

Warrington Local Plan 2029/30 Scoping consultation.

Response from Cheshire Wildlife Trust 29/04/26

Question 5. What do you consider should be included in the content of the new local plan?

The focus should be on policies that promote sustainable economic growth in a way that is transformative by helping to address issues related to climate, flooding, quality of life and access to greenspace.

Putting nature at the heart of new development attracts greater investment and builds in resilience to climate change and also delivers substantial health and well-being benefits. The Cheshire region Local Nature Recovery Strategy (CrLNRS 2025, Appendix 1) has determined that Warrington, along with Cheshire, is one of the most nature-depleted regions in the UK and reversing this trend should be at the heart of sustainable development if the people and the economy of the region are to thrive.

The new local plan should help deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) by integrating nature's recovery into spatial planning and leveraging investment. The LNRS has a legal basis through the Environment Act 2021 and there are also statutory targets to halt and reverse nature's decline which the Local Plan should help deliver.

Question 10. What do you think we need to consider in planning for more homes?

Access to nature-rich greenspace is fundamentally important as time spent in nature improves people's mental and physical health, reduces the burden on the health system and promotes increased economic activity.

Delivering new homes should also deliver benefits to nature and climate through strategic planning by protecting core Local Wildlife Sites, Priority Habitats and the green corridors that connect them.

Green spaces need to be managed with appropriate funding at the outset in line with the good practice exemplified by the Milton Keynes Park Trust. Space for nature should be incorporated into the fabric of the buildings and their surroundings e.g. bird bricks, bat boxes, permeable boundaries and nature highways.

The evidence-base for identifying the key wildlife corridors, core sites and the priorities for nature's recovery in Warrington are set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025.

Question 12. How should we balance the need for more homes with protecting open spaces the natural environment and the greenbelt?

There should be an overarching Green and Blue Infrastructure strategy (aligned with the LNRS) to help underpin site allocations (with particular adherence to the mitigation hierarchy). Good planning at an early stage should mean little conflict between the need to build homes and protecting nature. However, it's important that any Green Belt release excludes land of high

ecological value, including Local Wildlife Sites and Priority Habitats. By following these principles and setting ambitious targets, such as a minimum 20% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement, new development could help wildlife in the region recover.

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that in achieving sustainable development, the planning system has three overarching objectives (economic, social and environmental), which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives). Giving substantial weight to two of these objectives and not the other, is not representative of an integrated approach to achieving sustainable development. Instead it introduces an imbalance and associated risk that environmental considerations will be weakened outweighed.

Question 15. How can planning and development help support climate action and green energy in Warrington?

- development should not be sited in flood risk areas;
- specify a minimum BNG target of at least 20%;
- use sustainable construction methods and materials;
- ensure high energy efficiency and water efficiency standards for both construction and occupation, including solar panels on all new builds; and water consumption targets of 90 litres per person per day;
- incorporate natural features like SUDs to reduce surface water flooding and deliver other nature based solutions which benefit wildlife and people; and
- be well connected for wider services and access to jobs to reduce reliance on cars; with capacity to provide for new services and supporting infrastructure such as locally sourced clean energy, waste water treatment infrastructure, active travel, public transport and access to nature and services.

Question 16. How can planning and development support high-quality design, which is appropriate for and reflective of Warrington?

Refer to answers for questions 12, 15 and 17

Question 17. How can we ensure new development promotes healthy and active lifestyles for new and existing communities?

- ensure all homes are within five minutes' walk of nature-rich green space;
- have and implement a green and blue Infrastructure strategy (aligned with the LNRS), which includes accessible natural greenspace and green active travel routes linked to decarbonised public transport, local amenities and schools;
- include 'natural health services' where social prescribing, advice and volunteering opportunities are fully embedded;
- plan and design density around compact, social and walkable places that integrate nature with the built environment.

Question 18. Is there anything else you feel we should consider as we start to prepare to update our local plan?

Warrington has the opportunity with the new local plan to provide leadership in relation to sustainable development and place-making. There should be high standards on sustainability with low carbon buildings and infrastructure, minimisation of water and energy use. Most importantly placemaking should enable people to enjoy the beauty of nature on their doorstep with innovative design. Development should integrate new and existing habitats and watercourses into landscape design taking account of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to create natural corridors that allow nature to recover.

Realising this ambition will require ambitious minimum standards (for biodiversity; landscape; energy efficiency and water efficiency) along with clear policies on how these will be assessed, monitored and enforced.

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