

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 July 2018 16:34
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:
Subject: Re: [OFFICIAL] RE: Longridge land plan

[REDACTED]

This is the link to the plan showing the two pieces of land, the land delineated green and the land delineated blue for sale.

These are the parcels of land that CEC Cabinet has agreed to dispose of and which I am seeking to understand the process with a view to buying them from the Council.

So the decision to dispose has been made, therefore will it be [REDACTED] or will it be someone else who deals with the disposal?

Thank you

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/documents/s58738/Longridge%20Knutsford%20-%20Appendix%201.pdf>

Indicative Disposal Land - Cheshire East

moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk

Cheshire East Council* Issues Spreads Springwc Farm 46m Weir o Egerton 'o // House St John's - Wood Gaskell Rise School Path St John's-Church 57m

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 July 2018 15:45
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [OFFICIAL] RE: Longridge land plan

Dear [REDACTED]

My colleague [REDACTED] deals with Disposal assets and can review the land in question and determine if it is a surplus asset or not. He is on holiday until next Tuesday but will contact you on his return. He will need to know specifically which area of land you are wanting to buy ?

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 July 2018 11:26
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: [OFFICIAL] FW: Longridge land plan

[REDACTED]

How do I go about buying this land from the Council?

Thank you

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 05 July 2018 16:28
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Automatic reply: [OFFICIAL] FW: Longridge land plan

I'm out of the office on leave Friday until Monday 9th July 18.

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[REDACTED]

From: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Sent: 19 July 2018 11:57
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fw: Booths Mere development

This arrived in the proposeddisposalofpublicopenspace email box yesterday...

[REDACTED]

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 18-Jul-2018 21:35
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: Booths Mere development

Sir/Madam

I think the development of semi open land adjacent to the Longridge estate and Booths Hall would be wholly beneficial to deal with the urgent need for housing in the north Cheshire and Knutsford areas. There would need to be road improvements to the routes from Wilmslow to Knutsford and the Toft Road link; and additional primary school capacity in east Knutsford.

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 August 2018 14:25
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford
Attachments: Protecting and Enhancing Knutsford's Natural Environment.pdf; CWT Report Extracts.docx

Dear [REDACTED]

I'm writing to you as the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Regeneration in connection with the two Council owned open space sites i.e. the Green Land and the Blue Land at Longridge, Knutsford. These two plots, as you know, are adjacent to the much bigger land area situated across the road from the Longridge Housing Estate and referred to as site LPS 38, on which it is proposed, in the Cheshire East Council (CEC) local plan, to build 225 houses. I object to the development of LPS 38 and consequently I oppose the sale of these two adjoining strips.

Firstly, I will explain why I oppose the development of LPS 38. I don't know how familiar you are with this area. It's a large site which has not been farmed for many decades and so, over the years, has transformed into a natural wilderness area. It is much more than just a grass field. I and many others regularly walk through it. Soon after you enter you leave the modern world behind for a while to be completely surrounded by trees, including many young oaks, various bushes, plants and an abundance of wildlife. There is not a house or car in sight, the only modern intrusion being aircraft overhead. It has over time become a unique place of natural beauty, not possible to replicate.

Our sons, when they were growing up, paddled in Birkin Brook at one end of the site. Also at this end is an area of ancient woodland which includes Scots Pines. It's used by St John's Wood Academy as a forest school for young teenagers with special needs. They said the following: "Using a local woodland, we have been amazed at the progress pupils have made in increasing their self-esteem and self confidence. Most of our students have had negative experiences of school, but by participating in the Forest School they have been motivated, inspired and had fun." (Knutsford Guardian, 22 March 2018, Page 8)

Fishing takes place frequently in Booths Mere at the other end of the site. The space in between with it's pond and dozens of young oak trees scattered throughout, is used daily by walkers including dog owners and accompanied walks throughout it, take place about once a month. The whole area, not just the Birkin Brook end, forms part of a wildlife corridor which extends from Tatton Park on one side to Springwood on the other and beyond. Attached is a report entitled 'Protecting & Enhancing Knutsford's Natural Environment' which Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) published in October 2017. Also attached are paragraphs I've extracted from it, which relate specifically to this general area. As you can see from this report, CWT have included this site as one of the areas of distinctiveness providing important wildlife habitats in their own right as well as acting as ecological stepping stones and corridors. Importantly, they go on to recommend that the corridor network (and the whole of this site is clearly a big part of it) is identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and protected from development. (See map 10 on page 14 of the main report and also paragraph two on page 21.)

The residents in this corner of Knutsford, including Shaw Heath, Longridge, Higher Downs and North Downs already have an industrial estate, a household waste recycling centre and a petrol filling station in close proximity, while at the same time more homes and businesses are proposed at nearby Parkgate. Overall, there are plans for almost 1,000 houses in Knutsford, so in the future it's likely that a ring road will surround the town. People are becoming more disconnected from nature, so, easily accessible green breathing spaces, like this, to escape to, are increasingly important. Of the land that remains round Knutsford, this place is the most suitable and obvious to save.

CEC say that the proposed development would create approximately 20 acres of new public open space. That is not so. This open space is already used by the public for recreational purposes. Building houses on it would divide and reduce the area for people's enjoyment. The public who use it have no desire to walk round a new housing development built in the centre of it.

Mobberley Road struggles to cope with the volume of traffic between this area and the town centre. It is frequently difficult to access Knutsford from this side of town. Major development is proposed for Parkgate. The scheme for that industrial estate would result in extra vehicles (700) using the business units there. In addition to that, the plan to build houses at the northern end of Parkgate Lane would result in yet more vehicles (400) using Mobberley Road. This part of Knutsford being restricted by the proximity of Tatton Park has difficulty coping at present and certainly could not cope with an extra 1,100 vehicles from Parkgate. LPS 38 if it were to proceed would add another 400 vehicles to this congestion along with the added pollution and noise all that would create.

Also, I object to the sale of these two pieces of land for a couple of reasons directly connected with them, as opposed to with the main site.

Constructing a road through the blue playing field land to join Longridge would create a dangerous cross roads. The present junction is on a camber, near a school and a bus stop and already has restricted visibility.

CEC refer to the Green area as consisting of a thin strip of overgrown land running parallel to Longridge. The Council own and are responsible for the upkeep of this strip, so if it is overgrown, CEC have allowed it to be so. It may be a little overgrown but in reality it has an abundance of trees, bushes and plants. As a result it is a haven for insects and birdlife.

Finally, LPS 38 was adopted into the Local Plan on the 27th of July 2017, despite there being no means of access to the site. Then in October 2017 the Cabinet of CEC considered a report exploring options for enabling access. It was a flawed decision in the first instance to include this landlocked site in the local plan, a site which would require the sale of not one but two pieces of council land, one to create access to it and the other it's not clear why it would need to be sold as it's got a covenant on it barring access anyway. It's not deliverable and should now be removed from allocation. It is therefore not necessary to sell these two pieces of land adjoining it, so I ask you not to dispose of any or all of the adjoining Green or Blue open space land at Longridge, Knutsford. CWT stress that the whole area should be protected from development and I agree. It is too important ecologically and all of it should continue to be available for recreational purposes.

You will be making a decision which will shape the future of our area. It's possible that you have never been through the site. Earlier this year my wife and I invited you, as a cabinet member of CEC to come and walk the area with us. I ask that you as Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing & Regeneration, set aside an hour and yet again invite you to come and walk through the whole Dewscope site with us to see it for yourself. Having experienced it properly you will then be in a better position to consider whether 225 houses is really the right way forward for this wild oasis or whether it should be protected from development for people to enjoy. My wife and I will be very happy to accompany you on a walk through this land before you make that important decision concerning it's future.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the sender.

Protecting & Enhancing Knutsford's Natural Environment – Cheshire Wildlife Trust – October 2017

(Page 8) Most of Cheshire, the northern half of Shropshire and part of northwest Staffordshire sit within the *Meres and Mosses Natural Area*. This is an expansive area of gently rolling agricultural plain which, at the end of the last ice age, was largely underwater. Although the vast area of water eventually drained away it left behind a wetland landscape of meres, mosses, meandering rivers and ponds. This landscape is recognised as being of international importance for its wetland wildlife.

(Page 15) Although most woodlands in Cheshire are fragmented and impoverished, the woodland along the eastern boundary of Knutsford is an exception with large areas of inter-connected wildlife-rich habitat. Some of this woodland is thought to be at least 400 years old and Spring Wood is listed on the Natural England ancient woodland inventory (2015) and designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Spring Wood has a canopy of oak, ash and birch with a rowan, hawthorn and holly understorey. Ancient woodlands are considered irreplaceable habitats due to time taken for them to acquire their diverse flora and fauna and the indicator species are those that take hundreds of years to disperse. St John's Wood is an ash, sycamore, wych elm dominated woodland in a small damp valley on the edge of the town. Although probably not ancient it appears on the 1875 maps and has a good diversity of native species including yellow pimpernel and sweet woodruff which is present in the south of the site. It is possible that this part of the wood is older than the rest. There are reportedly over 60 species of woodland fungi present. Despite it being largely surrounded by development it is an important site and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

(Page 16) The presence of high quality woodland in the Knutsford area means that the area is important for other notable birds including spotted flycatcher which has been recorded breeding in the locality. Rare hobby and kestrel have both been recorded in the vicinity of the woodlands, and whilst kestrel is thought to breed in the locality it is less likely (but possible) that hobby breed here. There are at least three species of breeding owl in the vicinity of the woodlands around Tatton Mere including tawny owl, barn owl and little owl.

The semi-natural woodland in Knutsford is highly likely to support roosts of UK priority bat species which will forage for insect prey along the woodland edges, fens and waterbodies and along any intact hedgerows. Pipistrelle and Soprano pipistrelle bats have both been recorded in the Tatton Mere area.

Watercourses Marthall brook runs in a northerly direction along the eastern boundary of Knutsford Parish turning into Birkin Brook at the point where it is joined by Pedley Brook. Marthall brook upstream of Spring Wood is a highly diverse complex of wetland, species-rich grassland and woodland. Oak Wood which lies outside the parish boundary is similar to Spring Wood but has extensive areas of wood anemone.

The Knutsford area also supports rare pockets of species-rich grassland, the fastest disappearing habitat in the UK. Most of these pockets are on steep slopes, by the edges of woodland or on the edges of the meres and streams.

The species-rich neutral grassland on the grassy banks of the Marthall brook is particularly notable for butterflies and supports uncommon flora such as burnet saxifrage, adders tongue and dyer's greenweed.

(Page 17) Boothsmere and its adjacent areas of rough grassland and woodland is much smaller than the Tatton mere complex but also supports notable winter wildfowl populations as well as an array of woodland birds and uncommon wetland flora such as cowbane and water avens

(Page 18) Many of the 'medium distinctiveness' habitats are thought to be semi-natural grassland, in particular on the less productive margins of the watercourses and some woodlands such as St John's Wood. Semi-natural grasslands are invaluable for wildlife as they can support large populations of invertebrates and mammals such as brown hare (which has been recorded to the south of Knutsford). Many local red listed farmland birds such as linnet, skylark and yellow wagtail (recorded to the west of Knutsford) will feed on insects that live in semi-natural grasslands. Over-wintering birds such as fieldfare and redwing are found in especially high numbers in the Longridge area of Knutsford where they feed in open areas of semi-natural habitat.

(Page 18) Scattered farmland/parkland trees such as those present near Booths mere and the hedgerow network also help with landscape permeability by providing habitat and a food source for declining farmland bird populations such as house sparrow and yellowhammer and bullfinch which are all present in the wider area. Invertebrates and small mammals also inhabit hedgerows, in particular those with adjacent wide field margins as well as inhabiting areas of semi-improved grassland. The small mammal population supports birds such as barn owl which consequently do best in areas where the traditional farmland landscape is intact. Although the hedgerow network in Knutsford is generally very poor and fragmented there is one area around Brickhill Wood to the south east of Knutsford with a good hedgerow system. This is linked to the Marthall Brook corridor and is likely to be a very important area of the parish for birds as well as for foraging and commuting bats.

(Page 20) *Conclusion*

This study has highlighted that the important wildlife habitat in Knutsford is mainly associated with the meres and their fringing habitats as well as the native woodlands and species-rich grasslands along the Birkin and Marthall Brooks.

(Page 21) Most notably the study has highlighted a 'wildlife corridor network' which provides ecological connectivity between the meres, fringing wetlands, woodland and grasslands within and beyond the Neighbourhood Planning area. The wildlife corridor network supports a wide range of species including numerous birds, plants, mammals, and invertebrates that are in decline both locally and nationally. Some of the most notable are the rare plant species such as cowbane, sweet woodruff, adders tongue, dyer's green weed and water avens. Rare birds such as hobby and Cetti's warbler are important, as are the bird species which are declining fastest such as grasshopper warbler, lapwing, house sparrow, grey wagtail, linnet, yellow wagtail, spotted flycatcher, thrushes, starling, tree pipit, pochard and fast declining overwintering birds such as fieldfare and redwing.

Introduction

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

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

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

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

Objectives of the study

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

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

Protecting and Enhancing Knutsford's Natural Environment



Cheshire
Wildlife Trust

October 2017

• *Buffer zones*

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

• *Sustainable use areas*

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

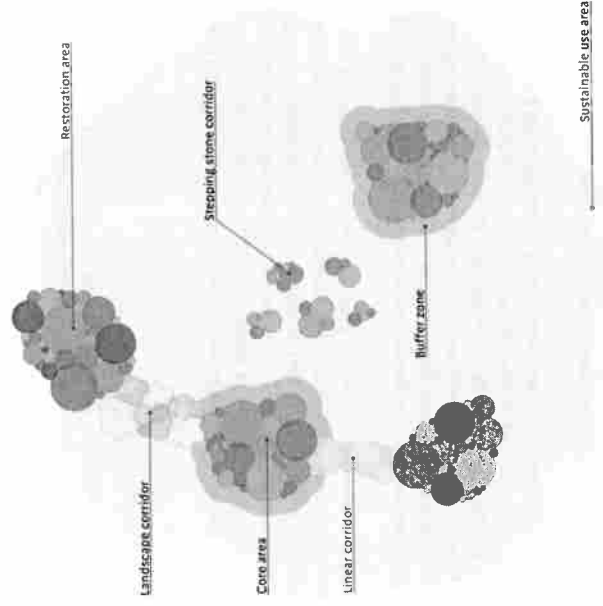


Figure 1. The components of ecological networks (Making Space for Nature report)

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

Background – ecological networks

In 2010 Professor Sir John Lawton submitted a report to DEFRA entitled 'Making Space for Nature:

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

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

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

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

• *Core areas*

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

• *Corridors and stepping stones*

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

• *Restoration areas*

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

Map 1: Landscape Character Typology



The Landscape Character Assessment (Map 1) identifies two recognisable landscape character types (LCTs) within the Knutsford Neighbourhood planning area, namely: Estate, Wood and Mere and Lower Farms and Woods. Each LCT is subdivided into smaller Landscape Character Areas (LCAs); details of the relevant LCTs and LCAs are given below:

LCT 9 - Estate, Wood and Mere (EWM)

- Large historic houses, associated buildings including estate farms, lodges etc.
- High densities of woodland – broadleaved and mixed
- Ornamental landscape features such as parkland and lakes
- Meres, mosses and ponds. Some meres adapted for ornamental purposes
- Wildfowl habitats
- Flat to undulating relief
- Irregular, semi-regular and regular fields (up to 8ha)
- Dispersed settlement
- Leisure facilities – visitor attractions e.g. historic estates (house and land) and golf courses

EWM 4 Tatton and Rostherne Character Area

This area lies to the north of Knutsford and incorporates 400 ha Tatton Park, one of the finest examples of an historic parkland in the country. The parkland includes landscaped gardens, Tatton Meres, the Deer Park and numerous woodlands. Main roads in the area skirt the parkland meaning that it has remained intact and distinct in character. This lack of fragmentation has also added to its wildlife value with large areas that support important habitats and species. The meres and fringing

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

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

Landscape Character Assessment for the Cheshire region

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

arable fields. There are a very small number of hedgerows meaning that the landscape is open and consequently the M6 motorway is very conspicuous.

Natural Area

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

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

ECOnet – Integrated vision of the Cheshire County Ecological Network

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

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

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

habitats are particularly notable for their wetland flora, as are the extensive areas of acid grassland in the old deer enclosure.

This is an undulating landscape with steeper slopes to the north in the area around Rostherne Mere. There are linear woodlands at Witchcote Wood, Dog Wood and Shawheath Plantation as well as scattered parkland trees and coverts within Tatton Park itself. On the outskirts of this character area are a number of individual farms some of which are estate tenancies.

EWM 5 Tabley Character Area

This area is defined by the three adjacent estates at Tabley, Toft and Booths Hall. The countryside is a gently undulating pastoral landscape with many intact hedgerows and a high density of woodland including planted parkland with scattered trees and more extensive blocks of woodland. Today the highly visible M6 motorway runs longitudinally through the landscape separating Tabley estate from the other two. The A50 and A537 run in the same direction and are now busy commuting routes to and from Knutsford town.

Settlement across this Landscape Character Area is low density with dispersed farms and halls. Fields are small to medium sized (up to 8 ha) and regular in shape apart from the areas to the east of Tabley and Toft where medieval field systems with small irregular fields are still visible. To the south of Knutsford is an area of more intensive arable farming with expansive fields where hedgerows have been removed or are cut low.

There are meres at Tabley and Booths Hall and further ornamental water features sit within planned landscapes with sweeping tree-lined drives and mature specimen trees. At Booths Hall there are relict Victorian gardens and at Norbury Booths is the site of a moated medieval hall with woodland, streams and ponds.

LCT 10 Lower Farms and Woods (LFW)

Key characteristics

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

LFW3 – Arley Character Area

This is a low rolling character area which extends from the county boundary in the north to the gas storage fields at Holcroft Moss. Across this area the fields are generally medium to large with some localised areas having a much strong network of hedgerows and field trees than others. The area to the immediate west of Knutsford and east of the M6 is intensively farmed and mainly consists of

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

Habitat type bands (Defra March 2012)

- Several published data sets were used to produce the habitat distinctiveness maps:
 - Priority habitat Natural England – High/medium confidence coded as high distinctiveness, and low confidence coded as medium distinctiveness unless other data is available.
 - Landcover data, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology 2007. Priority habitats (principal importance) and semi-natural habitats coded as medium distinctiveness (data in Appendix 1)
 - Agricultural land classification, Natural England - grade 4 medium distinctiveness, grade 5 high distinctiveness (adjusted where other data is available).
 - Protected sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves), Natural England, CWT/CW&C Local Authority – coded as high distinctiveness.
 - Ancient woodlands – Natural England 2015 – coded as high distinctiveness.
 - Meres and Mosses and other peat soils, Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership scheme, 2016. Functional Ecological Units, river valley peat and destroyed (historical) peat coded as medium distinctiveness. (Supporting information in Appendix 2.)
- Aerial photography (Microsoft Bing™ imagery) was used to validate the results by eye.
- The Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan area Land Character Assessment and EConet categories were mapped and the results were used to inform the conclusions.
- Habitat data from recent planning applications in Knutsford were researched and incorporated where appropriate.

Map 2: Ecological Network Mapping (EConet)



Due to the high number of sites designated for nature conservation the majority of the Knutsford area was identified by EConet as a fundamental component of the county wide ecological network (shaded purple).

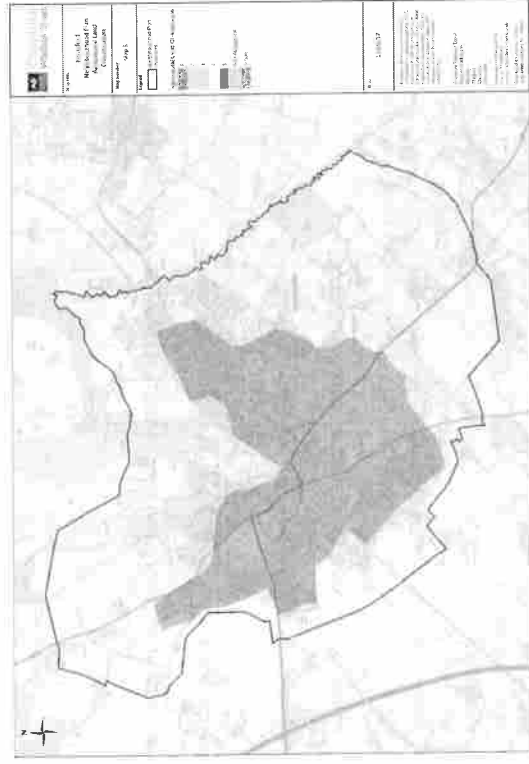
To the south east of Knutsford is a 'woodland development area (moderate ambition)' as it contains or lies close to important areas of ancient woodland including that at Spring wood. The extension of existing woodlands in this area (to incorporate land of current low habitat distinctiveness) would be highly desirable, particularly as a method of buffering and in the long term extending important and fragile habitats. EConet development areas are identified as those that would benefit most from restoration of the identified habitat type.

Methodology

Creating a habitat distinctiveness map

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

Map 5: Agricultural Land Grading – Natural England 2013



Map 6: Nature Conservation Sites, including designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, European designated sites (SAC, SPA), Ramsar sites, Local Wildlife Sites and non-designated Potential Local Wildlife Sites



Mapping

Map 3: Terrestrial habitats of Principal Importance – Natural England 2014



Map 4: Land Cover Map 2007 (LCM2007) is a parcel-based classification of satellite image data showing land cover for the entire United Kingdom derived from a computer classification of satellite scenes obtained mainly from the Landsat sensor



Map 9: Habitat Distinctiveness



Map 10: Indicative Wildlife Corridor Network



Map 7: Ancient woodland – Natural England 2015



Map 8: Meres and Mosses and other peat soils, Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership Scheme 2016



woodland has developed over lowland heath and supports a number of bird species including red listed¹ song thrush.

The presence of high quality woodland in the Knutsford area means that the area is important for other notable or red listed birds including spotted flycatcher which has been recorded breeding in the locality. Rare hobby and kestrel (amber listed) have both been recorded in the vicinity of the woodlands, and whist kestrel is thought to breed in the locality it is less likely (but possible) that hobby breed here. There are at least three species of breeding owl in the vicinity of the woodlands around Tatton Mere including tawny owl (amber listed), barn owl and little owl.

The semi-natural woodland in Knutsford is highly likely to support roosts of UK priority bat species which will forage for insect prey along the woodland edges, fens and waterbodies and along any intact hedgerows. Pipistrelle and Soprano pipistrelle bats have both been recorded in the Tatton Mere area.

The damp woodlands in the Knutsford area have a rich flora but unfortunately they also provide perfect conditions for the spread of the invasive non-native Himalayan balsam, which is present in abundance in the Knutsford Moor area and most likely along sections of Birkin Brook. This species is probably the biggest threat to the integrity of woodlands and wetlands as its vigorous growth means that native flora is outcompeted. This can have a devastating impact on the native flora and a knock on effect on groups of species such as birds, invertebrates and mammals. Himalayan balsam can also cause severe soil erosion issues when native flora that binds the soil disappears. This is particularly damaging to the banks of waterbodies causing soil to wash into the watercourses affecting the water quality.

2. Watercourses

Marshall brook runs in a northerly direction along the eastern boundary of Knutsford Parish turning into Birkin Brook at the point where it is joined by Pedley Brook. Marshall brook upstream of Spring Wood is a highly diverse complex of wetland, species-rich grassland and woodland. Oak Wood which lies outside the parish boundary is similar to Spring Wood but has extensive areas of wood anemone.

3. Species-rich grasslands

The Knutsford area also supports rare pockets of species-rich grassland, the fastest disappearing habitat in the UK. Most of these pockets are on steep slopes, by the edges of woodland or on the edges of the meres and streams. The species-rich neutral grassland on the grassy banks of the Marshall brook is particularly notable for butterflies and supports uncommon flora such as burnet saxifrage, adders tongue and dyer's greenweed. On the edge of Sanctuary Moor there are two areas of species rich grassland supporting species such as ragged robin, purple loosestrife, marsh cinqufoil and numerous sedges.

Although lying outside the parish boundary the old deer enclosure at Tatton Park is notable for having one of the largest expanses of unimproved acid grassland in the region (which is a designated

¹ Birds of Conservation Concern 2017

Results and discussion

High distinctiveness habitat (habitat of Principal Importance)

1. Woodland

Although most woodlands in Cheshire are fragmented and impoverished, the woodland along the eastern boundary of Knutsford is an exception with large areas of inter-connected wildlife-rich habitat. Some of this woodland is thought to be at least 400 years old and Spring Wood is listed on the ancient woodland inventory (Natural England 2015) and designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Spring Wood has a canopy of oak, ash and birch with a rowan, hawthorn and holly understorey. Ancient woodlands are considered irreplaceable habitats due to time taken for them to acquire their diverse flora and fauna and the indicator species are those that take hundreds of years to disperse.

St John's Wood is an ash, sycamore, wych elm dominated woodland in a small damp valley on the edge of the town. Although probably not ancient it appears on the 1875 maps and has a good diversity of native species including yellow pimpernel and sweet woodruff which is present in the south of the site. It is possible that this part of the wood is older than the rest. There are reportedly over 60 species of woodland fungi present. Despite it being largely surrounded by development it is an important site and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site; however wildlife at St John's Wood is vulnerable due to recreational pressures, littering and the impact that non-native species from adjacent gardens are having on the native biodiversity.

Windmill wood is a mixed plantation woodland with pockets of native broadleaved woodland with birch, oak holly and rowan and a good diversity of woodland fungi. Unfortunately invasive non-native rhododendron is present in more than 25% of the woodland the result of which is a diminished ground flora and limited general biodiversity.

Sanctuary Moor sits in a peaty depression south of Knutsford Moor and was very likely to have once been part of the glacial mere/fen complex to the north. The site is important for its wet alder/willow carr woodland with species such as the rare royal fern, ramsons, marsh marigold, reed sweet grass, meadowsweet and at least three species of peat forming sphagnum moss. Unfortunately there has been some damaging invasive non-native species planted around the edge including rhododendron, bamboo and cultivated arum.

Dogwood is a mosaic of different habitats with areas of mature plantation woodland and secondary sycamore woodland. There is a small area of mature semi-natural woodland towards the southern end. Although generally species poor there are certain areas that support extensive tracts of bluebells. Tatton Mere Covert is an area of mature plantation oak wood parkland that lies adjacent to the mere and Shawheath plantation is a strip of mixed plantation woodland that links Tatton Mere Covert with semi-natural native woodland at Witchcote wood to the north and to the Birkin Brook corridor to the north east.

The woodland in Knutsford moor on the edge of the central fen area is wet willow, birch and alder carr with drier oak-sycamore woodland on the periphery of the basin. At Knutsford Heath oak

undervalued and an ecological survey may indicate they should be mapped as 'high distinctiveness' priority habitat (which would be displayed as red in map 9). Conversely there may be areas which have been overvalued, particularly if recent management has led to the deterioration of the habitat; in which case these areas should be removed from the habitat distinctiveness map.

Many of the 'medium distinctiveness' habitats identified in map 9 are thought to be semi-natural grassland, particularly on the less productive margins of the watercourses and some woodlands such as St John's Wood. Semi-natural grasslands are invaluable for wildlife as they can support large populations of invertebrates and mammals such as brown hare (which has been recorded to the south of Knutsford). Many local red listed farmland birds such as linnet, skylark and yellow wagtail (recorded to the west of Knutsford) will feed on insects that live in semi-natural grasslands. Overwintering birds such as fieldfare and redwing (both BoCC red listed) are found in particularly high numbers in the Longridge area of Knutsford where they feed in open areas of semi-natural habitat.

There are extensive areas of arable farmland around Knutsford, which although not flagged up in the habitat distinctiveness maps may support breeding red-listed farmland birds. The area north and west of Knutsford (around Green Lane/Northwich Road) is particularly important for breeding lapwing (red listed and a species of Principal Importance) which must be taken into consideration if this area is ever developed.

The south east of Knutsford parish (around the Brickhill Wood area) has a fairly high density of field ponds which contributes to the permeability of the landscape for wildlife. Ponds have been highlighted as habitat of medium distinctiveness in map 9 and should always be retained where possible when land is developed. Where ponds are stocked with high numbers of fish the wildlife value is decreased. This is because introduced fish (such as bottom feeding non-native carp) can deplete the pond of invertebrate larvae and amphibian eggs/larvae as well as water plants. Despite this, even low value ponds can help increase landscape permeability for species such as birds and terrestrial invertebrates.

Scattered farmland/parkland trees such as those present near Booths mere and the hedgerow network also help with landscape permeability by providing habitat and a food source for declining farmland bird populations such as red listed house sparrow and yellowhammer and amber listed bullfinch which are all present in the wider area. Invertebrates and small mammals also inhabit hedgerows, particularly those with adjacent wide field margins as well as inhabiting areas of semi-improved grassland. The small mammal population supports birds such as barn owl which consequently do best in areas where the traditional farmland landscape is intact. Although the hedgerow network in Knutsford is generally very poor and fragmented there is one area around Brickhill Wood to the south east of Knutsford with a good hedgerow system. This is linked to the Marthall Brook corridor and is likely to be a very important area of the parish for birds as well as for foraging and commuting bats.

Several areas of woodland have been flagged up as medium distinctiveness but may well be high distinctiveness, these include Brickhill Wood and woodland south of Booths Hall Cottages. Other areas such as Approach Clump in Tatton Park and woodland opposite the sports pitches on Heath

Local Wildlife Site). There are also further areas of acid and marshy grassland to the west of the mere (highlighted as a potential Local Wildlife Site in map 6), although this is not as species rich as that in the old deer enclosure. There are also areas of flushed pastures fringing the two meres with species such as blinks, small sweet grass and greater birdsfoot trefoil

4. The Meres/fen

The meres in the Knutsford parish and surroundings are notable for both their landscape qualities and their wildlife. Those at Tatton and Tabley originate from natural depressions in the glacial drift left by ice sheets when they receded approximately 15,000 years ago. Melchett mere developed as a result of subsidence caused by salt extraction, whereas Booths mere is thought to be an artificial pool created as part of a historical landscaping scheme at Booths Hall/Norbury Booths.

Tatton mere and Melchett mere (Tatton Meres) are a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the well-developed aquatic flora, the fringing fen, flushed acidic grassland and adjacent woodland. The unusual assemblage submerged flora in Tatton mere include at least three different pondweeds, milfoils and crowfoots. The fen has county rarities such as cowbane and marsh fern and also supports populations of sedge warbler and reed warblers in the reedbeds at Knutsford Moor. The meres provide rich feeding grounds for sandmartins which feed in large numbers over the open water especially in early summer. There are also good assemblages of ducks and geese that are resident or visit in either the summer or winter months; these include gadwall, pintail, great crested grebe, pochard, teal, shoveller, goldeneye, tufted duck, coots and moorhens. There are at least three species of swan and around five species of geese. The surrounding parkland is important for snipe in the winter months with other notable species including kingfisher, reed buntings, grey wagtails, grasshopper warbler and rare breeding Cetti's warbler.

Booths mere and its adjacent areas of rough grassland and woodland is much smaller than the Tatton mere complex but also supports notable winter wildfowl populations as well as an array of woodland birds and uncommon wetland flora such as cowbane and water avens

5. Heath

A small area of heathland/acid grassland mosaic is present on sandy soils at Knutsford Heath. Although much reduced in size over the years there are remaining patches that support species such as heather, wavy hair grass and uncommon birdsfoot. These areas of the site are also notable for butterflies and grasshoppers. Although the heath was largely open at the beginning of the 20th century most of the site today is either oak, gorse and holly dominated woodland/scrub or semi-improved grassland.

Medium distinctiveness habitat

Areas of medium distinctiveness habitat are shown on map 9 (displayed as orange) and provide important wildlife habitats in their own right as well as acting as ecological stepping stones and corridors. Because the methodologies used to produce the maps are desk based rather than field survey based, there is a possibility that some of the medium distinctiveness areas have been

preventing flooding, but they may still hold polluted water so should not drain directly into existing wildlife habitat unless the filtration system is extensive.

As detailed above not all sections of the wildlife corridor provide high quality habitat and measures to improve the ability of the corridor to support the movement of species is desirable³. Enhancement of the corridor may be facilitated by opportunities arising through the planning process (e.g. S106 agreements, biodiversity offsetting/compensation) or through the aspirations of the local community.

In addition to the 'wildlife corridor network' this study has identified further areas of high or medium 'habitat distinctiveness' (Map 9) which, although sit outside the wildlife corridor network, nevertheless may provide important wildlife habitats acting as ecological stepping stones. These areas comprise semi-natural/species-rich grassland, ponds and semi-natural woodlands.

The network of field boundary hedgerows provides habitat connectivity between high distinctiveness areas, which would otherwise be separated by extensive areas of land predominantly of low habitat distinctiveness with restricted potential for wildlife to disperse. Although not identified as a key component of Knutsford ecological network, collectively, these hedgerows provide some degree of linear connectivity particularly through the south east of the neighbourhood and beyond. In addition to their intrinsic ecological value a good hedgerow network also adds to the landscape character value.

Old meadows and pastures supporting species-rich grassland are the fastest disappearing habitats in the UK. These grasslands are particularly important for pollinating insects and insectivorous birds and mammals. It is extremely important that the highlighted 'medium distinctiveness' areas should be thoroughly evaluated in the development control process. If they are found to support species-rich grassland they should be re-classified as 'high distinctiveness' (Habitat of Principal Importance) and there is a presumption that they should not be built on (as stipulated in the Local Plan and the NPPF). In order to achieve no 'net loss' in biodiversity, compensation may be required should these areas be lost to development when avoidance and mitigation strategies have been applied in line with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted that the important wildlife habitat in Knutsford is mainly associated with the meres and their fringing habitats as well as the native woodlands and species-rich grasslands along the Birkin and Marthall Brooks (riparian habitats). By attributing habitat distinctiveness values to all land parcels in the Neighbourhood Plan area the study has provided important evidence that should be taken into consideration when planning decisions are made. However we strongly recommend that further (phase 1) habitat survey work is undertaken at the appropriate time of year, in particular to verify that 'medium value' habitats have not been over or under-valued.

³ Refer to Recommendations section

Road may have semi-natural elements but are likely to have originated from non-native plantings and could well fall into the low distinctiveness category due to low biodiversity.

Wildlife corridor network

Wildlife corridors are a key component of local ecological networks as they provide connectivity between core areas of high wildlife value/distinctiveness enabling species to move between them to feed, disperse, migrate or reproduce. In conjunction with the results of the EConet analysis (2003), this study has identified a wildlife corridor network (shown in map 10) with ecological connectivity within and beyond the Knutsford Neighbourhood Planning area.

The corridor incorporates the high quality habitats at Tatton Park and the woodlands and watercourses that skirt the east and south of Knutsford parish. The corridor has good ecological connectivity along most of its length apart from several pinch points including where it is crossed by the railway line at Podmore Hollow and by Knutsford Road at Rooks Wood. The main A537 at Kerfield house will also provide a barrier to the passage of less mobile species and at St John's Wood connectivity is also fairly poor.

In the wider area Tatton Meres/Knutsford Moor is an integral part of a recognised migration highway for birds as they pass northwards from the flashes at Sandbach northwards to Rostherne Mere National Nature Reserve and on up to the Lancashire Mosses and the Lake District.

Protection of the wildlife corridor and other high and medium distinctiveness habitat

Map 10 incorporates an indicative boundary for the wildlife corridor network; however this is likely to require refinement following detailed survey work. The corridor should be wide enough to protect the valuable habitats identified in Map 9 and for this reason we have incorporated a 15 metre buffer zone around any high distinctiveness habitat. The buffer is necessary to help protect vulnerable habitat from factors such as light pollution and ground water pollution, predation by domestic pets, and invasive garden species if adjacent land is developed.

A 15m buffer zone is also appropriate for any land lying outside the corridor network that, following an ecological appraisal, is subsequently found to be high distinctiveness habitat of Principal Importance². Any potential development proposals adjacent to a high distinctiveness habitat or a wildlife corridor should demonstrate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen impacts on wildlife. For example low spillage (bat/otter sensitive) lighting should be recommended for use on the outside of buildings or in car-parks and along pathways and watercourses. Surface drainage water from developed areas should always be directed away from sensitive areas due to the risk of pollution unless the source of the water is clean, such as rainwater collected from roofs. Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SUDS) are useful in providing additional wildlife habitat and

² This may currently be mapped as medium distinctiveness due to lack of information.

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

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

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

The areas highlighted as 'wildlife corridor network' in Map 10 incorporate 5 designated Local Wildlife Sites and the Totton Meres SSSI/Ramsar, however it is highly likely that other land would meet also the criteria for Local Wildlife Site selection. These areas should be designated if the selection criteria are met, as LWS designation is likely to provide a greater level of protection within the planning system.

The wildlife corridor network should be in 'favourable condition'⁴ to provide breeding, foraging and commuting habitat for the native species that live there and native species which may subsequently colonise. Ideally these areas should be surveyed by a qualified ecologist to identify management priorities.

Management work may include:

- Control of Himalayan balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Giant hogweed (all present at Knutsford Moor): It is extremely important that these species are prevented from further colonisation of the woodlands and wetlands in the Knutsford area. These species are highly invasive and out-compete native flora. They can also cause soil erosion due to the lack of binding vegetation in winter (particularly on slopes). All three are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which means it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild. CWT can provide further advice on the control of this and other non-native species.
- Control of non-native/garden species in woodland. Garden species such as non-native daffodils, Spanish/hybrid bluebells, monbretia, cotoneaster and variegated yellow archangel and can all be highly invasive and damage the ecological balance of woodlands. The latter three are all listed on schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Providing information to homeowners that back onto woodlands (particularly St John's Wood) that highlights the importance of disposing of garden waste appropriately would be desirable.
- Hedgerows that form part of the wildlife corridor should be restored using locally native species such as wych elm, hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and holly (plant 60-90cm high 'whips' which have a good rate of survival and use tree guards to protect from rabbits and stock fence where necessary). New sections of hedgerow should ideally incorporate a tree every 30m (on average) which are demarked so as not to be inadvertently felled.
- All semi-natural grassland should be cut or grazed each year to maintain its wildlife value.

⁴ The definition of 'favourable condition' for Local Wildlife Sites is provided in Appendix 3

Most notably the study has highlighted a 'wildlife corridor network' which provides ecological connectivity between the meres, fringing wetlands, woodland and grasslands within and beyond the Neighbourhood Planning area. The wildlife corridor network supports a wide range of species including numerous birds, plants, mammals, and invertebrates that are in decline both locally and nationally. Some of the most notable are the rare plant species such as cowbane, sweet woodruff, adders tongue, dyer's green weed and water avens. Rare birds such as hobby and Cetti's warbler are important, as are the bird species which are declining fastest such as grasshopper warbler, lapwing, house sparrow, grey wagtail, linnet, yellow wagtail, spotted flycatcher, thrushes, starling, tree pipit, pochard and fast declining overwintering birds such as fieldfare and redwing.

We recommend that the corridor network shown in map 10 is identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and protected from development so that the guidance relating to ecological networks set out in the NPPF (paragraphs 114 and 117) may be implemented at a local level. The wildlife corridor network includes a buffer zone of up to 15 metres in places to protect the notable habitats shown in map 9. If new areas of high distinctiveness habitat are subsequently identified these should also be protected by a 15 metre non-developable buffer zone.

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

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

24	<p>their status in relation to <i>The Hedgerow Regulations</i>. Should the Local Planning Authority grant permission for removal, compensatory hedgerows should be provided.</p> <p>Guidance issued by DEFRA relating to biodiversity offsetting requires 'multipliers' to be applied according to the condition of any native hedgerow to be lost: 'Poor' condition hedgerows should be compensated for using a multiplier of x1 (i.e. like-for like length), 'Moderate' condition hedgerows should be compensated for using a multiplier of x2, and 'Good' condition hedgerows should be compensated for using a multiplier of x3 (e.g. loss of 10m of hedgerow in 'Good' condition would require 30m to be planted in compensation).</p> <p>Hedgerow condition assessment criteria are provided in the Natural England Higher Level Stewardship Farm Environment Plan Manual (2010), however, in brief, three condition assessments are made: average height before flailing is at least 2m; average width before flailing is at least 1.5m; less than 10% gaps, excluding gate holes and gaps beneath tree canopy. Native hedgerows meeting all three criteria are in 'Good' condition, those meeting any two criteria are in 'Moderate' condition, and those meeting no criteria are in 'Poor' condition.</p> <p>Any new sections of hedgerow should be created following the guidance provided above (point 1).</p> <p>4. Phase 1 habitat mapping</p> <p>It is strongly recommended that Knutsford Neighbourhood Planning area is phase 1 habitat mapped. This will provide a high level of habitat detail and could be used to verify the results of the habitat distinctiveness mapping (map 9). Phase 1 mapping may identify further areas of medium or high distinctiveness (Priority) habitat not identified by this assessment. Areas identified as having medium value habitat in this report should be targeted for survey as a priority. Phase 1 mapping should also be used to determine the exact position of the wildlife corridor network.</p>	Protecting and Enhancing Knutsford's Natural Environment	October 2017
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23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of lowland heath should be managed in the long term by controlling tree and scrub cover (professional advice should be sought first). • Ensuring watercourses are buffered by semi-natural habitat to provide riparian habitat and help prevent pollution runoff. <p>2. Protect, enhance and connect areas of high/medium value which lie outside the wildlife corridor</p> <p>Opportunities should be explored to restore or create more wildlife friendly habitat especially where connectivity with other areas of valuable habitat can be achieved or where valuable sites can be buffered. Larger areas of better connected habitat support larger and healthier species populations and help prevent local extinctions.</p> <p>Ways to enhance connections or to buffer sites could include the restoration of hedgerows, creation of low maintenance field margins and sowing <u>locally sourced</u> (local genetic stock) wildflower meadows⁵.</p> <p>Woodland expansion is desirable to buffer existing woodlands, but may be of limited value if new plantations are isolated from existing woodland due to slow colonisation by woodland species. It is vitally important that tree planting should only occur on species-poor (low value) habitats and away from the edges of watercourses including ditches and ponds. Professional advice should always be sought when creating new habitat particularly when designing the layout, position and composition of new woodland and how to use local woodlands as a 'reference'. Well-designed new woodlands contain up to 40% open space (glades and rides) and up to 25% shrub species. For maximum benefit to biodiversity rides should be east-west oriented (so that sunlight is maximised) and at least 30 metres wide to avoid over-shading when the canopy closes. It is recommended that trees and shrubs should be sourced from the Forestry Commission seed zone or from seed collected from local stands or from the local seed zone (collections should be made under the Voluntary Scheme for Certification of Native Trees and Shrubs, endorsed by the Forestry Commission).</p> <p>3. Protect existing hedgerow network</p> <p>Hedgerows which meet certain criteria are protected by <i>The Hedgerow Regulations</i>, 1997. Under the regulations it is against the law to remove or destroy 'Important' hedgerows without permission from the Local Planning Authority. Removal of a hedgerow in contravention of <i>The Hedgerow Regulations</i> is a criminal offence. The criteria used to assess hedgerows relate to its value from an archaeological, historical, landscape or wildlife perspective. The regulations exclude hedgerows that have been in existence for less than 30 years, garden hedges and some hedgerows which are less than 20 metres in length. The aim of the regulations is to protect 'important' hedgerows in the countryside by controlling their removal through a system of notification.</p> <p>Any proposals that involve the removal of hedgerows or sections of hedgerows or their associated features (e.g. ditches, banks, standard trees) should be supported by an assessment to ascertain</p>	<p>⁵ Cheshire Wildlife Trust can provide advice and seeds for locally sourced wildflower meadow creation.</p> <p>Protecting and Enhancing Knutsford's Natural Environment</p>	October 2017
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	Arable barley	Aba	Low
	Arable wheat	Aw	Low
	Arable stubble	Ast	Low
Improved Grassland ⁶	Improved grassland	Gi	Low
	Ley	Gl	Low
	Hay	Gh	Low
Rough Grassland	Rough / unmanaged grassland	Gr	Medium
	Neutral	Gn	Medium
'Calcareous Grassland'	Calcareous	Gc	Medium
Acid Grassland	Acid	Ga	Medium
	Bracken	Br	Medium
'Fen, Marsh and Swamp'	Fen / swamp	F	Medium
Heather	Heather & dwarf shrub	H	Medium
	Burnt heather	Hb	Medium
	Gorse	Hg	Medium
	Dry heath	Hd	Medium
Heather grassland	Heather grass	Hga	Medium

Appendices

Appendix 1

Habitats, LCM2007 classes⁶ and Broad Habitat subclasses for LCM2007 CEH

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

⁶ No habitat scores higher than 'medium distinctiveness' due to the reliability of the data

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

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

Appendix 3

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

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

Appendix 2

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

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

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

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

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

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 August 2018 09:57
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: [OFFICIAL] Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford
Attachments: Protecting and Enhancing Knutsford's Natural Environment.pdf; CWT Report Extracts.docx

.....and another one.

Many thanks.

[REDACTED]



Working for a brighter future together

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 August 2018 08:36
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford

Dear [REDACTED]

I'm writing to you as the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Regeneration in connection with the two Council owned open space sites i.e. the Green Land and the Blue Land at Longridge, Knutsford. These two plots, as you know, are adjacent to the much bigger land area situated across the road from the Longridge Housing Estate and referred to as site LPS 38, on which it is proposed, in the Cheshire East Council (CEC) local plan, to build 225 houses. I object to the development of LPS 38 and consequently I oppose the sale of these two adjoining strips.

Firstly, I will explain why I oppose the development of LPS 38. I don't know how familiar you are with this area. It's a large site which has not been farmed for many decades and so, over the years, has transformed into a natural wilderness area. It is much more than just a grass field. I and many others regularly walk through it. Soon after you enter you leave the modern world behind for a while to be completely surrounded by trees, including many young oaks, various bushes, plants and an abundance of wildlife. There is not a house or car in sight, the only modern intrusion being aircraft overhead. It has over time become a unique place of natural beauty, not possible to replicate.

Our sons, when they were growing up, paddled in Birkin Brook at one end of the site. Also at this end is an area of ancient woodland which includes Scots Pines. It's used by St John's Wood Academy as a forest school for young teenagers with special needs. They said the following: "Using a local woodland, we have been amazed at the progress pupils have made in increasing their self-esteem and self confidence. Most of

our students have had negative experiences of school, but by participating in the Forest School they have been motivated, inspired and had fun." (Knutsford Guardian, 22 March 2018, Page 8)

Fishing takes place frequently in Booths Mere at the other end of the site. The space in between with it's pond and dozens of young oak trees scattered throughout, is used daily by walkers including dog owners and accompanied walks throughout it, take place about once a month. The whole area, not just the Birkin Brook end, forms part of a wildlife corridor which extends from Tatton Park on one side to Springwood on the other and beyond. Attached is a report entitled 'Protecting & Enhancing Knutsford's Natural Environment' which Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) published in October 2017. Also attached are paragraphs I've extracted from it, which relate specifically to this general area. As you can see from this report, CWT have included this site as one of the areas of distinctiveness providing important wildlife habitats in their own right as well as acting as ecological stepping stones and corridors. Importantly, they go on to recommend that the corridor network (and the whole of this site is clearly a big part of it) is identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and protected from development. (See map 10 on page 14 of the main report and also paragraph two on page 21.)

The residents in this corner of Knutsford, including Shaw Heath, Longridge, Higher Downs and North Downs already have an industrial estate, a household waste recycling centre and a petrol filling station in close proximity, while at the same time more homes and businesses are proposed at nearby Parkgate. Overall, there are plans for almost 1,000 houses in Knutsford, so in the future it's likely that a ring road will surround the town. People are becoming more disconnected from nature, so, easily accessible green breathing spaces, like this, to escape to, are increasingly important. Of the land that remains round Knutsford, this place is the most suitable and obvious to save.

CEC say that the proposed development would create approximately 20 acres of new public open space. That is not so. This open space is already used by the public for recreational purposes. Building houses on it would divide and reduce the area for people's enjoyment. The public who use it have no desire to walk round a new housing development built in the centre of it.

Mobberley Road struggles to cope with the volume of traffic between this area and the town centre. It is frequently difficult to access Knutsford from this side of town. Major development is proposed for Parkgate. The scheme for that industrial estate would result in extra vehicles (700) using the business units there. In addition to that, the plan to build houses at the northern end of Parkgate Lane would result in yet more vehicles (400) using Mobberley Road. This part of Knutsford being restricted by the proximity of Tatton Park has difficulty coping at present and certainly could not cope with an extra 1,100 vehicles from Parkgate. LPS 38 if it were to proceed would add another 400 vehicles to this congestion along with the added pollution and noise all that would create.

Also, I object to the sale of these two pieces of land for a couple of reasons directly connected with them, as opposed to with the main site.

Constructing a road through the blue playing field land to join Longridge would create a dangerous cross roads. The present junction is on a camber, near a school and a bus stop and already has restricted visibility.

CEC refer to the Green area as consisting of a thin strip of overgrown land running parallel to Longridge. The Council own and are responsible for the upkeep of this strip, so if it is overgrown, CEC have allowed it to be so. It may be a little overgrown but in reality it has an abundance of trees, bushes and plants. As a result it is a haven for insects and birdlife.

Finally, LPS 38 was adopted into the Local Plan on the 27th of July 2017, despite there being no means of access to the site. Then in October 2017 the Cabinet of CEC considered a report exploring options for

enabling access. It was a flawed decision in the first instance to include this landlocked site in the local plan, a site which would require the sale of not one but two pieces of council land, one to create access to it and the other it's not clear why it would need to be sold as it's got a covenant on it barring access anyway. It's not deliverable and should now be removed from allocation. It is therefore not necessary to sell these two pieces of land adjoining it, so I ask you not to dispose of any or all of the adjoining Green or Blue open space land at Longridge, Knutsford. CWT stress that the whole area should be protected from development and I agree. It is too important ecologically and all of it should continue to be available for recreational purposes.

You will be making a decision which will shape the future of our area. It's possible that you have never been through the site. Earlier this year my husband and I invited you, as a cabinet member of CEC to come and walk the area with us. I ask that you as Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing & Regeneration, set aside an hour and yet again invite you to come and walk through the whole Dewscope site with us to see it for yourself. Having experienced it properly you will then be in a better position to consider whether 225 houses is really the right way forward for this wild oasis or whether it should be protected from development for people to enjoy. My husband and I will be very happy to accompany you on a walk through this land before you make that important decision concerning it's future.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the sender.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 August 2018 11:10
To: JORDAN, Frank
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: POS Disposal North Downs Longridge
Attachments: V2What decision is being requested of the Portfolio Holder.docx

Please could you confirm receipt of this email by return and reply in detail in due course. It forms one part of submissions to be made by the Community Group KROW.

Having returned from family events, I along with other residents have spent a couple of days reading the report and appendices concerning the sale of POS.

I am seeking clarity from you as to what the exact decision is that you are requiring from the Portfolio Holder.? We have found reference to the decision and disposal in various places in the papers and the method, timing and amount of land involved will focus the points that we may submit in due course. (see attached for references)

1. Are you seeking permission in principle to negotiate the freehold disposal of any of the green and blue land should a planning application be made requiring use of it?
2. Are you seeking to sell the freehold of the blue and green land.? Would this be an open sale or restricted only to the owner or successor in title of the land known as LPS38? When?
3. Are you seeking to confirm a Heads of Agreement or other more binding legal contract with the owner or successor in title , undertaking to sell the freehold when requested subject to conditions. When?
4. Are you looking to so something other than dispose of the freehold, perhaps easements, grant of rights?
5. Whatever the method and timing and amount of disposal, how will you guarantee the benefits / replacement mentioned in the papers proposing the disposal?
6. You state the blue land loss in three ways . 6.6 acres and 4% and strip Could you clarify how much land you would seek to replace the land loss?
7. Is this only for an access road to be defined in an outline planning application or actually intended to enable the final developer total flexibility in their planning application?

You will of course be aware that any decision to dispose of open space removes the designation that is stated on the land title and as such it weakens any negotiating position with a developer regarding replacement in a new development. This was pointed out in the consultation in a letter from the Open Spaces Society. It undermines statements made regarding possible benefits of disposal. Also this is designated playing field so it won't wash only seeking land replacement that is covered by a tarmac road.

Also may I respectfully point out that two errors have been repeated from the past, please could you make amends.

- The title relating to POS concerned should be **North Downs Longridge**.
- This decision has been notified for consultation in a holiday period , and direct notification to a community group known to be interested in the outcome has not been made.

Please could you ensure that the Portfolio holder is not pressed for a decision until after a face to face meeting has been arranged with representatives from KROW along with their Ward Councillor.

Regards

[Redacted Signature]

Knutsford Residents in Over Ward (**KROW**)

Aiming for transparency and fairness in matters relating to residents in Knutsford Over Ward

Campaigning to save Green Belt , Wildlife corridor, Open Space, Recreational Playing field Football pitch at Higher Downs North Downs Longridge Knutsford

Highlighting that Cheshire East Council have made a Local Plan with policies that they should stick to.

What decision is being requested of the Portfolio Holder?

Extracts from the Report & Papers issued 17th July 2018

Ref Issue Details:

To consider the options and issues in respect of a thin strip of land subject to a covenant (referred to as the Green Land) and the disposal of a strip of land to enable access across other land (referred to as the Blue Land) at Longridge, Knutsford.

Ref Report:

2. Recommendations

it is recommended that the Portfolio Holder;

2.1.1. Decides whether to authorise the freehold disposal of: -

(a) part of the Blue Land for the purposes of providing access and

(b) any other necessary interests in part of the Blue Land only for the purposes of providing access, installation and use of services to LPS 38 together with ancillary uses consistent with an access road such as, but not limited to, landscaping and constructing the access road.

2.1.2. Decides whether to authorise the freehold disposal of the whole or part of the Green Land and/or the grant of rights in respect of the installation, connection and use of any services over the Green Land.

5 BACKGROUND

5.4 Given that the Council wishes to minimise the loss of public open space it was proposed to advertise the Blue Land as a proposed disposal of public open space and then as part of the planning process define the exact extent of the land that would be disposed of. This would minimise the extent of the land that is proposed to be taken. Not to do this would mean that a larger area of the Blue Land would be disposed of as the exact area needed to enable access would be defined at a later date by the planning process. However it is anticipated that c4% of the Blue Land would be affected.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. Any such disposal would be conditional upon receipt of planning consent for housing with access through land allocated as existing open space within the Green Belt. If planning permission is not granted for any reason the disposal will not proceed.

Ref App 5 Collation of Objections:

Proposed method of disposal

Should it be decided to progress with the freehold disposal of the land it is proposed that the Council will enter into an agreement with the owner of the development land (Site LPS 38 in the local plan). This will be subject to them satisfying a number of conditions, including obtaining outline planning permission for the site. Any such disposal would be made in accordance with the Council's statutory requirement to secure best value.

App 8 Covenant

3.2 Work undertaken prior to the Cabinet decision also highlighted that using the Green Land as a principal means of access was not possible

3.3.2 Should the Council continue with investigating this matter there would be significant additional costs at a time of severe financial strain on Council resources. There is no available budget for this work and, given the external legal advice already received, such expenditure would be incurred in the knowledge that there is no meaningful prospect of success.

Perhaps the Portfolio holder should ask the question how much will legal work cost to attempt to negotiate the discharge

4.2 Disposal of the Green Land (in conjunction with the disposal of a strip of the Blue Land) will assist in the delivery of LPS 38.

7.2 It is considered appropriate to dispose of the Green Land in tandem with the Blue Land. This will allow the Green Land to be treated as part of the overall adjacent development and will provide connectivity to the open space for residents of the prospective adjacent development. This would not affect the covenant in place on the Green Land.

9 AUG 2018

16 57
August 2018

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- 8) It was a mistake to put this landlocked site in the local plan. It's not deliverable and should be removed from it. Therefore its not necessary to sell any or all of the adjoining Green or Blue lands. I ask you not to dispose of them. The Trust said it should be protected from development. I agree. It is too important ecologically. All of it should continue to be available for recreational purposes.

Yours sincerely

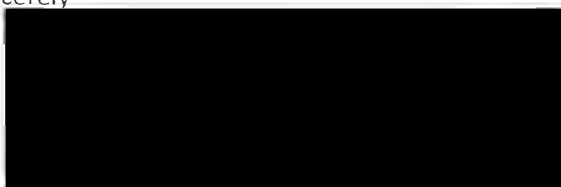


4 August 2018

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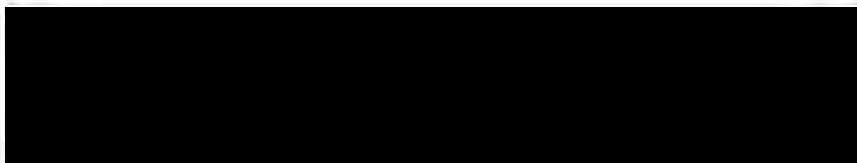


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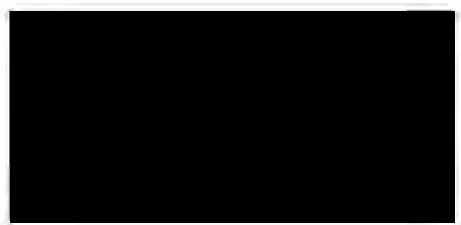


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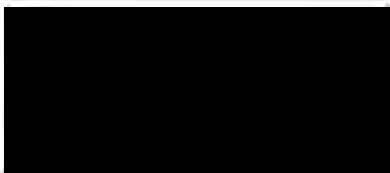


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14 AUG 2018



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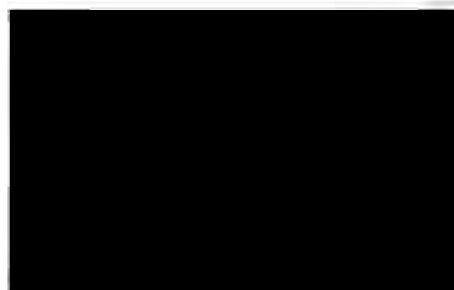
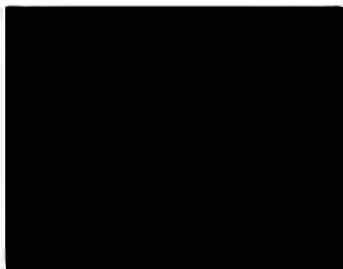
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WE WALK OVER HERE FREQUENTLY



5 August 2018

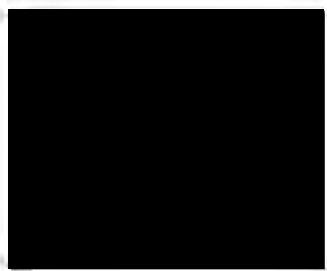
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I use the area twice a day for dog walking.



Lf August 2018

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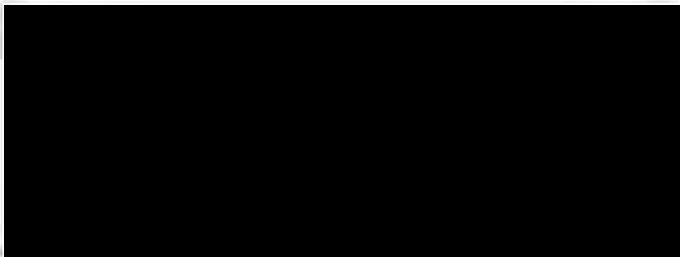


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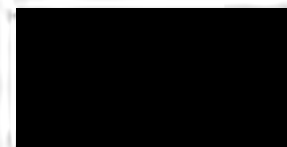
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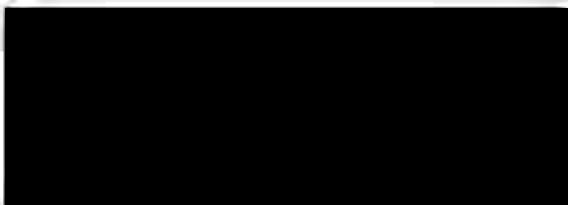


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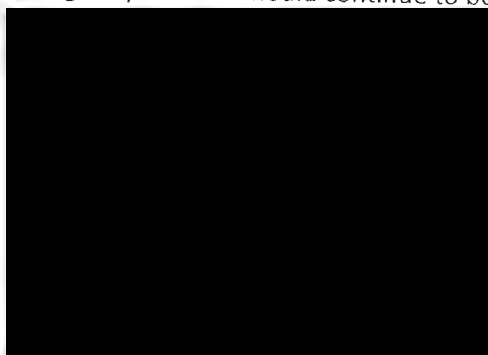


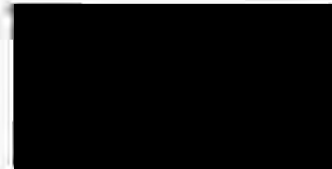
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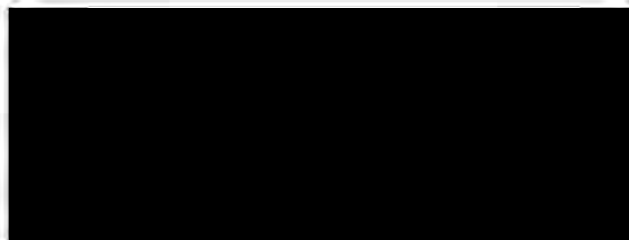


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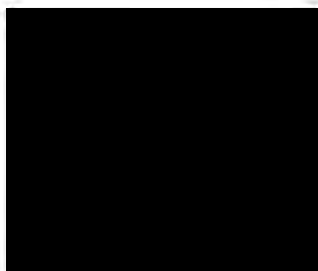
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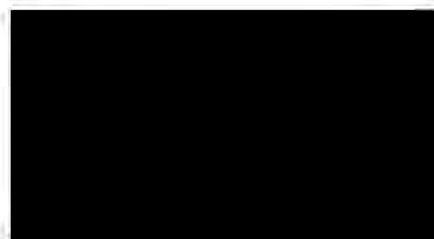
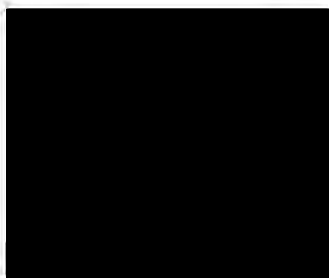
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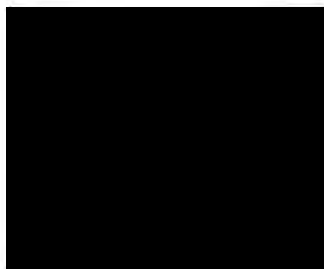
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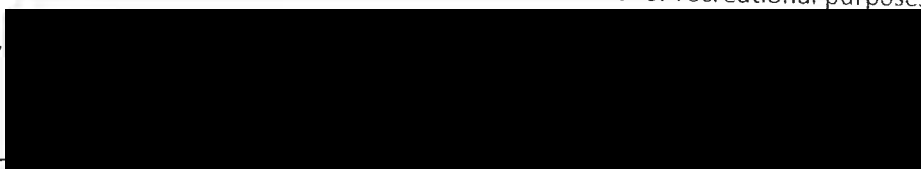


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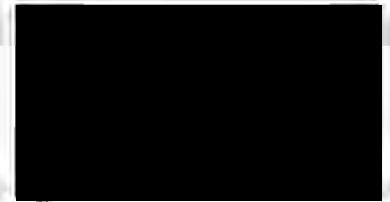
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I. USE THIS AREA REGULARLY FOR WALKING & WILDLIFE OBSERVATION



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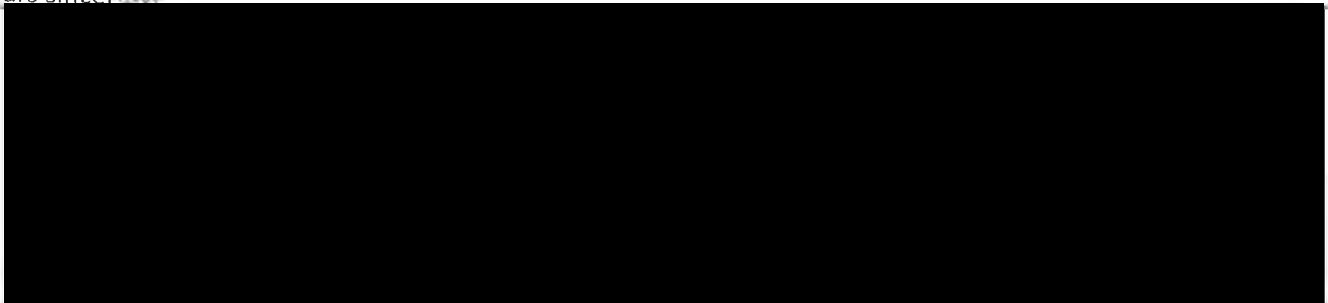


August 2018

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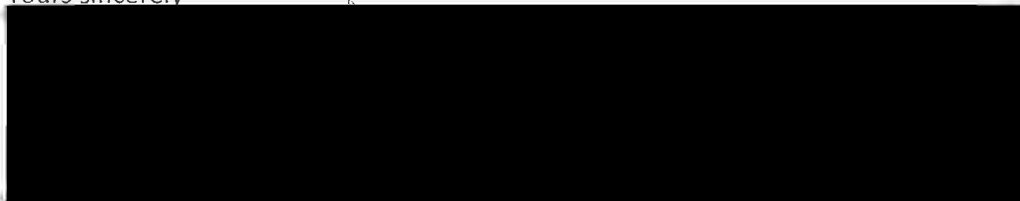


4 August 2018

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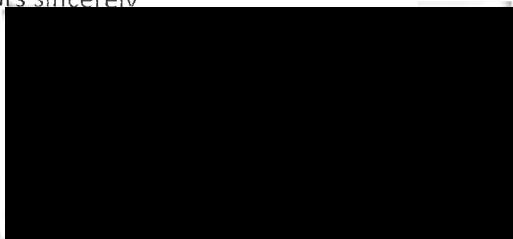


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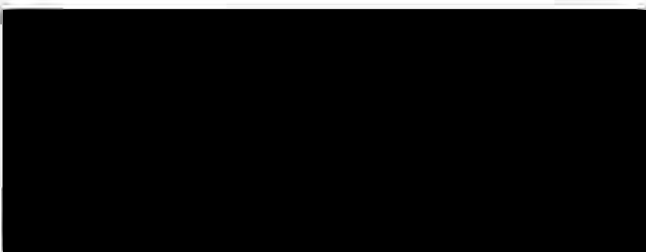


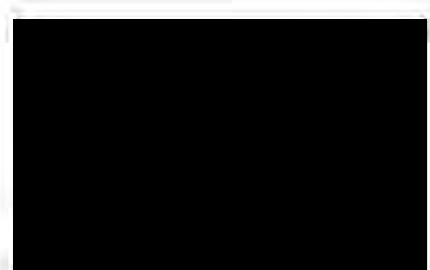
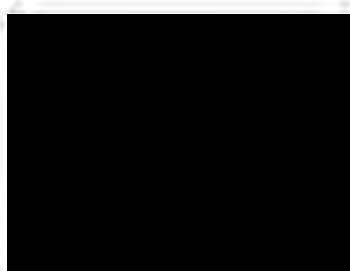
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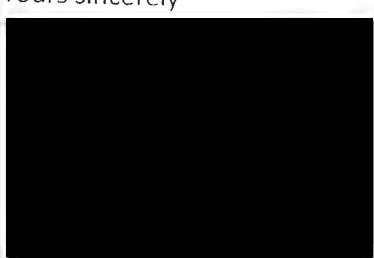


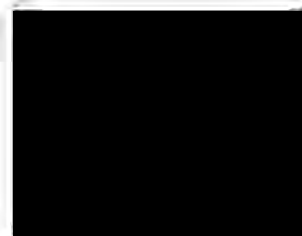
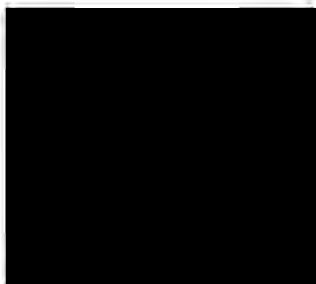
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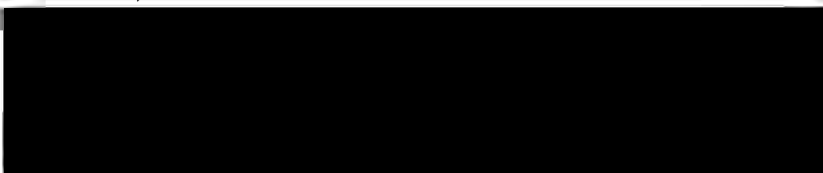


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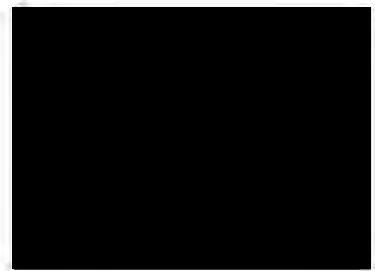
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~ 9 AUG 2018

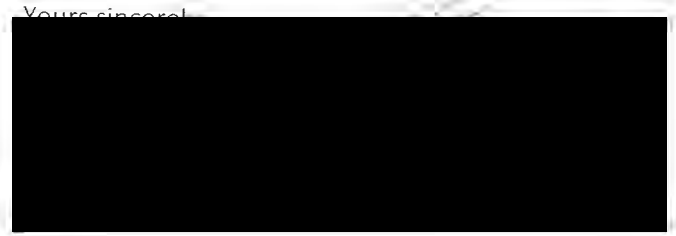


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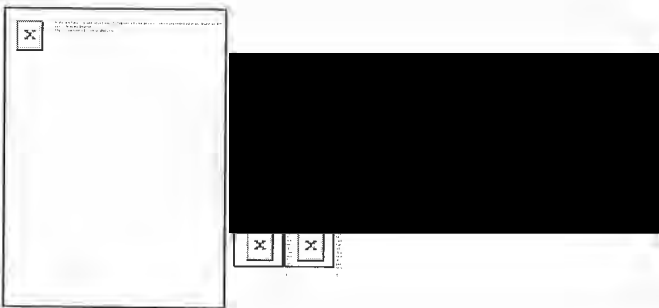


[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 23 July 2018 15:30
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: Land at Longridge Knutsford

As far as I'm aware our Town Clerk has identified all the parties who are potential beneficiaries of the covenant and advised Cheshire East Council, thus all parties are known.

It would be sensible to let Knutsford Town Council work with those parties and parties interested in developing the adjoining land to move to set aside the covenant and defer a decision until after those activities had reached a conclusion whether that be setting aside the covenant or failure.



Confidentiality: This email and its contents and any attachments are intended only for the above named. As the email may contain confidential or legally privileged information, if you are not the above named person or responsible for delivery to the above named, or suspect that you are not an intended recipient please delete or destroy the email and any attachments immediately.

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Access as a public body: The Council may be required to disclose this email (or any response to it) under the Freedom of Information Act, 2000, unless the information in it is covered by one of the exemptions in the Act.

Legal documents: The Council does not accept service of legal documents by email.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 July 2018 22:56
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: Longridge

In response to your public consultation, concerning "Blue land" for an approach road for new housing, I am a local resident living at 3 Higher Downs, and understand the need for more AFFORDABLE housing. I would make the following observations:

the junction will be very close to the one to Higher Downs - will there be a roundabout combining them?

all traffic heading for Knutsford will now choose the Higher Downs route, which is a twisty road, with a primary school at the end and is rendered a single carriageway road at school drop-off and collection times, owing to the parents, parking. Access at these times is already very difficult.

It seems a great shame that it is too difficult/costly, apparently, to be able to place an entrance road in the centre of the new housing, giving more likelihood of traffic exiting both in the directions, and thus of more convenience to all concerned.

What is the reason for this covenant in the first instance -there must have been some purpose behind it, which may be of significance and has not been made clear, or perhaps even not considered worthy of investigation?

[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 08 August 2018 10:33
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: POS North Downs Longridge Knutsford

Dear Sir/Madam,

The report writers and summary papers continue to undervalue the loss and overstate the benefit to Knutsford residents if the Council decides to dispose of playing field land in the green belt adjacent to a local wildlife area. Our family and many of our neighbours use this land daily for exercise and recreation, both important for our wellbeing and health. Having a road across the field would considerably reduce its use and safety for children playing. We also ask you to consider the environment and the loss of further natural habitat, which will already be severely affected by the house building.

The land, if required for a road, should be detailed through the planning process not by this method of disposal. We ask that the Portfolio holder obtain a quote for professional services to progress discharging the covenant and evaluating the risks and rejects the request to dispose of public land that is clearly not surplus to requirements.

We ask that CEC listens more keenly to the views of its residents.

Yours truly,

[Redacted Signature]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 August 2018 09:52
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: REF POS at North Downs Longridge Knutsford

Dear Sirs

I read that the report writers and summary papers continue to undervalue the loss and overstate the benefit that would occur to the Knutsford public, if the Council decides to dispose of playing field land in the green belt adjacent to a local wildlife area. There is also no declared evidence that formal professional advice has been given in writing, or a witness that the 'external legal' source is independent of any third party seeking to benefit from a decision. There may be a challenge from the beneficiaries of the covenant on the green strip that they have been bypassed.

A letter received from the Open Spaces Society during the notice period, clearly advises that the land, if required for a road, should be detailed through the planning process not by this method of disposal. In effect it is in danger of bypassing planning policy protection and possibly prejudicing its own decision making.

Cheshire East Council are clearly not prepared to listen to the public and are happy to risk their reputation.

I ask that the Portfolio holder obtain a quote for professional services to progress discharging the covenant and evaluating the risks, and rejects the request to dispose of public land that is clearly not surplus to requirements.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 08 August 2018 17:48
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: GREEN BELT LAND

Disposal of Green Belt, Longridge.

I am still strongly opposed to any blue land i.e. GREEN BELT being used for access to new housing. I would prefer no housing but am prepared to accept that and the covenant being broken without consultation of beneficiaries. (Is that legal?). However any intrusion into GREEN BELT is unacceptable. 4% 'subject to detailed design process' is far too vague and sadly I have no faith in this figure being adhered to. I am sure that this amount of land can be found elsewhere.

GOV.UK says 'GREEN BELT boundaries ... only be altered in very special... exceptional circumstances' GREEN BELT should 'enhance land...give opportunities for sport' not accommodate an access road.

In addition Open Spaces Society says that 'road planning should be detailed through planning' not the method of disposal suggested here.

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 09 August 2018 09:49
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: POS at North Downs Longridge Knutsford

To whom it may concern,

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Yours Sincerely,

[Redacted]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 August 2018 10:18
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: POS at North Downs Longridge Knutsford

REF POS at North Downs Longridge Knutsford

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Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 August 2018 12:46
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: FW: Save playing field North Downs Longridge

REF POS at North Downs Longridge Knutsford

To whom it may concern

As the land in question is obviously not surplus to requirements being a well used recreational amenity for nearby residents , disposal for development should not even be considered.

It is therefore incumbent on the Portfolio holder to show more sincerity in undertaking the tasks delegated by cabinet and obtain a quote for professional services to progress discharging the covenant and evaluating the risks, and rejects the request at this stage to dispose of public land

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The Council should act more for the public interest and protect our assets, and not support private developers in maximising their profit.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 August 2018 23:16
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: Land used as playing space for the children of our area

I am most concerned that Cheshire east Council are even considering selling this green space which has been in existence since the estate was built. At that time the planners thought this a worthwhile thing to do never dreaming that a future Council would consider selling this land against the wishes of the local residents .

Please consider doing the right thing for the future generations of children who will live here

[REDACTED]
Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 August 2018 19:17
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: REF POS at North Downs Longridge Knutsford

Good Day,

I read that the report writers and summary papers continue to undervalue the loss and overstate the benefit that would occur to the Knutsford public, if the Council decides to dispose of playing field land in the green belt adjacent to a local wildlife area. There is also no declared evidence that formal professional advice has been given in writing, or a witness that the 'external legal' source is independent of any third party seeking to benefit from a decision. There may be a challenge from the beneficiaries of the covenant on the green strip that they have been bypassed.

A letter received from the Open Spaces Society during the notice period, clearly advises that the land, if required for a road, should be detailed through the planning process not by this method of disposal. In effect it is in danger of bypassing planning policy protection and possibly prejudicing its own decision making.

Cheshire East Council are clearly not prepared to listen to the public and are happy to risk their reputation.

I ask that the Portfolio holder obtain a quote for professional services to progress discharging the covenant and evaluating the risks, and rejects the request to dispose of public land that is clearly not surplus to requirements.

This land is used daily by myself and my husband and as it is now back to a proper condition after a very long time of neglect we request it remains public open space.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 August 2018 19:11
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: REF POS at North Downs Longridge Knutsford

Good Day,

I read that the report writers and summary papers continue to undervalue the loss and overstate the benefit that would occur to the Knutsford public, if the Council decides to dispose of playing field land in the green belt adjacent to a local wildlife area. There is also no declared evidence that formal professional advice has been given in writing, or a witness that the 'external legal' source is independent of any third party seeking to benefit from a decision. There may be a challenge from the beneficiaries of the covenant on the green strip that they have been bypassed.

A letter received from the Open Spaces Society during the notice period, clearly advises that the land, if required for a road, should be detailed through the planning process not by this method of disposal. In effect it is in danger of bypassing planning policy protection and possibly prejudicing its own decision making.

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This land is used daily by myself and my wife and as it is now back to a proper condition after a very long time of neglect we request it remains public open space.

[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

From:

[Redacted]

Sent:

11 August 2018 23:32

To:

Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space

Cc:

[Redacted]

Subject:

KROW full response to POS disposal Knutsford

Attachments:

FinalKROW response to Proposed Decision to dispose..docx

Here is the final and full response to the Report and papers proposing a decision on the public open space at North Downs Longridge.

It has been preceded by a first response titled POS Disposal North Downs Longridge 7/8/2018 asking for clarity on the decision being requested and method and timing of disposal intended.

A request to the Portfolio holder for a meeting is outstanding.

Cheshire East Council

proposeddisposalofpublicopenspace@cheshireeast.gov.uk

cc [REDACTED]

11 August 2018

Ref: Representation regarding the proposed decision to dispose of public open space at (North Downs) Longridge Knutsford.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

We have previously submitted a request to [REDACTED] cc'd to this email address & [REDACTED] & Ward Councillors that further clarity be provided as to what the decision is that the Portfolio holder is being asked to make. The 'decision' delegated by cabinet is subject to due consideration of two parts

- a) options & consultation on the covenant on the green strip and
- b) responses to the formal notice to dispose of public open space.

Then it suggests that freehold disposal could take place, but this would clearly not satisfy other safeguards asked for or suggested to minimise the loss or achieve best value. There is no local oversight planned.

We consider that the intention of part a) was to formally start work communicating with the beneficiaries to seek a discharge of the covenant and this clearly has not taken place – indeed it has been resisted.

We consider that the responses received to the notice of disposal (b) have established that the land is not surplus to requirements, valued and used by the community since its transfer to the Knutsford Urban district council in 1969 until the present day.

Secondly, we have requested a meeting with the Portfolio holder, prior to a decision on this disposal copied to [REDACTED] and our Ward & Local Councillors.

We have sent a third email directly to the Portfolio holder requesting action on scrutiny copied to the Cabinet, Mayor and Knutsford Councillors.

ACTION REQUESTED

This is a fourth email as a direct response to the papers issued for a decision and requests as follows:

1. We ask that you do not rely on 'external' legal advice unwritten and from an unspecified source. Proper professional instruction should be given and received to the written satisfaction of the Head of Legal Services.

2. We ask that you take the advice given by the Open spaces society to reject the section 123 disposal process and instead progress any land take through the planning system.
3. Should you decide to dispose of or otherwise negotiate use of the blue land we would advise that you fully acknowledge the loss you are making on behalf of the public and outline how you will guarantee the benefits promised. The benefits should be agreed with community group KROW & Knutsford Town Council, and be subject to wider public engagement. At this stage this would be as below.

Specifically, 20 acres of public space to include recreational playing field and a full sized football pitch OR the amount of open space required by the new development plus 6.6 acres to include recreational playing field and a full sized football pitch, whichever is the higher figure to a better quality including location & access. Enhancement of the remaining land including access to and particularly that surrounding the Mere and Birkin Brook. Integration of the new and existing housing on North Downs and Longridge. Regeneration of the Longridge area. The details outlined in the LPS38 site allocation in the CECLPS. Especially the wildlife buffers and walking and cycling and public transport access to Active design principles.

We acknowledge that should the Longridge site become undeliverable then there will be implications for the housing land allocation in Knutsford.

The reasons for these requests are set out below in points 1-5.

KEY POINTS ARISING FROM THE PROPOSED DECISION PAPERS.

1 The exact detail of the requested decision is unclear.

The Portfolio holder needs to be very sure about the authority he is giving , so that it does not give rise to any claim that best value will not be achieved.

This is important because without the detail regarding the method , timing and how much land is involved it is impossible to assess whether best value has/ will be obtained and the likelihood of any party acquiring the land speculatively to realise increased value in the future.

Also, the authority is not allowed to give any state aid to any party and it maybe by disposing of blue land the Council is aiding and abetting a landowner /future developer and themselves by not satisfying beneficiaries of a covenant on nearby land.

2 Decision to dispose of the land in advance of a planning application is unwise and against the public interest.

The letter from the Open Spaces society concludes that the public interest is not best served by the decision to dispose under the section 123 1972 Act (amended).

The justification for seeking disposal is subject to planning and the benefits to the public are subject to planning, so not guaranteed, and should be disregarded, not least because the Authority must demonstrate that no prejudgement has taken place prior to a planning application. Also it could be against the public interest, as it side steps the planning policy protection intended in the NPPF and CECLPS.

We note that any comments from the public regarding planning matters were dismissed as not relevant to the disposal notice, yet the Council made reference to planning matters. A clear case of inconsistency.

3 Council reputational risk – legal work required to secure planning conditions.

The information in the decision request papers provided is misleading and continues to understate the loss and overstate the benefit. This will be interpreted by the public as the Council not listening and taking a risk outweighing the reward.

The portfolio holder is advised to read all the information himself to satisfy himself that the material presented is an accurate account of notice of disposal advert consultation responses received.

Of the 185 responses we would highlight the following 1.Open Spaces Society– 2.Resident re Wildlife corridor- 3.KROW - 4. Knutsford Town Council 5 Councillors individual submissions.

The portfolio holder is advised to understand how the benefits stated can be achieved through the planning process if freehold disposal has taken place.

The blue land is Green Belt, Wildlife corridor, Open Space, Recreational Playing field lapsed use Football pitch. (Incidentally the proposed new POS is outside of the allocated LPS38 development site in green belt and would require destruction of the natural environment)

The papers are written in a dismissive tone regarding the nature of the blue land and the value to the community. The statements that only part, a strip, 4% of the blue land will be taken, this is misleading and incorrect as this is subject to planning & developers design & access plans and claims that this is easily lost and the remaining land still available is a nonsense and insulting bordering on deceptive. It also suggests that only the minimal replacement will be negotiated for if necessary in the future. It also selectively picks a phrase from a well written letter regarding Wildlife corridor and undermines it. The area is recognised as a local wildlife site, both by the Council in its site details for LPS38 and the

Cheshire Wildlife Trust. It will be further designated in the Knutsford Neighbourhood plan. This includes the hedgerows and borders of the blue land. It is evidenced in the Local Plan Open spaces report.

It is clearly stated that the blue land in question is 6.6 acres and that is the quantity that would need to be replaced, as well as it the quality being of equal or better than now. That quality is determined by looking at location and access. Clearly the masterplan from the landowner's agent, deposited in the Local plan, showing POS outside the LPS38 development site and beyond the new housing fails that test.

Since the first press release regarding the notice of disposal, reference has been made to 20 acres of new POS being released by a development on LPS 38. No evidence has been provided to substantiate that. LPS is roughly 25 acres so clearly 20 can't be found in that. The land owner (Dewscope – Mark Horrocks & parents) also owns a further 12 acres that has remained within the green belt and consists of undevelopable land alongside the Birkin Brook and wilderness shrubs & trees etc. in the NW triangle. The Officer time securing permissions on that land and the relevant 106 & management company agreements will be substantial. The public will be enraged to see more green belt, environmentally sensitive land lost to provide a replacement for the blue land.

Report writers have indicated that the existing Longridge area will benefit from integration and regeneration. No evidence has been provided of how that will be achieved. The masterplan provided by landowners agent – Emery Planning and titled 'Mereside Longridge' clearly shows that if access is only through the blue land then the new housing will be shielded from Longridge by retaining the border next to the covenanted green land. Also a developer is not expected to contribute to regenerating an existing neighbourhood. This regeneration aspiration was first mooted when one of the beneficiaries of the Covenant , Great Places Housing was involved in talks to develop the site and they would use any profits to invest in their ownership on Longridge. Also the owner of the shopping parade & the pub could reinvest any monies due to upgrade their buildings.

Regeneration and integration should be excluded as a benefit of disposal unless evidence is provided. It would be subject to planning so outside the scope of this decision- maybe depending on the answer to point 1.

Finally a key point regarding benefit, Council Officers are promoting considerable benefit based on planning gain, but the final developer may well be able to argue that to make such a contribution would make his development unviable. Any non-contractually binding terms of agreement relating to the decision to dispose would be worthless.

4 Cabinet Oct 2017 required Officers to carry out further work on the covenant – no evidence provided and reliance on ‘external legal advisers’ requires scrutiny.

(Ref Appendix 8.)

The portfolio holder must satisfy himself that the ‘external advice’ is from an entirely independent party, (not related to the landowners, future developers or their agents) in writing and to the written satisfaction of the Head of Legal Services at Cheshire East Council.

Perhaps the Portfolio holder should ask the question how much will legal work cost to attempt to negotiate the discharge and why isn’t it being recharged to the landowner.

Officers maintain their position that a covenant on the green land is not possible to overcome and this justifies the disposal of the blue land to give sole road access to an allocated site LPS38. As a result of this judgement we understand that the in-house legal team **have not** been instructed to work on starting negotiations with the beneficiaries. Offers from Knutsford Town Council to identify the beneficiaries to enable negotiation to start have been rebuffed.

If the Council fails to attempt to negotiate with the beneficiaries, as it is the owner of both green & blue land it may be subject to claims that is attempting to deny the beneficiaries their rights in order to save itself from expense and obtain maximum benefit itself. To that end it would also be assisting a landowner to achieve maximum sale value on land that is landlocked. It is also reasonable to assume that when the covenant was put in place, the extent was not drawn around the blue land because it was designated open space and protection from disposal was assumed.

Appendix 8 Covenant does not confirm what action has been taken since October 2017. It does not confirm that legal advice has been commissioned and obtained in writing. It does not confirm whether the external adviser is in any way connected with the Council, the Landowner or future Developer of the site.

Moreover, the proposed decision request appears now to suggest that access will be required across the Green Land, so that will require overcoming the covenant. If so then the blue land is clearly not needed.

3.4 It is, however, pertinent to consider disposing of the Green Land in tandem with the Blue Land to ensure connectivity to the open space for new residents of the prospective adjacent development. This would not affect the covenants in place in respect of the Green Land.

Again below *benefits* are stated that are misleading overpromising.

4.2 Provision of significant public open space within LPS 38 by implication also replacing any public open space affected by the provision of an access to the site

LPS 38 is circa 25 acres. Blue land is 6.6 acres. The land previously outlined as POS by the agent in a masterplan is outside of LPS38 in the green belt and wilderness.

The developer would be able to design a scheme that enhances the overall provision and quality of public open space in the locality

He could but would be under no obligation to do so and may be held ransom to purchase the land outside of LPS38 but in DEWSCOPE ownership. Also this confirms that the intent may be not to deliver the new 20 acres but enhance the land which has been removed from open space designation and give it back with a road through it.

7.1 Crossing the Blue Land presents the only realistic opportunity to create certainty of development, subject to the planning process.

This is clearly a contradiction in a sentence.

5 Capital receipt for sale & the inclusion of LPS38 in CECLPS – Cabinet May-Oct 2017 information.

The portfolio holder should consider whether any material facts or reasons for part 2 disclosure have changed in the last year and bring them to the attention of the Cabinet to see if a different decision would be reached and to seek support for the negotiation with beneficiaries to begin in earnest at the landowners cost.

The value of that receipt is clearly much less than when the Engine of the North promoted the blue land for removal from the greenbelt and inclusion within the site for housing known now as LPS38.

It is clear that this position would suit Cheshire East Council, particularly the assets team as a capital receipt is held up as a benefit to the disposal of blue land. The previous promotion by Engine of the North and apparent Heads of Agreement with the landowner, appears to have created a legacy of ambition that needs rethinking.

It is widely known that the existence of a covenant was not made known to the examiner and that this would have affected the assessment of the deliverability of the site and questioned its allocation as a strategic site. Cheshire East Council cannot continue to cover up one error by making another in disposing of the blue land without using best endeavours to negotiate discharge of the covenant. Then it must be transparent by progressing through the planning process.

Knutsford Residents in Over Ward (**KROW**)



Aiming for transparency and fairness in matters relating to residents in Knutsford Over Ward
Campaigning to save Green Belt , Wildlife corridor, Open Space, Recreational Playing field
Football pitch at Higher Downs North Downs Longridge Knutsford

Highlighting that Cheshire East Council have made a Local Plan with policies that they should stick to.

Constituted community group representing 200 people.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 12 August 2018 10:47
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: northdowns longridge playing fields

I am very upset at the idea these playing fields are to be dug up. I have lived in Knutsford for 42 years. When we bought our house in Delmar Road we understood the fields were green belt and could not be touched. Both my children used to play on the fields and had so much fun. When my grandchildren visit they too enjoy playing on the fields.

When there is so much concern with obesity in children surely it is imperative that playing fields are left. As schools do less and less sport areas for children to run and play are extremely important.

[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 12 August 2018 13:13
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: Disposal of Open Space at Longridge, Knutsford
Attachments: Letter Re Disposal.docx

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please find attached letter in connection with the current consultation on the disposal of the open space at Longridge Knutsford

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted]



12 August 2018

Disposal of Open Space
Cheshire East Council

Re: Disposal of Open Space at Longridge

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are writing to you in connection with the Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford dated 17th July 2018.

Whilst I recognise the work that the council, its officers and members of interested groups including KROW have done and that the current proposal, ~4% of blue land, is an improvement, we still believe there are underlying issues that need to be resolved.

The council has received responses in connection with the previous proposal and has rejected some on the basis that they should be considered under the planning process related to the main LPS38 land. However, it uses some contrary arguments related to planning to justify some of its own arguments for disposal, it cannot selectively decide on this basis.

The whole situation is a catch 22 in so far as that the amount of blue land to be disposed of needs to be agreed by a successful planning application. The land cannot be sold until planning has been agreed and so conditions and the planning process is vital to whether part of the blue land should be disposed of.

The covenant on the green strip of land is written to prevent the development of LPS38 without remediation to the holders of the covenant. The risk management section of the latest council report does not mention this. There is a real risk that beneficiaries of the covenant seek damages from the council and landowner of LPS38 in enabling this development. By allowing access across the blue land the council has effectively allowed a bypass of the covenant. The costs, fees and damages defending this would far outweigh any costs spent dissolving the covenant correctly.

The new proposal although subject to planning permission is already in breach of local planning conditions. The limit of only one access road when a minimum of two for this size of development are required is predetermining plans. The following significant impacts will be made as a result of this predetermination: -

- 1) Lack of regeneration of existing Longridge housing estate, LPS38 was initially allocated on the basis of a joined-up approach, benefitting the local community. The most recent proposals show a distinctly separate site with no integration. This is presumably to maximise profits for developers ahead of community
- 2) Shift in traffic, with traffic now exiting the new development at a different point the flow of traffic will come through an already at capacity housing estate past two busy primary schools, rather than exiting to Mobberley Road. This will significantly increase the risk of accident, congestion and air pollution in the area of Higher Downs and Manor Park South and North

The proposal to replace lost open space however small is not acceptable as this is using non-open space greenbelt including parts of Birkin Brook and its protection is specifically noted in LPS38 section C of the Cheshire East Local Plan (CELP). LPS38 stated that provision be made within the existing boundaries for open space, however this additional open space is currently outside of LPS38 therefore allowing the developer to build more houses in LPS38 and justify opening up further green belt and destroying natural habitats, against the agreed CELP. There is no open space, formal or informal, in the boundaries of LPS38 and the proposed open space is significantly away from the blue land and is only accessible through the new housing development. There is no parking in the current plan so it will not provide a like for like replacement.

In summary, whilst we appreciate the reduced amount of blue land to be disposed and the work around that: -

- 1) The disposal of the land, is predetermining the design of the development and that this disposal should not be considered until a full planning application has been granted. A subsequent notice to dispose could then be conducted with all known consequences at the time
- 2) That the development of LPS38 without due consideration and disposal of the covenant runs a real risk of the council incurring large legal costs defending itself from covenant beneficiaries seeking damages

Therefore, at this moment we cannot support the disposal of any part of the blue land.

Yours faithfully,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the official.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 August 2018 09:52
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: REF POS at North Downs Longridge Knutsford

Dear Sirs

I read that the report writers and summary papers continue to undervalue the loss and overstate the benefit that would occur to the Knutsford public, if the Council decides to dispose of playing field land in the green belt adjacent to a local wildlife area. There is also no declared evidence that formal professional advice has been given in writing, or a witness that the 'external legal' source is independent of any third party seeking to benefit from a decision. There may be a challenge from the beneficiaries of the covenant on the green strip that they have been bypassed.

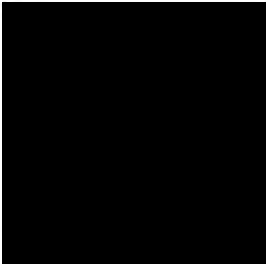
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Cheshire East Council are clearly not prepared to listen to the public and are happy to risk their reputation.

I ask that the Portfolio holder obtain a quote for professional services to progress discharging the covenant and evaluating the risks, and rejects the request to dispose of public land that is clearly not surplus to requirements.

[REDACTED]

15 AUG 2018

Monday 13th August 2018

Dear Cllr Arnold,

PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, LONGRIDGE/ NORTH DOWNS

Having reviewed the documents published on 17th July, the Town Council remains strongly opposed to the proposed disposal of the public open space on Longridge/North Downs delineated blue on plans. We have previously expressed that this is a big issue in Knutsford and one that has caused an unprecedented amount of contact from residents to the Town Council.

The published documents heavily lean towards a decision to disposal of part of the public open space to allow a road to be built through it to serve the new development. There are two main reasons for this given in the reports:

- a) It only involves disposing of 4% of the land
- b) The covenant cannot be set aside

DISPOSING OF 4%

The assertion that disposing of only 4% of the land is acceptable is dismissed by the Town Council. As a matter of principle, we remain strongly opposed to any disposal of this public open space when it has not been proven that the covenant cannot be set aside.

The report refers to disposal of 4% of the land which sounds very minor. However, the reality is that more than 4% of the usable space would be lost. The area is currently a large field and the creation of a road would cut at least 10% of the usable land off from the remainder. This would sterilise the cut off land from its existing use, relegating it to little more than amenity green space unsuitable for general recreation use. The remainder of the site would also be greatly impacted and an area around the new road would not be usable for recreation due to its proximity to traffic.

TOWN COUNCIL
KNUTSFORD
QUALITY GOLD

This open space should have a 90m football pitch (Cheshire East Council has failed to reinstate the goal posts) and losing this part of the site would prevent this football pitch being reinstated without the removal of the established hedgerow in the centre of the site.

THE COVENANT

You will be aware that the Town Council has undertaken its own research into the covenant. It is agreed that the covenant is enforceable and accepted that the Borough Council does not have the power to compel the beneficiaries to release the covenant.

Section 3.3.1 of the covenant report states:

The extent of the benefitting land is not identified and whilst further work on this issue has been undertaken by external legal advisors, significantly more work would be needed to define the exact extent of this.

We purchased HM Land Registry title document CH113177 "Land on the east side of Longridge, Knutsford" which is for the green land. This document refers to the restrictive covenant between Manchester City Council and Macclesfield Borough Council arising from the transfer dated 11th July 1977.

We then purchased a copy of this transfer document which states:

...and the [Macclesfield Borough Council] so as to bind the land hereby transferred and to the benefit of the remainder of the land comprised in Title Number CH15982 hereby covenants with the [Manchester City Council] for ever hereafter to keep and maintain the land hereby transferred as an open space and to leave the same unbuilt upon...

We then purchased the documents for CH15982 which is now filed as CH365317. This very clearly identifies the land which benefits from the covenant. This land being the Longridge estate as built by Manchester City Council.

It is confusing, therefore, that the report states that the benefitting land is not identified – it is.

The benefit of the covenant transfers with ownership of the land. The majority of the benefitting land is now owned by Great Places Housing Association. Great Places has confirmed to the Town Council its in principle agreement to assist in the release of the covenant.

In addition to Great Places, Manchester City Council owns the Falcon Bearer Public House. We have spoken with the City Council and are hopeful that they too would agree to release the covenant, having impressed upon them that it is in the community's best interest.

We have obtained records from HM Land Registry of all freehold ownership for the benefitting land. There are a further 110 freehold owners. The majority are owner occupiers, a small number are owned by residents living elsewhere in Knutsford and a small number owned by companies or landlords from outside the area.

It is clear, therefore, that it is possible to seek to arrange a deed of release with the parties enjoying the benefit of covenant. The Town Council offers its support in negotiating for the beneficiaries to agree to

this as we believe that a strong case can be put to them that it is in their best interests in order to safeguard our existing public open space and to ensure that the new estate links into Longridge. This is the desired community outcome.

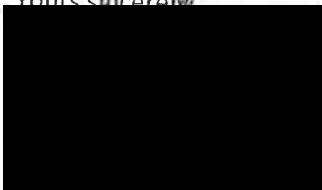
CONCLUSION

The Town Council reiterates that we fully support the development of LPS 38 and the disposal of the green land. We believe it has great potential to provide community benefit in the surrounding area. The Cheshire East Council Design Guide sets out a requirement for multiple accesses and this would not be met by providing a single access over the playing fields.

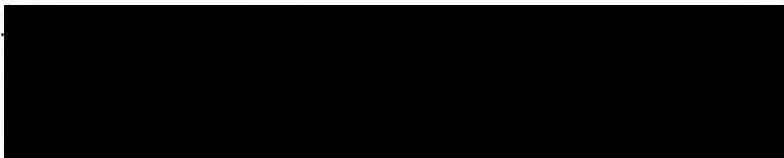
The response to the Public Open Space Disposal Notice, the previously submitted petitions to each Cheshire East Council and the Town Council and the unprecedented level of contact we have had with residents clearly demonstrates the public's view that the disposal of blue land is not supported. The Town Council implores you to undertake thorough exploratory work on the covenant to seek its discharge. The Town Council offers its support in doing this, in organising meetings and engaging with the beneficiaries.

We request that in advance of any decision being taken that you meet with the Town Council to discuss and explore the issues highlighted in this letter in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



cc.



CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
QUANTITY HOUSE

13 AUG 2018

9th August 2018

Re: Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford. I'm writing to you as the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Regeneration about the two Cheshire East Council sites (Green and Blue) adjacent to LPS 38, where 225 houses are to be built. I object to the development of LPS 38 and consequently I oppose the sale of the two adjoining strips for the following reasons: -

- 1) The Dewscope owned site has not been farmed for many decades so has transformed into a natural wilderness abundant in wildlife. It comprises a brook, trees (ancient woodland, Scots Pines, many young oaks), bushes, plants, a pond and adjoins a mere used for fishing. It forms part of an important wildlife corridor between Tatton Park and Springwood. It is not possible to replicate.
- 2) Major development is planned for Knutsford. Easily accessible green breathing spaces, to escape to, are increasingly important. This place is the most suitable and obvious to save.
- 3) The LPS 38 area is used daily by the public (walkers, dog owners etc) for recreational purposes. St John's Wood Academy use it as a forest school for young teenagers with special needs. Building houses on it would divide and reduce this open space and detract from people's enjoyment of it.
- 4) Cheshire Wildlife Trust's report 'Protecting & Enhancing Knutsford's Natural Environment' (Oct. 2017), included LPS 38 as an area of distinctiveness providing important wildlife habitats, as well as acting as ecological stepping stones and corridors. They recommend that the corridor network (this site is a big part of it) is protected from development. (Map 10, page 14 & paragraph 2, page 21)
- 5) Mobberley Road is congested. This part of town, being restricted by Tatton Park, could not cope with an extra 1,500 vehicles from Parkgate and Longridge, not to mention the pollution and noise.
- 6) Constructing a road through the Blue playing field to join Longridge would create a dangerous cross roads on a camber, near a school and bus stop with restricted visibility.
- 7) The Council have a duty to maintain the Green strip. It may be overgrown but in reality it has an abundance of trees, bushes and plants. It is a haven for insects and birdlife.
- 8) It was a mistake to put this landlocked site in the local plan. It's not deliverable and should be removed from it. Therefore its not necessary to sell any or all of the adjoining Green or Blue lands. I ask you not to dispose of them. The Trust said it should be protected from development. I agree. It is too important ecologically. All of it should continue to be available for recreational purposes.

Yours sincerely

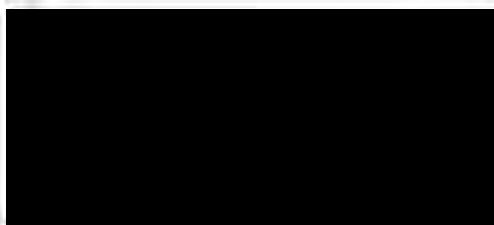
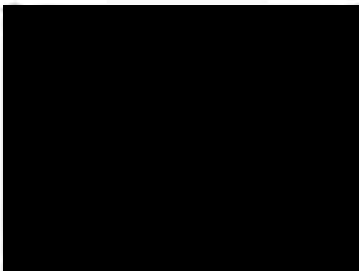
We use the area for walking regularly and will be sad to see this area destroyed.

Re: Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford. I'm writing to you as the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Regeneration about the two Cheshire East Council sites (Green and Blue) adjacent to LPS 38, where 225 houses are to be built. I object to the development of LPS 38 and consequently I oppose the sale of the two adjoining strips for the following reasons: -

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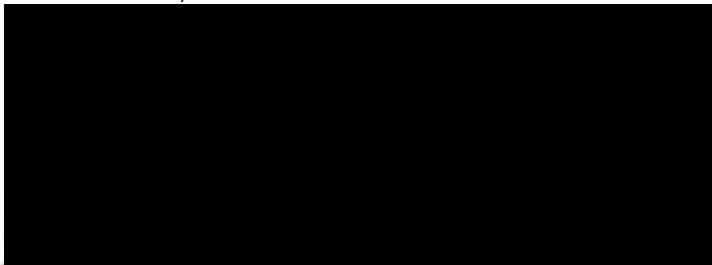


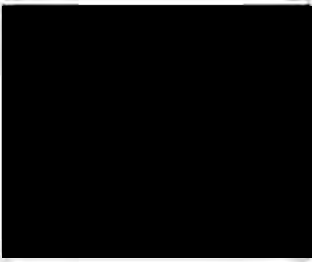

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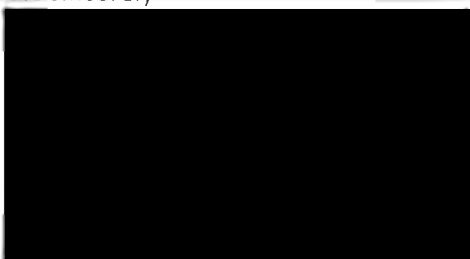
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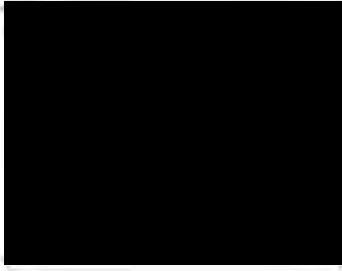
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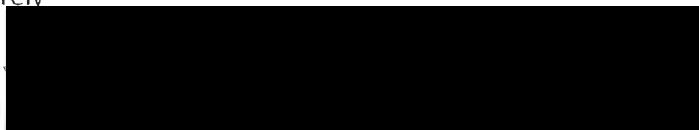


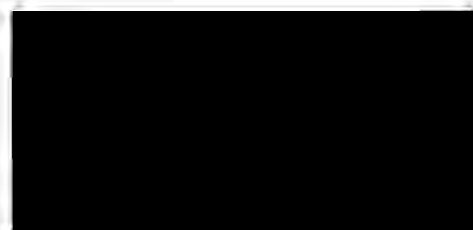
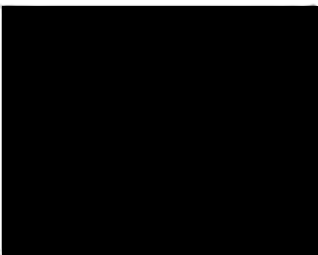
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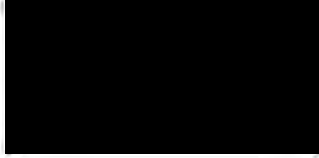
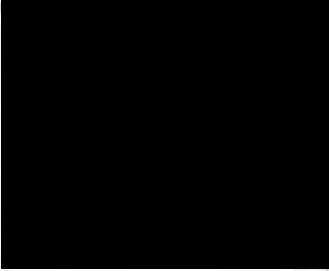
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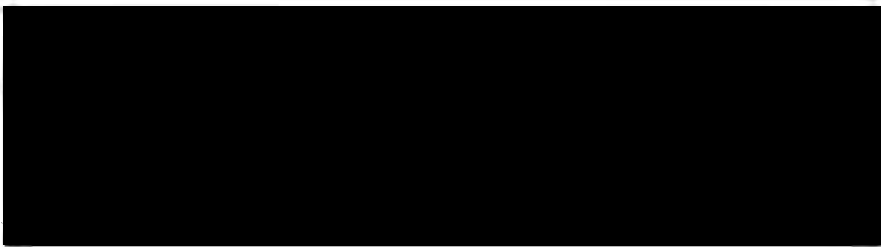





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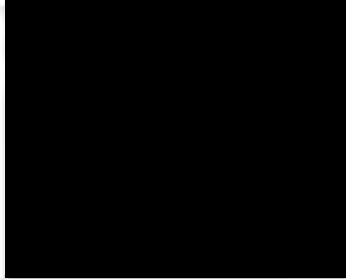


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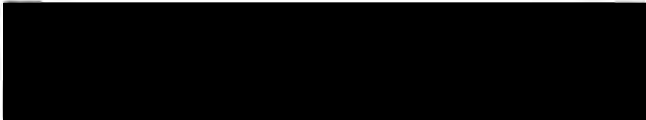





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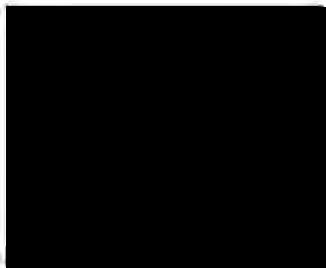
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WALK MY DOG ON THIS FIELD, THE ROAD IS BUSY
ENOUGH AS IT IS I HAVE 2 DISTILLED CHILDREN AND
I REGULARLY TAKE THEM FOR WALKS OVER HERE AND
THEY LOVE IT

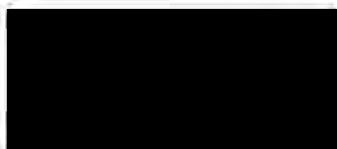


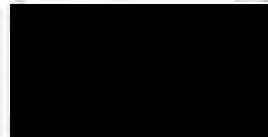
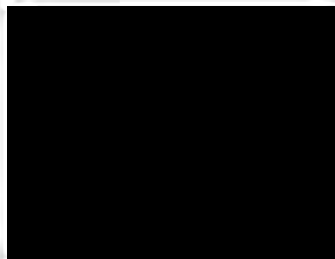
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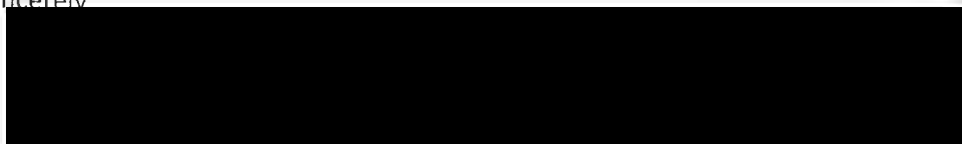


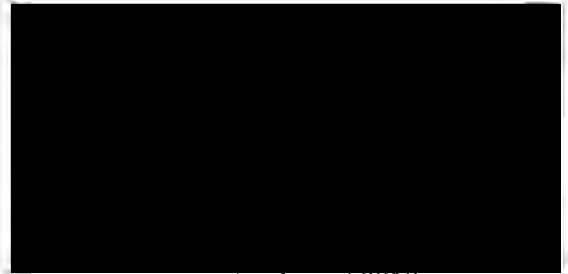
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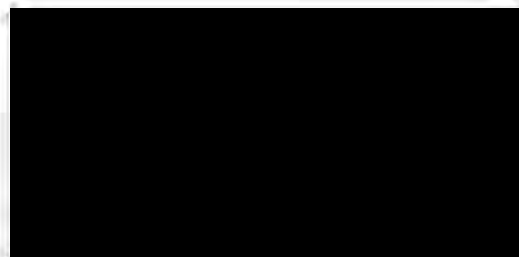
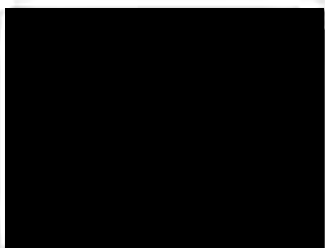
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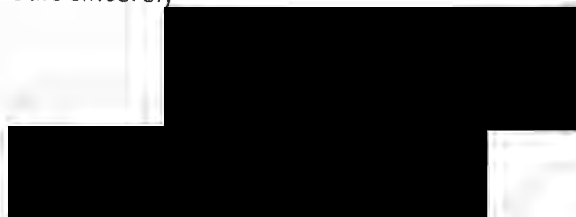


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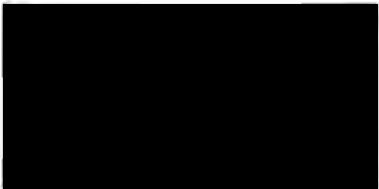


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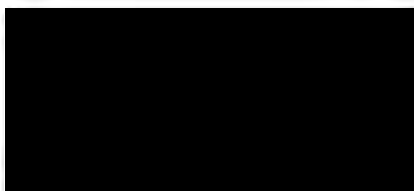



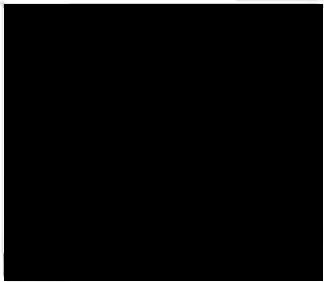
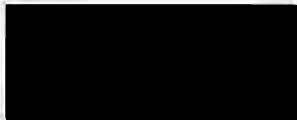
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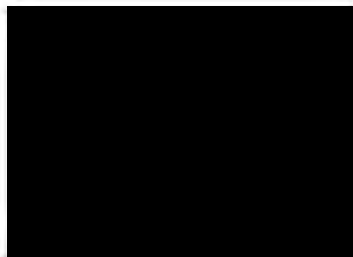



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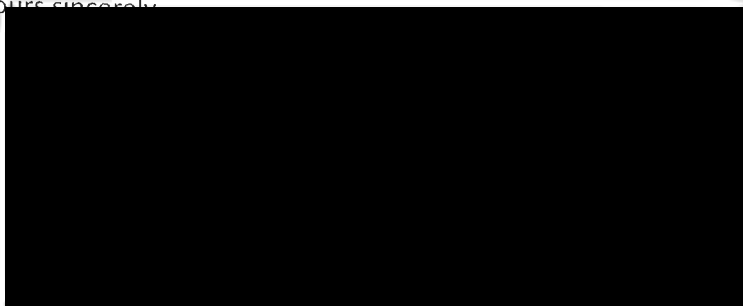


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WALK DOGS IN AREA.



August 2018

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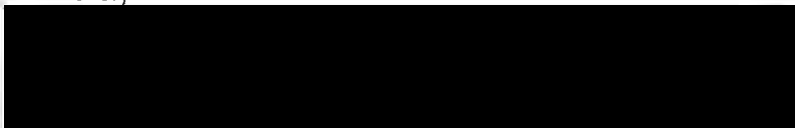


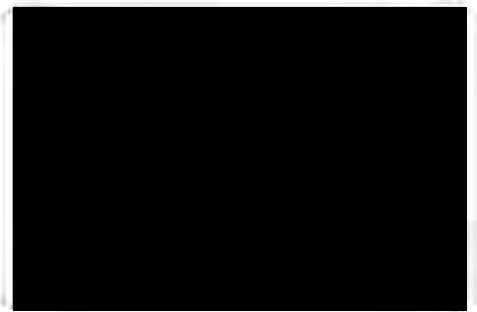
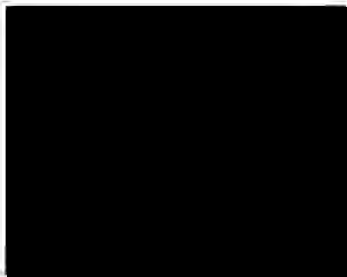
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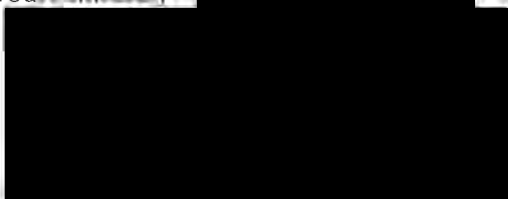


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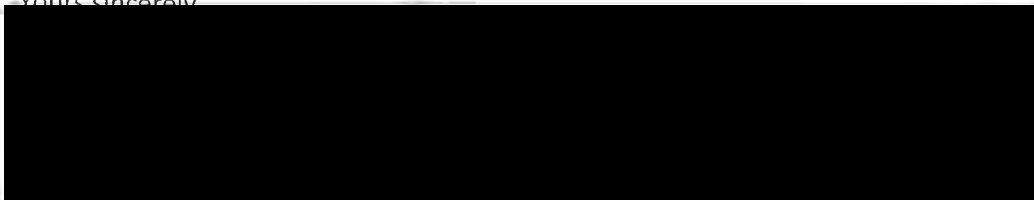


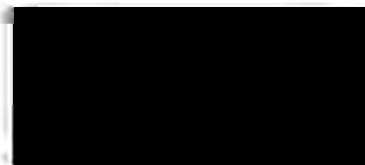
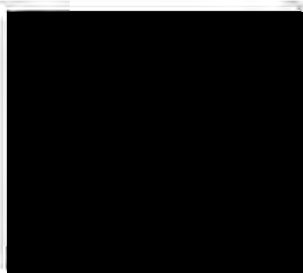
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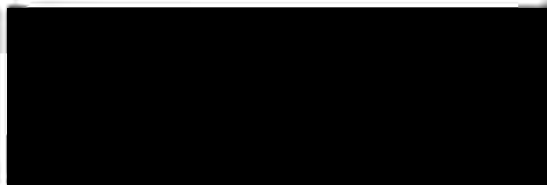


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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 August 2018 10:07
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: [OFFICIAL] Proposed Sale of land at Longridge, Knutsford for Dewscope housing development

Dear All,

Please find below a further email received regarding the above.

Many thanks.

[REDACTED]



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 August 2018 03:28
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Proposed Sale of land at Longridge, Knutsford for Dewscope housing development

Dear [REDACTED]

I write to you regarding the proposed housing development of 225 houses near Longridge, Knutsford and two Council owned open space sites. I object to this housing development and the sale of these two adjacent parcels of land.

Having grown up in the local area, I would like to highlight the importance of these areas to the local environment and the wellbeing of surrounding communities.

I am saddened that the council plans to sell part of the football pitch and break a legal covenant in selling the strip of land opposite the Longridge estate.

I spent many hours during my youth with my brother playing on this football pitch. However, in recent years the local authority has failed to actively maintain it.

A further housing development in this area will put further strain on local infrastructure and facilities. What provision have you made for dealing with the extra traffic this development will create ? Where will the residents of these new houses send their children to school ? Or which health facilities will these families use ?

I also understand that in your local plan you have failed to explicitly outline the implications of this development on these two land holdings and the subsequent need for access. I feel this is rather

disingenuous. Why didn't you clearly state the implications of this in the local plan you produced since it directly affects the public.

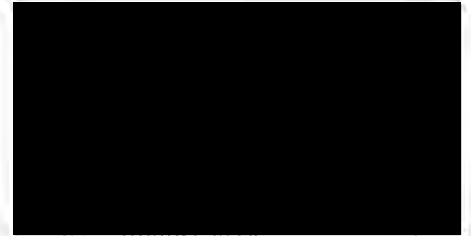
I also find it rather intriguing that one of the main beneficiaries of this development is not local residents, but a London-based hedge fund manager, via Dewscope Ltd, who will obviously make a considerable profit. It appears to me that his father, a former house builder, purchased this land many years ago with the sole purpose of having its green belt status revoked years later. A shrewd investment or cynical carpet-bagging ? That's open to interpretation. However, I would be surprised if some members of the council weren't already aware that this was the intention all along.

Nevertheless, the point isn't who will benefit financially, I do agree that more affordable housing is needed in the town. But not at the expense of existing communities who will lose out through greater traffic, less green space and reduced bio-diversity. It will hit the general wellbeing of people in the entire area.

I urge you to reconsider the sale of the council-owned football pitch, breaking of the covenant and more broadly, the entire housing development.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the sender.



August 2018

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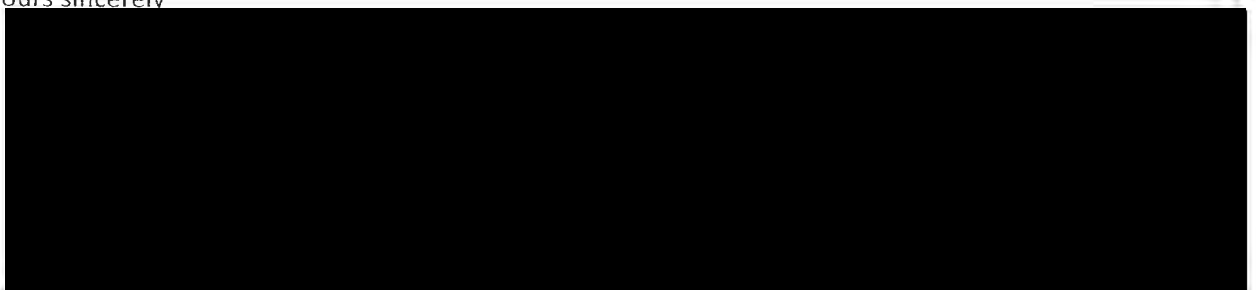
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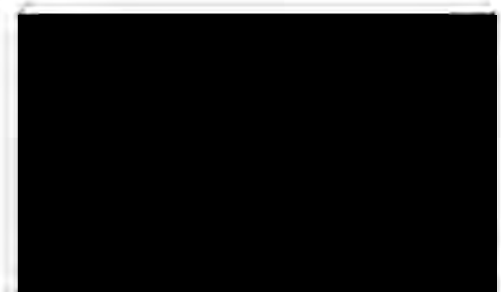
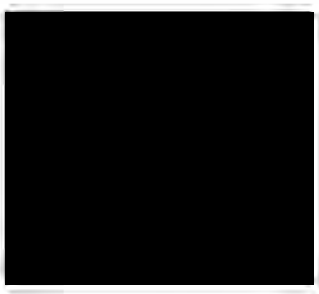
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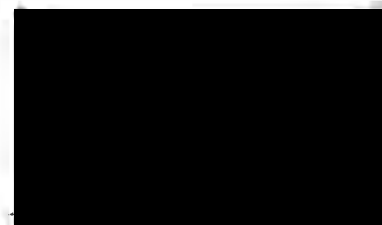
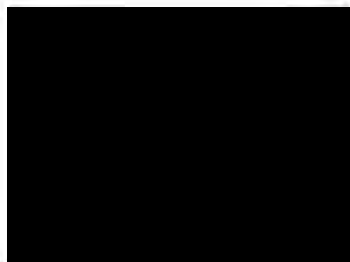
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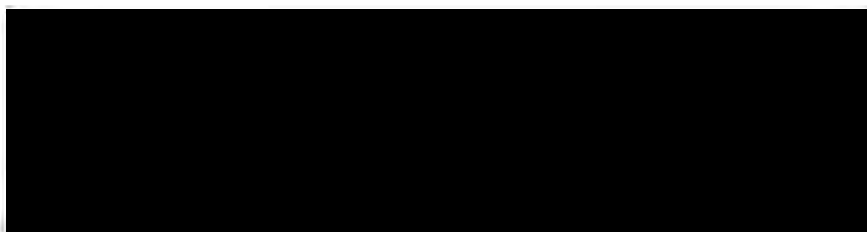
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(CAMERA CLUBS)
USE IT AS A CAMERA CLUB
walk the dogs

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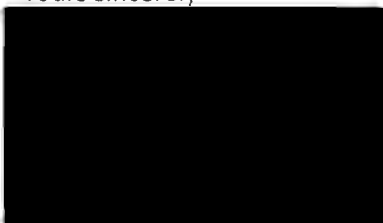


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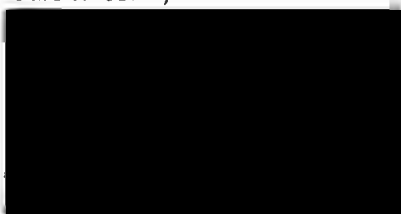
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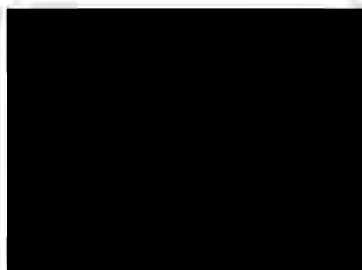
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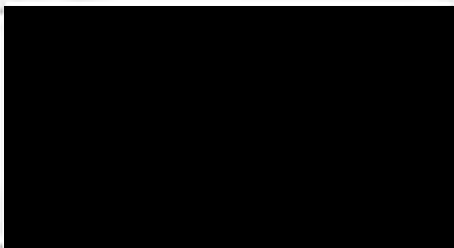





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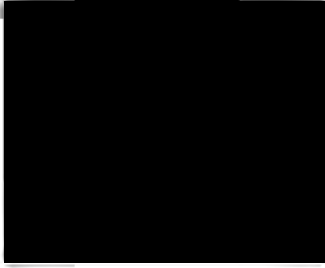
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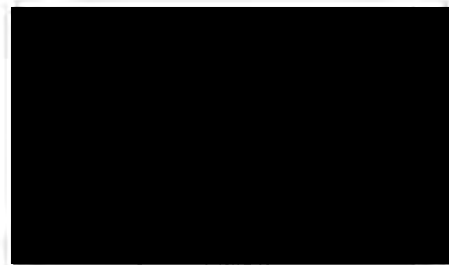
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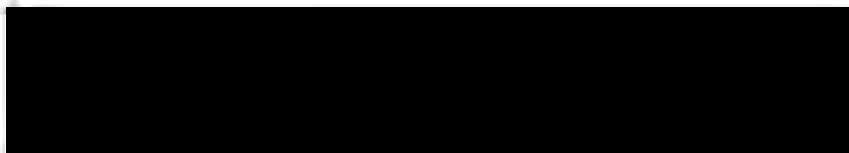
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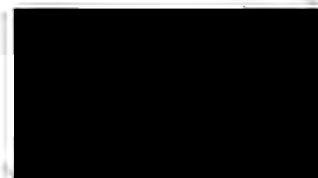
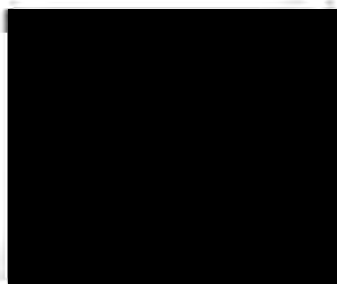
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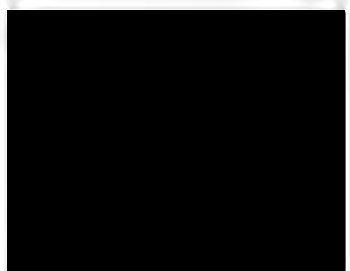
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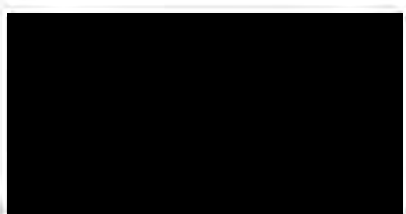


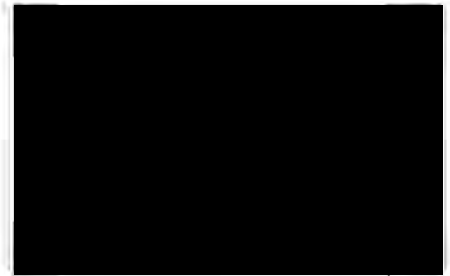
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WALK THE DOG ALL WEEK

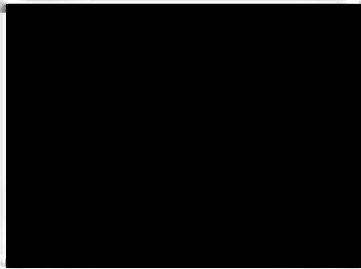

August 2018

Re: Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford. I'm writing to you as the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Regeneration about the two Cheshire East Council sites (Green and Blue) adjacent to LPS 38, where 225 houses are to be built. I object to the development of LPS 38 and consequently I oppose the sale of the two adjoining strips for the following reasons: -

- 1) The Dewscope owned site has not been farmed for many decades so has transformed into a natural wilderness abundant in wildlife. It comprises a brook, trees (ancient woodland, Scots Pines, many young oaks), bushes, plants, a pond and adjoins a mere used for fishing. It forms part of an important wildlife corridor between Tatton Park and Springwood. It is not possible to replicate.
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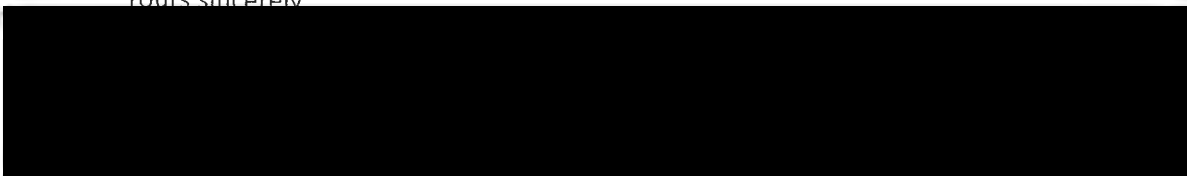


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Cc: Cabinet & Mayor & Knutsford Ward Cllrs.

11 August 2018 by email.

Dear [REDACTED]

Ref: Proposed decision to dispose of POS at *North Downs* Longridge Knutsford.

- We repeat our request that we would appreciate a meeting with you before you decide on the (unclear) proposal. This could not now be before September 10th.
- We ask that you do not agree to dispose of this land at this time, as there is considerable reputational, legal & financial risk to Cheshire East Council. As we have questioned the Officers reports we ask that you consider whether it is appropriate for you to take this decision as an individual without further scrutiny.
- Unwritten, uncredited, external advice is not good enough. We ask that you seek a quote for the engagement of professional services to formally start the process of discharging the covenant and request payment of this by the party requesting access. This would remove the report writers stated barrier to CEC re such action.
- We ask that you question the summary of representation and responses given in the report, where mention of a letter from the Open Spaces society was not explicitly declared and the tone dismisses public representation by continuing to understate the community value and overstate the benefits of disposing of the land. This land (since 1969) is playing field, recreational amenity land in the green belt adjacent to a local wildlife site as per the Local plan evidence papers and this has implications for future planning.
- We ask that you consider that it would be in the Knutsford public interest to alternatively take this request for access forward entirely via the planning process.
- To show good faith we also request a review of the Asset of Community Value decision which was recently refused following the assets team involvement.

Overleaf are supporting comments to these requests. Other submissions have been made via the general consultation email address.

Yours sincerely

*Aiming for transparency and fairness in matters relating to residents in Knutsford Over Ward.
A constituted community group representing 200 people.*

We understand that Cabinet delegated a decision to you to decide whether or not to dispose of any or all of the green or blue land. This to be after giving due consideration to (b)any representations made to a notice to dispose and (a) further work to explore options for facilitating the access to a proposed housing site across covenanted land including consultation on the same. The disposal requiring that best value be achieved and the circumstances requiring the Council to demonstrate its fiduciary duty in a way that is accountable to local people.

The Officer tasked with providing (a) on the green land, Frank Jordan has provided a summary report to you with appendices. This includes significant input from Officer Andrew Kehoe and another collation of representation provided by an unnamed source. It is totally unclear what decision you are being asked to make regarding the timing, method and amount of disposal. At this point it looks like a blank approval for disposal of all the land subject to assets negotiation with no oversight.

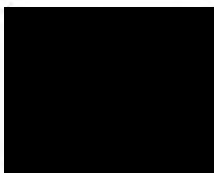
Under public law as a Portfolio Holder you could reasonably expect to defend your decision based on a recommendation from Officers. However, it can be challenged that (2) the summary of representations is not a fair one and there is (1) no evidence of further work having been undertaken on the covenant. This work should have attempted to discharge the covenant.

This having been highlighted to you, now makes the decision yours alone and should encourage total scrutiny of all the material provided and you reaching your own conclusion. You may wish to ask for further clarification on matters that may concern you, or conclude that the decision is not possible by you given that the Officers involved and the implication on a strategic housing site in the Local plan questions your unfettered independence on this matter. We would advise that an unfettered third party help you or Cabinet/Council with any scrutiny in this matter.

1) The green land covenant advice has been given on the basis of external legal advice and the assumption that work to formally negotiate a discharge of the covenant would be a costly exercise for Cheshire East Council. If as it is assumed, a landowner has requested permission for access across Council owned land then it should be for that applicant to pay for any costs involved in investigating the options and providing such access. We suggest that in fact it is the potential cost of satisfying the beneficiaries to achieve such a discharge is the key point here. Again this would need to be reclaimed in any price of disposal of land to such party. So at worst Cheshire East Council would have a cash flow consideration – not a total cost liability. To not do this by for example disposing of the blue land would give the landowner a huge benefit.

2) The report writers were also the ones that formally presented the information to Cabinet for a decision last October, originally seeking complete non-disclosure under part 2. Then and now the officers continue to be dismissive of the community value and use of the land. Clearly on behalf of the Council they have an interest in continuing to challenge what is obviously the case. There is recent evidence of interference in other places where the Council has been asked to consider the land. (Two recently this year and previously by Engine of the North in submissions to the Local plan and in response to communication from a local Councillor.)

Significantly the decision papers report fails to explicitly state that a letter was received from the Open Spaces society “urging rejection of this request” and land request be taken forward entirely through the planning process to ensure that all relevant planning policies apply.



FAO Cheshire East Council
Westfields
Middlewich Road
Sandbach

14th August 2018

Dear Sirs

Re Longridge Land Proposals

I write in connection with the proposed development site at Longridge, Knutsford and plans to sell or access any such development via open space land ('Blue' land) and/or the adjacent grass verge ('Green' land) and wish to submit my objections to the proposals.

I strongly object to disposal of the grass verge ('Green' land) or its use to access the proposed development site. The council have described the verge as 'overgrown vegetation' but this description fails to acknowledge the number of mature trees that are located within the verge. These trees enhance our (i.e. mine and Longridge residents in general) environment by improving biodiversity, assisting in reducing noise pollution and improving air quality. The trees provide us with pleasure as they are appealing to look at and their use by wildlife e.g. squirrels provides added interest. The verge acts as a wildlife corridor and is used by foxes, badgers and pheasants, whilst I've seen or heard other birds including owls, jays, and woodpeckers using the trees.

Longridge is already a dangerous road for vehicles and any increase in the volume of traffic will only increase the risk of accidents, both near the Industrial estate and at the bends closer to the proposed development. It will also make it very difficult for residents with properties fronting the suggested new access points to safely drive in and out of their properties. The new roundabout proposed at the junction with Parkgate will result in tailbacks of vehicles along the Mobberley Road which will in turn cause traffic to backup along Longridge. This is an issue in its own right but is compounded by the parking outside Longridge Trading Estate which effectively reduces the width of the road to one lane. I have seen numerous near misses and was myself hit in the rear of my car by another vehicle whilst waiting for a vehicle coming from the other direction.

It is acknowledged that there are some instances of anti-social behaviour within Longridge, as in other parts of Knutsford. Notwithstanding this, Longridge has a strong sense of community, as evidenced by the support given to events and activities that are organised for both local residents and to raise funds for charity. However sense of community is affected by its size. At present many of the Longridge residents know one another - if the size of the urban area grows, by removing the

verge ('Green' land) and reducing the size of the open space ('Blue' land), then our sense of 'belonging' will reduce and this is likely to increase feelings of anxiety particularly amongst elderly residents.

Cheshire East Council's report dated 10 October 2017 suggests that a new development will have 'regenerative benefits to the Longridge Estate' and that the developer will be able to 'enhance the overall provision and quality of public open space in the locality'. The proposals are for a new housing development not for new facilities on Longridge therefore it is difficult to understand what regenerative benefits this would provide. At present, Longridge residents have access to an open space ('Blue' land) used by many of the local children and an area of wild open scrub and woodland with footpaths on our doorstep - great for promoting our health and wellbeing. New facilities may be created within the new development but the point is that the existing facilities are on our doorstep - any removal or reduction of these diminishes the provision of open space for Longridge residents. Anything new will primarily be of benefit to the new development as there are already alternative facilities within Knutsford. The green spaces ('blue' and 'green' land as well as the proposed development site) also give us a sense of pride in the area as they make it a nice place to live.

Yours sincerely



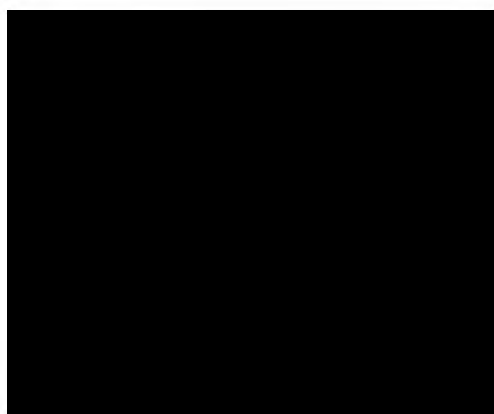
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 August 2018 17:39
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Objection: Disposal of Public Open Space at Longridge Knutsford
Attachments: Disposal of POS land at Longridge Objection.pdf

To whom it may concern,

Please find attached a response to the disposal of Public Open Space at Longridge Knutsford on behalf of Great Places Housing Group and our residents.

Please could you confirm receipt of this email.

Many Thanks,
[REDACTED]



Great Places Housing Group is a profit-for-purpose business which owns around 19,000 homes in 35 local authority areas across the north of England. Our Independence and Wellbeing service also provides support for almost 1700 customers including some of the most vulnerable people in our society. In the last financial year we developed 625 new homes to rent and buy as well as running a wide range of projects and initiatives to benefit our customers and their communities

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Great Places Housing Group response to the Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford

Great Places Housing Group wishes to object to the proposed disposal of the Public Open Space (POS) referred to as 'blue land' at Longridge, Knutsford to be used as access to any new residential development on the allocated land. As the site (LPS38) has been allocated within the adopted Local Plan, the suitability of this site for residential development is not considered within this response.

We consider that it is most beneficial to both the existing residents of Longridge and those of any proposed development; that if any development is to proceed, that the Council work with those included within the covenant to secure the 'green land' as access to the site with an active frontage along Longridge.

Great Places are a local landlord in the area with properties on the existing Longridge Estate. Through our Community Insight Report we know that neighbourhoods within Knutsford ranked among the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods in England on IMD 2015 and the seven IMD domains. Our qualitative work on the estate for a number of years and collected data tells us that there are numerous vulnerable residents who live within the Longridge community.

We are aware that there are approximately 400 young people aged 0-15 who would be impacted by the loss of the green spaces and the proposed disposal of public open space, as discussed below. There are nearly 300 people who are over the age of 65 living on the estate. Of these three hundred, 102 pensioners are living on their own. Although age alone does not denote vulnerability, 85 people are receiving Attendance Allowance. This is significant in such a tight geography because it is payable to people over the age of 65 who are severely disabled, physically or mentally and require personal care or supervision. 50 people are receiving Disability Living Allowance which is payable to children and adults in or out of work who are below the age of 65 and who are disabled, need help with personal care or have walking difficulties. In addition 2017 figures show that 55 people are receiving benefits as a direct result of their mental health and this does not take into account those who may be receiving other benefits and still suffering mental health issues. Many of the local residents will be impacted by the loss of POS and any proposed new development and might not either have fully understood or have been able to voice their concerns due to their vulnerabilities. As such, this response to the proposed disposal of land is written on behalf of Great Places Housing Group and our residents in the local area.

The objection centres on the loss of public open space, potential missed opportunities that could derive from a central entrance between the existing and allocated site if any development were to go ahead, and the impact that this will have on existing residents and businesses in Longridge given that there is another way of progressing any potential development through an alternative access. Were access to be taken through the existing open space, isolated communities would be created.

It is understood that the disposal of either piece of land could allow future development to take place in accordance with the local plan strategy.

Loss of Useable Public Open Space

Great Places do not consider that it is necessary for the disposal and loss of this public amenity when sufficient access to the site could be gained from the 'green land', if required, which is subject to a covenant.

Great Places consider that the loss of this open space would have a significant, negative impact upon the existing residents of Longridge and the North Downs area.



Public comments made to Great Places and within news articles, demonstrate that the open space is a well used and valued piece of land. The subject land is used for recreational purposes including children's play, dog walking and until recent years was a formal football pitch.

The allocated development site is also a well used informal open space at present and has been in use for many years. Whilst the loss of this has been agreed through the allocation of the site for residential development within the adopted Local Plan; this therefore makes it increasingly important that the remaining formal open space is fully retained to meet the communities' needs. The informal open space (the proposed development site) and POS (blue land) are heavily used for dog walking and general recreational activities. The loss of this POS is therefore in direct conflict to the information provided within the disposal report which states that: *"The reduction in the area of land available for recreational use is not considered such as would prevent or materially curtail other recreational activities. The marshy nature of the land is less than ideal for ball games over a significant proportion of the year."*



Whilst Cheshire East Council have tried to make reassurances on the amount of land to be reinstated through any planning application on the allocated residential land, it is well documented that many developers are looking to reduce the contributions that they make on planning applications due to viability. As such, Great Places query how the council plan to enforce the replacement of the playing fields and ensure that this is not done with the loss of other required contributions towards affordable housing, travel plans, education amongst others.

It is well reported that public open space contributes to social wellbeing and therefore, continued, safe access to this space must be protected before, during and after any construction on the neighbouring site for existing residents including children and vulnerable residents.

The council's intentions to use approximately 4% of the existing POS and the assumption that the remaining space could be continually used during construction is flawed. Great Places have concerns that the area identified as being lost by the Council will not be large enough for an adoptable road width with footpaths either side, visibility splays and construction space around this. As such, a greater amount of the site would be lost during and after construction which would impact upon the availability of the area for existing recreational users.

It is documented that there are open space requirements/shortages in the locality as discussed in the Open Space Assessment report for Knutsford 2012. The north-east of Knutsford is mentioned in relation to a shortage of allotment provision and eastern Knutsford generally in terms of poor accessibility to outdoor Sports Facilities. As such, it seems counter-active that the suggestion is to lose even a small amount of the existing POS facilities within this area in the north east of Knutsford, even if this is for a temporary period of time.

As identified, the 'blue land' is well used recreational green space, and forms part of the character of Longridge providing open space and views of the woodland beyond into the Green Belt. This should be seen as an asset to the community and the loss of this open space is not supported. The open space provides recreational space, which is easily accessed by all members of the community, in an otherwise mainly residential area. The local community benefit from its availability and constructing a road through it will make it less safe, due to construction and residential traffic, and it will be less used, reducing an already low level of open space provision within the area.

Any loss of green field land inevitably results in a loss of wildlife habitat. In an increasingly developed area of Knutsford this should not be supported, especially when, as discussed, there is another possible access to the allocated site which would have a minimal impact on existing wildlife and open space. The lighting of an adoptable highway, across currently dark space could have a serious impact upon birds nesting in nearby trees and other habitats. This coupled with the loss of habitats should any proposed development come forward on the allocated site would have a significant negative impact upon local habitats and therefore wildlife.

The 'blue land' falls within the defined Green Belt boundary. The purposes of the Green Belt as identified within the NPPF (2018) include preventing areas merging into one another and preventing the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas. Whilst paragraph 146 part c of the NPPF states that local transport infrastructure is *"not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it"*, in this situation, Great Places consider that the construction of the road would not preserve the openness of the area. As an area, outside of the Green Belt, can be used to access the proposed residential development site, Great Places do not consider it to be appropriate development within the Green Belt.

Overall, there are substantial negative impacts of the disposal of the 'blue land' should it be used as the access for any development which may come forward on the allocated site. Whilst any loss of green field land impacts upon wildlife and their habitat; it is considered that should access be required to the allocated site, access through the 'green land' would have a reduced impact compared with the 'blue land'.

Potential Uplift and Regeneration of the Area

The use of the 'green land' as access to the proposed development site, should it come forward, could afford an opportunity to uplift the Longridge estate. The disposal of the 'green land' would provide an opportunity to remove a physical and potential social barrier between the new housing and the Longridge Estate rather than creating two separated communities which would not have sustainable village centres with local facilities. Providing frontage of the new development onto Longridge would enable better connectivity across the wider neighbourhood.

This frontage onto the Longridge highway would provide the opportunity to uplift the existing commercial facilities and create a village centre around the existing facilities for both existing and new developments. This would be of benefit to all local persons.

Existing facilities include; a local shop, takeaway, pub and community café. The location of the entrance opposite or in close proximity to, the existing facilities will improve the visibility of these facilities. This in turn, would increase the footfall in the area leading to the potential for more business opportunities to arise around this commercial centre, increased economic benefit to the area and lead to further regeneration.

By investing in the access across the 'green land', a more sustainable community and commercial facilities can be created if the allocated site is to be developed.

Safety and Good Design

Access through the 'green land' would enable a safer street scene due to the natural surveillance provided by facing the existing residential and commercial area. This would also improve vehicular and pedestrian permeability between the proposed and existing areas. It is anticipated that if the two sites are combined thoughtfully, design wise, any potential hostility between the existing and proposed residential areas could be removed along with the physical barrier that the trees on the 'green land' would create between the two developments.

The natural surveillance from passing traffic and existing homes would provide a safer access to any new development which is more favourable to pedestrians and cyclists. Access across the 'blue land' would not provide this safety to cyclists and pedestrians, as although the entrance to the development would be lit, there is limited natural surveillance over the POS area in the evening. Sufficient amount of street lighting would have to be provided across the access to the development to ensure safety, which would also have a negative impact on the setting of the Green Belt and on the habitat of local wildlife in the public open space 'blue land'.

A wider entrance to the development could also be provided across the 'green land' as the amount of land designated to the highway wouldn't be restricted. The current proposal for it to be across the 'blue land' limits the highway to only 4% of the public open space to minimise loss. A wider entrance and visibility splays would provide greater vehicular safety in and out of the development and help to reduce the impact of the increased traffic in the area.

The loss of public open space, as discussed above, is also a safety concern as this reduces the amount of public open space within an acceptable distance from the existing community who have a range of accessibility requirements. Although the report states the public open space will be re-provisioned as part of any new development, the current access proposal across the 'blue land' would create an inward looking cul-de-sac development. The public open space land is currently used for children to play on and as a parent, it is unlikely you would be comfortable for your children have to play on the re-provisioned land that is located further away and located within a new community which, based on current designs, lacks integration with the existing housing. This is on top of the additional roads that would need to be crossed in order to access the newly provisioned open space. It is also noted that some of the more vulnerable existing residents, could find accessing the new POS challenging and this could have a negative impact upon the already isolated members of the community.

Viability of the Use of the 'Green Land'

The report produced in support of the disposal does not substantiate the claim that the use of the covenanted strip 'green land' for access to the allocated residential development site is unviable. Any evidence for this claim is not included within the report provided.

It would appear that the main argument against this option is financial, the council report states that: "6.1 Further work and external legal advice strongly indicates that there is no prospect of

gaining access across the Green Land. There would also be a need to expend significant additional funding and time in carrying out any further work on this issue, without any meaningful prospect of success. This would not constitute a prudent use of public resources."

Whilst there are potential early legal costs involved with the legal negotiations of the covenant, as previously mentioned, the potential regeneration of the area and sustainability of local facilities would provide financial benefits to the area to outweigh this. People are keen to live in an area where there are community facilities within walking distance and not have to use a private car to get to. As such, any proposed development could seem more attractive by making a focal point of what is available to them should they choose to live there.

Summary

Overall, Great Places consider that the disposal of the 'blue land' for access to any proposed residential development would create wider loss of public open space than the 4% anticipated by the Council, it would facilitate bad place making and would have a serious impact on the sustainability of the area and community cohesion. The use of the open space is not acceptable based on another access point being possible and more beneficial to the existing and proposed communities.

If development is to proceed on the allocated site, the potential use of the covenanted land provides a positive opportunity to try and create an integrated community with regeneration potential and an overall safer and more sustainable access to the allocated residential development site. Failure to use this access point would be a missed opportunity by Cheshire East Council.

Appendix 6: List of Objections of the report states that the Council have consulted with those party to the covenant on the 'green land'. However, Great Places have not been formally consulted on this matter. As such, we do not consider that sufficient investigation into the potential release of the covenant to enable site access has been undertaken and it remains a viable option for access into any proposed development site. Therefore disposing of the POS land isn't justified.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 August 2018 19:50
To: Proposed Disposal Of Public Open Space
Subject: Monday Deadline Response to Council - Playing field

All

Have you sent an email in to continue to object to the disposal of the North Downs Longridge playing field? Deadline Monday 13th August. Suggested text below. Rewrite to suit.

Forward to others. It is important that CEC believe that eyes are still upon them. cc me so I have an idea of numbers. Print off (enlarge font) and deliver around your road. 10 each would do.

Just YOU is good too.

TO proposeddisposalofpublicopenspace@cheshireeast.gov.uk

REF POS at North Downs Longridge Knutsford

I read that the report writers and summary papers continue to undervalue the loss and overstate the benefit that would occur to the Knutsford public, if the Council decides to dispose of playing field land in the green belt adjacent to a local wildlife area. There is also no declared evidence that formal professional advice has been given in writing, or a witness that the 'external legal' source is independent of any third party seeking to benefit from a decision. There may be a challenge from the beneficiaries of the covenant on the green strip that they have been bypassed.

A letter received from the Open Spaces Society during the notice period, clearly advises that the land, if required for a road, should be detailed through the planning process not by this method of disposal. In effect it is in danger of bypassing planning policy protection and possibly prejudicing its own decision making.

Cheshire East Council are clearly not prepared to listen to the public and are happy to risk their reputation.

I ask that the Portfolio holder obtain a quote for professional services to progress discharging the covenant and evaluating the risks, and rejects the request to dispose of public land that is clearly not surplus to requirements.

For full papers see CEC website

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IIId=48369&Opt=0>

Issue details - Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford | Cheshire East Council

moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk

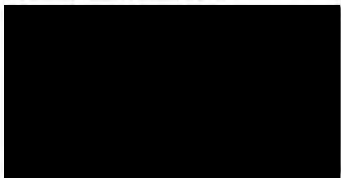
Issue details - Proposed Disposal of Public Open Space Land at Longridge, Knutsford

REF:

2323

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RO



N.B.



BECAUSE THIS COULD NOT BE
DELIVERED & WAS NOT CANCELLED
FOR, IT WAS RETURNED TO ME.

PLEASE AND THE ENCLOSED
NEEDS TO THE CONSUMER.

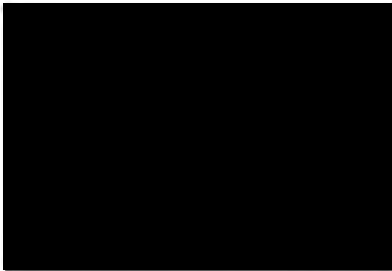


& CONFIRM YOU HAVE DONE SO
ALSO WITH YOU ADVANCE
YOUR DELIVERY, AS I WISH TO
ATTEND WHEN YOU DO SO?

NEEDS

John [Signature]

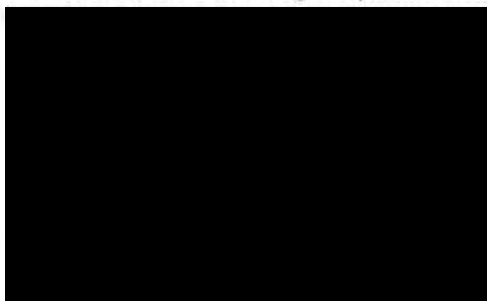
17 SEP 2018





+ August 2018

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I personally enjoy this area on a regular basis for walking.

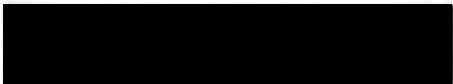
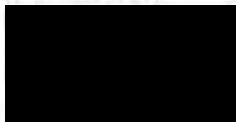


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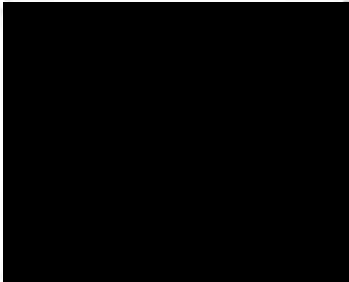
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It is important to note that my family do use the area.

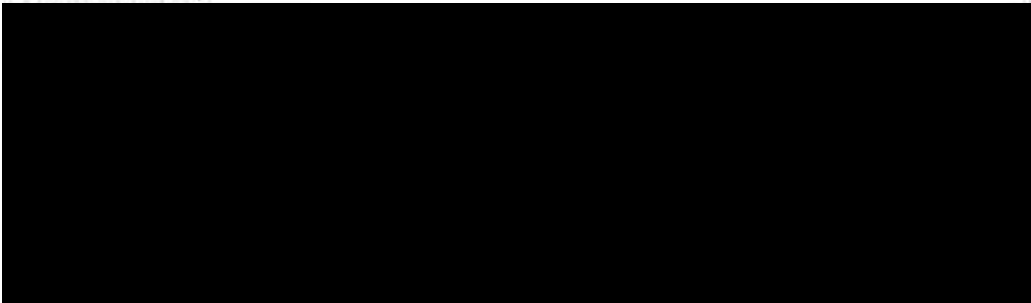


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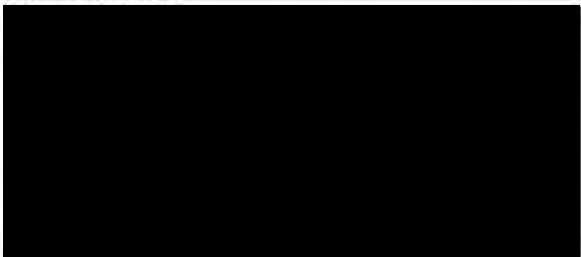



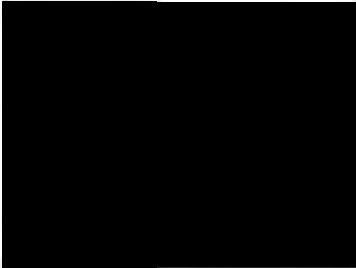
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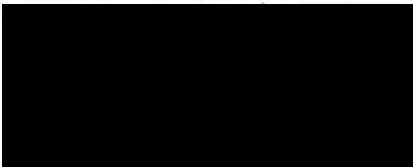




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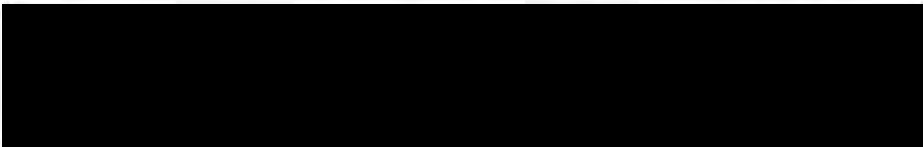


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