

Economy and Growth Committee Agenda

Date: Tuesday 13 September 2022
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the top of each report.

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making meetings are audio recorded and the recordings will be uploaded to the Council's website

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To note any apologies for absence from Members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 3 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2022.

4. **Public Speaking/Open Session**

In accordance with the Council's Committee Procedure Rules and Appendix on Public Speaking, as set out in the Constitution, a total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to put questions to the committee on any matter relating to this agenda. Each member of the public will be allowed up to two minutes each to speak, and the Chair will have discretion to vary this where they consider it appropriate. Members of the public wishing to speak are required to provide notice of this at least three clear working days' in advance of the meeting.

For requests for further information

Contact: Rachel Graves

Tel: 01270 686473 **Email:** rachel.graves@cheshireeast.gov.uk

5. **Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme - Land and Rights** (Pages 7 - 78)

To consider the proposals to provide a new gateway entrance to the south of Crewe town centre via a new pedestrian and cycleway linking High Street and Forge Street.

6. **Domestic Energy Efficiency** (Pages 79 - 124)

To consider the proposed changes to the Council's existing Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People Policy 2021-2026 and the ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent.

7. **Rural Action Plan** (Pages 125 - 178)

To consider the Rural Action Plan 2022/23 -2025/26.

8. **Broadway Meadows Car Park** (Pages 179 - 190)

To note the appraisal of the current surface car park at Broadway Meadows, Wilmslow, for development as a Multi Storey Car Park and ancillary residential development, to support additional provision of car parking spaces.

9. **Work Programme** (Pages 191 - 194)

To consider the Work Programme and determine any required amendments.

10. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The reports relating to the remaining item on the agenda have been withheld from public circulation and deposit pursuant to Section 100(B)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the matters may be determined with the press and public excluded.

The Committee may decide that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

PART 2 - MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITHOUT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

11. **Update on Regeneration Project**

To receive a verbal update on the Regeneration Project.

Membership: Councillors S Brookfield, D Brown, J Clowes, M Goldsmith (Vice-Chair), P Groves, S Hogben, M Houston, D Jefferay, A Kolker, N Mannion (Chair), R Moreton, D Stockton and P Williams

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economy and Growth Committee**
held on Tuesday, 12th July, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)
Councillor M Goldsmith (Vice-Chair)

Councillors D Brown, J Clowes, A Critchley, P Groves, S Hogben, M Houston,
D Jefferay, A Kolker, R Moreton, D Stockton and P Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Karen Carsberg, Head of Housing
Brendan Flanagan, Head of Rural and Cultural Economy
Andy Kehoe, Head of Estates
Jo Wise, Development & Regeneration Delivery Manager
Wendy Broadhurst, Lead Finance Partner (Place)
Adrian Leslie, Solicitor
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor S Brookfield. Councillor
A Critchley attended as substitute.

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to Item 5 – Wilmslow Town Centre Business Improvement
District, the following made declarations in the interest of openness:-

Councillor D Jefferay declared that he was the ward member for Wilmslow
East.

Councillor M Goldsmith declared that he was a member of Wilmslow Town
Council and had actively lobbied with the Town Council for funding for
Groundwork CLM.

10 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2022 be approved as a
correct record.

11 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

12 WILMSLOW TOWN CENTRE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

The Committee considered a report on the Wilmslow Town Centre Business Improvement District ballot and the way the Council should vote in the ballot.

The Council was the owner of several hereditaments within the proposed Business Improvement District (BID) area and therefore would be entitled to vote in the BID ballot, and, if the ballot was successful, be liable to pay the levy for its hereditaments falling within the scope of the BID proposal. The estimated BID levy on the Council was circa £5.5k/per annum (increasing by 0.05% per annum after 22/23) and would be payable over the five-year term of the BID.

The report recommended that the Council should vote 'Yes' as there would be a relatively low cost to the Council in the form of the levy, the BID proposals complemented the efforts of the Council to support the vitality and viability of Wilmslow Town Centre, aligned with the Council's corporate priority to support successful town centres and was in line with the recommendations of the emerging Wilmslow Town Centre Vitality Plan.

RESOLVED: That

- 1 the Wilmslow Town Centre Business Improvement District be supported by the Council.
- 2 delegated authority be granted to the Director of Growth and Enterprise to complete any ballot slips the Council is entitled to complete in the Business Improvement District ballot, voting in support of the Business Improvement District in the ballot on behalf of the Council for the Council's hereditaments.
- 3 in the event the Council is requested to attend the Business Improvement District meetings in an advisory capacity, the Director of Growth and Enterprise accept and agreed the most appropriate officer representation and empower that officer to provide such advice to Business Improvement District meetings as they consider necessary.
- 4 in the event of a 'yes' vote and the Business Improvement District proceeding, delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director Place to consider the Terms of Reference of the Business Improvement District Board, and having regard to any advice given by the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Economy and Growth Committee, determine whether to put forward

a Cheshire East Council representative for appointment onto the Business Improvement District Board, and if so, select the appropriate appointee and empower the appointee to make any decisions required on behalf of the Council.

13 2021/2022 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW - GROWTH AND ENTERPRISE

The Committee considered the 2021/2022 Annual Performance Review report for the Economy and Enterprise Department.

The report detailed the performance against the key priorities and key performance indicators of services in Housing, Estates, Rural & Cultural Economy and Economic Development.

The Director of Growth and Enterprise highlighted the following achievements:

- the Housing Team had been at the forefront of the Council's response to support Afghan and Ukrainian refugees.
- the Estates Team continued to support the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, surpassing the annual capital receipts target of £1m by achieving a year-end total of £1.3m.
- the Rural and Cultural Economy Team had been ensuring that the country parks and paths were available for use by residents and visitors and that Tatton Park had been awarded a number of awards including 'Green Flag' and 'Green Heritage site' and a Sandford Award for the Excellence in Heritage Education.
- the Economic Development Team had been at the forefront of the covid response and had administered the discretionary grant for support for business in the retail, leisure and hospitality sector. Development of Crewe Market Hall and Castle Street, Macclesfield had been completed and the Team was leading on the levelling-up programme with the production of business cases for submission for funding. Following submission of a bid by the Team for Crewe to be the new GG Rail Headquarters it had successfully made the shortlist of six towns and cities in the competition out of 41 bids.

The Committee commented and asked questions on the following:

- Energy efficiency in homes in Cheshire East and availability of government grants - it was reported that the Council had a number of programmes at the moment which were aimed at people in low incomes and off gas. The Team was working closely with social housing providers in connection with the Social Housing Decarbonising Fund and future work would include working with the private renting market to make changes. Funding would also be available to help rural resident move away from reliance on solid fuel to provide for alternative such as heat source pumps.
- Footfall in town centres and how it was measured – it was explained that the Council had been monitoring the data in all the key services centres and had commissioned the use of mobile

phone data, which showed where people had travel from to the town centres.

- Progress on the Gypsy traveller transit site – it was reported that work was ongoing to progress the discharge of planning conditions. An application had been submitted to Homes England for additional funding toward development costs which had been successful. The Council was awaiting the Homes England contract, and if agreed, could progress to the construction stage and start tendering for the work.
- Community Asset Transfer framework – it was stated that consultation had been carried out and a call for site with Parish Councils. The uptake had not been as significant as anticipated.

The Committee congratulated officers on their hard work during the year and the positive results across the department.

RESOLVED:

That the performance of the Growth and Enterprise Department be noted.

14 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme for 2022/23.

It was noted that at present there were eight agenda items listed for the September meeting of the Committee, and it was asked if an earlier start time for that meeting could be considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme for 2022/23 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.11 pm

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)



Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	13 th September 2022
Report Title:	Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme – Land and Rights
Report of:	Jayne Traverse, Executive Director - Place
Report Reference No:	EG/17/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	Crewe Central

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** The Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (“the Scheme”) will provide a new gateway entrance to the south of Crewe town centre via a new pedestrian and cycleway linking High Street and Forge Street. The Scheme will also link to the roundabout connecting High Street, Mill Street, Oak Street (A5078) and Vernon Way (A5019), making it more cyclist and pedestrian friendly.

- 1.2.** The Council’s Corporate Plan priorities include providing a thriving and sustainable place that is a great place for people to live, work and visit. With a transport network that is safe and promotes active travel and to be carbon neutral by 2025. The Scheme will provide better walking and cycling links between key service centres in Crewe and support the success of the Corporate Plan.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1** Cheshire East Council has ambitions to improve pedestrian and cycle links across Crewe. The aim is to create a sustainable and connected travel network and encourage an increase in walking and cycling across the town. To help achieve these ambitions, several different schemes are being brought forward, including the Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme.

- 2.2** The Council also has plans to promote regeneration of Crewe, which include proposals to improve accessibility and permeability into and around the town centre. Such improvements are expected to increase footfall and dwell time, helping to support activity in the town centre. These plans have previously been set out in the Council's Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework (2016) and Public Realm Strategy (2018).
- 2.3** The Scheme will create a new gateway entrance to the south of Crewe town centre via a new pedestrian and cycleway linking High Street and Forge Street. The Scheme will also link to the roundabout connecting High Street, Mill Street, Oak Street (A5078) and Vernon Way (A5019), making it more cyclist and pedestrian friendly.
- 2.4** The Council has secured full funding for this Scheme from central government. It is one of the ten projects that are being progressed following the Council's successful £14.1m bid for funding from the Government's Future High Streets Fund through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC).
- 2.5** An extensive public engagement exercise on the proposals for the Scheme was undertaken between 29 April to Friday 10 June 2022. The engagement exercise response has been positive. The Engagement Report has been appended to this report (Appendix A).
- 2.6** The Scheme planning application is under preparation and the application is expected to be made in the near future.
- 2.7** The Scheme delivery requires the acquisition of land owned by third parties which is held as either freehold or leasehold land and will require the parties to surrender their rights over the land.
- 2.8** Negotiations are progressing with the landowners, however, successful negotiations are not certain, and the use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers should be considered to help ensure the delivery of the Scheme.
- 2.9** Compulsory Purchase Order powers may not be necessary as there is also the possible option of appropriating rights under Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

3. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 3.1.** Note the findings of the public consultation exercise. The Engagement Report has been appended to this report (Appendix A).
- 3.2.** Delegate authority to the Head of Estates in consultation with the Director of Governance and Compliance and the Chief Financial Officer, to:

- 3.2.1. take all actions necessary for the acquisition, extinguishment or otherwise rendering ineffective any third-party interests over the Scheme land or to appropriate such land so as to come within the provisions of Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.
- 3.2.2. release or procure the release of any rights, covenants, and other interests over the Scheme land insofar as it has the right to do so and provided that such release would not put the Council in breach of any obligation to a third party or parties; and
- 3.3. Approve the development of a CPO pursuant to section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to acquire land and interests in respect land required for the Scheme and pursuant and Schedule 3 to the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 and all other powers as appropriate for the purpose of acquiring the land and new rights for the purpose of facilitating the development, redevelopment, and improvement of the land by way of highway and public realm works.
- 3.4. Authorise the Head of Estates to:
 - 3.4.1. Negotiate and agree terms to seek to acquire the land and rights (or extinguish the same) required for the Scheme by agreement and to instruct the Director of Governance and Compliance to negotiate and enter into the legal agreements necessary to facilitate any such agreements.
 - 3.4.2. Negotiate and approve the payment of any relevant and reasonable professional fees incurred by landowners and others with compensatable interests in taking professional advice in connection with the acquisition of their interests required for the Scheme.
- 3.5. Delegate to the Head of Infrastructure the authority to negotiate and enter into all necessary agreements in connection with the relocation of a sprinkler system water tank.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The acquisition of the land enables the Council to proceed with the development and delivery of the Scheme so that the benefits and outcomes of the Scheme can be realised.
- 4.2. The Council will make every effort to acquire the land and all interests it needs by negotiation, but it recognises that it may not be possible to agree terms for their acquisition. Without the acquisition of the land required it will not be possible to deliver the Scheme. It is preferable to acquire the necessary land and rights by negotiation rather than relying upon the Compulsory Purchase powers and/or powers to appropriate rights, as the

Council will have to demonstrate that it has made all reasonable efforts in this regard. However, if the negotiations fail, the Council will have to rely upon its powers to acquire the land and interests using a Compulsory Purchase Order and/or powers to appropriate rights to enable the Scheme to proceed.

- 4.3.** In addition to facilitating the eventual delivery of this Scheme, initiating the CPO process over the entire land holding, that is required to implement the Scheme, provides the legal framework for the compulsory acquisition of land necessary to deliver the Scheme. The CPO process requires that the acquisition of land should be pursued by agreement and the use of compulsory purchase powers should be a last resort.
- 4.4.** The Council's use of compulsory purchase powers and/or powers to appropriate rights is as a measure of last resort. Negotiations are ongoing with those parties who have an interest in the required rights and land, however, not all of the interests may be acquired by negotiation in order to ensure the delivery of the Scheme within a reasonable timescale.
- 4.5.** A further report, which sets out the detailed justification for doing so, will be brought before Committee to seek authorisation for making a Compulsory Purchase Order and/or using powers to appropriate rights should it be necessary to proceed on either basis.
- 4.6.** A sprinkler system water tank operated by an affected party and needs to be relocated enable the Scheme to proceed.

5. Other Options Considered

5.1. Land and Rights Acquisition by Negotiation

- 5.1.1.** Land acquisition could be pursued solely by negotiation and subsequent agreement. However, relying on land acquisition by agreement alone does not guarantee that the land and rights required for the Scheme will be secured and may delay the delivery of the Scheme.
- 5.1.2.** It is intended to acquire all the land and rights required for the Scheme by agreement where possible and to use the powers under the Housing and Planning Act 2006 to appropriate rights and/or the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to compulsory purchase land and interests that cannot be acquired through agreement beforehand to ensure deliverability of the Scheme within the programme.
- 5.1.3.** Negotiations are progressing with the landowners, however, successful negotiations are not certain, and the use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers and/or powers to appropriate rights should be considered to help ensure the delivery of the Scheme.

5.2. Relocation of the sprinkler system water tank

- 5.2.1. This needs to be relocated to enable the Scheme to proceed. The terms of the legal agreement with affected party will require that they have uninterrupted utility of the sprinkler system and to facilitate construction of the Scheme it will be necessary to move the tank before the commencement of construction works.

5.3. The Committee not approving the recommendations

- 5.3.1. If the land and rights required for the Scheme cannot be secured through negotiation and subsequent agreement, then the Scheme cannot be delivered without powers of Compulsory Purchase or appropriating rights.
- 5.3.2. If the sprinkler system water tank is not relocated in advance of the construction works then the Scheme may be delayed and the external funding secured via Future High St Fund from DLUCH will be lost.

6. Background

- 6.1. The Council has long-term ambitions to improve pedestrian and cycle links across Crewe to encourage an increase in 'active travel'. In particular, a priority is to improve links from Crewe railway station to the town centre. A phased approach has been adopted, and progress is being made in relation to each of these:
- a) the Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycling Connectivity Scheme, connecting the north end of Mill Street to the Civic & Cultural Quarter (which includes the Lifestyle Centre, Christ Church, Memorial Square and Market Hall, Lyceum Theatre). Currently, the alternative pedestrian route is via the longer Vernon Way Retail Park.
 - b) the Mill Street Corridor scheme, providing an improved pedestrian and cycle route between Nantwich Road and Mill Street.
 - c) the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme, comprising an enhanced pedestrian and cycle route from Crewe station to the Mill Street Corridor.
- 6.2. In June 2020 the Council submitted a Future High Street's Fund bid to support a package of regeneration projects to support Crewe town centre, which included the Southern Gateway Scheme. The bid was successful and in June 2021 the Government confirmed a grant offer of £14.1m to support the programme including £3.053m to deliver the Southern Gateway Scheme. The Mill Street Corridor project has been earmarked

for funding from the Government's Towns Fund, and the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme is the subject of a recently submitted bid to the Government's Levelling Up Fund.

- 6.3.** As well as improving connectivity, the Scheme will help to make Crewe more attractive and welcoming and support the Council's ongoing regeneration programme, which aims to encourage more people to visit the town centre and to stay for longer. It will enhance potential development sites, including the Youth Zone project proposed for the Oak Street Car Park site, which is being progressed with funding from the Council and the Government's Towns Fund.
- 6.4.** The Scheme will offer benefits to people living in the area and people accessing Crewe station and the town centre and will further prepare the town for the arrival of HS2 to Crewe by 2033 which is an important component of delivering the Council's future ambitions for Crewe and the surrounding area.
- 6.5.** As part of this investment the Council is planning to improve access and connectivity across Crewe town centre with several new routes for pedestrians and cyclists proposed. The changes will deliver safer, more attractive, and more convenient walking and cycling routes to make it easier for people to get around the town, reducing congestion and journey times. By prioritising walking and cycling, these projects will also contribute towards Cheshire East Council's ambition to be a carbon neutral borough by 2045.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** An extensive formal public engagement exercise on the proposals for the Scheme was undertaken between 29 April to Friday 10 June 2022. The engagement exercise response has been positive. The Engagement Report has been appended to this report (Appendix A)
- 7.2.** The Scheme planning application is under preparation and a Statement of Community Involvement will be included in the Planning Application. There will be further formal consultation as part of the planning process. The Planning Application is expected to be made in the near future.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1.** In authorising the progression of a CPO the Council would be proceeding under powers contained in section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to authorise the compulsory purchase of land and new rights required to facilitate the carrying out of development or improvement on land. The use of the

powers is subject to a restriction under section 226(1A). This provides that the Council as the acquiring authority must not use its powers unless they consider that the proposed development, redevelopment, or improvement is likely to contribute to achieving the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area for which the Council has the administrative responsibility. The benefit to be derived from exercising the power is not restricted to the area subject to the CPO but to the wellbeing of the whole of Cheshire East.

- 8.1.2. The delivery of the Scheme will require the Council to make a CPO using the powers set out above.
- 8.1.3. According to the Guidance compulsory purchase powers should only be used where there is a compelling case in the public interest that the benefits of the Scheme outweigh the interference with private rights and interests. Compulsory purchase powers are only to be used as a last resort on the land proposed to be a quiet should be the minimum considered to be reasonably required to achieve the Scheme.
- 8.1.4. In progressing the Scheme the Council must demonstrate that there are no impediments to implementation of the CPO. The Council must show that it has sources of funding available for both acquiring the land and implementing the Scheme for which the land is required.
- 8.1.5. The Council must also show that the Scheme is unlikely to be blocked by any physical or legal impediments to the implementation, including any need for planning permission or other concerns or licence to ensure that the Council can exercise its powers.
- 8.1.6. The Council has powers to purchase land by agreement pursuant to Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 8.1.7. The impacts of the Scheme on business and residential property that is off-line of the Scheme will be dealt with under the Land and Compensation act 1973
- 8.1.8. A local authority may appropriate land to be held for planning purposes for which it could have acquired land compulsorily under section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. If the Council has appropriated the land for planning purposes, it (and persons deriving title from the Council) may also rely on Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

- 8.1.9. This section authorises the development or use of land in accordance with a planning permission, notwithstanding that the development or use involves interference with an interest or right to which section 203 applies, or a breach of a restriction as to use of the land. Reliance on section 203 will therefore authorise the Council to override third party interests in the land such as easements, rights to light and restrictive covenants, in order to permit the redevelopment proposals to proceed.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1. The Scheme is one of the projects being progressed following the Council's successful £14.1m bid to the government's Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC). A Cabinet resolution from 10 November 2020 delegated authority to the Executive Director Place, in consultation with others, to accept the grant, approve budgets and take all necessary actions to implement the proposals. A subsequent Council resolution from 22 June 2021 approved a Supplementary Capital Estimate related to this funding programme.
- 8.2.2. Current Budget estimate including land, risk and inflation forecast is £3.834m against a budget of £3.054m. If these cost pressures are realised at the time of the formal construction cost, it will be necessary to Value Engineer the Scheme and / or find additional monies from within the wider Future High Streets Fund Programme. The team are confident that the project can be delivered and managed from within the FHSF programme.

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1. The Council's Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Plan (2016) and Crewe Public Realm Strategy (2018) set out plans to promote regeneration of Crewe which include specific proposals to improve accessibility and permeability into and around the town centre. Such improvements are expected to increase footfall and dwell time, helping to support activity in the town centre.
- 8.3.2. This Scheme aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan priorities include making Cheshire East 'a thriving and sustainable place' by:
- providing a great place for people to live, work and visit,
 - a transport network that is safe and promotes active travel,
 - thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Scheme and is available on request.
- 8.4.2. All public sector acquiring authorities are bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This means that they must have 'due regard' or think about the need to:
- ◆ eliminate unlawful discrimination
 - ◆ advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't
 - ◆ foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't
- 8.4.3. Having 'due regard' means public authorities must consciously consider or think about the need to do the three things set out in the public sector equality duty
- 8.4.4. In exercising their compulsory purchase and related powers (e.g., powers of entry and powers to make side road orders) acquiring authorities must have regard to the effect of any differential impacts on groups with protected characteristics.
- 8.4.5. Equality implications have been considered in the options appraisal and are incorporated into the Outline Business Case. It is not considered that any group with protected characteristics are adversely affected when it comes to the application of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 8.4.6. In progressing the Orders and carrying out any further consultations the Council will take into account the needs of persons with protected characteristics and the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1. It shall be necessary to ensure that sufficient resource is allocated in Estates, Highways, Legal and Planning Services to support delivery of the Scheme. If additional temporary resources are required these will be met from the project budget.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1. Having the ability to take forward the compulsory purchase and/or appropriation of rights powers enables the delivery of the Scheme in the event that these powers are needed to deliver Scheme. Timescales for compulsory purchase and/or appropriation of rights can be prolonged and may extend the delivery period beyond the

current FHSF grant spend period which may require renegotiation with the DLUHC.

- 8.6.2. Relocation of the sprinkler system water tank, cost estimate £100k. Due to the procurement lead time for this work it may be necessary to place the order before other agreements have been finalised to maintain the construction programme. This will be fully outlined in the ODR.

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1. The Scheme does not have any implications to rural communities.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1. Young people were encouraged to participate in the public engagement process.
- 8.8.2. Opportunities to engage with local schools and colleges will arise as the Scheme progresses for education and training purposes.

8.9. Public Health

- 8.9.1. The recommendations have no immediate impact on public health.
- 8.9.2. The public health implications of the Scheme have been considered during the preparation of an Environmental Assessment Report to accompany the planning application. During determination of the planning application the Council’s Environmental Health team will be consulted in relation to Noise and Air Quality and construction stage planning conditions may be applied.

8.10. Climate Change

- 8.10.1. This Scheme will facilitate active travel which supports the Council’s agenda to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Simon Kerr (Project Sponsor, Infrastructure) Simon.kerr@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07730 378280
Appendices:	Appendix A – Engagement Report
Background Papers:	

Crewe Hub Planning

Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme – Public Engagement Report

BRJ10651

24/08/2022

Crewe Hub Planning

Project No: BRJ10651
 Document Title: Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme Public Engagement Report
 Document No.:
 Revision: R0
 Date: 24/08/2022
 Client name: Cheshire East Council
 Project Manager: K.KRANAS
 Author: K. GEMBAL
 File name:

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Document history and status

Rev	Date	Description	By	Review	Approved
R0	24/08/2022	Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme Public Engagement Report	KG	CN	KK

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Executive Summary

Cheshire East Council has ambitions to improve pedestrian and cycle links across Crewe to encourage an increase in walking and cycling across the town. New active travel routes will make it easier for people to get in and out of the town, reducing congestion and journey times. They will also make Crewe more attractive, encouraging people to spend more time in the town, in turn benefiting local businesses.

To help achieve these ambitions for Crewe, several different schemes are being developed, including the Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS), the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme (NRBE) and the Mill Street Corridor.

A public engagement exercise on the proposals for the Southern Gateway PCCS and the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme ran for 6 weeks, between Friday 29 April to Friday 10 June 2022. **This report outlines the engagement process and the feedback collected for the Southern Gateway PCCS only.** A separate report for the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme is available alongside the planning application documents for this scheme.

As part of the engagement exercise, a consultation web page, scheme brochure and online questionnaire were produced and available online throughout the engagement period. Stakeholders were able to request hard paper copies of all materials, including a questionnaire, from Cheshire East Council, either by email or phone. Printed copies were also available to pick-up at Crewe Lifestyle Centre and within the Nantwich Road entrance of Crewe railway station, as well as A5 flyers providing an overview of all the ways to provide feedback.

Two public information events were organised during the engagement process. The events took place at Crewe Lifestyle Centre on 17 May 2022 and at Crewe Railway Station on 19 May 2022. Those who visited the events were able to receive detailed information about each scheme, ask questions of the project team, as well as share their opinions on the proposed design. In total, over 40 people visited the events to speak to the development team, and ask questions.

A total of 94 responses were received during the engagement period. Of these responses, 78 responses were via the questionnaire (54 online, 22 physical paper copies returned and 2 scanned versions received by email). In addition to this, 16 emails were also received. Some emails and letters referred to both the Southern Gateway PCCS and NRBE schemes within their response, these have been counted as separate responses for each scheme.

The responses have been analysed to determine public opinion and the level of acceptability to stakeholders. Cheshire East Council (CEC) has reviewed the comments received during the engagement exercise and, where possible and appropriate, consideration has been given to modifying the Southern Gateway PCCS to take account of the feedback submitted within the public engagement exercise responses.

A headline summary of the 78 questionnaire responses received during the public engagement period reveals:

- 86% (67 respondents) strongly agreed or tended to agree that there is a need for pedestrian and cycle improvements in this part of Crewe;

- 75% (58 respondents) liked or really liked the Southern Gateway PCCS;
- 68% (52 respondents) agreed with the preferred option to improve the crossing facilities at the existing roundabout;
- 39% (30 respondents) didn't like or really didn't like the option to replace the existing roundabout with traffic signals;
- 76% (57 respondents) thought the Southern Gateway PCCS will make getting into the town centre easier;
- 79% (60 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that the Southern Gateway PCCS will make travel to the town centre safer;
- 80% support CEC's vision for the wider active travel network.

In addition to the above, respondents provided comments about new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in this part of Crewe. Nine people voiced concern about cyclists' behaviour, such as using existing footpaths for cycling.

One of the questions asked respondents if they felt the scheme would encourage them to walk or cycle more. A total of 48 respondents stated the scheme will encourage them to walk more, with 34 respondents suggesting it will cause them to cycle more. In comparison, 16 respondents said they would not walk more, and 23 respondents said they would not cycle more, as a result of the scheme. Some of the individuals suggesting they would not cycle or walk more outlined health/mobility issues as a reason, whilst several explained that they do not use this part of Crewe, and others noting that they already walk/cycle regularly on a daily basis.

Alongside Southern Gateway PCCS, Cheshire East has ambitions to deliver new walking and cycling facilities as part of the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme and the emerging vision for the Mill Street Corridor. As such, respondents' views on the wider active travel network in Crewe were also gathered. Most of respondents who provided comments to this question supported the schemes and agreed that improvements are needed. Reasons submitted in favour of the wider network of improvements included that they will encourage more active travel, environmental considerations and the impact on health. Those opposed to the wider vision for additional cycle and pedestrian improvements in Crewe stated issues such as the cost of the investment, an unrecognised need for the scheme and that the schemes will disadvantage motorists.

Other key concerns seen throughout the questionnaire were around the need for the scheme, safety concerns (especially for pedestrians), connectivity of the cycle lanes and support for separate paths for cyclists and pedestrians.

This scheme is funded by the UK Government's Towns Fund / Future High Streets Fund. Overall the construction costs are anticipated to be £c2.5M. If the planning application is successful, and subject to land negotiations, we expect work to begin in Autumn 2023 and be complete by late Spring 2024.

1. Introduction

1.1 Scheme Background

Cheshire East Council is responsible for delivering and maintaining a high-quality travel network for pedestrians and cyclists. One of the Council's ambitions is to encourage more people to choose environmentally friendly modes of travel. This will help to reduce road congestion and help the Council achieve its goal of carbon neutrality by 2025.

The Crewe town centre Regeneration Framework highlights that some visitors are deterred from visiting the town due to the poor connectivity between key areas such as the railway station and the town centre. This poor perception reduces the time people spend in the town, which in turn impacts businesses and facilities.

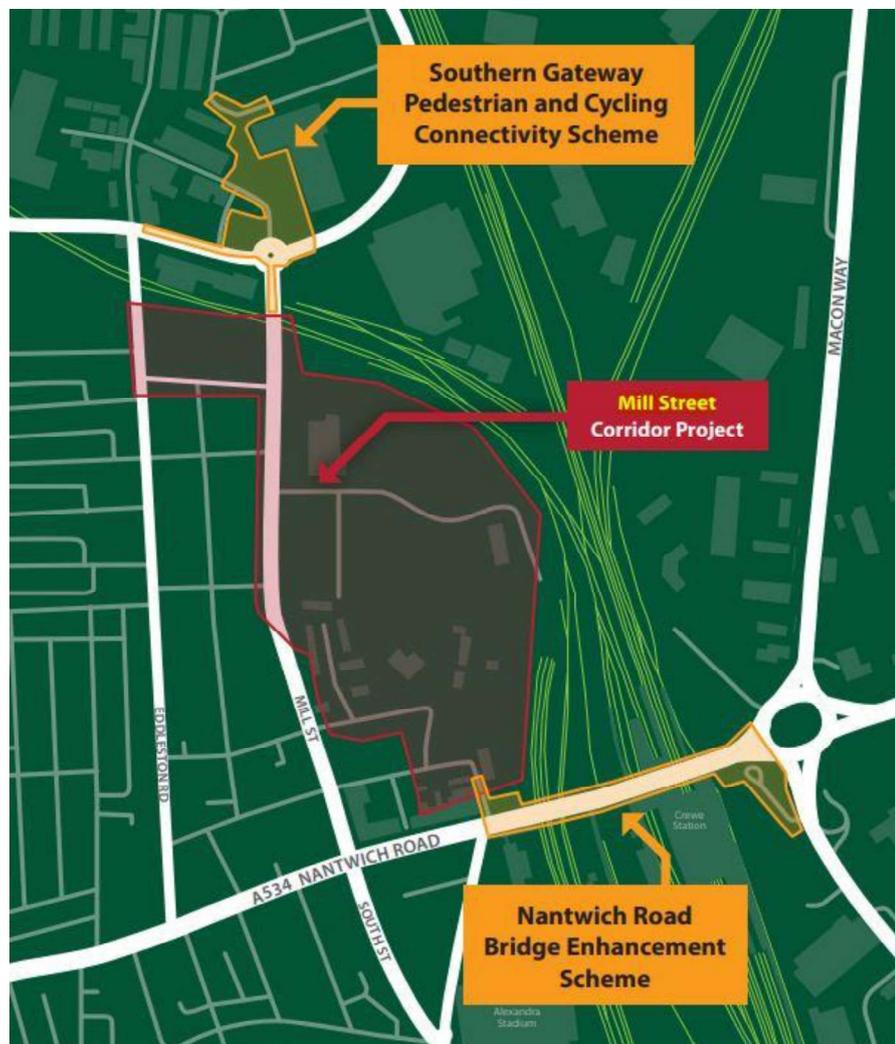


Figure 1: Location of the Crewe Cycling and Pedestrian Connectivity schemes

The vision for the Southern Gateway PCCS, including the new cycle path and pedestrian link, along with other public realm improvements such as new street lighting, trees and shrubs is to provide a high-quality arrival point into the town centre. Linking into the emerging Mill Street Corridor, as well as the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme, the Southern Gateway PCCS

will encourage people to walk and cycle more, reducing car usage. By improving accessibility and the local environment, visitors and local people will also be encouraged to stay in Crewe for longer, which will benefit existing local businesses and services. All of the cycling and walking schemes proposed, alongside the arrival of HS2 into the town, will contribute to regeneration of Crewe.

1.2 Scheme Design

The proposed Southern Gateway PCCS will link High Street and Forge Street via a new segregated footway and cyclepath immediately behind Crewe Lifestyle Centre. It will establish a new active travel link in the form of a new gateway into Crewe town centre from the south.

The scheme will consist of the following elements:

- Between Moss Square and Forge Street: A 6.0m wide shared cycleway/footway by re-orienting existing materials to highlight the route.
- Forge Street: Raised crossing to enhance pedestrian and cycle priority.
- Between Forge Street and High Street: Public realm improvements. A gently sloping two-way route for cyclists and separate pedestrian route. Street lighting and amenity lighting. SUDS features including a rain garden located between the cyclist and pedestrian route. Seating areas and landscaping including trees and shrubs. Retaining wall on each side.
- High Street: A segregated 2.0m wide footway and a 3.5m wide cycleway on the east side of High Street. On the approach to the roundabout, a 1.5m wide one-way (west to east) cycle crossing serving and giving priority to northbound cyclists movements. Resurfacing of High Street.
- Roundabout: The existing roundabout will be retained in its current arrangement. High Street will be realigned to provide sufficient space on the east side to continue with a 3.0m wide shared cycleway/footway. The Vernon Way crossing will be improved via the installation of a parallel crossing.
- Mill Street: A shared 3.0m wide cycleway/footway between the Vernon Way crossing and Mill Street pedestrian crossing (where cyclists will need to rejoin the carriageway). Resurfacing of the eastern footway up to the existing railway bridge where the scheme will tie in with Mill Street Corridor proposed scheme.

Additionally, artistic features that are inspired by the railway heritage of Crewe town are proposed in order to increase attractiveness of public realm and to strengthen a cultural identity. This has been reflected in the materials used for the pedestrian and cycle paths, as well as in planting choice.



Figure 2: Southern Gateway PCCS Key Plan

1.3 Scheme funding

This scheme is fully funded by the UK Government's Towns Fund / Future High Streets Fund. Overall the construction costs are anticipated to be £c2M. If the planning application is successful, and subject to land negotiations, we expect work to begin in Autumn 2023 and be complete by late Spring 2024.

1.4 Purpose of this document

This document is intended to provide a summary and a record of the feedback received during the 2022 public engagement exercise for the Southern Gateway PCCS. Wherever possible and appropriate, the findings of this document have been used, along with other design and assessment work, to give consideration to modifying the Southern Gateway PCCS to take account of the concerns raised.

This document aims to accurately reflect the feedback received via the questionnaire responses. It is not an endorsement or criticism of any of the specific views expressed by respondents to the questionnaire.



2. Methodology

This section describes how the public engagement exercise for the Southern Gateway PCCS proposals was undertaken, the materials produced and how they were made available to the public. It also details the key engagement activities and how they were promoted.

2.1 Upfront engagement

Cheshire East Council (CEC) Councillors Sam Corcoran (Leader of the Council) and Craig Browne (Deputy Leader of the Council and Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee) were kept closely informed about the development of the Southern Gateway PCCS prior to the public engagement exercise taking place. Councillor Laura Crane (Vice-Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee) was also briefed.

In-person engagement was undertaken with the 'We are all Crewe' Crewe Town Board, and specifically its sub-group the Transportation Green & Blue Infrastructure Forum comprised of business leaders, elected members of CEC and The Crewe and Nantwich MP Dr Kieran Mullan.

Upfront engagement was also offered by way of email to the following stakeholders:

- the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry / Business Council;
- Crewe Town Council.

2.2 Approach to the public engagement exercise

The public engagement ran for six weeks between 29 April 2022 and 10 June 2022. The aim of the engagement exercise was to allow stakeholders, including members of the public, to provide their feedback and opinions on the proposed Southern Gateway PCCS.

The comments and suggestions gathered as part of the engagement exercise have been used to inform the final design of the scheme where it is applicable and practicable.

2.2.1 Public engagement materials

A set of engagement materials were produced and made available to the public throughout the engagement period. This includes a dedicated scheme brochure, providing detail of the proposed scheme, and a questionnaire.

The engagement materials were hosted on a dedicated web page (www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS) which acted as the hub of the engagement and included a breakdown of how to provide feedback, as well as contact details for anyone wishing to speak directly to a member of the team.

The brochure provided the following information:

- background to the scheme and why it has been brought forward;
- a description of the proposed scheme, including anticipated scheme materials, alternative options that were considered and environmental impacts of the scheme;

- drawings of the scheme (high level and detailed options provided);
- an overview of how the scheme fits into wider vision for new pedestrian and cycle links across Crewe;
- ways to provide feedback during the engagement period;
- what the next steps are in terms of delivering this scheme.

Two roller banners were also produced and displayed at Crewe Lifestyle Centre and within the Nantwich Road entrance of Crewe railway station throughout the course of the engagement window. The banners were used during the public events.

In addition, a A5 scheme leaflet was produced which provided key headlines about the proposals and ways to provide feedback. The leaflets were distributed across key locations in the town including Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Crewe Station, Crewe Library and Crewe Town Hall.

Copies of the engagement materials be found in appendixes: scheme brochure (Appendix A), leaflet (Appendix B) and roller banners (Appendix C).

A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

2.2.2 Access to public engagement materials

The engagement materials were hosted on a dedicated web page (www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS). Links to this page were provided on the CEC Consultation portal webpage https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/consultations/consultations.aspx. The engagement material was also available as a physical paper copy and alternative formats upon request to CEC.

There was also the opportunity for people to pick up physical copies of the engagement materials including brochures, leaflets, and questionnaires (with freepost envelopes to return them) at various locations within Crewe. The locations that the materials were available at included Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Crewe Library, Crewe Town Hall, Cheshire College South & West Campus in Crewe, and at Crewe railway station, with additional copies provided for the public events. These materials were replenished regularly during the engagement period.

2.3 Publicity and promotion

During week commencing 25th April 2022, CEC issued press/media releases for the Crewe Cycling and Pedestrian Connectivity Schemes as follows:

- to their media hub webpage (https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/media_hub/media_releases/media-releases.aspx);
- to CEC's Facebook and Twitter accounts;
- to local councillors and to local media outlets including Cheshire Live (the online version of the Crewe Chronicle newspaper), The Nantwich News, Crewe Nub News, Signal 1 96.4FM (part of Bauer Planet Radio), Radio Silk 106.9FM, The Cat Community Radio 107.9FM, Sports365.info, Highways-News.com;
- Crewe Town Council (<https://www.crewetowncouncil.gov.uk/>) and Crewe Town Board (<https://weareallcrewe.co.uk/>) also created their own releases from the CEC example.

A copy of the CEC-generated press release can be found in Appendix E.

A number of local groups were also identified and contacted, such as local cycling groups and accessibility groups with a presence in Crewe. Please see section 2.4.4 for more details.

From the afternoon of 28th April 2022, roller banners were erected within Crewe Lifestyle Centre and within the Nantwich Road entrance of Crewe Railway Station, along with supplies of the engagement materials described above.

Throughout the engagement window, Cheshire East Council also publicised details of the engagement exercise via its social media channels.

2.4 Stakeholder engagement

2.4.1 Public events

Two public events were held as part of this engagement exercise. Both events were open to all members of the public to attend.

The events were intended to allow members of the public to ask questions of the project team, and draw awareness to the Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS), the NRBE scheme and the Mill Street Corridor.

Date	Time	Location
Tuesday 17 th May	2:00pm – 7:00pm	Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Moss Square, Crewe, CW1 2BB
Thursday 19 th May	2:00pm – 7:00pm	Crewe Railway Station, Nantwich Road, Crewe, CW2 6HR

Table 1: Information about the public events held as part of the engagement exercise

2.4.2 Political stakeholders

In addition to the upfront engagement detailed above, all CEC cabinet members were emailed at the start of the consultation and again on 24 February.

2.4.3 Emergency services

The Police (Cheshire Constabulary Crewe South division), the British Transport Police and the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust service were contacted as part of the wider engagement exercise.

2.4.4 Public engagement exercise

Over 150 stakeholders were contacted as part of the engagement exercise. Emails were sent out on three occasions between the end of April and mid-June 2022, inviting them to provide feedback. These included those already mentioned in Section 2.1. In addition, the 150 stakeholders included community and interest groups, accessibility and equality bodies, local businesses in the vicinity of the Southern Gateway PCCS and other relevant groups and organisations that were identified to have a potential interest in the proposals. The key stakeholder groups contacted are summarised below, with a full list of the stakeholders contacted attached in Appendix F.

Stakeholder group	Total contacted stakeholders
Chambers of Commerce	1
Companies	12
Departments	6
Educational Establishment	9
Emergency Services	3
Equality and Diversity	47
Interest Gropus	39
Local Government	14
National Government	2
Other Public Sector Bodies	12
Public Transport Operators	7
Transport Contatcs	5
Other (e.g. housing developer, resident groups, pressure groups, retail)	14

Table 2: Stakeholder groups that were contacted as part of the engagement exercise

2.4.5 Response channels

Responses to the engagement exercise were accepted through the following channels:

- online questionnaire;
- paper copies of the questionnaire;
- face-to-face or written form during the public information events;
- by email, to SGPCCS@cheshireeast.gov.uk;
- by freepost address.

2.4.6 Response collation, processing and coding

Online and paper response forms were collated and processed by the project team. Questions inviting a written response from the respondent underwent a rigorous coding process to bring out the key themes. Some of the questions provided opportunities for respondents to add their own suggestions or comments. All written additional responses were also coded and analysed by the project team. The key themes for these questions are presented below with references to actual responses received. Email responses were also coded. The complete list of codes used in analysis is attached as Appendix H.

Charts, tables and other visuals are used in the report to show the results of the questionnaire. If not stated differently, numbers shown in charts relate to numbers of respondents who chose specific option. In each case there is information about total number of respondents who gave answer to that question (e.g. n=78).

3. Response analysis

This section sets out the feedback to the public engagement exercise pertaining to the Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS). Responses were received via paper and online questionnaires, in addition to email responses. This section provides an overall breakdown of these responses by source (paper form, online, email), and demographic categories.

As of 10th June 2022, 94 responses were received. These included:

- 54 online questionnaires (51 completed and 3 partial);
- 22 paper questionnaires;
- 2 questionnaires received by email;
- 16 email responses with general comments.

Regarding the partial online questionnaires, responses were counted if they included at least one response to a question concerning general feelings towards the Southern Gateway PCCS.

3.1 Questionnaire analysis

The questionnaire contained 10 closed questions and 3 open-ended questions where respondents could provide their own written comments. Additionally, of the 10 closed questions, six were accompanied by open comment boxes. The open-ended questions were analysed to draw out key themes and individual topics raised. Respondents could reference a number of topics under one theme. The most prevalent themes arising from this analysis are identified, with the more detailed subject material for each discussed further.

3.1.1 Respondent demographics

Respondents were asked to complete an optional demographics section within the questionnaire, which included questions about gender identity, ethnic origin, nature of interest, age and other.

72 respondents (96% of total) completed the questionnaire as individuals, with three responses submitted on behalf of groups/organisations, which included Cycling UK and Cheshire East Council. Additionally, 23 respondents (31%) advised that they had attended one of the public events before answering to the questionnaire.

The majority of respondents identified themselves as Crewe residents (65%). Other options were responses added by respondents and included occasional visitors, visiting family and town councillors.

Figure 3 shows a different characteristics of respondents who provided some information in that section by online or paper questionnaire.

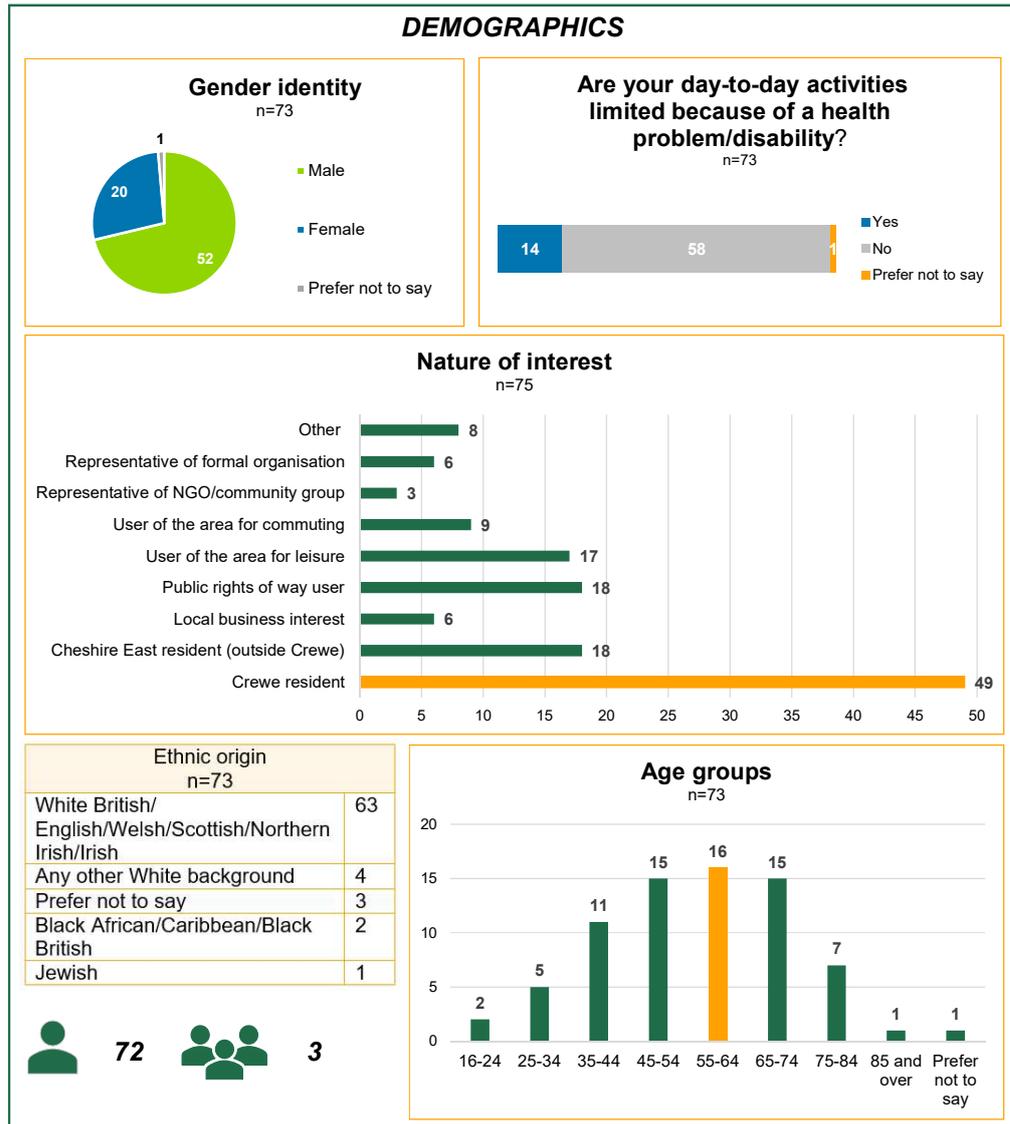


Figure 3: SG PCCS questionnaire respondents demographics

3.1.2 Postcode responses

The questionnaire asked respondents to provide their postcode to understand the geographical distribution of responses. 70 respondents provided this information and 8 chose not to. The postcodes were then grouped into postcode sectors according to how many responses were received from each area. The map below shows the geographical areas, and Table 3 provides more detailed information. Postcodes TN12 and WV11 have been omitted from the map due to their physical distance from scheme, but has still been included in analysis.

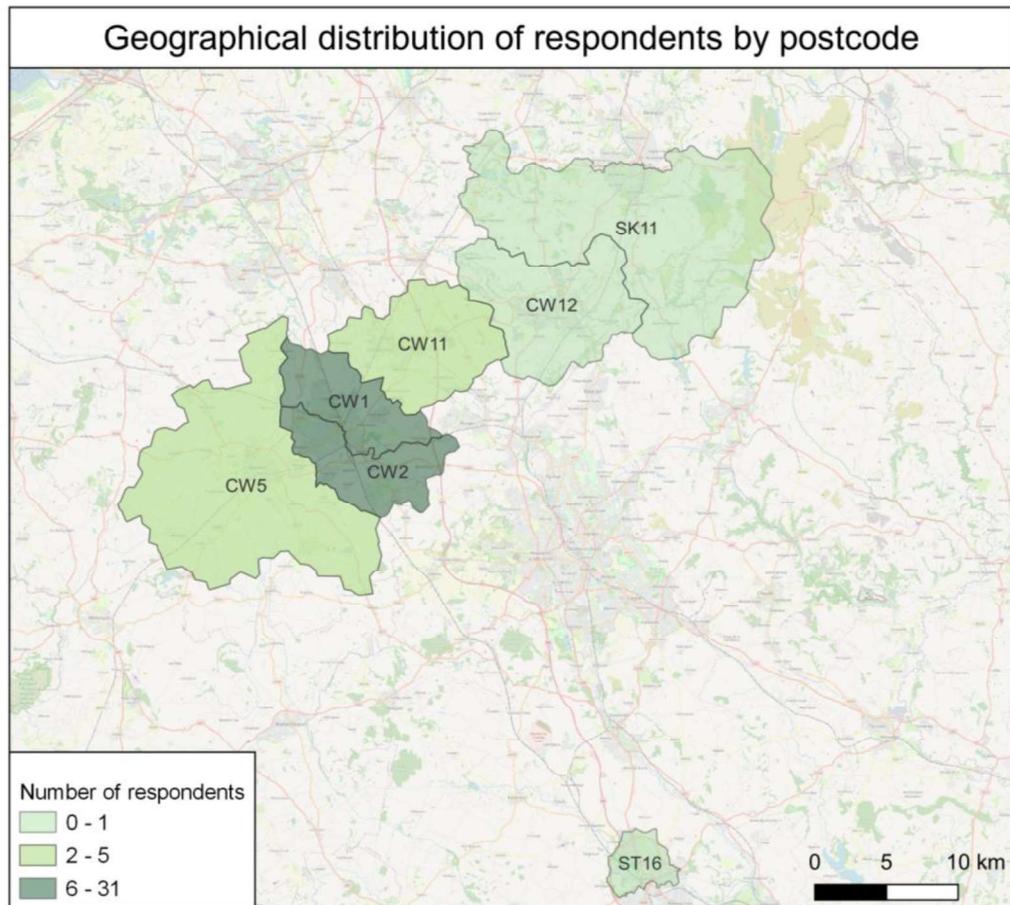


Figure 4: Geographical distribution by postcode (Base Source: OpenStreetMap)

Postcode	Area	District	Number of responses
CW1	Crewe (north)	Cheshire East	25
CW2	Crewe (south)		31
CW5	Nantwich, Willaston		4
CW11	Sandbach		5
CW12	Congleton		1
SK11	Macclesfield		1
ST16	Stafford	Staffordshire	1
TN12	Paddock Wood, Staplehurst	Maidstone	1
WV11	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton	1
		Blank	8
		Total	78

Table 3: Postcode responses distribution

Most of the responses received were from those living in two main postcode areas: CW1 (25 responses); and CW2 (31 responses). These are the postcodes covering the town centre. Almost all of the respondents were from Cheshire East (96%).

3.1.3 Travelling to and from Crewe town centre

The questionnaire explored how the respondents usually travel to and from Crewe town centre, as well as the modes of transport they use, and the purposes of such journeys.

31 respondents (40%) said that they visit Crewe town centre a few times a week, whilst a third of respondents (26, 34%) said they visit a few times a month. Only one respondent said they never travel to Crewe town centre.

More than half of the respondents said they visit Crewe town centre for shopping (40 respondents, 52%), with 30% using it for leisure purposes (23 respondents). Hospitality and culture were less popular journey reasons with less than 10 respondents choosing these options. None of respondents said that they visit town centre for educational purpose. Other reasons mentioned included banking and passing through to another location.

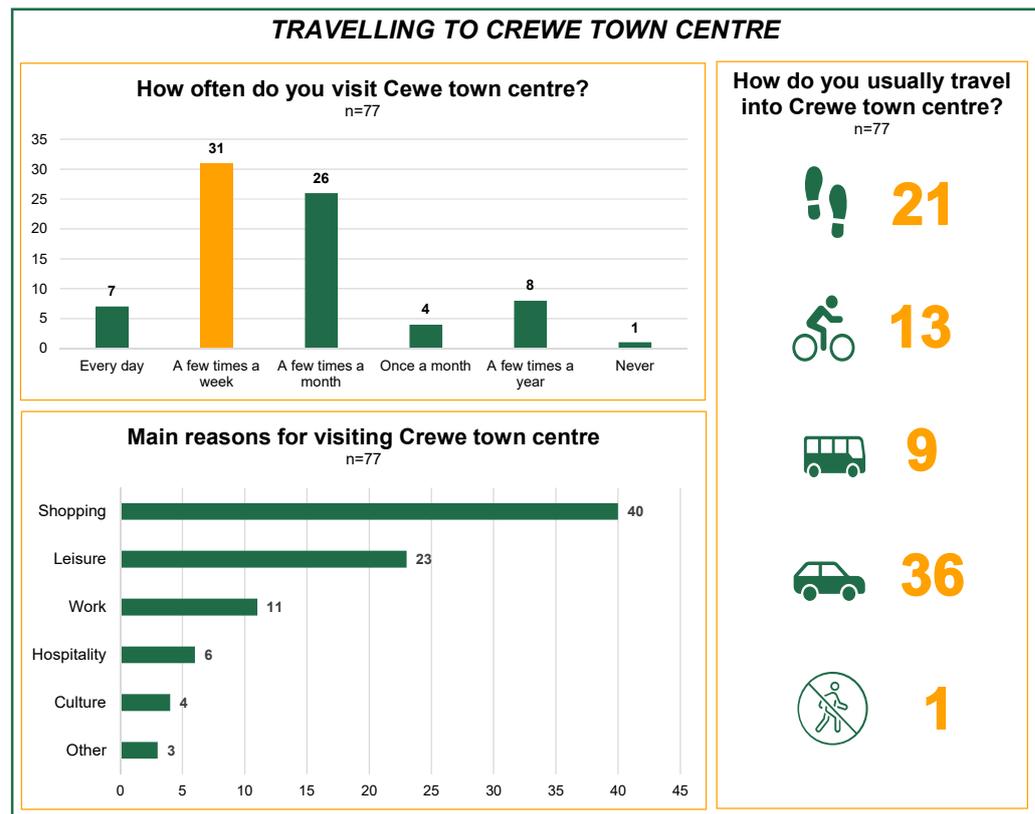


Figure 5: Travelling to and from Crewe town centre

To understand how the scheme will link with the wider active travel network proposed, respondents were asked how they usually travel to Crewe town centre. Almost every second respondent said that they travel to the town centre by car (36 respondents, 47%). Cyclists and pedestrians made up a combined 34 of the total respondents (44%), with slightly more people walking (21 compared to 13 cyclists). Most of the respondents who identified as cyclists live in Crewe south (CW2), and most people who usually walk to town centre live in Crewe north (CW1).

3.1.4 Feelings towards the Southern Gateway PCCS

The main part of the questionnaire included questions relating directly to the Southern Gateway PCCS proposals. The results are presented below in thematic sections, such as thoughts about the general need and support for the scheme, scheme design and impact of the scheme on travel decisions.

Firstly, respondents were asked whether they agree with the need for the proposed active travel improvements. Most of the respondents (67, 86%) strongly agreed or tended to agree that there is a need for cycle and

pedestrian improvements, with 9% (7 respondents) strongly disagreeing or tending to disagree.

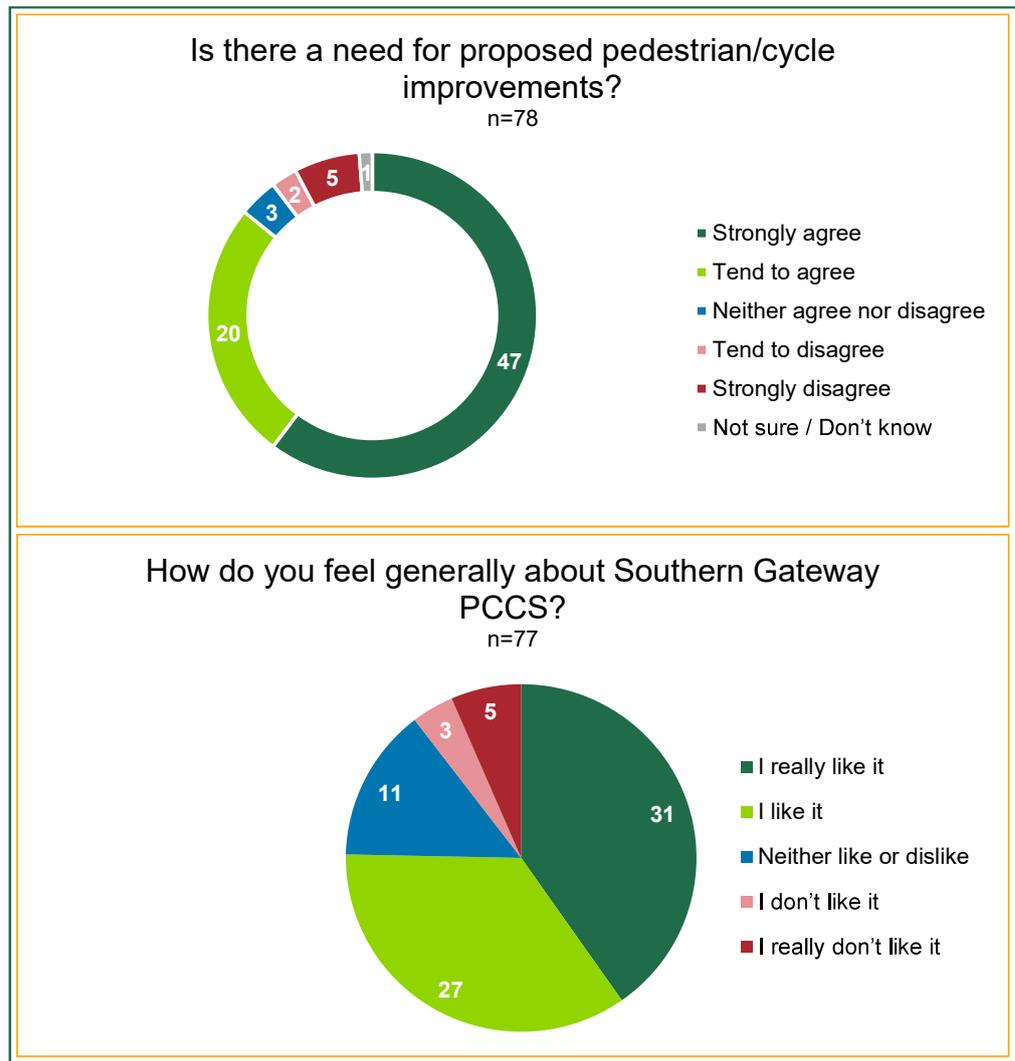


Figure 6: General feelings towards the Southern Gateway PCCS

Respondents were given the opportunity to explain their opinions via additional text comments. As per the general support for the scheme, most respondents used this opportunity to express their support for the improvements, which was in turn reflected in the comments:

- *"I walk this route on a regular basis, and this would improve it."* (Respondent 43);
- *"It would be good for the regeneration of Crewe town and good for the health of the resident's of Crewe."* (Respondent 54);
- *"Any improvements for cyclists and pedestrians is a good thing."* (Respondent 44).

Several respondents mentioned that the dangerous behaviour of cyclists is the reason they support the suggested improvements:

- *"Too many cyclists are using the footpaths which are not safe to walk on. I have nearly been knocked over by scooters and bikes not using the roads."* (Respondent 31);
- *"At present cyclists ride on pavements to avoid vehicles"* (Respondent 38).

- *"I frequently cycle through the town centre to get to the station. Parts of the route are difficult and dangerous - this will solve some of the problems." (Respondent 68);*
- *"It will make cycling safer." (Respondent 13).*

Other reasons given were related to the impact of the scheme on encouraging people to use active travel routes:

- *"Hopefully this will encourage people to walk/cycle more frequently." (Respondent 69);*
- *"Safe infrastructure support people to get out of their cars - and use alternative options." (Respondent 65).*

Those opposed mentioned issues such as pedestrian safety, under-used cycle paths and the current condition of Crewe town centre:

- *"Cyclists do not always use the existing spaces/routes for them." (Respondent 67);*
- *"Crewe town offers nothing other than supermarkets at the moment. They all have their own car park so no need to separate pedestrians." (Respondent 47);*
- *"As a pedestrian the interface between pedestrian and cyclists should be resisted at all costs, the risk of collision is too high. Now increased by the speed and weight of electric cycles." (Respondent 74).*

The next question sought respondents' general feelings about the proposed Southern Gateway PCCS. Three quarters of respondents liked or really liked the design (58 respondents, 75%), with 8 (10%) people disliking and 11 respondents (14%) outlining that they have a neutral opinion. Most of the respondents who identified as regular bus users (4 out of 9) disliked the scheme, whilst all respondents who cycle to Crewe town centre liked the scheme.

In the open-box comment section assigned, some of the respondents gave justifications for their opinions. Most respondents once again mentioned that the scheme will be an improvement to the current infrastructure:

- *"It is a refinement of the existing route." (Respondent 73);*
- *"There will be significant improvement in connectivity to the town centre from the south, however the proposals need to be as creative and high quality as possible and ensure successful connection and integration with the rest of the link from the station. This project along with the remainder of the link needs to be truly transformational. (...)." (Respondent 62);*
- *"Will be a big improvement and hopefully more will bike or walk to towns." (Respondent 48).*

The anticipated benefits of the scheme, such as promoting active travel and increased safety for cyclists and pedestrians were listed in favour of the scheme:

- *"It helps to create a "signposted" route into the Town Centre which helps to encourage active travel." (Respondent 57)*
- *"It connects two roads in a safe way for pedestrians and cyclists." (Respondent 65).*

Some comments reflected general support, but also included suggestions of further improvements:

- *“I generally like the scheme but the access for the pedestrians who walk down the slope from Prince Albert Street and then walk along the side of home bargains to go to the shops need to be considered.” (Respondent 41);*
- *“I really like the main part, but not the Mill Street proposals.” (Respondent 75).*

Several of those who don't support the scheme gave more detailed explanations of their opinions. These included safety concerns and the cost of the scheme:

- *“It does not adequately ensure the safety of pedestrians.” (Respondent 56);*
- *“Shared space scheme's do nothing to entice me to cycle on them. As an occasional cyclist I would just ride on the road than any shared space scheme.” (Respondent 2);*
- *“I think making the road off Mill Street narrower is going to cause more traffic congestion that what is already there now.” (Respondent 47);*
- *“Waste of money.” (Respondent 67).*

3.1.5 Design of the scheme

Respondents were asked their views on the detailed design of the Southern Gateway PCCS, such as the proposed changes to the current roundabout (connecting High Street to Mill Street, Oak Street and Vernon Way), suggested scheme materials and safety improvements.

In the engagement brochure the option to improve the crossing facilities at the existing roundabout was presented and within the questionnaire respondents could provide comments on this. 52 of respondents (68%) supported this presented option, 13 respondents (17%) did not support it, and 12 people (16%) gave no identified views. The next question also related to the same roundabout infrastructure and plans to replace it with traffic lights. More than one third of respondents (30 respondents, 39%) didn't support this change. 21 respondents (27%) gave neutral views, whilst 20 respondents (26%) liked the proposed replacement. Those who identified as frequent cyclists were the only group in which more respondents liked the idea than disliked it.

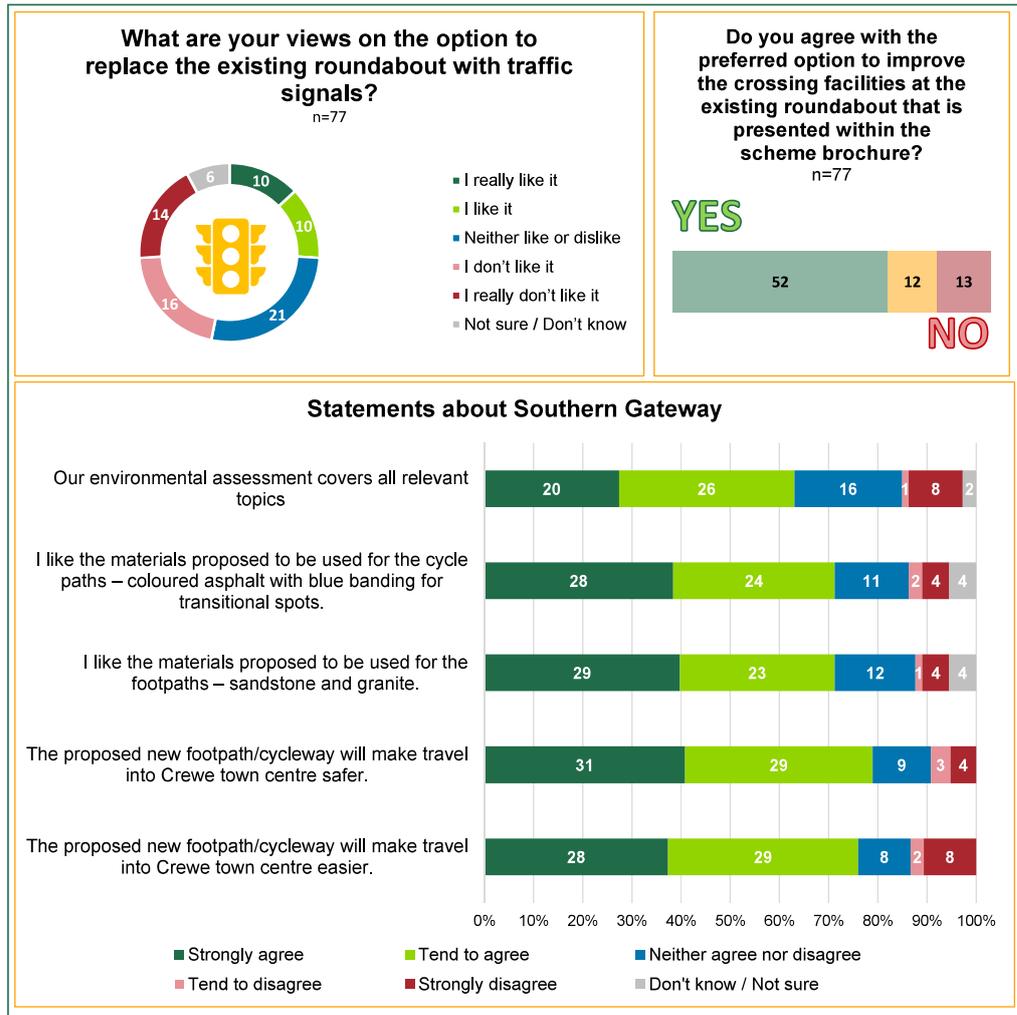


Figure 7: SG PCCS questionnaire – design of the scheme

Respondents could add additional comments to help further explain their views. Most of the comments submitted related to supporting improvements to the crossing facilities:

- *“It is not perfect but it is both pragmatic and affordable.” (Respondent 57);*
- *“Fairly straightforward upgrade.” (Respondent 59);*
- *“I strongly agree with the preferred option here. Changing the priorities and putting cyclists onto the pavement area could have disastrous consequences. It is easy to pick up speed on the downhill section around the bend and you could be met by another cyclist coming towards you or person pushing a pushchair or wheeling luggage. That could force a cyclist into the traffic to avoid a collision This could have potentially fatal consequences. With the constraints of the bridge, the preferred option seems the safest choice to me.” (Respondent 7).*

For those who were against, one of the most important issues related to giving priority to non-motorised users:

- *“In line with active travel priorities I think it is important that cyclists are given a priority route over the roundabout without needing to dismount and walk across.” (Respondent 8);*
- *“Pedestrians should be given more priority a signal junction and public realm improvements.” (Respondent 40).*

Respondents who disagreed with the option to replace the existing roundabout with traffic signals were mostly concerned about the impact on traffic flow and road congestion:

- *“Although this might be a good thing at peak times of the day, the rest of the time it will unnecessarily slow traffic and increase pollution.” (Respondent 7);*
- *“Depends on how it will effect traffic flow.” (Respondent 42);*
- *“Slows down traffic which leads to congestion.” (Respondent 67).*

Additionally, some respondents thought that the suggested improvement would not have significant impact or solve the main problems of the junction:

- *“Not practical and doesn't solve many of the issues.” (Respondent 57);*
- *“Better priority for pedestrians and cyclists but doesn't solve Mill Street problem.” (Respondent 75);*
- *“I dont think it would improve traffic at all. There's loads of examples of roundabouts and junctions in Crewe where the traffic actually improves when the traffic signals are broken.” (Respondent 22).*

As the main aim of the scheme is to increase active travel to and from Crewe town centre, respondents were asked if they thought that the scheme will make this travel easier and safer.

For the most part, respondents tended to agree or strongly agreed that the scheme will make travel to the town centre easier (76%, 57 respondents) and safer (79%, 60 respondents). 10 respondents thought the travel won't be easier as a result of the scheme, and 7 thought that it won't improve safety. Around 11% of respondents were undecided. Among those who were against, 4 respondents stated that their personal travel options are limited due to health problems/disability. These respondents comprised 40% of the total respondents who responded to the question about ease of travel and 57% for question about safety.

An important element of the design is the materials used for footpaths and cycle routes as they determine comfort of usage and influence the attractiveness of the space. In respect of both paths (pedestrian and cycle) respondents submitted similar views. 71% tended to agree or strongly agree with the proposed materials to be used (sandstone and granite for footpaths and coloured asphalt with blue banding for transitional spots for cycle paths). Around 8% of respondents said that they did not support the proposed materials. None of the identified regular cyclists disagreed or tended to disagree with the proposed materials. Among the respondents who declared that they regularly walk to Crewe town centre, two didn't approve of the materials proposed.

In the scheme brochure the anticipated impact of the scheme on the environment and local communities was presented. Respondents were given an opportunity to provide feedback on these environmental considerations in the questionnaire. 63% (46 respondents) tended to agree or strongly agreed that the presented information covered all of the relevant topics. 12% (9 respondents) strongly disagreed or tended to disagree.

3.1.6 Travel behaviour change

The last question related specifically to the Southern Gateway PCCS and sought to understand how the delivery of the scheme will influence respondents travel decisions.

Over 60% (48 respondents) suggested that the proposed scheme will encourage them to walk more through this part of Crewe town centre, and almost half of respondents (34, 47%) suggested it will make them cycle more. 21 respondents (30%) suggested that the scheme won't change anything regarding their travel to/from this part of Crewe town centre. Among car users, more stated that the scheme will encourage them to walk (20 respondents) than to cycle (14 respondents).

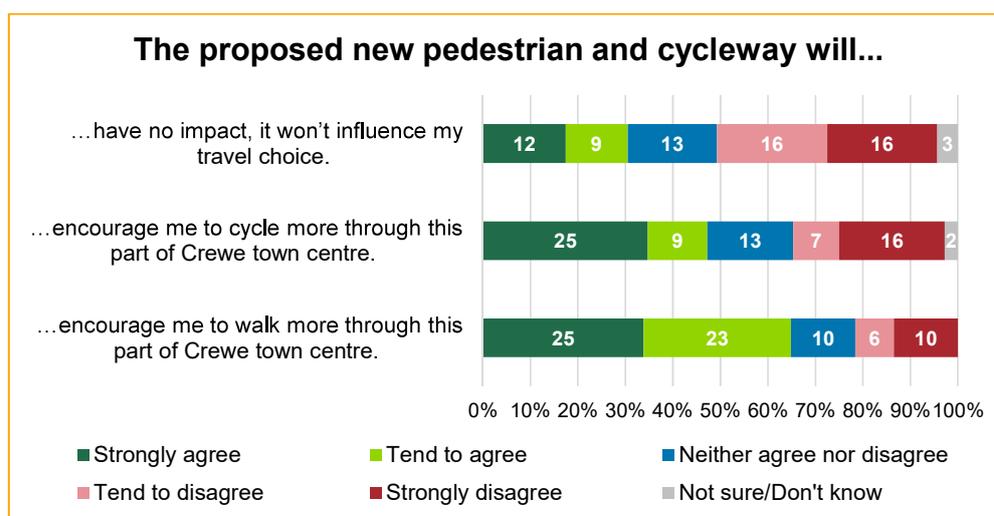


Figure 8: How the Southern Gateway PCCS will influence respondents travel decisions

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional explanations via an open comment box. For the most part, respondents gave reasons why they won't cycle or walk more. This included issues such as whether they use this part of Crewe town centre, safety and health issues, or not being willing to cycle at all:

- *"I already cycle and walk as much as I can, avoid driving." (Respondent 45);*
- *"Do not walk into the town centre from that side of Crewe." (Respondent 2);*
- *"I wouldn't walk with the fear of being followed or robbed. I wouldn't go on bike as the gangs that hang around in the town would probably hold me at knife point and steal it." (Respondent 47);*
- *"As a regular shopper at Home Bargains/Tesco, and with some limited mobility, this scheme which replaces my level access with dingy stairs outside Crewe Council Offices coupled with a long detour, will deter me from shopping in this area. The next similar superstore/Extra retail outlets are a Bus journeys out of town." (Respondent 49).*

Some respondents suggested that the scheme would encourage them to walk or cycle more and expressed general support for the scheme or confirmation of these plans:

- *"Because of my age I no longer cycle but I will use the pedestrian walkway." (Respondent 41);*

- *“The walking and cycling environment would be more pleasant. I usually cycle through Crewe anyway but the new scheme would make it more inviting.” (Respondent 4);*
- *“The route into town will be clearer.” (Respondent 40);*
- *“The new scheme will make walking/cycling more pleasant and safer.” (Respondent 78).*

3.1.7 Additional comments on the Southern Gateway PCCS

Respondents were given the opportunity to put forward additional ideas and information that might help improve the scheme’s design. 29 responses were submitted to this question. Most of the responses (10) provided more detailed suggestions on the proposed materials used, heritage and other improvements:

- *“If restricting traffic on a road is the only option, trial it first please with ‘give way to oncoming traffic’ signs.” (Respondent 65);*
- *“Improve the access under Mill Street railway bridge by opening up the existing old arch behind the east bridge abutment and extending it using pipe-jacking. There would be a need to acquire land from Crewe Heritage Centre and construct a ramp up to Vernon Way.” (Respondent 25);*
- *“Call it the Ironbridge Walk. My husband told me about the old bridge on the site of the walking avenue, it would be great to have it remembered.” (Respondent 58);*
- *“Needs public realm and benches where High Street is opened up.” (Respondent 33);*
- *“Public art and wayfinding drawing on approaches for the rest of the gateway from the station and also perhaps reflecting on whether aspects of the design could be more creative as part of that, including materiality.” (Respondent 62);*
- *“The rail bridge is constructed with arches. These could provide a separated pedestrian walkway through to the existing pedestrian crossing on Vernon Way.” (Respondent 59);*
- *“Pedestrian crossing should be a rainbow crossing for diversity and inclusivity promotion. The High Street/Forge Street pedestrian area should have slabs with moments of history in Crewe as a timeline to show Crewe’s growth.” (Respondent 1);*
- *“Need to look at more sustainable materials although I do like the consideration of planting to support water retention/attenuation.” (Respondent 51).*

Several respondents expressed their doubts about the scheme, as they preferred other options or were concerned about costs and links to other projects:

- *“Clearly the scheme needs to be abandoned. The previous plan to pedestrianise and create a boulevard of High St offers a far better solution to access the town centre and help to rejuvenate High Street and the terrace (Market Street) shops.” (Respondent 74);*
- *“Would have preferred alternative design option 1.” (Respondent 75);*

- *“I fear this is expensive window dressing, not radical enough to get real change.” (Respondent 45);*
- *“Given it's been left for so long it may as well be left a bit longer and built into to the wider Youth Zone project.” (Respondent 26);*
- *“Cycleway designs only work if they're linked up to other ones. E.g. Nearby on Dunwoody way.” (Respondent 2).*

Additionally, there were some general comments about the need for improvement or safety issues:

- *“Please have a highly secured preferably manned cycle parking hub in town centre to prevent thefts.” (Respondent 50);*
- *“Invest in attractive active travel routes as a priority. It will make a difference even if not understood right now. Make them green and pleasant!” (Respondent 9).*

3.1.8 Opinions on wider active travel network

Respondents were asked about their views of the ambitions for the wider active travel network plans that is proposed for Crewe. As the Southern Gateway PCCS is a part of this network, it was considered important to understand respondents views about this overall vision, including the Mill Street Corridor.

59 respondents (80%) support the vision for this wider active travel network, whilst 12% (9 people) were against it, and the rest (6 respondents, 8%) were undecided.

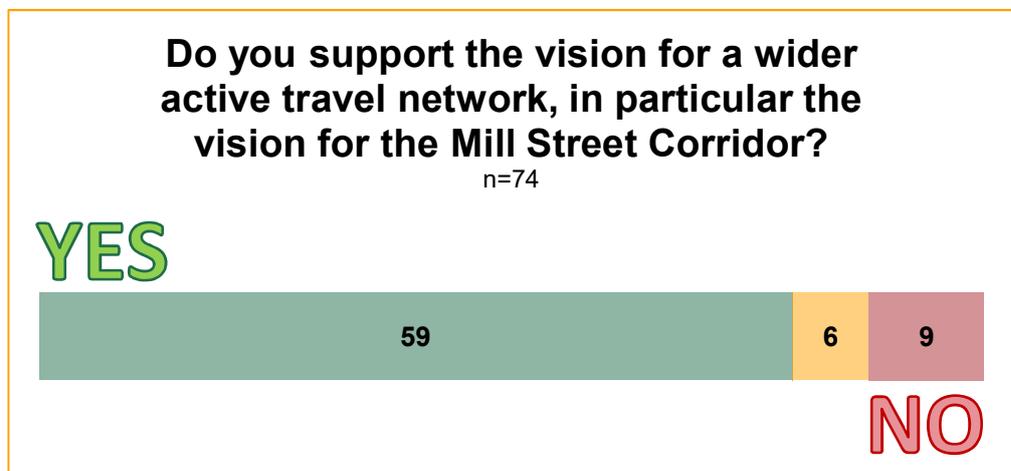


Figure 9: Support for the vision for a wider active travel network

39 respondents provided comments explaining their feelings towards the wider active travel network. Most of them expressed their support and agreed that improvements are needed:

- *“Need to join Nantwich Road to town centre.” (Respondent 42”);*
- *“There is an urgent need to reduce traffic emissions and air pollution, as well as improve air quality. We therefore need to reduce road usage from cars and improve pedestrian/cycling facilities.” (Respondent 63);*
- *“We have been waiting a long time for progress on connectivity the station/ employment sites nearby to the town centre. We would like to see CEC create a facility of the highest quality and one which is continuous.” (Respondent 78);*

- *“Vital to improve the connection between the station and town centre.” (Respondent 61);*
- *“The Mill Street Corridor is an excellent concept that is kind of the missing piece of the jigsaw. Getting funding for and completing this project could be key to getting people to access Crewe town centre from the station.” (Respondent 7);*
- *“It will improve the route between the train station and town centre for pedestrians and cyclists.” (Respondent 41).*

Some respondents mentioned the importance of encouraging people to walk and cycle more, environmental considerations and the positive health impacts.

Those who are against raised issues such as cost of investment, disadvantaging the motorists and no need for the scheme at all:

- *“I do not think it will encourage more cyclist. It will be very costly to implement the proposed changes and quite disruptive to traffic.” (Respondent 17);*
- *“There is an existing network of roads and pathways through this estate. Any improvements could be limited to proper signage and lighting.” (Respondent 59);*
- *“It is totally inadequate.” (Respondent 56);*
- *“Again, motorists will be disadvantaged.” (Respondent 67).*

3 respondents provided comments relating to the Dorothy Flude Retail Park, for example:

- *“The Dorothy Flude Retail Park should have been built fronting Mill Street. This would have permitted a much shorter Cycle/Pedestrian Greenway towards Mill Street Bridge. Obviously we have a much longer walk from the Railway Station today than previous and I cannot see that any “corridor” is going to emerge in Mill Street to that of today. The problem of Crewe not having any forward looking plans like in the past.” (Respondent 49).*

Respondents were also asked about their views on reallocating road space underneath the existing Mill Street bridge. 37 respondents provided feedback, with 9 providing suggestions regarding this idea:

- *“Have you investigated the east span of the Mill Street railway bridge? Are you sure you cannot open this up for the cycle/ ped route? Have you looked at stoke city council's scheme on Globe Street under the railway bridge at the station, creating the cycle network route?” (Respondent 78);*
- *“Ideally widen or make it one way.” (Respondent 72);*
- *“It would make more sense to put a cycle route via Macon Way.” (Respondent 16);*
- *“This should be closed to traffic completely. (...) Space under the bridge should just be pedestrians/cyclists and be a strategic focus going forward - as a shared space with access for maintenance works for the bridge and emergency vehicles only.” (Respondent 1);*
- *I would prefer the option of a dedicated cycle lane on the East side of the bridge (variation B) (Respondent 68).*

Several respondents outlined their support for the solution:

- *“I think it'd be great, its quite a bottleneck as it is.” (Respondent 22);*
- *“I welcome this.” (Respondent 76);*

- *“Yes if it makes it safer to get in and out of Crewe.” (Respondent 54);*
- *“I will need to try it out before deciding.” (Respondent 43);*
- *“I don’t mind as long as it doesn’t increase congestion which is already very poor.” (Respondent 6).*

Among the comments were several which were opposed to or reflected doubts about this solution:

- *“Keep cyclists away from the area.” (Respondent 67);*
- *“I prefer to keep both pavements as they are today.” (Respondent 41);*
- *“It just doesn’t solve the problem- both pedestrians and cyclists need good routes that are safe and convenient to use.” (Respondent 75);*
- *“Mostly dangerous. Pedestrians must not be required to change footpaths just because of cyclists who haven’t learnt to ride their bikes. The only good bit is the suggestion of examining the half built archway to widen the route, which should be done with a way of increasing clearance under the bridge to allow double decker buses and supermarket delivery trailers to fit. Until that is sorted it would be a waste of money to progress any significant scheme within the current constraints.” (Respondent 26).*

In the last question of the questionnaire, respondents were given an opportunity to provide any additional comments or suggestions that could improve walking and cycling conditions in Crewe. Almost half of all respondents provided further comment in this way. Most of the responses contained comments on other roads or parts of Crewe:

- *“My longstanding wish: allowing cycling in the bus lane on Crewe Road past B&Q and further down.” (Respondent 4);*
- *“Please complete the connect 2 route extension to Leighton Hospital asap & also please investigate how to provide a safe, more pleasant route from Queens Park/ tip kinder park into the town centre & install toucans at the Peacock roundabout.” (Respondent 78);*
- *“The missing 300m of footway on the east side of Vernon Way between Earl St roundabout and Tesco roundabout has been requested many times before, despite having a great advantage to motorists has never been provided. Its provision would greatly reduce the number of times the signalised crossing would be activated.” (Respondent 76)*
- *“Wychwood village and park desperately need cycle paths so children can cycle to school. And pavements to enable safe walking in this area.” (Respondent 5).*

Some further expressed their support for the improvements, with additional comments about safety:

- *“The sooner such schemes are implemented the better.” (Respondent 63);*
- *“Yes. Do it as soon as possible please! However riding a bicycle requires a responsible attitude and people riding irresponsibly should be required to do a cycling proficiency course!!!!” (Respondent 37).*

Several respondents raised the issues related to cycle facilities, such as cycle storage or maintenance of cycle paths:

- *“Crewe has several excellent pedestrian and cycling facilities, but what is needed is CONNECTIVITY between them.” (Respondent 25);*

- “Existing cycle paths need to be cleared of debris and vegetation more often. Remark the cycle lanes- almost invisible. NANTWICH RD! More cycle lanes please!” (Respondent 68);
- “More details required regarding short stay/long stay cycle stands - more cycle infrastructure needed in the town centre and current stands fixed.” (Respondent 1);
- “Upkeep of existing road markings.” (Respondent 38);
- “Raised kerbs to separate cycle route from cars on roads.” (Respondent 39).

3.2 Email responses

In addition to the 78 questionnaire responses received, a further 16 responses were received for the scheme in the form of emails. In total 17 emails were received. However as one of these emails contained just scanned versions of two questionnaires, the contents were counted as questionnaire responses. The email responses were reviewed, coded and analysed to understand the key themes present in them. The breakdown of the overall sentiment seen in the emails is detailed below.

General sentiment	Number of emails echoing the sentiment
Positive/in support of the scheme	7
Neutral/support for the scheme not expressed	7
Negative/does not support the scheme	3

Table 4: Breakdown of overall sentiment expressed in emails received

Notable organisations that responded by email include:

- Cheshire East Council (different departments);
- Crewe Town Board;
- Crewe Transportation Green and Blue Infrastructure Forum;
- Historic England;
- Network Rail;
- Sustrans;
- Weston Centre Business Hub.

The key themes mentioned in each are detailed below:

Email ID	Key themes
SGPCCSE01	Individual response, voiced concerns about shared pathways and cycleway maintenance, support giving priority to non-motorised users.
SGPCCSE02	Weston Centre Business Hub response, expressed concerns for significant change in Crewe town centre, suggested relocation of town centre closer to railway station.
SGPCCSE03	Individual response, provided some suggestions for the Mill Street Corridor scheme.

Email ID	Key themes
SGPCCSE04	Historic England response, stated they have no comments at this time.
SGPCCSE05	Cheshire East Highways response included 2 scanned questionnaires received by this organisation from individuals. It did not contain an opinion expressed by this organisation itself and the questionnaires have been counted within the questionnaire summary
SGPCCSE06	Individual response, opposed to shared pathways for cyclists and pedestrians due to safety issues.
SGPCCSE07	CEC Landscape Team response, stated the need for usage of complementary materials in all three schemes.
SGPCCSE08	CEC Cycling and Walking Champion response, voiced suggestions for design of paths under Mill Street Bridge.
SGPCCSE09	Individual response, expressed concerns for pedestrians' safety and accessibility due to planned stairwell in High Street area, oppose to shared pathways for cyclists and pedestrians.
SGPCCSE10	Sustrans response, expressed general support for the improvements, stated concerns for shared pathways and Forge Street design, linking all schemes and disabled friendly infrastructure.
SGPCCSE11	Individual response, expressed general support for the scheme, provided suggestion on including Iron Bridge heritage connection.
SGPCCSE12	Network Rail response, expressed general support for the scheme, provided some comments on NRBE scheme.
SGPCCSE13	Crewe Town Board response, expressed general support for the scheme.
SGPCCSE14	Individual response, support active travel, voiced concerns about lack of cycle storage and real impact of the scheme to encourage cycling.
SGPCCSE15	Individual response, expressed general support for the scheme, voiced need for road markings improvement in other cycle lanes in Crewe and Nantwich, concerned about cyclists safety.
SGPCCSE16	CEC Economic Development Team response, expressed concerns for shared pathway for cyclists and pedestrians, provided suggestions on Mill Street Bridge design.
SGPCCSE17	Crewe Transportation Green & Blue Infrastructure Forum response, expressed general support for the scheme.

Table 5: Key themes expressed in emails received

3.3 Additional survey responses

An additional pedestrian ('origin / destination') survey is being undertaken in late Summer 2022 to understand the level of usage of the private access road along-side the Home Bargains unit. This will help determine if any additional measures are needed elsewhere to ensure any possible severe impacts from this scheme are minimised.

4. Key Themes and Conclusions

A total of 78 responses were received via the Southern Gateway PCCS questionnaire (54 online, 22 physical paper copies returned, 2 scanned copies sent by email). In addition to this, 16 emails were also received. Some emails and letters referred to both the Southern Gateway PCCS and NRBE schemes within their response, and these have been counted as separate responses for each scheme.

The responses have been analysed to determine public opinion and the level of acceptability to stakeholders. Cheshire East Council has reviewed the comments received during the engagement exercise and, where possible and appropriate, consideration has been given to modifying the Southern Gateway PCCS to take account of the concerns raised in the public engagement exercise responses.

The scheme is fully funded from the UK Government's Towns Fund / Future High Streets Fund. Overall the construction costs are anticipated to be £c2M. If the planning application is successful, and subject to land negotiations, we expect work to begin in Summer 2023 and be complete by Spring 2024.

- The feedback received was constructive, with 67 respondents (86%) strongly agreeing or tending to agree that there is a need for pedestrian and cycle improvements in this part of Crewe.
- 58 respondents (75%) liked or really liked the Southern Gateway PCCS proposals.
- The preferred option to improve the crossing facilities at the existing roundabout was presented and 52 respondents (68%) agreed with it. 30 respondents (39%) didn't like or really didn't like the option to replace the existing roundabout with traffic signals.
- 57 respondents (76%) thought the Southern Gateway PCCS will make getting into the town centre easier; while 60 respondents (79%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Southern Gateway PCCS will make travel to the town centre safer.
- 80% support Cheshire East Council's vision for the wider active travel network.
- 21 respondents said improvements would not impact on how they travel in the area, with 34 respondents declaring to cycle more and 48 respondents felt encourage to walk more.
- Key concerns seen throughout the questionnaire were around the need for the scheme, safety concerns, esp. for pedestrians, connectivity of cycle lanes and separate paths for cyclists and pedestrians.

Respondents provided information as to why they feel there is a need for an improvement to pedestrian and cycle infrastructure in this part of Crewe. Of these, 9 voiced dangerous cyclists' behaviour (using pathways for cycling) and general safety issues for both, pedestrians and cyclists as their reasons why. Other important topics mentioned by four respondents were the fact that the scheme could encourage active travel and general support for the improvements. Several respondents stated that current cycle facilities are inadequate.

One of the questions asked respondents if they felt the scheme would encourage them to walk or cycle more. More respondents stated the scheme

will encourage them to walk more (48 respondents) than to cycle more (34 respondents). Not encouraged to walk or cycle more by the scheme were 16 respondents (walking) and 23 respondents (cycling). Some of these respondents provided health/mobility issues as the reason why, whilst several suggested they don't use this part of Crewe at all. Others suggested they already walk/cycle on daily basis.

Respondents' views on wider active travel network in Crewe were also gathered. Most of the respondents who provided additional comments supported the schemes and agreed that the improvements are needed. Other reasons raised in favour of the schemes included encouraging active travel, environmental considerations and positive impacts on health. Three respondents mentioned a need to reconsider the design of the Dorothy Flude Retail Park. Opponents of the wider vision for cycle and pedestrian improvements cited reasons such as the anticipated cost of investment, an unrecognised need for the scheme and the suggestion that it will disadvantage motorists.

The anticipated arrival of HS2 by 2033 and other regional rail improvements in Crewe provide a real opportunity for investment and development within the town, and Cheshire East as a whole. It is an exciting time for Crewe and its residents.

Cheshire East Council is responsible for delivering and maintaining a high-quality travel network for pedestrians and cyclists. One of the Council's ambitions is to encourage more people to choose environmentally friendly modes of travel. This will help to reduce road congestion and help the Council achieve its goal of carbon neutrality in own operations by 2025.

The vision for the Southern Gateway PCCS, including the new cycle path and pedestrian link, along with other public realm improvements such as new street lighting, trees and shrubs would provide a high-quality arrival point into the town centre.

Linking into the emerging Mill Street Corridor, as well as the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme, the Southern Gateway PCCS will encourage people to walk and cycle more, reducing car usage. By improving accessibility and the local environment, visitors and local people will also be encouraged to stay in Crewe for longer, which will benefit existing local businesses and services. All of the cycling and walking schemes proposed, alongside the arrival of HS2 into the town, will contribute to regeneration of Crewe.

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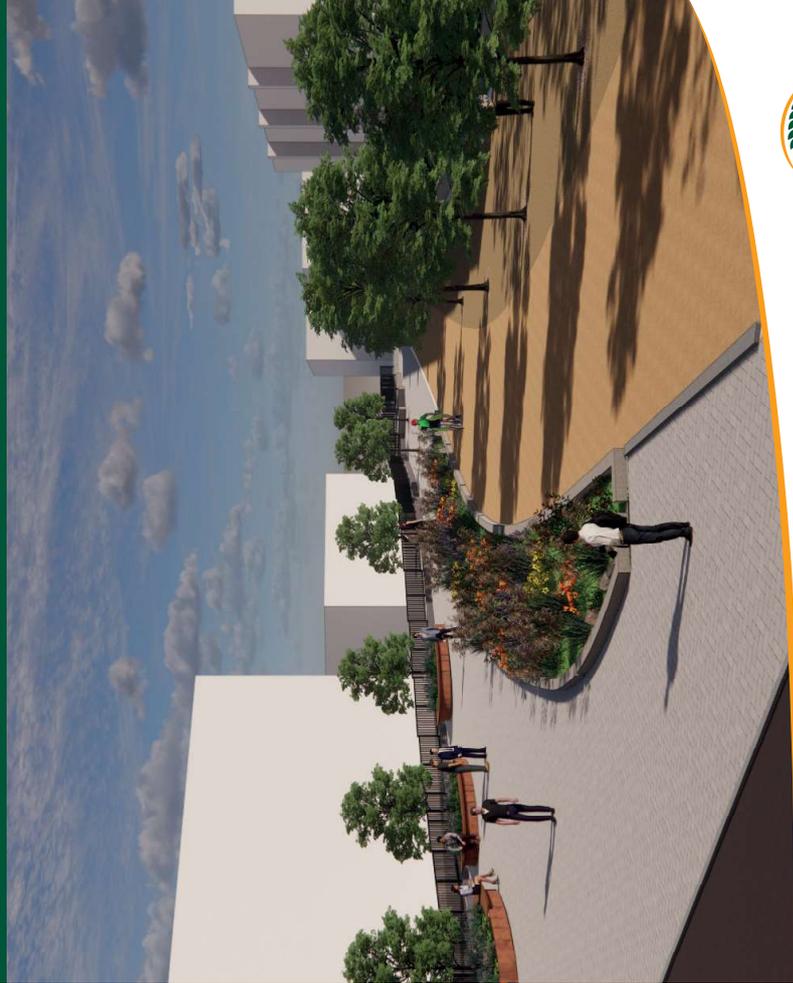
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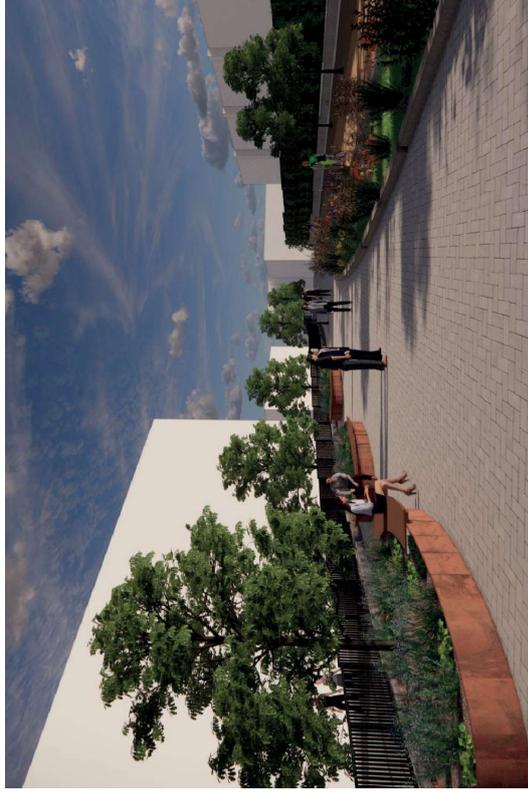
Appendix A Copy of the Southern Gateway PCCS brochure

Public Engagement for the Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycling Connectivity Scheme

This public
engagement
closes on
**Friday 10
June 2022**



An artist's impression of the Southern Gateway PCCS looking southwards from Forge Street



An artist's impression of the Southern Gateway PCCS looking northwards from High Street

Foreword

I am pleased to present this public engagement on the proposed Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS) in Crewe town centre.

The anticipated arrival of HS2 in 2033 and other regional rail improvements in Crewe provide a real opportunity for investment and development within the town, and Cheshire East as a whole.

As part of this investment, we are planning to improve access and connectivity across Crewe town centre with several new routes for pedestrians and cyclists proposed. The changes will deliver safer, more attractive, and more convenient walking and cycling routes to make it easier for people to get around the town, reducing congestion and journey times. By prioritising walking and cycling, these projects will also contribute towards Cheshire East Council's ambition to be a carbon neutral borough by 2045.

The Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycling Connectivity Scheme (PCCS) will deliver a new pedestrian walkway/cycleway between High Street and the Lifestyle Centre in Crewe town centre. It will transform this part of the town by establishing a new arrival gateway into the town. As well as connecting Forge Street to High Street, it will extend south to make the existing roundabout that links High Street, Mill Street, Oak Street (A5078) and Vernon Way (A5019) pedestrian and cycle friendly. Once built, the route will become the most direct walking and cycling route into the town centre from Crewe Station.

This brochure presents information on the preferred option and how you can share feedback on the scheme.

This is an exciting time for Crewe and its residents. I would urge you to provide your views on the scheme through the questionnaire that sits alongside this brochure or by completing it online by visiting www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS and following the links provided. Your feedback will be considered and used to help refine the design and junction choices before a planning application is finalised.



Councillor Craig Browne

Deputy Leader of Cheshire East Council and
Chair of its Highways and Transport Committee

Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS)

Introduction

Cheshire East Council has ambitions to improve pedestrian and cycle links across Crewe to encourage an increase in walking and cycling across the town. The changes will make it easier for people to get in and out of the town, reducing congestion and journey times.

To help achieve these ambitions, several different schemes are being developed, including the **Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS)**, the **Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme** and the **Mill Street Corridor**.

In this brochure you will find out more information about the proposed Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS), the other options and environmental considerations. You will also find information on Cheshire East wider ambitions through the Cycle and Pedestrian Connectivity Schemes. This is your opportunity to share your views and suggestions before we submit our planning application.

The window to provide your feedback will be open for six weeks, from **Friday 29 April 2022** to **Friday 10 June 2022**.



Your views are important to us

Sharing your thoughts and views with us at this stage will help to develop the scheme design. We want to know what works and what concerns you may have, as well as any local or specialist knowledge that may help us to improve our design.

Your feedback will be considered and used to help improve the final design of the Southern Gateway PCCS where appropriate. There will be an opportunity for you to comment further on the scheme as part of the statutory planning process.

We are holding two public information events where you can find out more about the scheme and speak to the project team. The events will be held on:

- Tuesday 17th May, between 2pm and 7pm, at Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Moss Square, Crewe, CW1 2BB
- Thursday 19th May, between 2pm and 7pm, at the Nantwich Road entrance of Crewe Railway Station, Crewe, CW2 6HR

How to respond

There are several ways that you can provide your feedback.

- Online: by visiting www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS and following the links provided.
- Email: ask questions, email your response or send through your questionnaire to SGPCCS@cheshireeast.gov.uk
- Exhibition: visit us at one of our public information events detailed above and complete a questionnaire.
- Post: you can post your response to:
Freepost Plus RSJJ-YTHC-CHZK, Research and Consultation, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ

Printed copies of this brochure and questionnaire are available at Crewe Lifestyle Centre and within the Nantwich Road entrance of Crewe Railway Station. Alternatively you can download and print the documents by visiting www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS and following the links.

If you require the documents in an alternative format please email webteam@cheshireeast.gov.uk or telephone 0300 123 5020.

All responses should be received by 11:59pm on Friday 10 June 2022. Any responses received after this date, sent to other addresses or submitted by other means may not be considered as part of the engagement process.

For more information on our other current and future projects, see the following page: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/highways_and_roadworks/major-projects/major-projects.aspx

Scheme Background

Cheshire East Council is responsible for delivering and maintaining a safe and high-quality highway network for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists.

The Crewe town centre Regeneration Framework highlights that some visitors are deterred from visiting the town due to poor connectivity between key areas such as the train station and town centre and unappealing environments. This poor perception reduces the time people spend in the town, which impacts businesses and facilities.

Our vision for the new off-road cycle path and pedestrian link and other public realm improvements such as new street lighting, trees and shrubs proposed at Southern Gateway PCCS would provide a high-quality arrival point into the town, addressing the issues identified above. The project is considered vital to the successful future of this part of the town, with a clear connected walking route and upgraded spaces. The proposed Southern Gateway PCCS will help to regenerate High Street and Oak Street as well as improve the area around Christ Church, making journeys into the town centre easier and more pleasant. We are also exploring the reallocation of road space below Mill Street Bridge to better tie into the Southern Gateway PCCS scheme.

By improving accessibility into the town and enhancing the local environment for visitors, it is hoped that the number of car trips between Crewe Station and the town centre will reduce and local people will be encouraged to stay longer in the town centre.



The Scheme Design

The proposed Southern Gateway PCCS will link High Street and Forge Street with a new shared cycleway/footway immediately behind the Lifestyle Centre. This will deliver a new active travel link in the form of a new gateway into Crewe town centre from the south.

The scheme will consist of the following elements:

- A new 3-metre-wide shared cycleway/footway between High Street and Forge Street
- A raised crossing to make it easier for pedestrian and cyclists to cross Forge Street
- The resurfacing of High Street, with the road realigned to provide enough space for the cycleway/footway
- The existing roundabout connecting High Street to Mill Street, Oak Street and Vernon Way will be retained, with an improved parallel crossing installed between Vernon Way
- New street lighting, trees and shrubs and other features such as a rain garden between Forge Street and High Street. This would be a small area of planted shrubs and flowers that collects water more easily to reduce water runoff elsewhere
- A connection to the Mill Street corridor scheme – a proposed active travel route linking the town centre with the existing railway station and proposed HS2 hub including via possible changes to the footpath arrangements underneath Mill Street bridge

The following variations have been considered with the aim to best balance cycle and walking provision under Mill Street Bridge:

Mill Street footway retention (Variation A – Preferred Option)

- Retains existing footways on Mill Street.

Benefits

- Pedestrians can keep using both footways on Mill Street.
- Removes the risk of having two-way cyclists and potentially pedestrians sharing the same narrow path adjacent to live traffic.

Disadvantages

- Cyclists heading south will have to join the carriageway on Mill Street, go under the railway bridge and then re-join the off-carriageway cycle route which will be part of the Mill Street corridor scheme. Cyclists heading north may choose to go through the roundabout rather than cross Mill Street and join the shared path that links with High Street. This will introduce a break in the route linking the town centre with the railway station and may impact road safety as cyclists will need to share the carriageway with live traffic.

Two-way cycle path only on east side (Variation B)

- Need to widen the existing east footway from 2.0m to 2.5m in order to make it meet the minimum design standards for a two-way cycle route only.
- The above will result in having to narrow the west footway down to 1.5m and potentially the carriageway as well.

Benefits

- Keeps cyclists off the carriageway by providing a uniform off-carriageway route linking the town centre with the railway station

Disadvantages

- Pedestrians walking on the east side of Mill Street are asked to cross and use the west footway in order to avoid the two-way cycle path. However, there is a risk that pedestrians will still use the two-way cycle route (former east footway), despite signage, essentially creating a very narrow shared space path that may impact road safety.
- Even if a 2.5m wide cycleway is provided on the east side under the railway bridge, there is risk of collision between cyclists travelling in opposite directions and adjacent to live traffic.



Alternative Design Options Considered

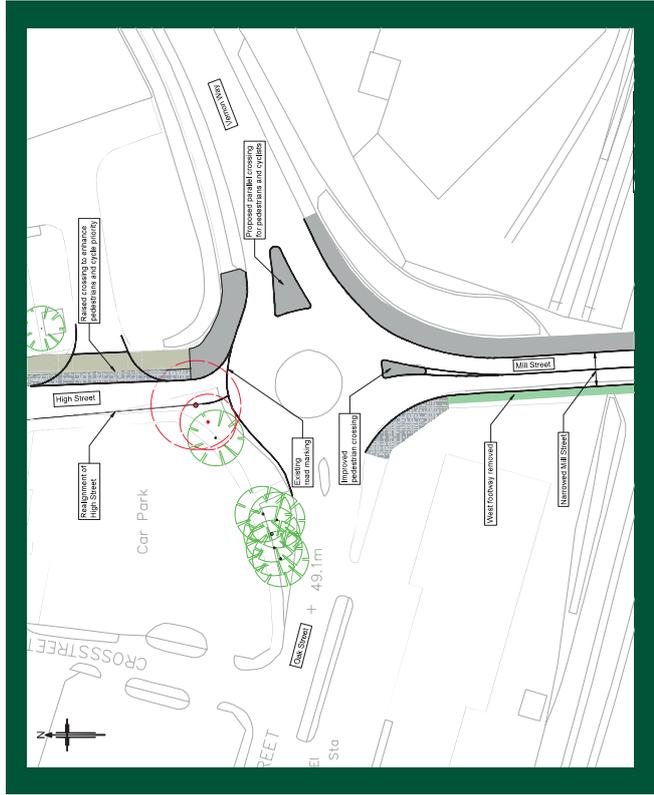
Two alternative options were considered for the roundabout connecting High Street to Mill Street, Oak Street and Vernon Way. The information provided below explains the two options and the reasons why they were not chosen over the preferred option. We'd welcome your feedback on the alternatives as part of this exercise.

Alternative design option 1 – Removal of Western Footway below Mill Street Bridge

This option would mean that Mill Street is realigned and narrowed by removing the footpath on the west side of the street and replacing it with a 3m wide shared cycleway/footway on the east side.

This option was not chosen as the preferred option for the following reasons:

- Mill Street would be narrowed from 3.2m to 3.06m which would make HGV maneuvering more difficult
- The west footway on Mill Street would be removed completely
- Although the new cycleway/footway would be much wider, it would not be able to achieve the normal required standards for a shared path due to the presence of the railway bridge
- There are concerns around the safety of pedestrians and cyclists on Mill Street as all of them would need to share the same 3.0m wide route on the east side



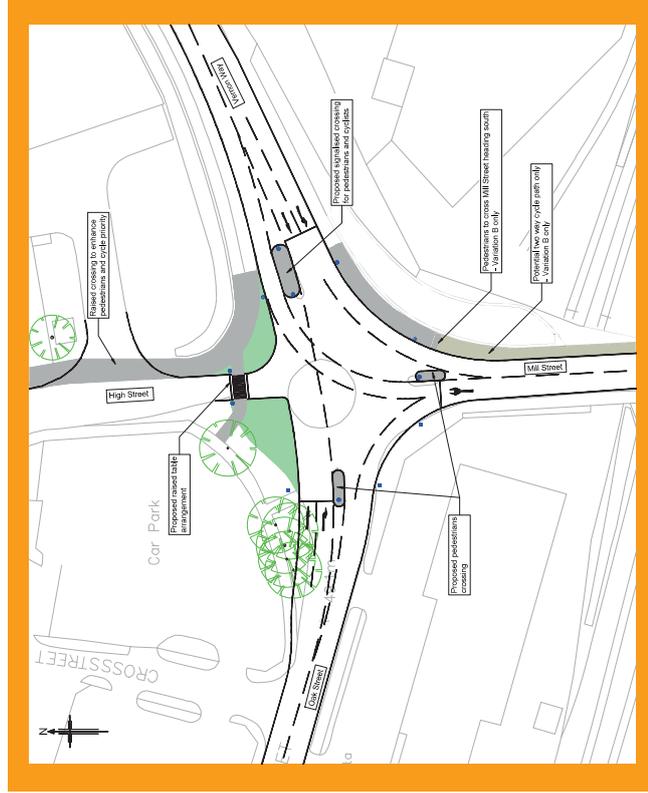
Alternative design option 2 – Signalised Crossroads

This option would convert the existing roundabout to a signalised crossroad.

This option was not chosen as the preferred option for the following reasons:

- It would have been considerably more expensive
- It would worsen traffic congestion and therefore air quality
- It does not allow for a shared cycleway/footway route on the east side of Mill Street

However, we recognise that this arrangement would allow additional improvements for cyclists and pedestrian crossings.



Scheme Materials

Crewe is a town created by the railways and as this will be the most direct link between the town and station, we are looking at opportunities to use artistic features that are inspired by this cultural identity.

Creative ideas include:

- Railway tunnel – working with artists to create the feeling of travelling through a tunnel. This could be a gateway feature which is lit.
- Lighting form through the central space to be symbolic of the over rail components of the railways.
- Re-purposed railway components combined into the public realm as a moment of interest, for example in furniture/signage/seating/paving inlays.

Natural sandstone and granite can be found across Crewe and so to reflect this existing heritage, they are the main materials that are proposed to be used.

We are also proposing to use coloured asphalt on the cycle paths, with blue block banding at transitional spots. The use of bands of block paving will create a subtle rhythm within the cycle path which will echo the sound associated with train movement.

Sandstone paving will be used for the footpaths, as well as self-binding gravel. Sandstone curbs will also be delivered.



Blue block banding on Cycleways

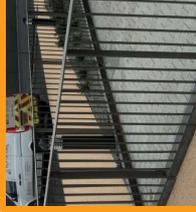
Image via Jacobs



Coloured Asphalt on Cycleways

Light Buff
UltraColour Asphalt

Image via Tamac



Vertical Wall Top Railing

Image courtesy of Alpha Rail



Masonry Retaining Wall (where visible to the public)

Blue engineering brick with bullnose brick coping

Image via Jacobs



Wide Silver Grey Granite kerbs

Image via Marshalls

Cycle Path

Wall

Kerbs

Environmental Considerations

A combination of high quality concrete and stone paving to footpaths
Scoutmoor setts/conservation x
Images via Marshalls



Wall



Self Binding Gravel
Breadon Golden Amber
Image via Brecon Aggregates



Planters
Oval shaped raised bed with tree and integrated seat
Image via StreetLife



Liquidambar Avenue
Liquidambar styraciflua
Image via Hillier Nurseries



Birch Coppse
Betula utilis Jacquemontii (multi stem)



Freestanding Green Screens
Placed in front of walls to obscure views towards back of commercial units
Image via Lang and Fulton



Climbing Plants
Evergreen Climber
Image via By Daniel Ventura – commons.wikimedia.org



Trees



Planting



Liquidambar Avenue
Liquidambar styraciflua
Image via Hillier Nurseries

Birch Coppse
Betula utilis Jacquemontii (multi stem)

Freestanding Green Screens
Placed in front of walls to obscure views towards back of commercial units
Image via Lang and Fulton

Climbing Plants
Evergreen Climber
Image via By Daniel Ventura – commons.wikimedia.org

Wide Swathe of Planting
Rain garden allowing surface water into planting bed
Image via Jacobs

Air Quality
Our assessments show there may be improvements in air quality, from reduced traffic emissions, as the scheme encourages more people to walk and cycle between the Crewe town centre and the train station. This assessment applies to the preferred junction.

Noise and vibration
The area currently experiences noise from local road traffic. Our initial assessment shows that the scheme is unlikely to significantly increase noise, however there may be a temporary increase in noise during the construction phase. There is also the potential for vibration impacts during the construction. of the scheme on nearby sensitive receptors. The noise and vibration impacts will be managed using best practice guidelines, with mitigation measures introduced where appropriate. During construction, there is also likely to be some short-term disruption of traffic in the surrounding road network. We will let you know in advance when work is planned to take place and will aim to minimise disruption as much as possible. Where road closures are required, we will try to undertake these overnight or at weekends when traffic levels are lower.

Landscape and visual
Some trees and hedgerows will be removed to allow the schemes construction; however, these will be replaced with new trees and plants, along with other public realm improvements.

Ecology and conservation
Due to the scheme's location, it is unlikely to have a significant impact on the ecology of the area. Where impacts are identified, we will look to minimise or mitigate these through our scheme design.

Water environment
Our initial assessments show that the scheme will have no significant effects on flooding, road drainage or watercourses.

Public Rights of Way
The development of the Southern Gateway PCCS will not affect any Public Rights of Way (PROW).

How will the scheme be funded?

The scheme is fully funded from the UK Government's Towns Fund / Future High Streets Fund. Overall the construction costs are anticipated to be £c2M. If the planning application is successful, and subject to land negotiations, we expect work to begin in Summer 2023 and be complete by Spring 2024.

How does the Southern Gateway PCCS fit into the wider vision for Crewe?

Cheshire East Council has ambitions to improve pedestrian and cycle links across Crewe to increase active travel across the town. The Southern Gateway PCCS is one of several projects which make up the Crewe Cycle and Pedestrian Connectivity Schemes. The aim of these Schemes is to deliver new and improved pedestrian and cycle links across Crewe, which once established will create a sustainable and connected travel network.

We are currently engaging on the Southern Gateway PCCS, as well as the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme and would like to hear your feedback before we submit planning applications for each project.

The proposed Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme would see the existing bridge extended to create a dedicated pedestrian and cycle pathway. The purpose of the scheme is to improve the connection between the railway station and the town centre as well as the public realm around the station and other travel facilities such as car parks, bus stops, taxi ranks and drop-off areas.

To find out more about this scheme visit www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS

We are also currently designing a scheme which will provide walking and cycling improvements along Mill Street.

The Mill Street Corridor project aims to deliver an active travel route linking the town centre (via the Southern Gateway PCCS) with the Crewe railway station (via the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme) - encouraging more people to cycle and walk through the provision of a more attractive and accessible facility and provide better wayfinding from the station to the town centre. Work is still taking place to identify the best route, but a key aspect of the project will be the ability to unlock future development opportunities. As part of looking at the options, we are also considering a potential redesign of the highway network underneath Mill Street bridge, which will allow us to redistribute the existing space under the structure, to create more space for pedestrians and cyclists.

Whilst we are not directly consulting on the specific scheme proposals for the Mill Street Corridor as part of this engagement, we would welcome feedback on our vision for how our improvements to this corridor will help to shape the wider network, and the two schemes mentioned above.

The schemes will all complement each other via a shared vision and together they will transform Crewe by connecting its main areas, improving the attractiveness of the town, and encouraging more people to walk and cycle in Crewe. The schemes are also part of a wider plan to prepare Crewe for the arrival of HS2.

Next Steps

Once the engagement closes on Friday 10 June 2022, we will analyse your responses and prepare an engagement findings report which will be published on the Council's webpage at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS

Your responses will help to inform the final design where possible and practical, and the findings of this engagement will be submitted alongside the planning application.

We plan to submit a planning application to Cheshire East Council in Summer 2022. There will be an opportunity for you to comment further on the scheme as part of the statutory planning process. The figure below provides our current timeline for the scheme.

Project Timetable



Appendix B Copy of the Crewe Cycling and Pedestrian Connectivity Schemes leaflet



Crewe Cycling and Pedestrian Connectivity Schemes

Public Engagement and Consultation

This public engagement and consultation runs between 29 April 2022 and 10 June 2022

Cheshire East Council has ambitions to improve pedestrian and cycle links across Crewe to encourage an increase in walking and cycling across the town. To help achieve these ambitions, several different schemes are being developed. We are inviting feedback on two of these schemes:

Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme

The scheme will improve access to Crewe Railway Station, especially as passenger numbers increase with the arrival of HS2 services in 2033.

Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS)

The proposed scheme will create a gateway into Crewe town centre via a new pedestrian and cycleway between High Street to Forge Street. It will also make the roundabout which connects High Street, Mill Street, Oak Street (A5078) and Vernon Way (A5019) more pedestrian and cycle friendly.



CREWE



To find out more visit www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS or scan the QR code below. On the website, you can also view information about how these schemes fit into our wider vision for improving cycling and pedestrian links in Crewe, including the Mill Street Corridor.



Get involved

The public engagement and consultation runs for 6 weeks from **Friday 29 April 2022** and closing at 11:59pm on **Friday 10 June 2022**.

To find out more visit www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS or pick up a copy of the scheme brochures and questionnaires at Crewe Lifestyle Centre or within the Nantwich Road entrance of Crewe Railway Station. Alternatively visit us at one of our information events:

- Crewe Lifestyle Centre on Tuesday 17 May 2022 between 2:00pm and 7:00pm; and
- Crewe Railway Station on Thursday 19 May 2022 between 2:00pm and 7:00pm.

How to respond

- Complete the scheme questionnaires online by visiting www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS
- Complete the paper version of the questionnaires and post them back to us at **Freepost Plus RSJJ-YTHC-CHZK, Research and Consultation, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ**
- Email your feedback:
 - For the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme - via NRBE@cheshireeast.gov.uk
 - For the Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycling Connectivity Scheme - via SGPCCS@cheshireeast.gov.uk

If you have any queries, or if you would like to receive the materials in an alternative format, please contact us by emailing using the above email addresses or telephone 0300 123 5020.

Appendix C Copy of the Crewe Cycling and Pedestrian Connectivity Schemes roller banners



Cheshire East Council has ambitions to improve cycling and pedestrian links across Crewe through several emerging schemes. Once established, these schemes will create a sustainable and connected active travel network.

To find out more, visit
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS
 Or scan the QR code available here



We want to hear your feedback on two of these schemes:

Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme

The proposed scheme will create a gateway into Crewe town centre via a new pedestrian and cycleway between High Street to Forge Street. It will also make the roundabout which connects High Street, Mill Street, Oak Street (A5078) and Vernon Way (A5019) more pedestrian and cycle friendly.

Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme

The proposed scheme will create more space parallel to the existing road bridge, specifically for use by pedestrians and cyclists. There will also be other public realm improvements such as tree planting, appropriate street furniture and welcome signage. The scheme will also include improved facilities for bus passengers and bus priority measures, recognising that the railway station is a key location for interchange with local bus services. It will prepare the town and railway station for the arrival of HS2 to Crewe by 2033.

We would also welcome your thoughts on the emerging high-level vision for the **Mill Street corridor**, that will eventually connect these schemes together.

Artists impression of the Southern Gateway PCCS



NORTHERN POWERHOUSE



Your views are important to us

The deadline for your feedback is **Friday 10 June 2022**

Sharing your thoughts and views with us at this stage will help us as we finalise the scheme designs. We want to know what you like, and what concerns you may have, as well as any local or specialist knowledge that you can share.



To give us your feedback:

- Take the brochures and questionnaires available today and post back to us at: Freepost Plus RSJJ-YTHC-CHZK, Research and Consultation, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ
- You can also complete our questionnaire online by visiting www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS
- If you require the documents in an alternative format please email SGPCCS@cheshireeast.gov.uk, NRBE@cheshireeast.gov.uk or telephone 0300 123 5020.

We will also be holding two public events

Tuesday 17 May
2pm – 7pm

Crewe Lifestyle Centre

Thursday 19 May
2pm – 7pm

Nantwich Road entrance of Crewe Railway Station

Masterplan image of the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme



Appendix D Copy of the Southern Gateway PCCS questionnaire

Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS) Questionnaire

Introduction

Cheshire East Council is seeking your thoughts on our proposals for the Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Scheme (PCCS). The proposed scheme will create a new gateway entrance to the south of Crewe town centre via a new pedestrian and cycleway linking High Street and Forge Street. The scheme will also link to the roundabout connecting High Street, Mill Street, Oak Street (A5078) and Vernon Way (A5019), making it more cyclist and pedestrian friendly. A series of public realm improvements are also planned.

We want to collect comments and feedback to help, where applicable and practical, shape the final design of the scheme ahead of submitting a planning application.

As well as Southern Gateway PCCS, we are also asking for your views on how the scheme fits into our wider active travel plan for Crewe, including along the proposed Mill Street Corridor. This scheme aims to deliver an active travel route linking the town centre with the existing railway station and proposed HS2 hub. Work is still taking place to identify the best route, but a key aspect of the project will be the ability to unlock land for future development opportunities.

Part of this questionnaire is seeking feedback on the design of the Southern Gateway PCCS scheme, please refer to the engagement/consultation materials available in the Southern Gateway PCCS brochure, or information via the Town Centre Regeneration Programme web page: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS.

Please provide any feedback or comments via this survey by **23:59 on Friday 10 June 2022**.

Contact us

If you have any queries about this engagement exercise or would like to receive the materials in an alternative format, please contact us by email at SGPCCS@cheshireeast.gov.uk or telephone on 0300 123 5020.

Travelling to and from Crewe town centre

In this section we will ask general questions about your travel to Crewe town centre. Your answers will help us to understand the views and needs of different users.

1. How often do you visit Crewe town centre?

Please tick one option only.

- Several times a day
- Every day
- A few times a week
- A few times a month
- Once a month
- A few times a year
- Never

2. What is your main reason for visiting Crewe Town Centre?

- Work
- Leisure
- Hospitality
- Culture
- Education
- Shopping
- Other (please write in below)

3. How do you usually travel into Crewe town centre?

Please tick one option only.

- Walk
- Cycle
- Bus
- Taxi
- Car
- I don't travel to Crewe town centre at all
- Other (Please write in):



Southern Gateway PCCS

In this section we will ask questions about your thoughts on the Southern Gateway PCCS. Please look through information about this scheme available in the scheme brochure, or the information via the Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Scheme web page www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS.

4. How strongly do you agree or disagree that there is a need for proposed pedestrian/cycle improvements in this part of Crewe town centre?

Please tick one option only:

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure/Don't know

Please state your reason(s) for this answer:

5. How do you feel generally about the Southern Gateway PCCS?

Please tick one option only.

- I really like it
- I like it
- Neither like or dislike
- I don't like it
- I really don't like it
- Don't know

Why do you feel this way?



6. Do you agree with the preferred option to improve the pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities at the existing roundabout that is presented within the scheme brochure?

Please tick one option only.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Why do you feel this way?

7. What are your views on the option to replace the existing roundabout with traffic signals?

Please tick one option only.

- I really like it
- I like it
- Neither like or dislike
- I don't like it
- I really don't like it
- Don't know

Why do you feel this way?

8. How do you feel about the following statements about the Southern Gateway PCCS?

Please tick one option from each row.

Statement:	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The proposed new footpath/cycleway will make travel into Crewe town centre easier.						

The proposed new footpath/cycleway will make travel into Crewe town centre safer.							
I like the materials proposed to be used for the footpaths – sandstone and granite.							
I like the materials proposed to be used for the cycle paths – coloured asphalt with blue banding for transitional spots.							
Our environmental assessment covers all relevant topics							

9. The proposed new pedestrian and cycleway will:

Please tick one option only in each row.

Options:	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
... encourage me to walk more through this part of Crewe town centre.						
... encourage me to cycle more through this part of Crewe town centre.						
... have no impact, it won't influence my travel choice.						

Please state your reasons for this answer. If the new footpaths and cycle paths won't encourage you to walk or cycle more, please tell us why:

10. Do you have any additional ideas or information that could improve the design of the scheme or that you think we should know?

Please share any additional comments:

Crewe Pedestrian and Cycleway Connectivity Schemes

In this section we ask questions about your thoughts and views on the vision for the wider active travel network. Please look through information about this vision available in the project brochure before answering this section.

11. Do you support the vision for a wider active travel network, in particular the vision for the Mill Street Corridor?

Please tick one option only.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Why do you feel this way?

12. In relation to the Mill Street Corridor, do you have any comments on our emerging vision to reallocate road space underneath the existing Mill Street bridge?

13. Do you have any comments on the wider active travel network that could help to improve walking and cycling conditions in Crewe?

Please share your thoughts:

About you

The information you give will help us to understand the views of different groups, and to check if services are being delivered in a fair and accessible way. You do not need to answer any of the following questions if you do not wish to.

The following questions are required to be answered:

14. *Are you completing this survey:

Please tick one option only.

- As an individual?
- On behalf of a group or an organisation?

14a. *If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please name the organisation, your role within it and how the views of members were gathered.

Organisation name:

Your role within the organisation:

How the views of members of the organisation were gathered:

15. Please provide your postcode. Please fill this in clearly and accurately, so that we can understand where people are responding from:

Please write in below.

Postcode:

16. Did you visit one of our exhibitions before completing this questionnaire

Please tick one box

- Yes
- No

17. What is your gender identity?

Please select one option only.

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe (please write in the box below):

18. What age group do you belong to?

Please select one option only.

- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 and over
- Prefer not to say

19. By completing this survey, you have identified that you have an interest in this project. It would help us if you could identify the nature of your interest.

Please select all that apply to you.

- Crewe resident
- Cheshire East resident (outside Crewe)
- Local business interest
- Public rights of way user
- User of the area for leisure
- User of the area for commuting
- Representative of NGO/community group

- Representative of formal organisation
- Other (please specify below):

20. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? This includes problems related to old age.

Please select one option only.

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

21. What is your ethnic origin?

Please select one option only.

- White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish
- Any other White background
- Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian
- Asian / Asian British
- Black African / Caribbean / Black British
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self describe (please write in the box below):

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

How we will use your data (Privacy Notice)

The data is being collected by Cheshire East Council, and will be processed by Jacobs U.K. Limited on behalf of Ringway Jacobs (the council's Highways Services provider).

What personal information is being processed

Personal data including (This list is not necessarily exhaustive):

- Names and titles
- Address
- Contact details such as telephone or mobile numbers and email addresses

Your information will be used for some or all of the following purposes

- To enable us to meet all legal and statutory functions under the Highways Act 1980
- To understand your needs in order to provide the services you require under Highways and Environment operations and Network Management activities
- To inform you of any updates / outcomes to your enquiry via telephone, email or via our 'Report It' if you logged your enquiry via this channel

We are collecting your personal data for the following purposes:

- investigate and rectify any highway defects
- deliver services and support to you
- carry out emergency works
- recover costs due to damage to the highway asset or enforcement duties
- understand how you interact with the highways online fault reporting website
- train and manage the employment of our workers who deliver those services
- keep track of spending on services
- check the quality of services

If you do not provide your personal information we will or may be unable to:

- Clarify with you the exact location or nature of your fault or enquiry, should we have a query regarding this or if there is insufficient information to resolve a fault or enquiry

- Recoup the costs and carry out repairs to the highway assets due to damage to the highway or enforcement action
- Improve our services and levels of customer service.

We rely upon the following laws to process your personal data:

- Flood and Water Management Act 2010
- Highways Act 1980
- New Roads and Street Works Act 1991
- Road Traffic Regulations Act 1981
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Traffic Management Act 2004
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Where we get your information from:

In most cases any information we hold on you will have been provided directly by yourself. This is usually via an enquiry that you have logged with us or from you in a survey or similar. We also receive your personal data from third parties, for example in letters from MPs, Councillors or Town/Parish Councils where you have asked an official person or organisations to act on your behalf.

Some of our operatives wear body cameras and likewise some of our vehicles have dash-cams which may mean that photos / video footage is taken of you as you pass-by our staff working on the network.

Who we share your personal data with:

Your data will be held within Cheshire East Highway's secure network. Access to your information will be restricted to authorised members of staff who are required to process it for the purposes outlined in this privacy notice. In order to deliver services to you it may be necessary for us to share your personal data with the following organisations/partners:

- Ward members (Councillors)
- MPs
- Internally with colleagues from other Cheshire East departments
- Cheshire Police or Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Other Local Authorities if there is a shared interest in your enquiry

- Our software providers will also store your information, but will only access on our instruction. They won't use it for any other reasons, and they have to look after it in the same way that we would.

In addition to the above the Highway Service also processes matters relating to its schemes under the Land Compensation Act 1973. This requires us to hold additional personal information for proof of name and address checks and financial or banking details to enable us to validate and administer applications. As part of the administration of these Claims independent valuers may be appointed to assist in the negotiation and agreement of compensation sums and will store your contact information for use only for this purpose.

How long we hold your personal data for:

In some instances we have legal obligations to retain some data in connection with our statutory obligations as a public authority. We aim to keep information only for as long as it is needed. How long we hold your information depends on the particular reason we collected the information from you. Full details on how long our service retains your information is listed in the Information Asset Register under 'Highways'.

Will your information be used to make automated decisions:

No

Your rights:

You have a number of rights regarding your personal data. You can ask for a copy of the information we hold about you and ask us to correct anything that is wrong. For detailed information about your rights please see the Cheshire East Council Privacy Notice:

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/website_information/privacy-notices/privacy-notice.aspx

Appendix E Copy of the press release ahead of public engagement

News Release



25 April 2022

Cheshire East Council seeks feedback on two cycling and pedestrian schemes in Crewe

Cheshire East Council is inviting feedback on two schemes which will create new, attractive, and more direct links for pedestrians and cyclists between Crewe railway station and the town centre.

The council has long-term ambitions to improve pedestrian and cycle links across Crewe to encourage an increase in 'active travel'.

As part of these ambitions, two improvement schemes are now being brought forward – the Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycling Connectivity Scheme and the Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme – and a public consultation on these plans will take place between Friday 29 April and Friday 10 June 2022.

The Southern Gateway Pedestrian and Cycling Connectivity Scheme will transform the southern part of Crewe town centre and is one of the projects being progressed following the council's successful £14.1m bid to the government's Future High Streets Fund.

The scheme will establish a new arrival gateway into the town, with a new pedestrian walkway and cycleway proposed between High Street and the Lifestyle Centre.

As well as connecting Forge Street to High Street, it will extend south to make the existing roundabout that links High Street, Mill Street, Oak Street (A5078) and Vernon Way (A5019) pedestrian and cycle friendly.

Once built, the route will become the most direct walking and cycling route into the town centre from Crewe station.

The Nantwich Road Bridge Enhancement Scheme is part of a wider ambition to improve the offer at Crewe station, making it more accessible.

The scheme will create more space parallel to the existing Nantwich Road Bridge, specifically for use by pedestrians and cyclists.

It will provide safer, more convenient, and more attractive pedestrian and cycle links over the existing railway corridor, to encourage active travel to and from the station, and make it easier for people to find their way to and from the town centre.

Both schemes will offer benefits to people living in the area and people accessing Crewe station and the town centre.

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk

The schemes will further prepare the town for the arrival of HS2 to Crewe by 2033 – an important component of delivering the council's future ambitions for Crewe and the surrounding area.

As well as improving connectivity, they will help to make Crewe more attractive and welcoming and support the council's ongoing regeneration programme, which aims to encourage more people to visit the town centre and to stay for longer.

The council is also developing proposals for the Mill Street Corridor, which would act as an active travel route connecting the two schemes.

The project is one of 10 in Crewe that has been earmarked to benefit from a £22.9m allocation of funding through the government's Towns Fund.

While not directly consulting on the options for the Mill Street corridor at the moment, the council wants to understand residents' views on this wider network as part of this engagement exercise.

Councillor Craig Browne, deputy leader of Cheshire East Council and chair of its highways and transport committee, said: "The anticipated arrival of HS2 by 2033 and other regional rail improvements in Crewe provide a real opportunity for investment and development within the town, and Cheshire East as a whole.

"To support this investment and unlock early benefits to Crewe, we are planning to improve access and connectivity across Crewe with several new routes for pedestrians and cyclists proposed.

"The changes will deliver safer, more attractive, and more convenient walking and cycling routes to make it easier for people to get around the town, reducing congestion and journey times.

"By prioritising walking and cycling, these projects will also contribute towards Cheshire East Council's ambition to be a carbon neutral borough by 2045. I encourage residents to take part in our engagement exercise and share their views on our ambitions for active travel in Crewe."

A webpage where people can learn more about the schemes and provide their feedback will be live from Thursday 28 April at: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/CreweCPS.

Two public information events are also scheduled, providing a chance for residents and businesses to speak to a member of the project team. The events are taking place on:

Tuesday 17 May, between 2pm and 7pm, at Crewe Lifestyle Centre, Moss Square, Crewe, CW1 2BB

Thursday 19 May, between 2pm and 7pm, at Crewe station, Nantwich Road, Crewe, CW2 6HR (just inside the Nantwich Road entrance)

The consultation will close at midnight on Friday 10 June.

ENDS

Appendix F List of organisations contacted as part of the engagement process

Appendix G A breakdown of responses to SG PCCS questionnaire – questions 8 and 9

Q8. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the Southern Gateway PCCS?

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / Not sure
The proposed new footpath/cycleway will make travel into Crewe town centre easier .	37%	39%	11%	3%	11%	0%
The proposed new footpath/cycleway will make travel into Crewe town centre safer .	41%	38%	12%	4%	5%	0%
I like the materials proposed to be used for the footpaths – sandstone and granite.	40%	32%	16%	1%	5%	5%
I like the materials proposed to be used for the cycle paths – coloured asphalt with blue banding for transitional spots.	38%	33%	15%	3%	5%	5%
Our environmental assessment covers all relevant topics	27%	36%	22%	1%	11%	3%

Q9. How strongly do you agree or disagree the proposed new pedestrian and cycleway will....

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know /Not sure
...encourage me to walk more through this part of Crewe town centre.	34%	31%	14%	8%	14%	0%
...encourage me to cycle more through this part of Crewe town centre.	35%	13%	18%	10%	22%	3%
... have no impact , it won't influence my travel choice.	17%	13%	19%	23%	23%	4%

Appendix H Code frame

Category	Codes
1.The current road design	101. Concerns/comments the bridge (Mill Street Bridge) 102. Too many traffic lights 103. The current road is too narrow 104. Current pedestrian crossings need improved 105. Concerns about car parking 106. Too much traffic 107. Issues with cycle lane/ scheme continuity/ Fragmentation of pedestrian and cycle lanes 108. Suggestions on proposed design 109. Inadequate current provision of cycling facilities 110. Problems with current road layout 111. Does not support shared pedestrian/cycling path 112. Importance of linking both schemes 113. Agree that scheme is an improvement 114. Current conditions for pedestrians are dangerous
2.Critiques/concerns	201. Cost concerns 202. Traffic congestion 203. Safety concerns 204. Cyclists safety 205. Environmental concerns 206. Pedestrian safety concerns 207. Air Quality concerns 208. Pessimistic about scheme relevance 209. Unsafe cycling practices 210. Disruption concern 211. Timescales of works 212. Pessimistic about scheme happening 213. Concern for materials proposed 214. Safety concerns related to crime 215. The scheme will not impact on how they use the area 216. Concern over how cyclists currently use the area 217. Concerns for other investments in the area 218. Concerns for town centre current condition 219. Impact on driving 220. Concerns for access for people with mobility difficulties
3.Support/opposing the scheme	301. Agree that there should be pedestrian/ cycle lane improvements 302. Disagree that there should be cycle lane improvements 303. It will impact traffic flow 304. Supports the overall scheme 305. Does not support the overall scheme 306. Improves the environment 307. Improves safety 308. Encourages active transport 309. Improves the health 310. No need to change current layout 311. Makes travel in the area easier/ safer 312. Improve access to town centre 313. Will not change/improve significantly

	<p>314. Support the suggested option 315. Does not support the suggested option 316. Prefer another option 317. Support the suggested option under some conditions</p>
4. Suggestions	<p>401. Funding spending suggestions 402. Make active travel the easiest option 402. Suggestion for further roads 404. Improvements to Crewe Town Centre needed 405. Wider public transport suggestions 406. Give non motorised users priority 407. Suggestions for Mill Street improvement</p>
5. Other	<p>501. Answers such as 'no', 'no comment' etc. 502. I don't walk/use this area 503. I don't cycle 504. Health issues that don't allow cycle 505. Not classified 506. Comment related to NRBES 507. Not sure 508. Already use this route</p>

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Appendix F – List of Organisations contacted as part of the engagement process



Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	13 September 2022
Report Title:	Domestic Energy Efficiency
Report of:	Jayne Traverse – Executive Director - Place
Report Reference No:	EG/12/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** This report outlines proposed changes to the Council's existing Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People Policy 2021-2026 and the ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent, to support low-income households to maintain their health and wellbeing in a warm home, in response to the Government's energy efficiency policy changes for low-income households.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** Rising fuel prices are dominating news headlines and is an area of considerable concern for households worried about how they are going to afford to heat their home. Improving the energy efficiency of homes is one practical step that households can take, to reduce the amount of energy that they need to use without compromising their health and wellbeing.
- 2.2.** For many low-income households, the pressure on household finances and the rising costs across the building industry means that energy efficiency improvements are unaffordable, and when an emergency happens such as a boiler breakdown, they are not able to afford repairs or a new boiler.
- 2.3.** The Council provides support to vulnerable households to access funding for energy efficiency improvements, including emergency boiler repairs and replacements. The Council provides practical help to apply for grants such as Energy Company Obligation (ECO) as well as direct financial help through the Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People Policy 2021-26.

- 2.4.** ECO places legal obligations on energy suppliers to deliver energy efficiency and heating measures to low-income households, including replacing broken heating systems, the upgrade of inefficient systems and the installation of insulation. There has been a recent change in Government policy for ECO to align with the strategy for net zero by 2050. ECO is valued at £4 billion over 4 years, so is a significant investment by energy suppliers.
- 2.5.** Under the new policy, ECO will focus on insulation measures and renewable heating systems, and significantly reduce the help available to repair or replace fossil fuel heating systems. Whilst this strategy is clearly aligned with the net zero target, there still needs to be a safety net for those vulnerable people where insulation isn't practical or is too disruptive, or where emergency boiler repairs or renewals are needed to safeguard their health and wellbeing.
- 2.6.** The Council provides a safety net for its vulnerable residents through its Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People Policy 2021-2026 (HRAVP Policy). The existing Policy has links to the Government's ECO policy, as households are eligible for support from the Council if they also qualify for ECO. The changes to ECO mean that the Council's HRAVP Policy needs to be amended to ensure that we are continuing to provide the safety net for vulnerable residents in Cheshire East.
- 2.7.** The Council's current HRAVP Policy states that to qualify for a grant, the homeowner must 'qualify by way of ill health or low income for funding from another fuel poverty related domestic energy efficiency scheme [such as ECO] for which they are required to make a financial contribution'.
- 2.8.** It is proposed that the Council amends its HRAVP Policy by removing the requirement to qualify for another fuel poverty related domestic energy efficiency scheme [such as ECO] and replacing this with maximum income and savings thresholds. It is proposed that the income threshold is set at £31,000 in line with the ECO4 Flexible Eligibility criteria detailed below; and that the savings threshold is set at £23,250 in line with the Care Act 2014. It is proposed that these thresholds should be adjusted if the ECO4 or Care Act thresholds are adjusted at any time while the HRAVP Policy is in force.
- 2.9.** The Government have also revised the Local Authority Flexible Eligibility scheme as part of ECO. Previously, local authorities were given discretion whether to participate in the scheme and were able to set local eligibility criteria to supplement the core ECO criteria. This allowed local authorities to determine local priorities such as targeting deprived areas or setting income thresholds in accordance with the local employment market. Under the new scheme local authorities continue to have discretion whether to participate in the scheme but must use the eligibility criteria stipulated by the Government. The local authority's role is to check that households meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme.

- 2.10.** Cheshire East has previously participated in this scheme, which has been effective in securing funding for households that wouldn't otherwise receive help. By publishing a new Statement of Intent that is compliant with the Government's guidance, the Council will continue to facilitate access to funding from ECO for households that do not meet the core ECO criteria of means tested benefits but do meet other criteria such as poor health or gross household income less than £31,000.
- 2.11.** A minor change has been made to the Targeted Regeneration Grant within the HRAVP Policy to provide more flexibility to align the grant with external grant funding opportunities and local priorities and needs. Funding opportunities may become available from time to time, for example the Towns Fund, which will each have their own eligibility criteria. To remove any conflict between the terms of any externally funded grants and the HRAVP Policy, it is proposed that the maximum grant amount of £10,000 is removed from the Policy, and replaced with "The grant amount will be determined and published in accordance with the individual regeneration scheme rules, terms and conditions that are in force at the time."

3. Recommendations

- 3.1.** That approval is given to the amendments to the Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People Policy 2021-2026 as outlined in Appendix A.
- 3.2.** That approval is given to the publication of the ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent as outlined in Appendix B.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** The Council cannot provide discretionary grants without formally adopting a policy that sets out the eligibility criteria.
- 4.2.** There is a strong policy drive for integrated approaches across housing, health and social care to prevent hospital admissions and expedite hospital discharge, none more so than in the pandemic. Housing's role in supporting health is becoming more prominent, with research demonstrating the causal link between poor housing conditions and ill health.
- 4.3.** The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 sets out our vision for a more open, fairer, greener Cheshire East. The plan sets out priorities under the three broad aims including "a great place for people to live, work and visit" and "reduce health inequalities". The proposed revisions to the Council's policies will enable us to deliver these priorities.
- 4.4.** At the Council meeting on 22 May 2019, Members approved a Notice of Motion relating to Climate Change, and committed to "work with all businesses, residents and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing energy consumptions and promoting healthy lifestyles". The Council made a further pledge in January 2022 to make Cheshire East a carbon neutral borough by 2045.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. The Council could do nothing and continue with the HRAVP Policy in its current form. Likewise, the Council could decide not to publish an ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent. This would be to the detriment of low-income and vulnerable residents who would not be able to access funding for emergency heating repairs and boiler replacements.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	Low-income and vulnerable households will not be able to access funding for emergency heating works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased GP attendances and hospital admissions for cold related ill health and falls • Increased risk of unsustainable household debt

6. Background

- 6.1. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 contains wide-ranging powers to provide financial help with housing renewal, including adapting or improving or repairing living accommodation. The Order also states that before the powers contained within it can be used, the Council must publish a policy on how it intends to use them.
- 6.2. On 9th March 2021, Cheshire East's former Cabinet approved the Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People Policy 2021-2026 (HRAVP Policy). The purpose of the HRAVP Policy was to set out the financial help that the Council will give to vulnerable households to improve and adapt their homes to improve their health and wellbeing and support them to live independently for longer.
- 6.3. The HRAVP Policy details the Affordable Warmth Grant, which provides grants of up to £2,000 for some or all of the cost of repairing or replacing broken boilers and heating systems, as well as providing first time central heating.
- 6.4. The HRAVP Policy stipulates that homeowners over the age of 18 were eligible for the grant if they met the criteria for funding from another energy efficiency grant (for example, ECO) but were unable to afford their financial contribution; or if they were unable to return home from hospital until a working heating system was in place; or if they were 'clinically extremely vulnerable' to Covid-19. In 2021-22 the Council granted £103,000 to 65 households to carry out essential heating improvements, which has drawn down £51,000 of ECO funding.

- 6.5.** Enquiries for help with energy improvements and heating repairs increased six-fold in March 2022, coinciding with the announcements for energy price increases. Households are very concerned about their energy bills and are exploring ways to make their homes more energy efficient to reduce their spending without compromising their health. Whilst demand has reduced over the spring and summer, it can be expected that it will increase in autumn and winter as the reality of the price rises sets in.
- 6.6.** A change in Government policy however means that there is a risk to the effectiveness of the HRAVP Policy. The Government consulted on changes to the ECO scheme (ECO4) and published its response on 1 April 2022, which changes the focus of energy efficiency improvements and the households that are eligible for support, and is likely to leave some people who would previously have received a grant from the Council without emergency support. ECO4 started on 1 April 2022 with regulations to be laid before Parliament in due course.
- 6.7.** The Government have removed disability benefits as a qualifying welfare benefit for ECO4. Whilst disability benefits are not means tested, they provide a proxy indicator of vulnerability to the effects of cold; cold homes increase the risk to people with impaired mobility and chronic health conditions.
- 6.8.** Oil and LPG boilers will no longer be installed through ECO. This is consistent with the Government's target for 'net zero' carbon emissions by 2050 where fossil fuel heating systems will be phased out, and the Council has secured grant funding for off-gas properties. However, there will continue to be situations where renewable heating systems such as heat pumps are not suitable for the property, and there is a risk that a vulnerable person with a broken oil or LPG boiler could be left without suitable heating.
- 6.9.** Properties that have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of Band C or above will no longer be eligible for ECO4. This will result in vulnerable people living in well insulated homes but with a broken boiler being unable to access financial support to repair or replace their boiler.
- 6.10.** The Government have stipulated that works carried out through ECO4 must result in an improvement of at least 2 EPC bands, ie a property starting at Band G must increase to Band E, and so on. Our experience in delivering the Green Homes Grant programme over the last 2 years is that it can be very difficult to achieve this increase without multiple costly measures such as internal or external solid wall insulation which can be disruptive to households and in some cases require planning permission.
- 6.11.** The Government have put a cap of 5,000 on the replacement of energy efficient broken gas boilers and electric storage heating through ECO4. This is an annual cap and is for England, Scotland and Wales, leaving people with efficient but broken boilers with very little opportunity for support.
- 6.12.** The Government have updated their guidance to local authorities for 'flexible eligibility' for ECO4 (where local authorities can certify that additional

households need support). The flexible eligibility routes for ECO4 have been established as follows:

- 6.12.1. Route 1: Gross household income of no more than £31,000.
- 6.12.2. Route 2: a combination of two or more of the following:
- Living in one of the most deprived areas on the Index of Multiple Deprivation;
 - In receipt of Council Tax Support;
 - People who are vulnerable to cold as defined by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence guideline NG6 (people with cardiovascular conditions; respiratory conditions; mental health conditions; disabilities; aged 65 and over; children aged 0 to 5; and pregnant women) (this cannot be used in conjunction with living in a deprived area to qualify)
 - In receipt of free school meals;
 - Referred to the local authority by the energy supplier or Citizens Advice as struggling with their energy bills;
 - Identified by the energy supplier as being in persistent fuel debt.
- 6.12.3. Route 3: NHS referrals for a cardiovascular condition, respiratory disease, immunosuppression, or limited mobility.
- 6.12.4. Route 4: Bespoke targeting. The Government will issue guidance on this later in 2022.
- 6.13.** The Council must produce a Statement of Intent setting out the above criteria to be able to certify households for ECO4 flexible eligibility. The Government has issued draft guidance for the ECO4 Flexible Eligibility scheme and have permitted the delivery of ECO4 through the core criteria as well as flexible eligibility before the draft regulations have been approved by Parliament. Whilst the guidance and regulations have gone through an extensive consultation process, a risk remains that the draft regulations may change before approval and households that are declared as eligible for ECO4 flexible eligibility may no longer be eligible. This is a low risk given the extensive consultation process that has taken place and is borne by energy suppliers and installers; there is no financial or legal risk to the Council.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1. There are no legal implications for this recommendation. The changes to the Policy are not controversial or place the Council in a different legal position than under the existing policy. The changes are in accordance with the Corporate Plan.

7.1.2. The Council remains the gateway for financial assistance under the various schemes and accordingly the legal implications for this remain as before. That is, such decisions made must be made in accordance with recognised public law principles and in accordance with the Policy unless there is good reason to depart from it.

7.1.3. The adoption of a financial threshold for eligibility for the affordable warmth grant based on current government thresholds under the Care Act 2014 and government guidance arguably widens the pool of eligibility to include those who would not have been eligible before but nonetheless would be exposed to energy poverty.

7.2. Finance

7.2.1. Delivery of the HRAVP Policy is funded by a rolling capital programme in the Council's budget: Home Repairs for Vulnerable People. Unspent funds from previous years are carried forward to subsequent years where the funds are committed but works are incomplete at the end of the financial year.

7.2.2. The total approved funding in 2022-23 including carry-forwards is £246,000. An additional £200,000 per annum is included in the capital programme until 2026 which will be subject to further approval as part of the budget setting process.

7.2.3. The number of people that can be assisted through the HRAVP Policy is limited by the budget that is available. A prioritisation system is in place to ensure that priority is given to people in need of emergency assistance; any non-urgent works are deferred, or work is undertaken to identify alternative funding sources.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. The HRAVP Policy and the ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent contribute to the overall vision of the 2021-2025 Corporate Plan to be an open, fairer, greener Cheshire East. It also supports the Council's priority to empower and care about people, and to make Cheshire East a thriving and sustainable place. We are committed to supporting the most vulnerable residents, whilst enabling others to support themselves and lead a prosperous and healthy life and reduce carbon emissions.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. The HRAVP Policy and the ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent will enable the Council to deliver efficient and effective housing services to groups with protected characteristics who are vulnerable, in particular but not limited to older people and people with a disability.

7.5. Human Resources

- 7.5.1. The policies will be administered by Housing officers within existing resources.

7.6. Risk Management

- 7.6.1. The Council must publish a housing renewal policy to be able to administer grants. Publication of the revised HRAVP Policy 2021-2026 and assessment of applications against the policy will ensure that the Council is compliant with this requirement.

7.7. Rural Communities

- 7.7.1. The amended HRAVP Policy and the ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent will widen the help available for residents across all areas of Cheshire East, however the greatest benefit will be felt by rural off-gas communities where heating system costs and energy bills tend to be higher, and the repair or renewal of off-gas boilers is no longer eligible for ECO4.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 7.8.1. The HRAVP Policy and the ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent will provide opportunities for young people to live in suitable housing, and protect the health of children and young people in low-income vulnerable families through improved living conditions.

7.9. Public Health

- 7.9.1. Housing is widely acknowledged to be an important social determinant of health and wellbeing. Living in a cold home has significant, demonstrable direct and indirect health impacts, with strong evidence to show that it is associated with poor health outcomes and an increased risk of morbidity and mortality for all age groups.

- 7.9.2. Cold and damp homes increase the risk and effects of cardiovascular, respiratory and rheumatoid diseases, as well as hypothermia and mental ill health. Groups who are more vulnerable to health problems associated with cold homes include; young children; older people; pregnant women; people with a physical or mental health condition(s); and people with a disability..

- 7.9.3. The HRAVP Policy and the ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent will enable the Council to provide housing services that directly impact on public health. Housing improvements will benefit vulnerable residents' mental and physical wellbeing and reduce demand on health and social care services.

7.9.4. Climate Change

7.9.5. Energy use in homes accounts for 28% of carbon emissions in Cheshire East. The Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and to encourage all businesses, residents and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint. The Council made a further pledge to make Cheshire East a carbon neutral borough by 2045. Providing support to low-income households who otherwise would not be able to afford to reduce their carbon footprint supports this commitment.

7.9.6. We do not consider that providing energy efficient fossil fuel boilers in limited urgent situations will have an adverse effect on the Council's commitment to becoming a carbon neutral borough by 2045.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Karen Whitehead, Housing Standards & Adaptations Manager karen.whitehead@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 686 653
Appendices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix A – Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People Policy 2021-2026 v.2 (2022) • Appendix B – Cheshire East Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent
Background Papers:	ECO4 Guidance: Local Authority Administration

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Home Repairs and Adaptations: Financial Assistance Policy

1 April 2021 – 31 March 2026

Revisions for approval - September 2022

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Revisions:

DATE	PAGE	REVISION
13 September 2022		

Purpose of the Policy

With 80% of the homes that people will be living in by 2050 already built, the condition of existing homes is a critical determinant of health and quality of life for all ages. The coronavirus pandemic has reinforced the importance of good quality homes for our physical and mental wellbeing. Cold, damp, poorly ventilated homes can cause or worsen the health conditions that put people at high risk from the effects of Covid-19. An overcrowded home reduces a household's ability to isolate those at particular risk or displaying symptoms. Spending long periods indoors in poor housing conditions can exacerbate poor mental health. Good housing benefits people's mental and physical wellbeing, enables informal carers to provide care, and underpins older people's ability to live independently, safely and as part of the wider community.

Reducing vacancy rates, improving the quality of the existing housing stock and preserving the built environment all lead to an improvement in quality of place and quality of life, creating attractive, safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods. Bringing empty homes back into use has many benefits, including increasing housing supply without the need to build, reducing carbon emissions associated with the building process, increasing footfall and spending in the local area and improving perceptions of community safety.

The primary responsibility for maintaining and improving housing rests with the owner, however there are occasions where it is necessary to intervene, including where vulnerable people are unable to afford to carry out urgent repairs that are affecting their health and safety, and to support disabled people to overcome functional difficulties created by an unsuitable home environment.

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 removed most of the prescriptive housing grant legislation in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 whilst retaining the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, and introduced a wide ranging discretionary power for local housing authorities to develop different forms of financial assistance to meet local needs.

To provide financial assistance for housing repairs and improvements, the local housing authority must first adopt and publish a policy setting out how it intends to use this general power to award assistance. This Policy sets out the grants and loans that the Council will make available to residents, subject to resources, and builds on our experience of delivering previous schemes for home repairs and adaptations that secure positive outcomes for vulnerable residents.

This Policy details the ways in which the Council will assist people to repair or adapt their homes. These products are in the following formats:

- **Interest free loan:** The Council offers the financial assistance on a repayable basis over a period of no more than ten years (five years for Empty Homes loans), but without any interest or additional premium upon repayment.

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- **Equity share loan:** The Council offers the financial assistance in exchange for a share in the value of the property. There are no regular repayments, and no interest is added to the loan. The loan becomes repayable when the property is sold or transferred, and the repayment will be based on the value of the property. For example, where a property is valued at £100,000 and the person borrows £10,000, the Council takes a 10% stake in the property. When the property is sold, the Council's stake is 10% of the sale price, so if the property is sold for £110,000, the Council receives a repayment of £11,000.
- **Grant:** The Council offers the financial assistance as a grant which is only repaid if any of the repayment conditions are triggered.

The Policy also details how the Council will act as a responsible lender and have regard to the applicant's ability to make repayments before we offer them a loan. As any loans are secured on the property, applicants are strongly advised to seek independent legal and financial advice, and the costs of professional advice can be included in their loan. We have developed two loan repayment options to maximise choice for applicants and to tailor our loan offer to their circumstances.

The Policy will be in operation from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2026, subject to adequate funding being available.

'Healthy Homes' Loan

1. Eligible Applicants

Any individual(s) who has a qualifying owner's interest in the property and is over the age of 18, and has lived in the property for at least 12 consecutive months at the date of application, **and:**

- 1.1 Has insufficient savings to be able to afford to carry out the repairs, **AND**
- 1.2.1 Is in receipt of an income related welfare benefit provided by the Government, **OR**
- 1.2.2 Has reached state retirement pension age.

2. Eligible Properties

- 2.1 The property must be situated in Cheshire East and must be registered at the Land Registry.
- 2.2 The loan will not normally be available where repairs have previously been completed and financed by a loan from the Council under this or previous Policies where the condition relating to future applications has not yet expired.

3. Eligible Works

- 3.1 The following types of works are eligible for assistance:
 - i. Repairs that will make the main structure of the property weather tight. For example, typical repairs that could be considered, based on the severity of the disrepair, include roofing, windows, doors, and preventing damp penetration.
 - ii. Repairs that will eliminate a significant hazard within the living accommodation. Typical repairs that could be considered, based on the severity of the disrepair, include electrics, gas, fire prevention and falls prevention.
 - iii. Measures to reduce the consequences of flooding in areas designated by the Council as at risk of flooding.
- 3.2 The following areas of the home are excluded from being eligible for assistance with repairs: gardens, yards, annexes, garages, sheds, porches and conservatories, except where they form a fundamental part of the living accommodation and are creating a significant hazard to the health and safety of the occupants.

Assistance will not be provided for kitchen or bathroom upgrades, or for decorative or cosmetic works that are not as a result of the assisted repairs.

- 3.3 A loan will not be given where there are other suitable forms of financial assistance available, for example but not limited to energy supplier schemes, or household insurance.
- 3.4 Loans will not be approved retrospectively; any works that have been started or completed prior to a valid loan application will not be considered.
- 3.5 Eligible works will be determined by the Housing service.

4. **Amounts**

- 4.1 The maximum loan amount that will be considered is £15,000, and a loan will not normally be considered for less than £1,000. These thresholds may only be waived at the Council's absolute discretion where no other suitable sources of funding can be identified, and the Council considers that financial hardship has been demonstrated.
- 4.2 Eligible costs that can be included in an application for assistance are:
 - i. Reasonable cost of eligible works and VAT
 - ii. Eligible fees as set out at Appendix C

5. **Application Process**

- 5.1 Applications must be made on the Council's official application form and accompanied by:
 - i. evidence supporting financial eligibility
 - ii. at least two written quotations on contractors' letter headed paper
 - iii. proof of owner's interest
 - iv. permission of all people who have an interest in the property
 - v. a valuation of the property for money lending purposes carried out by a RICS qualified surveyor
 - vi. proof of identity
 - vii. any other documents reasonably required by the Council to process the application.
- 5.2 Before approving a loan application, the Council will have regard to the applicant's ability to repay the loan. The Council will take account of any charges already secured on the property, and any information obtained in the course of its checks which reveal financial difficulties within the last six months. The Council will not normally award a loan where the existing charges registered on the property combined with the loan amount would reduce the available equity in the property to 10% or less of the property value.
- 5.3 Before a loan application is approved, the applicant and the Council must enter into a loan agreement and a legal charge must be registered at the Land

Registry in favour of the Council. The owner(s) must be party to the agreement.

6. **Carrying out and Completion of the Works**

6.1 Details are set out at Appendix D.

7. **Loan Conditions**

7.1 The loan must be secured by way of a legal charge registered at the Land Registry.

7.2 The loan must be repaid by one of the following methods:

- i. Interest-free repayment loan, as set out at Appendix A, or
- ii. Equity share loan, as set out at Appendix B.

7.3 The applicant must live in the property as their only residence.

7.4 A valid policy for buildings insurance enough to reinstate the building must remain in force until the assistance is repaid, with the Council's interest in the property noted on the policy.

7.5 Where an applicant has provided false or misleading information in their loan application or in their request for payment, the approved loan will be withdrawn, and a demand made for repayment of any monies already paid. The Council's interest in the property will not be removed from the Land Registry until all monies have been repaid. The Council reserves the right to apply interest at the Bank of England base rate plus 0.5% which will be charged daily from the 29th day after the demand for repayment is made until the loan is discharged in full.

7.6 The Council may by written notice require the applicant to provide a statement within 21 days showing how the loan conditions are being fulfilled. In the event that the loan conditions are breached, the Council reserves the right to make a demand for repayment of any outstanding monies, and interest at the Bank of England base rate plus 0.5% will be charged daily from the 29th day after the demand for repayment is made until the loan is discharged in full.

7.7 Further applications for financial assistance for repairs to the same property will not be considered under this Policy and subsequent versions of this Policy, for a period of ten years from the certified date of completion, or until the loan is discharged, whichever is the earlier.

7.8 In the event that the applicant seeks to remortgage the property or to secure further charges on the property, the Council will at its absolute discretion consider written requests to allow its charge to be postponed, taking into

account all relevant information and consideration of the risks to the Council's interest.

'Affordable Warmth' Grant

1. Eligible Applicants

1.1 Any individual(s) who has a qualifying owner's interest in the property, and is over the age of 18, and:

1.2.1 ~~Qualifies by way of ill health or low income for funding from another fuel poverty related domestic energy improvement scheme for which they are required to make a financial contribution (for example, but not limited to, Energy Company Obligation (ECO), Green Homes Grant, and any other funding schemes which may become available from time to time), OR~~

~~Has a gross household income of no more than £31,000 and gross household savings of no more than £23,250, OR~~

1.2.2 Is unable to return home from hospital until a working heating system is in place, **OR**

1.2.3 Has an illness that places them as 'clinically extremely vulnerable' to Covid-19 as defined by the NHS.

2. Eligible Properties

2.1 The property must be situated in Cheshire East.

3. Eligible Works

3.1 The following types of work are eligible for assistance:

- i. Heating and/or hot water repairs
- ii. Boiler replacements
- iii. Installation of an appropriate heating system or appliance in an inadequately heated room(s), for example additional radiator, first time central heating system, storage heater or gas fire
- iv. All types of building insulation
- v. Low carbon heating and hot water solutions.

3.2 Grants will not be approved retrospectively; any works that have been started or completed prior to a valid grant application will not be considered.

3.3 Eligible works will be determined by the Strategic Housing service in consultation with a Council-appointed contractor.

4. **Amount of the Grant**

4.1 The maximum grant amount will normally be 75% of the cost of the works, up to a maximum of £2,000. All other potential sources of funding must be exhausted first; the grant may only exceed 75% or £2,000 where the works are needed to enable a person to return home from hospital, or at the Council's absolute discretion where no other suitable sources of funding can be identified, and the Council considers that financial hardship has been demonstrated.

4.2 The maximum amount will include the cost of eligible works and any VAT. A fee in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges schedule can be included as part of the grant, for technical and professional services provided by the Council to facilitate the application process.

5. **Application Process**

5.1 Applications must be made on the Council's official application form and accompanied by

- i. evidence supporting financial or health eligibility
- ii. proof of identity
- iii. one quote provided by a Council-appointed contractor or at least two written quotations on contractors' letter headed paper provided by the applicant
- iv. proof of owner's interest
- v. and any other documents reasonably required by the Council to process the application.

6. **Carrying out and Completion of the Works**

6.1 Details are set out at Appendix D.

7. **Conditions of Assistance**

7.1 Where an applicant has provided false or misleading information in their grant application or in their request for payment, the approved grant will be withdrawn, and a demand made for repayment of any monies already paid.

'Disabled Facilities' Grant

The primary legislation for Disabled Facilities Grants is the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended).

1. Eligible Applicants

- 1.1 Any person with a qualifying owner's, tenant's or occupier's interest in the property who is over the age of 18.

2. Eligible Properties

- 2.1 Dwellings, qualifying houseboats and caravans are eligible for assistance.
- 2.2 The property must be situated in Cheshire East.
- 2.3 The property must be the only or main residence of the disabled person for whom the adaptation is intended.

3. Eligible Works

- 3.1 The works must be necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person.
- 3.2 It must be reasonable and practicable to carry out the works, having regard to the age and condition of the property.
- 3.3 The works must be for at least one of the following purposes:
- a) Facilitating access by the disabled person to and from the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or caravan, or the building in which the dwelling is situated;
 - b) Making the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or caravan, or the building in which the dwelling is situated, safe for the disabled person and other persons residing with them;
 - c) Facilitating access by the disabled person to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
 - d) Facilitating access by the disabled person to, or providing for them, a room used or usable for sleeping;
 - e) Facilitating access by the disabled person to, or providing for them, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating for the disabled person the use of a lavatory;
 - f) Facilitating access by the disabled person to, or providing for them, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating for the disabled person the use of a bath or shower;

- g) Facilitating access by the disabled person to, or providing for them, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating for the disabled person the use of a wash hand basin;
- h) Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled person
- i) Providing or improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled person
- j) Facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the controls or the position of the controls, or providing additional controls
- k) Facilitating access around the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or caravan for the disabled person to enable them to provide care for another person who is normally resident there
- l) Facilitating access to and from the garden for the disabled person
- m) Making access to and from the garden safe for the disabled person
- n) Such other purposes as may be specified by order of the Secretary of State.

3.4 Grants cannot be approved retrospectively; any works that have been started or completed prior to a valid grant application will not be considered.

3.5 Eligible works will be determined by the Strategic Housing service.

3.6 When determining eligible works, regard will be had to value for money and establishing the most cost-effective method of overcoming the disabling environment. The Council will always consider making adaptations within the existing footprint of the property first, and where this is not possible, only then will it consider extending the footprint of the living accommodation, apart from in exceptional circumstances where extending the footprint is the more cost-effective option.

3.7 It is recognised that applicants may wish to carry out adaptations which are not the most cost-effective approach. The Disabled Facilities Grant can be used flexibly to provide the applicant's preferred adaptations where the proposals will meet the needs identified by the Council-appointed Occupational Therapist. In these circumstances, the maximum grant awarded will be restricted to the value of the most cost-effective adaptations and any eligible fees, to the maximum grant specified in paragraph 4.1 below.

4. **Amounts**

4.1 The maximum amount of grant allowed is £50,000. At the time of publication of this Policy, the maximum mandatory grant is £30,000. The Policy provides for an additional discretionary grant of a maximum of £20,000. In the event that the mandatory maximum grant limit be adjusted to an amount exceeding £50,000, the higher limit will apply. The grant may only exceed £50,000 at the Council's absolute discretion where no other suitable sources of funding can

be identified, and the Council considers that financial hardship has been demonstrated.

- 4.2 The additional discretionary grant will not be awarded in conjunction with the use of the flexible Disabled Facilities Grant option outlined at paragraph 3.7, other than in exceptional circumstances where the most cost-effective option would exceed the mandatory maximum grant limit. In these circumstances, the discretionary grant will be capped at the value of the most cost-effective option.
- 4.3 Applicants will be subject to a Test of Resources in accordance with the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 (as amended) to determine whether all or any assistance will be made available. Where the applicant is in receipt of a means-tested benefit or the adaptations is for a disabled child under 16 years of age or a young person in full-time education under 20 years of age, there will be no Test of Resources.
- 4.4 Where applicants are assessed as having to make a financial contribution following a Test of Resources, the amount of grant to be awarded for eligible works will be reduced by an amount equivalent to the assessed contribution.
- 4.5 The maximum amount of grant will include the cost of eligible works, VAT and eligible fees. Eligible fees are detailed at Appendix C.

5. **Application Process**

- 5.1 Applicants must submit a valid application, consisting of:
- i. a completed application, together with evidence of any welfare benefit entitlement, income, savings, shares and capital
 - ii. details of the works to be carried out,
 - iii. two written quotations for each type of work from contractors, unless otherwise directed by the Council,
 - iv. owner's, tenant's, and/or occupier's certificate,
 - v. details of any eligible fees, and
 - vi. proof of ownership and /or written consent of all owners.
- 5.2 The Council will approve or refuse a grant application in writing not later than six months from the date of a valid application. Where a grant application is refused, the Council will provide a written statement of the reasons for refusal, and details of any appeals procedure.

6. **Carrying Out and Completion of the Works**

- 6.1 Details can be found at Appendix D.

7. **Conditions of Assistance**

- 7.1 In accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of grant) General Consent 2008:
- 7.1.1 If the applicant disposes of the property within 10 years of the certified date of completion, and the applicant has a qualifying owner's interest in the property, any grant in excess of £5,000 will become repayable, subject to a maximum amount repayable of £10,000.
- 7.1.2 The Council may, at its discretion, waive any demand for repayment of assistance once it has considered:
- i. the extent to which the grant recipient would suffer financial hardship were they to be required to repay all or any of the grant;
 - ii. whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the grant recipient to take up employment, or to change the location of their employment;
 - iii. whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or wellbeing of the grant recipient or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and
 - iv. whether the disposal is made to enable the grant recipient to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the grant recipient is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the grant recipient is in need by reason of disability or infirmity.
- 7.2 Requests for exemptions to repayment must be made in writing.
- 7.3 The Council reserves the right to remove equipment, such as lifts, when it is no longer required by the disabled person. Where the equipment cannot be reused due to its age or condition the Council may waive its right to recover such equipment.
- 7.4 Where an applicant has provided false or misleading information in their grant application or in their request for payment, the grant approval will be withdrawn, and a demand made for repayment of any monies already paid.

'Urgent Adaptations' Grant

1. Eligible Applicants

- 1.1 Any person with a qualifying owner's, tenant's or occupier's interest in the property who is over the age of 18, AND
 - 1.1.1 Needs urgent adaptations due to a rapid deterioration of function because of a life limiting illness, OR
 - 1.1.2 Needs a ceiling track hoist for safer moving and handling, OR
 - 1.1.3 Is unable to return home from hospital until urgent adaptations are completed.
- 1.2 Applicants will not be subject to any financial assessment.

2. Eligible Properties

- 2.1 Dwellings, qualifying houseboats and caravans are eligible for assistance.
- 2.2 The property must be situated in Cheshire East.
- 2.3 The property must be the only or main residence of the disabled person for whom the adaptation is intended.

3. Eligible Works

- 3.1 The works must be consistent with the purposes for which Disabled Facilities Grants must be given and must be for home adaptations that can be completed quickly to be able to meet an urgent need. Examples of adaptations that can be made quickly include, but are not limited to, stair lifts, wash dry toilets, ceiling track hoists, temporary ramps, and level access showers.
- 3.2 Grants will not be approved retrospectively; any works that have been started or completed prior to a valid grant application will not be considered.
- 3.3 Eligible works will be determined by the Strategic Housing service in consultation with a Council-appointed Occupational Therapist or hospital discharge service.
- 3.4 When determining eligible works, regard will be had to value for money and establishing the most cost-effective method of overcoming the disabling environment. Due to the urgent nature of works defined by the eligibility criteria, adaptations will be limited to the existing footprint of the property; works to extend living accommodation or make significant structural changes

are ineligible for this grant. The Disabled Facilities Grant is available for more extensive works, subject to eligibility.

4. **Amounts**

4.1 The maximum amount of grant allowed is £10,000. Any adaptation(s) that cost more than £10,000 are ineligible for this grant. The Disabled Facilities Grant is available for more extensive works, subject to eligibility. This grant and the Disabled Facilities Grant cannot be used in conjunction with each other for the same work.

4.2 The maximum amount of grant will include the cost of eligible works, VAT and eligible fees. Eligible fees are detailed at Appendix C.

5. **Application Process**

5.1 Applications must be made on the Council's official application form and accompanied by

- i. an Occupational Therapy / hospital referral
- ii. one quote provided by a Council-appointed contractor or at least two written quotations on contractors' letter headed paper provided by the applicant
- iii. proof of identity
- iv. proof of ownership and/or written consent of all owners.

5.2 The Council will approve or refuse a grant application in writing as soon as reasonably practicable. Where a grant application is refused, the Council will provide a written statement of the reasons for refusal, and details of any appeals procedure.

6. **Carrying Out and Completion of the Works**

6.1 Details can be found at Appendix D.

7. **Conditions of Assistance**

7.1 The Council reserves the right to remove equipment, such as lifts, when it is no longer required by the disabled person. Where the equipment cannot be reused due to its age or condition the Council may waive its right to recover such equipment.

7.2 Where an applicant has provided false or misleading information in their grant application or in their request for payment, the grant approval will be withdrawn, and a demand made for repayment of any monies already paid.

'Independent Living' Loan

1. Eligible Applicants

- 1.1 Any individual(s) who has a qualifying owner's interest in the property, and is over the age of 18, and is disabled, or a member of their household is disabled, and has been assessed by a Council-appointed Occupational Therapist as needing adaptations to their home.

2. Eligible Properties

- 2.1 The property must be situated in Cheshire East and be registered at the Land Registry.

3. Eligible Works

- 3.1 Adaptations that meet the purposes specified in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (refer to 'Eligible Works' under Disabled Facilities Grants) are eligible, where:

- i. The applicant is unable to afford their assessed contribution for the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant; or
- ii. The applicant is utilising the flexible Disabled Facilities Grant option but is unable to afford their contribution to their preferred adaptations; or
- iii. The adaptations are needed at a property that is not the main residence of the disabled person, but where the disabled person spends a significant proportion of their time receiving care (for example, in the home of a family member who provides regular respite care or support).

- 3.2 Loans will not be approved retrospectively; any works that have been started or completed prior to a valid loan application will not be considered.

- 3.3 Eligible works will be determined by the Strategic Housing service in consultation with a Council-appointed Occupational Therapist.

4. Amount of Loan

- 4.1 The maximum loan amount that will be considered is £15,000, and a loan will not normally be considered for less than £1,000. All other potential sources of funding must be exhausted first; these thresholds may only be waived at the Council's absolute discretion where no other suitable sources of funding can be identified, and the Council considers that financial hardship has been demonstrated using its standardised evaluation.

- 4.2 Eligible fees that may be included as part of the application for assistance are:

- i. Legal fees and disbursements incurred because of setting up the loan
- ii. Financial advice
- iii. Lenders' fees for registering a second charge

5. **Application Process**

5.1 Applications must be made on the Council's official application form and accompanied by:

- i. evidence supporting financial eligibility
- ii. at least two written quotations on contractors' letter headed paper
- iii. proof of owner's interest
- iv. permission of all people who have an interest in the property
- v. a valuation of the property for money lending purposes carried out by a RICS qualified surveyor
- vi. proof of identity
- vii. any other documents reasonably required by the Council to process the application.

5.2 Before approving a loan application, the Council will have regard to the applicant's ability to repay the loan. The Council will take account of any charges already secured on the property, and any information obtained in the course of its checks which reveal financial difficulties within the last six months. The Council will not normally award a loan where the existing charges registered on the property combined with the loan amount would reduce the available equity in the property to 10% or less of the property value.

5.3 Before a loan application is approved, the applicant and the Council must enter into a loan agreement and a legal charge must be registered at the Land Registry in favour of the Council.

6. **Carrying out and Completion of Works**

6.1 Details are set out at Appendix D.

7. **Loan Conditions**

7. **Loan Conditions**

7.1 The loan must be secured by way of a legal charge registered at the Land Registry.

7.2 The loan must be repaid by one of the following methods:

- i. Interest-free repayment loan, as set out at Appendix A, or
- ii. Equity share loan, as set out at Appendix B.

7.3 The applicant must live in the property as their only residence.

- 7.4 A valid policy for buildings insurance enough to reinstate the building must remain in force until the assistance is repaid, with the Council's interest in the property noted on the policy.
- 7.5 Where an applicant has provided false or misleading information in their loan application or in their request for payment, the approved loan will be withdrawn, and a demand made for repayment of any monies already paid. The Council's interest in the property will not be removed from the Land Registry until all monies have been repaid. The Council reserves the right to apply interest at the Bank of England base rate plus 0.5% which will be charged daily from the 29th day after the demand for repayment is made until the loan is discharged in full.
- 7.6 The Council may by written notice require the applicant to provide a statement within 21 days showing how the loan conditions are being fulfilled. In the event that the loan conditions are breached, the Council reserves the right to make a demand for repayment of any outstanding monies, and interest at the Bank of England base rate plus 0.5% will be charged daily from the 29th day after the demand for repayment is made until the loan is discharged in full.
- 7.7 Further applications for financial assistance for repairs to the same property will not be considered under this Policy and subsequent versions of this Policy, for a period of ten years from the certified date of completion, or until the loan is discharged, whichever is the earlier.
- 7.8 In the event that the applicant seeks to remortgage the property or to secure further charges on the property, the Council will at its absolute discretion consider written requests to allow its charge to be postponed, taking into account all relevant information and consideration of the risks to the Council's interest.

'Disability Relocation' Grant

1. Eligible Applicants

- 1.1 Any individual(s) who is over the age of 18, and is disabled, or a member of their household is disabled, and has been assessed by a Council-appointed Occupational Therapist as needing adaptations to their home, **and**
- 1.2 Is assessed as being unable to afford the full cost of the eligible relocation expenses. The Test of Resources set out in the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 (as amended) will be used to assess whether the applicant is able to afford to afford the full cost of the eligible relocation expenses.

2. Eligible Properties

- 2.1 The current property (that is, the property that the disabled person is moving from) must be situated in Cheshire East, **and**
 - 2.2.1 It must not be reasonable or practicable to adapt the current property, **or**
 - 2.2.2 The landlord has refused to give permission to adapt the property, **or**
 - 2.2.3 The property that the disabled person intends to move to offers a better suited solution for the disabled person, and the solution offers better value for money for the Council.
- 2.3 The new property must, in the reasonable opinion of the Strategic Housing service in conjunction with a Council-appointed Occupational Therapist, be appropriate to the needs of the disabled person, and any necessary adaptations to the new property must be reasonable and practicable.
- 2.4 The new property must be intended to be the only or main residence of the disabled person. There are no restrictions on the tenure or location of the new property.

3. Eligible Expenses

- 3.1 Assistance will be given towards reasonable removal costs associated with moving home, including:
 - i. Professional removal costs
 - ii. Disconnection and reconnection of household appliances
 - iii. Removal and reinstallation of disability equipment
- 3.2 Expenses that have been incurred prior to the application for assistance will not be considered.

3.3 Eligible expenses will be determined by the Strategic Housing service.

4. **Amounts**

4.1 The maximum grant amount will normally be £2,000. All other potential sources of funding must be exhausted first; the grant may only exceed £2,000 where no other sources of funding can be identified, and the applicant demonstrates financial hardship.

5. **Application Process**

5.1 Applications must be made on the Council's official application form and accompanied by

- i. an Occupational Therapy referral
- ii. proof of identity
- iii. a minimum of one written quotation on contractors' letter headed paper

5.2 The Council will approve or refuse a grant application in writing as soon as reasonably practicable. Where a grant application is refused, the Council will provide a written statement of the reasons for refusal, and details of any appeals procedure.

6. **Carrying out and Completion of Works**

6.1 Details can be found at Appendix D.

7. **Grant Conditions**

7.1 Where an applicant has provided false or misleading information in their grant application or in their request for payment, the approved grant will be withdrawn, and a demand made for repayment of any monies already paid.

7.2 Further applications for a disability relocation grant will not be considered from the same applicant under this Policy and subsequent versions of this Policy, except where there has been a change in the disabled person's or their carer's needs and the property cannot be adapted to meet those needs, or the needs of another disabled person residing at the property cannot be met within the property.

'Empty Homes' Loan

1. Eligible Applicants

- 1.1 Any individual(s) who has a qualifying owner's interest in the property and is over the age of 18.
- 1.2 The purposes for which an Empty Homes Loan may be given are:
 - i. For an owner of an empty home who intends to let the property on a tenancy that lasts for a minimum period of twelve months
 - ii. For an owner of an empty home who has entered, or intends to enter, into a lease agreement that lasts for at least the term of the loan agreement with a property management company or Registered Provider of social housing
 - iii. For an owner of empty home who intends to reoccupy the property as their main home

2. Eligible Properties

- 2.1 The property must be situated in Cheshire East and must be registered at the Land Registry.
- 2.2 The loan will not be available where repairs have previously been completed and financed by a loan from the Council under this or previous Policies where the condition relating to future applications has not yet expired.
- 2.3 The property must have been unoccupied for at least twelve consecutive months prior to the date of application.

3. Eligible Works

- 3.1 Works that will bring the property up to an acceptable living standard ready for occupancy are eligible.
- 3.2 The following areas of the home are excluded from being eligible for assistance with repairs: gardens, yards, annexes, garages, sheds, porches and conservatories, except where they form a fundamental part of the living accommodation.
- 3.3 A loan will not be given where there are other suitable forms of financial assistance available, for example but not limited to energy supplier schemes, or household insurance.
- 3.4 Loans will not be approved retrospectively; any works that have been started or completed prior to a valid loan application will not be considered.

3.5 Eligible works will be determined by the Housing service.

4. **Amounts**

4.1 The maximum loan amount that will be considered is £20,000, and a loan will not normally be considered for less than £1,000. All other potential sources of funding must be exhausted first; these thresholds may only be waived at the Council's absolute discretion where no other suitable sources of funding can be identified, and the Council considers that financial hardship has been demonstrated using its standardised evaluation.

4.2 Eligible costs that can be included in an application for assistance are:

- i. Reasonable cost of eligible works and VAT
- ii. Eligible fees, as detailed at Appendix C

5. **Application Process**

5.1 Applications must be made on the Council's official application form and accompanied by:

- i. at least two written quotations on contractors' letter headed paper
- ii. proof of owner's interest
- iii. permission of all people who have an interest in the property
- iv. a valuation of the property for money lending purposes carried out by a RICS qualified surveyor
- v. proof of identity
- vi. any other documents reasonably required by the Council to process the application.

5.2 Before approving a loan application, the Council will have regard to the applicant's ability to repay the loan. The Council will take account of any charges already secured on the property, and any information obtained in the course of its checks which reveal financial difficulties within the last six months. The Council will not normally award a loan where the existing charges registered on the property combined with the loan amount would reduce the available equity in the property to 10% or less of the property value.

5.3 Before a loan application is approved, the applicant and the Council must enter into a loan agreement and a legal charge must be registered at the Land Registry in favour of the Council.

6. **Carrying out and Completion of the Works**

6.1 Details can be found at Appendix D.

7. **Loan Conditions:**

- 7.1 The loan must be secured by way of a legal charge recorded at the Land Registry.
- 7.2 The loan will be provided as an interest-free repayment loan over a maximum term of five years as set out at Appendix A.
- 7.3 The property must be occupied by a tenant and remain available to let to tenants throughout the term of the loan. There must not be any restrictions that prevents a person in receipt of welfare benefits occupying the property.
- 7.4 A valid policy for buildings insurance sufficient to reinstate the building must remain in force until the assistance is repaid, with the Council's interest in the property noted on the policy.
- 7.5 Where an applicant has provided false or misleading information in their application for assistance or in their request for payment, the approval of assistance will be withdrawn and a demand made for repayment of any monies already paid. The Council reserves the right to apply interest at the Bank of England base rate plus 0.5% which will be charged daily from the 29th day after the demand for repayment is made until the loan is discharged in full.
- 7.6 The Council may by written notice require the applicant to provide a statement within 21 days showing how the loan conditions are being fulfilled. In the event that the loan conditions are breached, the Council reserves the right to make a demand for repayment of any outstanding monies, and interest at the Bank of England base rate plus 0.5% will be charged daily from the 29th day after the demand for repayment is made until the loan is discharged in full. The Council's interest in the property will not be removed from the Land Registry until all monies have been repaid.
- 7.7 Further applications for financial assistance for repairs to the same property will not be considered under this Policy and subsequent versions of this Policy, for a period of ten years from the certified date of completion.
- 7.8 The Council will normally only approve a maximum of three applications for Empty Homes Assistance from an applicant in any calendar year. This may only be waived where the applicant can demonstrate that no other suitable funding sources are available.
- 7.9 In the event that the applicant seeks to remortgage the property or to secure further charges on the property, the Council will at its absolute discretion consider written requests to allow its charge to be postponed, taking into account all relevant information and consideration of the risks to the Council's interest.

'Targeted Regeneration' Grant

1. Eligible Applicants

Any individual(s) who has a qualifying owner's interest in a property and is over the age of 18, who is:

- 1.1 An owner-occupier; **OR**
- 1.2 A private landlord; OR
- 1.3 An owner of a property that has been unoccupied for at least six months.

2. Eligible Properties

- 2.1 From time to time the Council may secure or allocate funding and designate a geographic area within Cheshire East that is eligible for a scheme of housing improvement or regeneration works. Residential properties within a designated area will be eligible for assistance.

3. Eligible Works

- 3.1 The following types of works are eligible for assistance:
 - i. Repairs that will make the main structure of the property weather tight. For example, typical repairs that could be considered, based on the severity of the disrepair, include roofing, windows, doors, and preventing damp penetration.
 - ii. Repairs that will improve the external appearance of the property. For example, fascias, gutters, downspouts, boundary walls or landscaping improvements that are sympathetic to the local heritage and street scene
 - iii. Measures that will improve the energy efficiency of the property. For example, loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, room in roof insulation, solid wall insulation, low carbon heating systems
- 3.2 Grants will not be approved retrospectively; any works that have been started or completed prior to a valid grant application will not be considered.
- 3.3 Eligible works will be determined by the Housing service.

4. Amounts

- 4.1 ~~The maximum grant will be 70% of the cost of the works, up to a maximum of £10,000. Applicants will be expected to make a minimum of 30% contribution.~~
- 4.2 ~~The maximum grant will be increased to £15,000 for the following applicants:~~

4.2.1 ~~Is in receipt of an income related welfare benefit provided by the Government,~~
OR

4.2.2 ~~Has reached state retirement pension age and has insufficient savings to be able to afford to carry out the repairs.~~

The grant amount will be determined and published in accordance with the individual regeneration scheme rules, terms and conditions that are in force at the time.

4.3 Eligible costs that can be included in an application for assistance are:

- iii. Reasonable cost of eligible works and VAT
- iv. Eligible fees as set out at Appendix C

5. **Application Process**

5.1 Applications must be made on the Council's official application form and accompanied by:

- i. at least one form of identification
- ii. evidence supporting financial eligibility ~~(for 100% grants of up to £15,000)~~
- iii. at least two written quotations on contractors' letter headed paper
- iv. proof of owner's interest
- v. permission of all people who also have an owner's interest
- vi. any other documents reasonably required by the Council to process the application.

6. **Carrying out and Completion of the Works**

6.1 Details are set out at Appendix D.

7. **Grant Conditions**

7.1 The applicant must enter into a written Agreement with the Council that sets out the terms and conditions of the grant.

7.2 If the applicant disposes of the property within 5 years of the certified date of completion, the full grant will become repayable.

7.3 Where an applicant has provided false or misleading information in their grant application or in their request for payment, the approved grant will be withdrawn, and a demand made for repayment of any monies already paid. The Council reserves the right to apply interest at the Bank of England base rate plus 0.5% which will be charged daily from the 29th day after the demand for repayment is made until the loan is discharged in full.

- 7.4 Further applications for financial assistance for repairs to the same property will not be considered under this Policy and subsequent versions of this Policy, for a period of ten years from the certified date of completion.

Applications for assistance falling outside of this Policy

All grant and loan applications will be considered against the published criteria. If the application does not meet the criteria, the Council will inform the applicant in writing of the reason why their application is being refused.

Where an applicant is refused assistance and they wish to appeal against the decision, they should appeal in writing to the Council within 28 days of the date of refusal.

It is recognised that there may be situations where the refusal of assistance would disproportionately disadvantage the applicant. In these circumstances, the Council may waive or alter some or all of the eligibility criteria, minimum or maximum amounts, or conditions of assistance based on the individual circumstances, and approve the application for assistance.

Transitional Arrangements

From 1st April 2021, all new applications for assistance will be considered against the criteria set out within this Policy.

All applications for assistance approved under the Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People: Financial Assistance Policy 2017 will continue to be valid in accordance with the specific conditions of assistance contained within that Policy.

All valid applications received on or before 31st March 2021 under the Home Repairs and Adaptations for Vulnerable People: Financial Assistance Policy 2017 but not yet approved at 1st April 2021 will be processed in accordance with that Policy, except where the applicant requests that their application is assessed in accordance with this replacement Policy.

Appendix A

Interest Free Repayment Loans

1. Loans are offered as secured loans. The loan is secured by way of a legal charge registered at the Land Registry, until such time that the loan is repaid in full.
2. All joint owners and, where applicable, anyone with a legal interest in the property must give their consent to the works to be carried out and the registration of a legal charge.
3. The Council may request a written valuation of the property, carried out by a RICS qualified surveyor, to determine whether there is enough equity for its interest in the property to be secure.
4. The applicant must make monthly repayments of the loan in accordance with an agreed schedule. We will calculate the monthly payment so that the loan is repaid to us by the end of the term of the loan. The term of the loan will not exceed ten years (five years in the case of an Empty Homes loan).
5. Applicants can repay the loan early at any time without penalty.
6. We may withdraw the offer at any time before we make the loan for any of the following reasons:
 - a. The discovery of a defect in the title to the property
 - b. The deterioration of the applicant's financial position
 - c. The supply of false information in connection with the applicant's loan application
7. If the applicant experiences financial difficulty and has problems maintaining the repayments schedule at any time, the Council will, having regard to the applicant's financial circumstances, consider alternative payment options including:
 - a. Recalculating monthly payments to include any arrears
 - b. Extending the period of the loan beyond the maximum loan term of ten years
 - c. Terminating the interest free repayment loan and offering the outstanding balance as an equity share loan
8. The loan will become immediately repayable in the following circumstances:
 - a. Upon sale or transfer of the property
 - b. If the property is no longer the main residence of the applicant
 - c. In the event of a successful insurance claim related to the eligible works
 - d. Upon death of the applicant (or where there is more than one applicant, the death of the last surviving applicant).
 - e. In the event of a breach of a loan condition.

Illustration (example only)

Amount borrowed:	24 monthly repayments	60 monthly repayments	84 monthly repayments	120 monthly repayments	Total repaid:
£1,000	41.67	16.67	11.90	8.33	£1,000
£2,000	83.33	33.33	23.81	16.67	£2,000
£5,000	208.33	83.33	59.52	41.67	£5,000
£10,000	416.67	166.67	119.05	83.33	£10,000

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Appendix B

Equity Share Loans

1. Loans are offered as secured loans. The loan is secured by way of a legal charge registered at the Land Registry.
2. All joint owners and, where applicable, anyone with a legal interest in the property must give their consent to the works to be carried out and the registration of a legal charge.
3. The Council will request a written valuation of the property suitable for money lending purposes carried out by a RICS qualified surveyor to determine the percentage share and whether there is enough equity for its interest in the property to be secure.
4. The principle amount borrowed (the loan) is secured as a percentage share in the property. The percentage share is calculated using the amount of the loan, and the value of the property.
5. The redemption value of the loan will be calculated based on the percentage share of the value of the property at the point of sale. If, at the time of redemption of the loan, the property value is less than when the loan was approved, the repayment amount will be less than the amount borrowed.
6. Applicants can repay the loan early at any time. A written valuation will be necessary to determine the repayment amount.
7. We may withdraw the offer at any time before we make the loan for any of the following reasons:
 - a. The discovery of a defect in the title to the property
 - b. The deterioration of the applicant's financial position
 - c. The supply of false information in connection with the applicant's loan application
8. The loan will become immediately repayable in the following circumstances:
 - a. Upon sale or transfer of the property
 - b. If the property is no longer the main residence of the applicant
 - c. In the event of a successful insurance claim related to the eligible works
 - d. Upon death of the applicant (or where there is more than one applicant, the death of the last surviving applicant)
 - e. In the event of a breach of a loan condition.

Illustration (example only)

	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Amount borrowed	£10,000	£7,000	£5,000
Value of property at date of loan offer	£100,000	£187,000	£150,000
Council's percentage share	10%	3.74%	3.33%
Value of property at date of repayment	£120,000	£200,000	£145,000
Amount repayable	£12,000	£7,480	£4,828.50

Appendix C

Preliminary and Ancillary services and charges

Disabled Facilities Grants

- Confirmation that an applicant has an owner's interest in the property
- Specialist, technical and/or structural surveys
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings
- Preparation of schedules of the relevant works
- Assistance in completing forms
- Advice on financing the cost of the relevant works which are not met by the Council's assistance
- Applications for building regulations approval or planning permission (including the application fee and the preparation of related documents)
- Obtaining estimates for the relevant works
- Advice on contracts
- Consideration of tenders
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Disconnection and reconnection of electricity, gas, water or drainage utilities where this is made necessary by the relevant works (but not charges arising from non-payment of bills)
- Payment of contractors
- Services and charges of an occupational therapist in relation to the relevant works

Healthy Homes, Independent Living and Empty Homes Loans

- i. Specialist, technical and/or structural reports that are required by the Council
- ii. Building Control fees for eligible works
- iii. Legal fees and disbursements incurred as a result of setting up the loan
- iv. Valuation fees
- v. Financial advice
- vi. Lenders' fees for registering a second charge
- vii. A fee in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges schedule will be included as part of the loan, for technical and professional services provided by the Council to facilitate the application process.

Affordable Warmth, Urgent Adaptations and Targeted Regeneration Grants

- i. Specialist, technical and/or structural reports that are required by the Council
- ii. Building Control fees for eligible works
- iii. A fee in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges schedule will be included as part of the grant, for technical and professional services provided by the Council to facilitate the application process.

Appendix D

Carrying out and Completion of Works

- 1 Works must be carried out by a contractor whose quotation was accepted as part of the grant or loan application. Any request to change the contractor must be made in writing. Consent will not be unreasonably withheld by the Council.
- 2 The timescales for the different grants and loans are set out below:

Grant/Loan	Work must be started by no later than -	Works must be completed by no later than -
Healthy Homes Loan	3 months from the date of approval	6 months from the date of approval
Affordable Warmth Grant	1 month from the date of approval	2 months from the date of approval
Disabled Facilities Grant	12 months from the date of approval	15 months from the date of approval
Urgent Adaptations Grant	1 month from the date of approval	2 months from the date of approval
Independent Living Loan	12 months from the date of approval	12 months from the date of approval
Disability Relocation Grant	1 month from the date of approval	1 month from the date of approval
Empty Homes Loan	3 months from the date of approval	6 months from the date of approval
Targeted Regeneration Grant	3 months from the date of approval	6 months from the date of approval

Requests for additional time to start or complete the works must be made in writing before the end of the relevant period. Consent will not be unreasonably withheld by the Council. If the timescales are not adhered to, the Council reserves the right to cancel the grant or loan approval.

- 3 In the event of unforeseen work or an increase in costs arising during the works the amount of the grant or loan may be increased at the discretion of the Council. The minimum amount of additional loan that will be considered is £200. The Council will only approve the request where the combined sum of the approved grant or loan with the additional request do not exceed the relevant maximum permitted grant or loan. Where the approved assistance is a loan, the applicant and the Council must enter into a revised loan agreement. Additional fees will be incurred for the registration of an amended legal charge.

- 4 Payment of assistance will be only be made where:
 - i. The eligible works have been completed in accordance with any statutory requirements and/or the Council's specification, and to the reasonable satisfaction of an appointed Strategic Housing officer, and
 - ii. The Council's standard payment request form has been completed, and
 - iii. The Council has received a valid invoice or receipt for the works. An invoice or receipt will not be considered valid where it is issued by a company that the applicant or a member of their family is a proprietor of.
- 5 Requests for interim payments will be considered. The value of interim payments will not exceed the value of the works completed and will not exceed 90% of the total value of eligible works that have been approved.
- 6 Requests for advance payments to make deposits for materials will not normally be considered and will only be allowed where the applicant demonstrates financial hardship.
- 7 Where requests are received for an increase to the grant or loan for unforeseen works, the Council will only approve the request where the combined sum of the approved grant or loan with the additional request do not exceed the relevant maximum permitted grant or loan. Where the approved assistance is a loan, the applicant and the Council must enter into a revised loan agreement.
- 8 In the event of a dispute between the applicant and the contractor about the satisfactory completion of works, the Council reserves the right to pay the grant or loan to the applicant or contractor if the works have been carried out to the satisfaction of a Strategic Housing officer.

Contact details

This Policy is operated by the Housing Standards and Adaptations team, part of the Strategic Housing service:

By telephone: 0300 123 5017 Option 4

By email: privatehousing@cheshireeast.gov.uk

By post: (Floor 1, Delamere House), c/o Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 2BJ

Or visit our website: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/homerepairs

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Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent

Publication Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Version: V.1

Published at: www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/helpwithheating

This statement sets out Cheshire East Council's flexible eligibility criteria for the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) scheme from April 2022 – March 2026.

The ECO4 scheme will focus on supporting low income and vulnerable households. The scheme will improve the least energy efficient homes helping to meet the Government's fuel poverty and net zero commitments.

The flexible approach for Local Authorities (LAs) to identifying fuel poor and vulnerable households who may benefit from heating and energy saving measures is referred to as "ECO4 Flex".

The Council welcomes the introduction of the ECO4 Flex eligibility routes as it helps the Council achieve its plans to improve the homes of those in fuel poverty or vulnerable to the cold.

The Council is publishing this Statement of Intent (SoI) on **XX/XX/XXXX** to confirm that each of the households declared will adhere to at least one of the four available routes outlined below:

Route 1: SAP bands D-G households with an income less than £31,000. This cap applies irrespective of the property size, composition, or region.

Route 2: SAP bands E-G households that meet a combination of two of the following proxies:

<p>Proxy 1) Homes in England in Lower-layer Super Output Area 1-3 (LSOA)¹, or homes in Welsh provision LSOA 1-3 on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019², or the Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2020, published by the Scottish Government³</p>
<p>Proxy 2) Householders receiving a Council Tax rebate (rebates based on low income only, excludes single person rebates).</p>
<p>Proxy 3) Householders vulnerable to living in a cold home as identified in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidance. Only one from the list can be used, excludes the proxy 'low income'.</p>
<p>Proxy 4) A householder receiving free school meals due to low-income.</p>
<p>Proxy 5) A householder supported by a LA run scheme, that has been named and described by the LA as supporting low income and vulnerable households for the purposes of NICE Guideline.</p>
<p>Proxy 6) A household referred to the LA for support by their energy supplier or Citizen's Advice or Citizen's Advice Scotland, because they have been identified as struggling to pay their electricity and gas bills.</p>

Route 3: SAP bands D-G households that have been identified by their doctor or GP as low-income and vulnerable, with an occupant whose health conditions may be impacted further by living in a cold home. These health conditions may be cardiovascular, respiratory, immunosuppressed, or limited mobility related.

This is because the Council has identified a positive correlation between households who suffer from long-term health conditions and living off a low-income, with living in poorly insulated homes.

Route 4: SAP band D-G households that are referred under Route 4: Bespoke Targeting. Suppliers and LAs can submit an application to BEIS where they have identified a low income and vulnerable household, who are not already eligible under the existing routes.

¹ [The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

² [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(full Index update with ranks\): 2019 | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales)

³ [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Declaration and evidence check confirmation

All potentially eligible households should apply through Cheshire East Council or an approved ECO installers to ensure that they can either benefit from the scheme or be assessed for eligibility under any other relevant programme.

The Service below will be responsible for checking and verifying declarations and associated evidence submitted on behalf of the local authority:

Strategic Housing – Sustainable Warmth team

Telephone: 0300 123 5017 option 4

Email: warm@cheshireeast.gov.uk

CEO or dedicated responsible person mandatory signature

Cheshire East Council will administer the scheme according to BEIS' ECO4 Order and will identify eligible households via Ofgem's application process. The CEO of the Council will oversee the process of identifying eligible households under ECO4 Flex.

The eligibility information will be stored securely in line with the Council's data protection policy, Information Commissioner's Office Data Sharing Code, and BEIS guidance.

Signature:

Name: Peter Skates

Job Title: Director of Growth and Enterprise

Date of signature: XX/XX/XXXX

For any general enquires relating to this SoI, please contact warm@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

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Working for a brighter future together

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	13 September 2022
Report Title:	Rural Action Plan
Report of:	Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Report Reference No:	EG/14/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** Following a report to the Economy and Growth Committee on 16th September 2021, Committee approved the preparation of a Rural Action Plan to cover the period 2022/23 to 2025/26, the workstreams to be addressed, and the setting up of a Member Advisory Panel, to provide guidance on the scope and priorities within the workstreams and drafting of the Rural Action Plan.
- 1.2.** The report summarises the approach and describes the priorities outlined in the Plan.
- 1.3.** The Rural Action Plan sets out an approach to building a strong and resilient rural economy with strong, supportive rural places and communities. It aligns with the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25:
 - **Open** – Through its contribution to the economy of Cheshire East, the rural area supports a sustainable financial future for the council.
 - **Fair** – The economy in rural areas supports the wellbeing of our communities.
 - **Green** – The economy in rural areas contributes to Cheshire East being 'A thriving and sustainable place', particularly in relation to it being a great place for people to live, work and visit, contributing to thriving urban and rural economies, the environment, and our quality of place as well as thriving and active rural communities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To approve and adopt the Rural Action Plan 2022/23 -2025/26

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. Cheshire East is defined under the Rural Services Network SPARSE rural classification as 'predominantly rural', while the Defra Rural Classification for the Borough is 'urban with significant rural'.
- 3.2. The Rural Action Plan sets out measures that help to achieve the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan in a predominantly rural area. The Plan supports the aim of being a thriving and sustainable place and priorities such as providing a great place for people to live, work and visit, reducing the impact on our environment and supporting thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all. There is a specific action in the Corporate Plan to deliver a Rural Action Plan to support *Thriving and active rural communities*.
- 3.3. The Rural Action Plan relates to the whole borough and deals with a range of matters. By the nature of rural affairs, the action plan needs to be able to reflect changes in national policies and local priorities. The Plan sets out the actions that the Council is taking to address issues and opportunities for Cheshire East from a rural perspective. It builds on the work of the Rural Action Plan 2018/19-2021/22.
- 3.4. The economy in rural areas does not sit in isolation from other factors: Planning, affordable housing, public transport, access to health facilities, education, older people's services, fuel poverty, viable local services, character/quality of environment and community engagement are all part of an associated matrix.
- 3.5. Therefore, while the primary focus is on the economy in rural areas, input was sought from a range of services with the intention of developing a baseline from which the refreshed plan could be developed. The previous Action Plan was reviewed to identify progress against the actions identified for the period to 2022. Based on that review, feedback from the Member Advisory group and identification of significant rural issues, opportunities and priorities, the Plan was 'refreshed' to cover the next three-year period of 2022/23 – 2025/26.
- 3.6. While the core priorities of the original plan remained valid, it was assumed that the emphasis and detail of actions would need to consider economic recovery from the pandemic, the impact of changes due to Brexit (eg changes to agricultural payments and a move to Environmental Land Management schemes) and climate change policy, where relevant.

- 3.7. In addition, since the original Rural Action Plan, the Council has a new Corporate Plan for the period 2021-2025, an Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan. Specifically, the Corporate Plan identifies the need for 'Thriving and active rural communities', and the need for a Rural action plan, a digital connectivity programme and, as part of bus review, to deliver improved accessibility to services and employment opportunities.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. There are no other options to consider other than a decision not to proceed in the review and refresh of the Rural Action Plan.

5. Background

- 5.1. 148,400 people, nearly two fifths of Cheshire East's total population (386,700), live in rural areas. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that delivery of our corporate outcomes meet the needs of rural communities and continue to support Cheshire East's quality of place. Cheshire East is a member of the Rural Services Network defined under its SPARSE rural classification as a Council considered predominantly rural, while the Defra Rural Classification for the Borough is 'urban with significant rural'.
- 5.2. A Rural Action Plan was first adopted by Cheshire East Council in January 2019 with the aim of helping to inform strategic choices and identify priorities regarding the rural area, based on the Council's strategies and plans at that time.
- 5.3. The overall aim of the plan is to help inform plans as part of meeting the Council's strategic outcomes, to support the economy in rural areas and to identify priorities regarding the rural area. This is based on the Council's existing strategies and plans along with the related evidence base. It does not replace those strategies and plans, but rather provides a rural focus on them to help decision makers ensure that the rural community, economy, and environment are understood and to help to co-ordinate actions.
- 5.4. Under the guidance of a Member Advisory Group appointed by the economy and Growth Committee, officers representing services across the Council have drawn on research, external advice, and service experience to identify a number of key priorities and suggested actions across a number of strategic issues. Several Council strategies and plans that relate to rural priorities are identified and their contribution considered against four themes of connectivity, economy, community (life chances and choices) and environment. As stated previously, the intention is to enable Council strategies to have a rural focus to help decision makers ensure that the rural dimensions are understood and to help to co-ordinate actions. As such, responsibility for delivery of actions relates to services across the Council, with the Rural Action Plan collating those that have a particular bearing on the rural area and its economic performance.

5.5. The focus of the current Plan is aimed at how the Council could help to build a strong and resilient rural economy with strong, supportive rural places and communities. Actions relate to:

- Digital Connectivity: Broadband and mobile
- Access for residents, business, and visitors
- Rural Housing
- Strong, supportive rural places and communities
- Planning for a green and sustainable place
- Visitor and cultural economy
- Rural based businesses

5.6. The overriding key priorities identified in the original action plan remain largely relevant and appropriate. The only exception was ‘Neighbourhood Planning’, which, because the initial emphasis on developing new plans has been largely met, is not addressed as a separate section, being covered within ‘Planning for a green and sustainable place’ instead.

5.7. The plan sets out actions that relate to the Council’s plans and strategies that are in place or will commence during the period of the Rural Action Plan. These reflect the following strategic priorities:

5.8. Digital Connectivity: Broadband and mobile

5.9. Digital and mobile connectivity is essential to a successful economy in rural areas, particularly taking account of the fact that self-employment is both higher than in urban areas and higher than the national average and where the Covid pandemic has led to a greater shift towards home or hybrid working. However, rural businesses and communities can often be harder or more expensive to reach than their urban counterparts. The Council continues to address these issues through a sub-regional ‘Connecting Cheshire’ programme, ensuring that the area can benefit from national funding programmes to improve connectivity. The focus of Government broadband infrastructure support is via BDUK (Building Digital UK).

5.10. Alongside this, the Council has adopted a Digital strategy to guide digital approaches to service transformation to benefit customers, residents, businesses, rural communities, and community sectors. It recognises that there are still challenges for connectivity in rural areas, but recognises that these are increasingly important to address, not only for the economy, but for healthcare and the delivery of a range of other services. The overarching Digital Strategy will be supported with detailed plans a series of measures against which our performance can be assessed.

5.11. Access for residents, business and visitors

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) was adopted in 2019 and covers the whole borough. The LTP has a key role to play in supporting the economy of the borough. It also recognises that the LTP supports the provision of high quality, attractive environments which encourage walking, cycling, and public transport whilst also effectively mitigating potential negative impacts of transport infrastructure. It also has a role to play in encouraging sustainable connectivity between our urban centres and their surrounding rural settings. This is due to be refreshed in 2024, taking account of new Government guidance to be published by the end of 2022.

- 5.12.** The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011 -26 (ROWIP) is closely integrated with the LTP. The Public Rights of Way (PROW) service is responsible for managing the borough's 1952km network of public rights of way. This is a primarily rural network and includes a number of medium or long-distance routes which are entirely within or pass-through Cheshire East on its public rights of way network.

5.13. Rural Housing

- 5.14.** The Council's priorities are guided by its Housing strategy, which will be renewed in 2023. Current priorities for rural housing include increasing the number of good-quality, mixed tenure, smaller type family homes, maintaining a housing delivery enabling role in town centres, villages and neighbourhoods, increasing provision of affordable housing where a need has been identified through working with parish councils and local communities and improving the housing offer for an ageing population.

- 5.15.** The Council has also adopted planning policies that underpin approaches to housing issues in the rural area including rural exception sites. Opportunities to provide affordable housing to enable local residents to remain living within their communities will be considered as part of the Housing strategy to be developed in 2023/24.

5.16. Strong, supportive rural places and communities

- 5.17** Cheshire East Council uses an asset-based approach to bring together and build upon our assets (organisations, places/buildings, knowledge, and enthusiasm) in our communities. Cheshire East Council will support and engage with communities including the voluntary, community and faith sector and the many active volunteer-based partnerships. This is articulated through the Connected Communities Strategy which covers the period to 2025.

5.17. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) will be undertaken to understand variation in the current experience of poverty across Cheshire East to consider likely future needs, while will include those of the rural areas.

5.18. In education there will be a focus on ensuring that appropriate support is available to smaller and rural schools through training and addressing relevant governance options, including Trust status.

5.19. Family hubs will be developed for parents/carers of children of all ages, to ensure that they can access support across a range of services using existing community venues. Services within the family hub network will also be accessible in a number of other ways including virtual, physical, and via outreach in rural areas.

5.20. Planning for a green and sustainable place

5.21. During the period of this Rural Action Plan important measures will be taken in respect of the Local Plan. The Sites Allocation Policy Document of the current Local Plan Strategy will be adopted, and the review of the Local Plan will commence in advance of adoption for the following period from 2026. There are significant changes planned to national planning policy which will need to be reflected in the new Local Plan strategy. In the meantime, national policies related to Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategy (a mandatory element of the Environment Act that will impact on the approach to ELMS), nutrient neutrality regulations, waste strategy and waste and minerals policy will impact on the rural area during the life of this plan.

5.22. The Council's own Environment Strategy, Carbon Action Plan commitments related to a commitment that the Council will be carbon-neutral by 2025 and its pledge to support the borough being carbon-neutral by 2045 will positively influence plans and projects in the rural area. By the nature of their land-use needs the Carbon action Plan's Low Carbon Energy Supply and Natural Capital offsetting programmes will have a particular focus on Council-owned land in the rural area

5.23. Visitor and cultural economy

5.24. A tourism recovery plan is in place to address significant issues such as the shortage of hospitality staff and cultural recovery projects have helped support the arts and heritage organisations. From 2023, the tourism recovery plan will give way to a new Visitor Economy Strategy and a new Cultural Framework will guide the Council's priorities for culture, arts, and heritage.

5.25. Rural based business

5.26. Rural-based business revolves around more than agriculture and land-based industries, whether in the visitor and hospitality sector, creative and digital, science and technology or manufacture. There are a number of significant employers based in rural areas, a large number of SMEs and a high level of home-based working.

5.27. The Council's work with business organisations and support for businesses is borough-wide and does not currently have a specific focus on rural-based businesses. However, the Council does recognise some of the specific issues for the rural area. For example, there a variety of policies in the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document that specifically address or support rural businesses. In addition, some programmes (eg Connecting Cheshire) have projects targeting rural business needs and some strategies (eg Visitor Economy Strategy) have a strong relevance to rural based business.

5.28. Other considerations

5.29. The Plan is intended to provide a framework that would inform further consideration of policy and strategic direction with a rural focus. There are a number of emerging challenges that may affect the rural area over the period of the plan but will not necessarily have plans in place to address them. Therefore, an appendix to the Rural Action Plan identifies issues or opportunities that may require further consideration over the period of the Plan. These issues have been identified during the plan development as ones that may need further consideration over the life of the plan and are not necessarily addressed by existing or intended plans, strategies, or projects.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1. No additional consultation is proposed as part of this process as the Rural Action Plan is primarily intended to provide a rural focus for the delivery of plans and strategies, each of which would normally be consulted on separately. A Member Advisory Group was set up by the Economy and Growth Committee to provide further engagement and guidance in drafting the Plan. The opportunity was also be taken to engage with the sub-regional Rural Strategy Group, as this offered an opportunity receive guidance from a range of rural interests that support the long-term physical, social and economic development of the rural area.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

7.1.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report and its recommendations.

7.2. Finance

7.2.1. Actions covered by the rural action plan will be delivered within existing service budgets, normally related to the lead service identified in the plan. While the future of funding arrangements for agriculture, the environment and rural development is currently unclear, it is anticipated that the plan may continue to provide the Council with an approach to what shapes the character and nature of the rural area, in preparation for any future changes to policy and funding.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. Cheshire East Council's Rural Action Plan is set in the context of how existing strategies deliver on the rural agenda and at the same time, helping to identify those gaps that need to be addressed in the future. A number of Council strategies and plans that relate to rural priorities contribute to delivery of the Plan.

7.3.2. The economy in rural areas and its contribution to 'quality of place' play an important role in Cheshire East, contributing to economic well-being. The Rural Action Plan provides a framework for consideration of future policy and strategic direction in the context of changes in national policy and related funding.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. Given that the proposal does not represent any change of policy an EIA has not been conducted. There are no direct implications for equalities.

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. There are no direct implications for human resources.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. There are no direct implications for risk management.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. A significant proportion of the Cheshire East population live in rural communities including the rural towns. The action plan will help to ensure that delivery of our corporate outcomes meet the needs of rural communities and the economy in rural areas.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. The action plan includes proposals that relate to strong, supportive rural places and communities, including life chances and choices that may relate to children and young people.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. The action plan includes proposals that relate to strong, supportive rural places and communities, including life chances and choices that may relate to public health.

7.10. Climate Change

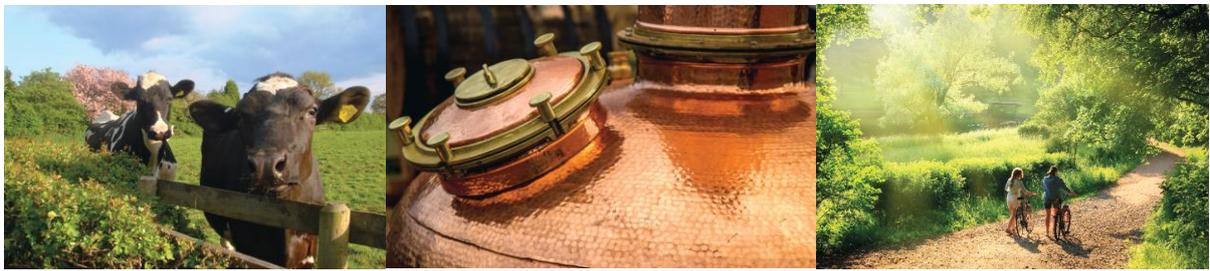
7.10.1. The action plan includes proposals that relate to the environment, with actions related to environmental sustainability and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Brendan Flanagan Head of Rural and Cultural Economy brendan.flanagan@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07802583903
Appendices:	Rural Action Plan 2022/23 -2025/26
Background Papers:	Cheshire East Rural Action Plan

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Cheshire East Rural Action Plan

2022 -26



Cheshire East Rural Action Plan 2022/23 -2025/26

Introduction

As part of delivering its Corporate Plan outcomes, the Council has undertaken to build a thriving and sustainable place and as part of that aim it seeks to have thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all with thriving and active rural communities. This Rural Action Plan has a focus on the economy in Rural areas. However, the rural economy does not sit in isolation from other factors, so a wider range of topics need to be considered including the environment, health, and connectivity. The Plan therefore provides a broader framework for the economy that takes into account relevant policy and strategic direction, but with a rural focus. It builds upon previous work by the Council to support its Rural area including the Rural Action Plan 2018/19-2021/22¹. It is intended that this plan will provide a framework that supports consideration of policy and strategic direction for the rural area, positioning the Council to be able to respond to changes at national and local level.

Background and context

Cheshire East is defined by the Rural Services Network SPARSE classification as a council considered ‘predominantly rural’, while the Defra Rural Classification for the Borough is ‘urban with significant rural’².



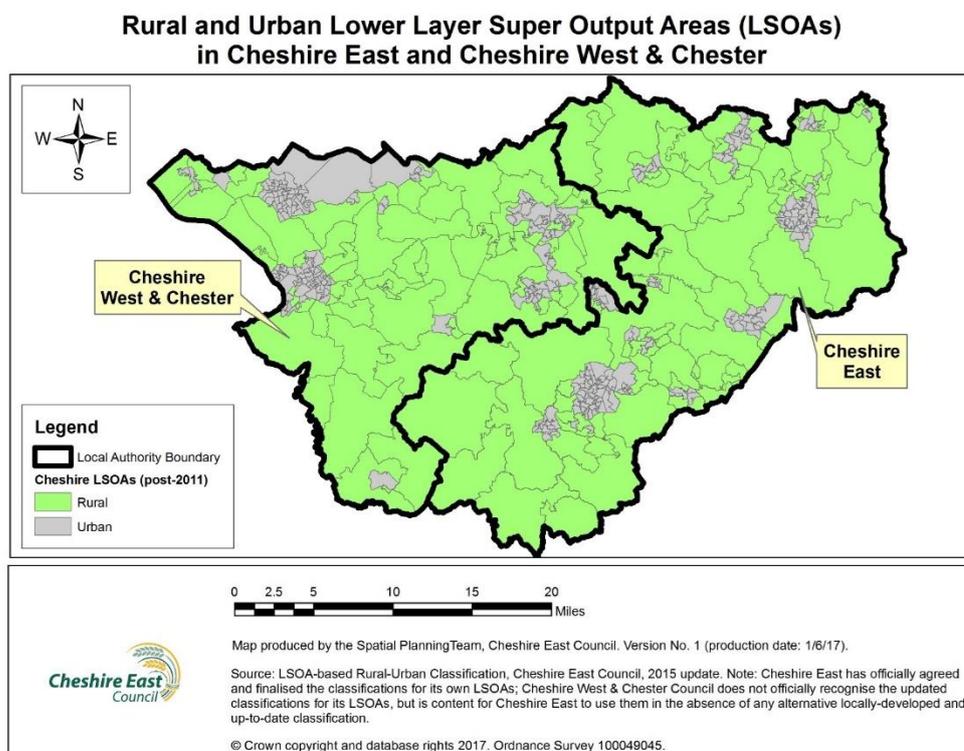
Whatever the definition, the rural aspect of Cheshire East is significant in terms of population, economic impact, and its contribution to the borough’s ‘quality of place’.

¹ [Rural Cheshire East \(Cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)

² [\(DEFRA\)_Statistical_Digest_of_Rural_England_2022_June_edition.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/111111/DEFRA_Statistical_Digest_of_Rural_England_2022_June_edition.pdf)

The Rural area is an important aspect of the borough's character but brings with it both the constraints and opportunities that are peculiar to rural areas.

148,400 people³, nearly two fifths of Cheshire East's total population (386,700), live in rural areas. The quality of its natural environment and excellent location, combined with factors such as high educational attainment and employment opportunities, ensure that Cheshire East is a place offering a high quality of life to its residents and is an attractive place to do business; a place where people want to live, work and visit.



Cheshire East was traditionally, and remains in many places, a rural area, with agriculture (particularly dairy) and land-based industries, a network of villages and mid-sized market towns serving as important service and functional centres. Alongside their roles as retail, commercial, educational and leisure focal points, these places historically developed specialisms, including extractive industries, chemicals and silk.

Stewardship of the rural environment is central to achieving this balance between economic growth and environmental and societal wellbeing. Rural economies have demonstrated their potential to provide more growth and employment if given appropriate stimuli and support from national and local business leaders or policy makers.

³ Source: Mid-year population estimates for small areas for 2020, Office for National Statistics (ONS). ONS Crown Copyright. Note: Figures based on 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at Lower Layer Super Output Area level), Research & Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

In 2020, GVA from Urban with Significant Rural areas (such as Cheshire East) contributed 12.5 per cent (£210 billion) of England's GVA⁴. This compares with Predominantly Rural areas contributing 15.0 per cent worth an estimated £253 billion, 44.6 per cent from Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London) (£750 billion), and 27.9 per cent from London (£470 billion). All area types have seen small decreases for total GVA since 2019.

It is not surprising that key sectors are focussed on the land and landscape: agriculture, tourism, forestry. However, a majority of rural business is in other sectors⁵, including renewable energy generation; advanced manufacturing and engineering; logistics; food and drink manufacturing, agri-tech and bio-renewables; financial & professional services and healthcare technology.

The economy in rural areas plays an important role in Cheshire East. The rural area boasts a diverse industry base, and the Council continues to play an important role in taking forward rural economic strategy in the sub-region. Traditional land-based businesses, the wider countryside, its rural tourism assets and events form an important part of local economy and the wider character of the sub-region. However, alongside traditional large-scale dairy and land-based enterprises, there are significant tourism businesses, creative & digital industries, distribution, science and technology businesses, with the rural areas of Cheshire East contributing a significant part of the area's economy.

There is real economic value in the area's natural capital and landscape character, and the contribution of farming and land management should not be underestimated or forgotten. It is after all, what underpins our rural character, environment and communities, contributing to our 'quality of place', which is accepted as an economic attribute, supporting locational decisions and investment in the area. It has been argued that those places with strong 'quality of place' attributes can stand out from their competitors and therefore stand a better chance of landing new investment and skilled workers. An 'emotional connection' to a place can become as important as more rational, number-driven determinants, particularly for knowledge workers. Cheshire East's rural character offers these attributes.

The agri-food sector in Cheshire East is well developed and diverse. This sector comprises of a range of companies from large scale food manufacturers and animal feed businesses to dairy operators, salad producers and small-scale operations (including traditional cheese producers, farm shops, breweries and distilleries). Like the visitor economy, agri-food is an important sector in Cheshire East's economy based in rural areas. Although representing a relatively small portion of the district's

⁴ Source: 'Rural productivity and gross value added (GVA)', Statistical Digest of Rural England, Defra, July 2022 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rural-productivity>)

⁵ Source: UK Business Counts (enterprises) data (for 2021), Office for National Statistics, NOMIS.

economic output (in terms of GVA), they both employ a high number of people and are important to the character of the area and its 'quality of place'.

The Council has a direct involvement in agricultural land through the Cheshire Farms Service, which was created to manage the agricultural estates of both Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council on their formation as unitary authorities in 2009. Cheshire East Council retains an estate of 4833 acres with a range of entry level farm types and sizes, providing opportunities to suitably qualified persons to enter agriculture.

Land management industries are important to Cheshire but the economy in rural areas reaches far beyond this in terms of jobs, enterprises, and output. The rural areas are now home to a wide range of other businesses that appreciate the rural setting, including professional services and digital/creative. The 'Science Corridor' in Cheshire East has many businesses based in rural locations with strengths in advanced scientific analysis and research, pharmaceuticals R&D, energy and radio-astronautics and astronomy. Alongside strategic employment sites based in a rural setting such as Alderley Park, Radbroke Hall, Waters (Wilmslow) and Jodrell Bank, the rural area supports a diverse economy of SMEs and micro-businesses. Beyond the strategic sites, agri-food and the visitor economy remain the most visibly significant rural-based sectors, but with the development of high-speed broadband coverage, professional, knowledge based, creative and digital businesses are also important.

In general, rural areas can have lower unemployment than urban areas 2011 Census figures (still the latest Census data – but release of 2021 Census data due to be begin within a few months) put the proportion of economically active 16-74-year-olds who were unemployed at 3.2% in the Borough's rural areas, but 5.4% in its urban areas.⁶

However, rural wages can often be lower⁷, especially those in agriculture and tourism where their seasonal nature can affect earnings. When combined in areas – predominantly rural – with higher house and fuel prices, the result can in some cases lead to instability of income levels, disparities in access to services and pockets of deprivation. One of the priorities for economic strategy can therefore be to seek to increase employment opportunities, reduce seasonality and champion the creation of better-paid wages in certain sectors.

Self-employment in the rural areas is higher than in urban areas and higher than the national average. Of those 16–74-year-old residents of Cheshire East who were in employment at the time of the 2011 Census, 16.6% were self-employed (similar to the England average of 15.7%), but this proportion is much greater (22.3%) in the

⁶ Source: 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics (ONS). ONS Crown Copyright. Note: Figures based on 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at Lower Layer Super Output Area level), Research & Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

⁷ Source: [[Rural earnings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)]

Borough's rural areas than in its urban areas (13.2%)⁸. The impact of the Covid pandemic and the increase in home working that resulted, have added an additional context.

Furthermore, due to the pandemic and its related restrictions, the value of Cheshire East's Visitor Economy fell to £548million⁹. Prior to that, in 2019 it was worth circa £994million, supporting over 11,000 fte jobs¹⁰, and was forecast to reach over £1bn by 2020. The rural offer (and its related heritage) is a very important component of our visitor economy and there remain opportunities to improve destination management, increase the availability of quality accommodation, and exploit specialist sector-based experiences (including filming and events) to allow the sector's contribution to increase once more and maintain a competitive position.

However, the rural economy does not sit in isolation from other factors which can impact upon its growth, sustainability and resilience: Planning, affordable housing, public transport, access to health facilities, education, older people's services, fuel poverty, viable local services, character/quality of environment and community engagement are all part of an associated matrix. Key areas for consideration in respect to the rural economy are:

- **Planning:** Positive planning allows rural communities to adapt and thrive. This must offer policies that reflect local circumstances and provide a workable planning system, which both engages and gains the trust of rural communities. The use of neighbourhood plans, and supplementary planning guidance may be appropriate tools in some circumstances.
- **Quality/character of environment:** quality of place can be a significant factor in locational decisions to live, work or invest, providing an 'emotional connection' and it is essential to visitor economy success. Prosperous places are supported by their inherent environmental, cultural or heritage characteristics.
- **Affordable Housing:** Rural communities need to be places where people from a range of age groups and backgrounds can live. Housing affordability is therefore a key concern with a need for affordable homes to meet the needs of rural communities, the economy in rural areas and address the issue of key workers. This needs to be addressed within the context of compliance with adopted planning policies.
- **Public transport:** Suitable public transport links are important to helping small businesses access markets or making it practical for employees to seek work in rural communities. Transport can also bring customers and tourists to local rural businesses such as shops, hotels and B&Bs. In 2019,

⁸ Source: 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics (ONS). ONS Crown Copyright. Note: Figures based on 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at Lower Layer Super Output Area level), Research & Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

⁹ Source: Annual STEAM data for economic value of visitor economy in Cheshire East

¹⁰ Annual STEAM data for Cheshire East.

at least 75% of the rural population in Cheshire East (based on a Sunday off-peak timetable) were located within 400 metres of a bus stop and had a service that could reach a principal town or key service centre in 40 minutes. When considering peak demands, such as during a weekday, over 80% of the population were able to access a bus stop located within 400 metres.

- Tackling fuel poverty: Rural areas generally have a higher proportion of households in fuel poverty¹¹, with many off the mains gas network or living in solid wall homes.
- Viable village services: Local services such as village shops, pubs and post offices are at the heart of functioning communities, as well as offering a lifeline to many vulnerable residents. Investment in local services not only benefits communities but also employee recruitment and new business development.
- Schools: Small and rural schools are important in functioning rural communities.
- Broadband and mobile connectivity: Rural businesses and communities need to share in the opportunities available with fast broadband services, but some are harder to reach than their urban counterparts. Poor connectivity or 'Not-spots' in some rural areas is a problem for residents unable to access digital services - 'Digital Poverty'. However, it can also impact economic development as businesses that rely on digital communications and routes to market may not wish to locate where they would be disadvantaged. Remaining businesses and the self-employed are unable to reap any of the productivity benefits and opportunities of digital connectivity and are constrained in their growth.
- Road Network: There is a strong interdependence between rural and urban economies. Urban centres are often major markets for rural based businesses and many rural residents work in local urban areas. Therefore, in order to realise the true potential of the rural economy, connectivity needs to be reduced as a barrier to trade and economic growth between urban and rural areas. The added benefit of good transport services is that it will attract visitors and their spending power to rural economies.
- Climate change: Cheshire East is a significantly rural area, with the Council owning or managing a range of agricultural and rural land holdings and having significant influence over development and land management elsewhere. Our rural areas have the potential to make a significant contribution to meeting the Borough's (and UK's) carbon reduction targets, and to improving the resilience of our economy to climate impacts. As an organisation, the Council has a target of achieving net-zero by 2025 and

¹¹ Table 4, Fuel Poverty Supplementary Tables – England – 2022 (2020 data), Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, February 2022: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-supplementary-tables-2022>

has joined UK100 (Countryside Climate Network) with a pledge to support the borough achieving net-zero by 2045.

Developing a Rural Action Plan

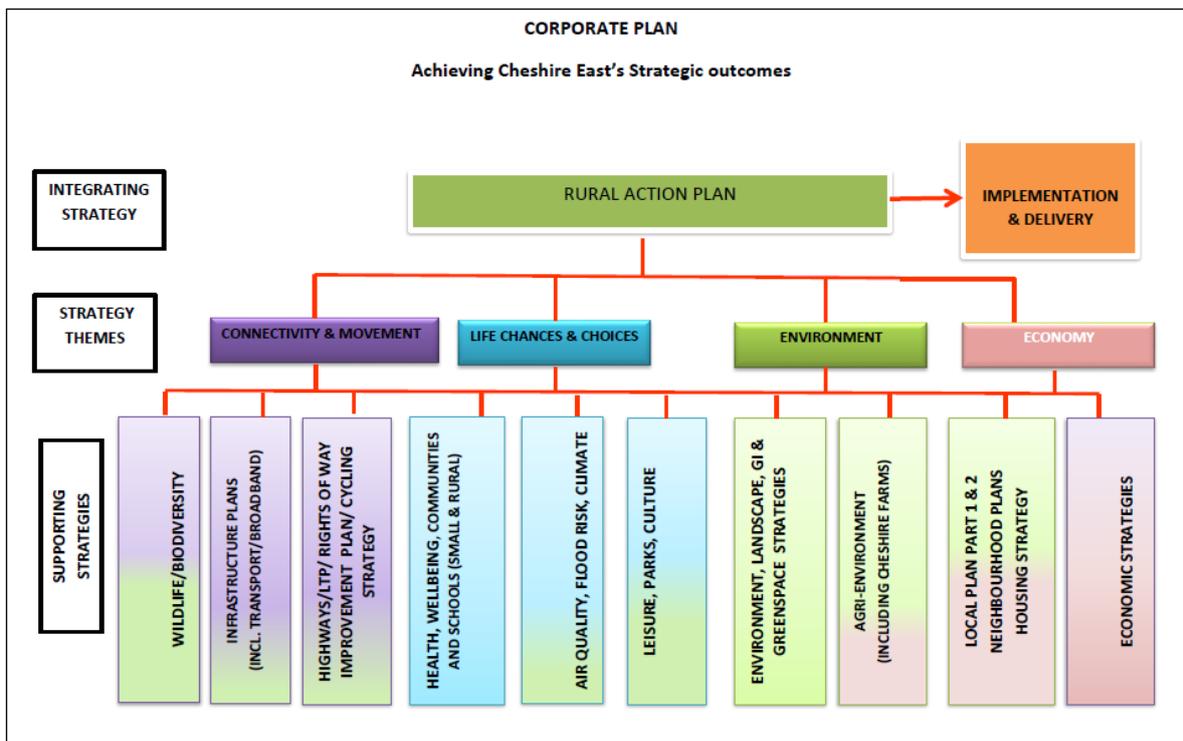
148,400 people, nearly two fifths of Cheshire East's total population (386,700), live in rural areas outside of the main towns. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that delivery of our corporate outcomes meets the needs of rural communities. The rural area is also part of Cheshire East's 'quality of place', contributing to economic well-being by offering characteristics that are part of the area's distinctiveness. Studies have shown how quality of place influences locational decisions with innovators and entrepreneurs attracted to creative, cultural and beautiful places.

A draft Rural Strategy Action Plan was produced in 2014 following review and consultation but was not formally approved. This was superseded by the 'Where Rural Communities Matter' document in early 2015 which outlined a number of key actions. The Rural Action Plan adopted in 2019 built on the successful aspects of this approach offering a more coherent action plan with agreed timelines and accountability helping link rural economic strategy to other key strategies and outcomes rather than being separate from them.

Under the guidance of a Member Advisory Group, appointed by the Economy and Growth Committee in September 2021, officers representing services across the Council have drawn on research, external advice and service experience to identify a number of key priorities and suggested actions across a number of strategic issues.

Cheshire East Council's rural action plan is set in the context of how existing strategies deliver on the rural agenda and at the same time, helping to identify those gaps that need to be addressed in the future. There is also a need to consider the role of the rural agenda in informing the Council's approach to the wider economy and to look at future funding arrangements in the round, including the Shared Prosperity Fund and any changes to arrangements for agriculture and the environment resulting from Brexit. Both national and local Environment Strategies are also of significance in influencing the rural agenda. While future national funding arrangements for agriculture and the environment are still in development to some degree, they will reflect many aspects that shape the character and nature of the rural area and its contribution to 'public goods'.

In the meantime, a number of Council strategies and plans that relate to the rural principles or priorities have been identified and their contribution audited against four themes of connectivity, life chances and choices, environment and economy. It is hoped that this framework will guide consideration of policy and strategic direction. The diagram below illustrates how a framework provides a cross-cutting approach to considering and integrating actions from a range of relevant strategies and plans, providing the basis for developing a Rural action plan. It is not intended to replace or take precedence over these strategies, but rather to allow consideration of how these may impact on the rural area or rural affairs.



The overall aim of the plan is to help inform strategic choices as part of meeting the Council’s strategic outcomes and identify priorities regarding the rural area. This is based on the Council’s existing strategies and plans along with their related an evidence base. It does not replace those strategies and plans, but rather provides a rural focus on them to help decision makers ensure that the rural community, economy, and environment are understood and to help to co-ordinate actions. This is part of an ongoing process that needs to be able to adapt to reflect changes.

There are a number of emerging challenges, including fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis, which are very relevant to the economy and our rural communities. These issues are likely to impact on finances, becoming a source of stress and threat to the rural areas of Cheshire East. These and other emerging issues that may affect the rural area will not necessarily have plans in place to address them. Therefore, while it is not intended to be a comprehensive list, appendix 1 identifies a number of key issues that have been identified during the plan development, which may need further consideration over the life of the plan.

A changing landscape for the Rural Action Plan

While the framework and many of the thematic priorities identified in the first Rural Action Plan will remain valid, there have been significant changes to the context in which these may be viewed. The emphasis and detail will need to reflect economic recovery from the pandemic, any impact of changes due to Brexit (eg changes to agricultural payments and a move to Environmental Land Management schemes) and climate change policy.

In addition, since the original Rural Action Plan, the Council has an Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan and a new Corporate Plan for the period 2021-2025. Specifically, the Corporate Plan identifies the need for 'Thriving and active rural communities', and the need for a Rural action plan.

Covid-19:

Since 2020 the Covid Pandemic has impacted on the economy, communities and individuals. In April 2020, staff at the Centre for Rural Economy and Rural Enterprise UK (Newcastle University), published a briefing note on COVID-19 and rural economies¹². On the one hand, the paper highlights how the dispersed population base and established tradition of home working acted as a source of resilience during the crisis. On the other hand, restrictions placed on personal travel for non-essential purposes may have disproportionately impacted on rural areas due to the greater dispersal of workplaces, consumer and business services, and because of the importance of visitor economies to many rural areas.

The OECD Regional Outlook 2021 highlighted vulnerabilities because rural areas have a less diversified economy, a larger share of workers in essential jobs (e.g. agriculture, food processing) coupled with limited ability to undertake these jobs at home and poorer broadband infrastructure¹³. It is self-evident that the COVID-19 pandemic increased reliance on digital connectivity, which impacts on economic activity, service delivery and on the well-being of rural communities. The OECD report indicates that lower incomes and fewer savings forced many rural residents to continue to work and not seek medical help if they needed it. Shortages of seasonal and temporary workers have also been a significant challenge, creating additional burdens for rural food businesses.

Rural economy, agricultural policy and levelling-up:

In March 2021 the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) published its first annual rural proofing report, *Rural Proofing in England 2020*. This followed a commitment in the Government's response to the House of Lords Select

¹² Phillipson J, Gorton M, Turner R, Shucksmith M, Aitken-McDermott K, Areal F, Cowie P, Hubbard C, Maioli S, McAreavey R, Souza-Monteiro D, Newbery R, Panzone L, Rowe F, Shortall S. [The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Implications for Rural Economies](#). *Sustainability* 2020, **12**(10), 3973.

¹³ [OECD Regional Outlook 2021: Addressing COVID-19 and Moving to Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions | en | OECD](#)

Committee on the Rural Economy Report 'Time for a strategy for the rural economy'. Although it primarily addresses nationally applicable policy and there was little that directly addressed rural needs or opportunities, it did point place a focus on policies such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Fund and agricultural transition plan.

The government's White Paper, 'Levelling up the United Kingdom' released on 2nd February 2022 brings together a number of policy strands and funding initiatives that have developed over the past few years, particularly since the 2020 Spending Review. These include a centrally managed funding package which includes the Levelling Up Fund, the Freeport Programme, Future High Streets Fund and the Towns Fund; a renewed priority to develop deals for the devolution of powers and funding with all areas across England through 'County Deals'; and a new formula allocated fund to replace EU structural funds, the 'Shared Prosperity Fund'. Any approach to levelling-up will need to take account of the rural-urban mix of the area, whether considering just Cheshire East or the wider sub-region.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)¹⁴ is in effect, succession funding for the EU structural funds. The UKSPF will provide £3 billion of new funding (revenue and capital) for local investment by March 2025. With an overarching aim of building pride in place and increasing life chances, there are three UKSPF investment priorities: communities and place; supporting local business; and people and skills. With all areas of the UK receiving a conditional allocation via a funding formula rather than through a competitive bidding process, there is scope to direct funding where it is needed reflecting need and opportunity right across the borough as set out in a Local Investment Plan submitted to Government for approval.

In January 2021, Defra published their Agricultural Transition Plan¹⁵ for 2021-2024 setting out the Government's plan for the new agricultural policy in England, starting when the UK left the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It includes details of the cuts in the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) over the 4 years although there is a lack of detail on the opportunities and schemes that will replace it. The Government has committed to investing the same total amount each year, through the life of this Parliament, to the end of 2024. The funding cuts from BPS will be recycled into other schemes such as productivity grants schemes and pilots for the new schemes. Environmental land management (ELMS) pilot schemes are now in place, being the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery. The outcome of these schemes will help shape the future of farming in England.

¹⁴ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁵ The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024
Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Climate change:

Our changing climate is requiring us to do things differently – in rural areas this means reducing use of hydrocarbons, increasing sequestration of carbon already in the atmosphere, and ensuring resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The Government has set a legally binding target for the UK to reduce greenhouse gases to ‘net zero’ by 2050 and in October 2021 published its *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener*¹⁶. The Strategy sets out decarbonisation pathways and supporting policies and programmes to reduce emissions for each sector plus some cross-cutting actions.

While they are not well articulated in the strategy, there are sectors that have been identified where there is a particular rural dimension that needs consideration¹⁷:

Heat and buildings: Rural areas are disproportionately ‘off grid’ and reliant on oil or LPG for heating. Heat pumps are often cited as the main technology for reaching net zero although there is a question as to whether heat pumps are the right solution in older and poorly insulated rural homes.

Transport: Achieving net-zero will require greater take up of low emission vehicles, the related expansion of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and a modal shift to public transport, walking and cycling. delivered in rural areas. All of these have challenges in a rural area.

Natural resources: Farming will be encouraged to engage with low carbon practices through the introduction of the ELMS (replacing the CAP) and the NFU has introduced its own strategy for the sector to help achieve net-zero. Nature-based solutions such as restoring peatland, the creation of new woodland or soil management through regenerative farming, will mostly affect rural areas and will have rural landscape and biodiversity impacts. In addition, nature-based solutions can offer remedial measures to address the impacts of a changing climate, such as increased heat stress and flood risk.

There are a wide range of risks posed by climate change in our rural areas¹⁸, increased extreme weather and volatility will increase risks to soil conditions and water supplies, and increased pests, pathogens and invasive species. All of which will impact upon landscape character and increase the risks of food insecurity.

Cheshire East priorities and Corporate Plan:

Cheshire East Council adopted a new Corporate Plan¹⁹ for the period 2021-2025. The Plan is based around a key vision of being **open, fair and green**, leading to the

¹⁶ [Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

¹⁷ Rural Services Network: Rural Lens Review: Net Zero Strategy (December 2021)

¹⁸ [Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](https://theccc.org.uk)

¹⁹ [Corporate Plan \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk)

following strategic priorities: An open and enabling organisation; A council which empowers and cares about people; A thriving and sustainable place. The Council has undertaken to build a thriving and sustainable place and as part of that aim it seeks to have thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all with thriving and active rural communities. The Plan specifically refers to the Rural Action Plan and a number of actions and outcomes that are specific to the rural area. It also sets out corporate actions and priorities that are of wider application, but will impact on the rural area, its communities, its environment, and its economy.

As well as the Corporate Plan a number of strategic priorities have been addressed since the previous Plan was published. These include completion of the Planning Site Allocations and Development Policies Document²⁰, the Environment Strategy²¹ and a Carbon Action Plan²², all of which have a significant relevance to the rural area of Cheshire East.

²⁰ [Revised Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document \(clean version for print\) \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)

²¹ [Environment Strategy \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)

²² [Carbon Neutral Council \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)

Progress against the Rural Action Plan 2019-22

Digital Connectivity: Broadband & mobile:

The Digital Cheshire ERDF project successfully completed and overdelivered on every contractual output, resulting in 96.44% broadband coverage. Out of the 205 businesses assisted (contracted profile was 180 businesses) 116 business were based within Cheshire East.

BDUK launched a Gigabit Vouchers scheme that enables Local Voucher Top Up scheme and development of this scheme for Cheshire has commenced. Data and input were provided to the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to support the development of a Digital Strategy for the sub-region. The LEP published a Digital Infrastructure Plan in October 2020 to support the development and leverage of investment in digital connectivity infrastructure. Cheshire East Council published its Digital Strategy²³ in 2022, which aims for a sustainable digital infrastructure and a vibrant digital economy, including an ambition that 'All residents and businesses will be able to access high speed broadband in their home or locality'.

Access for residents, business, and visitors:

Public Rights of Way have achieved an average of 83% of the network classed as 'easy to use' against a target of 80%. The lowest level was in 2019 (70%) due to significant storm impacts and resultant damage to infrastructure. The highest achieved was 93% in 2020, despite pressure caused by high levels of use once the pandemic started.

The Rights of Way Investment Plan²⁴ (ROWIP) remains valid until 2026 and continues to be progressed. However, resources constraints have impacted on the ability to develop some implementation plans since 2019.

The Local Transport Plan (LTP)²⁵, adopted by the Council in October 2019, covers the period between 2019 and 2024. This provides a strategic (Borough-wide) approach to transport. Local Transport Development Plans (LTDPs, which are called Town Plans in the LTP), have been produced to support the delivery of transport schemes at a local level. LTDPs have been developed for each key service centre and principal town, including surrounding rural areas. Five LTDPs were approved by the Highways and Transport Committee in March 2022, with the remaining six anticipated to be approved by Committee in June 2022.

²³ [Cheshire East Digital Strategy](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk) (Cheshireeast.gov.uk)

²⁴ [Improving our Public Rights of Way Network](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk) (cheshireeast.gov.uk)

²⁵ [Local Transport Plan](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk) (cheshireeast.gov.uk)

The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for Crewe, Congleton, Macclesfield and Wilmslow were adopted by the Council in March 2021. Their respective Implementation Plans were adopted in November 2021.

These Plans complement other schemes being brought forward in non-LCWIP areas that are being delivered through the STEPS/ Sustainable Modes of Travel to School (SMOTs) and active travel programmes, which include improvements in rural areas. In addition to the LCWIPs, a wide range of walking and cycling schemes are included within Local Transport Development Plans.

The Little Bus Service was relaunched as FlexiLink in September 2019. This operates during the core hours between 09.30am and 2.30pm, Monday to Friday. While the number of passengers using the service has dropped compared to pre COVID-19, demand for the service has gradually recovered. At the end of April 2022, demand was approximately one third lower than pre-COVID-19.

Additionally, a three-year pilot scheme called the 'Go-too' Service²⁶ was launched in October 2021 following receipt of £1.25 million of funding from the Rural Mobility Fund. This scheme covers a wide area to the south and south-west of Nantwich and operates between 7am and 9pm, Monday to Saturday, with low floor access.

Rural Housing:

There was a target to increase the provision of affordable homes on rural exceptions sites by 10% by 2021. 17 units were delivered in 2018/19. No rural exception sites have been delivered since then, although one is in planning that would deliver a further 10 or 11 units.

Many aspects have been delayed through the pandemic, but the groundwork has been developed further; A Housing Development Framework was established in 2021 and a Rural Housing Enabling Guide has been incorporated into emerging Housing Supplementary Planning Document²⁷ (SPD). There has also been engagement with Cheshire Community Action to understand process for CLH schemes throughout 2021. A workshop was held in March 2022 to gauge the appetite for Parish Councils to explore the CLH option. Existing Neighbourhood Plans are also being reviewed to assess appetite for affordable housing delivery.

Strong, supportive rural places and communities:

The 'tartan' rug²⁸ which provides an overview of health and wellbeing in all wards including rural, has been maintained and reviewed, most recently in February 2021 with results reported to the Adults and Health Committee in March 2022. This was reported as part of the Council's Live Well for Longer plan²⁹, which aligns to the

²⁶ www.go-too.co.uk

²⁷ [Housing Supplementary Planning Document \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)

²⁸ [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)

²⁹ [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Adults and Health Committee, 28/03/2022 10:30 \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)

council's Corporate Plan 2021-25, addressing the aim: 'to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents'. A key commitment within the plan reads: 'Our rural areas will not be disadvantaged in access to services'; there are actions identified within the Implementation Plan to address this commitment and further actions to be added as necessary during formal consultation.

Because commissioning data varies depending on the contract/service, it has not been possible to identify uptake in services specifically in rural areas as this depends on the Information sharing specified for each contract. With regard to the mental health and wellbeing of people, by assessing the levels of loneliness and social isolation in rural areas across the borough, work has not been progressed due to the pandemic and a new baseline will need to be established.

The public health team are encouraging and supporting Town Partnerships to help meet health outcomes and currently working with Crewe Town Council as part of Increasing Equality Commission, which may provide lessons for other such partnerships.

With regard to developing rural neighbourhood partnerships, a Locality Model is being developed in place of a functionality model. This will take into considerations of the rural agenda and needs. A Connected Communities Strategy³⁰ was launched in 2021. In addition, a crowdfunding platform was launched in August 2021, this provides an opportunity to connect Town and Parish Councils, CEC, private sector and local people to create and back projects that meet local needs. This provides a new collaborative funding approach.

With regard to education, rural schools have often had challenges to attend support training on school improvement. However, the move to virtual working through the pandemic has helped rural schools to attend.

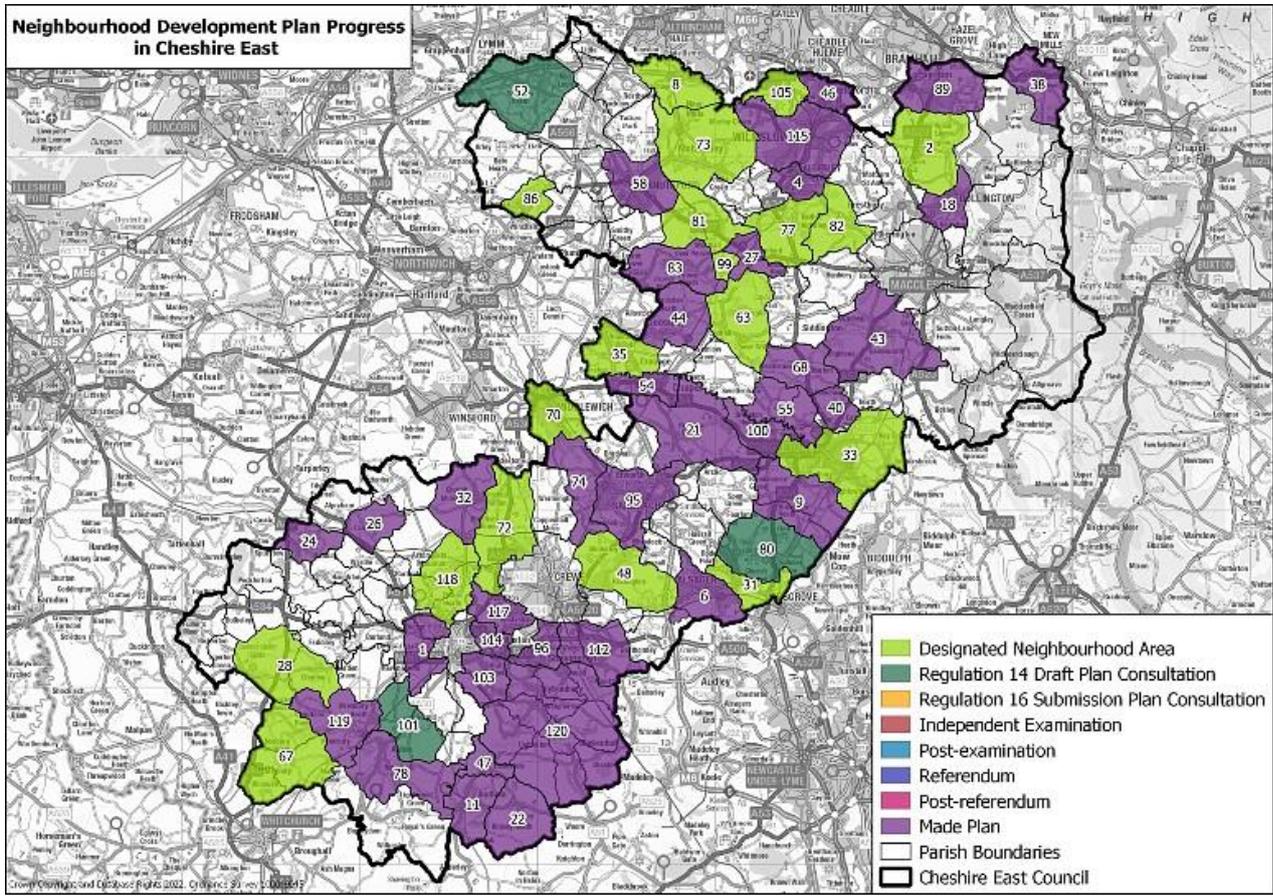
The appointment of a Headteacher role in small schools often requires a teaching commitment and may require rural schools to consider an executive role across more than one school. As at the end of the 2021/22 academic year, the local authority managed to secure leadership roles in all our rural schools ahead of the new academic year.

Neighbourhood planning:

Support for local councils has continued, putting in place Neighbourhood Development Plans that help shape their areas and enhance quality of life in rural communities. This includes working with rural communities who have identified a need for affordable housing within their Neighbourhood plans and review of adopted plans to ensure they continue to align with and inform the boroughs wider strategy.

³⁰ [Connected Communities \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)

A total of 36 neighbourhood plans are now in place³¹. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to plan for the types of development to meet their community's needs and where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.



Planning for a green and sustainable place:

The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy³² (LPS) is a Development Plan Document that forms the first part of the Local Plan for Cheshire East. It sets out the case for sustainable economic growth and will have implications for the management of development in Cheshire East up to 2030. The Local Plan Strategy was adopted in July 2017 with the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD- part 2 of the Local plan) submitted to the Secretary of State on 29 April 2021.

The SADPD³³ provides further detailed and non-strategic planning policies and land allocations in line with the strategy set out in the LPS. The Part 2 Plan is close to

³¹ [Neighbourhood Planning \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](http://cheshireeast.gov.uk)

³² <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/local-plan/local-plan-strategy-web-version-1.pdf>
Interactive map Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030

³³ https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/site-allocations-and-policies/site_allocations_and_policies.aspx

completion with consultation on the main modifications until 31 May 2022. It is expected to be adopted by the end of 2022.

The Plan includes detailed development management policies for rural areas. Section 6 of the SADPD specifically addresses 'Rural Issues', including agriculture and rural buildings. Policies also address aspects such as diversification, the best and most Versatile agricultural land, landscape character, green infrastructure, and biodiversity. A supplementary Planning Document has been prepared regarding Biodiversity Net Gain and is due for adoption by the end of 2022. No other SPDs related specifically to rural issues are currently in the pipeline. However, a Housing SPD and Environmental Protection SPD do have some, limited, cross over and are expected to be adopted by the end of 2022. The first draft Minerals and Waste Plan is due to be published mid-2022, with adoption expected by early 2024.

Cheshire East's Green Infrastructure plan³⁴ was published in 2019. The Plan highlights some strategic areas for further consideration and suggests some approaches to partnership working. The Plan provides an evidence base and framework to develop projects that deliver a net gain in green infrastructure and was used as evidence in the development of the Local Plan. In 2020/21 Cheshire East has been a pilot for the development of national Green Infrastructure standards 2020/21. The work was developed further with the completion of a sub-regional Natural Capital Assessment and investment plan at the end of 2021. It will be used as part of the evidence base for the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cheshire and Warrington with work starting in 2022. Part of the Farm estate was included in a pilot natural capital study with the intent of informing management options appraisals.

The Countryside Service and Tatton Park continue to develop the ecological quality and biodiversity of our SSSI/LNR's and countryside estate. The Farms Service continues to seek improvement in standards of estate management, good environmental practice and stewardship of the Council's farm estate whilst providing opportunities to suitably qualified persons to enter agriculture. The content of letting particulars and terms of tenancy agreements is evolving to require new tenants to assess natural capital base lines and implement plans that deliver continuous improvement.

The Council published its Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan in 2020. The Council is progressing its Carbon Action Plan programme to decarbonise buildings, fleet and embed Carbon reduction across the Council through culture change, policy and procurement. For Carbon not able to be reduced the Council is 'insetting' through nature-based solutions (including tree planting) and sustainable energy. To date over 50,000 trees have been planted as part of the programme and its first solar farm will be constructed at Leighton Grange alongside a 7ha woodland

³⁴ [Green Infrastructure \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)

planting. A baseline study of the Borough's peatlands was completed in 2021 and an area at Pastures wood Farm near Gawsorth was restored the same year.

Visitor and cultural economy:

Cheshire East's visitor economy was on track to be worth over £1bn by 2020, have reached a value of £994m in 2019. However, the impacts of the pandemic badly hit the sector, with a particular impact on the rural area where much of the tourism infrastructure is based. The latest figures show a value of £548m in 2020.

The Council supported businesses throughout the pandemic with advice, promotion, and the distribution of Government grants. There were several grant schemes specifically targeted at supporting tourism and hospitality businesses. In financial year 2020-21 the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant scheme made payments to 1680 businesses totalling £31,506,939, the Christmas Support Payment Scheme made payments to 274 businesses totalling £274,000, in 2021-22 the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant made payments to 745 businesses totalling £2,641,462. The Council approved a Tourism Recovery Plan in 2021 and has been instrumental in developing a programme to help address the staff and skills shortages in the sector.

As the pandemic hit, the Cheshire East LEADER programme was investing over £350,000 in 10 tourism projects, leveraging over £1m of investment and creating 19.2 fte jobs. Thankfully these and many more tourism businesses have proved resilient, helped by the support given.

The pandemic also affected the Rural Touring Arts programme which saw all performances cancelled. Thanks to a Cultural Recovery Fund grant, the scheme was able to put in place a digital programme and newsletter however the impact on venues and volunteers has been felt across the Borough. The scheme is now operation again, initially with fewer venues involved, as the scheme takes time to rebuild to its full compliment.

Rural based businesses:

The LEADER programme addressed a wider range of rural businesses than just tourism. In addition, grants were given for Farm Productivity, SMEs & Farm Diversification and Rural Services. Grant of £1,022,405 leveraged £2,698,578 of investment and created a further 94 jobs in addition to the rural tourism figures given earlier.

The Council supported rural businesses throughout the pandemic with advice, support, and the distribution of Government grants. More recently 448 businesses based in rural areas benefitted from Phase 3 of the Additional Restrictions Grant from September 2021 to March 2022. Recovery and Growth grants were awarded to 133 businesses in the rural economy with a variety of projects supported including green energy, improved ventilation, expanding manufacturing space, creating

outdoor space, digital transformation and purchase of new machinery and equipment.

Early in the pandemic the Council initiated and hosted a rural liaison group of representative organisations and businesses to ensure good communication and get feedback. This led on to the development at the start of 2021 of a sub-regional Rural Strategy Group as an advisory body, providing guidance and support to the Councils in developing and implementing strategies and action plans to support the long-term physical, social and economic development of the rural area.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS 2022/23 -2025/26

This action plan provides a cross-cutting approach, reflecting the plans and strategies of the Council and the work of partners in delivery. It is aimed at anyone interested in the wellbeing of rural Cheshire East, helping to inform decision makers and policy makers from public, private or voluntary sectors, community groups, wider stakeholders and individuals. The plan is intended to be a flexible resource that reflects the Council's aspirations and enables people and groups to engage in addressing identified priorities. Not all issues and opportunities can be addressed by the plans, strategies and projects set out in the action plan. Therefore appendix 2 tries to capture some of the other matters that the Council may wish to consider its role over the life of the plan. Some of these may lead to further plans and projects in the future.

The first Rural Action Plan identified key priorities and suggested actions across a number of strategic rural issues: connectivity, economy, community (life chances and choices) and environment. This plan adopts the same framework for consistency with the added lens of the Corporate Plan, which was adopted in 2020. Specifically, the Corporate Plan identifies the need for 'Thriving and active rural communities', and the need for a Rural action plan.

However, the emphasis and detail should also reflect economic recovery from the pandemic, any impact of a move to Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMS), climate change policy, and current Council priorities (including the Corporate Plan 2021-2025).

No.	Priority Issues (not necessarily in priority order)	Rural Connectivity	Rural Economy	Rural Community	Rural Environment	Corporate Plan
1.	Digital Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile	√	√	√	√	√
2.	Access for residents, businesses and visitors	√	√	√		√
3.	Rural Housing		√	√	√	√
4.	Strong, supportive rural places and communities		√			√
5.	Planning for a green and sustainable place (including Neighbourhood planning	√	√	√	√	√
6.	Visitor & Cultural Economy	√	√	√		√
7.	Rural Based Businesses	√	√	√		√

Digital Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile

Digital and mobile connectivity is essential to a successful economy in rural areas, particularly taking account of the fact that self-employment is both higher than in urban areas and higher than the national average and where the Covid pandemic has led to a greater shift towards home or hybrid working. However, rural businesses

and communities can often be harder or more expensive to reach than their urban counterparts. The Council continues to address these issues through a sub-regional 'Connecting Cheshire' programme, ensuring that the area can benefit from national funding programmes to improve connectivity.

Alongside this, the Council has adopted a Digital strategy to guide digital approaches to service transformation to benefit customers, residents, businesses, rural communities, and community sectors. It accepts that there are still challenges for connectivity in rural areas, but recognises that these are increasingly important to address, not only for the economy, but for healthcare and the delivery of a range of other services. The overarching Digital Strategy will be supported with detailed plans a series of measures against which our performance can be assessed.

A Digital Inclusion Plan is being developed that will cover reasons people are digitally excluded and identify how best we maximise opportunities to address these. Network connectivity, data poverty, availability of digital devices, ability and/or confidence to use the device, fear of being scammed, concerns re. intrusion etc will all be considered.

Access for residents, businesses and visitors

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) was adopted in 2019 and covers the whole borough. The LTP has a key role to play in supporting the economy of the borough. It also recognises that the LTP supports the provision of high quality, attractive environments which encourage walking, cycling, and public transport whilst also effectively mitigating potential negative impacts of transport infrastructure. It also has a role to play in encouraging sustainable connectivity between our urban centres and their surrounding rural settings. This is due to be refreshed in 2024, taking account of new Government guidance to be published by the end of 2022.

The LTP accepts that rural land-based and non-land based businesses require connections to labour, markets and suppliers whilst rural residents need access to jobs, services, friends and families. However, providing rural accessibility raises different issues than in towns and cities where low population densities tend to make bus services more expensive and more likely to require financial support from the Council. The Council has committed to exploring innovative ways of proving rural connectivity, and is currently running a pilot on-demand 'Go Too' service in the south of the borough. If successful, this may provide an alternative solution for poorly connected areas or services that are no longer viable commercially.

Go-too is funded through a national pilot project and will demonstrate that costs and benefits of Demand-responsive buses in rural areas. Longer term options will be informed by monitoring this pilot scheme.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011 -26 (ROWIP) is closely integrated with the LTP. The Public Rights of Way (PROW) service is responsible for managing the borough's 1952km network of public rights of way. This is a primarily rural network and includes a number of medium or long-distance routes which are entirely within or pass-through Cheshire East on its public rights of way network.

Rural Housing

The Council's adopted Housing Strategy will be reviewed and updated in 2023. This will consider a number of issues that are of particular importance to rural communities including affordable housing, the ageing population, delivery of rural exception sites and the provision of housing for rural workers. The Site Allocations and Development Policies Document, which contains policies relevant to rural housing will be adopted, while the Local Plan Strategy review will commence, giving a further opportunity to consider housing policies in relation to the rural area.

The delivery of the right type of housing in the right area is vitally important, more so within rural areas. There will also be a focus on community-led housing; exploring options of how the council can support and encourage local residents to take an active role in the delivery of housing for their community.

While the council is reliant on developers and housing associations to bring forward opportunities, the council can support planning applications (subject to compliance with planning policy) which bring forward rural schemes, and there is the potential to put council-owned rural sites through the Framework if they are suitable for housing development.

There are a number of sites currently allocated to the Housing Development Framework. The framework was set up in 2021/22 and a rural site opportunity is anticipated to go through for tender in 2023.

The 'Vulnerable and Older Persons' Housing Strategy sets out the need for suitable accommodation for older adults, including types such as extra care/independent living. For example, bungalows can be requested through the pre-application advice service, although delivery is dependent on the market and developers.

Rural fuel poverty is often driven by an ageing and energy inefficient housing stock and a lack of access to mains gas, together with rising fuel prices and the cost of delivering heating fuel to rural areas. The Council will take advantage of any funding opportunities to retrofit the housing stock and promote access to trustworthy retrofit advice.

Strong, supportive rural places and communities

Cheshire East Council uses an Asset Based approach to bring together and build upon our assets (organisations, places/buildings, knowledge and enthusiasm) in our communities. Cheshire East Council will support and engage with communities including the voluntary, community and faith sector and the many active volunteer-based partnerships. This is articulated through the Connected Communities Strategy which covers the period to 2025.

This includes delivery of a new crowdfunding platform, Cheshire East Crowd, with up to £10,000 available to support great community projects in partnership with crowdfunding platform Spacehive. This will enable local people, businesses, the council and other organisations to pledge alongside each other to crowdfunding campaigns that bring your ideas to life.

Neighbourhood Partnerships bring together a range of partners including the Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) sector, Police, children's centres, schools, Youth Services, Youth Offending Team, local elected members and businesses. The purpose is to understand local priorities based on local intelligence. We work as a partnership to create local projects that impact on those local priorities. Agencies and local residents work collaboratively to create and tailor projects to suit that community.

Care Communities bring together Health and Social Care professionals to understand local priorities. They provide a range of integrated Health and Social Care services within a community and in primary care settings to best suit local residents and impact on local priorities. There are eight Care Communities across Cheshire East, governed by local clinical leads. Each of our Care Communities serves a population ranging between 30,000 and 50,000 people.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) will be undertaken to: understand variation in the current experience of poverty across Cheshire East; to consider likely future needs; to understand current assets to address poverty; identify gaps in provision and assets to address poverty. This work is being led by Cheshire East Council Public Health in collaboration with the wider Council, NHS and VCFSE. The work is overseen by the Cheshire East JSNA Steering Group as part of the 2022/23 work programme.

The Council has worked with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to pilot a national approach. Public Health will undertake a needs assessment to understand the health and wellbeing issues facing older people in our rural communities. This will result in recommendations to the Council and its partners on a theme of connectivity (reducing social isolation, accessing services, staying active) with reference to CEC-wide strategies and their implementation in rural areas.

More generally, the Council seeks to create a place that supports health and wellbeing for everyone in Cheshire East, which involves many services throughout the Council. For example, improving health and wellbeing by increasing the number of people who use outdoor space for exercise/health reasons will involve parks, countryside and leisure services alongside public health, external agencies and voluntary sector.

The education directorate will be promoting a strategic training and development programme, which will be launched as from September 2022 for the academic year 22-23. This will play a key role for smaller and rural schools in ensuring that appropriate support is available where the release of staffing is a challenge to attend training and many staff have to hold multiple responsibilities.

The local authority will be taking up the option of establishing a multi academy trust; discussions with our maintained schools including rural schools has been positive. A registration of interest to the Regional Schools Commissioning Team is submitted in 2022 to be part of an initial national pilot for establishing a new trust. Decisions are expected by the end of September 2022 as to whether this option is taken forward.

All rural schools will need to consider an academy trust solution by 2030 as outlined in the 'White paper: Opportunities for All' and therefore school leaders and governing

boards will need to seek the right family of schools to meet their needs going forward.

In 2022, Cheshire East Council was successful in a bid for a share of the government's [Family Hubs Transformation Fund](#). The hubs aim to bring council, health and community services together to provide help to families ensuring they have access to the right support at the right time. Issues such as debt, poor mental health or threat of homelessness can happen to families at any point in a child or young person's life.

Centres will be developed to create the walk-in hubs for parents/carers of children of all ages, to ensure that they can access support across a range of services using existing community venues. Services within the family hub network will also be accessible in a number of other ways including virtual, physical, and via outreach in rural areas.

The Shared Prosperity Fund has a focus on Communities and place. It seeks to strengthen our social fabric and foster a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities. This includes community infrastructure, local green space, and community-led projects. An investment plan is submitted to Government for approval in 2022 and funding will be over a three-year period.

Planning for a green and sustainable place

During the period of this Rural Action Plan important measures will be taken in respect of the Local Plan. The Sites Allocation Policy Document of the current Local Plan Strategy will be adopted, and the review of the Local Plan will commence in advance of adoption for the following period from 2026. In addition, Neighbourhood plans help to identify locally distinct habitats and landscapes which should be subject to specific protection and/or policies that positively manage the impact of local land use decisions. The Council will continue to support local councils in both their preparation and, where they are already adopted, their review.

There are significant changes planned to national planning policy which will need to be reflected in the new Local Plan strategy. In the meantime, national policies related to Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategy (a mandatory element of the Environment Act that will impact on the approach to ELMS), nutrient neutrality regulations, waste strategy and waste and minerals policy will impact on the rural area during the life of this plan.

The Council's own Environment Strategy, Carbon Action Plan commitments related to a commitment that the Council will be carbon-neutral by 2025 and its pledge³⁵ to support the borough being carbon-neutral by 2045 will positively influence plans and projects in the rural area.

³⁵ [UK100 | Network of highly ambitious local government leaders for cleaner, more powerful communities](#)

Visitor & Cultural Economy

Many of Cheshire East's major visitor and cultural assets are in the rural area. The visitor and cultural economy were significantly impacted by the pandemic and the restrictions that were in place. A tourism recovery plan is in place to address significant issues such as the shortage of hospitality staff and cultural recovery projects helped support the arts and heritage organisations. The tourism recovery plan will give way to a new Visitor Economy Strategy from 2023. That strategy will need to address issues such as cost of living impacts, changes in the market due to the pandemic and problems with recruitment and retention of staff. It will also consider opportunities such as the 'staycation' effect, the value of filming, and making the most of recent investment in the sector, such as at Bewilderwood and 'First light', a major new visitor and educational experience that opened at Jodrell Bank World Heritage site in 2022.

The Cheshire East visitor economy forum has been developed into a wider sub-regional network hosted by Marketing Cheshire and supported by the Council. The 'Destination Cheshire' network brings together the visitor attractions and accommodation providers outside Chester in a collaborative grouping of largely rural-based businesses and organisations. This network will be important to the delivery of both the sub-regional Destination Management Plan and Cheshire East's Visitor Economy Strategy.

The Council continues to recognise the importance to the economy, quality of place and community benefit of arts culture and heritage. A new Cultural Framework will guide the Council's priorities for culture, arts and heritage from 2023. There are a number of rural-based cultural organisations and significant events that generate real economic benefit, positive profile for Cheshire East and community wellbeing. These include Rural Touring Arts, Wild Rumpus, Clonter Opera, Nantwich Food and Drink festival, RHS Flower Show, Tatton Park and Bluedot Festival. In addition, Jodrell Bank is Cheshire East's first UNESCO 'World Heritage Site'.

Rural-based businesses

Rural-based business revolves around more than agriculture and land-based industries, whether in the visitor and hospitality sector, creative and digital, science and technology or manufacture. There are a number of significant employers based in rural areas, a large number of SMEs and a high level of home-based working.

The Council's work with business organisations and support for businesses is borough-wide and does not currently have a specific focus on rural-based businesses. However, the Council does recognise some of the specific issues for the rural area. For example, there a variety of policies in the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document that specifically address or support rural businesses. In addition, some programmes (eg Connecting Cheshire) have projects targeting rural business needs and some strategies (eg Visitor Economy Strategy) have a strong relevance to rural based business.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has a specific focus on supporting local business, creating jobs and boosting community cohesion, promoting networking and collaboration, and increasing private sector investment. A 'rural Fund' was announced in September 2022 as a defined top-up to UKSPF in eligible authorities, including Cheshire East. There will also be investment to support people and skills that will follow from 2024-25.

Issues and opportunities for Rural businesses are not specific to the administrative geography of Cheshire East. The Council continues to work with others to help understand rural needs. This includes the sub-regional Rural Strategy Group, set up in 2021 as an advisory body, providing guidance and support to Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Councils in developing and implementing strategies and action plans to support the long-term physical, social and economic development of the rural area.

Rural Action plan 2022/23 – 2025/26

1.	Digital Connectivity: Broadband and Mobile		
	Indicative performance indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of households and premises connected (Corporate plan target: 100% superfast broad band access by 2025) • Vouchers provided to residents and SMEs 		
	Key actions	Primary responsibilities	Timescale
1.1	Complete the Superfast broadband 30gb rollout and deliver related SME support	CEC Growth & Enterprise	To April 2025
1.2	Continue the rollout of the Airband contract for full fibre broadband	CEC Growth & Enterprise	To April 2025
1.3	BDUK voucher top-up scheme for rural communities with less than 100mb/sec	CEC Growth & Enterprise	2022 - 2025
1.4	Support Project Gigabit – a BDUK operated scheme with scope for input/involvement by local authorities	CEC Growth & Enterprise	2024-25
1.5	Deliver the Cheshire East Digital Strategy	CEC Place Directorate	2022 -24
1.6	Develop a Digital Inclusion Plan	CEC/Health & Wellbeing Board	2023 -24

2.	Access for residents, business and visitors		
	Indicative performance indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of households within 400m of a bus stop served by a scheduled bus service • Maintain Public Rights of Way so that at least 80% of the network is classed as 'easy to use' • Secure and deliver new and improved public access routes where funding opportunities arise, including through development proposals, where possible, to improve access for residents, business and visitors 		
	Key actions	Primary responsibilities	Timescale
2.1	Adopted Local Transport Plan (LTP) addresses all areas of the borough and includes a local area profile. LTP refresh 2024: Guidance for refresh of the LTP to be published 2022, including application of LTP in rural areas	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2022 - 2027/28 2022-2024

2.2	Development of Town Plans for each key service centre and principal towns, which will also encompass the surrounding rural areas	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2019-23
2.3	Deliver Go-too pilot demand-responsive bus service in south-western part of Cheshire East funded by DfT Rural Mobility pilot scheme	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2022 - 24
2.4	Deliver projects under the Rights of Way Improvement Plan: 2011-2026. Delivery for the period will be in line with the Local Transport Plan and related strategies (such as Green Infrastructure, Cycling Strategy and Local Plan).	CEC Public Rights of Way/ Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2022-26
2.5	Sustainable travel enhancement programme (STEPS)– annual capital programme of investment in schemes to promote walking or cycling for local travel.	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways/ Public Rights of Way	2022 - ongoing
2.6	HS2a – implementation of mitigation and route changes	CEC Public Rights of Way/ Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2022 - 26
2.7	Implement PROW changes and improvements related to strategic road schemes impacting on the rural area, including Middlewich bypass, Poynton relief road, A500 and SEMMMS	CEC Public Rights of Way/ Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2022 - 26
2.8	Extend provision of EV charging points to CEC car parks in rural areas as part of LEVI (local electric vehicle infrastructure fund) programme	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2023 - 26
2.9	Active travel plans to be developed in partnership with major rural employers to provide better access and reduce car dependency. Council to recruit a dedicated Active Travel officer to lead this work.	CEC Strategic Infrastructure and Highways	2022 -25

3. Rural Housing			
	Indicative performance indicators:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Needs Surveys completed • Increase in engagement with parish councils, community groups & Neighbourhood Planning groups • Successful delivery of a housing scheme in a rural area or rural allocation site via the CEC Housing Development Framework • Adoption and implementation of a revised Housing Strategy in 2023 		
	Key actions	Primary responsibilities	Timescale
3.1	<p>Exploring opportunities to provide affordable housing to enable local residents to remain living within their communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacting and working with rural communities who have identified a need for affordable housing within their Neighbourhood plans • Undertake Housing Needs Surveys across our rural parishes • Continue to explore opportunities to develop rural exception sites. • Explore opportunities for Community Led Housing Projects 	CEC Strategic Housing & Strategic Planning/ Parish Councils.	<p>2022-26</p> <p>2022 -26</p> <p>2022-26</p> <p>2022-26</p>
3.2	Promote and deliver sites within rural areas, via the CEC Housing Development Framework, which will deliver a mix of housing types and tenures, including affordable housing	CEC Strategic Housing	2024/25
3.3	Develop, adopt and implement a new Housing Strategy for the borough	CEC Strategic Housing	2023
3.4	Put in place up-to-date planning policy and guidance to support the provision of rural housing, including for essential rural workers, primarily through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Strategic Planning	2022-26
3.5	Secure grant funding to retrofit off-gas homes.	CEC Strategic Housing	2023-25

4.	Strong, supportive rural places and communities		
	Indicative performance indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor through the Public Health Commissioned services scorecard • Annual review of the 'tartan' rug which will provide an overview of health and wellbeing in all wards including rural. • Monitor through uptake of the commissions to support resilience and independence eg carers hub, early help framework, emotionally healthy child and young people programme and CVS contracts. 		
	Key actions	CEC Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
4.1	Support local communities to identify assets that are important to them, and promote the Register of Assets of Community Value as a means of recognising their value and potential for sale to community groups	CEC Communities, Legal, & Assets; Parish Councils; VCFS	2021 -25
4.2	Deliver the connected Communities Strategy to improve health and wellbeing in the Borough by building on the distinctive strengths and characteristics of the towns and villages within Cheshire East, by encouraging and supporting Partnerships to help meet these outcomes.	CEC Communities Team & Public Health Team, Neighbourhood Partnerships, Parish Councils, VCFS	2021 -25
4.3	Develop and support Connected Communities neighbourhood partnerships covering rural areas, which bring local people together to address the needs of the community and work collaboratively to improve their shared offer.	CEC Communities Team, Parish Councils, VCF Sector Groups, Police, Health, CFRS,	2021 -25
4.4	Improving the mental health and wellbeing of people, through assessing the levels of loneliness and social isolation in rural areas across the borough, the carers strategy, and 'living well for longer'.	CEC Public Health, CCG's, NHS, CEC, Police, CFRS, Healthwatch, VCFS	2023-24
4.5	Working with the CE Wellbeing Network co-ordinates health and wellbeing campaigns, enable more people to Live Well for Longer through collaborative health and wellbeing campaigns that involve rural places	CEC Public Health, CCG's, NHS, CEC, Police, CFRS, Healthwatch, VCFS	2022-26

4.6	To promote strategic training and development and encourage rural schools to access the programme	CEC Education /Schools	2022-25
4.7	(Subject to a successful bid) to establish a Multi-Academy Trust as part of a national pilot, giving rural schools the opportunity to consider the academy trust solution	CEC Education /Schools	2022 -30
4.8	Manage the Shared Prosperity Fund with a focus on support for Communities and place.	CEC Place Directorate	2022 -25
4.9	As part of the Council's Carbon Action Plan and net zero the Council will work with the Boroughs' schools, academies, colleges and associated partners: to promote resources available for young people to understand and engage with measures to address Climate Change; and to undertake tree planting schemes as part of the natural capital programme	CEC Education/ CEC Place Directorate /Schools/Mersey Forest/Cheshire Wildlife Trust	2022 -26
4.10	Promote Crowd Funding through 'Cheshire East Crowd', with up to £10,000 available to support community projects.	CEC Communities Team	2021-24
4.11	Maintain 'social value' as part of the CEC procurement strategy	CEC procurement	2022 ongoing
4.12	Undertake a needs assessment to understand the health and wellbeing issues facing older people in our rural communities, with recommendations to the Council and its partners on a theme of connectivity	CEC Public Health VCFSE OHID Parish Councils Residents	2023 - 2024
4.13	Undertake the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	CEC Public Health/NHS/ VCFSE	2022/23
4.14	Address rural needs as part of the 'Winter wellbeing group' working with the community and voluntary sector	CEC Communities Team/Public Health/Winter wellbeing group	2022 - 26
4.15	Develop Family Hubs in line with government expectations and criteria.	CEC Children's Services Health, VCS	2022- 24

5.	Planning for a green and sustainable place		
	Indicative performance indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed planning policies in place to protect and enhance the quality of rural environment Climate change targets on track 		
	Key actions	CEC Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
5.1	Conserve and manage the natural features and biodiversity of the Council's Countryside assets and Tatton Park for present and future generations	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	2022-26
5.2	Further, detailed planning policies to be put in place to protect and enhance the quality of rural environment (landscape, heritage and biodiversity) through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Strategic Planning	2022/23
5.3	Continue to support local councils in putting in place Neighbourhood Development Plans that help shape their areas and enhance quality of life in rural communities.	CEC Strategic Planning	2022-26
5.4	Support communities to review their adopted Neighbourhood plans to ensure they continue to align with and inform the boroughs wider rural strategy, ensuring new opportunities are captured.	CEC Strategic Planning	2022 -26
5.5	Adoption of a Minerals and Waste Local Plan to ensure the proper planning and management of the Borough's natural resources	CEC Strategic Planning	2023/24
5.6	Review and amend supplementary planning guidance to ensure that the design and appearance of rural areas is maintained.	CEC Strategic Planning	2022- 24
5.7	Adopt supplementary planning guidance for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	CEC Strategic Planning	2022/23

5.8	Seek continued improvement in standards of estate management, maintenance, husbandry, good environmental practice and stewardship of the Council's farm estate whilst providing opportunities to suitably qualified persons to enter agriculture	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Cheshire Farms Shared service	2022 -26
5.9	During the period, the Council will review its farms strategy, agricultural land-holdings within the farm estate and on-going work with farm tenants to: - (1.1) Optimise Opportunities to improve soil and livestock management practices. (1.2) Identify appropriate opportunities for tree and hedge planting or mossland restoration within farm holdings to improve natural capital benefits and nature-based approaches to Carbon sequestration. (1.3) Review the terms and conditions of all new tenancies on Cheshire East Farms, as they become available, to facilitate (1.1) and (1.2) above. (1.4) Notwithstanding the above, maintain a viable farm estate to provide opportunities for entry-level access to farming	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Cheshire Farms Shared service	2022 - 26
5.10	Implement the Environment Strategy (2019) to provide the Council with a framework to help protect and enhance the environment and improve residents' quality of life, related to the natural and built environment of the borough and addressing transport, energy & carbon, waste and minerals.	CEC Place Directorate	2022 - 26
5.11	Deliver the Council's Carbon Action Plan targets including decarbonising the delivery of Council services in rural areas, increase local renewable energy and sequester carbon through nature-based solutions.	CEC Place Directorate	2025/26
5.12	Develop proposals for the Council and the role of our rural areas in supporting delivery of net-zero for the borough by 2045 (UK100 pledge)	CEC Place Directorate	2023
5.13	In support of its Carbon Action Plan, boroughwide targets and biodiversity	CEC Place Directorate	2022 - 26

	policies, the Council will review, and implement where appropriate, opportunities for improving natural capital, including tree and woodland cover, peatland restoration and other nature-based solutions on Council-owned land, and encouraging/facilitating such investment on other appropriate land		
5.14	Support the Council's environmental and carbon action plan objectives as part of the Mersey Forest Partnership, in collaboration with Cheshire Wildlife Trust, and working with the Local Nature Partnership,	CEC Place Directorate/ Mersey Forest/ CWT/LNP	2022 -26
5.15	Work with the Distribution Network Operators and others to strengthen and diversify the energy network in rural areas to enable the transition to net-zero and tackle fuel poverty.	CEC Place Directorate	2022 - 26

6.0	Visitor & Cultural Economy		
	Indicative performance indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value of the Cheshire East visitor economy returns to pre-pandemic levels by 2025 		
	Key actions	CEC Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
6.1	Implement (September 2021) Tourism Recovery Plan including deliver with partners of the hospitality recruitment and retention programme	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire, Job Centre +/Springboard	2022/23
6.2	Visitor Economy Strategy 2023-28 includes a focus on developing a distinctive rural tourism offer supported by website and social media activity	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	2023-28
6.3	Facilitate a 'Destination Cheshire' network support for the delivery of visitor economy strategy	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire, other partners	2023-28

6.4	Promote an annual Cheshire Day To promote the best of Cheshire as part of destination marketing	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	2023 onwards
6.5	Promotion of Sandstone and Gritstone trails and opportunities to improve visitor infrastructure	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, CWaC	2022 - 26
6.6	Promotion and support for rural attractions and events that generate tourism, economic and cultural benefits to Cheshire East	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, Marketing Cheshire	2022 - 26
6.7	Support and promote through the Cultural Framework activity and organisations that address CEC priorities and benefit the rural area	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	2023-27
6.8	Manage Tatton Park as one of the region's foremost tourism, cultural and heritage assets.	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy	2022 -26
6.9	Continue delivery of Rural Touring Network to support cultural priorities as part of Cultural framework.	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy, CWaC	2022 onwards
6.10	Liaison and collaborative working with Peak district to identify tourism and other opportunities of joint interest	CEC Rural & Cultural Economy /PDNP	2022 -26
6.11	Put in place up-to-date planning policy to maintain and enhance the visitor economy in the rural area through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document and Local Plan review	CEC Strategic Planning	2022-26

7.	Rural Based Businesses		
	Indicative performance indicators:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor through 'Tractivity' – CEC business activity database 		
	Key actions	CEC Primary responsibilities and other contributors	Timescale
7.1	Seek to maintain and grow the diverse economy in rural areas, including key sectors, working with businesses and others (eg Rural Strategy Group)	CEC Growth & Enterprise, CWaC, LEP, RSG	2022-26

7.2	Seek to maximise government support and finance available.	CEC Growth & Enterprise, Rural & Cultural Economy/LEP	2022-26
7.3	Manage the Shared Prosperity Fund: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting local business • People & Skills 	CEC Growth & Enterprise	2022-25 2024/25
7.4	Deliver a positive planning policy framework to support a prosperous rural economy including sustainable rural tourism to be reinforced through the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document	CEC Strategic Planning	2022/23

Appendix 1: Issues for further consideration during the period 2022/23-2025/26

The action plan identifies those things that the Council is doing or planning to do, which are relevant to or may impact on the rural area of the borough over the period of this Rural Action Plan. It is recognised that there will be other issues that may affect the rural area for which plans are not in place or are pending. Therefore, while it is not intended to be a comprehensive list, this appendix identifies a number of key issues that have been identified during the plan development, which may need further consideration over the life of the plan. For example, there may be a need to maintain awareness of potential impacts or to determine whether the Council has a role (and if so, what). There will also be situations where plans are still in preparation, where information is not yet available to allow the development of detailed plans or where further research and other work is necessary to inform future plans beyond the life of this plan.

Energy vulnerabilities:^{36 37}With some rural communities being off-grid and therefore more reliant on fossil fuels such as liquified petroleum gas (LPG) and oil, there is a potential double impact of transition towards net zero and current energy price inflation.

Government plans are to stop the installation of gas boilers in new homes by 2025 and new gas boilers by 2035. Instead, low-carbon heating systems (such as heat pumps) would take their place. In addition, there are proposals to phase out sales of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030 to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles and investing in grants to help buy cars and charge point infrastructure. The high costs of transition to alternative energy sources along with the inefficiencies of older building stock and the current lack of EV charging infrastructure, combine to impact disproportionately on rural areas, with individuals and businesses facing significant costs if prices do not come down significantly.

Energy costs can also be higher in rural areas because of the car dependency which will be reflected in higher fuel or charging costs, although some of the impacts may be mitigated by growing trends towards remote working.

There is a need to strengthen and diversify the energy network in rural areas to enable the transition to net-zero and tackle fuel poverty. Engagement with Distribution Network Operators and others may yet bring forward other solutions relevant to the rural area including AD/Biogas, solar and heat networks, which may play their part.

Agricultural transition and the environment: The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) mandated by the Environment Act, presents an opportunity for a cohesive and locally appropriate approach to nature recovery being delivered across the UK. To ensure this approach is based on valid evidence the natural capital assessments and mapping that will lie behind it must be maintained, kept updated and made

³⁶ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/rural-lens-review-heat-and-buildings-strategy>
<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/net-zero-strategy-rural-lens>
<https://rsnonline.org.uk/through-a-rural-lens-sustainable-warmth>

³⁷ NICRE Research Report No 1 April 2021 Rural SMEs and the net zero agenda.pdf (ncl.ac.uk)

available. Among other things, the LNRS could inform local priorities for Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMS). ELMS, which will be important to the viability of some rural businesses, will combine a number of schemes to reward farmers and landowners for 'public goods' which can assist nature recovery and the approach to achieving Net Zero.

Once Government finalises its approach to ELMS the Council will be able to update its strategy for the Farms Estate. The transition brought about by ELMS and Net Zero policies has the potential to deliver significant land use change. It will be important for the Council to gain an understanding of the potential implications for the environment, food production and communities of such changes and monitor their effects to inform its own policies going forward. Any borough wide Net Zero strategy, must consider how agriculture and other rural land use can deliver multiple functions including CO2 reduction, sequestering carbon, adapting to climate change, biodiversity, biomass production, food security, landscape and wider environmental goals.

While specific plans are yet to come forward, a network of organisations, including CEC, National Trust, Environment Agency, Mersey Forest, Natural England and private landowners, has started to focus on the Bollin catchment as having potential landscape-scale opportunities to benefit the environment and local communities in an area that runs from Macclesfield to the border with Trafford. Collaborative working is identifying potential projects, some of which may come to fruition during the lifetime of this plan, but which now require feasibility work to identify specific opportunities and investable solutions.

Investment in climate resilience: Despite moves towards Net Zero, climate change is already with us. This is already impacting in rural areas, with issues such as flood-risk, changing habitats, impacts on health from climate and fuel poverty, and physical damage to public rights of way and countryside assets. As well as a focus on carbon reduction and sequestration there is therefore a need and opportunity to consider investment in resilience rather than response and repair. Apart from consideration of how this may affect council assets and services, this also presents an issue for consideration through the planning process. There is also an opportunity to consider new or alternative solutions to problems, developing approaches with multiple benefits. For example, nature-based solutions to reducing downstream flood-risk can not only be cost-effective but will also have benefits for landscape and wildlife.

Rural based business:³⁸ Rural-based business revolves around more than agriculture and land-based industries. They are important and have their own challenges, but rural enterprises in general often require targeted and tailored consideration to address specific challenges arising from their distance from support services, markets and business networks. Practical issues related to staff recruitment and skills, accessibility, and housing can impact on many rural-based business, whether in the hospitality sector, creative and digital, science and technology or agriculture. There is a continued need for engagement with

³⁸ <https://www.parliament.co.uk/APPG/rural-business-and-the-rural-powerhouse>
Parliamentary group launches major report into rural economy • CLA

businesses, whether large or small, to understand the challenges and opportunities that are specific to the rural business community. Economic strategy should recognise the importance of rural-based business to the Cheshire East economy and ensure that there is an integrated, resourced, rural-proofed approach to addressing, the opportunities available across the Cheshire East economy and access to any relevant funding streams. However, economic strategy for rural-based business must also prioritise the practical issues that businesses in rural areas face, including accessibility, availability of staff, housing and digital connectivity.

The availability of affordable housing is a potential constraint to growth with impacts both on businesses and rural communities. The delivery of the right type and size of housing in the right area is vitally important for rural areas. Even with appropriate policies in place this will require increasing engagement with local community groups, parish councils and other organisations.

In a report by the NFU³⁹, they identified, access to mobile and broadband coverage as being the key to business growth. The NFU's Digital Technology Survey found that only 40 per cent of members believe their broadband to be sufficient for current business needs. Reliable coverage and connections will benefit farming, British food production, and wider rural businesses. Government funded schemes do exist, but the needs of harder to reach premises are not always addressed despite the intention to do so. Some areas have not been able to award contracts due to lack of supplier interest so there is a risk of delays or changes, while even if awarded there is no guarantee of the coverage that is actually deployed via these contracts. For example, Project Gigabit offers a lot of promise, but does not specifically target sub 30mbps premises. Rather, it will target funding on sub-gigabit premises, with the majority of work invested in upgrading. Therefore, given the scale the sub 30mbps issues in some rural areas, its impact for rural businesses may be more limited than the aspiration.

Regarding other types of funding programmes, evidence from previous large-scale area-wide rural development programmes (such as LEADER), demonstrates that success requires funding streams designed and delivered to ensure equitable access for rural as well as for urban places and economies. The LEADER approach, (see appendix 1 case studies in [Cheshire East Rural Action Plan, 2018-22](#)) was successful in both job creation and leverage of additional investment. The approach taken by the Cheshire local authorities offers a model for future rural funding streams, subject to capacity and resources being available.

Shared Prosperity and 'levelling-up': The Government's levelling-up agenda (February 2022) brings together a number of policy strands and funding initiatives that may have opportunities or impacts for rural areas. The government is also developing deals for the devolution of powers and funding with all areas across England through 'County Deals'. Any approach to 'levelling-up' will need to take

³⁹ 'The rural economy and levelling-up'; NFU/Onward, May 2021. and www.nfuonline.com/cross-sector/rural-affairs/broadband-and-mobile/broadband-must-read/2020-nfu-digital-survey-results-read-the-full-report

account of the rural-urban mix of the area, whether considering Cheshire East or the wider sub-region and be able to respond to evolving Government Policy.

The Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has a focus on 'Community and Place', 'Supporting Local Business' and 'People and Skills' and will help to fund projects that meet the Fund's criteria over the period to 2025. Part of the Government's 'levelling up' agenda, this also gives the Council the opportunity to consider how the projects and priorities can address some of the 'levelling up' opportunities where there are disparities within an area between rural and urban. A 'Rural fund' was announced in September 2022 as a top-up to UKSPF with an additional capital allocation as a successor to EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme. The fund will be for 2023/24 and 24/25 for 'local business' and 'communities and place' projects.

A briefing paper by NICRE⁴⁰ suggested that the Government's ambition to Share Prosperity or Build Back Better is the opportunity to visibly embrace the 20–25% of population, output and business stock hosted in England's rural areas. For Cheshire East, there will be rural representation on the UKSPF Local Partnership Group that will guide its implementation, but at the time of writing this plan, approval by Government of the UKSPF investment plan and preparation of a 'Rural Fund' addendum are awaited.

Access and Transport

Once plans are finalised, and subject to the outcome of the petitioning process, the Council will bring forward plans for the implementation of mitigation and route changes related to HS2b.

New government guidance from the Department of Transport will be available for Local transport Plans (LTP) from the end of 2022. This will apply to the whole borough and is expected to major on Decarbonising travel in accordance with national strategies. This is likely to re-introduce a performance-related funding regime so CEC has to decide where it can have greatest impact from its LTP investment.

CEC is undertaking a thorough review of home-to-school transport provision, with a view to improving sustainability for both parents and the Council. It is expected that the review will be completed in phases over the next 2-3 years. Community transport options will be investigated as part of a review of rural bus services, planned to be complete by April 23. Options will depend on availability of funding, as to date, CEC has not received any Government bus improvement funding.

Given the climate change imperative, there is a need to consider sustainable travel options for visitor attractions and major tourism businesses, many of which are in the rural area and can only be visited by car. EV charging infrastructure in rural areas and at attractions would assist this transition, while other options such as electric bikes at rail stations could be considered. There may also be links to Community Rail

⁴⁰ [NICRE Briefing Paper No 2 November 2021 The strategic case for equitable recognition of rural economies in Levelling Up policies.pdf \(ncl.ac.uk\)](#)

Partnerships, eg. Mid Cheshire Line CRP run a successful “Great Days out by Train” promotional campaign.

Research and intelligence: As the economy in rural areas is of importance to Cheshire East as a borough, there is an ongoing need to support future work with up to date and accessible local economic data, research, intelligence and analysis (including place and sector-based trends and data, visitor economy, events, SMEs, home working, investment, business needs, and mobile/digital connectivity).

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Working for a brighter future together

Economy & Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	13 th September 2022
Report Title:	Broadway Meadows Car Park
Report of:	Peter Skates
Report Reference No:	EG/04/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	Wilmslow wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform Committee as to the appraisal of the current surface car park at Broadway Meadows, Wilmslow, for development as a Multi Storey Car Park and ancillary residential development, to support additional provision of car parking spaces.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Corporate Plan identifies under the section for 'Thriving and Sustainable Place', an action & project for ;
- To increase parking provision close to local transport hubs
- Broadway Meadow multi-storey car park (MSCP)
 - Complete Local Transport Plan parking reviews
 - Town by town parking needs identified and plans progressed to match identified need.
- 2.2. Cheshire East Council published the Wilmslow Parking Strategy (WPS) in February 2020. A key recommendation of the WPS was to examine the business case for creating a multi-decked car park at Broadway Meadows to provide additional long stay parking for Wilmslow; and therefore, support the delivery of the parking strategy.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. To note that currently the financial viability of a new Multi Storey Car Park constructed on the existing surface car park has not been demonstrated.
- 3.2. To note that a further review of viability will be undertaken in 12 months, and alternative options of funding delivery and potential alternative locations will be explored.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The report seeks to update on deliverability of an aim and objective in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25, which identifies an intention to increase park provision close to local transport hubs.
- 4.2. A review in 12 months is identified as alternative options around funding and income guarantee, potentially through the private sector, may come forward as the occupation of the car park increases post covid. In addition, alternative sites for a car park could come forward, which may enable an improved financial analysis.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. This report sets out the analysis of the option to develop a new multi storey car park at Broadway Meadows Car Park in Wilmslow, and therefore inform next steps that could be undertaken.
- 5.2. To not provide the analysis of financial viability for development would not enable any decisions to be made with regard to proposal of new car park.

Option	Impact	Risk
<Do nothing – not to carry out a financial appraisal and feasibility review	No information would be available for assessment or decision by Committee	No basis to make any future decision.

6. Background

- 6.1. Cheshire East Council published the Wilmslow Parking Strategy (WPS) in February 2020. A key recommendation of the WPS was to examine the business case for creating a multi-decked car park at Broadway Meadows to provide additional long stay parking for Wilmslow; and therefore, support the delivery of the parking strategy.
- 6.2. Wilmslow is a town in the north of the Borough with a resident population of 24,497 (2011 Census). It is approximately 18km south of Manchester city centre, and approximately 4km south of the Greater

Manchester boundary. Subsequently, the town has significant economic ties with Greater Manchester and is subject to substantial commuter inflows and outflows to and from Greater Manchester, contributing to Wilmslow's economy to the benefit of both businesses and residents. Accordingly, Wilmslow's Gross Value Added (GVA) Index is higher than the UK's national average. Car ownership and use are high in Wilmslow, with 47% of households owning over two cars/vans which is 15% higher than the average for England (per 2011 Census). This contributes to a high reliance on car parking provision within the town.

- 6.3.** Wilmslow is a key service centre for the Cheshire East Borough and as such attracts in commuting and visitors from a wider area. Most of the employment is located within the centre, whilst key employer, Waters, is located to the west of Wilmslow. Royal London was until very recently another key employer based in Wilmslow but has since relocated to new premises at Alderley Park.
- 6.4.** Wilmslow Station is a railway station on the West Coast Mainline (Crewe to Manchester line) and is served by national rail services provided by Avanti West Coast, Cross Country, Arriva Northern and Transport for Wales. The capacity of station parking at Wilmslow rail station is constrained resulting in parking demand by rail users in areas outside of the station curtilage.
- 6.5.** Broadway Meadows Car Park is a Council owned long stay car park located in the centre of Wilmslow. It is one of seven Council owned car parks within Wilmslow; and one of only two car parks that are long stay. The car park currently provides 272 parking spaces.
- 6.6.** Car Parking in Wilmslow - overview
- 6.7.** In 2019, the Council completed a comprehensive review of parking in Wilmslow, informed by census data, correspondence received by the Council, engagement with key employers and on-street parking surveys. Public consultation took place between January and March 2019, with over 500 formal responses received by the Council.
- 6.8.** A set of proposals were developed to address parking issues in Wilmslow town centre and over-spill impacts in residential streets. Short term actions proposed in the report included developing an assessment for a multi-storey car park at Broadway Meadow and new parking restrictions on Alderley Road (Coach & Four to King's Arms Roundabout) which have since been completed.

- 6.9.** Overall, the parking strategy for Wilmslow proposes 47 management measures, with a clear delivery sequence to avoid merely shifting parking pressures from one part of Wilmslow to another.
- 6.10.** Parking demands in Wilmslow were affected quite markedly by the pandemic, especially the adoption of measures such as working-from-home. Activity levels have recovered more recently. Our most recent monitoring information (July 2022) indicates that current usage of town centre car parks is at 106% of pre-pandemic levels, with parking charging income at 98% of pre-pandemic levels. However, as a result of accommodating a high proportion of long-stay parking, Broadway Meadow continues to operate significantly below pre-pandemic levels. In June 2022, Broadway Meadows recorded occupancy at 40% compared to March 2020.
- 6.11.** Like many towns in the borough, there has been a decline in the average duration of stay in car parks with long-stay parking reduced whilst short stay parking has returned to levels greater than pre-pandemic. These trends are now quite stable and are considered to represent changes in lifestyles and behaviours that may be considered long-term.
- 6.12.** Provision of a new Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP)
- 6.13.** The Highways Department commissioned Ringway Jacobs to undertake a benchmarking study to use in consideration of a high level business case to develop a MSCP at Broadway Meadow. Ringway Jacobs considered the following options within this exercise: Report was received in February 2021.

Option 1	180 Space, two storey car park with a target Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA) of 4,296m ²
Option 2	280 Space, two storey car park with a target Gross Internal Floor Area of 6,720m ²
Option 3	400 Space, three storey car park with a target Gross Internal Floor Area of 9,600m ²

- 6.14.** It was agreed that the optimum solution supported by demand at that time was a circa 400 space car park. (Note: this was pre-covid demand but represented an appraisal based on the maximum usage for the car park)
- 6.15.** The 'Project' passed then from the Highways Teams to the Capital Projects Team. This team administers Capital Projects for the Council

– Schools , Leisure Centres, and as a comparison project, Royal Arcade MSCP in Crewe.

- 6.16.** Other development options on part of site :
- 6.17.** In addition, there was the potential available for releasing some of the site for Residential development (a potentially strong property location), thereby receiving a capital receipt to offset some of the MSCP development costs. To this end, the project delivery team instructed the architects to produce a massing exercise for both the MSCP and the proposed residential development element.
- 6.18.** The most suitable option for massing on the site for a car park and residential developments is illustrated in appendix A.
- 6.19.** Financial Appraisal
- 6.20.** In order to build a strong and robust business case, The Council requires financial modelling to assess the four primary areas of a development project;
- Annual Revenue
 - Management Cost
 - Total Construction Cost
 - Finance Cost – the cost of borrowing the money to fund the Car park.
- 6.21.** Annual Revenue –Highways Parking team reviewed all the key issues and assumptions including a price per space, occupancy, and potential for inflation growth in this price per space. Confirmation of the revenue was assessed against current charging levels but noting that a future Car Parking Review would consider car parking charges which would be considered through Transport & Highways Committee.
- 6.22.** Finally, any assessment on revenue must consider, and have regard to, the challenges in forecasting post covid occupancy, particularly in a town centre like Wilmslow that has a high level of office provision within its core centre.
- 6.23.** Appendix B identifies transactions and forecast revenue since 2019/2020 to 2023/24.
- 6.24.** Total Construction Cost – In order to provide improved cost analysis, and to engage in early discussions with a Contractor to build the MSCP, it was determined that the SCAPE Framework (a single source pre-procured construction framework) could provide the Council with a viable way to advance the principle of delivery.

- 6.25.** Under the Framework the single source contractor at the time was Wilmott Dixon, who also had a track record in the design and delivery of new multi storey car parks.
- 6.26.** With the SCAPE Framework, the Council had the ability to enter into a Pre Contract Services Agreement (PCSA), which enables the pre development aspects of a project to be advanced.
- 6.27.** Wilmott Dixon produced an appraisal in August 2021, which confirmed physical deliverability and some design aspects, but highlighted a cost and design/development fees. The total cost was assessed at this early design stage as circa £8.33M.
- 6.28.** Since that original cost plan was presented in August 2021, there has been considerable cost inflation and a fair assumption is that this cost would have increased by circa 9%, and therefore a new estimated figure of £9.08M
- 6.29.** Finance Costs – In order to fund the capital cost of constructing the new Multi storey Car park, the Council would have to borrow money to finance the construction, using Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), but would have the benefit of a subsidy from any premium from the residential site.
- 6.30.** The cost of borrowing on the capital outlay of £9.08m would require an annual repayment of £330,712 over the next 50 years. This includes borrowing the funds from the PWLB at the current rate of 3.22% then repaying the minimum revenue requirement for the principal amount. The total sum repayable would be £16.6m.
- 6.31.** Importance of Revenue to the Council's Budget
- 6.32.** To provide the best opportunity to achieve the Corporate Plan, and manage the ambitions of the Borough, the Council has created a Medium-Term Financial Strategy that continues to balance spending on services against resources across each of the next four years.
- 6.33.** Revenue is therefore key to delivering services across all the Council. Loss of revenue would therefore impact on services and the MTFS
- 6.34.** The key financial principal for this project should be that the Council is maintaining or improving a level of net revenue received.

6.35. The Financial Analysis:

6.36. Current Car Park

6.37. 272 spaces produced a gross revenue of circa £14,683 in June 2022 from 3,673 transactions. The equivalent month in 2019 produced revenue of £27,742 from 5496 transactions.

6.38. Pre Covid, the annual income (net of VAT) for financial year 2019/2020 was circa £274,525 (averaged to £22,877 per month) from 64,810 transactions (averaged to 5,401 per month).

6.39. The current financial year (2022/2023) based on receipts and forecasts on future months is estimated to be £161,945 (net of VAT) from circa 48,831 transactions.

6.40. Therefore, the car park is currently operating at a forecasted level for 2022/23 which is 59% on income revenue, and 75% on transactions, below that pre Covid.

6.41. A Future MSCP

6.42. Projecting assessments of income to a total of 403 spaces would see a potential annual revenue of circa £437,255 and applying this to a financial sensitivity analysis with assumptions at 75% occupancy across a week, and 'per space' pricing that had a 2% per annum growth. Set against a cost of £9.08M, payback is likely to be in circa 40 years.

6.43. A blended actual/forecast income level of £161,945 (2022/23) (net of VAT) is predicted for the current car park of 272 spaces and those spaces are not being fully occupied. This net income alone would not be sufficient to cover annual finance costs of a new MSCP. This figure if projected pro rata for 403 spaces would see a net rent of circa £239,941 with a projected payback of circa 73 years.

6.44. However, in financial analysis, any cost benefit cannot be assessed against a total of 403 new carpark spaces, but should be assessed against the actual additional new spaces on top of the existing 272. Therefore, it is the additional 131 spaces that would need to cover the cost of the new car park in additional income.

6.45. The Council would be investing £9.08M to deliver an additional 131 spaces, with an estimated additional income maximum (based on current full day price) of circa £142,135 (net of VAT) assessed.

6.46. The cost of borrowing on the capital outlay of £9.08m would require an annual finance repayment of £330,712 over the next 50 years

6.47. The net income from 131 spaces would not be sufficient to recover the borrowing and finance costs of a capital sum of circa £9.08M, and consequently demonstrates a financial deficit.

6.48. Conclusion:

6.49. At this time, the viability of a new Multi Storey Car Park has not been demonstrated, but will be subject to further review to explore any opportunities that would change the financial profile, and alternative development approaches including partnering with the private sector. Furthermore, other development opportunities may come forward on the site to enable additional capital receipts to offset costs.

6.50. The outcome of any future analysis and review will be reported back to this Committee.

7. Consultation and Engagement

7.1. As part of the preparation of the internal assessment, conversations with a number of ward councillors have been undertaken to understand local requirements and usage of the car park.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

8.1.1. As this is an appraisal report for noting, and there are no legal transactions proposed at this time, and therefore no legal implications have been considered in this report.

8.2. Finance

8.2.1. The financial appraisal is identified in this report and in the appendices, demonstrating that the business case to construct a new multi storey car park is demonstrated not to be viable at this time, but will be subject to further review.

8.3. Policy

8.3.1. The Corporate Plan identifies under the section for 'Thriving and Sustainable Place', an action & project for to increase parking provision close to local transport hubs including Broadway Meadow multi-storey car park (MSCP)

8.3.2. The Council published the Wilmslow Parking Strategy (WPS) in February 2020. A key recommendation of the WPS was to examine the business case for creating a multi-decked car park at Broadway Meadows to provide additional long stay parking for Wilmslow.

8.4. Equality

8.4.1. As this is an appraisal report for noting, and there are there are no equality issues or impact assessments to be considered at this time.

8.4.2. Human Resources

8.4.3. There are no human resources implications resulting from this report.

8.5. Risk Management

8.5.1. This is an appraisal report for noting by committee and therefore no ongoing risk management.

8.6. Rural Communities

8.6.1. None relating to this report

8.7. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.7.1. None relating to this report

8.8. Public Health

8.8.1. None relating to this report

8.9. Climate Change

8.9.1. This report is to note the feasibility appraisal of a MSCP to address parking provision within the town of Wilmslow.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Peter Skates Director of Growth & Enterprise peter.skates@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendices A&B
Background Papers:	None

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Appendix A :

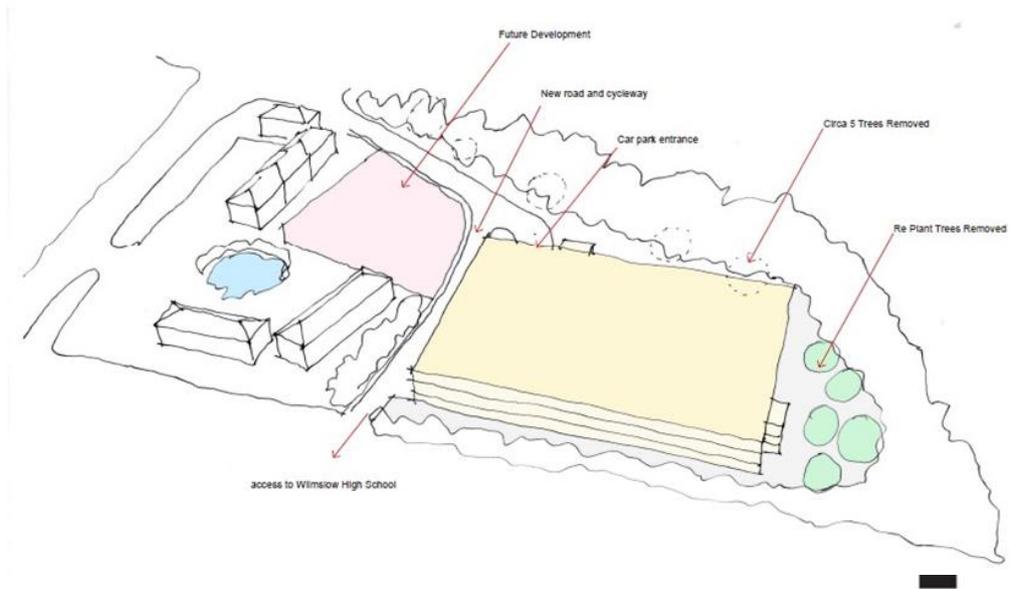
Option 4

Preferred Option

This option follows the principles established in the Design Brief Update Meeting on 10 May 2021.

Drift Levels - Footprint 1,640 sqm	Gross Area sqm	Spaces
Ground Floor	3570	133
Level 1	3570	133
Level 2	3570	133
		399

ANALYSIS	
Pros:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger footprint than Option 1-3 • Retains existing site boundaries • Releases site for future development • Larger footprint reduces scale and limits impact on residential community
Cons:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree removal required (although replanted)



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Design Summary

Proposed Site

The proposed site, owned by Cheshire East Council is known locally as the Broadway Meadow Car Park and provides parking for town centre users.

Cheshire East is undertaking a review of local car parking provision and is considering the use of Broadway Meadow for a multi-storey car park. This car park is aimed at will increase the long stay parking provision within the town centre, together with improving the legibility of car parking provision for residents, businesses and visitors.

This summary provides a high level appraisal of the site to ascertain capacity. Should the project move forwards, the next stage would be a feasibility study to RIBA Stage 1 to consider the layout and scale of the development.



Work Programme – Economy and Growth Committee – 2022/23

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
EG/12/22-23	15 Nov 2022	Empty Homes - Our Approach	To outline the options available to the Council to bring empty homes back into use, outlining the powers and financial requirements and approve an agreed approach which will be implemented by the Housing Standards and Adaptations Team.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		TBC	No	Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods	No
EG/15/22-23	15 Nov 2022	Visitor Economy Strategy	To approve the adoption of the Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy 2023-2028.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		TBC	No	Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods	No
EG/07/22-23	15 Nov 2022	Mid Year Review Financial Report	To receive an update on the financial position for 2022/23. To note or approve virements and supplementary estimates as required.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)		No	Yes	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making	No
EG/11/22-23	15 Nov 2022	Mid Year Performance Review	To consider mid-year performance.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	No	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making	No

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
EG/18/22-23	15 Nov 2022	Handforth Garden Village - Delivery Strategy	To seek approval for the funding and delivery strategy to safeguard, stabilise and ultimately restore the derelict buildings at Dairy House Farm and the procurement of the Pre-Construction works at the Garden Village.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	Yes	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making	Yes - 3
CE/19/22-23	15 Nov 2022	Housing Options Domestic Abuse Policy	To approve the Housing Options Domestic Abuse Policy, which outlines the services commitment to supporting those affected by domestic abuse, which is in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		Yes	No	Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient	No
EG/20/22-23	15 Nov 2022	Private Rented Sector Incentive Scheme	To approve the implementation of a Private Rented Incentive Scheme to enable officers to work with private sector landlords to secure affordable rented accommodation.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	No	Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient	No
EG/21/2-23	15 Nov 2022	Crewe Regeneration Programme Update	To provide an update on progress with the Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Programme.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	No	Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods	Yes/3

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
EG/22/22-23	15 Nov 2022	F106 Financial Contribution Policy Update	To approve the revised policy in relation to the spending of S106 contributions received in lieu of affordable housing.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	No	Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods	No
EG/03/22-23	17 Jan 2023	Asset Management Plan	The report introduces the Council's Asset Management Strategy and Corporate Asset Management Plan.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		Yes	Yes	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making	No
EG/08/22-23	17 Jan 2023	MTFS Budget Consultation	To respond to the budget consultation.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)		No	Yes	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making	No
EG/04/22-23	17 Jan 2023	Supported Employment Strategy	This report sets out the recommendations for a strategic approach to supported employment relating to adult social care customers with complex needs and support into work.	Executive Director Adults, Health and Integration		Yes	Yes	Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods	No
EG/09/22-23	14 Mar 2023	Second Financial Review Report	To receive an update on the financial position for 2022/23. To note or approve virements and supplementary estimates as required.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)		No	Yes	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making	No
EG/02/22-23		Town Centre Vitality Plans	To consider the outcomes of the public consultation.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		Yes	No	Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods	No

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
EG/10/22-23		Disposal of Public Open Space Land off Talke Road, Alsager	To provide all the relevant information, including the representations made in response to the intention to dispose of the Public Open Space land off Talke Road, Alsager for the purposes of the Council's compliance with its obligation to give consideration to such objections.	Director of Growth and Enterprise		No	No	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making	tbc