

Runcorn

Cheshire

'Mark Two' New Town – Designated 10 April 1964

Runcorn's masterplan aimed for 'unity and balance' between all of its elements, including between public and private transport. Its 'figure of 8' busway forms the framework around which the neighbourhood housing areas, industrial estates and parkland are laid out. Runcorn largely followed the path of the masterplan and is thus considered by many to be one of the most successful of the 'Mark Two' New Towns. Since 1974, Runcorn and Widnes, on the other side of the Mersey estuary (and like Runcorn formerly dominated by the chemical industries), have shared a local authority. A new (second) bridge connecting the two towns is under construction, to act as a catalyst for wider regeneration. Runcorn continues to face challenges of housing renewal, town centre regeneration and unemployment.



Halton Borough Council

Key facts:

- **Location:** 19 kilometres south east of Liverpool, 12 kilometres south west of Warrington, on the south bank of the Mersey.
- **2011 Census population:** 63,684, in 28, 575 households.¹
- **Local authority:** Halton Borough Council.
- **Local Plan status:** Halton Borough Council Core Strategy Local Plan (adopted 2013).

New Town designation:

- **Designated:** 10 April 1964.
- **Designated area:** 2,930 hectares.
- **Intended population:** 45,000 set out in the masterplan, growing to 70,000 by the 1980s, with view to reaching 100,000 later (population at designation: 28,500).
- **Development Corporation:** Designated to provide housing and employment for people from Liverpool and North Merseyside, exploiting the locational advantages of its site on main road and rail routes and adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal and the Mersey estuary. Using land to the east of the established town of Runcorn, the New Town was designed to be a balanced community. Development Corporation merged with Warrington Development Corporation 1 April 1981 and wound up 30 September 1989.

Housing, deprivation and health:

- The proportion of homes in Runcorn that are owner-occupied (57.0%) is 0.7% and 5.5% lower than the UK New Towns and UK averages, respectively. Nearly one-third of households in Runcorn are in social rent (32.0%) – 10.5% and 13.8% above the UK New Towns and UK averages, respectively.
- Halton was ranked as the 27th-most deprived borough in England in 2010. It contains ten areas that are in the 3% most deprived in England, seven of which are in Runcorn.
- Halton has, for many years, had some of the poorest health outcomes and shortest life expectancies of any area in

England. The 2011 Census reported that Runcorn has 1-2% fewer people declaring themselves to be in 'good' and 'very good' health, and 2% more declaring themselves to be in 'bad' health, than the UK New Towns and UK averages.

Employment/economic profile:

- The local economy has been subject to major restructuring, with decline in the traditional chemical manufacturing industries that once dominated. There is an emerging logistics sector and growth at Sci-Tech Daresbury, one of two National Science and Innovation Campuses.
- There is still a strong manufacturing base in Runcorn. Its biggest employer is currently Ineos Chlor (former ICI).
- Halton has levels of worklessness and unemployment higher than the North West region and UK averages.
- The Board of the local Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone has representation from Liverpool City Region LEP, Greater Manchester LEP, and Cheshire and Warrington LEP.

Development Corporation legacy:

- The masterplan still heavily influences planning policy and development today (a 400 metre maximum walk to a bus stop is now in planning policy for whole Borough).
- New housing is influenced by the New Town vernacular.
- The extent of the town's green space has implications for redevelopment. Some neighbourhoods are presenting regeneration challenges.
- Community development and active community participation are still very strong.
- Some housing design has not stood the test of time, and the covered shopping mall has presented economic and regeneration challenges.

Key issues for the future:

- Housing renewal.
- Town centre regeneration (for both the Old and New Towns).
- Economic growth/job creation.

¹ Totals for the following wards: Mersey, Heath, Grange, Beechwood, Halton Lea, Halton, Norton South, Norton North, Windmill Hill, Halton Castle, Daresbury

Did you know?

The masterplan did not specify a site for a cemetery because the masterplanner thought that in the future most people would be cremated.