

Draft For Consultation

Report No. B4027C/STS/01

08 August 2008

MERSEY GATEWAY

**DRAFT SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT
STRATEGY**

“GATEWAY TO SUSTAINABILITY”

Halton Borough Council

Environment and Development Directorate

Rutland House

Halton Lea

Runcorn

WA7 2GW

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Halton's Transport Policies, strategies and implementation programmes are contained within its second Local Transport Plan, (LTP2), which covers the period 2006/7- 2010/11. This Plan has been assessed by the DfT and graded as being 'Excellent'.

1.1.2 Amongst the key issues identified within the LTP2 are the problems resulting from congestion on the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB), which, due to the high levels of demand, is unable to satisfy its dual role of providing for both strategic inter-urban movement and local trips between Runcorn and Widnes.

1.1.3 The impact of this congestion on the SJB is felt locally and sub-regionally through the constraints it places on economic development and regeneration, due to its adverse impacts on local and sub-regional highway networks when incidents occur, and in the inability to adequately provide sustainable transport to address accessibility and connectivity issues.

1.1.4 Local policies contained within Halton's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2005 complement those contained within its LTP2 by focusing on improving accessibility, promoting economic growth and enhancing the environment.

1.1.5 The LTP and UDP recognise that the only way that these issues can be effectively addressed is through the construction of a new crossing of the River Mersey.

1.1.6 Halton Borough Council has therefore invested heavily in developing proposals for a new crossing, known as the Mersey Gateway, which is programmed to be delivered in 2014/15.

1.1.7 The Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy (MG STS) sets out how the proposed Mersey Gateway Project (the Project) can encourage sustainable transport in the Borough, and enable interventions and initiatives to be developed and implemented.

1.1.8 An important component of the Project is the proposed de-linking of the SJB and downgrading its status from strategic highway route to a route for local movement, including public transport, walking and cycling.

1.2 Links between the MG STS and the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (MG RS).

1.2.1 The Project is central to the achievement of the environmental and economic regeneration aspirations of the Borough and is key in those of the sub-region. It is also important in delivering the step change improvements required in sustainable transport provision to address concerns over accessibility and connectivity as part of the wider sustainable transport and sustainability agenda.

1.2.2 The MG STS and the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (MG RS) (GVA Grimley 2008) are part of a highly integrated multi-disciplinary approach that has been taken forward for the Project since its inception. These two strategies and associated documents are highly complementary and supportive of each other and together set out a rigorous and clear approach to maximising the benefits that the Mersey Gateway project will deliver.

1.2.3 Other work streams undertaken as part of the Project include extensive environmental

and ecological studies and assessments, civil engineering design and feasibility work and traffic appraisal. The latter has focused on transport economics and modelling and has included the development of the strategic Mersey Gateway variable demand model.

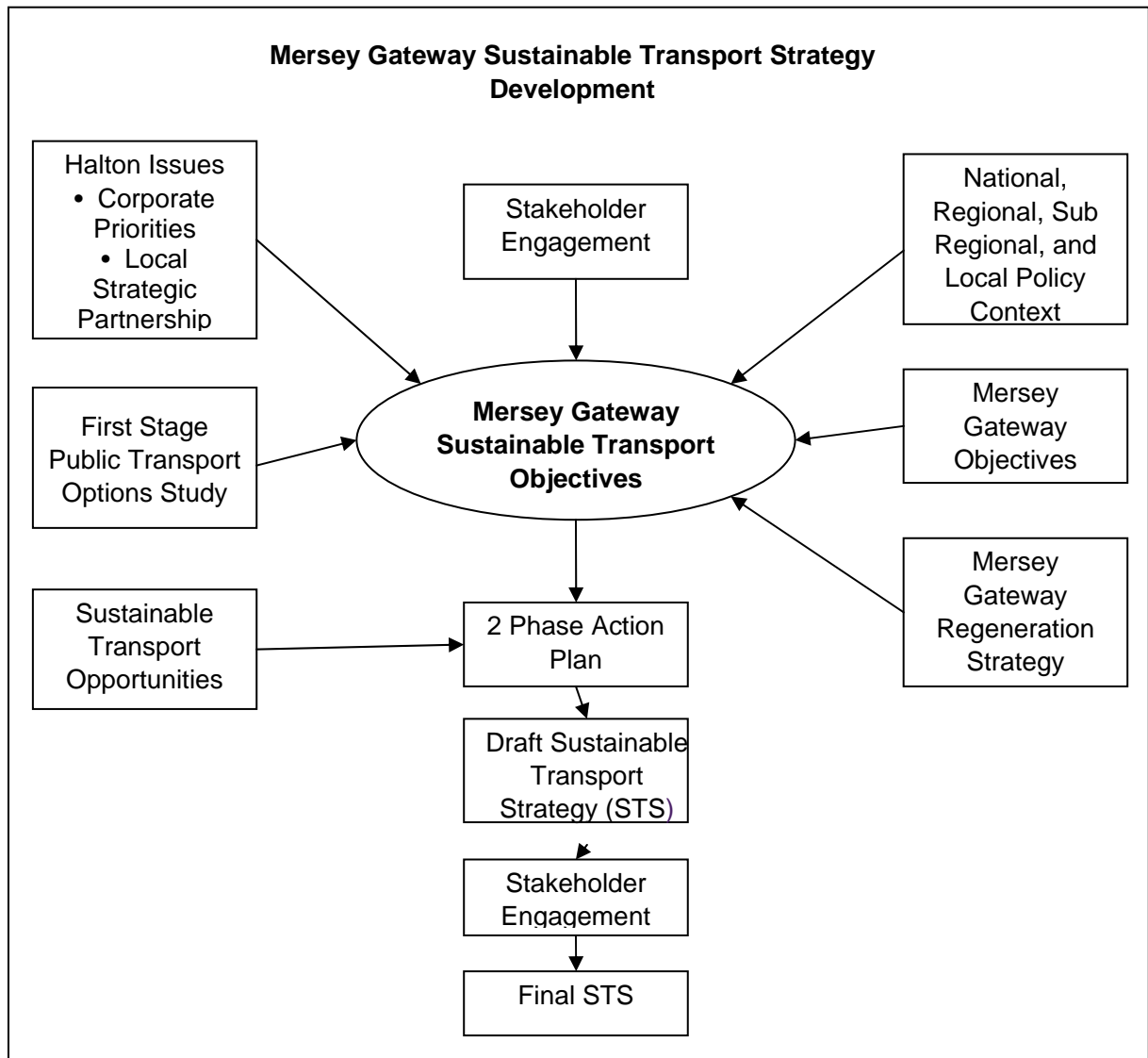
1.2.4 The Project has seven strategic objectives of which 3 relate directly to sustainable travel. These being:-

1.2.5

- Improving accessibility and conditions for public transport,
- Cycling; and
- Walking.

1.2.6 These objectives form the cornerstone of the MG STS, which clearly identifies the actions to significantly improve the sustainable transport offer in Halton, split into two distinct phases. The 1st phase focuses on those sustainable transport initiatives that will be delivered as a direct result of the Project. These initiatives will lay the foundations for a Borough wide strategy, which will be implemented as a 2nd phase.

1.2.7 The following diagram illustrates how the MG STS has been developed



1.3 This Report

1.3.1 This report for the MG STS incorporates the following inter-related sections:-

- **Section 2- Halton's Story of Place:** This section explores the historical context of Halton, its transport system and key issues that it faces;
- **Section 3- National Regional and Local Policy Context:** this section summarises what are the key relevant national, regional and local sustainable, planning and land use policies that support both the MG STS and the related MGRG;
- **Section 4- Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy:** this section describes the Sustainable Transport Strategy's vision and objectives before proceeding to specify a themed approach to delivering a step change in sustainable transport in Halton utilising a two phase Action Plan. It can be seen that the strategy is heavily influenced by the issues identified in Section 3, national, regional and local policies and key areas of work undertaken as part of the Project. In particular, the strategy draws heavily on the findings of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy and seeks to address the issues raised in the context of the 'First Stage Public Transit Options Study:' and
- **Section 5- Measuring Progress:** This section identifies challenging targets and a rigorous monitoring regime to assess progress.

2 HALTON'S STORY OF PLACE

2.1.1 This section considers the historical development and provision of transport infrastructure and services in the Borough. It also identifies key issues for the future development of sustainable transport and the role it can play in the social, economic and environmental regeneration of Halton and the wider sub region.

2.2 Historical Context and Character of Halton

2.2.1 Halton is a unique borough in the UK based around its town centres of Widnes and Runcorn, which are separated by the Mersey estuary. From a historical perspective, transport has been a dominating influence in shaping Halton's spatial characteristics, appearance and levels of urbanisation, as well as providing a foundation that has underpinned its economic base.

2.2.2 Since the mid-19th century, canals and railways coupled with the natural transport resource that the Mersey provides have helped to put Widnes and Runcorn clearly on the map, both in the UK and overseas. For example, the world's first railway dock was established at Spike Island. This was also the site of the UK's first major chemical factory, which opened in 1862 and was quickly followed by many more. This industrial legacy has produced a range of problems that the Borough still has to deal with.

2.2.3 In more contemporary times, the opening of the iconic Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) in 1961, as a replacement for what was known as the Transporter Bridge, led to immediate step change improvements in terms of road access across the Mersey between Widnes and Runcorn at the Runcorn Gap. The SJB greatly strengthened the strategic highway connections between Widnes and Runcorn and the surrounding region. This helped to further open up access and provide continued support for economic activity as well as underpin the development of the Runcorn New Town. The New Town was designated in 1964, and this too provided step change improvements in terms of better housing and living environments for people displaced from slum clearance areas in Liverpool.

2.2.4 The SJB was widened to accommodate a four-lane carriageway in 1977. At the time of the widening the bridge had a daily vehicle carrying capacity of 58,000 vehicles per day. Typically, the SJB currently carries 83,000 vehicles per weekday. It is also important to note that between the morning and evening peak periods, the traffic flow is typically in excess of 5000 vehicles per hour (two-way) and is therefore operating in excess of 70% of its capacity.

2.3 Runcorn New Town

2.3.1 Runcorn New Town was designed and developed using town planning and urban design principles that were progressive for their time particularly in respect of transport and accessibility. The design principles that were adopted for Runcorn New Town were based on the Radburn housing layout principles and led to a high degree of segregation between vehicular traffic and housing. In terms of land use, a carefully planned and integrated zoning strategy was developed, with residential development sited on or near the UK's first Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system known as the Runcorn busway. The busway was designed to provide high penetration and access to key community facilities, including the Shopping City, the UK's first American style shopping mall which was established at Halton Lea.

2.3.2 Land zoned for industrial and employment use was introduced on the periphery of the residential land in Runcorn, for example at Astmoor and Whitehouse Industrial Estate. These were in turn connected to the busway.

2.3.3 Integral to the layout and functioning of Runcorn New Town was the development of a well-defined network of expressways throughout Runcorn that had connections to Widnes via the SJB and the surrounding strategic highway network. These are discussed further below.

2.4 Population Growth in Halton

2.4.1 After a long period of decline, Halton's population, of 119,500 (2006) is showing signs of growth. This has been evident over the past 5 years and current forecasts indicate that continued growth could see the Borough's population increase by approximately 15,000 over the next 20 years.

2.5 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

2.5.1 The Government's standard measure of deprivation and inequality in England is the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), recently updated in 2007. The IMD covers a number of aspects of deprivation including disadvantage in: education; income; employment; health; and housing.

2.5.2 The Index of Multiple of Deprivation (IMD) for 2007, not only contains some of the latest data available, but also is one of the most comprehensive sources of deprivation indicators, as some 37 different indicators are used.

2.5.3 Halton is currently ranked 30th nationally (a ranking of 1 indicates that an area is the most deprived). This is 3rd highest on Merseyside, behind Knowsley and Liverpool, and 10th highest in the North West. The new IMD indicates that levels of deprivation have decreased in the borough as in the 2004 Index Halton was ranked 21st.

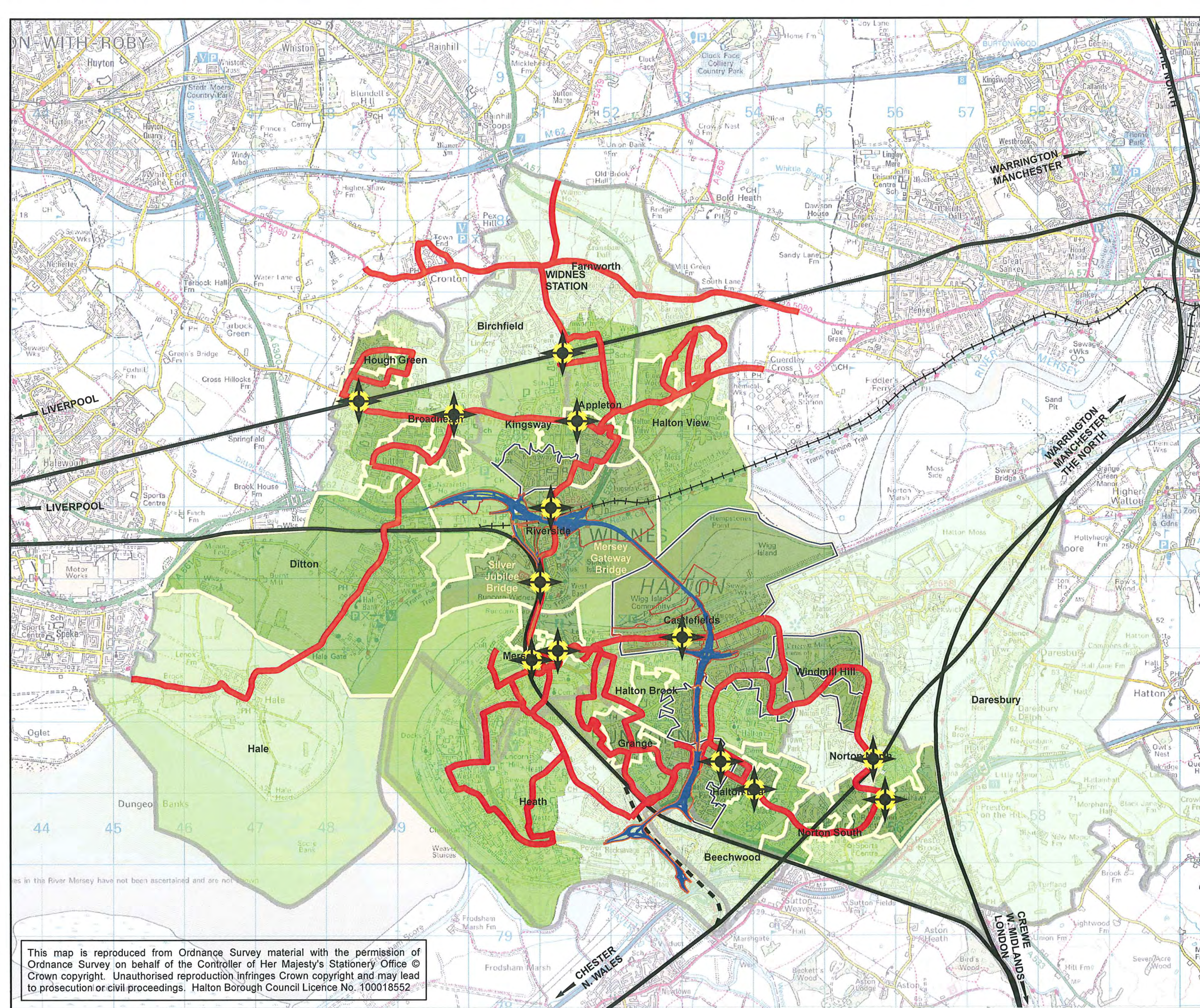
2.5.4 The proportion of Halton's population in the top 20% of super output areas, (which are small geographical units used as the building blocks for the IMD), has also decreased from 50% in 2004 to 48.5% in 2007.

2.5.5 In addition, Halton's 'concentration' of deprivation has gone down from 20th position in 2004 to 27th worst in England in 2007. 'Concentration' is a key way of identifying hot spots of deprivation within an area. However, there is still room for improvement.

2.5.6 Within Halton there are 8 super output areas in the top 975 Super Output Areas in England, i.e. within England's top 3% most deprived. This is up from 6 in 2004. The most deprived neighbourhood is ranked 306th out of 32,482 and is situated in the Windmill Hill area of Runcorn.

2.5.7 Figure 2.1 identifies the wards in the Borough that are suffering from social stress. Figure 2.1 also shows the IMD in relation to the core bus network in Halton and the SJB. Issues relating to the core bus network are considered later in this chapter.

2.5.8 It should also be noted that the 2001 National Census identified that 29.4% of households within Halton do not have access to a car/van falling below the combined average of 26.8% for England and Wales. Castlefields, Riverside and Kingsway contain the greatest percentage of households in Halton without access to a car or van. Figure 2.2 shows levels of car ownership by ward in Halton.



Legend

- Local Interchange
- Project Planning Application Boundary
- Transport & Works Act Boundary
- Halton Core Bus Network
- Freight Rail Route
- Proposed Halton Curve Passenger Route
- Passenger Rail Route
- Income IMD 2007 Worst 4%
- Income IMD 2007 Worst 20%
- Halton Ward Boundaries

Income IMD 2007 Rank

- 232 - 3429
- 3430 - 6689
- 6690 - 11480
- 11481 - 17395
- 17396 - 25896
- 25897 - 32131

Rev.	Drawn	Chkd	Approved	Date	Description

Client
HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Project
MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Title
INCOME INDICES OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION RANKINGS IN HALTON

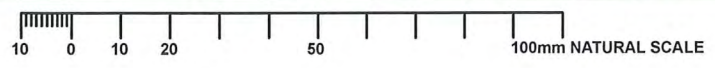
Gifford

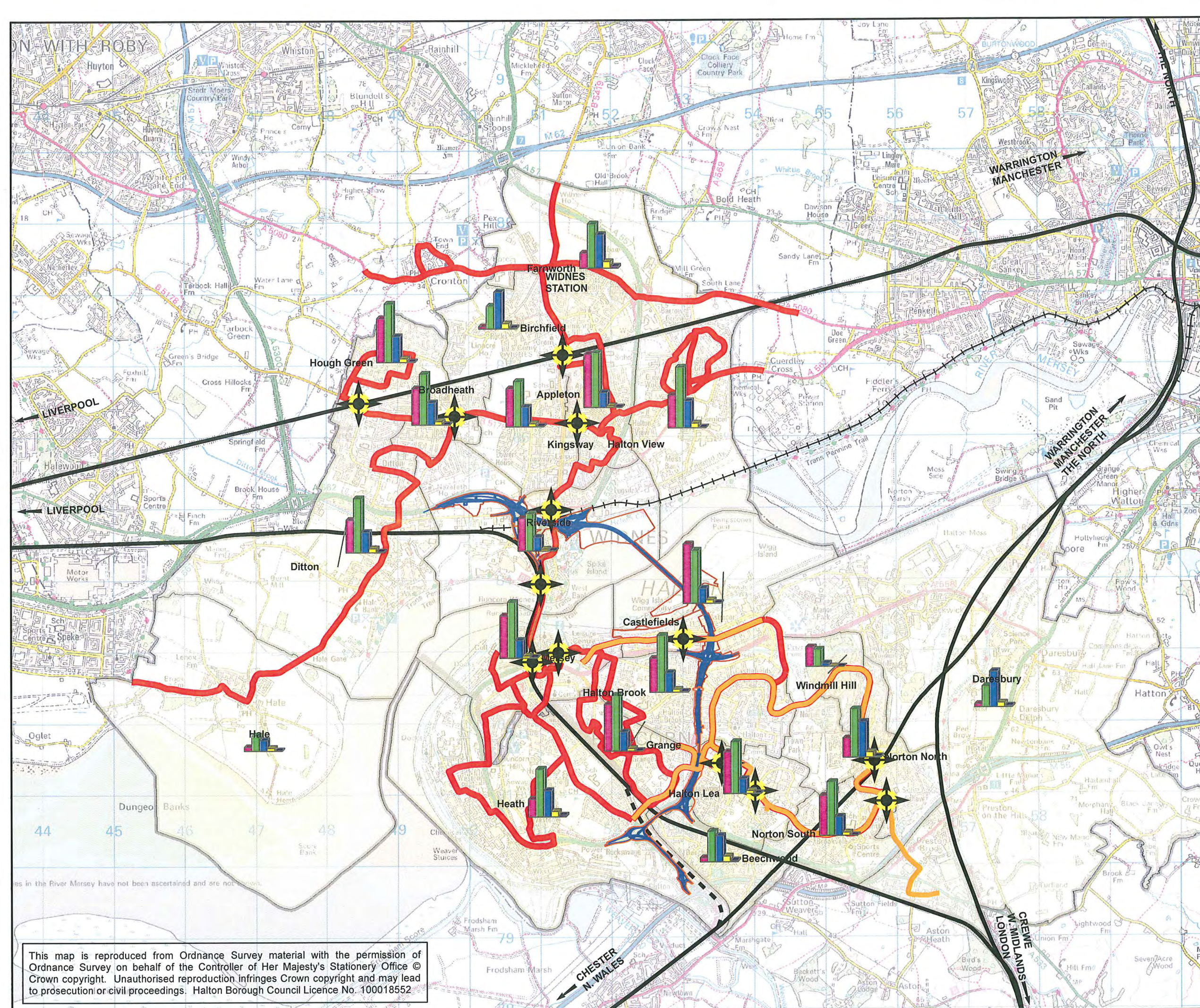
3rd Floor, King's Court, 2-4 Exchange Street, Manchester, M2 7HA
Tel: 0161 827 1890 Fax: 0161 819 5703 www.gifford.uk.com

Scale (At A3) 1:50,000	Date 02/07/08	Drawn Jane Hunter
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Drg No FIGURE 2.1	Rev. -
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Legend

- Local Interchange
- Runcorn Busway
- Project Planning Application Boundary
- Transport & Works Act Boundary
- Halton Core Bus Network
- Freight Rail Route
- Proposed Halton Curve Passenger Route
- Passenger Rail Route

Car Ownership Levels

- CO_NONE
- CO_1
- CO_2
- CO_3
- CO_4_PLUS

Halton Ward Boundaries

Rev.	Drawn	Chkd	Appr'd	Date	Description

Client
HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Project
SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Title
CAR OWNERSHIP IN HALTON

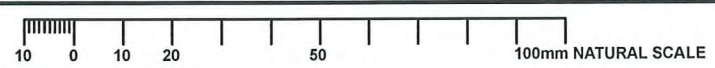
Gifford

3rd Floor, King's Court, 2-4 Exchange Street, Manchester, M2 7HA
Tel: 0161 827 1890 Fax: 0161 819 5703 www.gifford.co.uk

Scale (At A3) 1:50,000	Date 02/07/08	Drawn Jane Hunter
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Drg No FIGURE 2.2	Rev. -
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2.6 Business and Economic Prospects

2.6.1 Halton's economy has been performing well relative to the sub region and it is forecasted that this level of performance will continue. However, there is a concern with regards to the supply of labour, as fewer than 500 people are effectively and immediately available for work in the area. This could temper Halton's future growth trajectory.

2.6.2 It is forecasted, that by 2020 there will be an increase demand for employment of around 6,000, which is likely to result in a supply shortfall of 3,000. The inability to meet the demand locally implies that there will be a need for substantial net commuting, alongside a growth in population.

2.6.3 Therefore, if the economic aspirations are to be realised, then the Mersey Gateway proposals and associated sustainable transport measures are extremely important for the area's development, particularly as there is evidence of a mis-match between local future employment opportunities and the local supply base of labour.

2.7 HALTON'S SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SYSTEM

2.7.1 This section considers the key issues related to the transport modes in Halton including the network, services and facilities under the following headings:-

- Highway Network;
- Current rail network;
- Buses;
- Focus groups;
- Cycling and Pedestrian Networks;
- Road safety;
- Freight;
- Canals and waterways.
- Mobility Management; and
- Real time passenger information and intelligent transport systems and signage.

2.7.2 The Project offers significant opportunities for sustainable transport as part of the much wider regeneration programme, discussed in Section 4.

2.7.3 The Borough is a very compact urban area who's physical and socio-economic characteristics provide a fertile medium for sustainable travel. Communities across the Borough are generally linked by a comprehensive network of walking, cycling and public transport routes.

2.7.4 An analysis of local area statistics from the 2001 Census reveals that the majority of journeys are relatively short within Halton. For example 47.16% of economically active people, aged 16-74 years, travel less than 5km to work.

2.8 THE HIGHWAY NETWORK

2.8.1 The highway network in Runcorn, which largely evolved as part of the New Town development, is significantly different in character from that in Widnes which has evolved over time in the same way as many similar towns in the North West that were dominated by heavy manufacturing industry and associated development. In Runcorn, an extensive and defined network of Expressways designed primarily for motor vehicles connects with the SJB. It is the dominant highway infrastructure which includes the following major links:-

- Daresbury Expressway;
- Bridgewater Expressway;
- Central Expressway;
- Southern Expressway;
- Eastern Expressway; and
- Weston Point Expressway.

2.8.2 The Expressways were designed, where possible, to provide a high degree of segregation between motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. Local bus services mainly use the local highway network (with sections of bus priority measures at key locations mostly introduced as part of Halton's first and current Local Transport Plans). However, a dedicated segregated busway system was developed in the 1960's and 1970's by the previous Runcorn New Towns Commission. The highway network and the Runcorn Busway system is managed and maintained by Halton Borough Council.

2.8.3 The key issue affecting the highway network is one of congestion. Without doubt the worst sections of the highway network for delays is the SJB and its approach roads. However, the strides made by the Council in regenerating the Borough are resulting in an increasing number of junctions suffering from delay. It is therefore clear that action needs to be taken to increase the sustainable transport offer in the Borough and thereby 'head off' further increases in congestion.

2.9 CURRENT RAIL NETWORK

2.9.1 The Borough of Halton is dissected by 7 rail routes, two of which are currently assigned to rail freight traffic only. The rail routes are shown on Figure 2.9. These consist of the following:-

- The Liverpool Branch of the West Coast Main Line (between Weaver Junction and Warrington Bank Quay) which serves Runcorn station;
- The main spur of the West Coast Main line (between Weaver Junction and Warrington Bank Quay Stations) used by the main Scottish, West Midlands and London Euston Virgin services. No local rail stations are currently located on this section of the West Coast Main Line within the Borough;
- The route linking Liverpool Lime Street – Warrington Central and Manchester Piccadilly, with stations at Hough Green and Widnes within Halton;
- The Manchester and north Wales coast line linking Manchester – Warrington Bank Quay – Chester – Llandudno – Holyhead, with a local station at Runcorn East;

- The section of the Garston to Timperley route which links Ditton junction within the Borough to Fiddlers Ferry Power Station. Although this route is currently used exclusively by freight traffic, it passes through the heart of the Widnes Waterfront regeneration area and has therefore a potential role to play in providing local passenger rail services as part of improved Mersey Belt linkages strategy;
- The Runcorn Docks branch, which caters for freight traffic to and from the western Runcorn Docks system. This branch is linked to the main West Coast Mainline south of Runcorn Station; and
- The Halton Curve linking Halton Junction (on the West Coast Mainline Liverpool Branch) in the Heath area of Runcorn to Frodsham Junction on the main Manchester to north Wales Coast Line. This is currently used by occasional freight trains however a Parliamentary passenger train operates on summer Saturdays only comprising of one journey from Chester to Runcorn but not stopping at Helsby or Frodsham.

2.9.2 Although this network provides a comprehensive series of linkages for residents and businesses within the Borough, the various lines do not connect and, therefore, interchange opportunities are poor. Significantly, following the closure of Ditton Station in the mid 1990's, there is no direct passenger rail service linking Widnes and Runcorn. The only direct local rail line linking stations within the Borough is the route linking Hough Green to Widnes.

2.9.3 Furthermore, existing public transport, walking and cycling linkages between the various stations are underdeveloped and poorly differentiated. Figures released by the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) show that passenger rail travel to and from stations within Halton is greatly suppressed. This is compared to other similar areas across the North West of England and is mainly due to the following:-

- Limited park and ride facilities at stations with the exception of Runcorn Station on the West Coast Mainline Liverpool Branch;
- Poor passenger facilities at stations (old and underused station buildings – Widnes and Hough Green) and limited booking office opening hours (Runcorn East and Widnes);
- Limited accessibility within the design of stations with features such as stepped only footbridges and steep ramps still in existence which do not conform to national accessibility standards specified by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC); and
- Poorly sited stations on the edge of the urban area, especially Widnes and Runcorn East that are sited remote from the nearest commercial centres.

2.9.4 The current passenger rail operators on these routes are:

Liverpool Branch of the West Coast Main Line

- Virgin West Coast operates an hourly service on the Liverpool Lime Street – Runcorn – Crewe – Stafford – London service on the Liverpool Branch of the West Coast Mainline. This service is expected to be strengthened with the December 2008 proposed timetable changes;
- Virgin West Coast also operate regular services on the Weaver Junction to Warrington Bank Quay branch of the West Coast Mainline through Halton, however no local rail station exists on this branch; and

- London Midland operate regular semi-fast services on the Liverpool branch line of the West Coast Mainline linking Liverpool Lime Street – Liverpool South Parkway – Runcorn – local stations to Crewe (Acton Bridge, Winsford and Hartford), Crewe, Stafford, Wolverhampton and Birmingham New Street.

Liverpool to Manchester Route

- Northern Rail which operate local stopping services between Liverpool Lime Street – Liverpool South Parkway – Hough Green – Widnes – Warrington Central – Irlam – Manchester Oxford Road; and
- East Midland Trains (part of the Stagecoach Group) – linking Liverpool Lime Street – Widnes – Warrington Central and Manchester Piccadilly. These services are scheduled as semi fast and directly link the Borough to a wide range of destinations across the south Yorkshire, east Midlands and East Anglia.

2.9.5 These two operators combine to provide a basic three trains per hour service through Widnes station in each direction (Monday to Saturday daytimes) to both Liverpool and Manchester city centres.

Manchester and North Wales coast line

- Arriva Trains Wales provide an hourly service linking Manchester Piccadilly to Chester, Llandudno and Holyhead along the North Wales line. The only station on this line within Halton is Runcorn East station which is located on the eastern edge of the Runcorn new town area and is served by the Runcorn Busway system facilitating potentially excellent levels of bus / rail integration. Runcorn East Station has recently been adopted as a Community Station.

2.9.6 Rail currently accounts for a very small percentage share of work related journeys within Halton (1.19%).

2.9.7 Summary of Key Rail Issues Overall, Halton enjoys excellent rail links to neighbouring areas within the Liverpool City Region and Merseybelt, however significant issues remain as follows:-

- Limited internal Halton passenger rail market due to nature of network;
- Limited Park & Ride facilities;
- Rail demand is suppressed due to poor facilities at local stations;
- Bus links between stations to facilitate interchange are not well publicised and poorly differentiated;
- The rail station at Widnes is remote to the main town and commercial centre; and
- Relatively poor marketing of services locally.

2.10 BUSES

2.10.1 Local bus services provide the foundation of the local public transport network within Halton, and the vast majority of all local public transport trips. Halton's accessibility model shows that most of Halton's population live within 400m of a bus stop. Despite the extensive nature of the network local bus services only account for 6.7% of journey to work trips within Halton, although this is comparable to the national average of 7.6%

reported to travel to work by bus, coach and private bus (Census Data, 2001).

2.10.2 Furthermore, based on information provided by the bus operators, services are generally under utilised with an average passenger occupancy rate of 15% (Monday to Friday inter peaks).

2.10.3 There are two major bus operators in Halton. Arriva (North West and Wales), which is the dominant operator of commercially operated bus services within the Borough, operates over 60% of the registered bus mileage in Halton. Halton Transport Ltd is the municipal owned operator and accounts for approximately 34% of the operated mileage share in Halton.

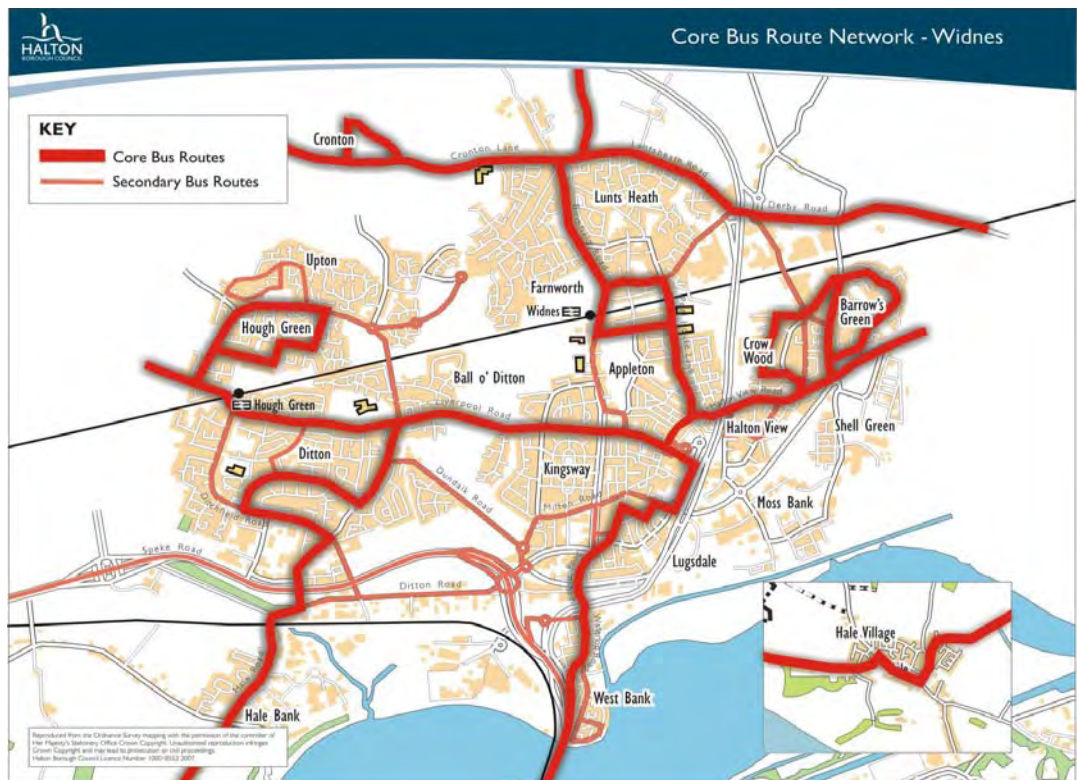
2.10.4 In addition to the above bus operators there are a further 10 smaller bus operators providing local services within the Borough mainly on contracted services for Halton Borough Council. Halton Borough Council currently spends £730,000 per year on securing socially necessary bus services, (those not provided commercially by bus companies). The most significant of which are:-

- Runcorn evening services (Runcorn Town Centre to Western Point and Halton Lea to Murdishaw via Castlefields, Windmill Hill, Norton, Runcorn East Station);
- Murdishaw Bus Interchange to Runcorn east employment areas (especially Whitehouse Industrial Estate, Daresbury Business Park, Daresbury Science and Innovation Centre and Manor Park). This service was originally introduced in 2002 using DfT Urban Bus Challenge Funding and is now funded by Halton BC; and
- Evening and Sunday services linking Widnes to Warrington town centre;

2.10.5 In addition, approximately 40% of the Halton BC local supported bus service budget is assigned to fund "de minimus" agreements which are permitted under the terms of the 1985 Transport Act. These agreements are typically to divert or alter existing commercial bus services to operate in certain areas or times of the day which would not run without public subsidy.

2.10.6 Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show the core bus route network in Halton as defined by the Halton Bus Strategy 2006/7 – 2010/11.

Figure 2.3 Core Bus Route Network- Widnes

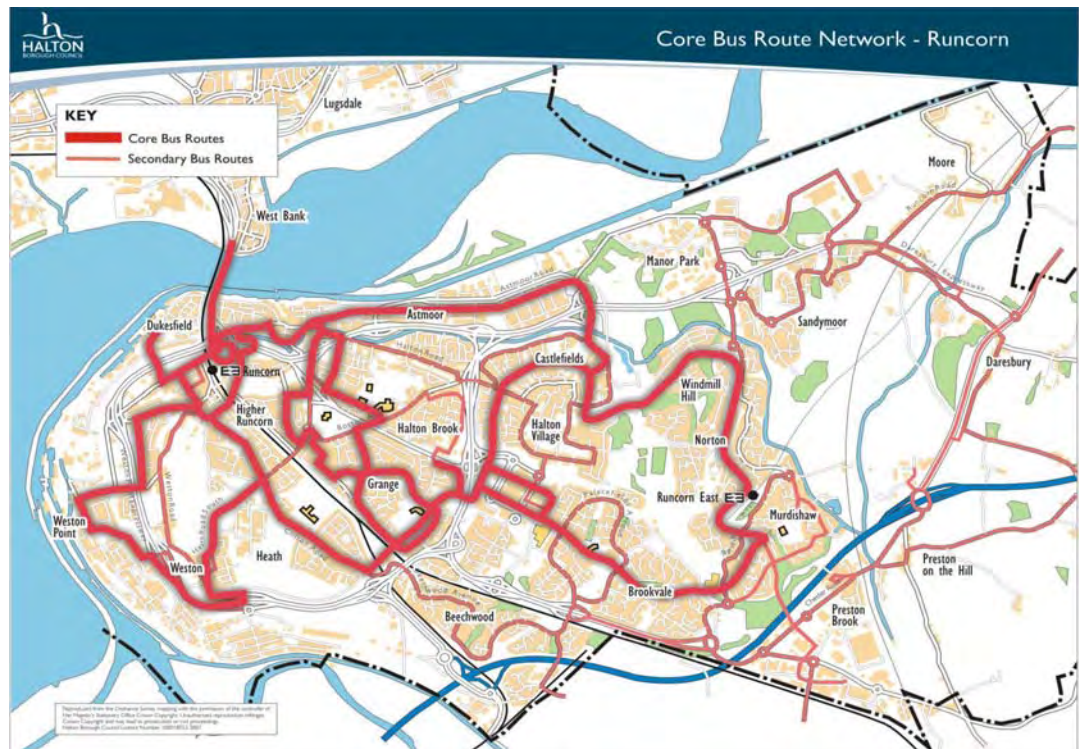


2.10.7 Currently, the three main bus corridors (on the Core Bus Route Network) with the highest bus frequencies are

- Runcorn Busway Loop Circular – (Halton Lea – Castlefields – Windmill Hill Runcorn East – Murdishaw – Brookvale and Palacefields) every 6 minutes each direction (Monday to Saturday daytime);
- Hough Green – Chesnut Lodge – Widnes Town Centre: - bus every 5 minutes In each direction (Monday to Saturday daytime); and
- Halton Lea – Runcorn High Street Bus Station via Halton Lodge and Grangeway (Cherry Tree).

2.10.8 The nature of the bus market within the Borough is very fragmented with the majority of passengers making relatively short trips. Both main operators have invested heavily in recent years and as a consequence the Borough is served by a high quality network of low floor fully accessible vehicles (95% of buses are now low floor within Halton).

Figure 2.4 Core Bus Network-Runcorn



2.10.9 Whilst Arriva (North West and Wales) is the dominant commercial operator within the Borough, both Arriva and Halton Transport Ltd compete 'head to head' on the majority of the Core Bus Route Network. The only significant sections of the network uniquely served by one of these two operators are as follows:-

Unique links served by Arriva (North West and Wales) include

- Runcorn Busway Loop North – (Castlefields – Windmill Hill);
- Hale Village;
- Beechwood (Runcorn); and
- Weston Point and Village (Runcorn).

Unique links served by Halton Transport Ltd include

- Crow Wood and Weates Close areas of eastern Widnes; and
- Sandymoor (Runcorn).

2.11 Improvements to bus network during Halton LTP 2 (2006/7 – 2010/11)

2.11.1 The Halton Bus Strategy 2006/7 – 2010/11 defined a hierarchy of local bus services within the Borough of Halton, namely:-

- Core Bus Network;
- Strategic Employment Links;

- Local Community Services; and
- Cross Boundary Links.

2.11.2 The foundation stone of the local bus network is the Core Bus Route Network (as shown in Figures 2.3 and 2.4 above). For this part of the bus network the following service quality standards were agreed with the bus companies, and are to be delivered as part of a voluntary quality partnership

- ‘Turn and go’ frequencies of every 15 minutes (or better) between 07.00am and 19.30pm (Monday to Saturday daytimes);
- At least 30 minute frequency of service evenings and Sundays; and
- All services to be operated by low floor easy access buses supported by improvements to key passenger facilities and information.

2.11.3 Table 2.1 below summarises some key outcomes from the Bus Strategy and provides an indication of progress and success achieved to date.

Table 2.1 Progress on Network since 2005/6

Issue raised in 2006 at the start of the Halton Bus Strategy 2006/7 – 2010/11.	Now June 2008
<i>“Lack of a multi operator ticket covering the whole of the Borough.”</i>	New “Halton Hopper” multi operator ticket introduced in June 2006. Ticket retailed through HBC Direct Link Shops, Contact Centre and Internet. Ticket sales approaching 1,000 per month. Discounted versions introduced for learners and NEET (not in employment, education or training) young people.
<i>“Currently there are a number services within the Borough that are not fully accessible.”</i>	Over 95% of buses within the Borough are now low floor and fully accessible. HBC continues to work with local operators to ensure the goal of 100% low floor operation is achieved by the end of 2010/11. Arriva introduced a fleet of 39 low floor buses in 2006 at a cost of £4.5m.
<i>“Relatively good cross boundary services on certain corridors”</i>	This remains the case, and has recently been improved following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of a 15 minute daytime and 30 minute frequency on the service 79C by Arriva in January 2006; • Introduction of a frequent service by Halton Transport Ltd on the service 14 linking Widnes to Liverpool. • Introduction of improved daytime service linking Widnes – St.Helens by Arriva; • Enhanced service between Halton and Warrington; and • New service 700 introduced linking Widnes to Liverpool John Lennon Airport and Manchester City Centre.
<i>“Relatively stable commercial bus network with frequent services throughout the day on most key routes within the Borough.”</i>	The bus network remains relatively stable within Halton. The two main operators, Halton Transport Ltd and Arriva restrict registrations changes to one major change per year.
<i>“Poor interchange opportunities /</i>	Bus / rail connections have been improved at

<p>facilities between the rail and local bus network.”</p>	<p>Runcorn Rail Station as part of the Quality Corridor initiative funded as part of the Local Transport Plan.</p> <p>The national “Plus Bus” ticketing scheme extended to serve Halton from May 2008 allowing through bus / rail ticketing within Halton.</p>
<p>“Potential funding opportunities for improved new services through “Kickstart” funding etc.”</p>	<p>Halton was successful in securing DfT ‘Kickstart’ funding in 2006 to improve the service 61 in north Widnes. This scheme introduced a 10-minute service in each direction between Farnworth and Widnes Town Centre.</p>

2.12 Network Performance – Core Bus Network Monday to Saturday Daytime

2.12.1 Figures 2.5 and 2.6 show the extent to which existing Monday to Saturday Daytime frequencies on the Core Bus Network meet the service requirement thresholds as set out in the Halton Bus Strategy (2006/7 – 2010/11). It shows that all parts of the Core Bus Network in Widnes meet the minimum quality thresholds, whereas in Runcorn the part of the network serving Weston Point and Weston Village still fails to meet the minimum quality threshold requirements, both in terms of service frequency and vehicle quality. As Figure 2.1 shows, the Weston Point and Weston Village areas suffer from higher than average levels of multiple deprivation.

Figure 2.5 Core bus network Widnes- Monday to Saturday Daytime

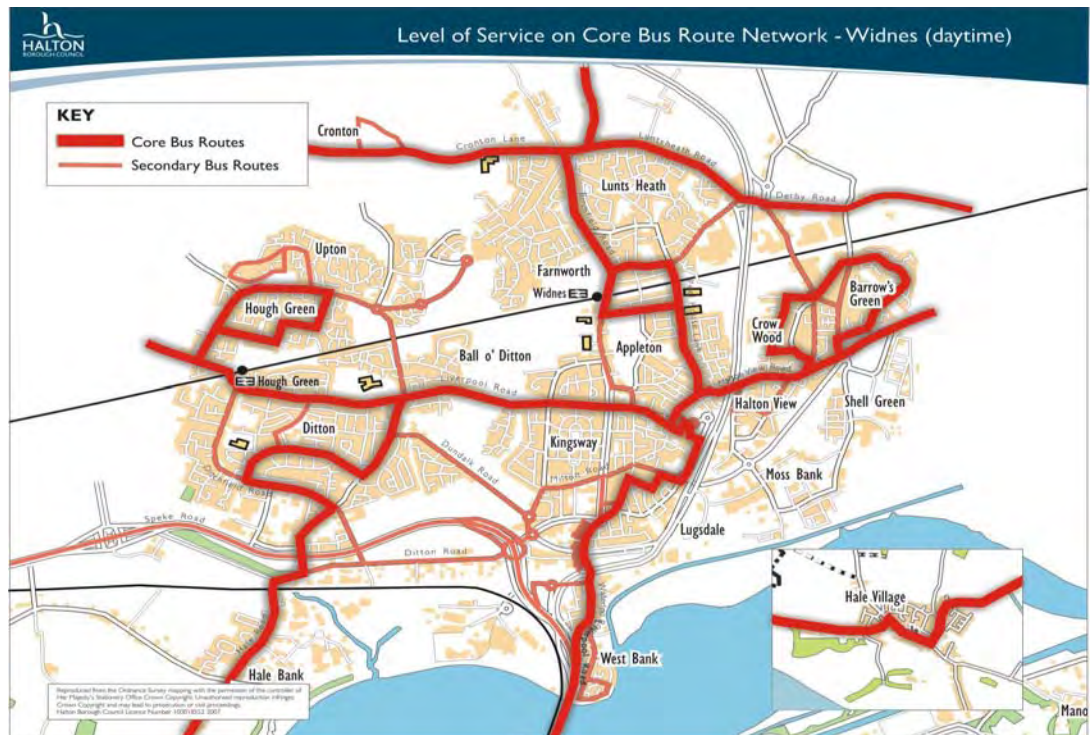
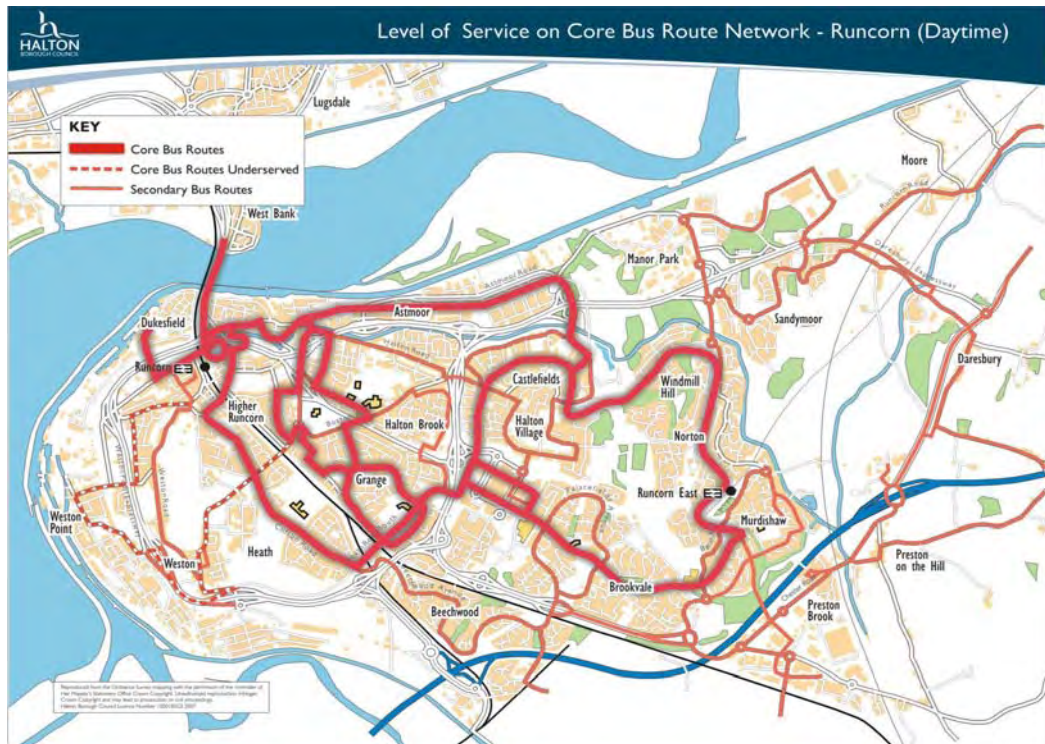


Figure 2.6 Core bus network Runcorn - Monday to Saturday Daytime



2.13 Evenings and Sundays

2.13.1 Figures 2.7 and 2.8 show the current provision of service on the Core Bus Route Network during evenings and Sundays. At these times, large areas of northern and eastern Widnes are under served including Weston Point and the northern Runcorn busway loop. In addition, although the minimum service threshold has been reached on the main Runcorn busway loop on Sunday daytimes, evening services on the busway remain poor (hourly or less on the northern section). Again as Figure 2.1 shows, these areas of the Borough exhibit high levels of multiple deprivation.

Figure 2.7 Core Bus Network Widnes Evenings and Sundays

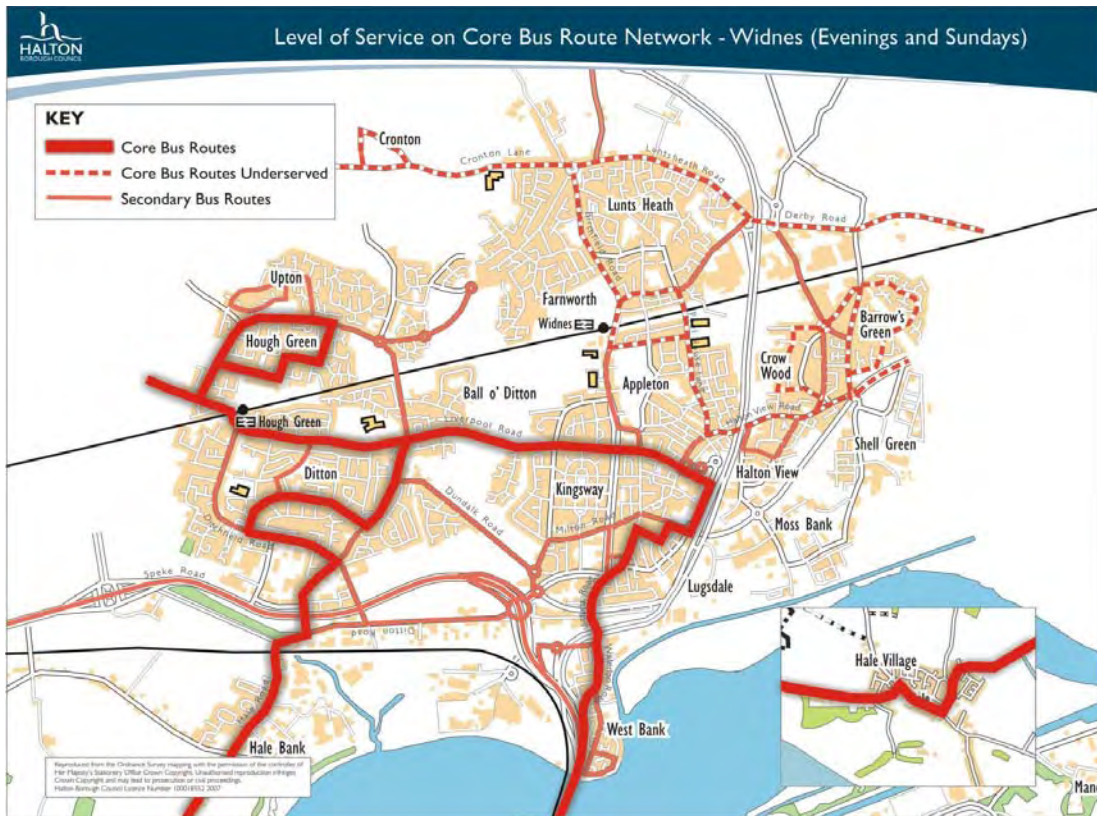
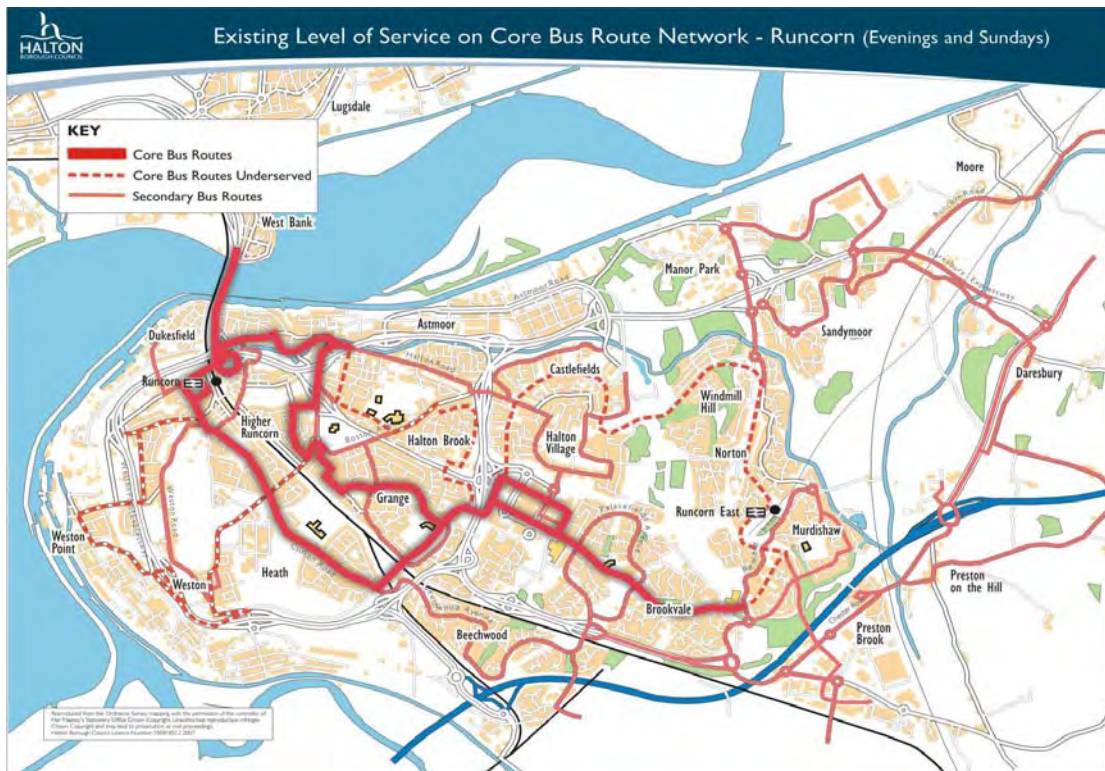


Figure 2.8 Core Bus Network- Runcorn Evenings and Sundays



2.14 Strategic Employment Links

2.14.1 The majority of bus services providing strategic employment links are in fact subsidised by Halton Borough Council. The services comprise of the following:-

- Service 200 linking Murdishaw and Runcorn East Station to key employment sites in eastern Runcorn; and
- Service 13 linking Widnes town centre to the Widnes Waterfront Economic Development Zone.

2.14.2 Patronage on both services is relatively subdued due to the dispersed nature of employment locations within the two areas and varied / flexible employment patterns resulting in difficulties in operating conventional fixed route services in these areas. Halton Transport Ltd provides a limited number of commercial peak hour services to Whitehouse Industrial Estate.

2.15 Local Community Services

2.15.1 These services are mostly operated by Halton Community Transport (HCT) under an SLA with Halton Borough Council. Services funded to date include the following:-

- Dial a Ride;
- 'Women's Safe Transport;
- Accessible Learners Service for post 16 learners; and
- Volunteer driver's scheme.

2.15.2 The services offered by HCT are greatly valued in the community and have consistently outperformed targets set for accessible travel in both LTPs.

2.15.3 Following a recent Best Value Review, HBC and HCT are currently in the process of better integrating these services as part of the new 'Door 2 Door' service.

2.16 Cross Boundary Services

2.16.1 The majority of the commercial bus services within Halton operate cross boundary to neighbouring local authority areas. Details of key cross boundary links provided from the main centres within Halton are shown in Table 2. 2 below.

2.16.2 As can be seen in Table 2.2 below, there is an excellent service linking Halton to Liverpool City Centre, with all major centres served. However the following key gaps remain:-

- Runcorn to St. Helens (particularly St. Helens Hospital); and
- Widnes to Chester (only served on a Sunday).

2.16.3 Furthermore, the only bus cross boundary corridor, not directly served by passenger rail is currently Widnes or Runcorn to St. Helens Town Centre. There are also very poor cross boundary local bus services to key urban areas in Vale Royal (Cheshire East and Chester Shadow Authority) in particular Northwich and Winsford, although Frodsham and Helsby are well served on the Manchester to north Wales lines (services call at Runcorn

East Station) and local bus services linking Runcorn (Halton Lea) to Chester. The commercial viability of key bus services within the Borough is heavily dependent upon cross boundary patronage levels in other neighbouring authority areas, particularly Merseyside.

Table 2.2 Summary of Cross Boundary Bus Services in Halton

Key Cross Boundary Destination	Number of Services	Service Numbers	Combined Monday – Saturday Peak Hour Frequency (buses per hour in each direction)	Direct Service from Widnes Town Centre	Direct Service from Halton Lea	Direct Service from Runcorn Town Centre
Liverpool	7	X1, 82A, 82B, 79C, 14, 61, 6	16	✓	✓	✓
Warrington	4	62,110,66, X30	5	✓	✓	✓
St. Helens	2	17/ A and 33A	3	✓	✗	✗
Chester	2	X30, 21	2	✗	✓	✗
Huyton	2	6, 61	4	✓	✓	✓
Whiston Hospital	2	6B,61	2	✓	✓	✓
Manchester City Centre	1	700	1	✓	✗	✗

2.17 Bus Patronage

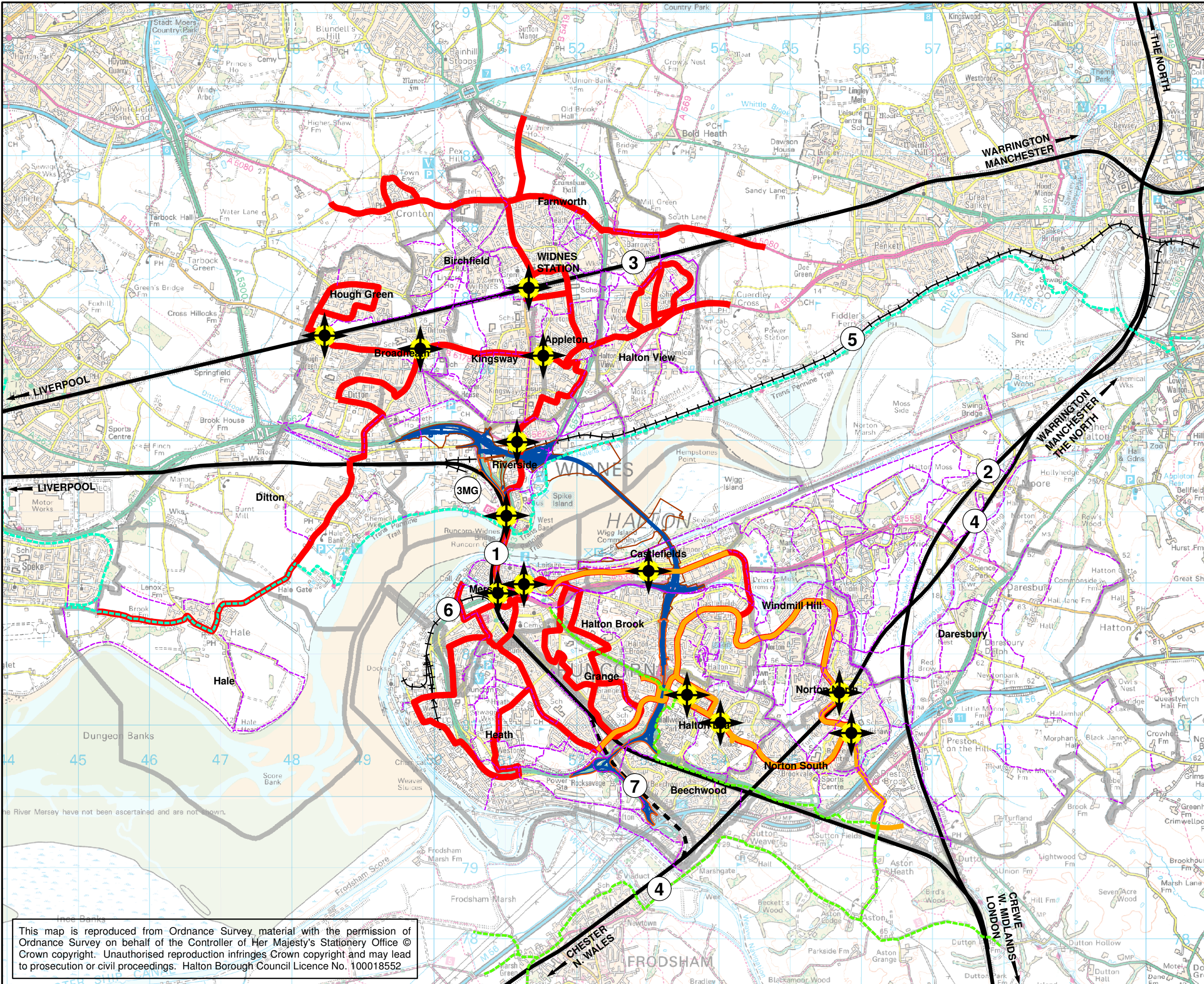
2.17.1 Approximately 5.94m passenger journeys were reported to have been made on the local bus network within Halton during 2007/8. This figure indicates a 2% fall in local bus passenger journeys during 2007/8. This follows the unprecedented reported 12% growth in 2006/7 following the introduction of the improved concessionary travel arrangements and significant improvements to commercial services by Arriva in January 2006. Evidence appears to point to at best stabilisation or slight fall in bus patronage following strong growth in 2006/7.

2.18 The Runcorn Busway

2.18.1 The Runcorn Busway was developed as an integral part of the Runcorn new town over 30 years' ago and is the first example of a segregated Busway or Bus Rapid Transit system to be introduced in the UK. Its location is shown on Figure 2.9. The Runcorn Busway is classed as highway and its use is largely restricted to buses only, apart from some other limited vehicles such as essential maintenance and the emergency services).

2.18.2 There are four component sections to the Runcorn Busway as follows:-

- A loop taking in Halton Lea including its 2 bus stations, Castlefield, Windmill Hill, Runcorn East Railway Station, Murdishaw Interchange and Palace Fields;
- A branch between Murdishaw Interchange and the Whitehouse Industrial Estate;



- Legend**
- Local Interchange
 - Cycle Routes**
 - Cycleways
 - NCN 5
 - Trans Pennine Trail (NCN 62)
 - Runcorn Busway
 - Project Planning Application Boundary
 - Transport & Works Act Boundary
 - Halton Core Bus Network
 - Freight Rail Route
 - Proposed Halton Curve Passenger Route
 - Passenger Rail Route
 - Halton Ward Boundaries
- 1 Liverpool Branch of West Coast Main Line (between Weaver Junction and Warrington Bank Quay).
 - 2 Main spur of West Coast Main Line (between Weaver Junction and Warrington Bank Quay Stations).
 - 3 Liverpool Lime Street to Warrington Central and Manchester Piccadilly route.
 - 4 Manchester and North Wales coast line. Section of the Garston to Timperley route.
 - 5 Manchester and North Wales coast line. Section of the Garston to Timperley route.
 - 6 Runcorn Docks Branch.
 - 7 Halton Curve.
- 3MG 3MG formerly known as Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park.

Rev.	Drawn	Chkd	Approved	Date	Description

Client
HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Project
MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Title
HALTON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT NETWORK

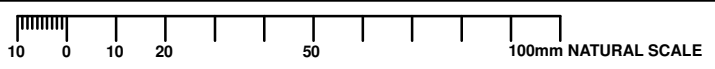
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- A branch between Halton Lodge to Beechwood which links Beechwood Avenue to Halton Lea via the Arriva Runcorn Garage; and
- A branch running through the Astmoor Industrial Estate between Bridge Street in Runcorn Old Town and Arkwright Road

2.18.3 Halton BC has implemented several key improvements to infrastructure on the busway system as part of the first and second LTP period including:-

- Modernisation and upgrade of Halton Lea North Bus Station;
- Improvements to key interchanges and stops including Halton Hospital, Brookfields and Halton High School;
- Castlefields District Centre proposals.
- Removal of poorly maintained vegetation and landscaping; and
- Removal of low clearance pedestrian bridges and unpopular pedestrian subway crossings at key locations.

2.18.4 Although the Runcorn Busway system remains a key part of the Halton bus network, parts of the system require considerable upgrade, and maintenance / management issues remain challenging. Key issues include:-

- Poor pedestrian connections between Halton Lea North and South Bus Stations when Halton Lea Shopping Centre is closed;
- A number of stops still require upgrading especially Halton Brow and Murdishaw.
- Poor information and signage across the busway system;
- Poor perceptions of safety and personal security on segregated sections of the busway system; and
- Under-utilised sections of busway particularly the Murdishaw to Whitehouse Industrial Estate link.

2.19 Quality Bus Corridor Strategy in Halton

2.19.1 A strategy of introducing Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) improvements has been integral to both Local Transport Plans in Halton and continues to be an effective way of bringing about a highly integrated range of public transport, highway and urban realm improvements and interventions encompassing the following:-

- Improvements to bus stops and the passenger waiting environments;
- Bus priority measures to improve reliability and regularity of services and reduce journey times;
- Integrated walking and cycling facilities;
- Traffic calming; and
- Improved street lighting and safety and security measures.

2.19.2 The QBC strategy and programme has been integral to improvements on the following corridors including Widnes to Runcorn via the SJB and the Liverpool corridor in Widnes on Liverpool Road.

2.20 Key Interchange Points

2.20.1 The key bus interchange points on the local bus network and shown in Figure 2.9 are:-

- Halton Lea North and South Bus Stations;
- Runcorn High Street Bus Station;
- Widnes Vicarage Road;
- Widnes Green Oaks;
- Murdishaw;
- Halton Hospital; and
- Chesnut Lodge (Widnes).

2.21 Issues identified in the Halton Access Plan 2006/7 – 2010/11

2.21.1 The Halton Access Plan identified the need for improvements to local bus services to key out-of-borough health facilities, namely Warrington General Hospital and Whiston Hospital. The latest accessibility indicators from the DfT (2005) reaffirm that general levels of accessibility are high within Halton to a range of key facilities however, further key improvements are needed to local bus services to ensure better levels of accessibility to out-of-borough hospital sites.

2.22 FOCUS GROUPS

2.22.1 This in- depth focus group consultation work was commissioned by Halton Borough Council and conducted in February and March 2008 and examined the following:-

- Attitudes and opinions to sustainable transport to travel, as a whole, as well as to individual aspects, e.g. public transport. This included in-depth probing for reasons, motivations and influences for peoples' attitudes and opinions;
- Behaviour and usage in terms of current travel patterns, and how these would/could/might change in future, for example, the impact of a new bridge and usage of different forms of transport; and
- Profiling of the characteristics of current and future users of different transport methods.

2.22.2 In summary the headline findings were as follows:-

- Personal safety and security and fear of crime and attack is a major deterrent to using public transport, especially buses;
- Public transport is limited in the services it can provide;
- Convenience and comfort are key reasons for using cars; and

- Participants, most of whom were Halton residents, demonstrated a low level of awareness of wider environmental issues and carbon footprints.

2.23 Safety and security

2.23.1 Respondents stated they wanted to 'make it safer to walk around', 'to walk to bus stops', and 'to train stations'.

2.23.2 Specific areas identified for improvement included the under-passes for example, in Runcorn Old Town to be better lit/made safer to walk through

2.23.3 Bus Stops in Halton are a major inhibitor to the use of public transport. Comments included, 'more lighting needed at bus stops', and 'make them safer, more welcoming, then more people would use them'.

2.23.4 The Runcorn Busway was identified as 'dangerous', a 'real danger', and that 'the stops on the busway are not attractive or welcoming' and that lighting is poor.

2.23.5 The railway stations were also heavily criticised. Runcorn East was identified as 'unfriendly', 'unwelcoming' and 'very poorly lit'. It was also noted that 'no-one there/no security/no staff' and that the car park is insecure', 'wouldn't leave my car there'. Hough Green and Widnes North were also identified as 'need for better lighting' and 'better security'. Even the taxi office 'looks uninviting/unwelcoming/dark/unsafe'. Runcorn Station was viewed slightly more positively as 'bright' and 'well maintained'.

2.23.6 Walking routes improvements were identified as follows:-

- More walkways along the River Mersey to be opened; and
- The walkway across the SJB should be made more user friendly', 'more attractive to use', 'have better access/better signage from both sides of the River'.

2.23.7 Improved road safety suggestions for pedestrians and cyclists included the following:-

- More separation of pedestrians from cars;
- Better control of buses/coaches/cars stopping/parking outside schools;
- More speed bumps;
- More speed cameras;
- Better policing;
- Give more priority to pedestrians
- Better road planning at entrances/exits to some car parks; and
- More wheelchair ramps off kerbs, also better for prams and buggies.

2.23.8 The Car Respondents who owned cars were very positive about the advantages the car, which was generally perceived as quicker, easier, more comfortable and more convenient. Other comments included the necessity of a car for transporting disabled relatives, or large families. Again, many mentioned the safety and security that the car offered compared to public transport.

2.23.9 Cars are typically not viewed as a problem in the area, and that their use was having a limited individual impact on the environment.

2.23.10 Those problems which were identified included:-

- Congestion on the SJB exacerbated by the closure of the SJB to road traffic due to suicides (jumpers), accidents and road works;
- The cost of driving;
- Speed bumps;
- Other drivers;
- Road works; and
- No health benefits

2.24 Public Transport

2.24.1 The general perception is that public transport is unreliable and that you 'have to wait around' and that it 'needs to be on time/arrive on time'.

2.24.2 Buses Comments on the limitation of public transport services included:-

- 'Buses don't go where I want to go'
- 'Need more routes'
- 'More destinations'
- 'Limits where you can live'
- 'It limits where I can go'
- "It limits 'where I can work'

2.24.3 Instances of buses driving past you waiting at the stops, especially at night and concerns over the safety on board buses was also raised including:-

- Overcrowding at peak times;
- Letting passengers stand in the bus;
- People falling over on the bus;
- Driving off before get chance to sit down;
- Drivers always in a rush;
- Pulling out in front of cars; and
- Stop thugs getting on.

2.24.4 Suggestions to improve safety on the buses included the re-introduction of bus

conductors who could collect fares instead of the driver and speed up the service, and who could also help people with kids/older people/with shopping/buggies. An additional person on board would also make people feel safer/more secure.

2.24.5 Similarly, suggestions also included improving the comfort of buses; improved courtesy from drivers; improved, more accessible detailed information on bus services and discount tickets; and that prices in general should be reduced.

2.24.6 Comments also included 'if public transport was better, cars would not be used as much', that 'public transport would cut the traffic' and that 'you can get more people in a bus than in a car'.

2.24.7 Specific routes were identified by respondents who had experienced specific problems using services that operate on these routes:-

- Widnes to Manor Park/Daresbury;
- Runcorn to Whitehouse (for evening shift – which has been withdrawn due to vandalism);
- Widnes to Whiston Hospital;
- Widnes to Warrington; and
- Runcorn Centre to Warrington.

2.24.8 Evening and night time services in particular were criticised, comments included:-

- "During day time – they are quite regular".
- 'Need later services'
- So they can be used to go out
- Especially Fridays/weekends
- 'Would encourage me to use buses more/use car less/less drinking and driving'.

2.25 Trains

2.25.1 The times of trains were criticised as inconvenient. Other issues included the inaccessibility/lack of attractiveness of the train stations.

2.26 Summary of Key Bus Issues

2.26.1 Although great strides have been made to improve the quality of bus services within Halton, which has resulted in recent increased patronage, a number of key issues remain to be addressed including:-

- Bus network remains very traditional with services primarily focused on existing commercial and town centres;
- Communities in western Runcorn are relatively poorly served by local bus services compared to other comparable areas (stimulus to improve services is provided by new Housing Growth Point proposal in western Runcorn);

- The busway is under utilised, requires upgrading in terms of information, signing and facilities, perceived as unsafe in parts and the connections between Halton Lea bus stations are poor.
- The northern section of the busway serving communities such as Castlefields and Windmill Hill is poorly served in the evenings despite having very high levels of multiple deprivation;
- Bus services to peripheral employment areas remain relatively poor and difficult to sustain on a commercial basis due to relatively low passenger numbers and dispersed nature of journey patterns;
- In terms of factors mitigating against the use of buses; the public have concerns that the services are not as convenient and comfortable as a car and are limited, access and facilities at bus stops need improving and personal security is an issue;
- Bus services to new housing areas particularly Sandymoor (eastern Runcorn) and Upton Rocks (northern Widnes) remain relatively poor;
- There is evidence of oversupply and wasteful competition between the two main operators on the key Widnes – Hough Green – Wavertree – Liverpool City Centre corridor;
- Further service improvements are needed to link key communities to out of Borough hospital sites especially Warrington and Whiston (St Helens) Hospitals; and;
- The bus network remains vulnerable to external operational influences in neighbouring areas particularly Merseyside.

2.27 CYCLING AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORKS

- 2.27.1 Cycling is a key mode of transport that can offer a sustainable alternative to the car and has many of the same benefits as walking. The Government's 2004 White Paper, *The Future of Transport*, states that 'there is huge potential for levels of walking and cycling to increase' and 'while there will always be some short trips for which a car is the most convenient choice (carrying heavy shopping, for example), many of these short journeys could be done on foot or by bike'. It goes on to recognise that 'concerns about safety deter many people from choosing to cycle or walk' and that it is the Government's aim 'that people are safer, and feel safer, whether on a bike or on foot.
- 2.27.2 Halton possesses an extensive network of walking networks, cycling networks, bridleways and public rights of way that extend across Halton and beyond its boundary.

2.28 Cycle Network

- 2.28.1 Halton Borough affords excellent potential for cycling journeys (both recreational and utility). However, whilst only 1.96% of work journeys are made by cycling within Halton, as 47.16% of local residents live within 5km of their place of work, there is good potential to encourage a greater number of short journeys to be made by walking and cycling within Halton. Given the relatively advantageous topography and mild climate, cycling offers a realistic option for shorter journeys within the Borough.
- 2.28.2 Sustrans claims that 75% of the UK's population lives within 2 miles of the National Cycle Network. This gives some indication of the potential demand for these types of routes and facilities. Two key strategic routes run through Halton and these are NCN 62 the Trans

Pennine Trail in Widnes, and NCN 5 in Runcorn. The routes of NCN 62 and NCN 5 in relation to Halton are shown on Figure 2.10 below. This figure also shows the proposed future route of NCN 82, which will connect Widnes with Runcorn via the SJB. This has not been introduced to date because of the inherent deficiencies of the existing facilities.

2.28.3 The Borough already has an excellent network of cycle routes, which are particularly well developed within central and eastern Runcorn. The Borough Council has inherited a comprehensive network of segregated cycle routes, which were specifically designed around the Radburn housing layout principles by the previous Runcorn New Town Development Corporation discussed earlier. Whereas in Widnes, which has a more traditional highway network, the corresponding cycle network mostly relies on the use of shared road space with other users. Halton Borough Council, over the last 10 years, has made considerable progress in upgrading the cycle network through the Halton Local Transport Plan process.

2.28.4 The current cycle network can best be described as a hierarchy of interlinking and complementary routes and corridors, consisting of:-

- Longer distance strategic routes (the majority of which are part of the defined National Cycle Network), which connects with the Borough, in particular the Trans Pennine Trail (NCN62 discussed below) running along the north bank of the River Mersey between Hale and Fiddlers Ferry Power Station, and the Bridgewater Canal route (NCN5) through central and eastern Runcorn; Can these be added to Fig 2.3
- Core intra-borough cycle routes linking key commercial centres with the secondary commercial centres and other key facilities such as health, leisure and employment; and
- Neighbourhood routes which branch off the Core Cycle Network.

2.28.5 As part of the Halton Local Transport Plan all three hierarchies of the route have been progressively updated and improved. However, there are currently poor and undefined strategic cycle links between Halton and the neighbouring boroughs of St. Helens and Knowsley. This issue will also be addressed as part of the Strategy.

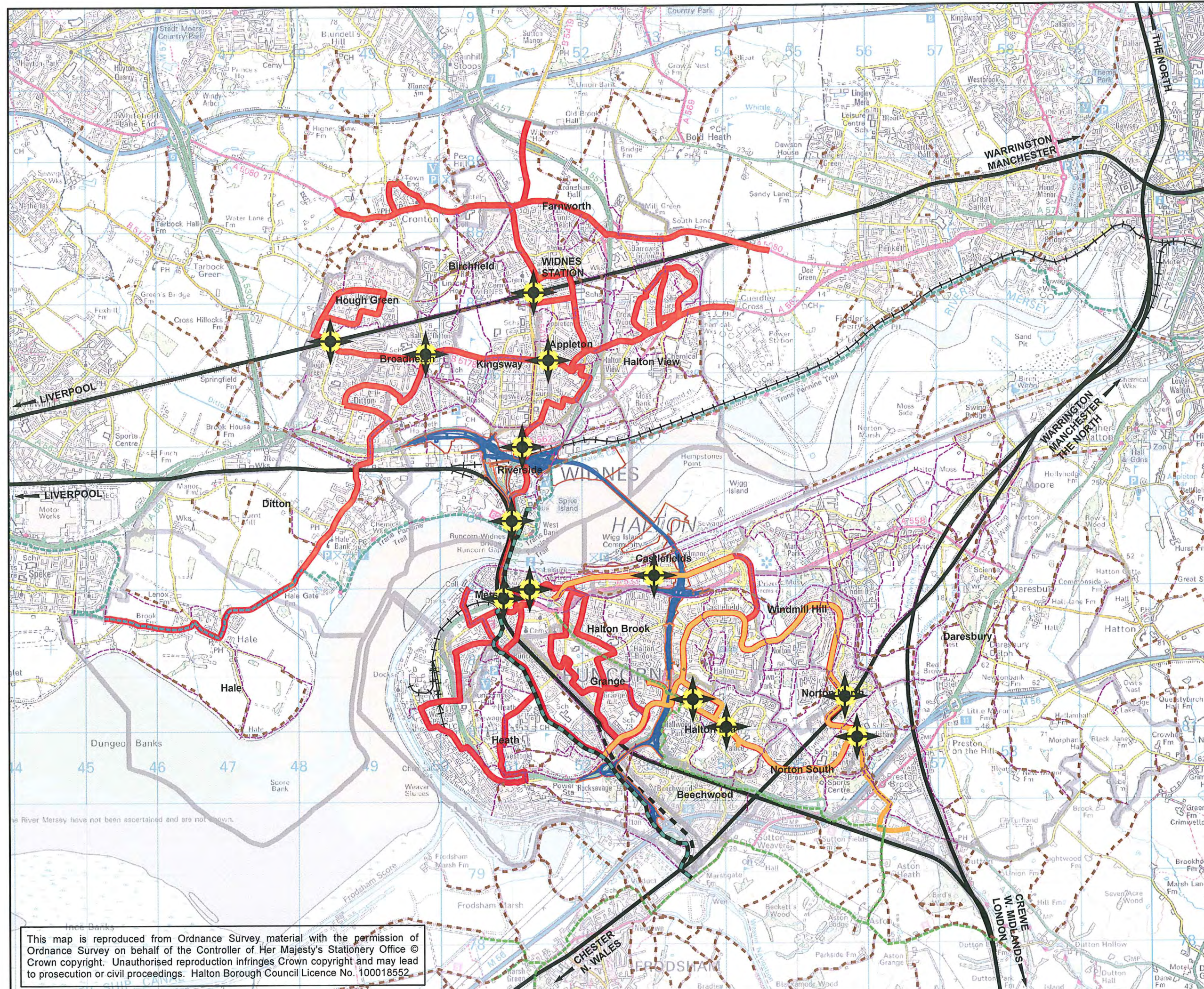
2.29 Local Demand Catchments for Cycling

2.29.1 Work undertaken by Gifford in 2006 indicated that higher proportions of cycle use might be anticipated in wards with high proportions of journeys to work between 2km and 5km. However, it was further noted that for travel to work journeys of less than 2km, walking might be a better alternative.

2.29.2 The wards of Riverside and Mersey are located at either end of the Silver Jubilee Bridge. For journeys to work of between 2km and 5km these wards are in the top 15% of wards within Halton. But, for journeys to work of less than 2km, these wards are in the lowest 40% of wards within Halton. This suggests that demand for cycling over the Silver Jubilee Bridge may be higher than demand for walking for travel to work journeys.

2.30 Trans Pennine Trail

2.30.1 The Trans Pennine Trail National Cycle Network Route 62 (NCN 62) is a multi-user route that runs across the North of England from Southport in Merseyside to Hornsea East in Yorkshire. NCN62 passes under the Silver Jubilee Bridge in West Bank. It runs along the northerly side of the Mersey estuary in an east to west alignment alongside the 3MG site



- Legend**
- Local Interchange
 - Public Right of Way
 - Cycleways
 - NCN 5
 - Trans Pennine Trail (NCN 62)
 - Proposed future route for NCN
 - Runcorn Busway
 - Project Planning Application Boundary
 - Transport & Works Act Boundary
 - Halton Core Bus Network
 - Freight Rail Route
 - Proposed Halton Curve Passenger Route
 - Passenger Rail Route
 - Halton Ward Boundaries

Rev.	Drawn.	Chkd	Apprvd	Date	Description

Client
HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Project
MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Title
LOCAL INTERCHANGES, CORE BUS NETWORK, RUNCORN BUSWAY, CYCLE ROUTES AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

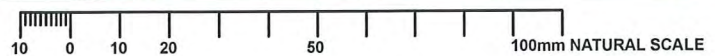
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onto Spike Island. It then continues east following the St Helens Canal towards Warrington, Lymm and Stockport before going over the Pennines into South Yorkshire. See Figure 2.10 showing the route in Halton.

2.30.2 NCN 5 is the strategic multi user route that exists in the south of the Borough in Runcorn and provides strategic connections between Runcorn Old Town and Vale Royal, Weaver Valley, Chester and North Wales. NCN5 comes into the south easterly quadrant of the Borough near the Whitehouse Industrial Estate and runs parallel with the Southern Expressway. At Beechwood it turns north to connect with Halton Lea Shopping Centre and then turns North West to Runcorn Centre where the route currently terminates.

2.31 The Bridgewater Way

2.31.1 A key component of the existing walking and cycling network in Halton includes the Bridgewater Way, which provides wide connections to the sustainable transport network both within and outside the Borough on the south side of the Mersey Estuary. The Bridgewater Canal towpath, which is 65km long, forms the multi-use Bridgewater Way trail.

2.31.2 The Bridgewater Way has been developed as part of a multi agency initiative including the Bridgewater Canal Trust and 8 local authorities including Halton Borough Council.

2.31.3 This highly strategic multi-user route presents major opportunities in terms of sustainable transport, leisure and the local economy in both Halton and the region particularly as the tow path connects Runcorn Centre with key centres including Daresbury Park and Daresbury Science and Innovation Centre, Warrington, Altrincham and the westerly quadrant of the Greater Manchester Conurbation including Salford, Worsley and Leigh.

2.31.4 The network of long distance strategic routes and Core Cycle Network is shown in Figure 2.3.

2.31.5 Table 2.3 below summarises locations in Runcorn and Widnes where formal cycle parking provision is in place. The issues and opportunities in relation to cycle parking and promoting and supporting cycle use and interchange between cycling and bus and rail travel are identified and discussed in more detail in Section 4. In addition, Halton Borough Council has recently installed secure cycle lockers at Widnes and Hough Green Rail Station.

Table 2.3 Locations in the Borough where formal cycle parking exists. (Gifford 2006)

Widnes	Runcorn
Albert Road (Jct Marzhan Way)	Church Street
Albert Road (Jct Cooper Street)	Halton Lea (Trident Entrance)
JJB Car Park	Brindley Arts Centre
Widnes Market Entrance (by car park)	Phoenix Park Visitors Centre
Morrison's	Runcorn Station
Widnes Road	Norton Priory
ASDA Entrance (trolley bays)	Asda

Victoria Square	
Kingsway Learning Centre	
Widnes Health Centre	
Victoria Park	
Liverpool Road (Jct Hale Road) Chestnut Lodge	
Liverpool Road (Jct Hale Road) Co-op	
Halton Stadium (secure, covered storage)	

2.32 Key Cycle Issues

2.32.1 Key cycle issues have been identified below:-

- The lack of a formal cycle route across the SJB between Widnes West Bank and Runcorn and connections to the local and strategic networks including NCN 62, NCN 5 and the Bridgewater Way;
- The routes from Runcorn railway station are inadequately maintained and signposted. There is a direct link from the station to Runcorn Riverside College, however the link to Runcorn Old Town is considered indirect and unattractive;
- The lack of strategic cycle routes and links between Widnes and St. Helens and key parts of southern Knowsley (especially Huyton and Prescot);
- The lack of a new strategic cycle link between northern Widnes and Penketh (Warrington) to complement the key Trans Pennine Trail (NCN 62);
- Improvements to the Core Cycle Network in the western Runcorn area to better link Rocksavage, Weston Point and Frodsham areas to central and eastern Runcorn and across the SJB to Widnes and the Trans Pennine Trail;
- Improvements to key orbital cycle routes in Widnes to better directly link suburbs, commercial and employment areas to leisure and education facilities;
- Measures to improve access to cycles for households, businesses and visitors in the area are needed, for example, short term cycle hire facilities;
- Lack of revenue has affected the maintenance of cycle lanes/off –road cycle facilities and greenways; and
- Cycleway signing needs improvement and integrating with the wider sustainable transport network.

2.33 Walking / Pedestrian Routes

2.33.1 Halton Borough has two distinct types of pedestrian provision as follows:-

- A network of footways alongside public highways; and
- An independent network of footpaths that is separate from the public highway network, mainly in the new town area of Runcorn.

- 2.33.2 9.3% of local residents in employment according to the 2001 Census walk to work within Halton.
- 2.33.3 Since 2004, when 'Walking and Cycling – an Action Plan' was published by the Department of Transport there has been increasing Government encouragement to promote and support projects for pedestrians that provide a real alternative to using the private car for short journeys.
- 2.33.4 Given increasing investment in walking, awareness of climate change issues and the positive health implications of increasing physical activity, it is important that walking is actively promoted as a strong alternative to the car for short journeys and challenging targets set.
- 2.33.5 The improved accessibility provided by the Project, in particular, the de-linking of the SJB, to enable direct access to Runcorn and the Widnes Waterfront Regeneration areas, removes the physical barriers to walking currently experienced by pedestrians.
- 2.33.6 A survey has revealed that despite the inhospitable conditions, 104 pedestrians were observed crossing the SJB on a typical weekday (the majority travelling out of the peak hours). The difficulties in crossing the Expressway system and lack of facilities on the SJB point to a demand, as well as a necessity, to walk.
- 2.33.7 Once tolls are introduced on both the SJB and the Mersey Gateway, walking will gain a competitive advantage and against a background of rising fuel costs, will become even more attractive to those who use their car (National Travel Statistics 2005 indicate that over 40% of car users would walk more 'if congestion charging was introduced'). This factor may be more relevant in Halton with its low car ownership and a significant proportion of its population in low-income groups.
- 2.33.8 The traffic modelling undertaken using the MDM suggests that in the Do-Something scenario tolling does have an effect on travel behaviour; changes in mode being one of the potential impacts.
- 2.33.9 The Transport Section of the Environmental Statement for the Project (Gifford 2007), estimates that additional 200-300 walking trips per day across the SJB could result from the Project.

2.34 Key Walking Issues

- 2.34.1 Lack of an attractive, well connected and integrated pedestrian link across the SJB between Widnes West Bank and Runcorn;
- 2.34.2 Poor permeability of existing pedestrian routes and connections in West Bank particularly areas to the West of Victoria Road and Waterloo Road and over Queensway and towards the 3MG; and
- 2.34.3 Poor permeability and lack of clear and direct routes and connections between Runcorn Old Town, Runcorn Station and Runcorn Riverside College and proposed housing growth point area at Weston.

2.35 ROAD SAFETY

- 2.35.1 A key concern in relation to transport is safety, particularly that on roads. In 2000 the Government produced a safety strategy entitled 'Tomorrow's Roads Safer for Everyone'.

Key national targets were set within the strategy for 2010, based on the average of 1994-1998 data; these being:-

- A 40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents;
- A 50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured (aged under 16); and
- A 10% reduction in the slight casualty rate.

2.35.2 Analysis and investigation of collisions on the SJB and on the northbound and southbound approaches has revealed that this route is a concern. Typical collisions have involved rear end shunts, misjudgement of speed or distance and vehicles colliding whilst changing lanes. The high demand for travel, coupled with the physical limitations and carriageway arrangements, have resulted in the route continuing to incur casualties, despite remedial measures having been taken. It is recognised that there is no realistic chance of addressing this problem without utilising the opportunities afforded by the Project to rationalise and reduce demand and recast the role of the SJB to serve only local journeys.

2.36 FREIGHT

2.36.1 Freight distribution plays a major part in Halton's economy, accounting for 11% of GDP and 16% of employment. The White Paper on the Future of Transport: A Network for 2030 identified efficient freight transport as essential to the economy and prosperity. Its strategy is to achieve more sustainable distribution of goods and it intends to achieve this through increased access to rail infrastructure, regulation, enforcement, best practice and modal shift programmes. It is therefore essential that Halton provides the necessary facilities to meet the demands of freight distribution.

2.36.2 Halton, as part of a Greater Merseyside initiative, has undertaken a review of freight in the region, which is reported in Halton & Merseyside's LTP1. The Merseyside Freight Study was commissioned to gain a greater understanding of the issues surrounding freight with an aim to developing a long-term strategy and action plan to:-

- Promote future economic growth;
- Reduce accidents, health risks and environmental damage; and
- Be affordable, practical and capable of implementation.

2.36.3 Halton's overriding objective on freight is to assist economic regeneration with minimal environmental costs. Main areas of the Freight Strategy in terms of the STS include:-

- The provision of the new Mersey Gateway crossing of the River Mersey in the Borough;
- Freight distribution sites to be located next to rail linkages and docks where possible, and in all cases to be accessed by suitable roads;
- To implement road and junction improvements to assist HGV movements;
- To pursue the scheme to improve Halton Curve;

- To ensure that site traffic generated from developments involving modal change has a minimal environmental impact;
- To liaise with the Highways Agency to assist with the implementation of motorway junction improvements and motorway signing; and
- Work with Network Rail to develop opportunities to get road freight onto rail.

2.37 Shipping

2.37.1 The Manchester Ship Canal handles vessels of up to 15,000 tonnes at Runcorn lay-by, which serves the North West's chemical industry and adjoins Runcorn Docks. Runcorn Docks can only accommodate vessels up to 6,500 tonnes; however, the convenient road connections are invaluable for the industries located nearby. 7 million tones of freight per annum are transported by the Manchester Ship Canal, reducing the impact on the local highway network. However, with a supporting policy framework this could be increased to 16 million tonnes per annum. Current supportive Government policy includes:-

- A New Deal for Transport; Better for Everyone (July 1998);
- A Better Quality of Life (May 1999); and
- Waterways for Tomorrow (June 2000).

2.37.2 The River Weaver Canal can only accommodate smaller sea vessels up to 1,000 tonnes and therefore with ships becoming larger, this canal has less potential. Traditional canals of up to 50 tonnes capacity cannot be expected to have any significant freight future.

2.38 Rail Freight

2.38.1 In order to reduce road freight and congestion within Halton there would need to be a substantial increase in the use of rail freight. There are two freight only lines within the Borough, which could restrict growth of rail freight.

2.38.2 The line from Ditton to Arpley, Warrington, is important for trans-modal rail freight, as it serves the 3 MG development.

2.38.3 3MG (Mersey Multimodal Gateway), previously know as Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park, is a major new rail/road freight handling and logistics park at Ditton covering roughly 180 hectares. 3MG will support a number of local, regional and strategic objectives regarding the sustainable movement of goods and materials, as outlined in the Government's Transport White Paper, the Northwest Regional Freight Strategy and in Halton's Local Transport Plan (LTP). The transfer of freight from road to rail will help to reduce congestion with a typical freight train transporting the equivalent of around 50 lorry journeys. This park provides a number of freight facilities including:-

- Rail access from the West Coast Main Line (and Halton Curve);
- An operational inter-modal terminal facility;
- Daily rail links to deep sea ports, and the Channel Tunnel;
- Direct connections to the UK motorway network;

- Road links to two international airports at Liverpool and Manchester; and
- Access to the nearby Port of Liverpool by road.

2.38.4 The second line runs from Runcorn station to the industrial sites at Runcorn and Weston Point docks, adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal.

2.38.5 Ditton has also been identified by the Northwest Development Agency as a Strategic Regional Site.

2.39 Road Haulage

2.39.1 Road haulage allows operators ease of access into the freight market as they do not have relatively high infrastructure costs that, for instance rail operators have.

2.39.2 As identified in Halton LTP2, the largest single issue in relation to road freight is the congestion on the Silver Jubilee Bridge. The proposal for the Mersey Gateway, which provides three lanes of traffic in each direction should assist in alleviating localised congestion and associated costly delays.

2.40 Air Freight

2.40.1 Liverpool John Lennon Airport lies close to the western side of the Borough and handles around 15,000 tonnes of freight per year. The airport benefits from being able to cater for night flights, an essential feature of air cargo capability.

2.40.2 The World Freight Terminal at Manchester Airport is accessed from Halton and other parts of the City Region by the M56 motorway. It handles over 140,000 tonnes of freight per year.

2.41 Freight Issues

2.41.1 Freight distribution accounts for 11% of the Borough's GDP and 16% employment. The largest single issue in relation to road freight is the congestion on the SJB and the need for a new crossing of the River Mersey. The congestion on the SJB is recognised by Halton Borough Council in its LTP2 2006/7-2010/11 as a constraint on the operation and development of freight movements within the Borough.

2.42 CANALS AND WATERWAYS

2.42.1 This section provides an overview of the provision of facilities for waterborne transport within the vicinity of the Project.

2.42.2 The Manchester Ship Canal passes along the south side of the estuary and provides passage for sea-going vessels of up to 15,000 tonnes. The canal also serves the Runcorn docks, which has road connections to the chemical, glass and pottery industries, and can cater for vessels up to 6,500 tonnes. The River Weaver Canal has a capacity for 1,000 tonnes runs to the south of Runcorn and connects with the Manchester Ship Canal. Both these canals are also described in the Freight Section of this report.

2.42.3 The Bridgewater Canal runs along the eastern boundary of Halton within Runcorn. This canal has a branch from the Murdishaw Marina to Runcorn town centre via Norton, Windmill Hill and Castlefields. The Runcorn branch of the canal used to be connected through to the Runcorn Docks system, however, this link was severed in the 1960's with the construction of the various spur roads and infrastructure linked to the SJB.

2.42.4 This canal is now used as a leisure cruising facility. As part of the MG RS for Runcorn discussed in Section 3, it is proposed that the canal connection is reinstated between Runcorn Old Town and Runcorn Docks.

2.42.5 The St Helens Canal, commencing near West Bank runs eastwards on the north side of the estuary. This canal is currently used as a small marina at Spike Island but is only navigable for a short length due to the presence of a wooden footbridge just upstream of Spike Island. It also retains a significant leisure role, with the towpath providing the route for the Trans-Pennine Trail for walkers and cyclists.

2.42.6 Many of these key routes are now classified as Multi User Routes such as NCN 62 as discussed above, and serve as significant leisure attractions. As part of the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy efforts will be made to utilise key links as important local sustainable transport corridors through:-

- The greater promotion of the links (signage);
- Infrastructure improvements to better link the routes with the existing walking, cycling and public transport networks at key nodes;
- further public realm improvements along the banks in line with the quality already provided along the Trans Pennine Trial (section between Spike Island and Fiddlers Ferry Power Station); and
- The introduction of local canal bus services on key sections (with commuter and leisure potential) especially between Murdishaw Marina, Windmill Hill, Castlefields and Runcorn Town Centre.

2.8.1 Key Inland Waterway and Canal Issues

- The Borough is served by a good network of inland waterways and canals which offer tremendous and far reaching leisure attractions and amenity use;
- With focused attention there is the potential to better integrate the inland waterway and canal network with walking, cycle and public transport networks;
- The need for Infrastructure improvements to better link the routes with the existing walking, cycling and public transport networks at key nodes;
- The need for public realm improvements along the banks in line with the quality already provided along the Trans Pennine Trial (section between Spike Island and Fiddlers Ferry Power Station); and
- There is potential to introduce a new waterbus service linking Runcorn Old Town Centre to the Murdishaw basin providing a leisure service linking key communities in Castlefields, Windmill Hill and Norton (stops at Astmoor, Castlefields North (Bridgewater Day Centre), Castlefields (The Barge), Phoenix Park (for Norton Priory), Windmill Hill, Norton and Murdishaw Basin. This service could also potentially serve the Runcorn Collegiate site, which is proposed to be constructed in the Murdishaw area and the Daresbury Science Innovation Centre.

2.43 MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

2.43.1 Halton Borough Council received national recognition for the work it has carried out on mobility management over the past 10 years, twice receiving Beacon Council status; in 2005/6 for Better Public Transport and; in 2008/9 for 'Improved Accessibility'. This has been based on an integrated approach to delivering transport / accessibility

improvements including Halton's Neighbourhood Travel Team (NTT).

2.44 Halton's Neighbourhood Travel Team (NTT)

2.44.1 Halton's Neighbourhood Travel Team (NTT) was formed in August 2002 and is based within Halton Borough Council's Transport Coordination Section.

2.44.2 Currently, the NTT provides a range of services that are designed to improve people's ability to travel into, out of and around the Borough and focuses on promoting and supporting travel change and Smarter Choices. These services are available to anyone living or working within the Borough and currently include working with employers and businesses to promote alternative 'green' travel arrangements to their employees e.g., the car-share database. Key activities are listed below;-.

- Working with new and existing business, to develop local travel plans in-line with Halton Borough Council's Borough wide LTP 2006/07-2010/11;
- Personalised journey planning service – available upon request;
- Freephone travel enquiry line;
- Holding travel surgeries on partner premises and within the community;
- The dissemination of transport and travel information to the community and employers;
- Conducting travel surveys with local communities and employers;
- Feeding back to HBC Transport Coordination Team with the findings from travel surveys and surgeries;
- Producing and distributing travel information leaflets;
- Providing discounted taxis through the "Links 2 Work" scheme for people unable to reach their place of employment by conventional public transport; and
- Delivering 'Travel Training' for key socially excluded members of the community.

2.44.3 However, issues raised by the NTT as part of the development of the MG STS:-

- Persistent problems associated with the low mobility and localised travel horizons of households living in low-income communities across Halton. Specific interventions continue to be needed to improve low-income communities access to key facilities such as fresh food, education, health, training and employment opportunities.
- High public transport fares especially for short journeys recognising that the majority of local bus journeys within Halton are less than 2.5 miles, and that a typical single journey costs between is £1.40 to £1.70. Furthermore, the 'cash' fare single for a typical local cross river bus journey between Runcorn (Halton Lea) to Widnes is currently £2.30;
- Lack of attractive local bus service links to key employment areas on the edge of the urban area, made increasingly difficult to provide due to flexible working patterns;

- Inaccessible infrastructure preventing people with limited mobility in accessing key public transport services and facilities across the Borough; and
- Lack of information / knowledge of the network of sustainable travel choices.

2.45 REAL TIME PASSENGER INFORMATION AND INTELLEAGENT TRANSPORT SYSTEMS (ITS) AND SIGNAGE

2.45.1 In Halton there are Real Time Passenger Information displays at key stops on routes 14, 17 and 61 between Hough Green and Widnes Town Centre and Farnworth and Widnes Town Centre and at key stops within Runcorn. This system was introduced and developed as part of a partnership between Halton BC, Halton Transport Ltd and the Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive (Merseytravel).

2.45.2 One of the key passenger benefits of real time passenger information systems is that they give passengers confidence that buses are operating and are going to turn up even though route 14 is a high frequency service.

2.45.3 Intelligent traffic signage systems that provide variable messages are in place on the SJB to provide motorists with advance information on lane closures. This system is linked into the Highways Agency's variable message signing, which covers a wide area of the strategic motorway network incorporating the M6, M62 and M56.

2.45.4 One of the outcomes of the consultation for the MG STS (Gifford 2008) was that the respondents generally perceived public transport to be unreliable.

2.46 Key Real Time Passenger Information and ITS Issues

- Lack of integration between RTPI and systems for sustainable modes for example between bus and rail at stations such as Runcorn;
- Lack of RTPI on low frequency bus routes;
- Lack of RTPI at off line locations such as key employments sites, major retail stores and health and leisure facilities; and
- Lack of RTPI at key stops on the busway such as Murdishaw, Astmoor, Halton Hospital, Runcorn East.

2.47 Conclusion

2.47.1 This section has considered the historical development and provision of transport infrastructure and services within the Borough and has identified a wide range of transport related issues. These issues are key to the MG STS and are evident in its development, which is detailed in Section 4.

3 THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section sets the scene in terms of the wider transportation and planning policies, strategies and frameworks at the national, regional and local levels. It therefore provides a overview of the key issues that need to be addressed by the MG STS in order to demonstrate consistency with current thinking and approaches to the delivery of sustainable transport.

3.1.2 The first part of the section summarises the relevant transport policy documents that underpin the development of the MG STS, and the second part makes reference to the key spatial planning.

3.2 Key Transport Policy Documents

3.2.1 Towards a Sustainable Transport System (TaSTS) Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World, DfT 2007.

3.2.2 This is an important discussion document that sets out the Government's response to the following landmark reviews and studies relating to economic development and sustainability:-

- Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change (October 2006); and
- The Eddington Transport Study – The Case for Action (December 2006). It is important at the outset to set out the Government's agenda and thinking in relation to sustainable transport and economic growth beyond the period of the LTP 2 2006/7-2010/11.

3.2.3 The document also assesses how the recommendations of these reports can be translated into the Government's short, medium and long-term policymaking process.

3.2.4 The key conclusions of the Stern Review are very much focussed on developing strategies and interventions that can help to combat climate change, recognising the significant and highly detrimental impact this could have on the UK's economy if no action is taken. The Stern review recognises, however, that there is still time to avoid the worst impacts.

3.2.5 TaSTS recognises that the Stern Review 'is not about sacrificing all economic growth to reduce CO₂, but about tackling climate change in the most cost-effective way possible in order to achieve future economic and social objectives'. The Mersey Gateway Project is not simply about providing additional highway capacity, but is central to the social, economic and environmental aspirations of the Borough. The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy confirms the potential wider impact of the Project on these matters and its role in stimulating regeneration in five areas of the Borough. Importantly, the proposed tolling regime which will not only cover the new bridge, but also the SJB, will enable better management of car based trips and help to encourage greater use of less polluting forms of transport.

3.2.6 The Eddington Study was written recognising the Government's commitment to sustainable development. It provides advice on the long-term links between transport and the UK's economic productivity, growth and stability.

- 3.2.7 The headline conclusions of the Eddington Report in the context of the MG STS include the following:-
- Provision of the right transport connections to the right places;
 - Good transport systems support the productivity of urban areas; and
 - Strategic economic priorities for long-term transport policy should be the growing and congested urban areas and their catchments.
- 3.2.8 The Project aims to eliminate the bottleneck that is created by the SJB and enable strategic traffic movement that passes through the Borough to connect with the wider network and attractors including Liverpool City Region and other parts of the UK, via Halton.
- 3.2.9 At the local level the Project facilitates step change improvements to connections between Runcorn and Widnes via the SJB. For example, reduced congestion on the SJB will facilitate improvements to the integrity of the bus network by reducing journey times, improving reliability and underpinning enhanced connections across the estuary between Runcorn and Widnes. In terms of walking & cycling, the creation of a sustainable transport corridor over the SJB facilitates local connections between Widnes, West Bank and Runcorn and the strategic multi user routes. These include the Trans Pennine Trail in Widnes (National Cycle Network 62), NCN 5, and the Bridgewater Way in Runcorn.
- 3.2.10 The Project helps to improve the integrity and efficiency of the movement of goods and materials and strengthen the role and attractiveness of strategic multi modal transport facilities in the Borough, such as the 3MG site.
- 3.2.11 TaSTS identifies 5 broad goals for the Government's agenda as follow:-
- Maximise the competitiveness and productivity of the economy;
 - Address climate change by cutting emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases;
 - Protect people's safety, security and wealth;
 - Improve quality of life, and promote the development of healthy natural environments; and
 - Promote greater equality of opportunity.
- 3.2.12 TaSTS emphasises the importance of making best use of existing networks and improving their performance. Halton has a long established, highly developed network and associated facilities and infrastructure. A key emphasis and focus of TaSTS is on treating the most unreliable, congested and crowded sections of highway to improve end-to-end journey times, for example, trips across the SJB at peak times. This is particularly important for travel to work, domestic and international business trips, as well as the movement of goods and raw and finished materials. Removing delays at bottlenecks, such as the SJB, improves journey time reliability and hence makes businesses more competitive.
- 3.2.13 Proposals to reduce congestion, promote more sustainable development and facilitate

high levels of accessibility and permeability by sustainable modes, such as walking, cycling and public transport, should facilitate reductions in greenhouse gases. In relation to motorised transport there are opportunities to introduce new low emission or zero emission public transport vehicles to operate services across the network within Halton, and surrounding areas.

3.2.14 Protecting people's safety and security is a key issue on the Government's agenda. Public consultation focus group research undertaken for the MG STS (Gifford 2008) revealed that perceptions of safety and security and fear of personal attack was a major concern of the respondents. It is an issue that can actively deter people from using sustainable transport services and facilities unless it can be adequately addressed through safety and security interventions.

3.2.15 There is a strong relationship between issues relating to promoting accessibility and permeability and the design and development of the urban realm. Making interchanges and bus stops more visible and generating activity is one of a number of ways of addressing safety and security issues and instilling more confidence in the sustainable modes of transport.

3.2.16 Transport's negative impacts on the quality of life are obvious. These include noise, vibration and intrusion all of which can undermine people's well-being. However, transport also has powerful benefits, which people value highly – the ability to visit friends and relatives, to enjoy the open space and access shops and leisure facilities.

3.2.17 People's expectations of comfort, convenience, quality of service, and speed and accuracy of information are increasing, and the UK Government is keen to see that authorities such as Halton through its community links can to respond to these expectations.

3.2.18 From Halton's perspective the Project facilitates an opportunity to provide step change improvements to restore and uplift the biodiversity and landscape of large areas of the River Mersey estuary. The down grading of the SJB to a local sustainable corridor will ameliorate the current negative impacts of transport that are experienced by communities in West Bank and Runcorn that are adjacent to the SJB and its approaches.

3.2.19 Ensuring that our transport systems provide effective access for everyone, including disadvantaged groups and disabled people, to jobs, services and social networks is a core aim of transport policy. These factors are embedded in Halton's general approach to transport provision and are largely delivered through the services of its Neighbourhood Travel Team.

3.2.20 Looking at transport's wider impacts, people's life-chances can vary hugely between regions, and there are pockets of deprivation in even the most affluent areas. What is particularly significant is that Halton is currently ranked 30th in Government's ranking of deprivation, which indicates that it suffers disproportionately from high levels of social stress.

3.2.21 A number of the wards in Halton that exhibit these characteristics lie close to the SJB and the core bus, cycle and pedestrian networks. In order to reduce social exclusion, the MG STS advocates a highly targeted action plan to enhance accessibility.

3.3 'The Future of Transport' White Paper: A Network for 2030 (CM 6234) – July 2004

3.3.1 The TaSTS White Paper follows on closely from the previous White Paper 'The Future of

Transport, which was published by the DfT in July 2004. This sets out a vision for the transport network and future transport investment up to 2030 and seeks to develop a coherent transport system through investment in the following:-

- Road Network to provide a more reliable and freer flowing service for both personal travel and freight, with people able to make informed choices about how and when they travel;
- Rail Network providing a fast, reliable and efficient service, particularly for inter-urban journeys;
- Bus Services which are reliable, flexible, convenient and tailored for local needs;
- Walking and Cycling:- making these modes a real alternative for local trips; and
- Ports and Airports providing improved international and domestic links.

3.4 Halton Local Transport Plan, LTP 2: 2006/07 – 2010/11

3.4.1 Halton's transport policies, strategies and implementation programmes are contained within its second Local Transport Plan, (LTP2), which covers the period 2006/7- 2010/11. This Plan has been assessed by the DfT and graded as being 'Excellent'.

3.4.2 The overarching objective of Halton's LTP2 is:

'The delivery of a smart sustainable, inclusive and accessible transport system and infrastructure that seeks to improve the quality of life for people living in Halton by encouraging economic growth and regeneration, and the protection and enhancement of the historic, natural and human environment.'

3.4.3 The plan is structured around the four-shared priorities for transport, which were agreed by Local and central Government. The objectives and summarised issues associated with each priority that are relevant to the Project are described below.

3.5 Tacking Congestion

Objectives

- To address and manage both local and strategic travel demand to ensure that the area's regeneration needs are met;
- To develop a sustainable and integrated transport system that meets the social, economic and environmental needs of Halton's residents; and
- To manage and maintain the highway network to minimise congestion and delay.

3.5.1 The major and overriding congestion problem identified in LTP 2 is experienced on the approaches to the SJB. The SJB performs both a local function linking Widnes and Runcorn as well as a strategic role for the region. However, as Halton progresses its regeneration, a number of key junctions, as well as parts of the town centres are experiencing increasing levels of congestion at peak periods. Congestion hotspots include A56 Chester Road/A558 Eastern Expressway roundabout, the Widnes Eastern Relief Road/Fiddlers Ferry Road junction and the A557 approach to the M56 Junction 12. The LTP2 states that the Project will lead to 'significant journey time savings for cross

river traffic and will enable the SJB to cater for locally sustainable travel.'

3.6 Delivering Accessibility

Objective:

- To resolve problems experienced by socially excluded communities, when accessing key services, and enhance life chances and employment opportunities.

3.6.1 The Borough has developed extensive and detailed information on the accessibility of services and facilities in relation to local residents, networks and services. As part of its LTP2, the Borough has developed a comprehensive bus strategy, which addresses key accessibility issues. The bus strategy focuses on addressing the following matters, which have been identified as being important, in delivering increased travel on buses:-

- Network reliability;
- Accessibility;
- Permeability;
- Accurate information;
- Safe and accessible facilities and infrastructure;
- Affordable services;
- Minimum levels of service to communities across the network;
- Travel training;
- Co-ordinating different vehicle fleets;
- Stakeholder involvement to develop the network, services and facilities; and
- Improved access to Health facilities in the Borough.

3.6.2 These factors have also been recognised in the preparation of this sustainable transport strategy and as such have been incorporated in its development.

3.7 Safer Roads

Objectives:

- To minimise the incidence of personal injury road crashes within the Borough, through a combination of targeted physical measures and preventative road safety education and training initiatives.

3.7.1 The Halton Safer Roads strategy is based on a holistic and balanced approach utilising engineering, education, training, publicity and enforcement techniques. Measures are generally targeted at specific problems, which are identified through extensive analysis of road casualty data.

3.7.2 An ongoing casualty hotspot problem exists on the SJB, where due to the high vehicular

demand, substandard carriageway width and constrained highway arrangement, road casualties continue to occur on a regular basis. Attempts have been made to address the problem in the past with limited success. It is now recognised that the only realistic opportunity to successfully resolve this problem is through reducing the demand to travel on the bridge and simplifying its role to just a local route. Both of these measures will be achieved by the Mersey Gateway Project.

3.8 Better Air quality

Objectives

- To address air quality issues which have an impact on health and the environment, through management of travel demand and the provision and encouragement of environmentally sustainable travel choices.

3.8.1 There are known linkages between high levels of air pollution and health. In the short term, high levels of pollution can result in increased hospital admissions for people whose health is vulnerable to pollution. Exposure to pollutants, such as fine particles, over several years, may also contribute towards a reduced life expectancy. In addition, of course, there is a growing concern about the contribution that vehicle emissions make to the problem of greenhouse gases.

3.8.2 Locally, increased congestion on the highway network has resulted in three areas of the Borough being at risk of exceeding air quality objectives. The three areas are:-

- Deacon Rd (NO₂);
- Milton Road (NO₂); and
- Hale Road (PM₁₀)

3.8.3 Should the concentration of pollutants at these sites fail to meet the Air Quality Objectives, then Halton will be required to declare an Air Quality Management Area, (AQMA) and action plan for each area, to reduce the levels of pollutants.

3.8.4 The MG STS has an important part to play in reducing vehicle emissions by encouraging the use of more sustainable forms of transport.

3.9 Transport Policies of Neighbouring Authorities

3.9.1 Recognising the close links that Halton has with its neighbouring authorities and the wider strategic impacts that the Project is expected to deliver particularly, in relation to sustainable transport, it is important to consider the LTP policies of neighbouring authorities.

3.10 Cheshire County Council

3.10.1 Within the context of the four shared Government/Local Authority priorities of congestion, accessibility, safety and air quality, Cheshire has identified the following objectives:-

- Enhance the quality of life of those who live, work or visit Cheshire;
- Promote social inclusion and accessibility to everyday services for all, especially those without a car;

- Promote the integration of all forms of transport and land use planning, leading to a better, more efficient public transport system;
- Contribute to an efficient economy and to support sustainable economic growth and regeneration in appropriate locations; and
- Manage a well-maintained and efficient transport network.

3.11 Warrington Borough Council

3.11.1 Warrington Borough Council is working on a co-ordinated strategy to meet the following objectives:-

- Enhance and protect the environment of the borough;
- Improve safety, personal security and health;
- To contribute to an efficient economy and to support sustainable economic growth in Warrington;
- Improve accessibility and mobility in the borough;
- To promote the integration of all forms of transport and land use planning; and
- Improve the quality of life, transport system, and reduce social exclusion and poverty in the borough.

3.12 Merseyside Authorities

3.12.1 The Merseyside Authorities which comprise Merseytravel, Liverpool City Council, and St Helens, Knowsley, Sefton and Wirral Councils state the following set of objectives in their LTP2:-

- Provide appropriate infrastructure to improve the capacity and efficiency of the network and support the economic growth areas;
- Provide access for all to provide better links to employment, education and health;
- Manage demand to ensure that roads do not become congested and affect the efficient movement of public transport and freight;
- Protect/enhance the environment by taking positive measures to reduce the effects of travel demand;
- Support a healthier community by addressing air and noise problems caused by traffic and promote cycling and walking; and
- Make best use of existing resources by ensuring an efficient maintenance regime.

3.13 Key Spatial Planning Documents -National Spatial Policy Framework

3.13.1 National, Regional and Local Planning Policy and Strategy Frameworks -This section includes a high level review of key national, regional and local planning policy and strategy frameworks considered relevant to the MG STS. Key Policy Documents include

3.14 Planning Policy Statement 1 Delivering Sustainable Development

3.14.1 Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM, 2005) sets out the Government's overarching planning policies for the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system.

3.14.2 Key principles set out in PPS1 place responsibility on Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities to ensure that development plans contribute to global sustainability by addressing the causes and potential impacts of climate change – through policies which achieve the following:-

- Reduce energy use;
- Reduce emissions (for example, by encouraging patterns of development, which reduce the need to travel by private car, or reduce the impact of moving freight);
- Promote the development of renewable energy resources; and
- Take climate change impacts into account in the location and design of the development.

3.14.3 This has placed a responsibility on Halton through its Local Development Framework (LDF), discussed below, to enhance the environment as part of development proposals. This means that significant impacts on the environment have to be avoided. Furthermore, those alternative options that might reduce or eliminate those impacts must be taken forward.

3.14.4 PPS 1 states that reducing the need to travel is highly appropriate to supporting sustainable development. The planning process adopted by Halton should actively manage patterns of urban growth to make the fullest use of public transport, and focus development in existing centres near to major public transport interchanges, for example, in Widnes and Runcorn.

3.15 Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change, supplement to PPS1 (DCLG, 2007)

3.15.1 Key Planning Objectives set out in this PPS that are highly relevant to the MG STS are to provide spatial strategies that:-

- Deliver patterns of urban growth and sustainable rural developments that help secure the fullest possible use of sustainable transport for moving freight, public transport, cycling and walking; and, which overall, reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

3.16 Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning (PPS12) June 2008

3.16.1 The recently reissued PPS12 reiterates the key role of local spatial planning which is closely aligned to Sustainable Community Strategies (developed by Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's). The Local Government White Paper seeks to encourage local authorities to ensure that:-

- Their SCS takes full account of spatial, economic, social and environmental issues;
- Key spatial planning objectives for the area are set out in the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and are in harmony with Sustainable Community Strategy priorities; and

- The Local Area Agreement (LAA), as the delivery agreement with central Government, is based on the priorities of the SCS and supported by local planning policy to deliver the outcomes agreed.

3.16.2 Each local planning authority should produce a core strategy which includes:-

- An overall vision which sets out how the area and the places within it should develop;
- Strategic objectives for the area focusing on the key issues to be addressed;
- A delivery strategy for achieving these objectives. This should set out how much development is intended to happen where, when, and by what means it will be delivered. Locations for strategic development should be indicated on a key diagram; and
- Clear arrangements for managing and monitoring the delivery of the strategy.

3.17 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 13: Transport (March 2001)

3.17.1 Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG13) key objective is to integrate planning and transport at a national, regional, strategic and local level and to promote more sustainable transport choices both for carrying people and for moving freight. The aim of this approach is to:-

- Promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight;
- Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling; and
- Reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

3.18 Regional Spatial Planning Framework

3.18.1 Emerging North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS 2006)

3.18.2 From the regional perspective, the emerging North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS 2006) focuses heavily on the need to increase the contribution towards the movement of people, goods and services by sustainable modes including road based transport, rail waterways, walking and cycling.

3.18.3 Key objectives and outcomes of the RSS that are highly relevant to the MG STS include the following:-

- Support economic growth and business competitiveness, tackle congestion and improve journey time reliability;
- Support regeneration and reduce social exclusion, integrate transport networks within, to and between the North West's city regions, and between these city regions and others in the North of England;
- Improve surface access, in particular to Liverpool John Lennon and Manchester Airports and Port of Liverpool, to underpin the gateway functions;
- Introduce an integrated range of measures to manage travel demand and encourage a shift from the car to more sustainable modes of transport;

- Improve the public realm in the North West's regional centres, regional towns and cities and key tourist destinations;
- Enhance accessibility by developing integrated transport networks based on hubs at key service centres in order to support regeneration, reduce social exclusion and encourage sustainable tourism in rural areas;
- Community and demand responsive transport should improve access to employment, services and facilities, particularly in rural areas where traditional commercial bus services are less likely to be financially viable and revenue support opportunities are limited. For example, east Runcorn and employment areas around Daresbury;
- Develop a structured framework and improve region's highway network to reduce the wider environmental, social, health and quality of life impacts of road transport and infrastructure; and
- Facilitate opportunities for increasing the movement of freight by rail and on water.

3.18.4 A key component of the Project is to address the issues of network integrity, which, amongst other things, will help strengthen and improve business performance as well as provide a platform for delivering high levels of reliability and regularity on the bus network. This is important in helping to promote growth in patronage in line with parallel integrated strategies.

3.18.5 By the nature of its location at a key crossing and gateway location, the Borough has always provided a platform for facilitating transport connections. Halton's residents, have a close affinity and association with Merseyside. Hence the importance of maintaining and strengthening and improving transport connections by bus and rail between the Borough and this important region.

3.19 Liverpool City Region Development Programme

3.19.1 Halton is one of a group of local authorities comprising the Liverpool City Region. It is also a member of the operational group of the Merseyside Partnership, which was responsible for creating the Liverpool City Region and its Development Programme. The operational group also includes Merseytravel, which is the body responsible for the planning and promotion of sustainable transport in Merseyside.

3.19.2 The opportunities identified in the Development Programme and which underpin the strategy for the Liverpool City Region include the following, which are particularly applicable to Halton and the MG STS:-

- The improved connectivity between the key centres of the City Region – and with the Manchester City region and the Midlands, which will result from the Mersey Gateway Bridge (the second River crossing);
- The City Region's developments in science and innovation including Daresbury in Halton;
- The stable and strong economies of Cheshire and North Wales including Vale Royal and Weaver Valley, containing knowledge economy businesses, research, development and manufacturing;

- The potential that John Lennon Airport provides as a resource for Halton's business and community to access UK and overseas markets; and
- The City Region's considerable, as yet unused, capacity for expansion in the form of land released by the decline of manufacturing in past decades. This includes the land that represents a legacy from the chemical industry. This industry used to dominate Widnes and Runcorn, for example, land adjoining West Bank and land in East Widnes.

3.20 Local Spatial Planning Framework

3.20.1 Halton Unitary Development Plan (adopted April 2005)

3.20.2 The saved policies of the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) represent the Council's adopted statutory development plan.

3.20.3 The UDP policies set out an extensive range of aims and objectives across all policy areas. For sustainable transport and land use within the Borough, the aims are:-

- To provide an efficient and effective land use pattern and transport infrastructure, which will reduce overall demand for travel and allow improved accessibility by a variety of transport modes;
- To develop safe, efficient and inclusive integrated transport systems and infrastructure that encourage sustainable economic growth and regeneration;
- To promote a new sustainable crossing of the River Mersey; and
- To encourage increased use of walking and cycling as modes of transport.

3.20.4 The UDP policies clearly identify the need to resolve the transport, accessibility and economic constraints imposed by the current river crossings. The need for a new river crossing is explicitly recognised: in particular Policy S14 states that:-

'A scheme for a new crossing of the River Mersey, east of the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge will be promoted to relieve congestion on the existing bridge as part of an integrated transport system for Halton and the wider regional transport network'.

3.20.5 The saved UDP policies also include a number of specific transport-related policies, under the themes of: Integrated Public Transport Network; Cycle Network; Pedestrian Network; Road Network; Sustainable Economic Growth; Accessibility for All; Safety for All; and the Environment.

3.21 Halton Local Development Framework (emerging)

3.21.1 The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the new system of spatial plans, introduced following the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The folder of LDF documents includes among others, Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), the former carrying more weight and the ability to allocate land for particular purposes. It is anticipated that documents within the LDF will eventually replace the saved UDP policies to become the Council's statutory development plan.

3.21.2 The first DPD to be produced is the emerging Halton Core Strategy, currently under production. The Core Strategy will provide the overarching spatial planning framework for

the Borough's development to 2026 and beyond. The emerging Core Strategy will look beyond LTP2 and the planned opening of the Mersey Gateway, and identify in broad terms the areas of the Borough where development and change will happen during the plan period. The document will establish the Spatial Vision, Strategic Objectives and Spatial Strategy for Halton in its opening section. It is intended that the Spatial Strategy will be conveyed through seven Spatial Themes:-

- An Affordable and Decent, Home and Neighbourhood;
- A Balanced and Prosperous Economy;
- Health, Learning and Social Inclusion;
- Vital and Vibrant Town Centres;
- Well Designed Places and Spaces;
- A Cleaner, Safer and Greener Environment; and
- Sustainable Travel Options.

3.21.3 The MG STS will support transport and movement related interventions, which are considered to be critical to the successful delivery of the Spatial Strategy for Halton.

3.21.4 The LDF may include further sustainable transport-related policies, in DPDs and SPDs, yet to be produced.

4 MERSEY GATEWAY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY (MG STS)

4.1.1 The MG STS supports the following high level Mersey Gateway objectives:-

- To relieve the congested SJB, thereby removing the constraint on local and regional development and better provide for local transport needs;
- To improve accessibility in order to maximise local development and regional economic growth opportunities;
- To improve local air quality and enhance the general urban environment; and
- Improve public transport links across the river.

4.1.2 The proposed strategy aims to deliver the following key vision for sustainable travel options within Halton

To identify and promote a network of high quality, safe, affordable, accessible and environmentally friendly travel measures for local residents, businesses and visitors to Halton, which support the key objectives of Halton's Local Transport Plan and the Mersey Gateway project.

4.2 MG STS Objectives

4.2.1 This vision will be achieved by an integrated package of measures and initiatives designed to meet the following objectives:-

- Further improve accessibility for residents living in the most deprived Wards in the Borough to a wide range of key facilities including – employment, learning / training, health, leisure and retail facilities;
- Reduce the future reliance on carbon-intensive modes of travel through the promotion of greater use of public transport, walking and cycling options;
- Support the continued regeneration of the Borough, through ensuring new high quality sustainable transport opportunities are delivered as part of the Mersey Gateway Project and associated Regeneration Strategy;
- Improve the modal share of journeys into the 3 main commercial centres of the Borough (Runcorn town centre, Widnes town centre and Halton Lea) by sustainable forms of transport, thereby supporting the regeneration of the centres; and
- Further develop new strategic high quality sustainable transport links / corridors through the Borough utilising the opportunities provided by the Mersey Gateway scheme and thereby improving complementary Mersey Belt and Liverpool City Region linkages.

4.3 Defining the approach

4.3.1 In order to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Mersey Gateway Project, a comprehensive strategy has been developed to improve the range and quality of public transport services within Halton. This Strategy seeks to build upon:-

- **The Mersey Gateway Key Objectives** (as above);

- **First Stage Public Transit Options Study** (Reid Rail 2007) – this report was commissioned by Halton Borough Council to help inform the development of the Sustainable Transport Strategy by carrying out a high level review of the feasibility of utilising a range of alternative rapid public transport options as part of the Mersey Gateway scheme;
- **Halton Local Transport Plan 2006/7 – 2010/11** (This is the second Local Transport Plan for Halton which sets out Halton Borough Council's strategic objectives, strategies and policies for the period April 2006 to March 2011 and beyond. It also details the schemes and initiatives that will be delivered, together with performance indicators and targets which will be used to monitor progress);
- **Halton Access Plan 2006/7 – 2010/11** -This complements the Halton Local Transport Plan and covers the same period, setting out a range of complementary actions to improve accessibility to a wide range of facilities across the Borough;
- **'Halton's Story of Place'** in Section 2 of this Study; and
- **The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy** – the purpose of which is to explore the wide ranging economic, social, physical and environmental regeneration opportunities that the Mersey Gateway scheme could potentially deliver.

4.3.2 Complementary to the development of the public transport element of the Strategy was the conclusions of the 'First Stage Public Transit Options Study'. This provided a focus for the strategy and is now described in the following section.

4.4 Public Transit Options

4.4.1 The First Stage Public Transit Options Study (Reid Rail May 2007) was commissioned by the Mersey Gateway Project Team to enable the development of the MG STS to be informed by a comprehensive 'state of the art' review of various public transit options. The Study included:-

- A comprehensive review of various public transport route development options;
- An initial passenger demand study;
- A review of the opportunities to integrate various public transit options into the proposed delinking of the SJB;
- A 'High Level' assessment of the costs and benefits of the utilisation of a wide range of potential public transit options and technologies including
 - Personalised Rapid Transit (PRT);
 - Ultra Light Rail (ULT);
 - Guided Busway (also including Trolley Bus);
 - Busway;
 - Light Rail;
 - Tram – Train;
 - Heavy Rail; and
 - Monorail.
- The short listing and evaluation in detail of the following options:
 - Medium level bus priorities;
 - High level bus priorities;

- Bus rapid transit using guided busways;
- Bus rapid transit using regular busways;
- Light rail;
- Opportunities for tram-train; and
- Heavy rail development.

4.4.2 The evaluation was based on:-

- Spatial characteristics, to determine the ease with which each system could be integrated into the existing commercial centres within Halton, the suitability for accommodation of each option within the structure of the existing SJB, and the proposed new Mersey Gateway (MG) structures / infrastructure;
- Alternative energy and power supply options to minimise emissions and carbon footprint;
- Vehicle capacity and system capacity matched to likely future demand including indicative networks;
- Indicative system performance for each public transport option; and
- Indicative vehicle and infrastructure costs for each public transport option.

4.4.3 All of the above were carried on the assumption that the Mersey Gateway scheme is constructed and fully operational. As such, this STS is designed to complement and work in a holistic manner with the new crossing.

4.4.4 The recommendations/conclusions of this detailed evaluation of the short listed options can be summarised as follows:-

- **Heavy Rail Enhancements** should not form part of the MG STS, but existing and future heavy rail facilities need to be integrated into proposed transit systems;
- **Tram–Train Options** may be worthy of further investigation, possibly based on a basic north-south transit system;
- **Light Rail Options** may be worthy of further consideration, possibly as part of a basic north-south transit system. However, option to link with proposed Merseytram Lines 2 & 3 would be poor value for money;
- **Tramway** the Study identified that this may be worthy of further consideration, possibly as part of a basic north-south transit system operating exclusively within Halton;
- **Bus Based Options (Guided and non guided options)** Runcorn Busway provides a sound basis for developing a network to serve a wider part of Halton, using unguided buses. Whilst not recommending guided bus technology for kerb guidance, due to it being unsuitable/insufficiently developed; elements of the technology could be used for docking and providing for narrow rights of way and for guidance on the MG, should this option be pursued. Further investigation of options was recommended;
- **Bus Based Transit (alternative power and traction options)** Trolley buses and dual mode technologies were not excluded. Electrification could be applied to the bus based rapid transit options, but is not a prerequisite, as vehicles can be based on diesel or low emission bio fuel. A bus based rapid transit system is an option,

worthy of further investigation, subject to detailed technical and investment appraisal;

- **High Level Bus Priority Measures.** The relatively modest cost of adopting high level bus priorities, compared with the cost of light rail or tramway, suggests that the option should be retained for further detailed study and evaluation;
- **Medium Level Bus Priorities** The relatively low cost of bus priorities, delivered through a corridor approach, suggests that the option should be retained for further consideration and should form the Base Case for any evaluation of transit option systems;
- **Demand Responsive and Para Transit Options** Apart from VAL and Bombardier AGT, the most innovative systems are high risk options. However, none have potential cost savings or significant benefits compared with conventional transit systems and therefore should not be considered further;
- **Delinking the Silver Jubilee Bridge** Recommended that the delinking proposals for optimising public transport benefits are developed and evaluated in more detail; and
- **Accommodating public transport on the MG Bridge and Associated infrastructure** - The Study recommended that £6m be set aside to accommodate public transit options on the MG.

4.4.5 Reid Rail's study of public transport options provide a clear recommendation that:

- The Council should develop a Bus Rapid Transit system, linked into the heavy rail network, utilising medium level bus priority measures, delivered through a corridor approach. The characteristics of the system being;-
 - Metro quality service;
 - Integrated network of routes and corridors;
 - Segregated Busway (in key places based on the existing Runcorn Busway);
 - Typically pre-board fare payment / verification;
 - Higher quality stations;
 - Clean vehicle technologies;
 - Marketing Identity; and
 - Superior quality service.

4.4.6 It is also recommended that further feasibility work should also be considered for high level bus priority measures and Tram-Train & Light Rail options.

4.5 The Strategy

4.5.1 Building on the above recommendations, a comprehensive and integrated sustainable transport strategy has been developed, which builds upon and complements the Project. The strategy incorporates a wide variety of complementary measures to encourage sustainable travel, through improving opportunities for public transport use, walking and cycling.

4.5.2 The strategy is based on two phases of implementation: the first contains those initiatives that potentially could be funded by the Mersey Gateway's toll income, LTP funding and bus operators. The second incorporates the longer-term projects that will draw on the variety of public and private sector funding that may be available at the time. The recommendations set out below will be brought to fruition depending upon the availability

of such funding.

4.5.3 The work programmes have been developed into a number of themes, which address the key areas of concern, previously identified in Section 2. The principles on which each phase has been developed, themes and action plans are now described

4.6 Phase One (years 2014/15 to 2021/22)

4.7 Improvement Theme 1 -

Further improvements to the main Runcorn Busway loop which will act as the focus of the proposed new Bus Rapid Transit System for Halton. It is intended that this will be delivered through a voluntary quality bus partnership between HBC, the Mersey Gateway concessionaire and the bus operators.'

4.7.1 Measures to be undertaken include:-

- Key services and infrastructure on the defined Halton Core Bus Route Network will be upgraded. This will form the first stage of the new Halton Transit Network (HTN) (Bus Rapid Transit based primarily on unguided lengths of busway), which should fill important gaps in the network and thereby help to encourage higher levels of cross river trips within the Borough. All existing stops will be improved to a higher standard, featuring enhanced waiting facilities for passengers, improved, signage, information (including real time at all stops), CCTV, off bus ticketing facilities and an emergency helpline facility. (This would build upon the existing bus stop improvement programme delivered through the first and second Halton LTPs.). Appropriate local bus priority measures will be introduced along key corridors of the HTN, especially through the toll plazas on the approach to the SJB.
- The sections of the HTN include:-
 - Transit Line 1- Runcorn Busway Loop (Halton Lea – Castlefields, Windmill Hill, Norton , Runcorn East Station, Murdishaw, Brookfields, Palacefields and Halton Hospital) and new proposed cross town link to the Heath and Weston Point (serving the proposed Halton Housing Growth Point site);
 - Transit Line 2 – Hough Green – Runcorn town centre bus station (Hough Green Estate loop – Hough Green Rail Station, Chesnut Lodge, Widnes town centre and Widnes West Bank) ; and
 - Transit Line 3 - Widnes town centre to Halton Lea via the SJB, Grangeway and Halton Brook areas.
- The HTN will be linked to a range of key employment areas by a series of high quality connector services at prime interchange points, namely:-
 - Halton Lea;
 - Murdishaw (for eastern Runcorn employment areas and proposed new Runcorn Collegiate school);
 - West Bank (for Widnes Waterfront);
 - Widnes Green Oaks (for Widnes Waterfront)
 - Runcorn town centre bus station for Riverside College Runcorn;
- Introduction of a fleet of new high quality dedicated bus rapid transit vehicles, which would operate on the busway loop system and other key sections of the Core Route Network within Halton. These vehicles will be operated by environmentally friendly fuels (high mix of bio fuels or hybrid traction);

- The standard Monday to Saturday daytime frequency on the proposed transit system will be standardised to every 5 minutes, and 15 minutes evenings and Sundays. This will create a genuine 'turn up and go' frequency;
- Introduction of automated passenger announcements on fleet of dedicated vehicles operating on the proposed new Bus Rapid Transit System informing passengers on the impending arrival at stops and other key service information; and
- Greater community involvement in the management of the bus stops on the transit system through the development of community partnerships, based on the successful rail model. High quality public realm features will be incorporated at key stops and along prime corridors of the proposed new transit system.

4.7.2 Table 4.1 below shows the projected costs of delivering these improvements, which will be funded through a mixture of:-

- Halton Local Transport Plan capital funding;
- Bus Operator contributions (funding for new vehicles etc.); and
- Developer contributions.

Table 4.1 Proposed Costs of Improvement Theme 1

Theme 1 Elements	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	2016/17 £000s	2017/18 £000s	2018/19 £000s	2019/20 £000s	2020/21 £000s	Total £000s
<i>Improvements to Murdishaw Bus Interchange (LTP)</i>	150	25	0	0	0	0	0	175
<i>Improvements to Halton Lea South Bus Station (LTP)</i>	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	200
<i>Improvements to Halton Hospital Interchange (LTP)</i>	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	100
<i>Introduction of new BRT style buses (Bus Operators)</i>	1,000	1,000	1,000	500	0	0	0	3,500
<i>Improvements to bus stops on the main busway loop (LTP)</i>	550	750	750	750	550	300	300	3,950
<i>Improvements to information on board vehicles and stops (LTP)</i>	100	50	10	0	0	0	0	160
Total	2000	1925	1760	1250	550	300	300	8.085

4.8 Improvement Theme 2

‘Possible Ring fencing of Mersey Gateway toll revenue to deliver further service enhancements on the Core Bus Route Network within the Borough and to support the conversion of key elements of the network to proposed Bus Rapid Transit system.’

4.8.1 This theme focuses on addressing the key bus service accessibility gaps for low income communities, increasing the accessibility of employment, training, health, education, social and food retail shopping opportunities. There is potential for many of the new links to be funded using ‘pump prime funding’, generated through Mersey Gateway tolls. The package of bus service improvements will require an average of £500,000 per year of Mersey Gateway toll income to fund the £5.5m programme of measures. It is envisaged that the revenue support will be decreased over a period of 5 years after which, the new services will be operated commercially. This approach will enable patronage levels to build up, whilst offering service quality levels commensurate with the rest of the defined Core Bus Route Network. It will also enable reinvestment of the funding into the development of further service improvements. It is proposed that all initial bus improvement schemes will be delivered through a voluntary quality bus partnership agreement between Halton Borough Council and the bus operators.

4.8.2 Key measures to be implemented include:-

- **Runcorn ‘Super 8’ Service** will provide better integration of bus services between east and west Runcorn and improvements to evening services on the northern loop of the Runcorn Busway. The ‘Super 8’ will additionally serve the proposed new Strategic Housing Growth Point site at Western Point. Estimated cost = £530,000 over five years. This will be based on a “Kickstart” style principle with decreasing subsidy over the 5-year period. This assumes that the service will be fully commercial after 5 years;
- **Runcorn Town Centre Shuttle Bus Service** This would be a new service provided by vehicles, using the latest low carbon technologies to minimise their impact on the environment, linking:-
 - Runcorn town centre bus station;
 - The Bridges Retail Park;
 - Runcorn station;
 - Riverside College, Runcorn;
 - Independent Living Centre;
 - Runcorn Waterfront;
 - ‘The Deck’ residential development; and
 - Runcorn leisure centre.
- This new service will be operated by a fleet of dedicated new environmentally friendly shuttle buses, It is proposed that the service will operate every 20 minutes in each direction (Monday to Friday daytime (07.00 – 21.00), and every 30 minutes Saturday and Sundays (09.00 – 21.00). The projected cost of this new service is £1.33m over 5 years.
- **Enhanced Widnes Town Centre Shuttle Bus Service:** - The enhanced service will be provided by vehicles, using the latest low carbon technologies to minimise their impact on the environment, which will link the following key attractions:-
 - Widnes Green Oakes bus station;
 - Widnes Waterfront;

- 3MG;
 - West Bank (proposed new public transport interchange); and
 - Halton Stadium and Widnes leisure centre.
- The enhanced service will be based on an extension to the existing service 13, which is proposed to be funded by NWDA and ERDF Objective 2 funding. This new service will utilise a new fleet of dedicated environmentally friendly shuttle buses, running every 20 minutes in each direction (Monday to Friday daytime (07.00 – 21.00), and every 30 minutes Saturday and Sundays (09.00 – 21.00). The estimated cost of this initiative is £1.33 m over 5 years.
 - **Runcorn East ‘Door 2 Door’ Service** This would involve the introduction of a new dedicated demand responsive transport service for key areas in eastern Runcorn. The service will operate as an extension to the recently introduced Borough wide “Door 2 Door” service, and will be operated through the new centralised booking and vehicle scheduling system introduced as part of Halton’s second LTP. This new service will link key employment sites in eastern Runcorn to both Murdishaw Bus Interchange and Runcorn East Bus Station. The service will operate 24 hrs per day, 7 days per week and will serve the key following areas:-
 - Murdishaw bus interchange;
 - Runcorn East bus station;
 - Whitehouse Industrial Estate;
 - Daresbury Business Park;
 - Daresbury Science and Innovation Park;
 - Manor Park;
 - Sandymoor; and
 - Windmill Hill.

4.8.3 Table 4.2 below details the costs of funding these measures, which shows that all of the proposed actions within this Theme would be funded from Mersey Gateway toll revenue.

Table 4.2 Proposed Costs of Improvement Theme 2

Mersey Gateway Theme 2	2014/15 (£000s)	2015/16 (£000s)	2016/17 (£000s)	2017/18 (£000s)	2018/19 (£000s)	2019/20 (£000s)	2020/21 (£000s)	2021/22 (£000s)	2022/23 (£000s)	2023/24 (£000s)	2024/25 (£000s)	Totals (£000s)
Proposed Runcorn Busway Service enhancements through the recasting and enhancement of existing busway circulars services 1 and 2 establishment of the Super 8 service focussing on the Runcorn Busway and adjoining areas of high deprivation	150.0	140.0	100.0	90.0	70.0	50.0	30.0	10.0				640.00
Proposed Gateway Shuttle Service for Runcorn	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	150.0	1,750.00
Enhanced Widnes Town Centre Shuttle Bus Service	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	1,760.00
Proposed Door to Door demand responsive service expansion in East Runcorn	30.0	40.0	80.0	90.0	110.0	120.0	130.0	130.0	130.0	130.0	130.0	1,120.00
Community Transport Development Fund						10.0	20.0	40.0	50.0			120.00
Local Concessionary Fares Scheme for 16 - 19 year olds										50.0	60.0	110.00
Totals	500.0	500.0	500.0	500.0	500.0	500.0	500.0	500.0	500.0	500.0	500.0	5,500.00

4.9 Improvement Theme 3

Cycling and Walking Improvements

4.9.1 In addition to the proposed step change improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport on the SJB, an extensive and highly complementary package of transport improvements has been identified by Halton Borough Council that are designed to address the key issues set out in Section 2, including:-

- The need for key strategic cycle and walking routes and links between Widnes and St. Helens and parts of southern Knowsley (especially Huyton and Prescot);
- A new strategic cycle link between northern Widnes and Penketh (Warrington) to complement the Trans Pennine Trail route;
- Improvements to the Core Cycle Network in the western Runcorn area to better link Rocksavage, Weston Point and Frodsham areas to central and eastern Runcorn and across the SJB to Widnes and the Trans Pennine Trail;
- Improvements to prime orbital cycle routes in Widnes to better directly link the suburbs, commercial and employment areas and leisure and education facilities;
- Improved access to cycle facilities for households, businesses and visitors in the area;
- Improved cycle links between Widnes town centre and Widnes Waterfront via West Bank and new proposed local centre; and
- Improved walking and cycling route linking the SJB / Runcorn Station and Runcorn town centre.

4.9.2 The estimated costs of these improvements are shown in Table 4.3 below. It is proposed that these works would be primarily funded from Halton Local Transport Plan funding, with some contributions projected from developers and other sources.

Table 4.3 Proposed Costs of Theme 3 Cycling and Walking Improvements

Mersey Gateway Improvement Theme 3	1.0.1 Projected Cost Profile					1.0.2
	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	2018/19 £	(£)
<i>Improved strategic cycle link North Widnes – St. Helens</i>	100,000	50,000	10,000	0	0	160,000
<i>Improved cycle route linking north Widnes to Penketh - Warrington</i>	25,000	20,000	20,000	0	0	65,000
<i>New improved strategic Runcorn – Weston Point – Rocksavage – Frodsham – Weaver regional park cycle / pedestrian route. (this route will serve the new proposed Housing Growth Point development.)</i>	250,000	20,000	10,000	5,000	5,000	290,000
<i>Improvements to orbital routes in Widnes and Runcorn.</i>	80,000	90,000	40,000	20,000	20,000	250,000
<i>Introduction of new cycle hire service at key locations across the Borough.</i>	100,000	50,000	20,000	10,000	10,000	190,000
<i>Improved cycle / walking links to / from Widnes West Bank / Waterfront.</i>	50,000	50,000	20,000	10,000	0	130,000
<i>Improved cycle / walking links between SJB / Runcorn Station and</i>	25,000	10,000	0	0	0	35,000
Total	630,000	290,000	120,000	45,000	35,000	1.12m

4.10 Improvement Theme 4

Improved bus / rail interchange facilities at Hough Green, Widnes and Runcorn Rail Stations.

4.10.1 Proposed improvements include:-

- New station booking offices and passenger waiting facilities (with enhanced opening hours);
- Improved bus / rail interchange facilities at all stations;

- Improved information facilitating connections and real time bus information; and
- High quality public realm features commensurate with the proposed Halton Bus Transit System (see above).

4.10.2 The estimated cost of this option is £1.5m, which will be funded by a mixture of rail industry funding and contributions from the Halton LTP.

4.10.3 The overall projected cost of the Phase 1 improvements is projected to be £15.2M

4.10.4 Phase Two (years 2022/23 – 2031/32) Over the medium to longer term it is proposed that the following improvement themes be developed as part of the Strategy.

4.11 Improvement Theme 5

Introduction of a new multi modal ITSO compatible SMART “Mobility” card to act as a common travel payment platform for local residents and businesses’

4.11.1 It is proposed that the Mersey Gateway concessionaire will manage the ITSO compatible SMART card, which will form a common platform for the payment of:-

- Bridge tolls;
- Public transport journeys;
- Cycle hire facilities; and
- ‘Door 2 Door’ services.

4.11.2 This proposal will be incorporated into the existing family of pre paid multi operator public transport passes which are currently available in Halton based on the block exemption to the 2002 Competition Act. The card will be able to build on the successful operator reimbursement mechanisms that are already in place.

4.11.3 As part of the development of the scheme, Halton BC and the Mersey Gateway Concessionaire will look for opportunities to integrate the proposed new SMART card with similar complementary proposals being advanced in other local authority areas across the Mersey Belt and North West region.

4.11.4 The estimated cost of this option is £2m.

4.12 Improvement Theme 6

Opening of a new Strategic Park and Ride site
--

4.12.1 In the longer term it is also proposed that, Halton Borough Council and the Mersey Gateway concessionaire will investigate the feasibility of constructing a new strategic Park and Ride site, close to the key approaches of the Mersey Gateway scheme. This scheme could again be partially funded from bridge toll revenue. Possible locations for the Park & Ride site include the current Council owned depot on Lower House Lane in Widnes. The estimated capital construction costs of this option are £1.5m.

4.13 Improvement Theme 7 -

Canals / Inland Waterways

4.13.1 The MG STS has also identified further improvements to canals and waterways to support the development of further strategic transport / access improvements for passengers and freight during the longer time frame of the Strategy. These include:-

- The introduction of a new passenger waterbus service linking Runcorn Town Centre to Murdishaw Marina via Astmoor, Castlefields, Phoenix Park and Windmill Hill (This service will mainly serve the leisure and visitor market, however a pre feasibility study will also examine options to utilise the link to encourage more local journeys to be made by the service);
- A feasibility Study will be carried out into the reopening of the link between the Runcorn branch of the Bridgewater Canal to the Manchester Ship Canal at Runcorn Docks. This will be facilitated by the planned delinking of the SJB in Runcorn and other changes to land use pattern in Runcorn Town Centre as part of MG Regeneration Strategy; and
- Further support for measures will further utilise the Manchester Ship Canal as a key inland freight and distribution artery.

4.13.2 The estimated cost of the above feasibility studies = £500,000

4.14 Improvement Theme 8

Mobility Management Measures

4.14.1 The MG STS also seeks to advance proposals to further strengthen mobility management within the Borough, as part of a package of complementary measures across the Liverpool City Region. These could include:-

- Enhanced travel blending and advice to households within the Borough which includes individualised travel planning);
- The cost of this measure will be subject to a full feasibility study.

4.14.2 Improvement Theme 9

4.14.3 In addition, to the above themes, the strategy has identified a further theme, which is important to the objectives of the Mersey Gateway Project, but is planned to be delivered in advance of the period covered by the short term phase. This theme is:

Re-opening of the Halton Curve

4.14.4 Halton Curve links Halton Junction (on the West Coast Mainline Liverpool Branch) in the Heath area of Runcorn to Frodsham Junction on the main Manchester to North Wales coast line. The proposal involves the introduction of a new local passenger rail service linking Liverpool Lime Street – Liverpool South Parkway – Widnes Waterfront (3MG)– Runcorn – Beechwood – Frodsham – Chester. The scheme not only caters for strategic movements between Chester and Liverpool, but also local journeys within Halton, should the option to build a station at Beechwood and re-open Ditton station be adopted. Halton Curve is already a commitment within Halton and Merseyside’s Local Transport Plans and has been the subject of a detailed project appraisal by Network Rail [Options Report

Halton Curve, September 2007].

4.14.5 The cost of the basic scheme is projected at £13.6m. The funding for this project has yet to be identified, but is likely to be provided from a cocktail of public and private sector initiatives. The scheme is initially planned to be operational by 2011/12.

4.14.6 The economic benefits of the scheme include:-

- Significant impact on the accessibility of locations along the line of route, increasing the size of local labour markets;
- Bringing just over 500 jobs to the North West of England; and
- The biggest impacts will be felt in Runcorn, Widnes, Frodsham, Helsby and Chester.

4.15 NATA Appraisal

4.15.1 A NATA appraisal of all the themes has been undertaken, the results of which are shown in Table 4.4

4.16 Programme Summary

4.16.1 Table 4.5 summarises the MG STS Actions and Funding Programme.

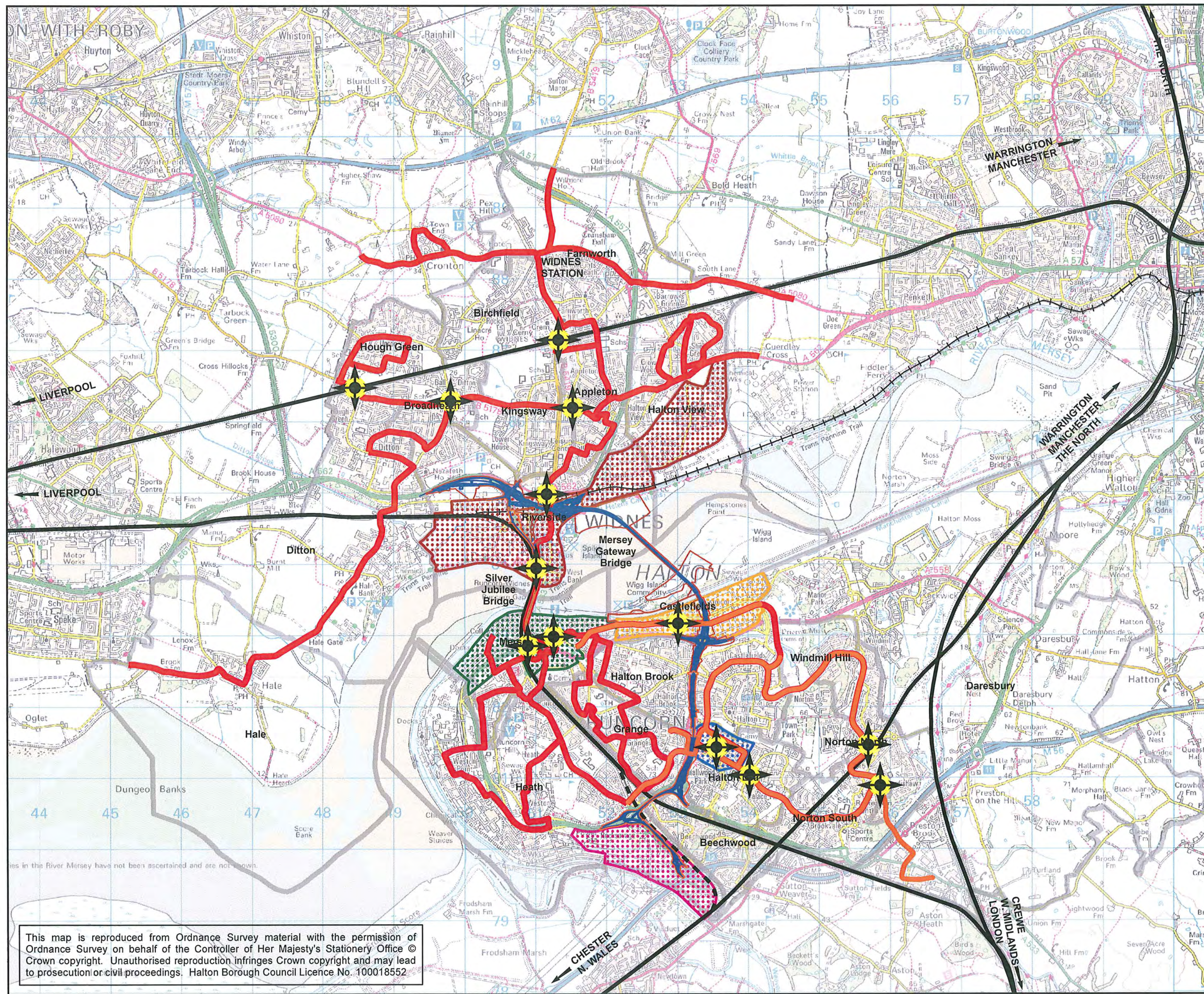
4.17 The Strategy in Practice

4.17.1 It is generally recognised that transport is not an end in itself, but is a means to an end. It is therefore important to demonstrate how the proposed strategy complements key initiatives within Halton and enables the delivery of much wider socio, economic and environmental benefits.

4.17.2 In developing this strategy particular attention has been paid to addressing the key transport issues that were identified in The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (MG RS). This Section summarises the aims and objectives of the MG RS along with the key sustainable transport issues relevant to the five designated regeneration areas in Halton. The five areas are listed below and shown in Figure 4.0:-

- West Bank;
- Runcorn;
- Astmoor;
- Halton Lea; and
- Rocksavage and Clifton.

4.17.3 The Project impacts directly on two of the regeneration areas; West Bank, Widnes; and Runcorn town centre and as such provides early opportunities for regeneration. However, regeneration in the remaining three areas is more dependent on other development opportunities and as such is more long term. The following section focuses on an integrated approach to the transport issues in West Bank and Runcorn town centre and identifies those themes in the Phase 1 delivery programme that will facilitate regeneration in the two areas. Measures are also identified for the other three areas, but due to the timescale involved are less detailed.



Legend

- Local Interchange
- Runcorn Busway
- Project Planning Application Boundary
- Transport & Works Act Boundary
- Halton Core Bus Network
- Freight Rail Route
- Proposed Halton Curve Passenger Route
- Passenger Rail Route

Regeneration Areas

- RUNCORN
- WEST BANK
- ROCK SAVAGE
- HALTON LEA
- ASTMOOR
- Halton Ward Boundaries

Rev.	Drawn	Chkd	Apprvd	Date	Description

Client
HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Project
SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Title
PROPOSED REGENERATION AREAS WITHIN HALTON

Gifford

3rd Floor, King's Court, 2-4 Exchange Street, Manchester, M2 7HA
Tel: 0161 827 1890 Fax: 0161 819 5703 www.gifford.uk.com

Scale (At A3) 1:50,000	Date 26/06/08	Drawn Jane Hunter
Drg FIGURE 4.0	Rev. -	

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Table 4.4 below, illustrates the results of a high level impact evaluation of the proposed strategy using key elements of the DfT’s NATA approach to transport appraisal. **LP**= Low Positive **N** = Neutral **MP**= Medium Positive **HP**=High Positive

Assessment Criteria	Bus Based Transit Improvements Themes 1 and 2	Cycle/ Walking and Waterway Improvements Improvement Theme 3	Rail Station Improvements Improvement Theme 4	Mobility Card (Multi Modal SMART Card) – improvement Theme 5	Construction of new strategic Park and Ride site and Interchange – Improvement Theme 6	Further canal / waterway improvements Theme 7	Further mobility Management Measures Theme 8	Re-opening of Halton Curve – Improvement Theme 9
Environment:								
Landscape	N	HP	N	N	LP	LP	LP	LN
Noise and Air Pollution	MP	HP	MP	N	LN	LP	LP	LP
Congestion	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP
Safety	LP	LP	MP	LP	LP	N	LP	LP
Economy:							LP	
Regional	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	MP
Local	MP	LP	LP	LP	MP	LP	LP	MP
Employment (employers)	MP	LP	LP	LP	MP	LP	LP	MP
Employment (employees)	MP	LP	LP	LP	MP	LP	LP	MP
Integration	MP	MP	MP	MP	HP	MP	LP	MP
Passengers							LP	
Journey Time	MP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	MP
Increased accessibility	HP	MP	LP	LP	MP	LP	LP	MP
Service Frequency	HP	LP	LP	LP	MP	LP	LP	MP
Service Reliability	MP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	LP	MP
Journey Opportunities	HP	MP	LP	MP	MP	LP	LP	MP

4.18 The Draft Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (MG RS) (GVA Grimley April 2008)

4.18.1 The MG RS explores a wide range of economic, social, physical and environmental opportunities for Halton that result as a direct consequence of the Project. Significantly the MG RS recognises that the Project is much more than just a bridge.

4.18.2 The development of the strategy has included extensive and wide reaching stakeholder participation and consultation in Halton.

4.18.3 There are four overlapping themes that the MG RS seeks to develop of which two are highly relevant to the MG STS; these being:-

- **Enhancing Accessibility** – through reduced travel times, thereby extending potential catchment areas to education, employment and other community facilities.
- **Image, Property and Development** – the Mersey Gateway will have a direct physical impact on the locality and will assist in the definition of land use, movement and design mix.

4.19 Integrated Solution 1 - West Bank, Widnes

4.19.1 The MG RS recommends that as part of the Mersey Gateway scheme, the West Bank area of Widnes should be comprehensively upgraded as an attractive mixed land use area. Hence the Sustainable Transport Strategy seeks to support the MG Regeneration Strategy by delivering a comprehensive range of transport and access improvements to support the key proposals for that area.

4.19.2 Para 4.6 of the Regeneration Strategy states

‘An important ambition for the [West Bank] area is firstly to create a new and improved waterfront promenade, which as part of a robust environmental improvement strategy, could really transform the image and quality of place. A second important ambition is to improve the links with adjacent areas, particularly Widnes and Runcorn town centres, and also enhanced accessibility to the Trans Pennine Trail and the highway network.’

4.19.3 Following on from this, the MG RS recommends the following key improvements within the West Bank area

- **‘Image and Place Making’**
 - To support the improved image and place making within the West Bank area, the MG RS proposes the creation of a new neighbourhood centre located on the Waterloo Road corridor. This new commercial centre is designed to provide an attractive commercial and social hub for the community where a wide range of key local services will be provided within an attractive setting. This new proposed commercial centre will also act as the hub of an enhanced network of improved sustainable transport links especially public transport, walking and cycling improvements in the area.
 - Furthermore, new sustainable access improvements are proposed to open up access to the Widnes Waterfront area stretching from Spike Island through to Pickering’s Pastures. Particular attention will be placed to the creation of new high quality walking and cycling routes emanating from the key public transport interchanges identified at Irwell Street and the new

proposed District Centre (located off Waterloo Road). These improved walking and cycling links will be complemented by the introduction of a new shuttle bus service linking West Bank, Widnes Waterfront, 3MG, and Widnes town centre, detailed in Theme 2.

- **Accessibility and Movement'**
 - To improve accessibility and movement within the West Bank area, the MG RS specifically recommends that the A533 (Queensway) should be downgraded using modifications to the existing road infrastructure to create more direct access to the West Bank area. As part of the proposals the A533 becomes a local two-way road to simplify and maximize accessibility. This will be complemented by new at grade junctions allowing better local traffic movements within and between West Bank and the surrounding areas.
 - The MG RS also identifies the need for the creation of clearer and more easily defined routes for pedestrians and cyclists through the West Bank area. It also provides for a clear hierarchy of defined routes, which responds to the character of the areas proposed and provides for pedestrian and cycle movement, especially key north / south linkages.
- **Development and Economic Prosperity'**
 - High quality public realm improvements will be introduced as part of the proposals, which will seek to unify the area and improve the 'sense of place'.

4.19.4 Key issues related to sustainable transport and movement in this area are as follows:-

- Poor traffic circulation and a lack of permeability;
- Area dominated by motor vehicles and road infrastructure;
- A hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Poor linkages into West Bank;
- Need to upgrade links to Widnes Town Centre and the River Mersey Estuary; and
- Need to improve safety and security on footways and roads.

4.19.5 The MG STS will address these issues by implementing the following:-

- A significant upgrade to key bus routes through the area. The area is dissected by one of the key Core Bus Routes (identified in Section 2) linking Widnes town centre to West Bank and the SJB. This Core Bus Corridor will be upgraded as part of the first phase of the introduction of the proposed new Halton Transit System. This will be complemented by the introduction of a new improved local community shuttle bus service, under Theme 2, offering improved connectivity between the key residential communities within West Bank, the main employment areas, the proposed new commercial centre and key public transport interchange nodes (to be located at Irwell Street and the new commercial centre on Waterloo Road). This service, in addition, provides for enhanced north / south links;
- The creation of new high quality and attractive core walking and cycling routes, (Theme 3), again linking the key public transport nodes in the area and the housing, employment and leisure attractions in the area;

- Further improvements to the Trans Pennine section of the strategic cycle network, (Theme 3); and
- Halton BC would aspire to deliver a high quality scheme to better provide for pedestrian movements between the high level SJB deck (and proposed public transport interchange at Irwell Street) to the waterfront area at West Bank. (Theme 3).

4.20 Proposed Delinking of the SJB in the West Bank

4.20.1 Integral to the Project is the delinking of the SJB from the strategic highway network. The delinking arrangements are aimed at reducing the potential for the SJB to be used as a strategic link for long distance traffic movement, whilst increasing its function as a local connection for residents and businesses in the Borough.

4.20.2 The planning application submitted in respect of the Project includes delinking proposals on Queensway in West Bank. The reference design for the proposed delinking as submitted with the Planning Application is shown in Figure 4.1.

4.21 Integrated Solution 2 Runcorn Town Centre

4.21.1 The MG RS also identifies and recommends specific infrastructure and land use changes for Runcorn town Centre, which are supported by measures in the MG STS.

4.21.2 Key issues related to sustainable transport and movement in this area from the perspective of the MG RS are as follows:-

- Poor visibility and legibility of Runcorn Railway Station and associated bus and pedestrian facilities and connections;
- Poor pedestrian links and high levels of severance in this area; and
- Dominant road infrastructure, particularly on elevated structures.

4.21.3 A number of potential solutions have been considered for the de-linking of the SJB in Runcorn as set out in the Mersey Gateway Delinking Options Report (Gifford 2006). The scale of the heavy highway infrastructure on the Runcorn side of the SJB is significant and complex. The MG RS has examined the development potential for land in this area following de-linking. A key opportunity resulting from this is the potential to redevelop Runcorn Station with associated office and business land uses adjoining the frontage of the station.

4.21.4 From the perspective of the MG STS, the de linking of the SJB provides an opportunity to develop and improve Runcorn rail station as a major transport interchange and thereby address the sustainable transport issue identified above. The key design considerations include the need to identify a solution that maximises the development and commercial opportunities of the station, whilst facilitating a key sub regional interchange and transport hub at the station. Designs will also have to incorporate direct linkages for buses, pedestrians and cycles between the station and Runcorn Old Town and the Housing Growth Point at Weston.

4.21.5 To help support the regeneration of Runcorn Town Centre, the key transport recommendations contained within the MG RS, which are supported by the Sustainable Transport Strategy include:-



NOTES

1. This layout is indicative of a highway/ infrastructure layout which delinks the local roads from the main network and can deliver the key elements described within Sustainable Transport Strategy. It should be appreciated that further development will be required to integrate this layout with the objectives of the Regeneration Strategy.

<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Rev</td> <td>Drawn</td> <td>Check</td> <td>Approved</td> <td>Date</td> <td>FOR INFORMATION</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>13.08.07</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Rev	Drawn	Check	Approved	Date	FOR INFORMATION					13.08.07		Description
Rev	Drawn	Check	Approved	Date	FOR INFORMATION								
				13.08.07									
Client													
 													
Project													
THE MERSEY GATEWAY													
Drawing Title													
WESTBANK DELINKING INDICATIVE LAYOUT REFERENCE DESIGN OPTION													
													

Figure 4.1

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- The removal of the highway bridge over the Bridgewater Canal, which currently prevent it joining with the Manchester Ship Canal and the wider links of the inland waterways within the Cheshire loop system, which the Runcorn Branch of the Bridgewater Canal forms part of;
- A comprehensive redesign of the road layout from / to the SJB, involving the removal of the Runcorn 'loops', to simplify vehicular movement into / out of the town centre and allow direct bus and vehicular movement from the SJB to the rail station;
- Retention of the eastbound slip which would be redesigned as a two way road linking the SJB to the town centre by a new at grade 4 way junction on the Runcorn Expressway; and
- Downgrading of road infrastructure from the 'loops' format allowing improved pedestrian and cyclist movement from the town centre to commercial development via upgraded and new pedestrian and cycle links.

4.21.6 The MG STS will address these issues by implementing the following:-

- The introduction of a new town centre shuttle bus service (Theme 2) linking Runcorn Town Centre Bus Station - Runcorn Rail Station (through the new proposed mixed use commercial area created through the removal of the 'loops'), The Bridge Retail Park - Riverside College Halton - the Independent Living Centre and the Runcorn Promenade;
- Core Bus Route Network Improvements over the SJB linking West Bank to Runcorn Town Centre (Theme 1);
- Improved bus links between Runcorn TC and the proposed new Housing Growth Point area at Western Docks (Theme 2);
- Cycling and Walking Links (Theme 3); and
- Improved leisure corridor along the Runcorn Branch of the Bridgewater Canal (Theme 7).

4.22 Common issues and themes in West Bank and Runcorn associated with the SJB

4.22.1 There are a number of common issues and themes in terms of sustainable transport in West Bank and Runcorn regeneration areas and these are related to the SJB, which provides the only connection for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists in the Borough.

4.23 Issues associated with the pedestrian route on the SJB

4.23.1 The SJB offers very poor facilities for pedestrians walking between Runcorn and Widnes. The route comprises a narrow pedestrian route running along the east side of the SJB between the West Bank in Widnes and the Town Viaduct in Runcorn. (See photographs below). Other factors discouraging pedestrian movements include:-

- Noisy environment particularly on the approaches to the SJB;
- Poor air quality;
- Close proximity of pedestrians to dense traffic;

- High potential for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists due to the narrowness of the route;
- High level of exposure to the wind and rain;
- Bridge vibrates which can be unnerving for pedestrians; and
- The route is not a formalized route for cyclists.

Existing narrow footway on the east side of the SJB that is intended for pedestrians, but is also used by cyclists.



Cyclists in West Bank heading south towards Runcorn via the SJB.



4.23.2 Feedback from recent public consultation for the MG STS (Gifford 2008) indicated that the walkway across the SJB should be made more user friendly, more attractive to use and have better access and signage from both sides of the river estuary. Concerns about personal safety were also expressed by consultees as pedestrians and, to a lesser

degree, cyclists who are out of view when crossing the bridge.

- 4.23.3 Experience and observations have indicated that pedestrians walking across the SJB often have to get out of the way of cyclists and there is a degree conflict between the two groups of users. This is exacerbated by the narrowness of the route.

4.24 Issues associated with cycling on the SJB route

- 4.24.1 A survey conducted on 4th December 2007 between 7am and 7pm counted 104 pedestrians and 129 cyclists using the footway on the SJB (Gifford 2007). That survey was undertaken at a time of the year when demand is likely to be low due to the seasonal weather conditions at this time of the year. This does, however, illustrate that there is a core of users who wish to make the connections across the bridge and a potential latent demand.

- 4.24.2 An automatic counter installed on the Town Viaduct has been monitoring cycle use over the SJB. A summary of the data collected between May 07 and March 08 is shown in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5 Summary of Cycle Use over SJB from Automatic Counting Equipment

		Volume	
Month	Period	Ave Mon-Fri	Ave Sat-Sun
May-07	21st-31st	172	61
Jun-07	1st-10th	206	151
Jul-07	2nd-22nd	157	118
Aug-07	NO DATA		
Sep-07	17th-30th	163	126
Oct-07	Whole month	146	102
Nov-07	Whole month	123	79
Dec-07	Whole month	88	62
Jan-08	25th-31st	107	95
Feb-08	Whole month	132	102
Mar-08	27th-2nd April	136	96
AVERAGE		143	99

- 4.24.3 There is therefore substantial capacity to generate additional cycling and walking trips over the SJB due to the creation of a more favourable environment for pedestrians and cyclists both on the key approaches and on the SJB itself.

4.25 Integrated Solution 3 - Astmoor Sustainable Transport Issues

- 4.25.1 Key issues related to sustainable transport and movement in this area are as follows

- Poor visibility of the Astmoor branch of the busway and stops;
- Poor integration between the busway and pedestrian and cycle routes and adjoining employment and business sites;
- Weak links north-south links within Astmoor and links to Runcorn Town Centre; and
- Poor public realm particularly in areas adjacent to the busway and stops; and

- No clearly defined interchange and key transport node on the Busway in Astmoor.

4.25.2 Measures to address these issues will be implemented as part of proposals to comprehensively regenerate the Astmoor Industrial Estate by Halton Borough Council.

4.25.3 The MG Sustainable Transport Strategy identifies two other areas which although significant commercial / development areas in their own right, will have less of a significant impact on the Mersey Gateway scheme itself. However sustainable transport links to both areas will benefit from the scheme and the key issues for each of these areas is considered briefly below.

4.26 Halton Lea Sustainable Transport Issues

4.26.1 Halton Lea is one of the foremost commercial centres within the Borough, with significant retail and business office functions. The majority of the centre was purpose built between the late 1960's and mid 1970's in a series of phases, coinciding with the expansion of the Runcorn New Town area.

4.26.2 The main commercial shopping centre, although now dated in many respects was designed around a unique arrangement of segregated access routes for public transport, pedestrians/ cyclists and vehicle movements. The centre is the hub of the unique Runcorn Busway system which connects all the main residential areas in the Runcorn New Town area with the shopping centre. Passenger access to the busway system is served by two separate bus stations (Halton Lea North and South) which are located on the extremities of the development and served by an elevated one way loop section of the busway. Accessibility by bus to the main commercial centre continues to be excellent from most areas of the New Town during the Monday to Saturday daytime, however service quality and availability deteriorates during evenings and Sundays.

4.26.3 Cycling and walking access to Halton Lea is generally very good and is based again on segregated walking and cycling links from surrounding areas. Pedestrians and cyclists are fed into the centre via a network of elevated pedestrian footbridges, although with the opening of the Trident Retail Park in 2003, at grade pedestrian access was improved to the southern section of Halton Lea.

4.26.4 The main issues related to sustainable transport and movement in this centre include

- Car movement dominates the area:-
- The two bus stations at Halton Lea (Halton Lea North and South) operate independently of each other and are not very visible;
- Poor provision for pedestrians;
- The centre suffers from poor legibility with the main access to the shopping area being hidden; and;
- Direct vehicle access from the east is lacking.

4.26.5 Over the longer term, and linked into any future redevelopment of the commercial centre at Halton Lea, Halton Borough Council will work with developers to address these problems.

4.27 Rock Savage and Clifton Sustainable Transport Issues

4.27.1 The MG Regeneration Strategy recommends a package of regeneration measures for the

Rock Savage and Clifton areas of southern Runcorn. The area is tightly ringed by a network of strategic road links and infrastructure (A557 'Western Point Expressway' and M56) which limits the permeability and ease of movement by sustainable transport choices to the rest of the urban area. The area also fronts onto the River Weaver Canal which provides an important recreational and leisure resource. The rail alignment which is the proposed route of the new Halton Curve rail service is also located on the western fringes of the area; however pedestrian access between Clifton and the proposed station on the line at Beechwood is currently severed by the A557.

4.27.2 The western part of the area is dominated by heavy industrial activity associated with Rocksavage Power Plant and Weston Dock, the principle road access points of which are Cavendish Farm Road and Bankes Lane. Towards the south east of the area lies the Ashville Industrial Estate, this only has vehicle access from the A557 (off the severed Clifton Road). Sandwiched in between these two industrial / commercial areas lies the small residential area of Clifton Village. Access to Clifton Village, is limited by sustainable travel choices due to the existence of heavy road infrastructure, with public transport, walking and cycling links currently extremely limited in scope. Furthermore strategic walking and cycling linkages are hampered by the design and limited road / footpath capacity on the Swing Bridge over the Weaver Navigation Canal effecting key walking and cycling movements between Runcorn and Frodsham and the Weaver Vale area.

4.27.3 The MG Regeneration Strategy identifies the area as the key southern gateway to Runcorn and key link between the M56 and the Mersey Gateway. The MG Regeneration Strategy identifies the following objectives for the area:-

- **Objective One** Strengthen the distinctive character assets of the area including the Weaver Canal, Sutton Quay's and areas of woodland through the promotion of leisure and recreation;
- **Objective Two:** – Respond to the demand for smaller better quality employment accommodation to cater for SME's and business start ups;
- **Objective Three:** – Seek to promote alternative energy production within the area due to the opportunity offered by the areas relative seclusion, lack of opportunity for residential development and locational links into the Borough's electrical supply network;
- **Objective Four:** – Encourage high quality visible gateway development opportunities;
- **Objective Five:** – Maximise the use of contaminated land through appropriate redevelopment; and
- **Objective Six:** – Promote improved east – west pedestrian links along the Weaver Canal.

4.27.4 Therefore over the medium to long term the MG Sustainable Transport Strategy will seek to deliver the following improvements funded out of a mixture of Local Transport Plan funding and developer contributions:-

- The introduction of improved community passenger transport services to the Clifton Village area;
- Improved local pedestrian and cycle links between Clifton Village and the core of the urban area in Runcorn;

- Better walking and cycling links between Clifton and the surrounding commercial and employment areas to the proposed new rail station on the Halton Curve Rail Line;
- The development of Travel Plans with businesses in the area to work up more detailed proposals to promote the greater use of walking, cycling and public transport to the key employment areas; and
- The further development of strategic cycle / walking links through the area, in particular the re-opening of a new cycle / walking link over the Weaver Canal and River Weaver thereby improving connections between southern and western Runcorn and Frodsham.

4.28 Conclusion

4.28.1 This section identifies a two-phase implementation plan, based on a thematic approach, which addresses key issues identified in the MG RS. This is shown in Table 4.6 below. The following Section 5 describes how progress is to be monitored on the implementation of the MG STS and identifies a series of challenging targets, which are linked to the MG STS objectives.

Improved cycle / walking links between SJB/ Runcorn Station and Runcorn Town Centre	Local Transport Plan	25	10											35.00
Totals		630.0	290.0	120.0	45.0	35.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1,120.00
Actions Phase 1 - Theme 4														
Improved bus rail interchange facilities at Hough Green, Widnes and Runcorn Stations	LTP / Network Rail		0.500	0.500	0.500									1.50
Total Projectred Costs of Phase 1 Actions		3230.000	2615.500	2380.500	2295.500	1085.000	800.000	800.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	500.000	15206.500
Actions Phase 2														
Theme 5 - Introduction of a new multi modal ISO compatible smart "Mobility " card to act as a common travel payment platform for local residents	LTP/S106/S278								0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500		2.00
Theme 6 Development of a new Strategic Park and Ride facility as part of the Mersey Gateway Scheme	LTP/S106/S278								0.500	1.500	0.500			2.50
Theme 7 - Canal and Inland Waterway Feasibility Studies	LTP/S106/S278								0.250	0.250				0.50
Theme 8 Mobility Management Measures	LTP/S106/S278										0.500			0.50
Total Phase 2 Projected Action Costs		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.250	2.250	1.500	0.500	0.500	5.500

5 MEASURING PROGRESS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

5.1 Measuring Progress

5.1.1 As with any key strategy covering a period of 20 years, it is important to identify and agree a robust framework for measuring the effectiveness of the Strategy both in terms of outputs and impacts.

5.1.2 It is proposed that the recently established Halton Local Strategic Transport Board will steer the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy, and that annual updates will be produced in line with the normal reporting mechanisms for the Halton Local Transport Plan (or successor documents).

5.1.3 To assist with the measuring of progress the following output indicators and impact targets are proposed (grouped under each of key objectives of the MG Sustainable Transport Strategy).

5.2 Objective One

Further improve accessibility for residents living in the most deprived Wards in the Borough to a wide range of key facilities including – employment, learning / training, health, leisure and retail facilities.

Table 5.1- Objective 1 Indicators

Output Indicator	Impact Target
Improved cycle links between the top five most deprived areas of the Borough and key regeneration sites.	Increase the percentage of people living in the top five most deprived areas of the Borough, regularly cycling to education, employment, health, leisure and shopping facilities to 10% in 2021 and 25% in 2031
Improved accessibility to key employment sites in eastern Runcorn through the introduction of a new 'Door 2 Door' service (operating 24 / 7)	Reduction in the journey time for residents living in the top 5 most deprived Wards living within 40 minutes end to end journey time from their home to place of employment in eastern Runcorn. Specific targets will be identified when base data becomes available. Performance will be monitored using the Accession model.

5.3 Objective Two

Reduce the future reliance on carbon intensive modes of travel through the promotion of greater use of public transport, walking and cycling options.

Table 5.2- Objective 2 Indicators

Output Indicator	Impact Target
Improvements to local bus services on the Core Bus Route Network, as set out in Themes 1 and 2.	Increase the percentage of people travelling to and from work by bus from 8% in 2001 to 15% in 2021, and 25% in 2031.
Introduction of 20 new cycle hire nodes in the Borough.	Generate 1,000 active members of the cycle hire scheme by 2021 (Active members are defined as using the scheme at least twice per month).
Introduction a fleet of at least 40 buses running on bio fuel or alternative low carbon fuel as part of the Strategy	Reduce reliance on conventional diesel sources for operators providing services on the local public transport network by 75% by 2021.

5.4 Objective Three

Support the continued regeneration of the Borough, through ensuring new high quality sustainable transport opportunities are delivered as part of the Mersey Gateway Project and associated Regeneration Strategy.

Table 5.3 Objective 3 Indicators

Output Indicator	Impact Target
The introduction of 2 new high quality shuttle bus services linking key regeneration sites to Widnes and Runcorn town centres.	90% of the population of Halton should be within 45mins travel time of key regeneration areas by public transport by 2021. Performance will be monitored using the Accession model
Improved accessibility to key employment sites in eastern Runcorn through the introduction of a new 'Door 2 Door' service (operating 24 / 7)	Delivering a 20 minute 'connecting' target for passengers arriving and transferring to / from the new proposed eastern Runcorn 'Door 2 Door' service at Murdishaw Bus Interchange or Runcorn East Station, Specific targets will be identified when base data becomes available. Performance will be monitored using the Accession model.
Better linkages for pedestrians and cyclists over the SJB.	Increase the number of pedestrians and cyclists travelling over the SJB by 100% by 2021.

5.5 Objective Four

Improve the modal share of journeys into the 3 main commercial centres (Runcorn town centre, Widnes town centre and Halton Lea) by sustainable forms of transport, thereby supporting the regeneration of the centres.

Table 5.4 Objective 4 Indicators

Output Indicator	Impact Target
The introduction of improved frequencies and hours of operation on the Core Bus Route Network, which links the key three commercial centres to their surrounding residential areas.	Increase the percentage of people travelling into the three main commercial centres by public transport to 25% by 2021, and 35% by 2031.
Introduction of improved cycle links and facilities into the main commercial centres from the surrounding areas.	Increase the percentage of people travelling into the three main commercial centres, by cycling to 15% by 2021 and 25% by 2031.
Improve the footfall in the three main commercial centres through measures to improve the pedestrian environment.	Increase the percentage of people walking to the three main commercial centres by 25% from 2008 to 2021.

N.B. Baseline figures for the cordon count's need to be established. The cordon counts will be conducted once every 3 years, during the period of the Strategy.

5.6 Objective Five

Further develop new strategic high quality sustainable transport links / corridors through the Borough utilising opportunities provided by the Mersey Gateway Project and thereby improving key Mersey Belt and Liverpool City Region linkages.

Table 5.5 Objective 5 Indicator

Output Indicator	Impact Target
Better cycle links between the Trans Pennine Trail and Runcorn via SJB.	Increase the number of pedestrians and cyclists travelling over the SJB by 100% by 2021