

HULME WALFIELD AND SOMERFORD BOOTHS
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REFERENDUM VERSION

2018 - 2030



**Hulme Walfield
and Somerford Booths**
Parish Council
JULY 2017

Front cover picture of Bluebells by the River Dane, with kind permission from David Thompson

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1 FOREWORD

1.1 The Localism Act of 2011 gave new rights and powers to communities. It introduced Neighbourhood Planning into the hierarchy of spatial planning in England, giving communities the right to shape their future development at a local level. It is a powerful tool in that it has statutory weight and must be taken as a material consideration in planning decision-making.

1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework states ‘Neighbourhood Planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need.....Neighbourhood Planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right type of development for their community. The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned to the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.’

1.3 All Neighbourhood Plans must:

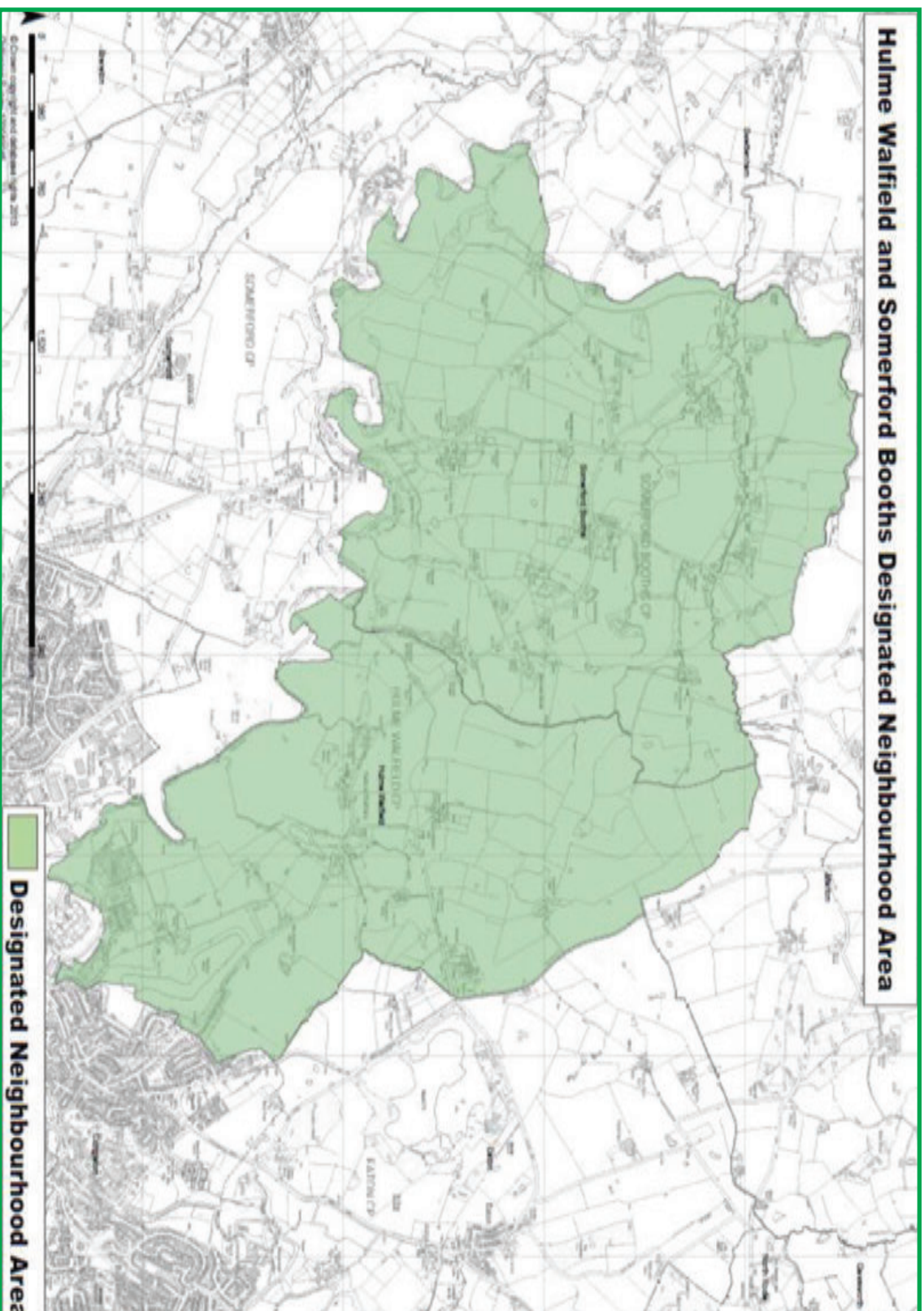
- ***have appropriate regard to national planning policy;***
- ***contribute to sustainable development;***
- ***be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area;***
- ***be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.***

1.4 At the time of the submission of the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan, the hearings into the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy had been undertaken, and the Local Plan **was** formally adopted in 2017. Whilst Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are in the rural area, they are in close proximity to Congleton, and there are strategic sites proposed in the Cheshire East Local Plan which fall within the Neighbourhood Plan designated area for over 1000 new dwellings. Additionally, the Congleton Link Road is proposed to be built and the route takes the road through Hulme Walfield.

1.5 The Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan was produced following a resolution to undertake a Plan at the Parish Council Meeting of 25th June 2015. A steering group was formed who consulted and listened to the community on a range of issues that influence the well-being, sustainability and long term preservation of the parishes’ rural community. Every effort has been made to ensure that the vision, aims, objectives and policies of the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan reflect the views of the majority of the local residents, whilst having regard to local and national policies.

1.6 Following the pre-submission (Regulation 14) consultation on the draft Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan, amendments have been made to reflect representations received.

1.6 Figure A – Map of Designated Area



1.6 Following the pre-submission consultation on the draft Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan, adjustments will be made to reflect representations received.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 HISTORY

2.2 Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are small villages and civil parishes, just north of Congleton, in the unitary authority of Cheshire East and the ceremonial county of Cheshire. Hulme Walfield is home to most of Westlow Mere. According to the 2001 census, the population of the civil parish was 140, increasing slightly to 148 at the 2011 Census.

2.3 In the census of 2001 Somerford Booths was recorded as having a population of 175, increasing to 181 at the 2011 Census. The parish is small and now consists of scattered farms and small groupings of houses, including the hamlet of Newsbank. It contains Somerford Booths Hall as well as Grove House Farm and Broomfield Farm which are shown as ancient buildings on the Ordnance Survey map of the area.

2.3 The two civil parishes hold a parish council meeting under a grouping scheme, consequently called Hulme Walfield & Somerford Booths Parish Council. The Parish Council has only fairly recently been reformed, in October 2014.

2.4 The two rural parishes of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are fortunate to be home to eight Listed Buildings, the majority of which reflect the long association with farming and agriculture. At Hulme Walfield is Hulme Walfield Hall, a Grade II listed three storey 17th century brick farmhouse that was expanded in the 18th century. Also Grade II Listed is Brick House Farmhouse which was built in the mid to late 18th century. Grade II Listed St Michael's Church was designed by George Gilbert Scott and was built in sandstone in 1855-1856. Inside the church is a 16th century font.

2.5 Somerford Booths is home to the Grade II* listed Somerford Booths Hall. This country house is two storeys and was built in rendered brick with stone dressings. The house has an entrance front of five symmetrical bays and was originally built in 1612 and altered in about 1817 by John Webb. Somerford Booths Hall is one of twenty three sites in Cheshire where John Webb 'a skilful conjuror of Parks and Pleasure Grounds' was commissioned to undertake landscape improvements, and his influence can be seen in the parkland's design. Grove House Farmhouse is a Grade II listed farmhouse dating from the 16th century. The farmhouse was altered in the 17th century, and again in the 19th century, when a new wing was added. Old Hall Farmhouse, Broomfield Farmhouse, and an outbuilding at Broomfield Farm are all Grade II listed buildings all of which date from the 17th century.

2.6 LANDSCAPE

2.7 Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths lie within National Character Area 61 – Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain, a pastoral area of rolling plain which is particularly important for dairy farming. The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008 classifies the parishes as lying within three recognisable landscape character types - the Lower Farms and Woods; Higher Farms and Woods; and River Valley. The key characteristics of the Lower Farms and Woods Character Type include:

- ***Low lying gentle rolling topography***
- ***Hedgerow boundaries and standard trees in a mix of medieval, reorganised fields***
- ***Horsiculture***
- ***High density of woodland***
- ***Dispersed farms and nucleated hamlets/villages***
- ***Mosses and meres***
- ***Large number of water bodies***

The key characteristics of the Higher Farms and Woods Character Type include :-

- *Gentle rolling and moderate undulating topography*
- *A mix of medieval and post-medieval reorganised fields (irregular, semi-regular and regular up to 8ha)*
- *Hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees*
- *High density of woodland – blocks, coverts and riparian*
- *Predominantly low density dispersed settlements*
- *Ponds*
- *Small mossland areas*



2.8 This undulating character type has a rural nature, which is defined by a higher than average density of woodland compared with much of Cheshire. Land use is a mix of arable and pasture, while settlement largely retains its dispersed low density pattern. Intensive reorganisation during the post-medieval period saw the breakup of medieval field patterns. Small surviving mosses are typical in most areas, as are ponds. Many areas have a very rural character with small, winding country lanes rising and falling over the undulating ground.

2.9 The very south of the parishes fall within the River Valleys landscape type – specifically the Upper River Dane character area. The key characteristics of the River Valleys Landscape type include:

- *Steep sided river valleys*
- *Meandering river courses*
- *High levels of woodland along the river and tributary valleys, of which a significant proportion is ancient woodland*
- *Tributaries in wooded cloughs*
- *Grassy banks – including acid grassland*
- *Bridges and viaducts*
- *Isolated halls and farms*

2.10 In the Upper River Dane character area the river meanders within a steep-sided, wooded valley with a wide and generally flat floor. Much of the steeper ground is wooded, whilst the valley floor is devoted to pasture. Field boundaries are generally defined by post and wire fences and much of the valley floor appears as a wide, open expanse of grassland. The course of the river is marked by an intermittent line of vegetation, typified by willows leaning over the watercourse. The high, steep valley side slopes and the frequency of woodland ensure there is little inter-visibility between this area and adjoining character areas. Within the body of the character area there is a single crossing point in the form of a small road bridge. Consequently much of the river is inaccessible to all but the most determined walker.

2.11 A large proportion of the course of the River Dane is wooded of which a significant part is ancient woodland – principally on the steeper slopes and following the tributary valleys. There is scrub and mature woodland as well as some unimproved neutral pastures. From Holmes Chapel through Congleton to the Peak Park boundary the river valley is designated as a Site of Biological importance, by far the longest SBI in Cheshire. It has high ornithological interest with many varieties of birds present, some of which are in rapid national decline such as the lesser spotted woodpecker, and the spotted fly catcher, and is important for insects, and mammals.



2.12 BUILT CHARACTER AND DESIGN

2.13 Cheshire East Council has recently prepared a design guide (www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/borough-design-guide-consultation.aspx). The guide is geared principally toward larger scale housing proposals, but is also relevant to smaller scale development. The intention is to both guide and improve the quality of new development but to also provide a basis for Cheshire East to reject design that does not contribute in a positive way to Cheshire East as a place. The guide highlights that Cheshire East is a fantastic part of the country, where picturesque market towns nestle within unspoilt countryside. It is a very special and unique place that should be protected. Its character and attractiveness underpins the quality of life enjoyed by the Borough and its residents.

2.14 Five settlement character areas have been identified, and Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths fall within 'Silk, Cotton and Market Towns', which covers the central area of Cheshire East. It is rural in character and defined by a higher than average density of woodland than most of Cheshire.

2.15 The design guide highlights that the boundaries of the settlement edges with the wider open countryside range from coursed stone/brick walling, native and ornamental hedgerows, Cheshire/Parkland style railings, concrete post/panel fences to close boarded timber fences.

2.16 In the settlement character area of Silk, Cotton and Market Towns, brick and render are the traditional choice for external walls with localised areas of stone. Timber is used selectively for decoration. Slate is the predominate material for roofing.

2.17 HULME WALFIELD AND SOMERFORD BOOTHS TODAY

Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are two parishes of around 333 people, living in 140 households.

Based on the 2011 census, we know that:

- *The population is slightly older than the average in England, with Hulme Walfield having slightly more children under the age of 16 than the national average, and Somerford Booths slightly less*
- *The community is fortunate to be safer than average, with less recorded crimes than the England average*
- *Average weekly income is higher in the parishes than in England as a whole, with fewer than average benefits, council tax or pension credit claimants living here, and less children living in poverty*
- *There are less people on average living with a limiting long term illness*
- *There are a larger than average number of residents who are self-employed, work 49 + hours per week, and who work from home*
- *Both parishes have a large proportion of detached homes (Hulme Walfield has 50% and Somerford Booths has 53%) with few terraced properties (1.6% at Hulme Walfield and 13.3% at Somerford Booths) which is significantly different from the national averages of 22% and 24% respectively*
- *The parishes also have a higher proportion of owner occupied homes than average, and homes tend to be in the higher Council Tax bands*
- *House prices for semi-detached and detached properties are higher than average, with an overall affordability ratio of 11.5 (median house price as a ratio of median income)*
- *Households are less overcrowded than average, but there are a higher number of houses without central heating and more people than average in fuel poverty*
- *In both parishes the car is relied upon heavily as a mode of transport, with more cars per household than the average, and far fewer with no car or only one car. The national average of economically active people using public transport to get to work is 11%, but in Hulme Walfield this figure is only 3.8%, and in Somerford Booths 0.8%*
- *The parishes are further away than average from key services such as a secondary school, GP, Pub or Post Office, leading to problems for those without a car. It takes longer than average to travel to the supermarket, town centre and hospital by walking or public transport than the county average (in the case of the supermarket, at it takes over five times as long)*

- *The population density is low, with only 0.36 people per hectare in Hulme Walfield, and 0.34 people per hectare at Somerford Booths, compared to the national average of 4.1 persons per hectare.*



3 *PLANNING BACKGROUND*

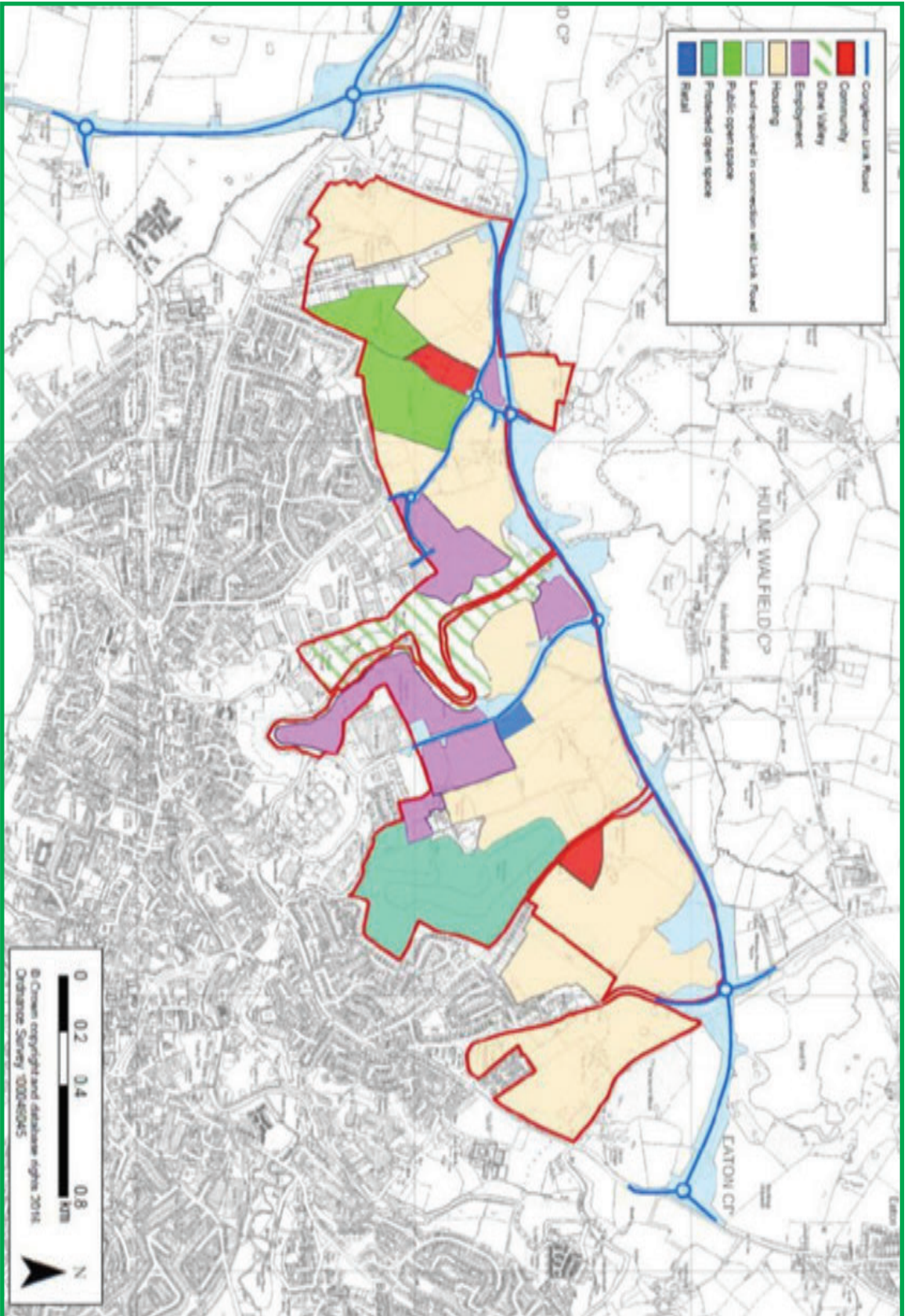
3.1 Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are classed as being in open countryside in the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005). Following Local Government Reorganisation in 2009, Cheshire County Council was abolished and the boroughs of Congleton, Macclesfield and Crewe and Nantwich merged to become Cheshire East, and a new Local Plan was prepared. At the time of the submission of the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan, the hearings into the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy had been undertaken, and it is hoped that the Local Plan will be formally adopted in 2017.

3.2 Whilst Hulme Walfield & Somerford Booths are in the rural area, they are in close proximity to the town of Congleton. In June 2016 planning permission was granted for the Congleton Link Road, the route of which partially runs through Hulme Walfield. In the Cheshire East Local Plan it is recognised that the Link Road is at the heart of the development strategy for Congleton.

3.3 To facilitate the delivery of the Link Road, the Local Plan states that no development will be permitted on the land required for its delivery. Cheshire East Council foresee that the Link Road would open up land to the south of the road, to the north of existing built up area of Congleton for development. The North Congleton Masterplan has therefore been prepared which allocates land and strategic sites, three of which are either wholly or partly within the parishes of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths.

Once developed, these sites will provide for approximately 1000 new homes within the parishes. This is a huge and dramatic change for the parishes, which at the time of the 2011 census only had 140 households – indeed, the parishes will see an increase of approximately 714%. Hulme Walfield will experience the most dramatic growth, and it is anticipated that there will be no further large scale increases over and above the strategic sites during the plan period.

3.4 Figure B – Conleton Link Road and Area of Interest

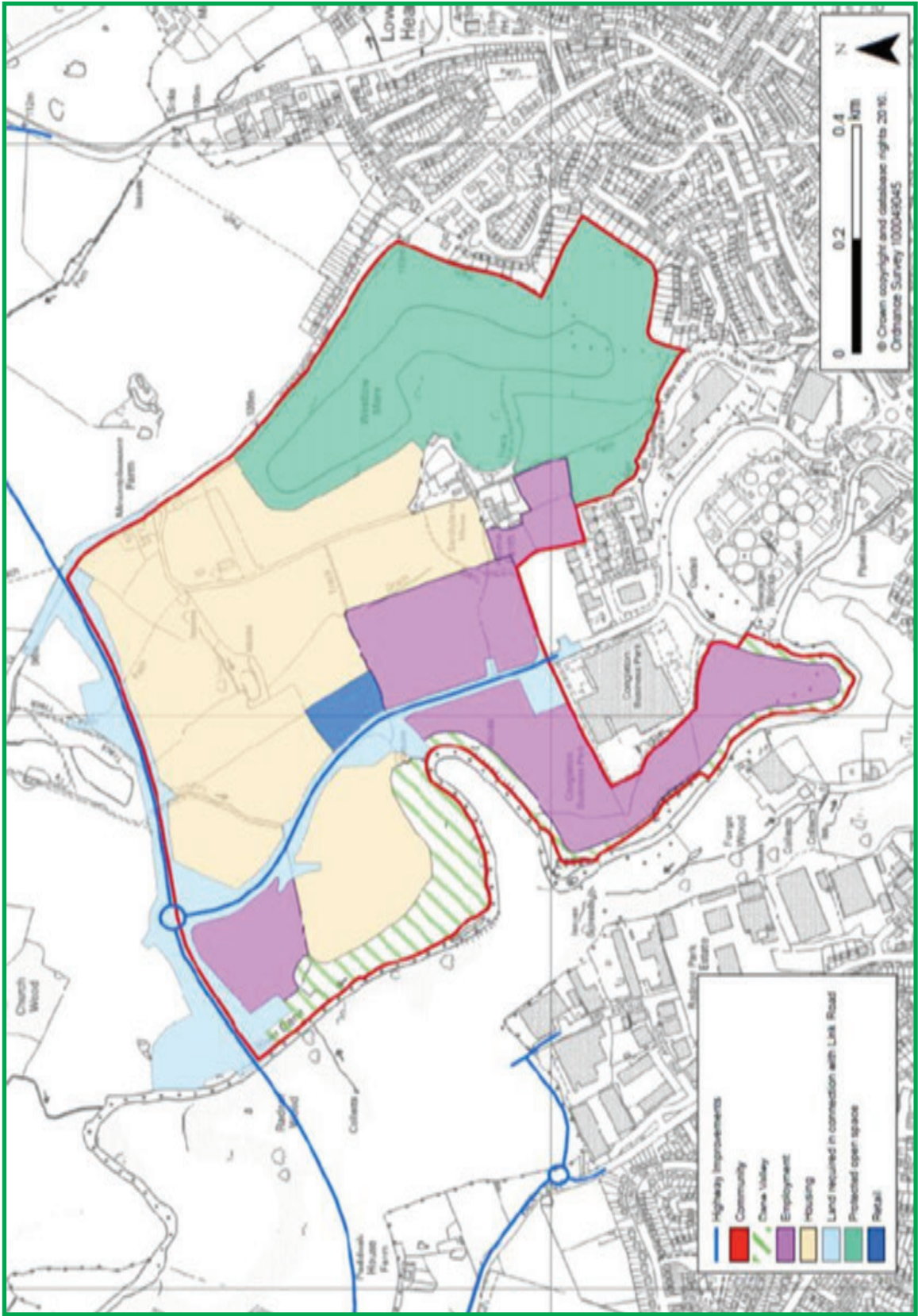


1.6 Following the pre-submission consultation on the draft Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan, adjustments will be made to reflect representations received.

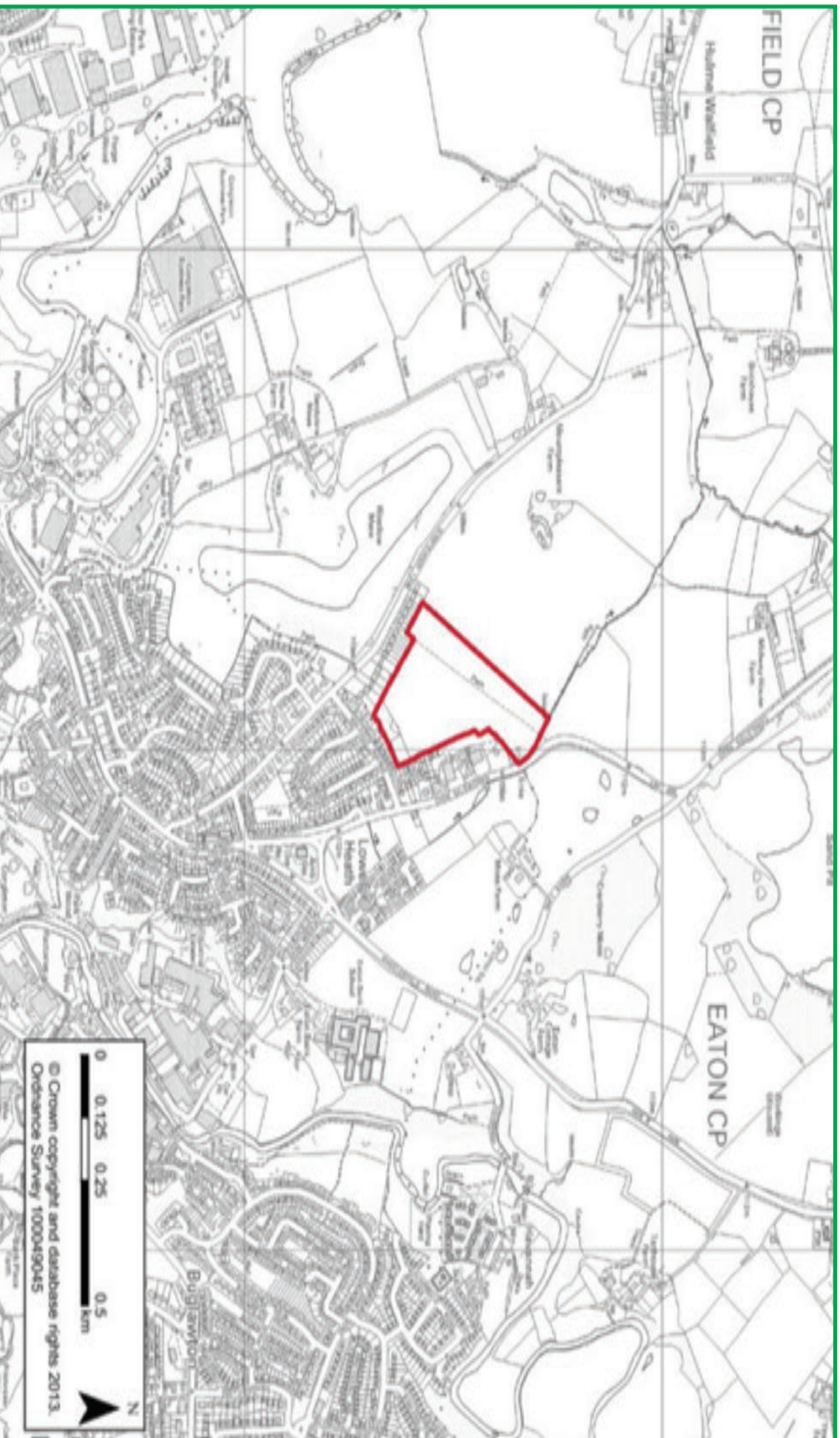
3.5 The following maps show the strategic sites.

3.6 Figure C – Congleton Business Park Extension Site

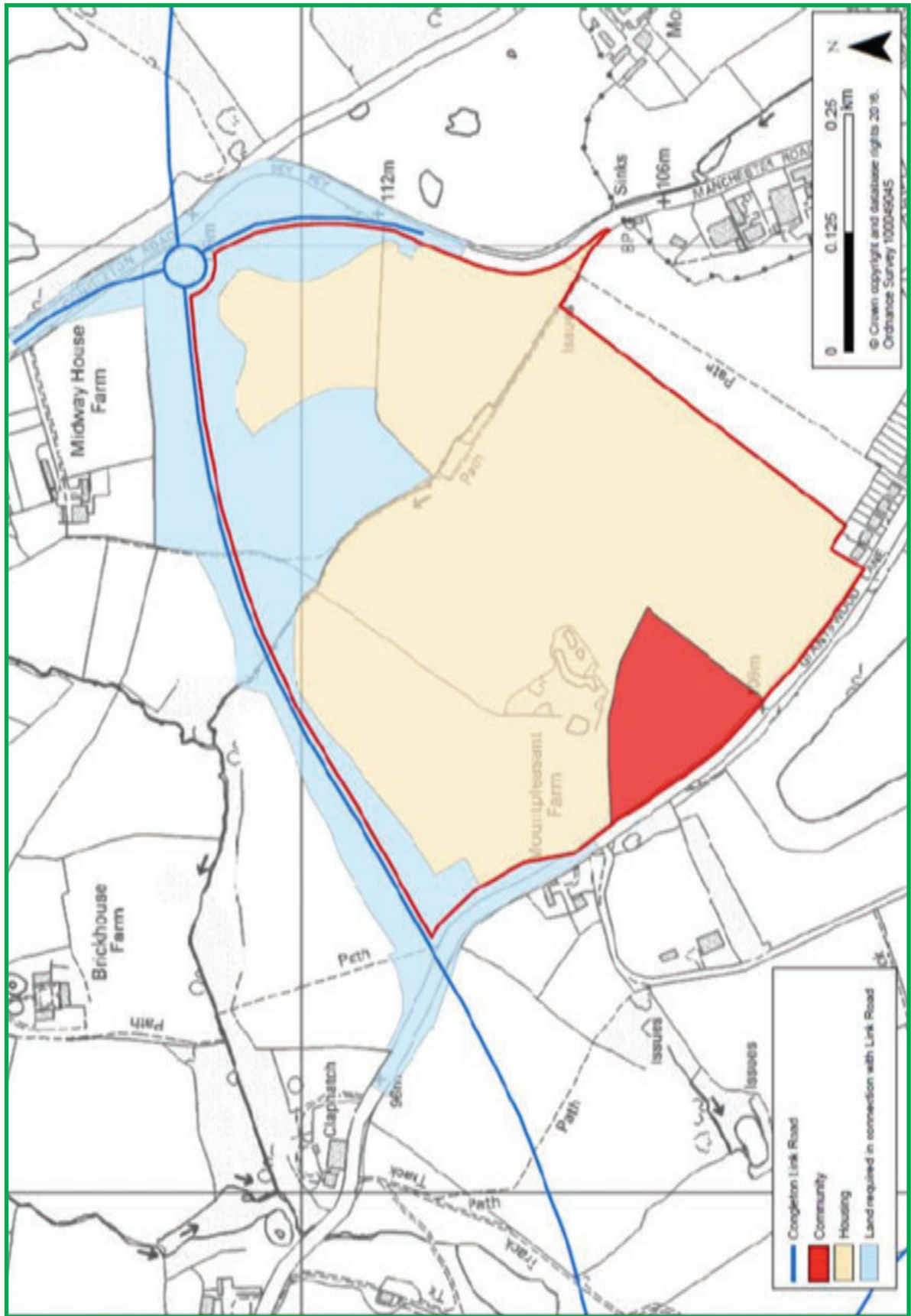
(625 new dwellings proposed, 10 hectares of land for employment and commercial uses adjacent to Congleton Business Park, along with up to 3 hectares of land for employment and commercial uses adjacent to the Congleton Link Road Junction).



3.7 Figure D – Giantswood Lane South
(150 new homes at approximately 30 dwellings per ha). This site covers an area from Giantswood Lane to Manchester Road.



3.8 Figure E – Giantswood Lane to Manchester Road
 (Partly in Eaton ward) 500 new homes (at approximately 30 dwellings per hectare).



Important note: These strategic development maps have been reproduced from the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Proposed Main Modifications (February 2017), which is a document created and managed by Cheshire East. As plans progress some information in these maps may be subject to change. Please consult Cheshire East’s website for up to date information on the strategic site development plans.

3.9 Cheshire East Council have proposed in the Local Plan that along with contributions to the link road, the sites will provide for affordable housing; children's play facilities; appropriate retail to meet local needs; pedestrian and cycle links set in green infrastructure to new and existing facilities; health and education contributions; a new primary school; open spaces for nature conservation and recreation; enhancement of the River Dane corridor; public transport links, and the retention and improvement of an existing footpath.

3.10 Planning permission has already begun to be granted, as at March 2017 permission has been granted for 96 units on the Giantswood Lane South site (Figure D); and an application is currently being determined for 500 residential units, a primary school and local shopping facilities at the Giantswood Lane to Manchester Road site (Figure E).

4 CONSULTATION

4.1 The Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan is a community plan and must derive its vision, objectives and policies from the community. From the outset the Parish Council were determined that the residents should be kept informed and given every opportunity to inform the Steering Group of their views. An Engagement Plan was prepared, and communication and consultation, in various forms, have played a major role in formulating the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.2 It was therefore considered important to:

- ***Promote a high degree of awareness of the project***
- ***Encourage everyone to contribute to the development of the Neighbourhood Plan***
- ***Promote consultation events and provide regular updates on the status of the Neighbourhood Plan and its development***

4.3 Key to this programme was publicity to gain residents engagement. This was gained via public meetings, postal information, and electronic media via the Parish Council website.

4.4 Further information on consultation methods and the results from the consultations can be found in more detail in the Consultation Statement that accompanies this Neighbourhood Plan (see www.hulmewalfieldandsomerfordboothsparishcouncil.co.uk).

4.5 The proposed Neighbourhood Area for the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan was subject to consultation from 28th October to 8th December 2015 and was formally designated on 16th December 2015.

4.6 An initial questionnaire was delivered to every household in the parish on March 7th 2016 to be completed by 31st March. The questionnaire was used as a basis on which to develop the objective, visions and policies. (The questionnaire can be seen at Appendix 1) 26 responses were received, a response rate of 19%. The questionnaire asked a number of questions, such as what was the respondents liked and disliked about where they live, what threats they foresaw to the parishes, what issues were important to them, and what development they would or wouldn't support.

4.7 When asked what residents like about living in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, overwhelmingly the answer was the rural nature of the village and the open countryside. Words such as quiet and peaceful were also used, with references to the greenery and wildlife. The following word cloud highlights the responses, with the larger the word, the more frequent the mention.



A word cloud featuring the words 'peaceful', 'quiet', 'rural', and 'countryside' in large, bold, orange and red fonts. Smaller words like 'greenery' and 'wildlife' are also present in green.

4.8 When asked what they didn't like about living in the parishes, the largest response was the dislike of ratruns which have developed to avoid traffic congestion on the A roads. Inconsiderate development was the next most repeated response, with other issues raised including slow broadband, lack of infrastructure, loss of the countryside and no nearby shop or post office.



A word cloud featuring the words 'ratrun' and 'development' in large, bold, orange and red fonts. Smaller words like 'infrastructure' and 'broadband' are also present in green.

4.9 The main threats to the future of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths were seen to be proposed housing development along with the threat to tranquillity, wildlife and loss of agricultural land. People were worried about the expansion into the open countryside and the joining up of the parishes by ribbon development. A further repeated worry was bad development, along with commercial and industrial development that wasn't suited to a countryside location.



A word cloud featuring the words 'development' and 'expansion' in large, bold, orange and red fonts. Smaller words like 'urbanisation', 'industry', and 'ribbon' are also present in green.

4.10 Respondents were asked to score, on a scale of 1-10, how important certain issues were to them. The issues were ranked in the following order:

- *The natural environment*
- *The historic/traditional environment*
- *Infrastructure and services*
- *Transport and roads*
- *Leisure/recreation*
- *Housing*
- *Jobs*



A word cloud featuring the words 'infrastructure', 'environment', 'heritage', and 'transport' in large, bold, orange and red fonts. Smaller words like 'jobs' and 'housing' are also present in green.

4.11 When asked what development they would support, the main response was small scale development, and fewer houses with good design. A number had concerns that the link road should be properly landscaped. Redevelopment of brownfield land was raised, as was affordable housing and the need for infill development. The need for agricultural homes, family homes and community premises was also raised. Respondents were asked what development they wouldn't support. The main response to this was large housing estates and commercial/industrial development.

4.12 Once an initial vision and objectives had been drafted, a further questionnaire was sent to residents in July 2016. 42 responses to the questionnaire were received – this is the best response gained from the parishes since the parish council was reformed, indicating significant interest and support for the Neighbourhood Plan. 83% of respondents completely or mainly agreed with the proposed vision, and 81% of respondents completely agreed with all the proposed objectives. Following the questionnaire, additional residents became involved in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.13 Additionally, a business questionnaire was sent to over 50 businesses within the parishes in August 2016. The questionnaire could also be completed online. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2. A total of 11 responses were received from companies spread throughout Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, and the results were used to help to formulate the rural economy policy in the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.14 The Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to the list of statutory and other bodies provided by Cheshire East Council as required under Regulation 14, Town and Country Planning, England Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (General) 2012. A total of 40 responses were received, making over 195 comments on the Neighbourhood Plan. After consideration of the comments received, the draft plan was amended to take account of relevant issues raised (see consultation statement at www.hulmewalfieldandsomerfordboothsparishcouncil.co.uk).

5 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 The vision and objectives are based on the key issues raised by local people during the initial stages of the consultation process. They have been summarised and refined by the Steering Group to form the basis of the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.2 An initial questionnaire asked residents for their vision of how they would like to be describing their parishes by 2030. Over half the respondents answered as 'a rural agricultural parish', retaining the open countryside and maintaining the peace and quiet. Green spaces, an enhanced community and the need for developments to be small scale were also mentioned. The following word cloud highlights the responses received.



5.3 Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are small rural parishes in the heart of the open Cheshire countryside. The vision for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths is:

VISION

In 2030 the Congleton Link Road will have been completed and new housing and employment developed on the proposed strategic locations south of the Link Road.

The remainder of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths will be quiet, peaceful but thriving rural communities, enjoying a close relationship with the open countryside, agriculture and wildlife. The parishes will have evolved in a sustainable way, with high quality, small scale development meeting local needs whilst maintaining the charm and character of the area. There will be improved services, and residents and visitors will continue to enjoy easy and open access to the surrounding countryside.

5.4 Following on from the vision, the following objectives have been identified, and the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan seek to deliver these objectives:

OBJECTIVES

- *To protect and enhance the open countryside and valued wildlife habitats*
- *To protect valued hedgerows, trees and woodlands*
- *To protect, enhance and develop footpaths and bridleways*
- *To encourage small development on brownfield land, infill sites and through conversions*
- *To ensure that new development is in keeping with local character*
- *To protect and enhance heritage assets*
- *To improve access to broadband and similar services*
- *To encourage and support a thriving local rural economy*

6 HOUSING AND DESIGN POLICIES

6.1 The Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan has the following objectives:

- *To encourage small development on brownfield land, infill sites and through conversions*
- *Encourage everyone to contribute to the development of the Neighbourhood Plan*
- *To ensure that new development is in keeping with local character*

6.2 The addition of approximately 1000 new dwellings from the strategic sites (see chapter 3) will be a huge change for the parishes, which at the time of the 2011 census had only 140 households. This is a dramatic increase of approximately 714%. The new developments will bring with them additional facilities and services. Additionally, it is likely that housing needs arising from the parishes can be met through the new housing on the strategic sites, helping to sustain the local community. However, one of the main responses which came out very strongly from the consultations was that people value the rural nature and open countryside of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, and it is the aim of the Neighbourhood Plan that outside of the strategic sites new housing development will remain of a scale and design appropriate to the rural location.

6.3 It is recognised that developer contributions from the housing developments south of the Link Road are to be used to help fund the Link Road. Likewise, it is recognised that the developments are for a substantial number of houses, some of which have already been granted planning permission. Policies relevant to housing development in the remainder of the parishes, which will be remaining as small, rural communities, will not always be appropriate or relevant for the larger scale development on the strategic sites. Policy HOU1 in the Neighbourhood Plan will therefore be applicable to any proposed new developments that may come forward outside of the strategic sites, whilst a policy concerning the development of the strategic sites is included separately.

6.4 Cheshire East Council have produced a Housing Advice Note for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths (see Appendix 3), which has indicated the likely housing need for the parishes and helped inform the Neighbourhood Plan policies. The Housing Advice Note was prepared in July 2016, using methodology endorsed by Planning Practice Guidance and best practice. The Advice Note looked at evidence such as household projections, census data, dwelling completion rates and the local plan strategy to give an appropriate quantum of housing for the parishes, along with characteristics of the housing need.

6.5 The Housing Advice Note indicates that the range of potential housing targets for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths could be 19-21 dwellings (2010-2030) or around 1 dwelling per annum. This would largely be in line with the rate of development seen across the Parishes in previous years. This is comprised of the following:

- **Local Plan proportionate figure: 20** *(There are 20656 households in the rural area of Cheshire East, and 141 households in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths – 0.68% of total households in the rural area. If the parishes were to take a proportion of the 2950 dwellings to be delivered in the rural area over the plan period, this would equate to 20 dwellings).*
- **DCLG Household Projections: 19** *(It is projected that by 2030 Cheshire East households will increase to 180 000 from 159 000 in 2010 – an average increase of 1050 households per annum. Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths has a 0.088% share of all households in Cheshire East, projected forward this gives a figure of 158 households by 2030. With a ratio of 0.959 households per dwelling, this equates to 19 dwellings over the plan period).*
- **Dwelling completion rate: 21** *(Between 2001-2011 there was an increase of 11 dwellings in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, or 1.1 dwellings per annum. Projecting forward to 2030, a figure of 21 dwellings would be arrived at if this rate continued over the plan period).*

6.6 Additionally, the Housing Advice Note indicates that there are some affordability issues in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, with rural areas in general experiencing acute affordability concerns. Affordable housing is addressed through policies in the Local Plan, and the Housing Advice Note stresses that a significant increase in housing numbers to deliver affordable housing would not be a sustainable policy given the parishes' rural location. The Advice Note highlights that the strategic sites will contribute to meeting some affordable housing need. The existing population of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths is approximately 333 people, in 140 households. It is evident that the 1000 new homes (which should be providing 30% affordable housing i.e. approximately 333 affordable dwellings) will be more than able to satisfy the affordable housing need and requirement arising from the parishes for the plan period of 2010-2030. Outside of the strategic sites some

small scale affordable housing may come forward through developer contributions on windfall sites.

6.7 From April 2010 to September 2015 there were no dwelling completions. There are, however, 39 dwellings committed (March 2017). This includes a development at Somerford Booths Hall for 27 dwellings, including 3 conversions (24 additional units). As the potential target range for the parishes is 19-21 units for the plan period (up to 2030), it is not considered necessary to allocate further sites for residential development. The neighbourhood plan housing policies will allow for appropriate small scale windfall developments, as has historically been the case in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths.

6.8 New housing developments

POLICY HOU1 – NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS (OUTSIDE OF THE STRATEGIC SITES)

Outside of the strategic sites, permission will be granted for small scale residential developments of 3 or fewer dwellings that are well designed and meet all other relevant policies within this Plan and either:

- a) fill a small, restricted gap in the continuity of existing frontage buildings, and/or**
- b) are located on brownfield land, and/or**
- c) are conversions of existing buildings, and/or**
- d) are replacing an existing building.**
- e) do not negatively impact on the natural environment**

Any development other than that proposed on the strategic sites, will be limited in size to 3 properties in order that it is on a scale commensurate with the existing character of the villages. In the case of conversions or on brownfield sites, where the existing building or brownfield site is of an appropriate size and scale, the number of new dwellings created may be greater as long as the character of the original buildings and the surrounding area is respected and new development is within the existing building or brownfield site footprint.

6.9 Evidence and Justification

Development in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths has historically been at a slow and steady rate. According to the 2011 census, the population of Hulme Walfield was 148, and of Somerford Booths was 181. In the 1801 census, taken more than 200 years previously, Hulme Walfield had a population of 122, and Somerford Booths a population of 250. There have never been any large scale housing developments in the parishes, and the rural feel and open countryside are greatly valued by the local community. Further large scale development over and above that proposed on the strategic sites, would be out of character with the villages.

6.10 Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are outside any defined settlement limits in both the Local Plan and are therefore classed as being within the open countryside. The protection of the open countryside from urbanising development is a principal objective of the Local Plan Strategy. One of the policy principles underpinning the Local Plan vision is to develop brownfield sites, where possible, to minimise the use of greenfield and the open countryside. Development in the open countryside will normally be unacceptable unless it can be shown to be essential to local needs and the rural economy and cannot be accommodated within existing settlements.

6.11 The Housing Advice Note has indicated that there was a likely need of between 19-21 units in the parishes in the Plan Period. There are currently commitments for 39 dwellings outside of the strategic sites (March 2017). This housing requirement, along with specific housing needs, will be more than met by these proposed developments and the housing developments for approximately 1000 dwellings on the strategic sites, some of which have already been granted planning permission.

6.12 Any new housing development outside of the strategic sites, will therefore be limited in scale, with a maximum of up to three units, in order to remain in keeping with the character of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, which has no large estate type developments, and is characterised by small scale development or individual units. In order to protect the open countryside, development should therefore be infill, conversions, replacements of an existing building, or on sites that have been previously developed. In the case of conversions or on brownfield sites, where the existing building or site is of an appropriate size and scale, the number of new dwellings created may be greater as long as the character of original buildings and the surrounding area is respected.

6.13 Housing for Older People

POLICY HOU2 – HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Within the Strategic Sites, new development schemes which cater for the needs of people with disabilities, or which are specifically for extra care housing for older people will be supported. Additionally, new dwellings which are proposed to directly accommodate a person/persons over the State Retirement Age, or with disabilities, through design or house type will be supported. Housing should be a suitable mix of tenures, with an element of affordable housing based upon the most up to date assessment of housing need.

6.14 The Housing Advice Note highlights that the proportion of the very elderly population in the villages is significantly greater than the Cheshire East average and that there are a large proportion of households who will become very elderly over the plan period. However, it is recognised that whilst there is a need to consider carefully the provision of specialist housing for the elderly, the viability of such provision and the need to ensure that sheltered/ retirement provision is close to services and facilities, may lead to such accommodation being better provided for in larger, nearby settlements. There is an opportunity, with the development of the strategic sites, for an element of the new housing to provide much needed accommodation for people with disabilities and for the elderly, both through the design and type of housing developed, and the specific provision of extra care housing schemes.

6.15 This policy accords with paragraph 50 of the NPPF and helps deliver a wide and appropriate choice of homes.

6.16 Rural Character

POLICY HOU3 – RURAL CHARACTER

To ensure that buildings, characteristic features and materials are representative of the local character of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, the design and layout of all new developments should demonstrate consideration of the latest Design Guide and Local Character Assessment for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths.

New development should take the following into account, where appropriate and viable:

- A. Development adjoining open countryside should provide a sympathetic transition.
- B. Development should be bordered by boundary treatments appropriate to its location, with hedgerows being preferable. Existing hedgerow boundaries should be protected and maintained as a feature of new development.
- C. Existing water courses and wetland features such as ponds should be retained to enhance local biodiversity.
- D. All new building shall take account of the topography and natural features of the site to maximise the views from the site to the surrounding areas of countryside and to minimise impact on the skyline.
- E. Views to important local landmarks such as The Cloud and St Michael's Church should be maintained.
- F. Development should support features beneficial to wildlife.
- G. Outside of the strategic sites new development should not have street lights. Within the strategic sites outdoor lighting sources should have a minimum impact on the environment, should minimise light pollution, and should minimise adverse effects on wildlife.
- H. Development should not have a negative impact upon, nor inappropriately urbanise the rural country lanes.

6.17 Evidence and Justification

It is important that any new development is of high quality design, enhancing the local character of the parish. Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths have a dispersed character with attractive, often isolated and individual buildings set back from the road, within a rural landscape, and with views of the open countryside abounding. Every effort needs to be adopted to ensure new developments respect this. The National Planning Policy Framework states that developments should respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

6.18 A local character assessment has been undertaken detailing the important characteristics of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths (see Appendix 4). The assessment highlighted that the local character can be defined as gently undulating, agricultural, rural open countryside with limited built development largely consisting of low density, detached dwellings and individual large farmsteads dispersed along narrow, country lanes.

6.19 Hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees are an important landscape feature of the two parishes. The Cheshire Wildlife Trust Report 'Protecting and Enhancing Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths' Natural Environment' (see Appendix 5) highlights the importance of hedgerows not just ecologically, but for their contribution to the landscape character and historical value of the

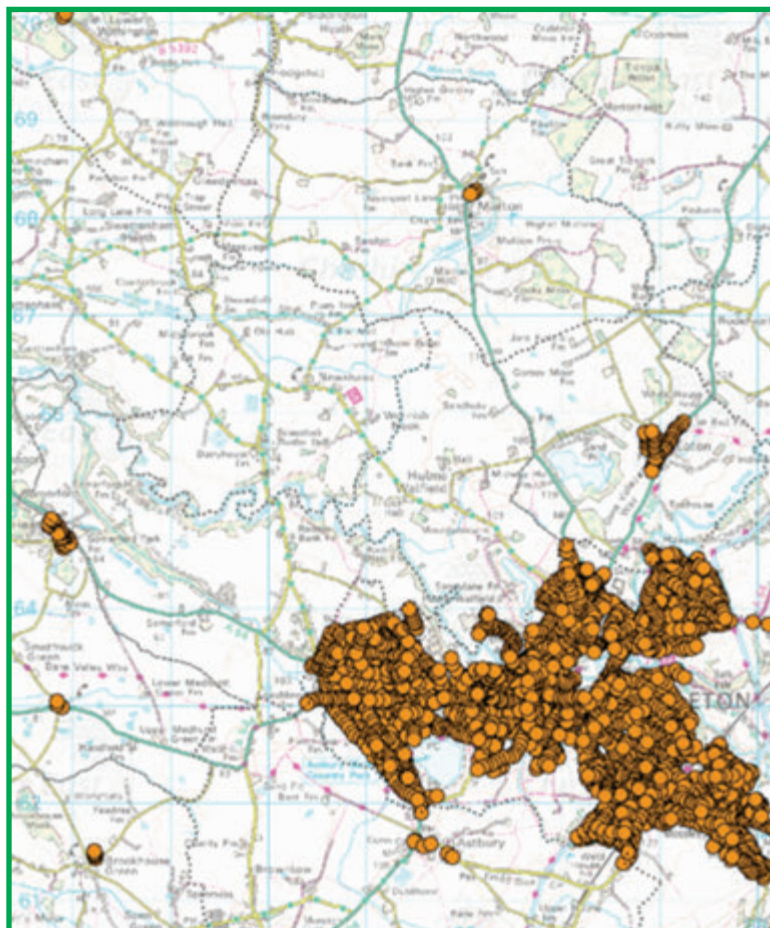
area. They should be protected from inappropriate development and used as boundaries for new development where possible. Additionally, the parishes are home to a number of wetland features and water courses which enhance local biodiversity, enrich the local character and provide attractive views. As such it is considered important that these are retained.

6.20 It was apparent from the survey results that local wildlife is important to the community. In order to support local wildlife, new development should support features within their design that are beneficial to wildlife such as bird and bat boxes, appropriate planting, and small gaps in boundary treatments to allow for hedgehogs. The Cheshire Wildlife Trust report recommends that low spillage (bat/ otter sensitive) lighting should be used on the outside of buildings or in car parks, and along pathways and watercourses, and should be kept to a minimum.

6.21 Somerford Booths currently has no street lighting, and Hulme Walfield very few other than at the very southern tip of its boundary. Both parishes enjoy the natural dark sky. Figure F clearly highlights the lack of street lighting in the parishes, particularly when compared to the nearby town of Congleton. In order to reflect the local character, new developments outside of the strategic sites should therefore have no street lighting. Within the strategic sites outdoor lighting sources should have a minimum impact on the environment.

6.22 One of the most noticeable elements of the parishes is their narrow, winding, country lanes, which often have no footpath or pavement. Subject to highway safety issues, it is important that in order to maintain the local character of the parishes that development does not lead to the rural road network becoming inappropriately urbanised.

6.23 Figure F – Map highlighting the lack of street lighting in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths



6.24 Housing Design

POLICY HOU4 – HOUSING DESIGN

New residential development will be required to demonstrate consideration of the following design principles, where appropriate, and should demonstrate consideration of the latest Design Guide and Local Character Assessment for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths.

Residential development will be supported where:

- A. Traditional materials and detailing are included.
- B. New housing should be positioned such that it does not prejudice the amenity of future occupiers or the occupiers of adjacent property by reason of overshadowing, overlooking, visual intrusion, noise and disturbance, odour, or in any other way.
- C. New dwellings are no more than 2 storeys high.
- D. The orientation of new buildings should be arranged to maintain as far as possible the views from existing buildings.
- E. New residential development outside of the strategic sites should normally be of individual design.
- F. Dwellings are varied in design, size and with appropriate outside space.
- G. Dwellings are set back from the adjoining highway.

6.25 Evidence and Justification

Cheshire East Council has recently prepared a design guide that has been out for consultation (www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/borough-design-guide-consultation.aspx). The guide highlights that the character and attractiveness of Cheshire East underpins the quality of life enjoyed by the Borough and its residents.

6.26 Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths fall within 'Silk, Cotton and Market Towns', which covers the central area of Cheshire East. It is rural in character and defined by a higher than average density of woodland than most of Cheshire. The Design Guide gives Design Cues for Silk, Cotton and Market Towns. Those relevant to Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths include

- *Features include single and full height bay windows, ridge detailing and prominent chimney stacks*
- *Less terraced housing found in smaller settlements*
- *Landscape setting, views and footpaths out to countryside*

6.27 In order to reflect and enhance the character of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, the design guide should be consulted on all new development proposals.

6.28 Additionally, the local character assessment for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths (see Appendix 4) highlighted that the character of the villages has developed over many years. Residential development has tended to be in the form of disperse, non-uniform, single or two storey individual dwellings, set back from the road and often of a different design from neighbouring residential properties, in harmony with the local topography and local landscape. Development should reflect these principles. Traditional materials such as old Cheshire brick, pan and slate tiles are apparent throughout the parishes, and should be included in new designs where appropriate.

6.29 One of the core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework is to always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Para 58 states that neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area, that developments should establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Developments should respond to local character and history, reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. Para 61 states planning policies and decisions should address the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

7 ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

7.1 The overwhelming response from the public consultations was that the community value and cherish the rural nature of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, and wish to protect the open countryside and local wildlife. As a result, the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan has the following relevant objectives:

- *To protect and enhance the open countryside and valued wildlife habitats*
- *To protect valued hedgerows, trees and woodlands*
- *To protect, enhance and develop footpaths and bridleways*

7.2 Wildlife Corridor and Areas of Habitat Distinctiveness

POLICY ENV1 – WILDLIFE CORRIDOR AND AREAS OF HABITAT DISTINCTIVENESS

Development should not significantly adversely affect the the areas of high or medium distinctiveness identified in Figure J, or the wildlife corridors identified in Figure K. The enhancement of these areas for biodiversity will be supported.

Where the reasons for proposed development clearly outweigh the value of the ecological feature adversely affected and there are no appropriate alternatives, suitable mitigation and/or compensation must be provided to address the adverse impacts of the proposed development.

Carefully designed mitigation must be put in place at the Congleton Link Road and the Strategic Sites so that ecological connectivity is not compromised.

7.3 Evidence and Justification

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group commissioned Cheshire Wildlife Trust to undertake a study of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths' natural environment, in order to inform and produce appropriate policies for the Neighbourhood Plan. The report 'Protecting and Enhancing Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths' Natural Environment was published in January 2017 (Appendix 5).

7.4 The report identified the core, high ecological value sites (high distinctiveness) for nature conservation in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, which are recommended for protection, and medium value sites (semi natural habitat) which should be considered as biodiversity opportunity areas subject to further evaluation, and which should be subject to a full evaluation should they be proposed for future development. Additionally, the report identified key local and regional ecological networks within the Neighbourhood Plan area that should be protected through Neighbourhood Plan policies.

7.5 The study identified numerous major areas of high value (distinctiveness) habitat in the Neighbourhood Plan area (See figure I) including Bunister Wood, Briery Bank, Church Wood, woodland at Westlow Mere, wood near Mountpleasant Farm, Holly Heath Farm Wood, Clonter Wood, wood at Grove House Farm, Black Planting, Woodside Park, Bancroft Wood, wood at Hulme Walfield Old Hall, wood by Claphatch, Warburton's Wood and woodland along the River Dane. An additional four woodlands are listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory – Holly Banks SSSI, Old Hall Wood, Shannock Big Wood and Scar Wood. These woodlands are thought to be at least 400 years old.

7.6 Holly Banks SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) is particularly notable for the richness of its habitat and unusual flora, with oak, silver birch, bluebell, bracken sanicle, thin spiked wood sedge, wood small reed and early purple orchid, along with ash, which, elm and wild cherry.

7.7 Areas of high distinctiveness grassland also exists, most notably the Local Wildlife Site 'Field at Hulme Walfield' which has an unusual flora which provides an important resource for invertebrates such as bees and butterflies. Additionally, acid grassland on the banks of Westlow Mere is important for birds and animals.

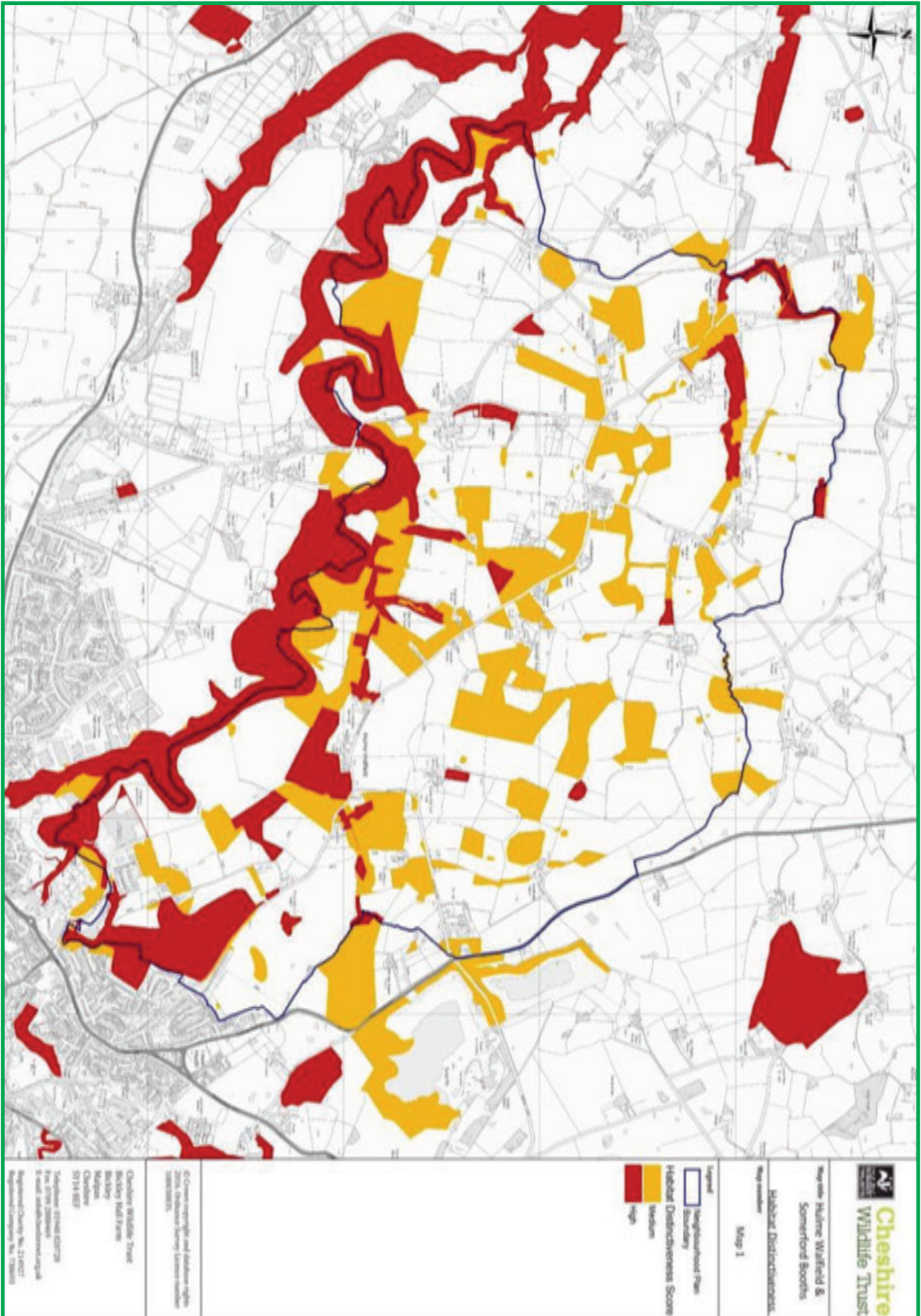
7.8 Areas of 'medium habitat distinctiveness' were also identified as they provide important wildlife habitats in their own right as well as acting as ecological stepping stones. The majority are semi natural grassland and wet grassland along the River Dane terraces and tributaries such as Midge Brook, by Claphatch/ Brickhouse Farm and Schoolpool Brook.

7.9 The report also identifies areas that act as a wildlife corridor network (figure K) with high ecological connectivity within and beyond the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan area. The network incorporates areas of woodland and grassland along the River Dane Terraces and Midge brook, along with groups of woodlands, some of which are important nationally and all important on a county wide basis. The woodlands support notable birds such as spotted fly catcher, lesser spotted woodpecker and willow tit, all which are in rapid decline nationally. The connectivity between the woods is key to their continued wildlife value as it helps make the woodlands more resilient to environmental change. The extensive network of field boundary hedgerows also provide habitat connectivity through the neighbourhood plan area and beyond.

7.10 The Cheshire Wildlife Trust report highlighted that the wildlife corridor network has a good degree of ecological connectivity which is currently only compromised where it is crossed by the A34. The new Congleton Link Road and associated housing developments will inevitably compromise this connectivity unless carefully designed mitigation is put in place before disruption occurs. It is recognised that some parts of the strategic sites are in the wildlife corridor, or areas of high habitat distinctiveness. In these instances mitigation must be put in place, and the development of the sites carefully designed and managed so as to minimise adverse impacts on the natural environment.

7.11 The Cheshire Wildlife Trust report recommended that the indicative wildlife corridor network (figure K overleaf) should be identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and protected from development, so that the guidance relating to ecological networks set out in the draft Local Plan and the NPPF may be implemented at a local level. This network includes a buffer zone of 15 metres in places to protect notable habitats. Additionally, any future development of sites which are adjacent to high distinctiveness habitat or a wildlife corridor should be able to demonstrate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen any potential impacts on wildlife.

7.12 Figure G - Habitat Distinctiveness



7.14 The Cheshire Wildlife Trust concludes 'Future development of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths village should respect the natural environment. The most intact landscapes, in terms of biodiversity, landform and historical/ cultural associations should be valued highly when planning decisions are made. Protection and enhancement of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths' natural assets is of crucial importance for nature conservation and ecosystem services but it is also important for the enjoyment of future generations.'

7.15 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and creating ecological networks are central to the National Planning Policy Framework. Indeed, biodiversity is mentioned fifteen times in the NPPF with protection and improvement of the natural environment as core objectives of the planning system. The community in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths is keen to protect wildlife and one of the key ways to achieve this is to ensure that new developments are appropriately located and do not cause a net loss of biodiversity. The NPPF states that planning policies should identify and map components of the local 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 local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation.

7.16 Policy SE4 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy seeks to ensure that all development should conserve the landscape character and quality and should, where possible, enhance and effectively manage the historic, natural and man-made features that contribute to local distinctiveness of rural and urban landscapes. Development should preserve local distinctiveness and avoid the loss of habitats of significant landscape importance.

7.17 Trees and Hedgerows

POLICY ENV2 – TREES AND HEDGEROWS

Hedgerows and trees which make a significant contribution to the amenity, biodiversity and landscape character of the surrounding area must be preserved, where the benefits of development are considered to outweigh the benefit of preserving trees and hedgerows, development will be permitted subject to appropriate mitigation. The retention of trees and hedgerows in situ will always be preferable.

Verges, trees and hedgerows along country lanes should be retained where possible.

7.18 Evidence and Justification

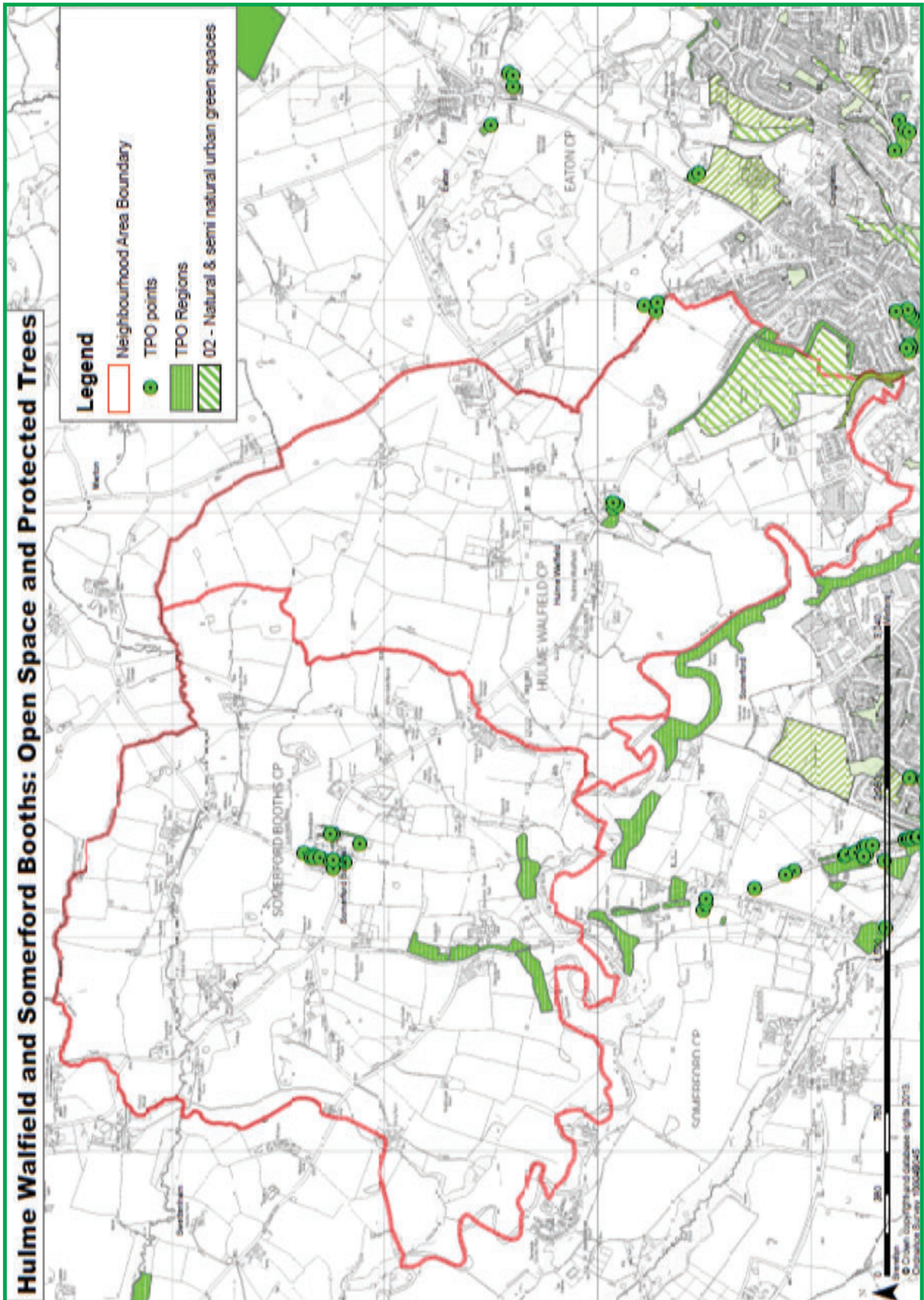
The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008 classifies Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths as lying within the Higher Farms and Woods, Lower farms and Woods and River Valley Landscape Character Types. One of the key characteristics of these character types includes hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees, along with a high density of woodland, particularly along the river and tributary valleys, of which a significant proportion is ancient woodland.

7.19 The high number of trees and hedgerows is apparent in the parish and a valued local characteristic which should be protected and enhanced. The Cheshire Wildlife Trust report 'Protecting and Enhancing Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths' Natural Environment' (Appendix 5) highlights that there are numerous areas of high value woodland habitat, some of which is of national importance being at least 400 years old. The woodlands are a rich habitat, home to wildlife, and support rare and unusual flora. They support rare birds such as the willow tit and

lesser spotted woodpecker, which are all red listed species in rapid decline. The report highlights the good network of hedgerows in the parishes, which along with their ecological value contribute greatly to the landscape character and historical value of the area.

7.20 This policy helps to deliver one of the key aims of the NPPF of conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Para 118 states that planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

7.21 Figure I - Open Space and Protected Trees



7.22 Footpaths, Cycleways and Bridleways

POLICY ENV3 – MULTI-USE ROUTES

Any appropriate proposals to maintain and enhance the network of public rights of way and cycleways will be supported. Additionally, links and improvements to the existing network of public rights of way and cycleways will be sought in connection with new developments, where viable, to improve access to the countryside.

Proposals to divert public rights of way or cycleways should provide clear and demonstrable benefits for the wider community.

7.23 Evidence and Justification

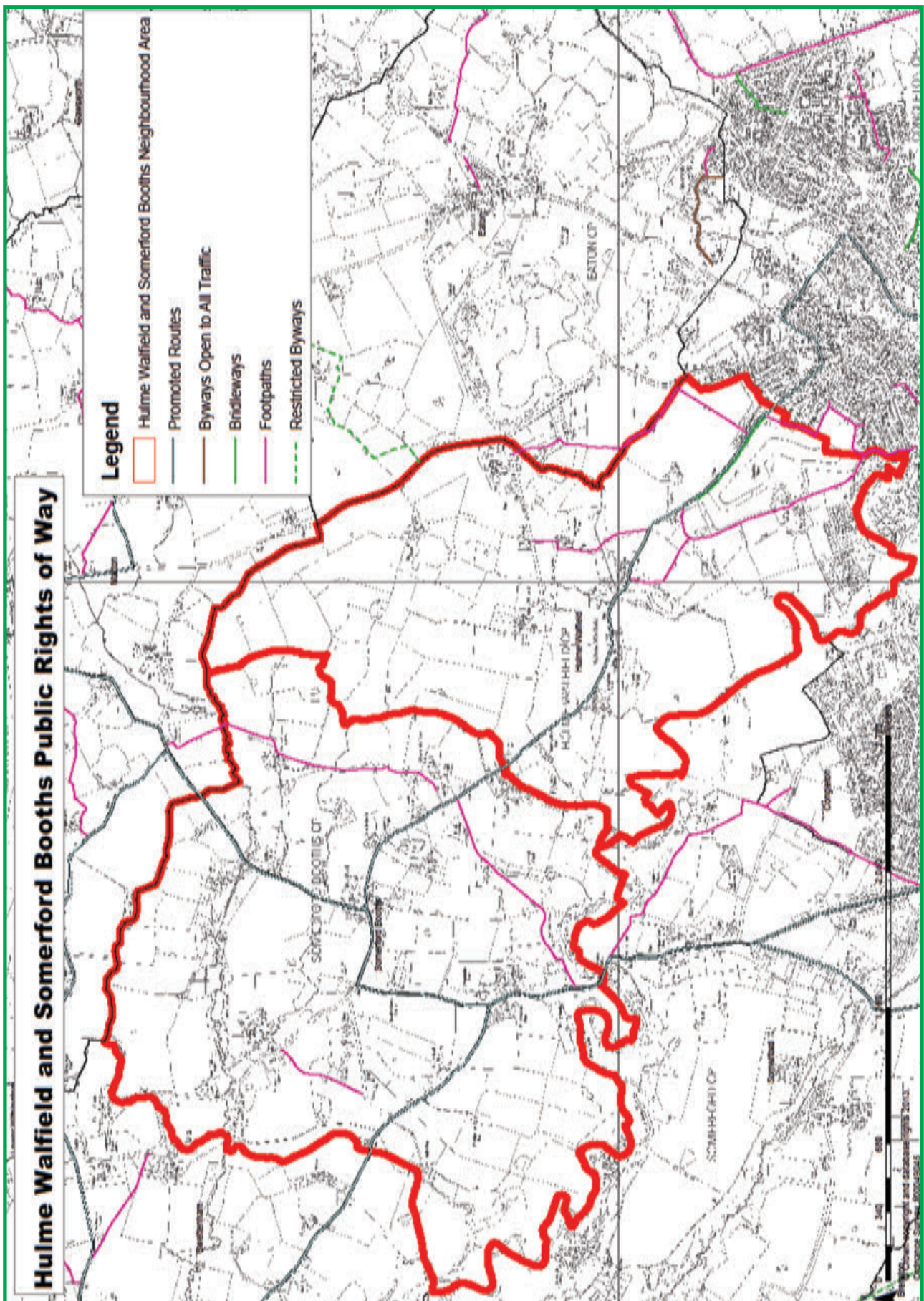
The importance of the natural environment and continued access to the open countryside were highlighted often by the community in the questionnaire responses.

7.24 Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths have a number of public rights of way that allow direct access to the countryside, along with three routes which are part of the National Cycle Network. Public Rights of Way are highways which the public may use at any time. There are four categories of Public Right of Way, each with different groups of people who may use that category – public footpaths, public bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to protect the existing network, and take opportunities to integrate any new developments within the existing rights of way network, and enhance existing provision by creating new links where possible. The Cheshire East Local Plan indicates that developments on the Strategic Sites south of the approved Link Road are to deliver pedestrian and cycle links set in green infrastructure to new and existing facilities, and will retain and improve an existing footpath.

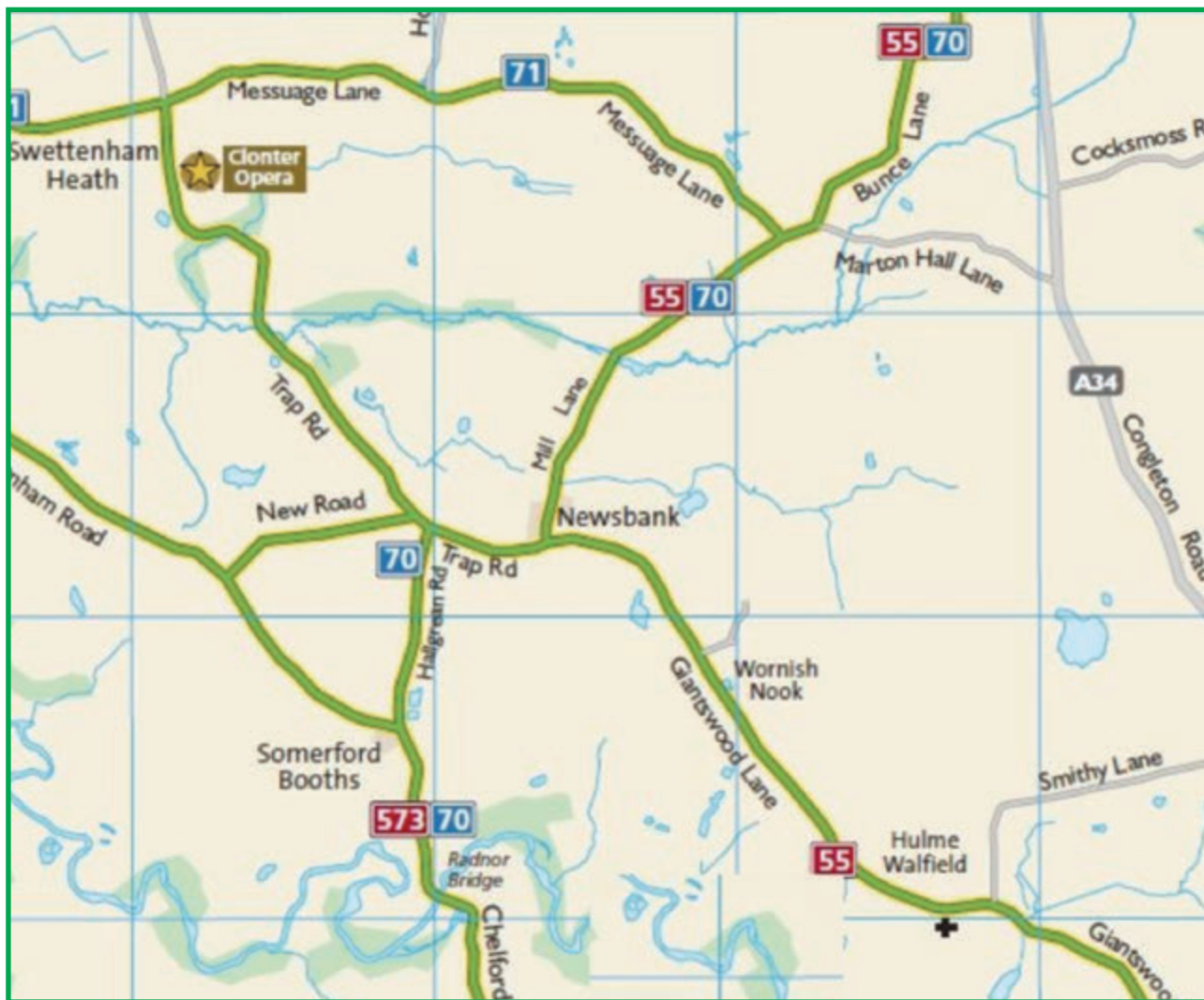
7.25 There is only one bridleway in Hulme Walfield, and none in Somerford Booths. There are a number of small horse liverys and private stables in the area and any improvements or provision of safe places to ride would be welcomed.

7.26 This policy seeks to help deliver one of the NPPF's key planning aims of conserving and enhancing the natural environment, and also of promoting health communities. Para 75 indicates that policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and that opportunities should be sought to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing public rights of way networks.

7.27 Figure J - Map detailing the Public Rights of Way in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths



7.28 Figure K - Map detailing cycling routes in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths



8 RURAL ECONOMY POLICY

8.1 The Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan has the following objective: *To encourage and support a thriving local rural economy*

8.2 Rural Economy

POLICY ECON1 – RURAL ECONOMY

Subject to respecting Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths built and landscape character, and environmental, traffic and residential amenity impacts being acceptable, the following will be supported:

- i. The development of new small businesses and the expansion of existing businesses, particularly on brownfield sites and at the existing and proposed extension to Congleton Business Park**
- ii. Proposals that promote or provide facilities for home working and businesses operating from home**
- iii. The sympathetic conversion of existing buildings for business and enterprise**
- iv. The diversification of farms and rural businesses**
- v. Agricultural and Horticultural enterprises**

B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) uses should be directed to the existing and proposed extension to Congleton Business Park.

8.3 Evidence and Justification

Somerford Booths has a significantly higher than average proportion of people aged 16-74 who work from home (16.9% compared to the average in England of 3.5%). Hulme Walfield also has a slightly higher percentage, at 3.8%. Both parishes have a higher than average proportion of people in employment who work more than 49 hours a week (23.2% in Somerford Booths, and 15.4% in Hulme Walfield, compared to the England average of 13.3%). Both parishes also have a noticeably higher percentage of 16-74 year olds who are self-employed (30% in Somerford Booths and 15.1% in Hulme Walfield compared to the England average of 9.8%) (2011 Census). Additionally, the average time it takes to walk or get public transport to the nearest employment centre is 50 minutes, far greater than the average in Cheshire of 12 minutes. The rural economy and local small businesses are therefore a vital and welcome part of village life.

8.4 A business questionnaire was sent to over 50 businesses within the parishes in August 2016. The questionnaire could also be completed online. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2. A total of 11 responses were received from companies spread throughout Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths. One business had moved, and another had retired, so nine businesses completed the questionnaire. The majority were agriculture/ horticulture and landscaping based, with others being primarily concerned with manufacturing and engineering; sales; building and computing. Five of the companies employed staff who worked from home, and seven of the businesses had worked in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths for over twenty years. The number of people in the work force ranged from one to eight, with all companies having both full and part time workers bar one, who had only one part time worker.

8.5 The businesses were asked why they were located in the parishes, and eight of the nine responded that it was where they live. Two of the businesses indicated that in the next five years they are likely to close due to retirement. Three planned to expand. No business indicated that they would have a need to move their businesses into new premises either within or outside of the parishes.

8.6 The main concerns of the businesses were broadband speed, electricity provision and retaining the safe rural environment. The results also confirmed that home working is high, and indicated that some companies have been located in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths for a long time and intend to stay within the parishes. The results also highlighted that amongst the respondents there had been no recent new business start-ups (the most recent began operating in 2008).

8.7 The Cheshire East Local Plan amended submission version (2016) has included as an allocation Congleton Business Park Extension Site (Figure C). This includes 10 hectares of land for employment and commercial uses adjacent to Congleton Business Park, along with up to 3 hectares of land for employment and commercial uses adjacent to the Congleton Link Road Junction). This area, south of the approved Congleton Link Road, falls within the parish of Hulme Walfield. In order to respect the rural character, any new industrial or storage and distribution uses will be more appropriately directed to the existing Business Park or proposed extension, rather than within the rural remainder of the Parishes.

8.8 The Housing Advice Note prepared by Cheshire East Council (Appendix 3) indicates that a high proportion of the economically active work from home or are self-employed, and recommends the inclusion of policies within the Neighbourhood Plan which support local employment.

8.9 It is hoped that the above policy will help to ensure that Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booth's rural economy can grow sustainability over the Plan period and beyond, and that support will be given for both existing businesses and for new businesses and enterprises within the parish.

8.10 One of the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework is to support a prosperous rural economy. Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. The Designated Neighbourhood Area includes a number of farms and the National Planning Policy Framework supports the reuse of existing rural buildings, particularly for economic purposes, and promotes the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.

9

INFRASTRUCTURE

9.1 The Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan has the following objective:

- *To improve access to services*

9.2 Infrastructure

POLICY INF1 – INFRASTRUCTURE

New residential development will be expected to address the impacts and benefits it will have on community infrastructure and how any negative aspects can be mitigated. Proposals shall either incorporate the necessary improvements or include a contribution towards such improvement, subject to viability, by whatever charging system Cheshire East Council has in place.

The associated infrastructure that has been detailed for provision as part of the site specific principles of development for the strategic sites within the Cheshire East Local Plan must be adhered to.

9.3 Evidence and Justification

Throughout the consultation process, comments were received about the need to improve access to facilities and services. It is recognised that outside of the strategic sites, new development is unlikely to be of a level that would facilitate large scale developer contributions. However, the strategic sites are of such a large scale and will impact the parishes to such an extent that developer contributions will be sought that facilitate the provision and improvement of associated necessary services.

9.4 The draft Cheshire East Local Plan states that along with contributions to the link road, the sites will provide for affordable housing; children’s play facilities; appropriate retail to meet local needs; pedestrian and cycle links set in green infrastructure to new and existing facilities; health and education contributions; a new primary school; open spaces for nature conservation and recreation; enhancement of the River Dane corridor; public transport links, and the retention and improvement of an existing footpath. Additionally, each proposed strategic site has a list of site specific principles for development which highlight what services, facilities and infrastructure is required for that particular development to proceed. With the amount of new expansion proposed, along with the lack of existing facilities, it is essential that these requirements are indeed delivered alongside the new housing in order for the developments to be successful and sustainable.

9.5 Broadband

POLICY INF2 – COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

The development of advanced high quality communications infrastructure, including high speed broadband, will be supported, subject to:

- i) Development being kept to a minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the existing and future networks.
- ii) Any development being sympathetic to its surroundings and camouflaged where appropriate, with underground networks being preferable.

9.6 Evidence and Justification

Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are rural communities, further away than average from key services such as a secondary school, GP or Post Office. Accessing public transport at a necessary or convenient time is not always achievable, and this can be a real problem for people without the use of a car. The nearest secondary school is 4k from Somerford Booths with the average in England being 2.1k. The nearest GP surgery is 4.6k from Somerford Booths and 2.1k from Hulme Walfield compared to the England average of 1.2k, and it is 3.9k to the nearest post office from Somerford Booths and 2.1k from Hulme Walfield, which compares unfavourably to the England average of 1k. (Source: Commission for Rural Communities 2010).

9.7 It takes longer than average to travel to the nearest supermarket, town centre and employment centre by walking or public transport than the county average. (Source – Department of Transport 2011). In the case of the supermarket it takes over five times as long (52 minutes rather than the county average of 10 minutes).

9.8 It is therefore considered important that Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths have high quality communications infrastructure. The issue of broadband services was raised in every consultation carried out whilst preparing the Neighbourhood Plan. Superfast broadband is encouraged so that everyone, particularly the elderly and people with disabilities, can have greater access to opportunities and services which are available on the world wide web.

9.9 Additionally, a larger than average percentage of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths residents work from home. The 2011 census information indicates that 3.8% of 16-74 year olds in Hulme Walfield work from home, and 16.9% of Somerford Booths 16-74 year olds, which is higher than the average in England of 3.5%. Having a high quality communications infrastructure is therefore important to help sustain and develop the businesses of these residents. Indeed, one of the main concerns that was detailed in the responses to the business questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was broadband services and broadband speed.

9.10 One of the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework is to support high quality communications infrastructure. Paragraph 42 highlights that supporting high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth, and that the development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services.

APPENDIX 1

PARISHIONER ENGAGEMENT

INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

CONSULT VISION

**VISION OBJECTIVES QUESTIONNAIRE
& RESIDENTS RESPONSES**

Proposed Neighbourhood Plan for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths

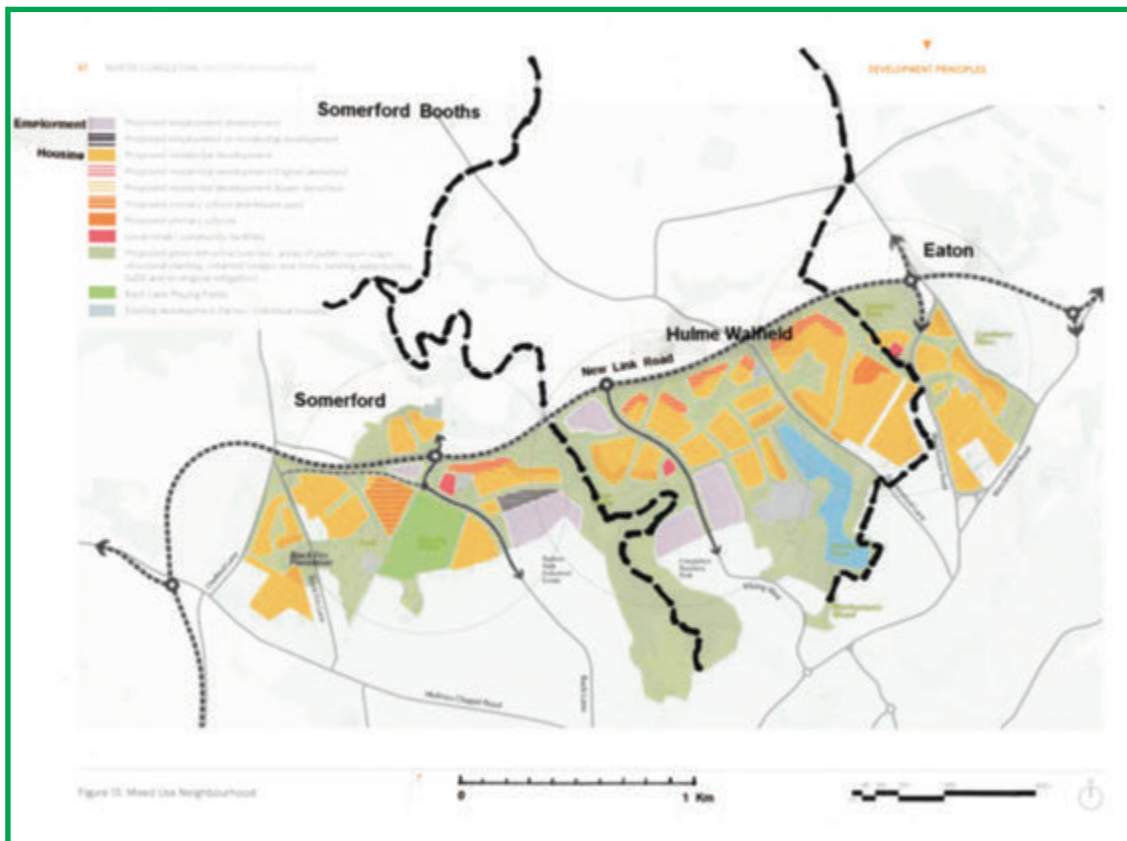
INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

As you will know, your Parish Council is in the early stages of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Why do we need one? So that the Parish residents can have a say in future building developments in our Parishes.

Over the next 15 years, a considerable amount of development in Hulme Walfield is proposed in Cheshire East Council's Draft Local Plan; principally the Congleton Link Road together with some 1000 houses.

(Drawing below based on Barton Willmore's North Congleton Masterplan October 2015)



- ***A Neighbourhood Plan will have equal 'weight' to Cheshire East's Local Plan (after they are both formally approved) and must be taken into account by Cheshire East's Planners to guide all future development activities in our Parishes.***
- ***A Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity to Cheshire East's Local Plan, and so it can't be used to propose less development than is in the Local Plan.***
- ***So, although we have to accept that such development is likely to happen, having a Neighbourhood Plan gives us the opportunity to influence and shape that development.***

- *The Parish Community has to gather evidence to support a Neighbourhood Plan, write the Plan, and submit it to residents to vote for its adoption.*
- *We have appointed consultants to help us with this task (Cheshire Community Action) but we need to make a preliminary start on the process.*
- *We need to set up a small Planning Group of representatives from residents, businesses and other interested parties.*
- *This group then needs to collect information about the needs and issues affecting the Parishes over the coming years.*
- *This will involve consulting with the various interests in the Parishes – residents, businesses, other organisations, ensuring that we canvass the views of all sections of the communities.*
- *This is the first stage of the Plan preparation. There will be Public Meetings and further consultations etc. Your views are essential at this stage and will be very welcomed at all future stages in the process.*

If you think you could help with any part of the Neighbourhood Planning process, please contact us via the address below and provide your contact details (post or email) to the Clerk of the Council.

To help us get started we've attached a very short questionnaire to which we'd welcome your responses (by post or email).

QUESTIONNAIRE

We would really like to know what do you think are the main issues over the next 15 years that we should consider in the Neighbourhood Plan? (These must be the sort of Development and Land Use issues that would be taken into account when determining a Planning Application. So, concerns about non planning issues such as speed limits, litter and bus timetables etc. can't be dealt with in a Neighbourhood Plan).

- 1) **Do you agree we should prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?**
Yes/No/Comment.....
- 2) **What do you like about where you live?**
- 3) **What do you dislike?**
- 4) **What do you see as the main threats to the future of our Parishes?**
- 5) **Your vision; How would you like to be describing our Parishes by 2030**
- 6) **On a scale of 1-10 (low to high) how important are the following issues to you?**
 - Housing
 - Jobs
 - Transport and roads
 - Leisure /recreation
 - The natural environment
 - The historic/traditional environment
 - Infrastructure-(services.internet etc)
- 7) **What type of development would you support?**
- 8) **What type would you object to (or not support)?**
- 9) **What priority issue would you really like to be included in the Plan?**
- 10) **Any other comments?**

Please return completed questionnaires by March 31st to;

Mrs Julie Mason, 2 Field View Rd, Somerford, Congleton, CW12 4UG.

Email: jmasonparishclerk@gmail.com

Finally, it would be VERY helpful to have your email address and postcode to help us communicate with you more effectively (and to know which Parish you're from);

Name: _____

Email: _____

Postcode: _____

Proposed Neighbourhood Plan for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths

CONSULT VISION

Background:

Over the next 15 years, a considerable amount of development is proposed, in Hulme Walfield, in Cheshire East Council's draft Local Plan; principally the Congleton Link Road together with some 1000 houses. Whilst there is currently little included in the draft Local Plan that impacts Somerford Booths it is possible that there will be applications for development in this area too.

The Parish Council decided to develop a Neighbourhood Plan so that we, residents of both parishes, can have a say in future development.

Update:

Firstly, we would like to pass on our thanks to all of you that responded to the last newsletter by completing the questionnaire. The responses we received had many common themes with the majority stating they would want the parishes to remain rural, quiet and peaceful countryside with references to wildlife and greenery.

There is a difficult balance to be achieved as the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Cheshire East Local Plan. As the land that lies south of the planned link road has been put forward as strategic land allocated for development within the draft Cheshire East Local Plan, our Neighbourhood Plan will focus on the rest of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths outside of those strategic areas. Any challenges and influence we wish to make to the designated areas will be through the Parish Council directly.

The committee have now looked at the responses we received and developed a draft vision and objectives on the next page:

Vision:

In 2030, the Congleton Link Road will have been completed and new housing and employment developed on the proposed strategic locations south of the Link Road.

The remainder of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths will be quiet, peaceful but thriving rural communities, enjoying a close relationship with the open countryside, agriculture and wildlife. The parishes will have evolved in a sustainable way, with high quality, small scale development meeting local needs whilst maintaining the charm and character of the area. There will be improved services, and residents and visitors will continue to enjoy easy and open access to the surrounding countryside.

Objectives:

1. *To protect and enhance the open countryside and valued wildlife habitats.*
2. *To protect valued hedgerows, trees and woodlands.*
3. *To protect, enhance and develop footpaths and bridleways.*

4. *To encourage small development on brownfield land, infill sites and through conversions.*
5. *To ensure that new development is in keeping with local character.*
6. *To protect and enhance heritage assets.*
7. *To improve access to broadband and similar services.*
8. *To encourage and support a thriving local rural community.*

Next Steps:

Once we have established that we have a vision and objectives that reflect the residents views we will start developing detailed policies, along with the supporting evidence and justifications that are required within a neighbourhood plan.

The policies are important as they should describe how we might be able to achieve our objectives and will be used by planning officers at the Cheshire East Council when considering applications in our parishes.

We've attached a very short questionnaire to which we'd welcome your responses (by post or email).

QUESTIONNAIRE

It's important the Neighbourhood plan reflects the views held by residents within the parishes. To that end please could you let us know what you think about the draft vision and objectives by answering the following questions:

1) Does the **vision** reflect your vision for the parishes?

Completely / Mainly / Partially / Not at all (please provide details in comments box)

2) Are the **objectives** relevant and do they accurately reflect your views?

	Objective	Relevant
1)	To protect and enhance the open countryside and valued wildlife habitats.	Y/N
2)	To protect valued hedgerows, trees and woodlands.	Y/N
3)	To protect and enhance footpaths and bridleways.	Y/N
4)	To encourage small development on brownfield land, infill sites and through conversions.	Y/N
5)	To ensure that new development is in keeping with local character.	Y/N
6)	To protect and enhance heritage assets.	Y/N
7)	To improve access to broadband and similar services.	Y/N
8)	To encourage and support a thriving local rural community.	Y/N

Comments:

Please return completed questionnaires by July 15th to;

Mrs Karen Ogden, The Old Vicarage, Giantswood Lane, Hulme Walfield, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 2JQ.

Email: karenogden306@hotmail.co.uk

Finally, it would be very helpful (if you have not already provided it) to have your email address and postcode to help us communicate with you more effectively;

Name: _____

Email: _____

Postcode: _____

If you would like to help us to create the Neighbourhood plan please tick this box and confirm your contact details

Proposed Neighbourhood Plan for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths

VISION AND OBJECTIVES QUESTIONNAIRE RESIDENTS RESPONSE

In total 42 responses to the questionnaire have been received. This is the best response gained from the parishes since the PC was reformed which indicates significant support for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Vision:

In 2030, the Congleton Link Road will have been completed and new housing and employment developed on the proposed strategic locations south of the Link Road.

The remainder of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths will be quiet, peaceful but thriving rural communities, enjoying a close relationship with the open countryside, agriculture and wildlife. The parishes will have evolved in a sustainable way, with high quality, small scale development meeting local needs whilst maintaining the charm and character of the area. There will be improved services, and residents and visitors will continue to enjoy easy and open access to the surrounding countryside.

Residents were asked if the above Vision reflected their vision for the parishes, they responded as follows:

Response	No. of responses
Completely	11
Mainly	14
Partially	4
Not at all	1
No response	12

83% of those that responded completely/mainly agreed with the proposed vision

Objectives:

1. To protect and enhance the open countryside and valued wildlife habitats.
2. To protect valued hedgerows, trees and woodlands.
3. To protect, enhance and develop footpaths and bridleways.
4. To encourage small development on brownfield land, infill sites and through conversions.
5. To ensure that new development is in keeping with local character.
6. To protect and enhance heritage assets.
7. To improve access to broadband and similar services.
8. To encourage and support a thriving local rural community.

Rdrhcdmsr vdqd 'rjdc he sgdx sgntfgs sg's sgd 'anud Paidbshudr vdqd qdkdu'ms 'mc 'bbtq'sdkx qdekdbb
sgdhq uhdvr. sgdx qdronmcdc 'r enknvr?

34 respondents agreed that all the 8 proposed objectives were relevant.

The 8 other respondents replied as follows:

- *2 did not answer Objective no. 3 but agreed with all others*
- *1 did not answer Objective no. 8 but agreed with all others*
- *2 did not answer any of the objectives questions*
- *1 respondent did not agree with no. 3 but agreed with all others*
- *1 respondent did not agree with no. 4&8 and did not answer 5 but agreed with all others*
- *1 respondent did not agree with no. 4 but agreed with all others*

81 % of those that responded completely agreed with the all the proposed objectives

93% of those that responded completely agreed with 7 or more of the proposed objectives

Next Steps:

The Neighbourhood Planning Committee will now review all the comments received and consider what relative adjustments can be made. There will be the opportunity to include policies within the neighbourhood plan to address specific concerns raised.

Some comments received cannot be addressed through the plan. This is due to the nature of neighbourhood plans and the constraints imposed to them so that they can serve their purpose of being a local planning policy.

12 of the responding residents have expressed a desire to assist in the further development of the neighbourhood plan which is greatly appreciated. The Neighbourhood Planning committee will get in touch with these people soon!

APPENDIX 2

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Proposed Neighbourhood Plan for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths

BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Business Owner/Manager

The Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity for local businesses to influence what happens in our Parishes over the next fifteen years.

Businesses are key to the vitality and viability of our community; therefore, we want to understand the businesses in our Parishes, the reasons you are located here, what would make you stay in the area and what your future needs are so that we can try to help meet those needs.

Neighbourhood Plans will form part of the planning process and must reflect the views of the community but also be in general conformity with the policies within Cheshire East and National Planning guidelines. Before the Plan can be adopted by the Council, it will go before an independent examiner, and be subject to a referendum where more than 50% of those voting must be in favour of the Plan for it to be implemented. You can see from this just how important it is you make your views known so that they can be reflected in the final document.

The Plan will set out a vision as to what the community will be like to live and work in over the next fifteen years and, hopefully, how that vision can be achieved. The Plan will set out “sustainable” policies for the use of land in the Parishes both with regard to conservation and future needs of the community. This work should result in a robust Neighbourhood Plan that will become part of the statutory development plan and be used by Cheshire East planning officers to help determine planning applications.

When considering your responses for the future of your business, please bear in mind that Cheshire East draft local plan includes the Link Road that runs through Hulme Walfield and that most of the land south of the proposed link road has been assigned as Strategic Development areas within that plan.

Your input into the Plan really is essential in providing evidence of the views of the businesses in our Parishes. The results of the survey will be reported in a confidential manner but please feel free to remain anonymous if you prefer.

If you need any help completing the questionnaire or would like to request a further copy, email **Shona Amies at shonaamies@gmail.co.uk**. If you need more space for your comments, please feel free to attach sheet/s of paper to this questionnaire.

Business Questionnaire 2016

Please return in the envelope provided before August 19th 2016.

1.	What is the name of your business? <i>(please leave blank if you wish your return to remain anonymous)</i>
-----------	--

2.	What is your business principally concerned with? <i>(Tick one).</i>			
	Agriculture, horticulture & landscaping		Catering (café, pub, food sales etc.)	
	Building and construction		Sales to other businesses	
	Computing		Storage	
	Healthcare or social work		Transport	
	Manufacturing and engineering		Personal services (hairdressing, chiropody etc.)	
	Motor trade			
	Professional services		Other	
	Retail sales to the public		Say what.....	

3.	Is your business carried out from... <i>(Please tick).</i>	
	Office	
	Land / Agriculture	
	Business park	
	Work from home	
	Other	
	Please specify.....	

4.		No	Yes
	Does your business also operate from other premises outside the parish?		

5.	For how long has your business operated in the Parish?
	Is your business located in Somerford Booths or Hulme Walfield <i>(Please circle as appropriate).</i>

6.	Why are you located in the Parishes? For example, might it be location, availability of workforce, access, cost? Please give as much detail as possible.
-----------	--

7.	What are the obstacles to growing or retaining your business in the parish (<i>Tick all that apply</i>)		
	Recruitment of staff		Planning constraints
	Suitability of premises		Road links
	Cost of premises		Car parking
	Security of site or premises		Public transport links (road, rail, air)
	Finance		Availability of services (gas. Electricity etc.)
	Internet access		Local or National government policy
	Broadband speed		Other <i>Say what</i>
	Location of customers		
	Uncertainty about the future of your premises		None

8.	Please enter the number of people in your workforce	Number of people
	Full time (i.e. 35 hours or more a week)	
	Part time (i.e. 34 hours or less a week)	
	Variable hours	

9.	In the next 5 years is it most likely your business will.....	
	Expand	
	Stay the same	
	Shrink	
	Close	

10.	Are you likely to have a need to move your business into new premises in the parish , if available, in the next 5 years?	
	Yes	
	No	
	Don't know	
	If yes, why?.....	

11.	Are you likely to move your business out of the parish in the next 5 years?	
	Yes	
	No	
	Don't know	
	If yes, why?.....	

APPENDIX 3

HOUSING ADVICE NOTE

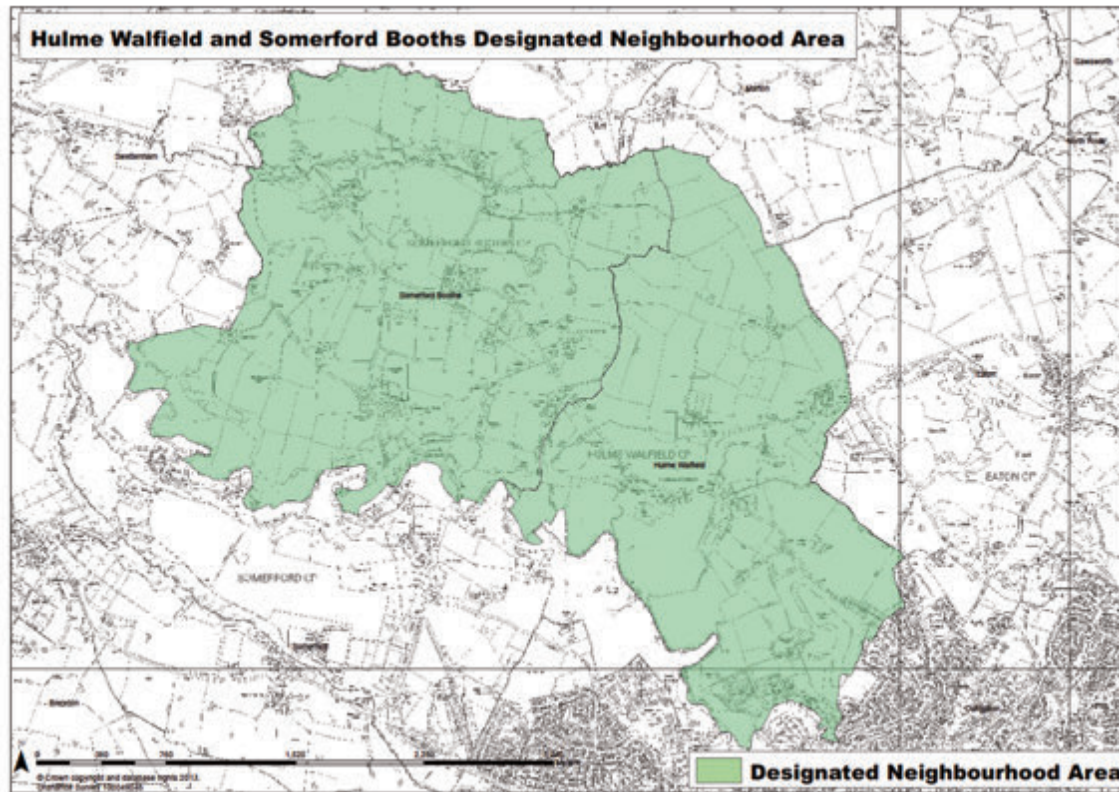
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). The Neighbourhood Area, as designated, covers the administrative area of the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Parishes.
- 1.2. The study area is defined on the below map.

Figure 1: Map of Neighbourhood Area



2. Methodology

- 2.1. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) outlines that “establishing future need for housing is not an exact science. No single approach will provide a definitive answer.” Whilst you cannot establish Objectively Assessed Need at such a small local level, this Housing Advice Note will be underpinned by a methodology endorsed by PPG and best practice.
- 2.2. A robust assessment will need to assess a range of evidence sources including local data and be capable of being considered in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan in order to satisfy Basic Condition E. Basic Condition E requires the Neighbourhood Plan to be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that) The emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) is currently under examination and when adopted will form the Development Plan for the area. Therefore it is important that to ‘future-proof’ the NDP, as it considers the emerging Strategic Policies.
- 2.3. A balance needs to be struck within the evidence base when assessing housing need at the neighbourhood level, between the requirement to be in general conformity with the strategic policies and the demographic and other evidence which may give a different view at the very local level. Therefore the relevant policies relating to housing supply will need to be conformed with.
- 2.4. The following evidence sources have been relied upon to prepare this assessment:
 - **Emerging Local Plan**

- **DCLG Household Projections**
- **Dwelling completion rate 2001-2011**
- **Local housing waiting list**
- **LEP Strategic Economic Plan**
- **Local Authority Employment Land Review**
- **Census Data (demographic and housing data)**
- **Local house and rental prices**

2.5. The methodology for determining the quantity of housing need is to assess the range or the average of the household projections and formation for the Plan period and then adjust this upwards or downwards dependent on market signals. As this is subjective, any judgements should be reasonable and the process to come to them, clear and transparent.

2.6. The approach endorsed in this report is to assess the level of housing required based on need rather than any assessment of the supply of housing/housing land. This is in line with PPG. No supply or policy constraints have been applied to the figure. It is advised that further stages are undertaken to assess the conclusions in the report against available capacity such as policy constraints, landscape constraints, local factors, availability of land etc.

2.7. A range of local demographic factors and market signals have been assessed and applied to the recommended figure to balance any housing need requirements.

2.8. The report will focus on analysis of trend data and comparisons with Cheshire East averages to ascertain how market indicators and characteristics of housing need in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths may need to be addressed in the Plan. The report will seek to establish an appropriate housing figure for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths based on evidence available, including DCLG household projections and the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy evidence base.

2.9. The HNA has interrogated a range of evidence sources and has calculated four possible figures for an appropriate quantum of housing for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, these include;

- *The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) housing allocation base on a proportionate and even split approach.*
- *DCLG 2012 household projections.*
- *The dwelling completion rates 2001-2011.*

3. Characteristics of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Population

3.1. The following section will characterise the population of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths and analyse trend data and assess how the town may differ from the wider Borough. This will help ascertain the features of housing need that may need to be addressed in the Plan.

3.2. The data is presented at Parish level; however some data is only available at other statistical geographies such as Lower or Middle Super Output Area level.

3.3. Table 1 shows the population and household size of the town compared with Cheshire East and England.

3.4. Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths has seen considerably lower levels of population growth than Cheshire East and around half the growth in the number households as Cheshire East. The average household size in the Parish has decreased, however this is still higher than the Cheshire East average household size. The increase in dwellings between Census periods is not as high as Cheshire East dwelling growth.

Table 1: Population and Household Size

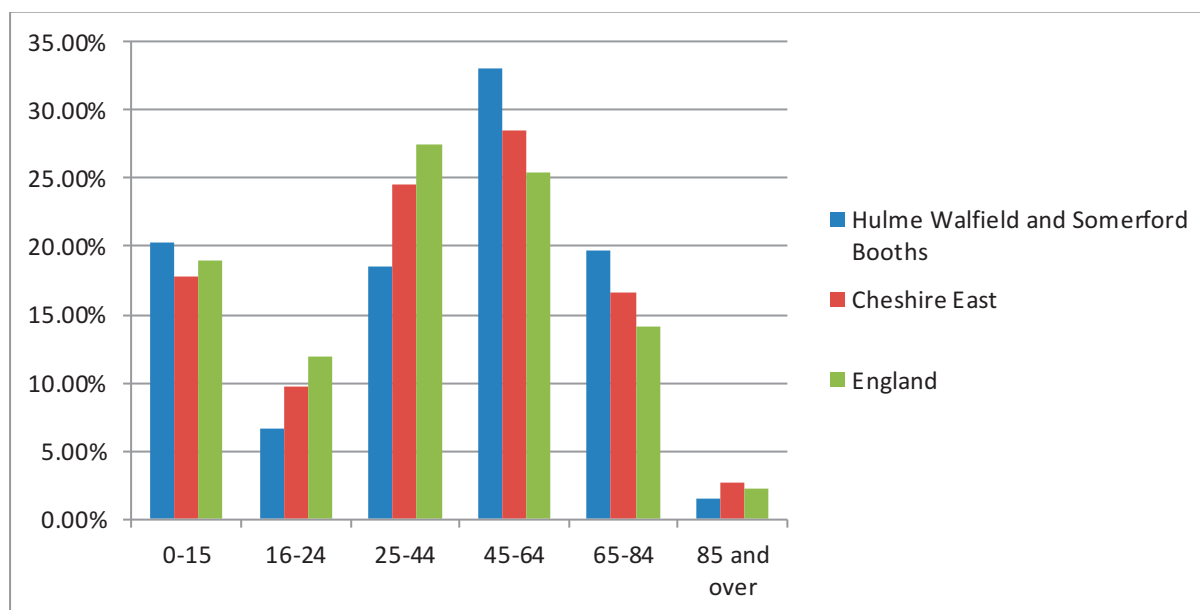
	Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths 2011	Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Change 2001-2011	Cheshire East 2011	Cheshire East Change 2001-2011
Population	329	0.92%	370,127	5.3%
Households	141	4.44%	159,441	8.4%
Average household size	2.32	-0.01	2.29	0.07
Dwellings	147	8.09%	166,236	8.6%

Source: ONS, Census, 2001 and 2011

3.5. Figure 2 illustrates that Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths has a significantly higher proportion of older age groups, most notably in the 65 – 84 ages, accounting for almost 10% of the population, compared with around 2% for both Cheshire East and National proportions. The Parish has a slighter lower proportion of very elderly, however the greater proportion of the ages 45-64 and 65-84, who will become elderly and very elderly over the Plan period.

3.6. The proportion of younger adults (16-24) and ages 25-44 are notable; these are considerably lower than the Cheshire East and national averages.

Figure 2: Age Structure



Source: ONS, Census, 2011

3.7. Table 2 considers how the proportion of ages has changed between Census periods.

3.8. When considering Table 2 with the current age structure of the Parish, it illustrates that the greatest rate of growth has been in the 65 and over ages and children. This is not surprising and is comparable with both local and national trends in terms of an ageing population. However the rate of this growth compared with Cheshire East is notable. The Parish has seen decline in young adults and middle aged groups.

Table 2: Age group rate of change 2001-2011

	Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Rate of Change 2001-2011	Cheshire East Rate of Change 2001-2011
0-15	36.73%	-4.1%
16-24	-15.38%	14.9%
25-44	-17.57%	-7.6%
45-64	-13.49%	12.9%
65-84	27.45%	17.8%
85 and over	100.00%	34.7%

Source: ONS, Census, 2001 and 2011

3.9. Table 3 shows the proportion of the Parish born outside the UK and their place of birth and length of residence. There are significantly less migrants than the average for England and less than the Cheshire East average. The majority of those resident in the Parish were born in the UK and of those born outside the UK, the majority have resided in the UK for 10 years or more, this is comparable to Cheshire East. This suggests that recent higher rates of international migration will have had very little impact on the Parish, however it is noted that often many people who locate to the UK do so initially in areas with higher concentrations of migrants, but may move to other parts of the UK over time.

Table 3: Length of residence and place of birth 2011

		Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths 2011	Cheshire East 2011	England 2011	
Born in the UK		97.26%	94.52%	86.16%	
Born outside UK	Total	2.74%	5.48%	13.84%	
	EU	0.61%	2.26%	3.74%	
	Other	2.13%	3.22%	10.10%	
	Length of residence	Resident in UK; Less than 2 Years	0.00%	0.65%	1.75%
		Resident in UK; 2 Years or More but Less Than 5 Years	0.00%	1.00%	2.21%
		Resident in UK; 5 Years or More but Less Than 10 Years	0.00%	1.09%	2.87%
		Resident in UK; 10 Years or More	2.74%	2.74%	7.01%

Source: ONS, Census, 2011

3.10. Table 4 below illustrates that Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths has considerably greater proportion of detached properties than both the Cheshire East and England averages. Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths has considerably fewer terraced properties. In terms of flat/apartments accommodation, Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths has much fewer purpose built flats, broadly similar level of flats as part of a converted or shared house and a notably greater proportion of flats in a commercial building.

3.11. The higher proportions of detached properties accords with the rural and dispersed nature of the Parish.

Table 4: Accommodation Type 2011

		Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths 2011	Cheshire East 2011	England 2011
Whole House or Bungalow	Detached	49.65%	35.55%	22.43%
	Semi Detached	34.75%	32.56%	31.23%
	Terraced	8.51%	21.25%	24.46%
Flat, Maisonette or Apartment	Purpose-Built Block of Flats or Tenement	1.42%	8.42%	16.43%
	Part of a Converted or Shared House	4.96%	1.07%	3.78%
	In Commercial Building	0.00%	0.68%	0.95%
Caravan or Other Mobile or Temporary Structure		0.71%	0.42%	0.37%
Shared Dwelling		0.00%	0.06%	0.35%

Source: ONS, Census, 2011.

- 3.12. Overcrowding, concealed and shared households can demonstrate an un-met need for housing and longer term increase in the number of these households may be a signal to consider increasing planned housing numbers.
- 3.13. A concealed family is a group which wishes to form their own household but is unable to do so. This can be for a number of reasons, but typically due to high house prices or unavailability of suitable properties. The presence of a high proportion of concealed families can be a market indicator to increase the number of dwellings in an area.
- 3.14. Table 5 shows that the proportion of concealed families in the Parish is almost double the Cheshire East average. Whilst this is still only a small number, it is notable.
- 3.15. Furthermore Table 6 shows the occupancy rating compared with Cheshire East. Occupancy rating is a useful indicator of the level of overcrowding or under occupancy in an area and the rating provides a measure of whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded or under-occupied. Occupancy rating is calculated on the number of rooms required (based on a standard formula) subtracted from the number of rooms present.
- 3.16. An occupancy rating of -1 implies that a household has one less room than required, whereas +1 implies that they have one more room than the standard requirement.
- 3.17. Whilst the majority of households in the Parish have a greater number of rooms than required, therefore under-occupying a property, the proportion with 1 rooms or less than their requirement is 4.26% in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, compared with 2.89% for Cheshire East. The figure underlying this percentage is 6 households.
- 3.18. Due to the very small numbers of households in the Parish, small changes in household numbers can have significant effects on the rate of change, therefore caution is required.

Table 5: Concealed families 2011

		Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths 2011	Cheshire East 2011
All families total		98	110,567
Concealed families total:		2 (2.04%)	1,176 (1.1%)
Concealed lone parent families	Total	0	433
	Dependent children	0	352
	All children non-dependent	0	81
Concealed couple family	Total	2	743
	No children	0	580
	Dependent children	1	118
	All children non-dependent	1	45

Source: ONS, Census, 2011.

Table 6: Occupancy Rating 2011

	Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths 2011	Cheshire East 2011
Occupancy Rating (Rooms) of +2 or More	81.56%	62.81%
Occupancy Rating (Rooms) of +1	9.93%	20.72%
Occupancy Rating (Rooms) of 0	4.26%	12.91%
Occupancy Rating (Rooms) of -1	4.26%	2.89%
Occupancy Rating (Rooms) of -2 or Less	0.00%	0.67%

Source: ONS, Census, 2011.

3.19. Table 7 illustrates the predominant household type in the Parish is couple households with no children and pensioner households followed by couple households with children. This largely accords with the age structure of the Parish which high proportions of children, middle ages and elderly populations and significantly lower proportions of younger ages. This may also be largely due to the limited local jobs available, with many younger adults locating closer to larger urban areas for jobs and accessibility.

3.20. The growth in pensioners has been significantly faster than the Cheshire East change, suggesting the ageing population is more acute locally.

Table 7: Household Type 2001 and 2011

	Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths 2011	Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths rate of change 2001-2011	Cheshire East 2011	Cheshire East rate of change 2001-2011
One Person household - Pensioner	12.77%	28.57%	13.43%	1.38%
One Person household - Other	17.73%	66.67%	16.26%	30.90%
One Family and no others - All pensioner households	12.06%	41.67%	10.16%	6.68%
One family and no others - Couple households with no children	22.70%	10.34%	19.67%	5.14%
One family and no others - Couple households with dependent children	20.57%	-12.12%	20.49%	-3.09%
One family and no others - Lone parent households with dependent children	2.84%	100.00%	5.87%	31.54%
One family and no others - All children non-dependent	6.38%	-57.14%	9.68%	8.16%
Other households	4.96%	-36.36%	4.44%	15.96%

3.21. Table 8 shows that more people own their own home than the Cheshire East and National averages. There are also no shared ownership properties in the Parish, which may largely be due to its very rural nature with very limited social housing stock in this locality. The proportion of private rented is notable.

Table 8: Tenure 2011

	Hulme Walfield and Somersford Booths 2011	Cheshire East 2011	England 2011
Owned; Total	73.8%	74.49%	63.34%
Owned; Owned Outright	45.4%	37.53%	30.57%
Owned; Owned with a Mortgage or Loan	28.4%	36.95%	32.77%
Shared Ownership (Part Owned and Part Rented)	0.0%	0.49%	0.79%
Social Rented; Total	9.9%	11.38%	17.69%
Social Rented; Rented from Council (Local Authority)	0.0%	2.69%	9.43%
Social Rented; Other Social Rented	9.9%	8.69%	8.27%
Private Rented; Total	14.9%	12.50%	16.84%
Private Rented; Private Landlord or Letting Agency	14.2%	11.44%	15.42%
Private Rented; Employer of a Household Member	0.7%	0.14%	0.25%
Private Rented; Relative or Friend of Household Member	0.0%	0.75%	0.90%
Private Rented; Other	0.0%	0.17%	0.27%
Living rent free	1.4%	1.14%	1.34%

Table 9 illustrates the Parish has slightly lower levels of economically active than wider Cheshire East, and significantly fewer full time employees than the Borough. The proportion of self-employed is notable, accounting for nearly a quarter of economic activity more than double the Borough.

Similarly Table 10 shows nearly a quarter of those in work, work mainly at or from home, suggesting there are a significant proportion of the population who work from home in self employment. This could be in farm/agriculture employment. There is a greater proportion of retired residents than the Borough as a whole.

Table 9: Economic Activity 2011

		Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths 2011	Cheshire East 2011
Economically Active	Total	69.92%	70.59%
	Employee: Full time	29.66%	39.44%
	Employee: Part time	13.56%	14.37%
	Self-Employed	23.31%	10.72%
	Unemployed	0.42%	3.23%
	Full-time Student	2.97%	2.82%
Economically Inactive	Total	30.08%	29.41%
	Retired	21.19%	17.14%
	Student	1.27%	4.19%
	Looking after home or family	4.66%	3.54%
	Long-term sick or disabled	1.69%	3.07%
	Other	1.27%	1.47%

Source: ONS, Census, 2011. This table provides information that classifies usual residents aged 16 to 74 by economic activity.

Table 10: Distance travelled to work 2011

	Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths 2011	Cheshire East 2011
Distance travelled to work: Less than 2km;	7.93%	17.80%
Distance travelled to work: 2km to less than 5km	14.63%	14.49%
Distance travelled to work: 5km to less than 10km;	3.66%	14.10%
Distance travelled to work: 10km to less than 20km;	25.61%	17.77%
Distance travelled to work: 20km to less than 30km;	3.66%	6.88%
Distance travelled to work: 30km to less than 40km;	5.49%	3.61%
Distance travelled to work: 40km to less than 60km;	1.22%	2.50%
Distance travelled to work: 60km and over;	1.83%	3.05%
Distance travelled to work: Work mainly at or from home	23.17%	12.88%
Distance travelled to work: Other	12.80%	6.91%

Source: ONS, Census, 2011.

3.22. The majority of those in work commute 10-20km to work or mainly at or from home.

4. Local Housing Register Data and Affordable Housing Need

4.1. Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths falls within the Congleton Rural sub-area for the purposes of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment update 2013. This identified a requirement for affordable housing, predominantly 3 bed general needs housing and a need for 2 bed older persons accommodation and a lesser need for 1 and 2 bed general needs units.

4.2. Information from Cheshire Homechoice, the Councils' choice based lettings system, illustrates there are 3 applicants who have selected Hulme Walfield as their first

choice, these applicants require 1no. 2 bed and 2no. 3 bed properties. There are no applicants who have selected Somerford Booths.

5. Cheshire and Warrington Matters: A Strategic Economic Plan for Cheshire and Warrington

- 5.1. Cheshire East forms part of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The LEP has prepared a Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which details the areas of growth and development for the Cheshire and Warrington area.
- 5.2. The vision from the SEP for Cheshire and Warrington is to, by 2030, grow population by 100,000, create 75,000 new jobs and 70,000 new homes.
- 5.3. Integral to this growth and a key intervention priority in the plan is the Crewe High Growth City accelerated by HS2 hub as key driver.
- 5.4. The enhanced connectivity through the delivery of HS2 hub will impact on the sub-region. However that impact on plan making cannot yet be fully understood.

6. Employment Land

- 6.1. The Alignment of Economic, Employment & Housing Strategy report (AEEHSR) , which Ekosgen undertook for the Cheshire East Local Plan, suggests there is a requirement for around 380ha of additional employment land over the Local Plan period (2010-30). This estimate - which the Council accepted for its resumed (2015) Local Plan examination hearings - provides for:
 - net jobs growth, which is estimated to require a net increase of 195ha of employment land; and
 - a potential annual loss of employment land to non-employment uses of 6ha per annum on average, or 120ha over the Plan period (the 6ha average is taken from the 2012 Cheshire East Employment Land Review's analysis of 1997-2011 employment land losses); and
 - a 20% flexibility factor, to ensure that future land supply is flexible enough to provide a range and choice of land to meet demand, and to act as a buffer in the event of sites no longer being delivered, land losses or the need to reallocate employment uses.

7. Housing Development Study 2015

- 7.1. It is useful to consider the growth expected across Cheshire East as part of the CELPS.
- 7.2. As part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, a Housing Development Study was prepared to establish the Full Objectively Assessed Need for the Borough. This predicts that a dwellings provision of 1,800 per annum in the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy will result in:
 - The population growing by 15.7% (58,100) over the Plan period, from 369,100 (2010) to 427,100 (2030).
 - The number of households growing by 20.4% (32,400) over the Plan period, from 158,600 (2010) to 190,900 (2030).
 - Increases, over the Plan period, of 64.9% in the population aged over 65 and above, 133.8% in the population ages 85 and above. This highlights that older people are expected to make up an increasing proportion of the Borough's population.

8. Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Submission Version

- 8.1. The 36,000 dwelling requirement identified within the Cheshire East Council Proposed Changes to the LPS (Consultation Draft) February 2016 is the minimum requirement for housing development within Cheshire East across the Plan period.
- 8.2. The Spatial Distribution work undertaken by AECOM on behalf of the Council outlines that the 'Rural and Other' areas should take 2950 homes over the Plan

period. The geographical distribution and the proportion of the 2950 homes that each area will take are not decided.

8.3. An approach which distributes development on a proportional basis may reasonably act as a suitable methodology. This approach means establishing the percentage share of households that each settlement currently holds and distributing development on a percentage basis for each settlement.

8.4. There are 20,656¹ households within the Rural and Other Settlements area. There are 141 households in the Parishes of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, accounting for 0.68% of total households in the Rural and Other areas. On a proportional basis if Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths were to take a 'proportion' of the 2950 dwellings to be distributed, this would equate to a requirement for **20 dwellings**.

9. DCLG Household Projections

9.1. Guidance dictates that DCLG household projections are a robust evidence base and that the most recent projections available should be used as a starting point for any assessment of need.

9.2. The most recent household projections are the 2012 based household projections that were released in February 2015. These project that by 2030 Cheshire East households will increase to 180,000 from 159,000 in 2010. This equates to an average increase of 1,050 households per annum.

9.3. It would be presumable to calculate that as at the 2011 census the number of households was 141 in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, a 0.088% share of all households in Cheshire East, as a proportion Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths would notionally have had 140 households in 2010.

9.4. On a theoretical assumption that Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths will continue to comprise a 0.088% share of Cheshire East population, it would be reasonable to project that it would have 158 households by 2030, an increase of 18 households over the Plan period.

9.5. In the 2011 census Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths had a ratio of 0.959 households per dwelling, which when applied to the 18 household increases, equates to **19 dwellings** over the Plan period.

9.6. This can be taken to represent the level of need arising from household increases, the 'unconstrained need' of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths.

10. Dwelling completion rate 2001-2011

10.1. Between 2001 and 2011 there was increase of 11 dwellings in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, or 1.1 dwellings per annum. Projecting the level of dwelling increase forward to 2030, a figure of **21 dwellings** could be arrived at if the rate of increase continued over the Plan period.

11. Quantity of housing

11.1. The range of potential housing targets for Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths could be 19-21 dwellings or around 1 dwelling per annum. This would largely be in line with the rate of development seen across the Parish in previous years.

11.2. This is comprised of the following:

- Local Plan proportionate figure: 20
- DCLG Household Projections: 19
- Dwelling completion rate: 21

¹ Source: 2011, ONS, Census.

12. Completions and Commitments

12.1. The position regarding completions in the Parish is detailed below.




	Completions
2010/11	0
2011/12	0
2012/13	0
2013/14	0
2014/15	0
up to 30 th September	0
Total	0


12.2. Housing monitoring information for the period April 2010 to September 2015 illustrates there have been no completions. There are a further 15 dwellings committed, taking the completions and commitments, to 15. These commitments can be deducted from the target range of housing, making the requirement for between 4-6 dwellings for the remainder of the Plan period.

13. Market signals and impact on housing figure

13.1. Table 11 shows how factors specific to Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths may have an impact on the housing range derived from the quantitative data. The Neighbourhood Plan group may wish to consider the below factors to form a judgement and consideration for their housing policies rather than give definitive answers.

Table 11: Market Signals and impact on quantity of housing

Factor/Evidence	Possible impact on figure	Rationale
Migration/Net commuting		There are very limited jobs locally in the parishes, however there are many who work in local industries and agricultural workers.
Overcrowding/ Concealed households		The proportion of concealment is notable when compared with the borough average, 2.04% compared with 1.1% for Cheshire East as a whole. The proportion of households who are overcrowded is low, with over 80% of households having 2 or more rooms than their requirement. However the number with 1 less room than their requirement is around 4% compared with 2% for Cheshire East.
Rental/ House prices to surrounding area		Need more information. To be completed
Age structure of Parishes and ageing population		The age structure of the Parish is predominantly elderly, with a high proportion of 45-64 year olds who will become elderly over the Plan period. The rate of growth in elderly population is more acute than at borough and national averages. There is also a lower proportion of 16-44 year olds and decline in these age groups between Census periods. The Parish had very limited

		population growth between Census periods with only 0.92% compared with 5% across the borough. Therefore there is a risk that the continuing ageing population and decline in younger age groups could lead to very limited population growth or population decline in the future.
Housing demand		Need more information. To be completed
Affordability		There are affordability issues in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, with rural areas in general experiencing acute affordability concerns. Affordable housing is addressed through policies in higher tier plans, however the scale of development that an area such as Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths would expect to provide would not necessarily deliver affordable housing through developer contributions. However a significant increase in housing numbers to deliver affordable housing would not be a sustainable policy given the rural location. Larger developments within the Parish that adjoin Congleton and deliver strategic needs as part of the Local Plan will contribute to meeting some affordable housing need. Addressing local affordable housing need from the Parishes are discussed below.

14. Characteristics of Housing Need

14.1. Table 12 takes into account census data on demographics and population change, conclusions can be drawn to show the possible impacts on housing need in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths. Table 12 summarises these characteristics.

Table 12: Characteristics of Housing Need and potential impact on housing type

Factor/Evidence	Possible impact on type of housing need	Possible policy response
Ageing population/Older persons housing	Local trends are more acute than Cheshire East and national position. The proportion of very elderly population is significantly greater than Cheshire East average and the rate of growth in this age group over the previous 10 years is greater than Cheshire East. There are also a large proportion of households who will become very elderly over the Plan period.	Consider policies to address the housing and other service needs of this population group, which will account for a considerable proportion of the population of the Plan period. Need to consider carefully provision of specialist housing for the elderly and the viability of providing

		this in this location, including ensuring any sheltered/ retirement housing is close to services and facilities. Such accommodation may be better provided in larger nearby settlements.
Economic Activity	A high proportion of the economically active work from home or are self employed.	Consider policies which support local employment and industry.
Affordable housing	High local house prices and lack of affordable housing in the Parish, in terms of smaller affordable market housing and social housing, means that young adults and families may be priced out of the Parish or unable to return. Affordable housing policies in higher tier plans will deliver limited affordable housing in this location through developer contributions, however rural exceptions policy does allow for small scale all affordable schemes to meet local needs.	Consider allocating a site for local affordable housing if evidenced by a survey of parishioners.

15. Recommendations

- 15.1. This report has been prepared to present demographic and trend data to inform the drafting of housing policies by Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Parish Council.
- 15.2. Next steps include considering the conclusions in this report and formulating draft housing policies for further thought and comment.
- 15.3. It is recommended the groups consider policies on;
- Provision of older persons accommodation – how will older persons accommodation be delivered and services provided in this location. Whether they want to retain independence through smaller downsizing properties or specific care provision.
 - Housing offer to meet the vision and aspiration of the Plan – the group should consider how they wish to see change over the Plan period and whether this is to continue with trends of limited growth and whether this will sustain the community.
 - Affordable housing – Consider whether there is local need for affordable housing and commitment to allocate a suitable site for affordable housing.

APPENDIX 4

LOCAL CHARACTER ASSESSMENT



**Hulme Walfield
and Somerford Booths**
Parish Council

**Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths
Neighbourhood Plan**

Local Character Assessment

APRIL 2017



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INTRODUCTION

The information in this summary was prepared in March 2017. Many of the photographs were taken in March 2017 with additional photographs provided copyright free by David Thompson, a resident and keen amateur photographer, from his collection.

Hulme Walfield & Somerford Booths Parish Council is preparing a neighbourhood plan and has an opportunity to establish a local policy framework to determine planning applications. Hulme Walfield & Somerford Booths are rural parishes located in close proximity to the north west of Congleton in Cheshire. The vision for Hulme Walfield & Somerford Booths neighbourhood plan is:

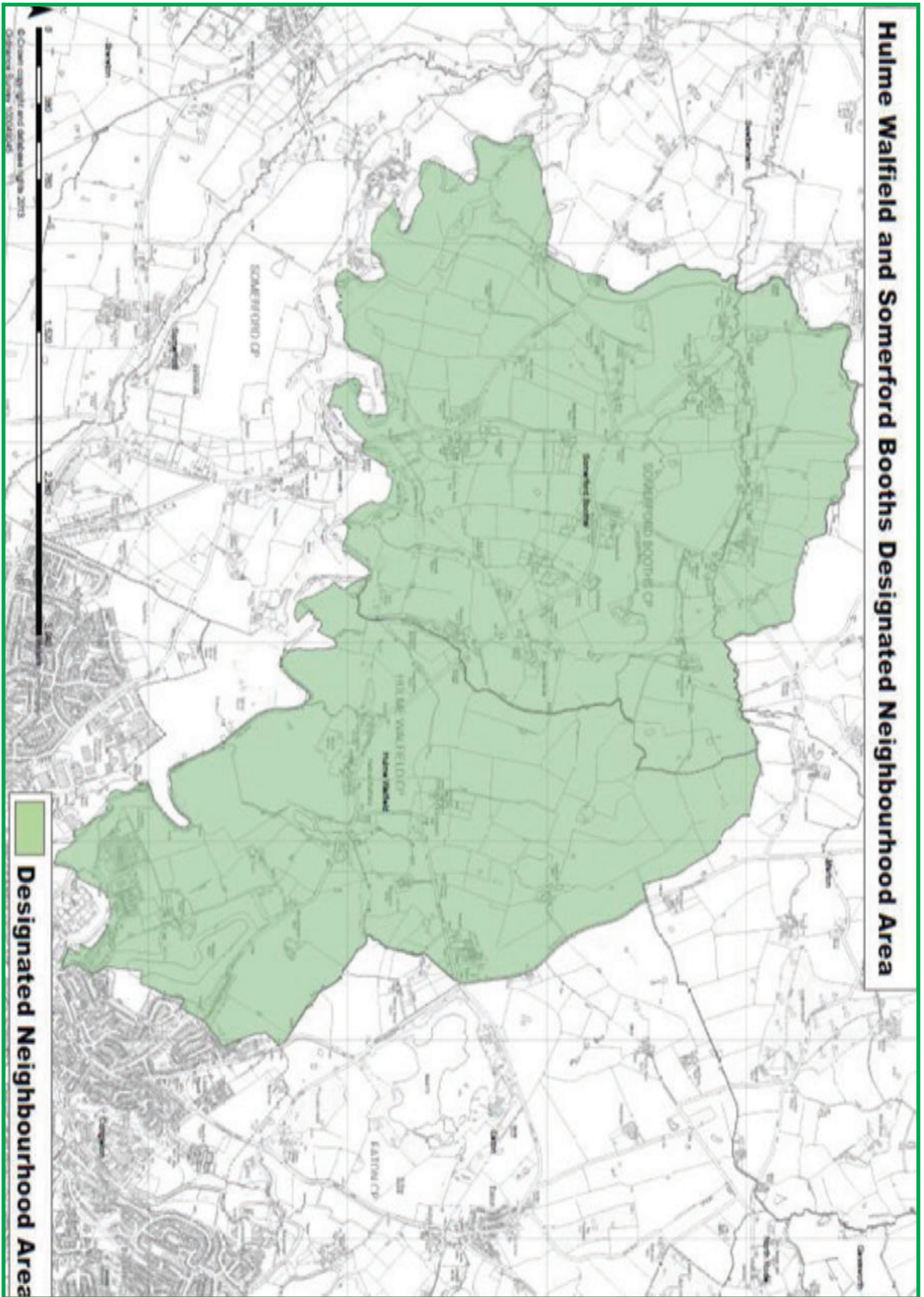
In 2030 the Congleton Link Road will have been completed and new housing and employment developed on the proposed strategic locations to the south of and bounded by the Link Road.

The remainder of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths will be quiet, peaceful but thriving rural communities, enjoying a close relationship with the open countryside, agriculture and wildlife. The parishes will have evolved in a sustainable way, with high quality, small scale development meeting local needs whilst maintaining the charm and character of the area. There will be improved services, and residents and visitors will continue to enjoy easy and open access to the surrounding countryside.

The Vision is supported by a series of objectives, those relevant to landscape and character are:

- To protect and enhance the open countryside and valued wildlife habitats***
- To protect valued hedgerows, trees and woodlands***
- To protect, enhance and develop footpaths, cycleways and bridleways***
- To ensure that new development is in keeping with the local character***

7.22 Figure L - Open Space and Protected Trees



POLICY CONTEXT: NATIONAL POLICY

The core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework address the role of design and the relevance of character and landscape in the planning process. The Core Principles state that planning should:

‘always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings’

And:

‘take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it’

These principles are further detailed through a number of policies. Section 7 of the NPPF sets out at length what good design means and how it should be addressed in the planning system. Paragraph 58 sets out that:

Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- ***will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;***
- ***establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;***
- ***optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;***
- ***respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging;***
- ***appropriate innovation;***
- ***create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and***
- ***are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate***

Whilst planning policies should not seek to impose specific styles or features, local distinctiveness is to be recognised (paragraph 60) and great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative design (paragraph 63). The NPPF also sets out that planning policies and decisions should ‘identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason’ (para.121)

NPPF also sets out a series of policies related to the countryside and landscape. Planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (para.17) and local and neighbourhood plans should support sustainable rural enterprise which respects the character of the countryside (para.28).

The NPPF also sets out a series of policies specifically relating to landscape and environment:

- ***Paragraph 109: The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:***
‘protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;’
- ***Paragraph 113: Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks.***
- ***Paragraph 117: To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should: plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries;***
- ***Paragraph 125: By encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.***

The NPPF sets a framework within which there are opportunities for local and neighbourhood plans to plan positively for design, environment and landscape.

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths lie within National Character Area 61 – Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain, a pastoral area of rolling plain which is particularly important for dairy farming. The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008 classifies the parishes as lying within three recognisable landscape character types - the Lower Farms and Woods; Higher Farms and Woods; and River Valley. The key characteristics of the Lower Farms and Woods Character Type:

Low lying gentle rolling topography

- ***Low lying gentle rolling topography***
- ***Hedgerow boundaries and standard trees in a mix of medieval, reorganised fields***
- ***Horticulture***
- ***High density of woodland***
- ***Dispersed farms and nucleated hamlets/villages***
- ***Mosses and meres***
- ***Large number of water bodies***

The key characteristics of the Higher Farms and Woods Character Type:

- ***Gentle rolling and moderate undulating topography***
- ***A mix of medieval and post-medieval reorganised fields (irregular, semi-regular and regular up to 8ha)***
- ***Hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees***

- ***High density of woodland – blocks, coverts and riparian***
- ***Predominantly low density dispersed settlements***
- ***Ponds***
- ***Small moss land areas***

This undulating character type has a rural nature, which is defined by a higher than average density of woodland compared with much of Cheshire. Land use is a mix of arable and pasture, while settlement largely retains its dispersed low density pattern. Intensive reorganisation during the post-medieval period saw the breakup of medieval field patterns. Small surviving mosses are typical in most areas, as are ponds. Many areas have a very rural character with small, winding country lanes rising and falling over the undulating ground.

The very south of the parishes fall within the River Valleys landscape type – specifically the Upper River Dane character area. The key characteristics of the River Valleys Landscape type include:

- ***Steep sided river valleys***
- ***Meandering river courses***
- ***High levels of woodland along the river and tributary valleys, of which a significant proportion is ancient woodland***
- ***Tributaries in wooded cloughs***
- ***Grassy banks – including acid grassland***
- ***Bridges and viaducts***
- ***Isolated halls and farms***

In the Upper River Dane character area the river meanders within a steep-sided, wooded valley with a wide and generally flat floor. Much of the steeper ground is wooded, whilst the valley floor is devoted to pasture. Field boundaries are generally defined by post and wire fences and much of the valley floor appears as a wide, open expanse of grassland. The course of the river is marked by an intermittent line of vegetation, typified by willows leaning over the watercourse. The high, steep valley side slopes and the frequency of woodland ensure there is little inter-visibility between this area and adjoining character areas. Within the body of the character area there is a single crossing point in the form of a small road bridge. Consequently much of the river is inaccessible to all but the most determined walker.

A large proportion of the course of the River Dane is wooded of which a significant part is ancient woodland – principally on the steeper slopes and following the tributary valleys. There is scrub and mature woodland as well as some unimproved neutral pastures. From Holmes Chapel through Congleton to the Peak Park boundary the river valley is designated as a Site of Biological importance, by far the longest SBI in Cheshire. It has high ornithological interest with many varieties of birds present, some of which are in rapid national decline such as the lesser spotted woodpecker, and the spotted fly catcher, and is important for insects, and mammals.

Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths are gently undulating, with a sharp drop down to the river Dane. The area is predominantly agricultural, and has many trees and hedgerows, with narrow winding country lanes and large field systems.

LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

The Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (January 2005) contains policy GR5 which relates specifically to landscape character. GR5 states:

'Development will be permitted only where it respects or enhances the landscape character of the area. Development will not be permitted which, in the view of the borough council, would be likely to impact adversely on the landscape character of such areas, or would unacceptably obscure views or unacceptably lessen the visual impact of significant landmarks or landscape features when viewed from areas generally accessible to the public, as a result of the location, design or landscaping of the proposal. Particular attention will be paid towards the protection of features that contribute to the setting of urban areas.'

The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy sets out strategic policies which will form the local basis of future detailed policies in the borough. Policy SE4 sets out the approach that Cheshire east Council will take in regard to landscape issues which is to ensure that 'all development should conserve the landscape character and quality and should where possible, enhance and effectively manage the historic, natural and man-made landscape features that contribute to local distinctiveness of both rural and urban landscapes.' The policy is set out in full at Appendix 2.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The two parishes are fortunate to have a long and rich heritage. A bronze age palstave, with shield and mid rib decoration has been found in Hulme Walfield, and a bronze age socketed axe head was discovered in Somerford Booths. Additionally, a medieval deserted settlement has been identified at Somerford Booths.

According to the 2001 census, the population of the civil parish of Holmes Chapel was 140, increasing slightly to 148 at the 2011 Census. In the census of 2001 Somerford Booths was recorded as having a population of 175, increasing to 181 at the 2011 Census.

Little change has taken place in the built environment in the parishes for many years.

VERNACULAR DETAILING AND LOCAL CHARACTER

- *Most residences are of single and two storey height, and proportionate to their plots incorporating front and rear gardens.*
- *Layout is formed through the relation of individual dwellings at low density to their immediate surroundings. Chimneys are evident in many properties.*
- *A wide range of materials are employed throughout including timber cladding, rendering, and a variety of brick styles. Traditional materials including old Cheshire brick and slate or pan tiles are notable in the older properties.*
- *Boundary treatments range from completely open to soft, low level landscaping and hedgerows to timber board and low rise walls.*
- *Planting and landscaping is incorporated into the public realm throughout the parishes with hedgerows often establishing boundaries along lanes. Trees and shrubbery are prominent in frontage gardens with good examples of mature trees across the parishes.*

- *Many properties are detached and are relatively isolated and well dispersed.*
- *Properties are generally non uniform in design and distinct from other nearby dwellings.*
- *Properties tend to be set back some distance from the road.*
- *There are no street lights in Somerford Booths, and none in Hulme Walfield other than at the southern tip of its boundary.*
- *The roads are narrow, rural lanes, largely with no pavements or footpaths.*
- *Views to the surrounding countryside abound, with the large gaps between built development providing access and views to the countryside.*
- *Important views and vistas include views towards the Peak District National Park, the local landmark The Cloud, Shutingsloe Hill and Macclesfield Forest.*
- *There is no centre to the two parishes, with the only public building being the church of St Michael in Hulme Walfield.*
- *There are a number of watercourses and wetland features in the parishes, which offer lovely views and enhance local biodiversity.*

The local character can therefore be defined as gently undulating, agricultural, rural open countryside with limited built development largely consisting of low density, detached dwellings and individual large farmsteads dispersed along narrow, country lanes.

CHARACTER AREAS

The following photographs give a sense of the rural nature and open, countryside feel of the parishes, along with the rural countryside lanes, trees and hedgerows, extensive long and mid-range views across Cheshire, and the lack of built up development.

1. View from Giantswood Lane across to the Cloud



2. St Michaels Church, Giantswood Lane



3. View across open farmland on Smithy Lane towards the Peak District National Park



4. Westlow Mere



5. The Dane Valley



6. View over open fields from footpath between Wornish Nook and Newsbank



7. View over smallholding fields at Wornish Nook



8. Giantswood Lane, towards Hulme Walfield, by Wornish Nook



9. Access to Park Cottage and public footpath to woodlands along the River Dane



10. View from Giantswood Lane over farmers' fields towards the Cloud, a significant local landmark



11. Ponies in a paddock at Newsbank



12. Entrances to a residential property on Giantswood Lane



13. Open fields by the River Dane Radnor Bank bridge



13b. Views across farmland and the Dane Valley from Chelford Road



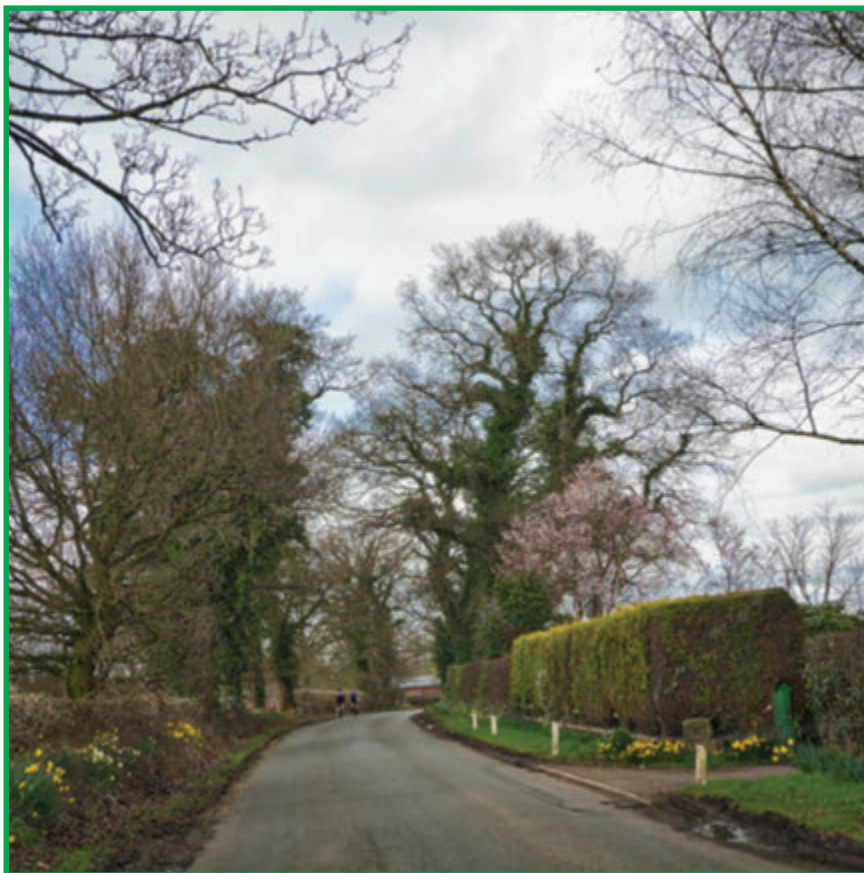
14. View of the River Dane from Radnor Bank bridge



15. Stile to a footpath alongside the River Dane on Hall Green Lane



16. Hall Green Lane, heading towards Giantswood Lane



17. Farmers Field of potatoes on Giantswood Lane



18. Swans, geese and wildfowl at the Pond on Giantswood Lane



19. Alpacas, at New Pool Farm, Giantswood Lane



20. Views over parkland towards Clonter Opera



21. Views across open farmland from New Hall, Giantswood Lane



22. Views across open farmland on New Road



23. Views across Farmland at Holly Heath Farm, Swettenham Road



24. Views across open farmland towards Hall Farm and the Cloud



25. Views to Dairyhouse Farm from Fieldhouse Farm



26. Views across to Shutlingsloe and the Peak District National Park from Mill Lane



27 Views across paddocks towards the Cloud from Wornish Nook



28. Views across open farmland towards Midge Brook from Mill Lane

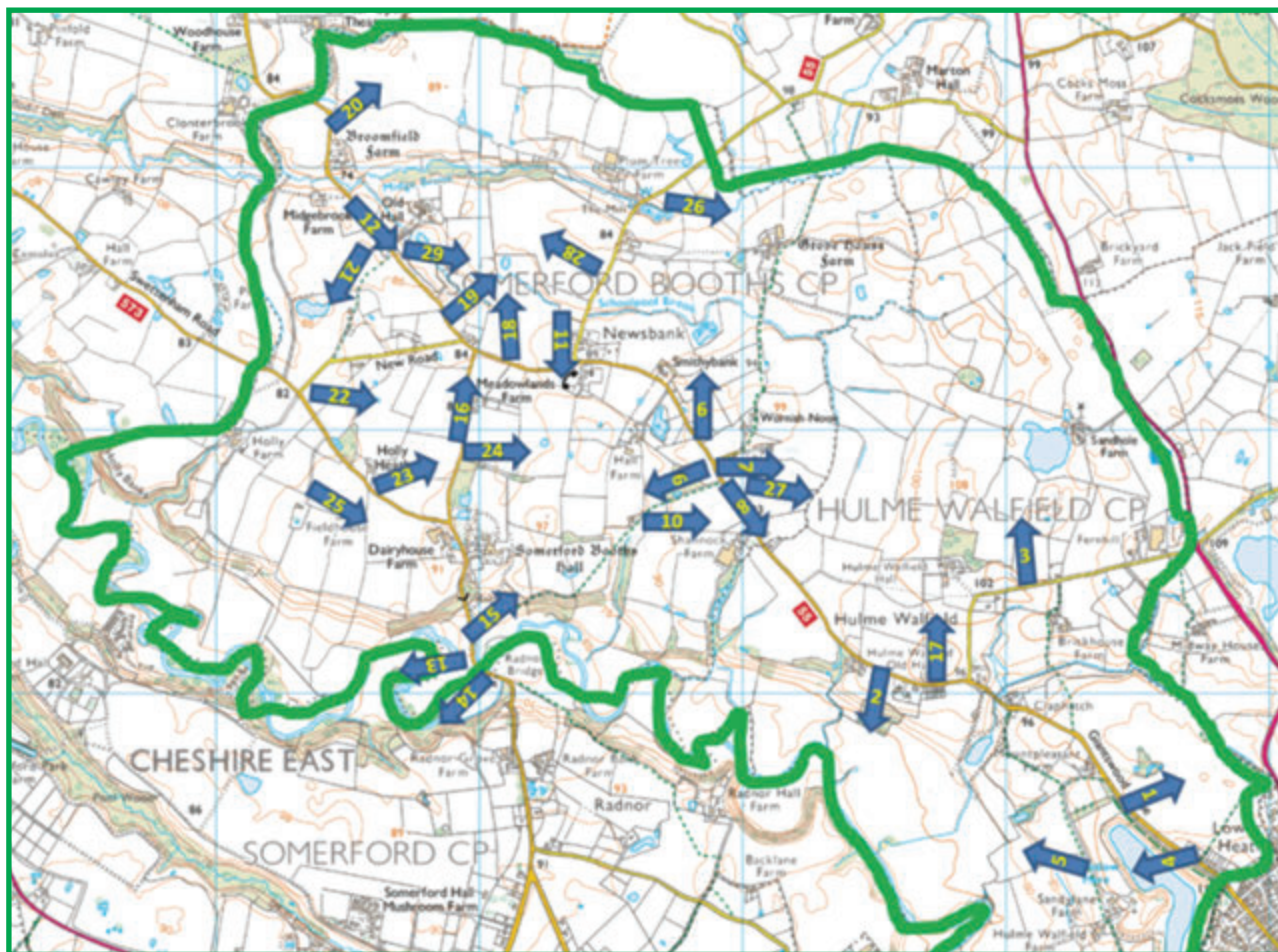


29. Views across paddocks and woodland from Old Hall towards the Cloud



APPENDIX 1

Map of photographs of local characteristics and views



No.	DESCRIPTION	REASON FOR IMPORTANCE
1	View from Giantswood Lane across to the Cloud	One of the best views across open farmland towards the Cloud, the most prominent landscape feature in Cheshire East. This view will be diminished once the strategic sites have been built.
2	St Michaels Church	A gothic revival architectural style Anglican church dating back to 1856. The only church in both parishes.
3	View across open farmland on Smithy Lane towards the Peak District National Park	One of the key elements to the Parishes is the long reaching and open views
4	View through woodland down to Westlow Mere	Even on the edge of the parish, close to the edge of Congleton there are still areas that are important wildlife havens and provide a countryside feel to the landscape.

No.	DESCRIPTION	REASON FOR IMPORTANCE
5	View along the Dane Valley	The Dane Valley itself is a mix of Woodland areas and open pasture, providing a typical countryside valley view - this view will be diminished once the strategic sites have been built.
6	Views across farmland between Wornish Nook and Newsbank	The high quality pasture in the parishes also includes large open fields with long ranging views.
7	Views over smallholding fields at Wornish Nook	Although the parishes contain many large fields, some of the smallholdings create less formal views with a very natural feel to the hedgerows.
8	Giantswood Lane looking towards Hulme Walfield, by Wornish Nook	The many small lanes in the parishes provide views which are classically rural, with green verges and tree lined hedgerows.
9	Lane to XXX Farm and footpath to woodland and the river Dave	Many of the hedgerows in the parish are left to grow, providing a less maintained rural feel to some of the views.
10	View from Giantswood Lane over farmers' fields towards the Cloud, a significant local landmark	Giantswood Lane offers some of the best open views of the Cloud and the ridge towards Mow Cop.
11	Ponies in a paddock at Newsbank	Along with typical farming livestock of sheep and cattle the parish provides opportunities for residents to keep other animals including ponies and horses as a rural pastime.
12	Entrances to a residential property on Giantswood Lane	The open development within the parishes is highlighted by houses in small clusters or individual properties where a lot of rural character is seen in the road frontages.
13	Open fields by the River Dane Radnor Bank bridge	Pasture within the Dane valley is very fertile and provide lush green expanses, even in the winter time.
14	View of River Dane from Radnor Bank bridge	The River Dane provides part of the parish boundary and a wildlife corridor, and also a naturally meandering river through the parish.
15	Stile to footpath alongside the River Dane on Hall Green Lane	There are a number of footpaths in the parishes, with classic stiles and marker posts.

No.	DESCRIPTION	REASON FOR IMPORTANCE
16	Hall Green Lane, heading towards Giantswood Lane	A view of the well maintained verges and Daffodils outside Meadowlands Farm.
17	Farmers Field on Giantswood Lane	At the beginning of the year the views change from green to brown as farmers prepare for the potato crops.
18	Swans and geese at the pond on Giantswood Lane	The pond and fields by Newsbank is a sanctuary for swans and wildlife looked after by local residents. It also provides a place where many bird species can be seen.
19	Alpacas, at New Pool Farm, from Giantswood Lane	Amongst the more unusual livestock in the parish are alpacas.
20	Views over parkland towards Clonter Opera	Classic views of typical English woodlands near Clonter Opera.
21	Views across open farmland from New Hall, Giantswood Lane	Typical views of open fields, with tree lined hedgerows, which can be seen throughout the parishes.
22	Views across open farmland on New Road	Fields for arable crops provide different views in the parishes.
23	Views across Farmland at Holly Heath Farm, Swettenham Road	One of the views across sheep and cattle grazing fields towards Grade II listed Somerford Hall and surrounding woodland.
24	Views across open farmland towards Hall Farm and the Cloud	From the west of Somerford Booths views of the Cloud can still be seen.
25	Views to Dairyhouse Farm from Fieldhouse Farm	The many farms provide different views where agriculture continues to provide jobs in our rural parishes.
26	Views across to Shutlingsloe and the Peak District from Mill Lane	With open aspects, the views are long reaching, with Shutlingsloe in the far distance and the Peak District across the full horizon.

No.	DESCRIPTION	REASON FOR IMPORTANCE
27	Views across paddocks towards the Cloud from Wornish Nook	One of the best views towards the Cloud and along the ridge towards Mow Cop
28	Views across open farmland towards Midge brook from Mill Lane	One of the larger fields in the parish, used for turf farming.
29	Views across paddocks and woodland from Old Hall towards the Cloud	A less open view because of a copse of trees, showing a view towards Newsbank and the Cloud.

APPENDIX 2

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Policy SE4

1. The high quality of the built and natural environment is recognised as a significant characteristic of the Borough. All development should conserve the landscape character and quality and should where possible, enhance and effectively manage the historic, natural and man-made landscape features that contribute to local distinctiveness of both rural and urban landscapes.

2. Development will be expected to:

i. Incorporate appropriate landscaping which reflects the character of the area through appropriate design and management;

ii. Where appropriate, provide suitable and appropriate mitigation for the restoration of damaged landscape areas;

iii. Preserve and promote local distinctiveness and diversity;

iv. Avoid the loss of habitats of significant landscape importance;

v. Protect and / or conserve the historical and ecological qualities of an area;

3. In Local Landscape Designation Areas, Cheshire East will seek to conserve and enhance the quality of the landscape and to protect it from development which is likely to have an adverse effect on its character and appearance and setting. Where development is considered to be acceptable in principle; measures will be sought to integrate it into the landscape character of the area by:

i. Protecting, restoring and enhancing the character and appearance of the local area through suitable planting, landscape and / or woodland;

ii. Making suitable provision for better public access to, and enjoyment of, the Local Landscape Designation Areas;

4. Where development may affect a local or national⁷⁰ designation a full understanding of the context, characteristics and significance should be provided and informed by the Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment, Historic Landscape Assessment and the Local Landscape Designation Study. In Local Landscape Designation Areas, Cheshire East will seek to conserve and enhance the quality of the landscape and to protect it from development which is likely to have an adverse effect on its character and appearance.

APPENDIX 5

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT STUDY

Protecting and Enhancing Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths' Natural Environment



Cheshire
Wildlife Trust

January 2017

Introduction

Neighbourhood Planning has provided an important opportunity for communities to shape their local environment for future generations. Identifying and evaluating opportunities and constraints will mean that communities are in an informed position and therefore better able to protect their valuable natural assets.

In 2011 the government published their Biodiversity 2020 '*strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem services*' which built on the recommendations of the earlier Natural Environment white paper. The mission of the Biodiversity 2020 strategy is to '*halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.*'

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2012 drew on these principles and protecting and enhancing biodiversity and creating ecological networks are central to this framework. Indeed 'biodiversity' is mentioned 15 times in the NPPF with protection and improvement of the natural environment as core objectives of the planning system. Planning policies specifically designed to address the overall loss of biodiversity are known as 'no net loss policies'. Most Local Plans now have 'no net loss' policies or similarly worded policies in place.

According to Biodiversity 2020 there are numerous ways to work towards achieving these aims, with landowners, conservation charities and individuals playing a part. However, the planning system has a central role in achieving the aims of Biodiversity 2020, particularly strategic planning, but also development control. At a local level Neighbourhood Planning has the potential to be a key factor in determining whether the aims of Biodiversity 2020 are realised, by identifying local priorities for nature conservation and ensuring these are taken into consideration in the planning process.

Objectives of the study

The first stage to protecting and enhancing the natural environment is to identify the natural assets that exist within the neighbourhood. This report aims to identify the core, high ecological value sites for nature conservation in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, as well as sites deemed to be of medium ecological value. The high value sites are recommended for protection through the neighbourhood planning process and the medium value sites could be considered as biodiversity opportunity areas subject to further evaluation. Medium and high value sites should also act as an alert in the planning system triggering full evaluation should they be proposed for future development.

The report also aims to identify key local and regional ecological networks within the neighbourhood planning area and recommends that these are protected through the neighbourhood plan. It also identifies key characteristics associated with the landscape character of the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths area so these can be referenced in planning policies.

Background – ecological networks

In 2010 Professor Sir John Lawton submitted a report to DEFRA entitled ‘Making Space for Nature: A review of England’s Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network’. The report identified that we need a step change in our approach to wildlife conservation from trying to hang on to what we have, to one of large-scale habitat restoration and recreation, underpinned by the re-establishment of ecological processes and ecosystem services, for the benefits of both people and wildlife. The report also identified that this vision will only be realised if we work at local scales in partnership with local people.

The natural environment is fundamental to our well-being, health and economy, and provides us with a range of ecosystem services such as food, water, materials, flood defences and carbon sequestration – and biodiversity underpins most, if not all, of them. The pressures on our land and water are likely to continue to increase and we need to learn how to manage these resources in ways which deliver multiple benefits, for example, achieving profitable and productive farming while also adopting practices which enhance carbon storage, improve flood water management and support wildlife.

England’s wildlife habitats have become increasingly fragmented and isolated, leading to declines in the provision of some ecosystem services, and losses to species populations. Ecological networks have become widely recognised as an effective way to conserve wildlife in environments that have become fragmented by human activities.

Ecological networks generally have five components (see Figure 1) which reflect both existing and potential ecological importance and function.

- *Core areas*

These are areas of high nature conservation value which form the heart of the network. They contain habitats that are rare or important because of the wildlife they support or the ecosystem services they provide. They generally have the highest concentrations of species or support rare species. They include protected wildlife sites and other semi-natural areas of high ecological quality.

- *Corridors and stepping stones*

These are spaces that improve the functional connectivity between core areas, enabling species to move between them to feed, disperse, migrate or reproduce. Connectivity need not just come from linear, continuous habitats; a number of small sites may act as ‘stepping stones’ across which certain species can move between core areas.

- *Restoration areas*

These are areas where measures are planned to restore or create new high value areas (which will ultimately become ‘core areas’) so that ecological functions and species populations can be restored. They are often situated so as to complement, connect or enhance existing core areas.

- *Buffer zones*

These are areas that closely surround core areas, restoration areas, 'stepping stones' and ecological corridors, and protect them from adverse impacts from the wider environment.

- *Sustainable use areas*

These are areas within the wider landscape focussed on the sustainable use of natural resources and appropriate economic activities, together with the maintenance of ecosystem services. Set up appropriately, they help to 'soften the matrix' outside the network and make it more permeable and less hostile to wildlife, including self-sustaining populations of species that are dependent upon, or at least tolerant of, certain forms of agriculture. There is overlap in the functions of buffer zones and sustainable use areas, but the latter are less clearly demarcated than buffers, with a greater variety of land uses.

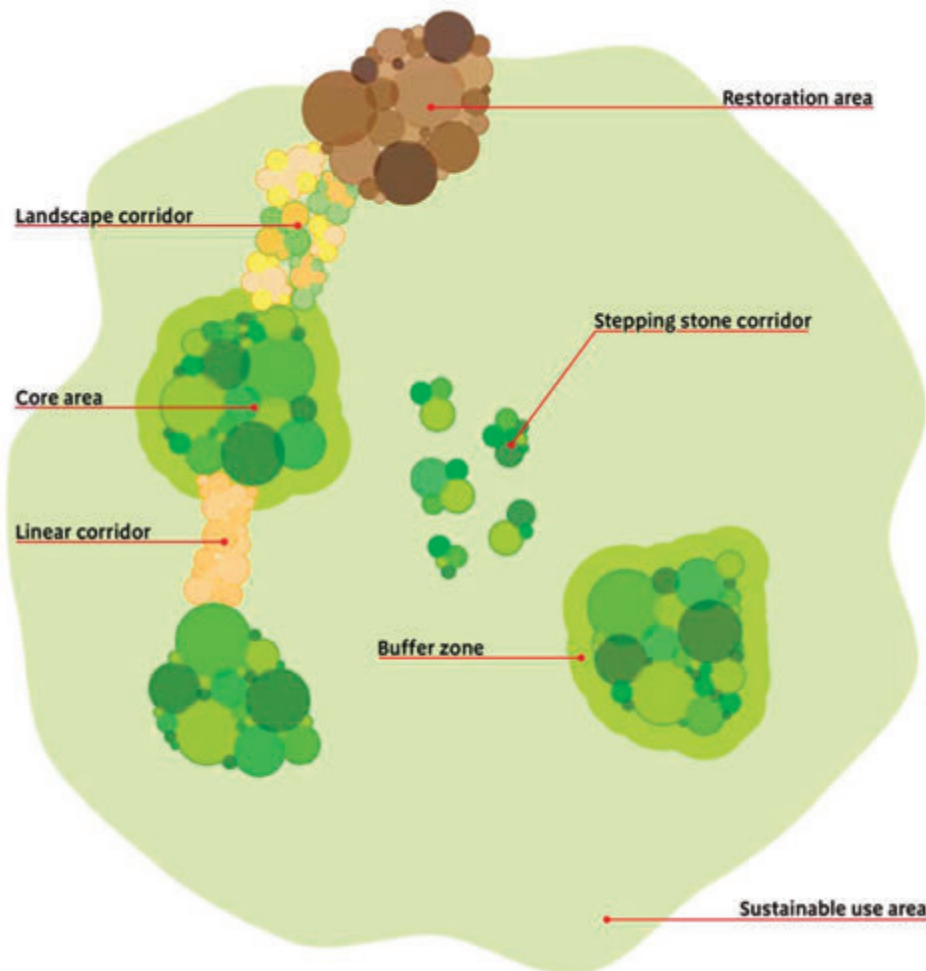


Figure 1. The components of ecological networks (Making Space for Nature report)

The principles of creating coherent ecological networks have since been embedded within many planning and policy documents. The Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice', which was published in 2011, reiterated a Government commitment to move from net biodiversity loss to net gain, by recognising the importance of supporting healthy, well-functioning ecosystems and establishing more coherent ecological networks.

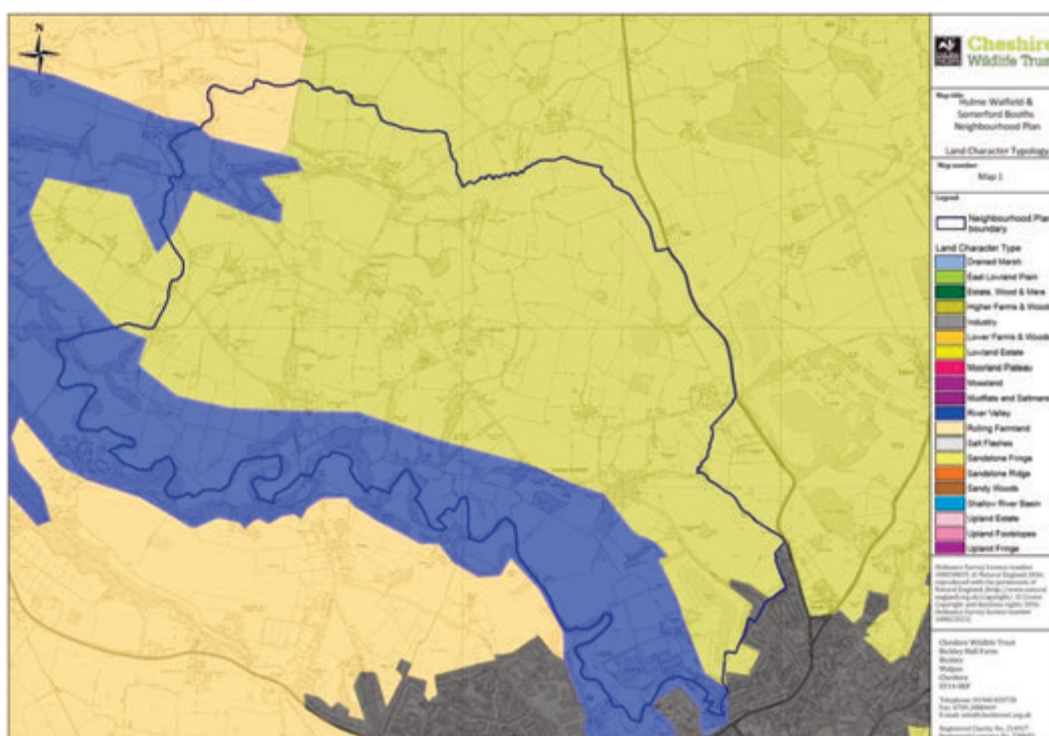
The National Planning and Policy Framework published in 2012 also includes the establishment and conservation of a coherent ecological network as a core principle including:

- The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- Local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.
- To minimise impacts on biodiversity planning policies should identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation; and promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations.

Landscape Character Assessment for the Cheshire region

On a national level Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths lies within National Character Area 61 – Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain; a pastoral area of rolling plain which is particularly important for dairy farming. More locally the Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment of 2008 identifies recognisable patterns in the landscape and classifies the Cheshire Landscape into 20 broad Landscape Character Types (LCTs). Different aspects such as geology, landform, soils, vegetation and landuse have been used to identify character areas. The assessment is intended to be used as a basis for planning and the creation of future landscape strategies as well as raising public awareness of landscape character and creating a sense of place.

Map 1: Landscape Character Typology



The Landscape Character Assessment (Map 1) identifies three recognisable landscape character types (LCTs) within the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood planning area; namely Lower Farms and Woods, Higher Farms and Woods and River Valley, These character types are further refined and subdivided into Landscape Character Areas (LCAs):

Type 10 - Lower Farms and Woods

Key characteristics

- Low lying gently rolling topography
- Hedgerow boundaries and standard trees in a mix of medieval, reorganised fields (irregular, semi-regular, and regular up to 8ha). Many larger open fields where traditional hedging has either been removed or replaced with fencing.
- Horsiculture – fenced horse paddocks
- High density of woodland – blocks and coverts and riparian
- Medium settlement density – mix of dispersed farms and nucleated hamlets/villages
- Mosses and some meres resulting from glacial deposits
- Large number of water bodies

LFW1 - Marthall Character Area (including Peover Eye, Jodrell Bank and Swettenham Heath)

In the far north-west corner of the NP there are two fields situated between Clonter and Midge Brooks which lie in the far south of the Marthall Character Area. This character area stretches to Knutsford and Wilmslow in the north and Plumley in the west. It is a largely rural landscape with both mixed arable and pastoral farmland. Settlement density is generally medium with a combination of dispersed and nucleated small villages and hamlets. The south of the character area is less influenced by the larger conurbations in the north.

Historically much of this area comprised extensive areas of sandy heathland with heathers and birch, together with pockets of sphagnum dominated wet mosslands edged by species rich fen vegetation. Several streams cut through the flat landscape creating clough woodlands, some of which are ancient in origin, such as the Peover Eye valley.

Type 16 - Higher Farms and Woods

Key characteristics

- Gentle rolling and moderate undulating topography
- A mix of medieval and post medieval reorganised fields (irregular, semi-regular and regular up to 8 ha)
- Hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees
- High density of woodland (blocks, coverts and riparian)
- Predominantly low density dispersed settlement
- Ponds
- Small mossland areas

HFW1 Gawsworth Character Area – including Rodeheath, Marton and North Rode

This area lies north of the river Dane between Congleton and Macclesfield. Away from these conurbations the area is typically very rural with isolated farms and hamlets and quiet county lanes. Across much of the area there are wide reaching views towards the hills in the east. There is little in the way of development apart from a small number of sand quarries and two main A roads that run north-south.

The fields are a mixture of sizes with the larger ones having been agriculturally improved. The field systems date from the post medieval period although many have been enlarged through hedgerow removal. The exception to this trend is on the slopes of the watercourses where some smaller fields still exist. The steeper slopes are mainly wooded and a small number of these woodlands are thought to be ancient. Compared to other areas of lowland Cheshire this character area has a relatively large proportion of woodland, largely located in isolated blocks and surrounded by agriculturally improved grassland or arable fields.

Type 13 – River Valley

Key characteristics

- Steep sided river valleys
- Meandering river courses
- High levels of woodland along the river and tributary valleys of which a significant proportion is ancient woodland.
- Tributaries in wooded cloughs
- Grassy banks including acid grassland.
- Bridges and viaducts
- Isolated halls and farms

R5 – Upper Dane Character Area

This area is characterised by the meanders and steep wooded terraces of the river Dane (including Holly Banks SSSI, Bunister wood, Briery Bank, Church Wood and Scar wood). The character area extends along the steep sided tributaries of the Dane, including the lower reaches of Midge Brook. Some of the woodland on the terraces and cloughs of the tributaries is ancient in origin with sycamore, ash, oak and wych elm and a rich ground flora.

The wide valley floor is mainly pastureland with some smaller areas of arable crops. Many of the fields have been increased in size, although traditional field patterns can still be seen on some of the farmed shallower river terraces. Here the field sizes are small and irregular and the fields are bounded by hawthorn hedges.

The area is very rural with a small number of farms and halls with the one small settlement at Swettenham village.

Natural Area

Natural Areas as defined by English Nature (now Natural England) in 1996 are a series of biogeographical units reflecting ecological integrity land form, landuse and cultural influences. Their boundaries usually correspond to those of the Landscape Character Areas although they normally encompass multiple LCAs as they are generally larger.

Most of Cheshire, the northern half of Shropshire and part of northwest Staffordshire sit within the *Meres and Mosses Natural Area*. This is an expansive area of gently rolling agricultural plain which, at the end of the last ice age, was largely underwater. Although the vast area of water eventually drained away it left behind a wetland landscape of meres, mosses, meandering rivers and ponds. This landscape is recognised as being of international importance for its wetland wildlife.

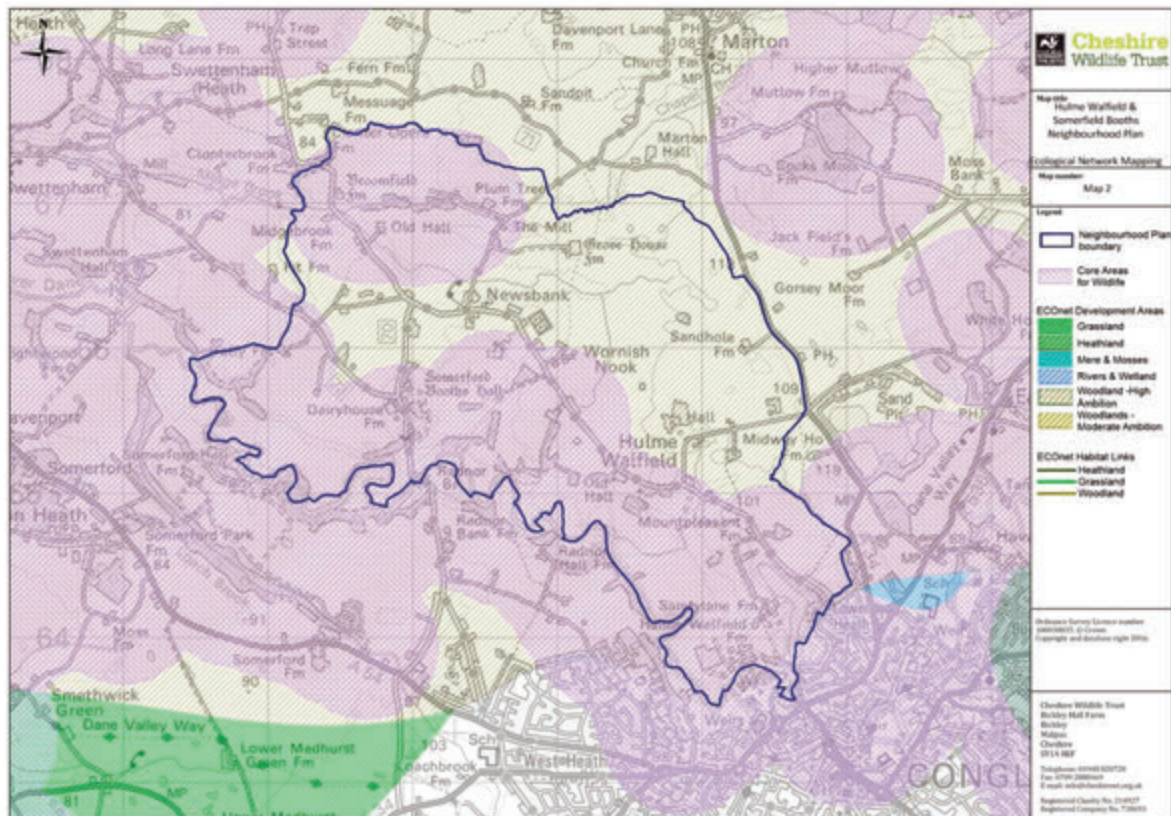
Econet – Integrated vision of the Cheshire County Ecological Network

Between 1999 and 2003 the then Cheshire County Council were a partner within the Life ECONet Project. This was a project supported by the Life-Environment Programme of the European Commission to demonstrate in Cheshire and in Emilia-Romagna and Abruzzo (Italy) how ecological networks can help achieve more sustainable land use planning and management, as well as overcome the problems of habitat loss, fragmentation and species isolation.

The Econet study is an integrated vision of a Cheshire County Ecological Network of ecological cohesion. The vision acts as a framework for nature conservation in the region by identifying areas of strategic importance for wildlife. It is intended as a guideline for making decisions in local and strategic planning in relation to biodiversity.

The 2003 study identified numerous core areas of key importance for wildlife. It also identified development areas which were assessed as having the greatest potential to contribute to the viability of the core areas through habitat restoration and creation schemes. The aim of any future work related to the county ecological network should be to expand the core areas and to provide better habitat connectivity (wildlife corridors). The guidance provided by the Econet project has been incorporated into the conclusions of this report created for the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan.

Map 2: Ecological Network Mapping (Econet)



Large areas of land bordering the River Dane and Midge Brook were identified by Econet as being fundamental components of the county wide ecological network.

Methodology

Creating a habitat distinctiveness map

In line with current Defra methodologies to determine 'no net loss' in biodiversity, habitat data from the sources listed below was attributed to one of three categories listed in the table:

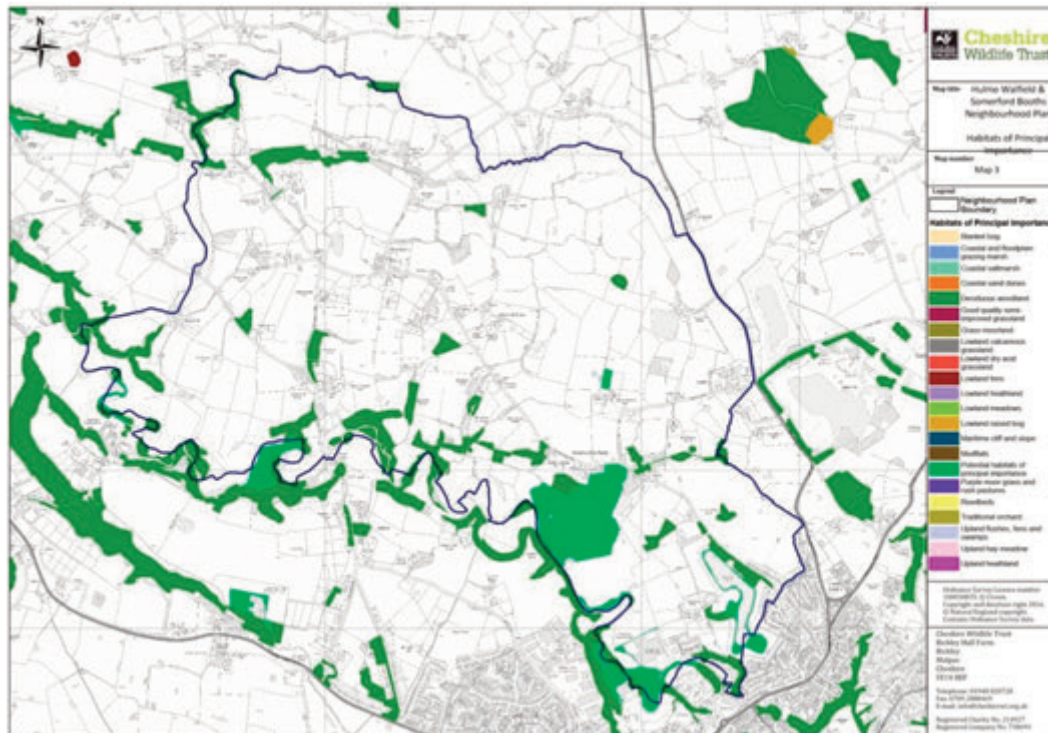
Habitat type band	Distinctiveness	Broad habitat type covered	Colour on map
High ecological value	High	Priority habitat as defined in section 41 of the NERC Act, Designated nature conservation sites (statutory and non-statutory)	Red
Medium ecological value	Medium	Semi-natural habitats and habitats with potential to be restored to Priority quality. Includes field ponds.	Orange
Low ecological value	Low	E.g. Intensive agricultural but may still form an important part of the ecological network in an area.	n/a

Habitat type bands (Defra March 2012)

- Five published data sets were used to produce the habitat distinctiveness maps:
 - Priority habitat Natural England – coded as high distinctiveness
 - Protected sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves), Natural England, CWT/CE Local Authority – coded as high distinctiveness
 - Agricultural land classification, Natural England - grade 4 medium distinctiveness, grade 5 high distinctiveness (adjusted where other data is available).
 - Landcover data, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology 2007. Priority habitats (principal importance) and semi-natural habitats coded as medium distinctiveness (data in Appendix 1)
 - Meres and Mosses and other peat soils, Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership scheme, 2016. Functional Ecological Units, river valley peat and destroyed peat coded as medium distinctiveness. (Supporting information in Appendix 2.)
- Aerial photography (Microsoft Bing™ Imagery) was used to validate the results by eye.
- The Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan area Land Character Assessment and Econet categories were mapped and the results were used to inform the conclusions.
- Habitat data from recent planning applications in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths was researched and incorporated where appropriate.

Mapping

Map 3: Priority habitat – Natural England 2014

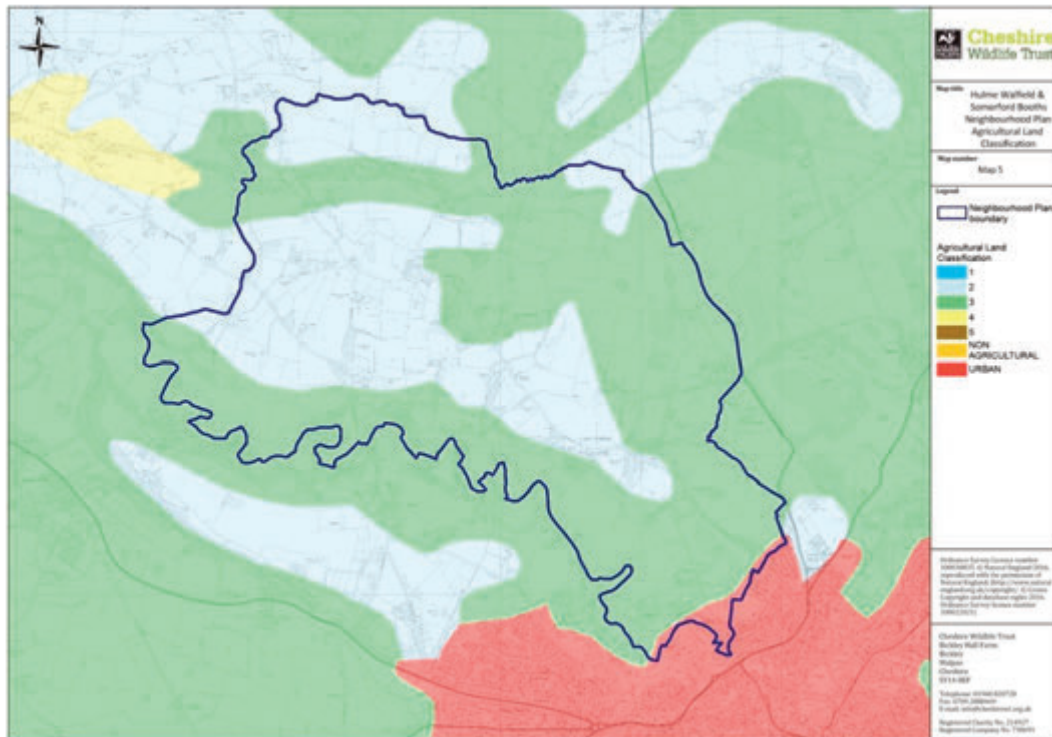


Map 4: Land Cover Habitats

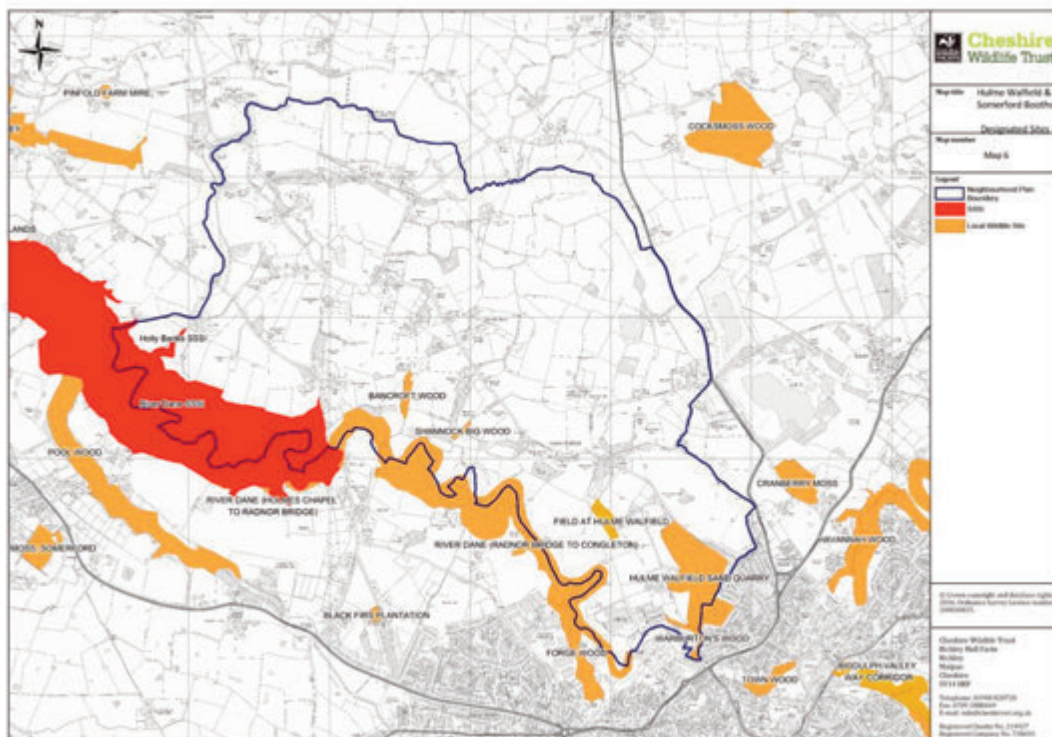


Land Cover Map 2007 (LCM2007) is a parcel-based classification of satellite image data showing land cover for the entire United Kingdom derived from a computer classification of satellite scenes obtained mainly from the Landsat sensor

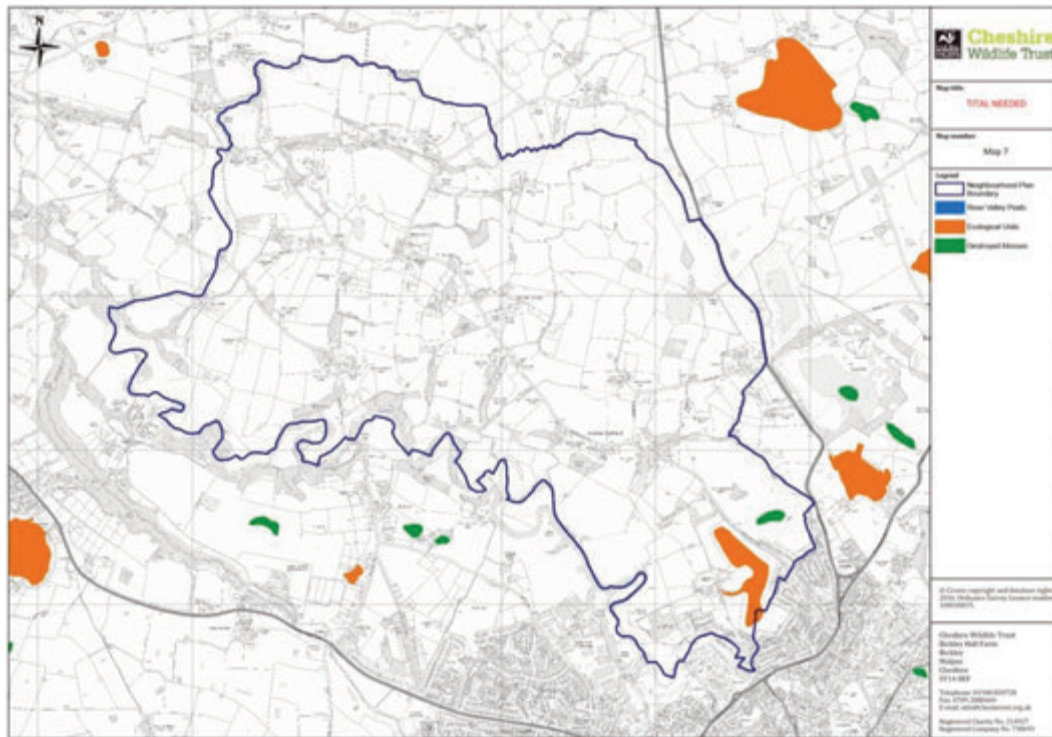
Map 5: Agricultural Land Grading – Natural England 2013



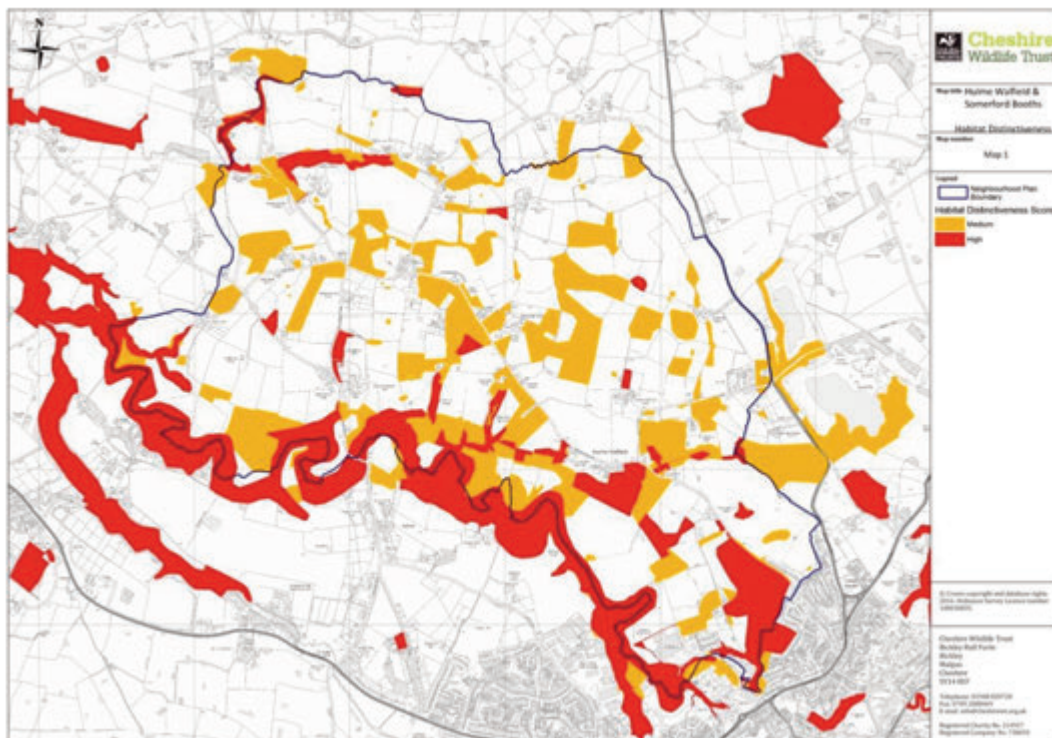
Map 6: Designated Nature Conservation Sites (including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves)



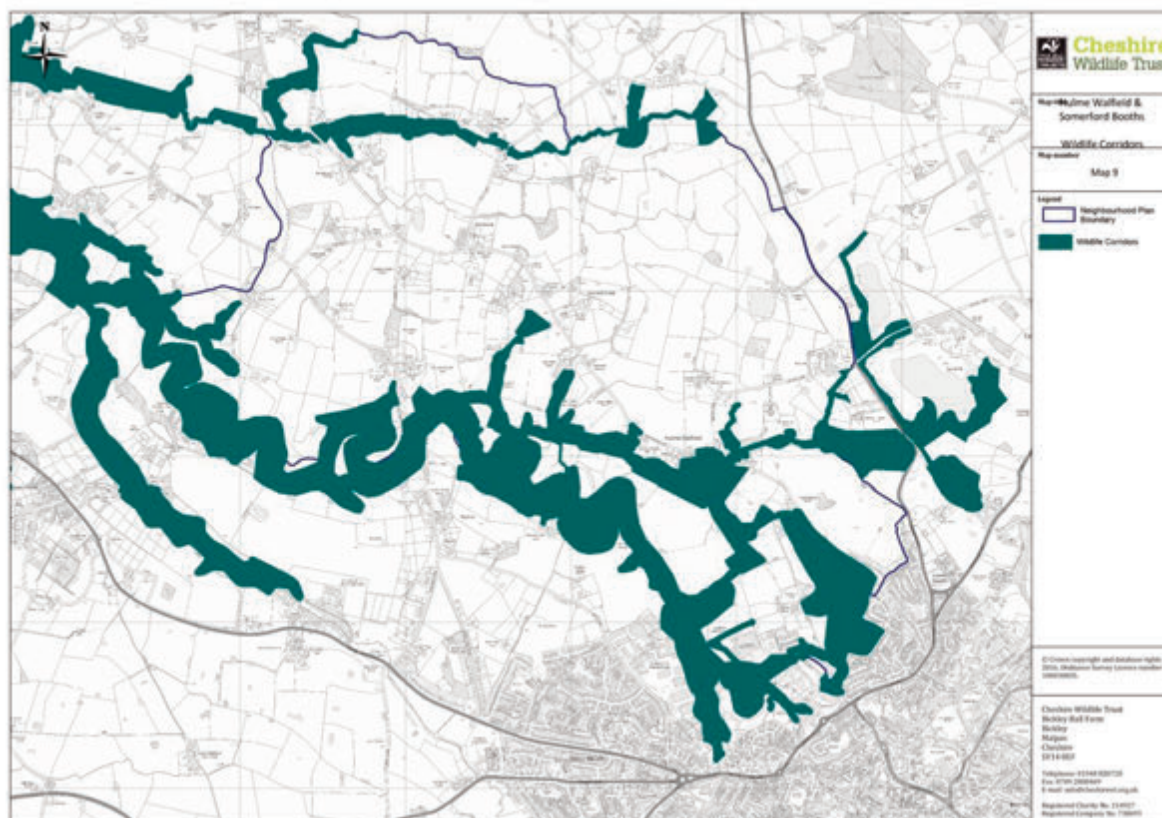
Map 7: Meres and Mosses and other peat soils, Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Scheme 2016



Map 8: Habitat Distinctiveness



Map 9: Indicative Wildlife Corridor Network



Results and discussion

High distinctiveness habitat

This study has identified numerous areas of high value woodland habitat (displayed as red on map 8) in the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan area including: Bunister wood, Briery Bank, Church Wood, woodland at Westlow Mere, wood near Mountpleasant farm (2 parcels), Holly Heath Farm Wood, Clonter Wood, wood at Grove House Farm, Black Planting, Woodside Park, Bancroft Wood, wood at Hulme Walfield Old Hall, wood by Claphatch, Warburton's Wood and unnamed riparian woodland along the River Dane. An additional four woodlands are listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, namely Holly Banks SSSI, Old Hall Wood, Shannock Big Wood and Scar wood. These woodlands, which are thought to be at least 400 years old, are mainly confined to the steep river terraces of the Dane, apart from Old Hall Wood which is situated on the banks of Midge Brook. The Ancient Woodland Inventory is incomplete and it is likely that some of the other parcels of woodland are also ancient.

Not all the woodland parcels are designated; however those that are either Local Wildlife Site or Site of Special Scientific Interest are shown on map 6. The designated woodlands include large tracts along the river Dane (including Bunister Wood, Briery Bank), Holly Banks SSSI, Shannock Big Wood, Bancroft Wood and Warburton's Wood.

Holly Banks Site of Special Scientific Interest is particularly notable for the richness of the habitat, with an unusual flora. The upper slopes are slightly acidic in character with oak, silver birch, bluebell and bracken, whereas the lower slopes (on Keuper marl) are more basic in character supporting rarities such as sanicle, thin spiked wood sedge, wood small reed and early purple orchid. Ash, wych elm and wild cherry are present on the lower slopes with alder in the wetter areas.

The other woodlands in the locality support similar species with oak, ash, wych elm and sycamore all common; wetter areas have willows and alder. There is a rich ground flora throughout these woods with species such as wood anemone, bluebell, ramsons and moschatel. Warbuton's wood is sycamore dominated with a good ground flora in undisturbed areas. Invasive Himalayan balsam is present in most of the local woodlands and poses a serious threat to the woodland diversity.

The mapping exercise has also highlighted areas of high distinctiveness grassland. Most notable for its diverse grassland is the 'Field at Hulme Walfield' (Local Wildlife Site). It has an unusual flora with numerous sedges, rushes and wildflowers providing an important resource for invertebrates such as bees and butterflies. Also notable is the acid grassland present on the banks of Westlow Mere (Hulme Walfield Sand Quarry LWS). This site is also important for birds and mammals. Species rich neutral and marshy grassland is present in small pockets along the river Dane, especially on the steeper slopes or wet areas which have escaped agricultural improvement. An area of grassland by Hulme Walfield Old Hall is also thought to be high distinctiveness habitat with species such as red clover and native grasses.

Medium distinctiveness habitat

Areas of medium distinctiveness habitat are shown on map 8 (displayed as orange) and provide important wildlife habitats in their own right as well as acting as ecological stepping stones and corridors. The majority of these are thought to be semi-natural grassland, including wet grassland and areas of riparian woodland along the River Dane terraces and tributaries such as Midge Brook, an unnamed tributary by Claphatch/Brickhouse Farm and Schoolpool Brook.

Although there is a fairly low density of field ponds in the area, there are a number of larger pools which may be stocked with fish. These are often surrounded by areas of wet woodland and help contribute to the permeability of the landscape to wildlife. The Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Plan Area also supports a good network of hedgerows, especially on the steeper ground where field enlargement has not been as widespread as it has on the flatter areas.

There is a possibility that some of the medium distinctiveness areas have been undervalued and an ecological survey may indicate they should be mapped as 'high distinctiveness' priority habitat (which would be displayed as red in map 8). Conversely there may be areas which have been overvalued, particularly if recent management has led to the deterioration of the habitat; in which case these areas should be removed from the habitat distinctiveness map.

Wildlife corridor network

Wildlife corridors are a key component of local ecological networks as they provide connectivity between core areas of high wildlife value/distinctiveness enabling species to move between them to feed, disperse, migrate or reproduce. In conjunction with the results of the Econet analysis (2003), this study has identified a wildlife corridor network (shown in map 9) with ecological connectivity within and beyond the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Planning area.

The wildlife corridor network shows high fidelity to the Upper Dane Character Area (R5) identified in the Landscape Character Assessment. It incorporates areas of riparian woodland and grassland along the River Dane Terraces and Midge Brook, a tributary of the Dane. Although this section of the corridor appears separate to the rest of the network, it joins the River Dane further downstream at Swettenham Village after passing through the Swettenham Valley Local Wildlife Site.

The wildlife corridor network excludes parts of the Dane valley floor that have been agriculturally improved, but includes the ancient river terraces that are either wooded or support semi-natural grassland. Not all the river terraces are designated sites which could mean they may be vulnerable to development pressures in the future.

The group of woodlands within the Neighbourhood planning area represent a particularly important cluster. Some of these have been recognised as ancient and therefore important on a UK wide basis, however all the native woodlands in the cluster are important on at least a county wide basis. As well as a rich flora the woodlands support notable birds such as spotted fly catcher, lesser spotted woodpecker and willow tit, all red listed species which are in rapid decline nationally. It is the connectivity between these woods that is key to their continued wildlife value as it helps to make the woodlands more resilient to environmental change.

As well as connectivity along the river terraces, the wildlife corridor also connects important wildlife habitat outside of the immediate Dane valley, including land at Eaton Hall Quarry and Cranberry Moss Local Wildlife Site. Connectivity to these two sites is largely via an unnamed tributary of the Dane that runs close to Claphatch and Brickhouse Farm. Eaton Hall Quarry lies outside of the Neighbourhood Planning area but it is known to support especially high numbers of overwintering birds such as lapwing, curlew, oystercatcher and starling. Westlow Mere is a designated Local Wildlife Site (Hulme Walfield Sand Quarry) with direct connectivity to ancient river terraces at Warbutons wood Local Wildlife Site. Both sites are included in the wildlife corridor network.

The network has a good degree of ecological connectivity which is currently only compromised, where it is crossed by the route of the A34; despite this there remains some connectivity for mobile species such as birds, bats and invertebrates. The new Congleton Link Road and associated housing developments will inevitably compromise this connectivity unless carefully designed mitigation is put in place before disruption occurs.

Protection of the wildlife corridor and other high distinctiveness habitat

Map 9 incorporates an indicative boundary for the wildlife corridor network; however this is likely to require refinement following detailed survey work. The corridor should be wide enough to protect the valuable habitats identified in Map 8 and for this reason we have incorporated a 15 metre buffer zone around any high distinctiveness habitat. The buffer is necessary to help protect vulnerable habitat from factors such as water and light pollution, predation by domestic pets, and invasive garden species.

A 15m buffer zone is also appropriate for any land lying outside the corridor network that, following an ecological appraisal, is subsequently found to be high distinctiveness Priority habitat¹. Any potential development proposals which are adjacent to a high distinctiveness habitat or a wildlife corridor should demonstrate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen any impact on wildlife. For example low spillage (bat/otter sensitive) lighting should be recommended for use on the outside of buildings or in car-parks and along pathways and watercourses. Surface drainage water from developed areas should always be directed away from sensitive areas due to the risk of pollution unless the source of the water is clean, such as rainwater collected from roofs. Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS) are useful in providing additional wildlife habitat and preventing flooding, but they may still hold polluted water so should not drain directly into existing wildlife habitat unless the filtration system is extensive.

Not all sections of the wildlife corridor provide high quality habitat and measures to improve the ability of the corridor to support the movement of species is desirable. Enhancement of the corridor may be facilitated by opportunities arising through the planning process (e.g. S106 agreements, biodiversity offsetting/compensation) or through the aspirations of the local community.

In addition to the 'wildlife corridor network' this study has identified further areas of high or medium 'habitat distinctiveness' (Map 8) which, although sit outside the wildlife corridor network, nevertheless may provide important wildlife habitats acting as ecological stepping stones. These areas comprise semi-natural/species-rich grassland, ponds and semi-natural woodlands.

The extensive network of field boundary hedgerows provides habitat connectivity between these areas, which would otherwise be separated by extensive areas of land predominantly of low habitat distinctiveness with restricted potential for wildlife to disperse. Although not identified as a key component of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths' ecological network, collectively, these hedgerows provide linear connectivity through the neighbourhood and beyond, in addition to their intrinsic ecological value. Where hedgerows are associated with small irregular shaped fields, for example to the south west of Hulme Walfield Old Hall, they also contribute greatly to the landscape character and historical value of the area.

Old meadows supporting species-rich neutral or marshy grassland are the fastest disappearing habitats in the UK. These grasslands are particularly important for pollinating insects and insectivorous birds and mammals. It is extremely important that the highlighted 'medium distinctiveness' areas should be thoroughly evaluated in the development control process. If they

¹ This may currently be mapped as medium distinctiveness due to lack of information.

are found to support species-rich grassland they should be re-classified as ‘high distinctiveness’ (Priority/principal importance) habitat and they should not be built on (as stipulated in the Local Plan and the NPPF). In order to achieve no ‘net loss’ in biodiversity, compensation may be required should these areas be lost to development when avoidance and mitigation strategies have been applied in line with the guidance set out in the Local Plan.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted that the important wildlife habitat in Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths is mainly associated with the woodlands and semi-natural grasslands of the ancient terraces of the River Dane and its tributaries. By attributing habitat distinctiveness values to all land parcels in the Neighbourhood Plan area the study has provided important evidence that should be taken into consideration when planning decisions are taken. However we strongly recommend that further (phase 1) habitat survey work is undertaken at the appropriate time of year, in particular to verify that ‘medium value’ habitats have not been over or under-valued.

Most notably the analysis has identified a ‘wildlife corridor network’ which provides ecological connectivity between woodlands, grassland and riparian habitat within and beyond the Neighbourhood Planning area. The wildlife corridor network supports a wide range of species including numerous birds, plants and invertebrates that are in decline both locally and nationally.

We recommend that the corridor network shown in map 9 is identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and protected from development so that the guidance relating to ecological networks set out in the Local Plan and the NPPF may be implemented at a local level. The wildlife corridor network includes a buffer zone of up to 15 metres in places to protect the notable habitats shown in map 8. If new areas of high distinctiveness habitat are subsequently identified these should also be protected by a 15 metre non-developable buffer zone.

Any future development of sites which are adjacent to high distinctiveness habitat or a wildlife corridor should be able to demonstrate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen any potential impacts on wildlife. An example of this is that bat sensitive lighting could be recommended for use on the outside of buildings or in carparks/pathways, and otter sensitive lighting in areas adjacent the River Dane and its tributaries. Surface drainage water from developed areas should always be directed away from sensitive areas due to the risk of pollution.

To summarise, future development of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths village should respect the natural environment. The most intact landscapes, in terms of biodiversity, landform and historical/cultural associations should be valued highly when planning decisions are made. Protection and enhancement of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths’ natural assets is of crucial importance for nature conservation and ecosystem services but it is also important for the enjoyment of future generations.

Recommendations for improving and protecting habitat in order to create a coherent ecological network

Following adoption of the neighbourhood plan, CWT advises that the following recommendations should be actioned:

1. Improve the quality of the ‘wildlife corridor network’ and assess against Local Wildlife Site selection criteria

The areas highlighted as ‘wildlife corridor network’ in Map 9 incorporate eight designated Local Wildlife Sites, however it is highly likely that other land would meet also the criteria for Local Wildlife Site selection. These areas should be designated if the selection criteria are met, as LWS designation is likely to provide a greater level of protection within the planning system.

The wildlife corridor network should be in ‘favourable condition’² to provide breeding, foraging and commuting habitat for the native species that live there and native species which may subsequently colonise. Ideally these areas should be surveyed by a qualified ecologist to identify management priorities.

Management work may include:

- Control of Himalayan balsam. It is extremely important that this species is prevented from further colonisation the woodlands and wetlands. The Cheshire Wildlife Trust is aware that extensive areas of non-native Himalayan balsam have previously been recorded in many of the woodlands and along the banks of the river Dane. This species is highly invasive out-competing native flora and causing soil erosion due to the lack of binding vegetation in winter (particularly on river banks). Himalayan balsam is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act which means it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild. CWT can provide further advice on the control of this and other non-native species.
- Control of non-native/garden species in woodland. Garden species such as daffodils, monbretia, cotoneaster, variegated yellow archangel and Spanish bluebells can all be highly invasive and damage the ecological balance of woodlands.
- Hedgerows that form part of the wildlife corridor should be restored using locally native species such as wych elm, hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and holly (plant 60-90cm high ‘whips’ which have a good rate of survival and use tree guards to protect from rabbits and stock fence where necessary). New sections of hedgerow should ideally incorporate a tree every 30m (on average) which are demarked so as not to be inadvertently flailed.
- All semi-natural grassland should be cut or grazed each year to maintain their wildlife value.

² The definition of ‘favourable condition’ for Local Wildlife Sites is provided in Appendix 3

2. Protect, enhance and connect areas of high/medium value which lie outside the wildlife corridor

Opportunities should be explored to restore or create more wildlife friendly habitat especially where connectivity with other areas of valuable habitat can be achieved or where valuable sites can be buffered. Larger areas of better connected habitat support larger and healthier species populations and help prevent local extinctions.

Ways to enhance connections or to buffer sites could include the restoration of hedgerows, creation of low maintenance field margins and sowing locally sourced (local genetic stock) wildflower meadows³. Woodland expansion is desirable; however tree planting should only occur on species-poor (low value) grasslands and away from water vole habitat. Professional advice should always be sought when creating new habitat.

3. Protect existing hedgerow network

Hedgerows which meet certain criteria are protected by *The Hedgerow Regulations, 1997*. Under the regulations it is against the law to remove or destroy 'Important' hedgerows without permission from the Local Planning Authority. Removal of a hedgerow in contravention of *The Hedgerow Regulations* is a criminal offence. The criteria used to assess hedgerows relate to its value from an archaeological, historical, landscape or wildlife perspective. The regulations exclude hedgerows that have been in existence for less than 30 years, garden hedges and some hedgerows which are less than 20 metres in length. The aim of the regulations is to protect 'Important' hedgerows in the countryside by controlling their removal through a system of notification.

Any proposals that involve the removal of hedgerows or sections of hedgerows or their associated features (e.g. ditches, banks, standard trees) should be supported by an assessment to ascertain their status in relation to *The Hedgerow Regulations*. Should the Local Planning Authority grant permission for removal, compensatory hedgerows should be provided.

Guidance issued by DEFRA relating to biodiversity offsetting requires 'multipliers' to be applied according to the condition of any native hedgerow to be lost: 'Poor' condition hedgerows should be compensated for using a multiplier of x1 (i.e. like-for-like length), 'Moderate' condition hedgerows should be compensated for using a multiplier of x2, and 'Good' condition hedgerows should be compensated for using a multiplier of x3 (e.g. loss of 10m of hedgerow in 'Good' condition would require 30m to be planted in compensation).

Hedgerow condition assessment criteria are provided in the Natural England Higher Level Stewardship Farm Environment Plan Manual (2010), however, in brief, three condition assessments are made: average height before flailing is at least 2m; average width before flailing is at least 1.5m; less than 10% gaps, excluding gate holes and gaps beneath tree canopy. Native hedgerows meeting all three criteria are in 'Good' condition, those meeting any two criteria are in 'Moderate' condition, and those meeting no criteria are in 'Poor' condition.

³ Cheshire Wildlife Trust can provide advice and seeds for locally sourced wildflower meadow creation.

Any new sections of hedgerow should be created following the guidance provided above (point 1).

4. Phase 1 habitat mapping

It is strongly recommended that Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Neighbourhood Planning area is phase 1 habitat mapped. This will provide a high level of habitat detail and could be used to verify the results of the habitat distinctiveness mapping (map 8). Phase 1 mapping may identify further areas of medium or high distinctiveness (Priority) habitat not identified by this assessment. Areas identified as having medium value habitat in this report should be targeted for survey as a priority. Phase 1 mapping should also be used to determine the exact position of the wildlife corridor network.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Habitats, LCM2007 classes⁴ and Broad Habitat subclasses for LCM2007 CEH

LCM2007 class	LCM2007 class number	Broad Habitat sub-class	Broad habitat sub-class code	Habitat Score
Broadleaved woodland	1	Deciduous	D	Medium
		Recent (<10yrs)	Dn	Medium
		Mixed	M	Medium
		Scrub	Sc	Medium
'Coniferous Woodland'	2	Conifer	C	Low
		Larch	Cl	Low
		Recent (<10yrs)	Cn	Low
		Evergreen	E	Low/Medium
		Felled	Fd	Medium
'Arable and Horticulture'	3	Arable bare	Aba	Low
		Arable Unknown	Aun	Low
		Unknown non-cereal	Aun	Low
		Orchard	O	Medium

⁴ No habitat scores higher than 'medium distinctiveness' due to the reliability of the data

		Arable barley	Aba	Low
		Arable wheat	Aw	Low
		Arable stubble	Ast	Low
Improved Grassland'	4	Improved grassland	Gi	Low
		Ley	Gl	Low
		Hay	Gh	Low
Rough Grassland	5	Rough / unmanaged grassland	Gr	Medium
'Neutral Grassland'	6	Neutral	Gn	Medium
'Calcareous Grassland'	7	Calcareous	Gc	Medium
Acid Grassland	8	Acid	Ga	Medium
		Bracken	Br	Medium
'Fen, Marsh and Swamp'	9	Fen / swamp	F	Medium
Heather	10	Heather & dwarf shrub	H	Medium
		Burnt heather	Hb	Medium
		Gorse	Hg	Medium
		Dry heath	Hd	Medium
Heather grassland	11	Heather grass	Hga	Medium

'Bog'	12	Bog	Bo	Medium
		Blanket bog	Bb	Medium
		Bog (Grass dom.)	Bg	Medium
		Bog (Heather dom.)	Bh	Medium
'Montane Habitats'	13	Montane habitats	Z	Medium
Inland Rock'	14	Inland rock	lb	Medium
		Despoiled land	Ud	Medium
Salt water	15	Water sea	Ws	Medium
		Water estuary	We	Medium
Freshwater	16	Water flooded	Wf	Medium
		Water lake	Wl	Medium
		Water River	Wr	Medium
'Supra-littoral Rock'	17	Supra littoral rocks	Sr	Medium?
'Supra-littoral Sediment'	18	Sand dune	Sd	Medium
		Sand dune with shrubs	Sds	Medium
		Shingle	Sh	Medium?
		Shingle vegetated	Shv	Medium
'Littoral Rock'	19	Littoral rock	Lr	Medium
		Littoral rock / algae	Lra	Medium

Littoral sediment	20	Littoral mud	Lm	Medium
		Littoral mud / algae	Lma	Medium
		Littoral sand	Ls	Medium
Saltmarsh	21	Saltmarsh	Sm	Medium
		Saltmarsh grazing	Smg	Medium
Urban	22	Bare	Ba	Low
		Urban	U	Low
		Urban industrial	Ui	Low
Suburban	23	Urban suburban	Us	Low

Meres & Mosses LPS / NIA:
Methodology for Mapping Extant Meres & Mosses

The mapping of 'Functional Ecological Units' is primarily based on topography, with use being made of lidar data. Lidar is a remote sensing technique whereby an airborne survey using lasers generates detailed topographic data (known as a Digital Terrain Model (DTM)). With approximately 70% coverage of the Meres & Mosses landscape.

Mapping of the Functional Ecological Units (FEUs) started with the identification of extant sites:-

- 1) All designated sites, SSSIs and County (Local) Wildlife Sites, that are either a mere or a moss were included.
- 2) Beyond the designated sites, use was made of a detailed peat soils map for the area. From this dataset a distinction was made between likely moss peats and extensive areas of likely fen peat associated with some of the river valleys. The moss peat sites were then reviewed using aerial photography and divided into two categories: destroyed and de-graded. The former are sites under arable, intensive grassland or other land use, where any relict habitat, and potentially even the peat itself, have been lost – these were excluded. The de-graded sites are those supporting some form of relict habitat (e.g. extensive grassland, rush pasture or woodland) offering potential for restoration – these were taken forward as FEUs.
- 3) Finally the 1:10,000 scale OS base map was scanned for names alluding to meres and mosses. All waterbodies specifically called "Mere" were included in the mapping, but sites with names suggestive of meres (e.g. Black Lake) were ignored. A few sites were identified called "Moss" – however, because these were not shown on the peat soils map, these were excluded.

For each potential FEU the lidar data was manipulated to show land within a nominal 3 metres elevation of the lowest point on the site. The FEU was then defined as the obvious basin around the lowest point – i.e. the land where it should be possible to restore hydrological function and therefore a wetland habitat mosaic (generally a nominal 1.0 - 1.5 metres above the lowest point on the site). Where no lidar data was available, the likely boundary of the FEU was estimated from the peat soils data and aerial photography.

Appendix 3

In order for a Local Wildlife Site to be recorded as in positive management all four of the following should be met:

- The conservation features for which the site has been selected are clearly documented.
- There is documented evidence of a management plan/management scheme/advisory document which is sufficiently targeted to maintain or enhance the above features.
- The management requirements set out in the document are being met sufficiently in order to maintain the above features. This should be assessed at 5 year intervals (minimum) and recorded 'not known' if the interval is greater than 5 years.
- The Local Sites Partnership has verified the above evidence.

