

Highways and Transport Committee Agenda

Date:Thursday, 19th September, 2024Time:10.00 amVenue:The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

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

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

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

1. Apologies for Absence

To note any apologies for absence from Members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

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

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (**Pages 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 July 2024.

4. Public Speaking/Open Session

In accordance with paragraph 2.24 of the Council's Committee Procedure Rules and Appendix on Public Speaking, set out in the <u>Constitution</u>, a total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to put questions to the committee on any matter relating to this agenda. Each member of the public will be allowed up to two minutes each to speak, and the Chair will have discretion to vary this where they consider it appropriate.

Members of the public wishing to speak are required to provide notice of this at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting.

Petitions - To receive any petitions which have met the criteria - <u>Petitions Scheme</u> <u>Criteria</u>, and falls within the remit of the Committee. Petition organisers will be allowed up to three minutes to speak.

5. First Financial Review 2024/25 (Pages 9 - 68)

To receive a report on the first financial review for Highways and Transport services for the financial year 2024/25.

6. Bus Service Review - Results and Recommendations (Pages 69 - 210)

To consider a report on the Bus Service Review 2024 – Results and Recommendations.

7. Crossing Facilities Strategy (Pages 211 - 324)

To consider a report on the Cheshire East Crossing Facilities Strategy.

8. Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 – Part III, Section 53, Application No: CO/8/48: Application for the Addition of a Public Footpath from Mill Lane to the Junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall (Pages 325 - 338)

To consider an application to amend the Definitive Map and Statement to add a Public Footpath between Mill Lane (to junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall.

9. Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 -Part III, Section 53, Application No: CO/8/35: Application for the Addition of a Public Footpath from Footpath No.9 Hassall to the Junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall, Hassall. (Pages 339 - 358)

To consider an application to amend the Definitive Map and Statement to add a Public Footpath between Footpath No.9 Hassall to the junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall.

10. Wildlife and Countryside act 1981 - Part III Section 53 Application No CN-7-29 Application for the varying of particulars of Public Footpath 17 Crewe (Pages 359 - 384)

To consider an application for the varying of particulars of Public Footpath 17 Crewe.

11. Wildlife and Countryside act 1981 - Part III Section 53 Two applications Nos. CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 to vary the location of Public Footpaths 34 and 36 in the Parish of Odd Rode (Pages 385 - 410)

To consider two applications to vary the location of Public Footpaths 34 and 36 in the Parish of Odd Rode.

12. **Proposed Public Path Creation Agreement: Hulme Walfield, Public Footpath No. 2 (**Pages 411 - 420)

To consider a report on the proposed Public Path Creation Agreement: Hulme Walfield, Public Footpath No.2.

Extension to Proposed Diversion of Public Footpath No. 35 (parts) in the Parish of Nantwich (formerly Public Footpath No. 4 in the Parish of Henhull) (Pages 421 - 428)

To consider a report on an extension to Proposed Diversion of Public Footpath No.35 in the Parish of Nantwich.

14. Work Programme (Pages 429 - 434)

To consider the Work Programme and determine any required amendments.

15. **Reporting of Urgent Decisions (**Pages 435 - 436)

To note an urgent decision taken on behalf of the Committee.

THERE ARE NO PART 2 ITEMS

Membership: Councillors C Browne, L Braithwaite, R Chadwick, P Coan, A Coiley, L Crane (Vice-Chair), H Faddes, A Gage, M Goldsmith (Chair), C Hilliard, M Muldoon, J Priest and M Sewart

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Agenda Item 3

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Highways and Transport Committee** held on Friday, 19th July, 2024 in the The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor M Goldsmith (Chair) Councillor L Crane (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Adams, C Browne, L Braithwaite, R Chadwick, D Clark, P Coan, A Coiley, D Edwardes, H Faddes, A Gage and M Muldoon

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Tom Moody, Director of Highways and Infrastructure Domenic De Bechi - Head of Highways Steve Reading, Principal Accountant Mandy Withington, Solicitor Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors C Hilliard, J Priest and M Sewart. Councillors S Adams, D Clark and D Edwardes attended as substitutes.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

14 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2024 be approved as a correct record.

15 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

16 HIGHWAY SERVICE CONTRACT

The Committee considered the report on the review of the Highways Service Contract (HSC).

On 3 October 2018 the Council had commenced a 15-year contract to deliver highways services with Ringway Jacobs Ltd (the Highways Service Contract).

The HSC contained a mid-term break clause which allowed the Council to shorten the service period to 8 years in specific circumstances. If exercised the Council was required to notify Ringway Jacobs by 2 October 2024.

The Council had appointed the Future Highways Research Group to undertake a peer review of the HSC. The Peer Review report, at Appendix 1 to the report, made 20 recommendations for improvement. An improvement plan would be developed in response to these recommendations.

From the findings of the peer review, it was recommended that the Council should not exercise the break clause.

A Member Advisory Panel had been created to advise the Director of Highways and Infrastructure, from an elected member perspective, on matters concerning the peer review. The report of the Member Advisory Panel was set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

The Committee referred to the funding for the highways works and how the contract operated. It was explained that an open book approach was used, and the Council has regular discussions with the contractor on costs. Reference was made to the quality of repairs done and resources available to carry out the work and the expansion of the client team to include a quality control officer. The Committee noted the disconnection between the public perception of the state of road in Cheshire East and the industry professional view reported in the peer review report.

17 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

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

18 HIGHWAY SERVICE CONTRACT

The Committee considered the confidential Appendix 4.

19 READMITTANCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

20 HIGHWAY SERVICE CONTRACT

The recommendations were proposed and seconded and put to the vote.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 note the findings of the peer review, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and the views of the Member Advisory Panel, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.
- 2 approve the contact break clause is not exercised.
- 3 delegate to the Director of Highways and Infrastructure to develop and implement a plan to respond to the findings of the peer review.
- 4 Approve that resources to consider the successor delivery model are included in financial planning from April 2028 to October 2033.

21 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme.

It was noted that the report on the Flowerpot Junction Improvement Scheme would now be brought to the Committee in January 2025.

There was still no clarity on how the National Parking Platform would be rolled out and it was therefore proposed that the update report be moved back to the November 2024 meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.20 am

Councillor M Goldsmith (Chair)

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OPEN

Highways and Transport Committee

19 September 2024

First Financial Review 2024/25

Report of: Adele Taylor, Interim Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)

Report Reference No: HTC/19/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: Not applicable

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report provides the current forecast outturn for the financial year 2024/25 based on our income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of July 2024. It also identifies actions that are being taken to address adverse variances to urgently address our financial sustainability.
- 2 The report provides the forecast outturn for all services, to provide Members with contextual information on the position for the whole Council. Members are asked to focus their scrutiny on the forecasts and supporting information relating to services within the remit of the Committee whilst understanding the overall context as a whole.
- 3 The report highlights any changes and external pressures that are impacting the Council since setting the budget in February 2024. Annex 1, Section 2 of the report highlights what the Council is forecasting to achieve as part of the 2024/25 approved budget changes per line (growth and savings).
- 4 It is clear that further actions need to be identified to bring the Council back to a position where we are living within our means, and it will be important that these actions are closely monitored, and appropriate action taken to manage our resources. This report includes information on the actions that are currently underway.
- 5 Reporting the financial forecast outturn at this stage, and in this format, supports the Council's vision to be an open Council as set out in the Cheshire East Council Plan 2024-25. In particular, the priorities for an open and enabling organisation, ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making.

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6 The report also requests member approval for amendments to the Council's budget in line with authorisation levels within the Constitution.

Executive Summary

- 7 The Council operates a financial cycle of planning, review, management and reporting. This report ensures that we review where we are and provides a forecast **outturn** position for the 2024/25 financial year whilst also identifying the actions that need to be taken to manage our overall resources. The information in this report also supports planning for next year's budget by identifying issues that may have medium term impacts.
- 8 The Council set its 2024/25 annual budget in February 2024. The budget was balanced, as required by statute, with planned use of reserves of £22m, plus £30m of savings to achieve in year, and included important assumptions about spending in the year. The budget is part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024 to 2028.
- 9 The First Financial Review (FR1) forecast revenue outturn is an **adverse variance of £26.5m**, (prior to application of any Exceptional Financial Support) as detailed below in **Table 1**:

Table 1 2024/25	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance
	(NET) £m	£m	£m
Service Committee			
Adults and Health	138.0	158.7	20.7
Children and Families	91.5	98.8	7.3
Corporate Policy	41.7	41.7	0.0
Economy and Growth	28.1	25.5	(2.6)
Environment and Communities	48.4	49.1	0.6
Highways and Transport	16.0	15.5	(0.5)
Sub-Committee			
Finance Sub:			
Central Budgets	23.9	24.8	0.9
Funding	(387.6)	(387.6)	-
TOTAL	-	26.5	26.5

10 The FR1 forecast reserves, after agreed movements budgeted for in the 2024-28 MTFS, are currently £14.0m, being £4.5m of General Fund Reserve and £9.5m of Earmarked Reserves. The Council's level of reserves is therefore insufficient to cover the current forecast revenue outturn for the year without further action.

- 11 This forecast does not assume use of the Exceptional Finance Support (EFS) that was requested in 2023/24 and 2024/25 that was agreed in principle, subject to a number of conditions being satisfied, including the submission of a transformation plan at the end of August 2024. It also does not assume the cost of accepting that EFS support which would impact on the cost of borrowing over the medium term.
- 12 The FR1 forecast position indicates that further urgent action to reduce the overspend, and bring spending back in line with budget, is required. Failure to do so would require the Council to use the existing conditional Exceptional Financial Support (£17.6m) which would be the only way for the S151 Officer to avoid having to issue a S114 notice to the Council.
- 13 The level of EFS support would need to be agreed and finalised with the government and the financial impact of this would need to be built into the overall financial modelling for the Council. As reported to members in June 2024 in the 'Medium Term Financial Strategy Assumptions and Reporting Cycle for 2024/25 to 2028/29' the Council faces a significant four-year funding gap, with the shortfall in 2025/26 currently estimated at £41.9m. There is a risk that pressures leading to the FR1 forecast position may increase that shortfall figure if rapid action doesn't take place to stabilise our financial position.
- 14 The FR1 forecast position for capital spending for 2024/25 indicates forecast capital expenditure of £164.5m against the MTFS budget of £215.8m. Re-profiling of Capital expenditure to future years to match scheme delivery as well as an ongoing capital review to ensure that our capital borrowing remains affordable is underway and there will be further reporting on this at FR2.

Table 2	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2024/28 Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Capital Programme MTFS Funded by:	215,779	177,633	66,772	132,054	592,238 -
Borrowing	55,199	53,218	19,318	30,215	157,950
Grants and other contribution:	160,580	124,415	47,454	101,839	434,288
	215,779	177,633	66,772	132,054	592,238
Capital Programme FR1 Funded by:	164,545	141,232	109,679	231,837	647,293
Borrowing	51,878	53,566	10,180	27,779	143,403
Grants and other contribution:	112,667	87,666	99,499	204,058	503,890
	164,545	141,232	109,679	231,837	647,293
Movement from MTFS	(51,234)	(36,401)	42,907	99,783	55,055

15 **Table 2** sets out the capital programme profiling changes:

16 **Table 3** sets out the summary revised capital programme:

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Table 3	MTFS	C/Fwd	SCEs	Virements	Budget	Revised
	Budget	from	in Quarter	in Quarter	Reductions	FR1
	2024/28	2023/24	2024/25	2024/25	2024/25	Budget
						2024/28
	£m		£m	£m	£m	£m
Adults and Health	0.8					0.8
Children and Families	86.8	1.9	21.6	(1.4)		108.9
Highways & Transport	270.2	8.1	9.8		(1.1)	287.0
Economy & Growth	175.6	9.9	1.3	2.1	(4.2)	184.7
Environment &	39.4	2.2	0.4	0.1	(0.1)	42.0
Corporate Policy	19.4	4.4				23.8
	592.2	26.5	33.1	0.8	(5.4)	647.2

17 As part of the urgent actions required to reduce the overspend a full review of the capital programme is being undertaken. The forecast borrowing that is included in the capital programme will have the following revenue impact:

Table 4	2024/25 Estimate £000s	2025/26 Estimate £000s	2026/27 Estimate £000s	2027/28 Estimate £000s	2024-28 Total £000s
Forecast borrowing to fund capital programme	51,878	53,566	10,180	27,779	143,403
MRP	-	3,916	5,392	6,854	16,162
Interest	2,610	3,796	3,469	4,302	14,177
Total annual revenue impact	2,610	7,712	8,861	11,156	30,339

- 18 In order to alleviate the revenue pressure from external borrowing an immediate reduction in capital spend is required. This will reduce the related revenue impact of interest costs and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) both of which are charged to revenue through the Capital Financing Budget (CFB). The council must aim to optimise use of all other available sources to fund our capital programme and must minimise the use of borrowing to reduce the pressures on the revenue budget. Identification of any additional capital receipts that can be realised in year would also reduce revenue pressures from borrowing in year or could be used to assist with funding of transformation activity if a capitalisation direction could be agreed to use them in that way with Central Government.
- 19 Due to the long-term nature of capital investment the revenue implications of decisions taken by the council now will extend well beyond the term of the current year and into the medium term.
- 20 In the review of the capital programme the long-term capital repayment commitments (MRP) will be the initial area of focus. Reducing the annual MRP associated with any new borrowing on a scheme-by-scheme basis will be a priority. There will be a secondary impact of reducing forecast interest which will also reduce the effect on the revenue account, but it is the reduction in new borrowing and new commitment to long term capital

repayments that will allow the programme to remain affordable and sustainable.

- 21 Reductions in borrowing can be achieved through:
 - (a) Reduce, delay or remove schemes funded by borrowing;
 - (b) Focus on exiting contractual commitments, fulfilling statutory services and public safety requirements;
 - (c) Prioritise the capital projects that will have most beneficial impact on the revenue budget in the medium term;
 - (d) Remove forward funding;
 - (e) Reprioritise use of grants and apply appropriate S106 contributions to schemes.
- 22 A Strategic Finance Management Board has been set up to lead on a number of key tasks to urgently reduce spend and identify additional savings, including:
 - Line by line reviews of all budgets to further identify immediately any underspends and/or additional funding;
 - Stop any non-essential spend;
 - Actively manage vacancies, particularly agency usage and reduce any overspends on staffing as soon as possible;
 - Review of Section 106 legacy budgets;
 - Review of capital receipts available and potentially surplus assets that can be sold (for best consideration);
 - Identification of any other areas of discretionary spend including grants awarded, where spend can be reduced or stopped.
- In addition, any directorate that is identified as being off target by more than 5% is now subject to a detailed finance and performance review on a weekly basis through a financial recovery review process. This includes a detailed action plan, identifying what can be done to sustainably reduce the pressure and gaining assurance over the management of those actions to deliver improved financial outturns. This process has been put in place for Adults Services and Children and Families and is being chaired by the S151 Officer.
- 24 Paragraphs 58-60 below provides a summary overview of the forecast against the approved 2024/25 budget change items, including RAG rating. In addition, there is further detail per change item with accompanying commentary, as reviewed by the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, in respect of each item within **Annex 1, Section 2**.

25 Annex 1: Detailed First Financial Review 2024/25

- Section 1 2024/25 Forecast Outturn
- Section 2 2024/25 Approved Budget Change Items
- Section 3 Revenue Grants for approval

- Section 4 Capital
- Section 5 Reserves

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways and Transport Committee to:

1. Review the factors leading to a forecast adverse/(positive) Net Revenue financial variance of:

Council: £26.5m against a revised budget of £387.6m (6.8%) **Highways and Transport**: (£0.5m) against a revised budget of £16.0m (3.1%)

To scrutinise the contents of **Annex 1**, **Section 2** relevant to services within the committee's remit, and review progress on the delivery of the MTFS approved budget policy change items, the RAG ratings and latest forecasts, and to understand the actions to be taken to address any adverse variances from the approved budget.

2. Consider the in-year forecast capital spending of:

Council: £164.5m against an approved MTFS budget of £215.8m **Highways and Transport**: £45.8m against an approved MTFS budget of £66.5m

due to slippage that has been re-profiled into future years.

- 3. Note the available reserves position as per Annex 1, Section 5.
- 4. Note that Council will be asked to approve Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding over £1,000,000 as per Annex 1, Section 3, Table 1.
- 5. Approve the Supplementary Capital Estimate above £500,000 up to and including £1,000,000 as per **Annex 1, Section 4, Table 3** in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Background

- 26 This single view of the financial picture of the Council provides the overall financial context.
- 27 The management structure of the Council is organised into four directorates: Adults, Health and Integration; Children's Services; Place; and Corporate Services. The Council's reporting structure provides forecasts of a potential year-end outturn within each directorate during the year, as well as highlighting activity carried out in support of each outcome contained within

the Corporate Plan. Budget holders are responsible for ensuring they manage their resources in line with the objectives of the Council and within the approved budget.

28 For the purposes of each committee, these directorate budgets are aligned to a specific committee and the appendices to this report provides information at a level that the committee should have the ability to be able to scrutinise what is causing any variations in budget and appropriate actions to bring the council back into line in terms of managing its resources.

Key issues causing the pressures

- 29 There are a number of key issues causing the forecast revenue overspend, including:
 - Ongoing adverse effects of the extended period of high inflation and interest rates;
 - Continued increasing demand and complexity of care beyond the levels that had been previously identified;
 - Increase in staff costs, including use of agency staff and impact of National Living Wage which also impacts on our third party commissioned contracts;
 - Increased borrowing costs associated with the unfunded Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit;
 - Non delivery of some previously agreed savings and/or income targets;
 - The financial impact of investment in transformation and improvement activity over the medium term.

Specific commentary on the forecast outturn position by Committee

Adults and Health adverse variance of £20.7m

- 30 The Adults, Health and Integration budget is forecast to overspend by £20.8m. This is in part a consequence of the full year impact of activity levels identified in the 2023/24 year-end outturn. The department started 2024/25 with a higher level of commitment than originally planned for when the MTFS was set in February 2024, and therefore unfunded. An additional £7m of in-year savings would be required to off-set one-off funding received in 2023/24 that will not be received in 2024/25.
- 31 The key drivers of forecast expenditure remain price increases, staff costs and increase in complexity, however, at the beginning of this year we have seen an unusual increase in the number of former self-funders seeking local authority funding to meet the ongoing cost of their care.
- 32 As set out in the 2024/25 to 2027/28 MTFS, the forecast anticipates several serious and significant risks, including pressure on prices due to unfunded increases in the National Living Wage. The department is currently in negotiations with a number of providers who are seeking above inflation increases. The department has recently acquired a negotiation tool to

ensure full cost and price transparency which will be used before agreeing increases, to ensure greater fairness and consistency.

- 33 As in previous years, increases in discharge activity in the NHS continues to drive additional price and activity in adult social care. A reduction of over 50 acute beds across the local NHS trusts is intensifying the impact on adult social care. A review by specialist consultants, commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care is attempting to analyse the impact.
- 34 The department is undertaking significant work to address the budget pressures. This includes:
 - The financial impact of changes agreed to the charging policy for this financial year;
 - Reviewing our pricing strategy;
 - Reviewing our use of agency members of staff;
 - Whole system review of supported living operations to reduce the number of under-utilised placements;
 - Considering transformation options that may be able to be delivered earlier;
 - Reviewing use of technology to support service delivery.

Children and Families adverse variance of £7.3m

- 35 At the end of the last financial year the outturn for Children and Families was an overspend of £8.2m. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy included growth to address the pressures that were emerging throughout 2023/24. The costs of children's social care are a concern for many local authorities and not unique to Cheshire East. The First Financial Review for 2024/25 reflects a £7.3m in-year pressure.
- 36 The key pressure areas for the directorate include:
- 37 Children's social care agency placements where the complexity of children in care has continued to increase and also the number of children in care has increased from 528 at April 2024 to 534 at June 2024 (compared to a decrease from 586 at April 2023 to 576 at June 2023). Placement costs are increasing by significantly more than inflation and more than was projected for growth in-year. This has in part been affected by the disproportionate number of asylum seeking children in Cheshire East.
- 38 The use and cost of agency staff in children's social care to cover vacancies, sick absence, and maternity leave.
- 39 The number of staff is greater than the planned establishment to ensure we are able to meet our statutory needs.
- 40 Home to school transport costs where a mix of increasing numbers of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), driver shortages and increasing fuel costs have seen overall costs rise.

- 41 Schools Catering where the costs of the service are above the current charged income level and base budget.
- 42 Work is underway in the services to look at mitigating actions which can be taken to reduce this forecast position in-year, and these pressures will be considered as part of the developing MTFS for 2025/26. These include:
 - Reviewing costs of placements as more detailed reviews are underway focusing on the expected length that some placements may need to be in place for
 - Staffing establishment reviews now scheduled on a 6 weekly basis including a review of agency staff and alternative working
 - Reunification children to be identified with targeted work in place for individual cases
 - Tracking of similar spend across teams to be held in the same place as residential and supported accommodation spend to increase overall grip and understanding
 - Work on Edge of Care Service proposals to identify early intervention that may reduce admissions and costs

Dedicated School Grant (DSG)

- 43 The key pressure on DSG relates to the high needs block where the SEND service continues to see a significant increase in the number of pupils with an EHCPs, and the associated school placement costs.
- 44 This has placed pressure on the grant used to provide funding for children with SEND in various settings and led to a £31.7m deficit in 2023/24. This adds on to the brought forward deficit of £46.9m to take the DSG Reserve to a £78.6m deficit position at the end of 2023/24.
- 45 This is an improvement on the budget gap as determined by the Council's DSG Management Plan that was reported to Children and Families Committee in April 2024 and set out the planned expenditure and income on high needs over the medium term.

Corporate Policy £23,000 overspend

- 46 The Corporate Services Directorate has a net budget of £41.7m. At First Financial Review, the budget is forecast to overspend by £23,000.
- 47 However, it must be noted that, following a recent review of staffing establishments, there are pending staffing budgets realignments to be actioned which will change individual service forecasts but not the overall figure for Corporate Services.
- 48 Vacancy management in Corporate Services has resulted in the majority of services forecasting underspends on staffing budgets totalling just over £2m.

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- 49 This has been combined with tighter control on non-pay spending across all services which is achieving a forecast underspend of £0.7m, and additional income of £0.2m is forecast in the Registrations Service.
- 50 However, these underspends have been offset by:
 - a forecast £1.3m under-recovery of Rent Allowances;
 - a forecast overspend of £0.4m on the Transactional Service Centre (TSC), hosted by Cheshire West and Chester, mainly due to the additional costs of the stabilisation programme;
 - a £0.5m shortfall in charging staff time to capital projects within ICT Strategy;
 - and a £0.1m overspend in ICT Shared Service due to lower than budgeted project income and schools recharge income.
- 51 There is a forecast overspend of £0.5m in Revenues and Benefits, and Accountancy due to additional costs including Bank Charges and External Audit fees, and a staffing budget pressure of £0.1m across Corporate Services relating to the estimated impact of the latest pay award offer versus the amount included in the MTFS.

Place Directorate favourable variance of £2.5m

52 Overall, the Place Directorate is reporting an underspend of £2.5m at the first Financial Review against a £92.6m budget. Pressures from reducing planning application income (£0.5m), increased waste collection and disposal costs (£0.7m) and yet to be secured savings against leisure (£0.2m) have been mitigated through vacancy management, reducing expenditure and maximising funding opportunities.

Economy & Growth favourable variance of £2.6m

- 53 Growth and Enterprise Directorate and Place Directorate have an underspend of £2.6m against a net budget of £28.1m, the key reasons for the underspend are:
 - Facilities Management: £1.7m underspend is forecast. This reflects pressures against maintenance budgets of £0.7m (additional pressures and delivery of savings), costs of workplace initiatives and equipment of £0.3m, the transfer of underspends to offset Place MTFS targets across the Directorate £0.6m have been offset by:
 - Savings against gas and electricity compared to much higher budgeted costs £3m.
 - Business rates underspend £0.1m due to revaluations and appeals.
 - Underspends from vacancy management £0.2m.
 - Economic Development: £0.4m forecast underspend from vacancy management, reduced expenditure on supplies and increased income.

- Assets Service: £0.1m underspend from managing vacancies offset by lower property income.
- Housing: £0.2m underspend from vacancy management.

Environment & Communities adverse variance of £0.6m

- 54 Environment and Neighbourhood Services has an overspend of £0.6m against a net budget of £48.4m. The key reasons for the overspend are:
 - Development Management: £0.6m overspend is forecast reflecting pressures from a shortfall in income from planning applications £0.5m plus one-off costs of the new planning system £0.1m. These pressures are offset by vacancy management savings of £0.1m.
 - Environmental Commissioning ANSA: £0.4m overspend comprising pressures of £0.3m relating to the estimated impact of the latest pay award, Ansa Contract pressures of £0.5m (includes £0.1m Emergency HWRC Closures, £0.2m Place Saving Target (MTFS 2023/24), £0.2m waste collection crew costs) and £0.2m Recycling contract pressure. Ansa mitigations £0.1m and additional use of ASDV Reserve £0.5m are offsetting these pressures.
 - Libraries: £0.2m overspend. Pressures of £0.5m delivery of MTFS savings offset by £0.2m vacancy management and £0.1m underspend relating to MTFS growth for exploring a charitable trust model.
 - Leisure Commissioning: £0.2m overspend relating to delivery of MTFS savings.
 - Other service issues: £0.8m net underspend.
 - Building Control: £0.2m building control income pressure offset by £0.3m from vacancy management savings.
 - Local Land Charges and Planning Support: £0.2m underspend from vacancy management savings.
 - Strategic Planning: £0.3m underspend reflecting £0.1m vacancy management plus £0.2m delayed Local Plan costs.
 - Environmental Management Services: £0.1m underspend (capital financing costs offset by Green waste income).
 - Regulatory Services: £0.1m (£0.2m vacancies offset by £0.1m CCTV costs).

Highways & Transport favourable variance of £0.5m

- 55 Highways & Infrastructure are reporting an underspend of £0.5m against a net budget of £16m. The key reasons for the underspend are:
 - Car Parking: £0.4m underspend: through vacancy management £0.1m and increased income £0.3m.

• Strategic Transport: £0.1m underspend from vacancy management.

Finance Sub adverse variance of £0.9m

- 56 Finance Sub Committee are reporting an adverse variance of £0.9m against a net budget of £23.853m.
 - Financing & Investment £0.4m net pressure reflecting £1.6m increased cost of interest payments on borrowing offset by £0.9m increased interest receipts from investments.
 - Reserves use (change from MTFS) reflects £0.5m additional Flexible Capital Receipts to offset by £1m reduction in available Capital Financing Reserve at outturn compared to forecast balance reflected in the February 2024 MTFS.

Overall mitigations planned to manage pressures

57 A Strategic Finance Management Board has been set up to lead on a number of key tasks to urgently reduce spend and identify additional savings as noted in paragraphs 22-23 above.

Progress on delivery of the 2024/25 approved budget change items

- 58 Table 5 presents a summary of the progress on the delivery of the 2024/25 approved budget change items. For items rated as Amber these are for items where there are risks and/or mitigating actions in place. For items rated as red these are for items where services are projecting an adverse variance and there is risk of in year non delivery/achievement. New mitigation items have also been included that have come forward since the approval of the MTFS to help the in year position where identified.
- 59 As the green and blue columns show, £10.2m of the budget change items are either delivered or on track to be delivered or even exceed in some cases. However, there is also a pressure of £41.4m as shown in the red column that has a high risk of not being achieved within this financial year. There are new in year mitigations of £7.5m, unrelated to the change item rows that has been identified to assist the outturn position. The table below summarises the progress by Committee:

Committee	Approved Change Budget	Forecast Outturn	Comple	eted	Could Exceed	Green	Amber	Red	Mitigations
	£'000	£'000	£'	000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adults & Health	1,136	21,853	-3,	223	0	-6,430	0	34,601	-3,095
Children & Families	9,909	17,238		482	0	14,002	295	915	1,543
Corporate Policy	489	512	-:	507	0	250	-232	1,581	-580
Economy & Growth	3,316	728		-92	0	3,896	33	690	-3,799
Environment & Communities	-52	623	1,	130	-1,480	-3,754	2,456	3,310	-1,039
Finance Sub	-19,667	-18,748	1	600	0	-19,348	0	0	0
Highways & Transport	4,869	4,393	2,	638	0	1,647	245	351	-488
TOTAL	-	26,599	1,	028	-1,480	-9,737	2,798	41,448	-7,458

Table 5: Summary of the progress on the delivery of the 2024/25 approvedbudget change items

60 A complete list of all approved budget change items, with progress noted against each item, can be found in **Annex 1, Section 2**.

Revenue Grants for Approval

61 Approvals for Supplementary Revenue Estimates for allocation of additional grant funding are detailed in **Annex 1, Section 3**.

Reserves Position

- 62 On 1 April 2024, Earmarked Reserves totalled £32.278m and the General Fund Reserve Balance totalled £5.580m. Of the total earmarked reserves, more than £22m (70.46%) will be spent in 2024/25, on supporting the revenue budget for 2024/25.
- 63 Table 6 and 7 shows the forecast level of Earmarked and General reserves by the end of 2024/25.

Earmarked Reserves	Opening Balance 1 April 2024 £000	General Fund Transfers £000	Forecast Reserve Movement in year £000	Additional Drawdown Requests* £000	Forecast Closing Balance 31 March 2025 £000
Adults and Health Committee	5,226	(2,795)	(90)	0	2,341
Children and Families Committee	1,724	0	(1,593)	(131)	0
Corporate Policy Committee	20,773	(6,551)	(2,680)	(4,695)	6,847
Economy and Growth Committee	2,777	(662)	(1,004)	(765)	346
Environment and Communities Committee	870	(390)	(402)	(78)	0
Highways and Transport Committee	908	(205)	(415)	(288)	0
EARMARKED RESERVES TOTAL MOVEMENT	32,278	(10,603)	(6,184)	(5,957)	9,534

Table 6: Earmarked Reserves

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are still subject to review and are yet to be approved.

** Totals excludes Schools' balances

Table 7: General Reserves

General Reserves	Opening Balance 1 April 2024 £000	General Fund Transfers £000	Forecast Reserve Movement £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Balance 31 March 2025 £000
General Fund Reserve	5,580	(1,051)	0	0	4,529
GENERAL FUND RESERVE TOTAL MOVEMENT	5,580	(1,051)	0	0	4,529

- 64 The Council is currently forecast to have £9.534m of earmarked reserves at the end of the financial year 2024/25. Of this £2.279m can be considered ringfenced, with specific conditions limiting their use.
- A full list of all earmarked reserves can be found in **Annex 1, Section 5**.

Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve

66 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is ring-fenced funding received for: schools; high needs / special educational needs; and early years provision. In recent years there has been a pressure on the DSG high needs block where funding has not kept pace with the increasing numbers and cost of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan. This has created a deficit DSG reserve balance which is held in an unusable reserve. 67 The on-going pressure is regularly reviewed; at the end of 2023/24 the deficit was £78.6m and this is forecast to increase by £43.0m by the end of 2024/25. This is an improvement on the Council's DSG Management Plan approved in April 2024, which sets out the planned expenditure and income on high needs over the medium term. The DSG Management Plan is currently being updated and will be reported to Committee on completion.

Table 8 Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit	£m
Deficit Balance Brought forward	78.6
Additional In-year Pressures	43.0
Deficit Balance at 31st March 2025	121.6

Debt

- 68 Sundry debt includes all invoiced income due to the Council except for statutory taxes (Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates). The balance of outstanding debt at 31 July 2024 has increased by £0.375m since 2023/24 Outturn (end of March 2024).
- 69 Annually, the Council raises invoices with a total value of over £80m. Around a quarter of the Council's overall sundry debt portfolio relates to charges for Adult Social Care, the remainder being spread across a range of functions including Highways, Property Services, Licensing and Building Control.
- 70 The Revenue Recovery team (using their experience gained in collecting Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates) engage with services to offer advice and assistance in all aspects of debt management, including facilitating access to debt collection/enforcement agent services (currently provided by Bristow & Sutor).
- 71 After allowing for debt still within the payment terms, the amount of outstanding service debt at the end of July 2024 was £17.3m.
- 72 The total amount of service debt over six months old is £10.5m; provision of £6.8m was made at year ended 31st March 2024 to cover doubtful debt in the event that it needs to be written off.
- 73 The level of Adult Social Care debt can fluctuate depending on when in the month the snapshot is taken, for example if it is before or after the Direct Debit income is received and allocated. The debt also has different levels of risk depending on the type of debt. For example, around £3.5m is linked to deferred arrangements which is debt that is secured on property or assets, and therefore carries a low risk. There is also around £5m of debt which is deemed to be lower risk as its linked to areas such as probate, property sales or deputyship.

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Table 9 – Debt Summary as at 31st July 2024

	Outstanding Debt		£000 Increase /	Over 6 r	nonths o	ld £000 Increase /
	Outturn	FR1	(Decrease)	Outturn	FR1	(Decrease)
Adults and Health Committee						
Adults, Public Health and Communities*	13,691	14,534	843	8,556	9,091	535
Children and Families Committee						
Children's Social Care (Incl. Directorate)	219	182	(37)	-	14	14
Prevention and Early Help	141	72	(69)	(5)	(4)	1
Schools	24	22	(2)	(1)	2	3
Highways and Transport Committee						
Highways and Infrastructure	1,598	1,189	(409)	678	751	73
Economy and Growth Committee						
Growth and Enterprise	581	704	123	328	393	65
Environment and Communities Committee						
Environment and Neighbourhood Services	384	355	(29)	189	209	20
Corporate Policy Committee						
Finance and Customer Services	111	109	(2)	73	73	-
Governance and Compliance	20	37	17	1	-	(1)
Human Resources	3	8	5	-	1	1
ICT	184	119	(65)	1	1	-
Total	16,956	17,331	375	9,820	10,530	711

Council Tax and Business Rates

Council Tax

74 **Table 10** details each precepting authorities share of the budgeted collectable rates income.

Table 10 Share of Council Tax Collectable Rates	Band D Charge	Collectable Rates £m
Cheshire East Council	1,792.59	287.1
Town and Parish Councils	71.57	11.5
Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner	262.94	42.1
Cheshire Fire Authority	90.09	14.4
Total	2,217.19	355.1

75 The collectable rates valuation is based on the assumption that of the total amount billed, at least 99% will be collected. **Table 11** demonstrates that, excluding a slight reduction during the Covid-19 pandemic, the target to collect at least 99% of Council Tax within three years continues to be achieved.

Table 11 Council Tax Collection Rates	2020/21 %	2021/22 %	2022/23 %	2023/24 %	2024/25 %
After 1 year	97.4	97.8	98.2	98.0	*28.43
After 2 years	98.6	98.5	98.8	**	**
After 3 years	98.9	99.0	**	**	**

* 2024/25 rate is up to 30th June 2024. ** Data is not yet available.

76 After accounting adjustments, the Council Tax Collection Fund is forecasting a £0.9m deficit for 2024/25, of which, £0.8m is attributable to Cheshire East Council. This deficit will be repayable in 2025/26 and will be managed through the Collection Fund Earmarked Reserve.

Non-Domestic Rates (NDR)

- 77 Collectable rates are distributed between Cheshire East Council (49%), Cheshire Fire Authority (1%), and Central Government (50%).
- 78 Non-domestic Rates valuations for 2024/25 were set out in the NNDR1 return to Central Government in January 2024. Any variance to this forecast is included in the following years' NNDR1 return and any gain or loss will be recovered in 2025/26. The total Net Rates Payable into the Collection Fund was forecast at £155.7m.
- 79 **Table 12** demonstrates that the target to collect at least 99% of Non-Domestic Rates within three years continues to be achieved.

Table 12 Non-Domestic Collection Rates	2020/21 %	2021/22 %	2022/23 %	2023/24 %	2024/25 %
After 1 year	92.4	95.6	98.2	97.7	*29.19
After 2 years	97.4	98.3	98.8	**	**
After 3 years	99.0	99.2	**	**	**

* 2024/25 rate is up to 30th June 2024.

** Data is not yet available.

80 After accounting adjustments, the Non-Domestic Rates Collection Fund is forecasting a £3.8m deficit for 2024/25, of which, £1.9m is attributable to Cheshire East Council. This deficit will be repayable in 2025/26 and will be managed through the Collection Fund Earmarked Reserve.

Treasury Management Strategy update

- 81 Treasury Management income to 31 July 2024 is £895,000 which is higher than the budgeted £620,000. However, borrowing costs are also higher than budgeted at £6m compared to budget of £5.3m. This is caused by a combination of increasing interest rates with an increased borrowing requirement. From the projected cash flows for the remainder of 2024/25 the net additional financing costs (borrowing less investment interest) is expected to be £0.7m in excess of that budgeted.
- 82 Interest rates have seen substantial rises over the last 2 years which has significantly increased the cost of borrowing. The expectation is that borrowing costs will start to fall later in 2024/25 and beyond.

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- 83 At the moment, cash shortfalls are generally being met by temporary borrowing from other Local Authorities which for a number of years has been considerably cheaper than other sources of borrowing and allowed the Council to keep financing costs low. The cost of these loans is currently relatively high compared with longer term loans, but interest forecasts suggest it is still the cheaper option in the long term. However, liquidity risk remains an issue as funds become more scarce towards year end and the request to the Government for exceptional financial support has raised credit worthiness concerns with some lenders. To reduce liquidity risk and any potential credit related penalisation on interest costs, consideration is being given to taking more longer term PWLB loans.
- 84 The cost of short term borrowing for the first 4 months of 2024/25 is 5.54% which is an increase from 4.82% for 2023/24. These costs are now expected to reduce as the outlook is for reducing interest rates.

Investment Strategy

There have not been any material changes to the Investment Strategy since that reported at Final Outturn 2023/24, see link <u>Final Outturn 2023-24 Annex 1.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</u>

Consultation and Engagement

86 As part of the budget setting process the Pre-Budget Consultation provided an opportunity for interested parties to review and comment on the Council's Budget proposals. The budget proposals described in the consultation document were Council wide proposals and that consultation was invited on the broad budget proposals. Where the implications of individual proposals were much wider for individuals affected by each proposal, further full and proper consultation was undertaken with people who would potentially be affected by individual budget proposals.

Reasons for Recommendations

87 The overall process for managing the Council's resources focuses on value for money, good governance and stewardship. The budget and policy framework sets out rules for managing the Council's financial affairs and contains the financial limits that apply in various parts of the Constitution. As part of sound financial management and to comply with the constitution any changes to the budgets agreed by Council in the MTFS require approval in line with the financial limits within the Finance Procedure Rules.

88 This report provides strong links between the Council's statutory reporting requirements and the in-year monitoring and management processes for financial and non-financial management of resources.

Other Options Considered

89 None. This report is important to ensure Members of the Committee are sighted on the financial pressure the Council is facing and the activity to date to try and mitigate this issue and are given an opportunity to scrutinise this activity and identify any further actions that could be taken to learn to live within our means Do nothing. Impact – Members are not updated on the financial position of the Council. Risks – Not abiding by the Constitution to provide regular reports.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 90 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget and require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.
- 91 The provisions of section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- 92 The Council should therefore have robust processes in place so that it can meet statutory requirements and fulfil its fiduciary duty. It must ensure that all available resources are directed towards the delivery of statutory functions, savings and efficiency plans. Local authorities are creatures of statute and are regulated through the legislative regime and whilst they have in more recent times been given a general power of competence, this must operate within that regime. Within the statutory framework there are specific obligations placed upon a local authority to support communities. These duties encompass general and specific duties and there is often significant local discretion in respect of how those services or duties are discharged. These will need to be assessed and advised on as each circumstance is considered.

- 93 The financial position of the Council must therefore be closely monitored, and Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings or alternative mitigations.
- 94 This report provides an update on progress for 2024/25 for all services.
- 95 It also provides updates and comments regarding the Council's request for Exceptional Financial Support under The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 which inserted an amended Section 12A as a trigger event within the Local Government Act 2003, in relation to capital finance risk management. The legislation also provides for risk mitigation directions to be given to the Council which limit the ability to undertake certain financial action. The limitations are based on identified risk thresholds.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 96 The Council's financial resources are agreed by Council and aligned to the achievement of stated outcomes for local residents and communities. Monitoring and managing performance helps to ensure that resources are used effectively, and that business planning and financial decision making are made in the right context.
- 97 Reserve levels are agreed, by Council, in February each year and are based on a risk assessment that considers the financial challenges facing the Council. If spending associated with in-year delivery of services is not contained within original forecasts for such activity it may be necessary to vire funds from reserves.
- 98 The unplanned use of financial reserves could require the Council to deliver a greater level of future savings to replenish reserve balances and / or revise the level of risks associated with the development of the Reserves Strategy in future.
- 99 As part of the process to produce this report, senior officers review expenditure and income across all services to support the development of mitigation plans that will return the outturn to a balanced position at year-end.
- 100 Forecasts contained within this review provide important information in the process of developing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Analysis of variances during the year will identify whether such

performance is likely to continue, and this enables more robust estimates to be established.

- 101 The risk associated with the scale of these challenges is that the Council could act illegally, triggering the requirement for a s.114 report from the Chief Financial Officer. Illegal behaviour in this context could materialise from two distinct sources:
 - i) Spending decisions could be made that exceed the available resources of the Council. This would unbalance the budget, which is unlawful.
 - ii) Spending decisions to restrict or hide pressures could be made that avoid an immediate deficit, but in fact are based on unlawful activity.
- 102 The consequences of the Council undermining a budget with illegal activity, or planned illegal activity, is the requirement to issue a s.114 report. Under these circumstances statutory services will continue and existing contracts and commitments must be honoured. But any spending that is not essential or which can be postponed must not take place.
- 103 Further consequences would be highly likely and could include the appointment of Commissioners from the MHCLG, and potential restrictions on the decision-making powers of local leaders.

Policy

- 104 This report is a backward look at Council activities and predicts the year-end position. It supports the Corporate Plan aim Open and priority to be an open and enabling organisation.
- 105 The forecast outturn position, ongoing considerations for future years, and the impact on general reserves will be fed into the assumptions underpinning the 2025 to 2029 Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 106 The approval of supplementary estimates and virements are governed by the Finance Procedure Rules section of the Constitution.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

107 Any equality implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Human Resources

108 This report is a backward look at Council activities at outturn and states the year end position. Any HR implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Risk Management

109 Financial risks are assessed and reported on a regular basis, and remedial action taken if required. Risks associated with the achievement of the 2023/24 budget and the level of general reserves were factored into the 2024/25 financial scenario, budget, and reserves strategy.

Rural Communities

110 The report provides details of service provision across the borough.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

111 The report provides details of service provision across the borough and notes the pressure on Children in Care.

Public Health

112 This report is a backward look at Council activities at the first review and provides the forecast year end position. Any public health implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Climate Change

113 There are no direct implications for climate change.

Access to Information				
Contact Officer:	Adele Taylor, Interim Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer) <u>adele.taylor@cheshireeast.gov.uk</u> Paul Goodwin, Head of Finance & Deputy Chief Finance Officer <u>paul.goodwin@cheshireeast.gov.uk</u>			
Appendices:	Annex 1 including:			
	Section 1 2024/25 Forecast Outturn			
	 Section 2 2024/25 Approved Budget Change Items 			
	Section 3 Revenue Grants for approval			
	Section 4 Capital			
	Section 5 Reserves			
Background Papers:	The following are links to key background documents:			
	Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-2028			

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ANNEX 1



First Financial Review 2024/25 Results to end of July 2024

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Section 1: 2024/25 Forecast Outturn

- 1.1. Table 1 provides a service summary of financial performance based on information available as at the end of July 2024. The current forecast is that services will be £25.6m over budget in the current year.
- 1.2. It also shows that central budgets are forecast to be £0.9m over budget resulting in an overall outturn of £26.5m overspend against a net revenue budget of £387.6m.
- 1.3. The overall revenue position does not include the impact of applying any Exceptional Financial Support.
- 1.4. The forecast outturn position is based on a full financial management review across all service and reflects the following assumptions:
 - Includes those savings that have been identified as non-achievable though the tracker on our High Level Business Cases (HLBC) with no/some alternative actions currently presented;
 - A review of the on-going impacts of adverse variances identified in 2023/24;
 - Any identified, emerging items of significance:
 - Within Adult Social Care, significant growth is forecast for care costs in line with position seen year to date, less mitigations linked to delivery of the Impower savings;
 - Includes the assumptions around additional revenue resources in Childrens Services to resource the draft improvement plan in relation to the recent OFSTED inspection;
 - Forecast impact of the proposed increased 2024/25 pay award £1.6m (unfunded);
 - Detailed review of any vacancy underspends in all areas;
 - One-off items that have been identified so far through line by line reviews and/or identification of additional funding that has been announced since the MTFS was set.
- 1.5. Further items impacting on the level of the Council's balances are detailed in **Section 5**.

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Table 1 Service Revenue OutturnForecasts 2024/25	Revised Budget £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Forecast Variance £m
Adult Social Care - Operations Commissioning Public Health	146.1 (8.1)	167.8 (9.1)	21.7 (1.0)
Adults and Health Committee	138.0	158.7	20.7
Directorate	1.6	2.9	1.3
Children's Social Care	56.5	61.1	4.6
Eduction, Strong Start & Integration	33.4	34.8	1.4
Children and Families Committee	91.5	98.8	7.3
Directorate	(0.3)	(0.4)	(0.0)
Growth & Enterprise	28.5	25.9	(2.6)
Economy and Growth Committee	28.1	25.5	(2.6)
Environment & Neighbourhood Services	48.4	49.1	0.6
Environment and Communities Committee	48.4	49.1	0.6
Highways & Infrastructure	16.0	15.5	(0.5)
Highways and Transport Committee	16.0	15.5	(0.5)
Directorate	1.4	1.2	(0.2)
Finance & Customer Services	12.1	14.1	1.9
Governance & Compliance Services	10.9	9.7	(1.2)
Communications	0.7	0.7	(0.0)
HR	2.4	2.1	(0.3)
ICT	12.2	12.0	(0.1)
Policy & Change	2.0	1.9	(0.0)
Corporate Policy Committee	41.7	41.7	0.0
TOTAL SERVICES NET EXPENDITURE	363.7	389.3	25.6
CENTRAL BUDGETS			
Capital Financing	31.7	32.0	0.4
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	(18.3)	(17.2)	1.1
Parish Precepts & Other Operating Expenditure	11.5	11.4	(0.1)
Income from Use of Capital Receipts	(1.0)	(1.5)	(0.5)
Finance Sub-Committee - Central Budgets	23.9	24.8	0.9
	387.6	414.1	26.5
TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE	(298.5)	(298.5)	
Council Tax	(56.6)	(56.6)	-
Business Rates Retention Scheme Unringfenced Grants	(32.4)	(32.4)	-
Finance Sub-Committee - Net Funding	(387.6)	(387.6)	-
NET (SURPLUS) / DEFICIT	-	26.5	26.5

Section 2: 2024/25 Approved Budget Change Items

The following table provides up detailed commentary on the progress against the approved budget change items that were agreed as part of the budget agreed in February 2024. These are split by relevant committee.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Adults and Health Committee	+1.136	+21.853	+20.717	
1	Fees and Charges	-1.800	-1.800	0	Green
2	Client Contributions Increase	-0.800	-2.097	-1.297	Green
3	Working Age Adults - Prevent, Reduce, Delay	-1.467	-1.467	0	Green - Multiple activities contributing to these savings. Validation of delivery and measures being developed by SROs and Finance.
4	Older People – Prevent, Reduce, Delay	-1.566	-1.566	0	Green - Multiple activities contributing to these savings. Validation of delivery and measures being developed by SROs and Finance.
5	Market Sustainability and Workforce grant	-1.100	-1.100	0	Completed
6	Revenue grants for Adult Social Care	-2.480	-2.480	0	Completed
7	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.493	-0.493	0	Completed
8	Investment in Adult Social Care	+7.600	+32.497	+24.897	Red – MTFS growth for Care Costs not sufficient to cover the pressure seen in 2023/24 plus the expected growth in 2024/25. Mitigations to reduce pressure reported separately.
9	Pay Inflation	+1.892	+2.104	+0.212	Red - NJC Pay Claim process has started - over spend against budget is based on £1,290 or 2.5% increase. Compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3%
10	Resettlement Revenue Grants – reversal of 2023/24 use	+0.850*	+0.850*	0	Completed
11	Adult Social Care Transformation Earmarked Reserve Release – reversal of 2023/24 use	+0.500*	+0.500*	0	Green

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
12	Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care – Removal of Grant Income	-	-	-	Green
13	Asset Management	твс	ТВС	-	Green - It is expected that the NHS will confirm their intentions for usage of one of the key CEC sites in question by September 2024. Once this is received, the business case for future usage of the site will be revisited and taken through the appropriate CEC governance procedures. The model of care in relation to high- cost adult social care and health provisions will be part of this work.
14	Investigate potential agency creation	ТВС	ТВС	-	Green - This proposal has been consistently delivered in relation to the usage of a Care Workers agency in all but name. Care4CE, the Council's in house care provider, has been utilising workers, both casual and agency, as a bank of workers for several years to successfully deliver operational requirements. The establishment of a CEC.
In year	Other variances to reconcile to 2024/25 FR1 forecast	0	+4.612	+4.612	
In year	Mitigations reducing the FR1 reported forecast position	0	-7.707	-7.707	

* Item represented a one-off spend in 2023/24. As it is not a permanent part of the budget, the value of the proposal is reversed in 2024/25.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets (some of the budget change items have been separated out since the publication of the MTFS)	2024/25 MTFS £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Children and Families Committee	+9.909	+17.238	+7.329	
15	Discretionary offer to children with disabilities	-0.900	-0.901	-0.001	Green - On track, project team progressing multiple improvements to redesign the service offer, ensuring consistency and efficiency.
16	Remove school catering subsidy	-0.516	+0.027	+0.543	Red - In progress, rate uplift to be applied in September 2024 in order to cover the costs of the service through to the end of March 2025 when it ends.
17	Review of structure to further integrate children and families services	-1.000	-0.167	+0.833	Red - Delivery Planning in progress to address saving. Including: further Establishment review, service redesign, cross directorate risk management.
18	Reduce discretionary Post-16 Travel Support	-0.400	-0.250	+0.150	Red - Agreed by Committee so progressing, too early to confirm take-up.
19	Achieve the Family Hub model	-0.250	-0.250	0	Green - Committee approved permission to consult. Following the consultation period, a report will go back to Committee in November for a decision to move forward with the new model. Savings are not going to be delivered in year therefore alternative saving being found to cover this.
20a	Other Service Reviews – Review of commissioned services across the C&F directorate. Review of the current Domestic Abuse Service	-0.100	-0.132	-0.032	Completed.
20b	Other Service Reviews – Maximise grant allocation to cover all costs	-0.100	0	+0.100	Red - Plan to explore current / future grants to ensure where T&Cs allow, contribution to fund base costs (e.g. staffing and on costs) is maximised.
20c	Other Service Reviews – Traded services	-0.050	+0.017	+0.067	Red - Part delivered but may need to look for alternative options to cover the remaining saving for this year.
21a	Reduce Growth in expenditure – review of high cost, low outcome external residential placements	-1.000	-1.000	0	Red - Whilst work has been happening to open CE Children's Homes and our first open is now open, with our second due imminently and our collaboration with foster 4 working well to increase our foster carers, we still are seeing more children coming into care, with a steady increase. There is also increasing instability with the residential market, driving up prices. Complex young people need high packages of support, which are extremely expensive. We are due to review all high cost placements and weekly on-going Triple S (Stability, Step up and Step Down) meetings are happening to review placement outcomes and costs.

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21b	Reduce Growth in expenditure – increase commissioning approach to establish greater opportunities to provide accommodation for +16 young people	-0.400	-0.400	0	Amber - 16+ and 18+ Commissioning Plans / Market Shaping in Progress. Responding to increasing demand and complexity.
21c	Reduce Growth in expenditure – Foster Care	-0.250	-0.250	0	Amber - Developing a Delivery Plan to increase Foster Care provision.
21d	Reduce Growth in expenditure – reduced spend on expert assessment in court proceedings and services post public law proceedings	-0.250	-0.250	0	Amber - Establishing a Task & Finish Group to explore and develop processes and capacity to reduce costly legal proceedings.
22	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.515	-0.451	+0.064	Red. CEC pension reduction completed. Teacher's pension legacy costs are not reducing as anticipated.
23	Growth to deliver statutory Youth Justice service, and growth to ensure budget is sufficient to meet Safeguarding Partnership duties	+0.170	+0.200	+0.030	Red.
24	Growth to provide capacity to deliver transformation for SEND	+0.500	+0.500	0	Green.
25	Wraparound Childcare Programme (funded)	+0.587	+0.587	0	Amber - Currently reviewing sufficiency and funding details to manage delivery within budget.
25	Wraparound Childcare Programme (funded)	-0.587	-0.587	0	Amber - Currently reviewing sufficiency and funding details to manage delivery within budget.
26	Legal Proceeding - Child Protection	+0.770	+0.532	-0.238	Amber.
27	Growth in School Transport budget	+0.936	+1.286	+0.350	Red.
28	Pay Inflation	+1.374	+1.915	+0.541	Red - NJC Pay Claim process has started - over spend against budget is based on £1,290 or 2.5% increase. Compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3%

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29	Use of Children & Families Transformation Reserve – reversal of 2023/24 use	+1.065*	+1.065*	0	Completed.
30	Growth in Childrens Placement costs	+10.825	+14.203	+3.378	Red - Will need to be closely monitored throughout the year to ensure that funding is sufficient to meet demand and complexity.
31	Revenue costs for the Crewe Youth Zone (as above) aligned to Supporting Families Funding	-	-	-	Amber.
31	Early Help budget to support funding towards the Crewe Youth Zone	-	-	-	Amber.
32	SEND Capital Modification	TBC	TBC	-	Amber - Contingent upon wider asset management and associated timelines. Extensive work underway to plan and progress development opportunities. Captured as part of the Capital Program reported to Committee.
33	Childrens Social Work Bank	TBC	TBC	-	Red - Various options currently being explored as part of wider C&F Establishment review and potential peripatetic resource options.
34	Safe Walking Routes to School	TBC	твс	-	Green - Features as part of School Transport Programme.
35	Withdrawal of the CEC School Meals Service	TBC	TBC	-	Green - Features as part of School Catering subsidy project - CF2428-16.
In year	In-year emerging variance Education, Strong Start and Integration	0	-0.500	-0.500	Green. Underspend relates to vacancy management, reduced spend and income generation across services.
In year	In-year emerging variance Children and Families Directorate	0	+0.427	+0.427	Red. Overspend relates to supplier compensation payment, external Quality Assurance Agency costs and cost of establishment.
In year	In-Year emerging variance Children's Social Care	0	+1.616	+1.616	Red. Overspend mainly relates to staffing costs.

* Item represented a one-off spend in 2023/24. As it is not a permanent part of the budget, the value of the proposal is reversed in 2024/25.

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	Corporate Policy Committee	+0.489	+0.512	+0.023	
36	Reduce leadership and management costs	-0.540	-0.190	+0.350	Red - The feedback from the DMA review is that senior management vacancies will require recruitment to in order to complete the complement of Corporate Managers. In year vacancy savings will continue but will be time limited. There is potential to increase costs by additional management support during transformation. This will result in increased budget pressure. This pressure is being mitigated through the four in-year items at the end of this table. Most of those will be permanent and used to deliver this saving. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
37	Close the Emergency Assistance Scheme	-0.220	-0.220	0	Completed
38	Reduce election costs and increase charges where possible	-0.150	-0.150	0	Green - The proposal is to make a payment during 2024/25 of £70k-£80k from the existing election account, as part of this one-off saving. The remainder will be delivered by reducing the sum which would normally be paid into the election reserve. This might be mitigated in the year of the next local elections by monies which will be raised by charging town and parish councils for their elections in 2027. However, this will not be sufficient and will be likely to lead to the need for a supplementary estimate.
39a	Accelerate Digital Transformation (ICT Operational efficiencies)	-0.100	-0.100	0	Green – third party costs have been reduced and there are plans to reduce further during the year.
39b	Accelerate Digital (Digital efficiencies)	-0.150	-0.150	0	Green – Removal of temporary budget for Solutions Architect Resource, now covered by an Earmarked Reserve.
40	Enforce prompt debt recovery and increase charges for costs	-0.150	-0.150	0	Completed - The award of costs is a matter for the Magistrates at each court hearing. However, only by exception will they vary from the level already agreed by us with the Court Manager. The approach to the Court Manager has been made and the revised level agreed. The action is therefore complete, but the financial benefits will accrue as we continue the regular recovery process during the year.
41a	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – School Subsidy (ICT)	-0.032	-0.032	0	Green

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41b	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – Organisational Development	-0.100	-0.100	0	Completed
41c	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – Registration Services	-0.050	-0.050	0	Green
41d	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – School Subsidy	-0.018	0	+0.018	Amber - Part of the £50k School Subsidy saving - Finance team to assist in identifying options. These are listed at the end of the table.
41e	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services	-0.010	0	+0.010	Amber - Finance team to assist in identifying options. These are listed at the end of the table.
41f	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – Printing	-0.050	-0.010	+0.040	Amber - Finance team to assist in identifying options. These are listed at the end of the table.
41g	Other efficiencies and reductions across Corporate Services – Hybrid working / mileage	-0.050	0	+0.050	Amber – Options being considered regarding reduced travel spend including ensuring efficient planning around meeting attendance and minimising unnecessary movements across the area. This maximises efficient use of time as well for teams.
42	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.378	-0.378	0	Completed
43	Mitigation of reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant	+0.136	+0.136	0	Completed
44	Pay Inflation	+1.446	+1.581	+0.135	Red - NJC Pay Claim process has started - over spend against budget is based on £1,290 or 2.5% increase. Compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3%. Mitigations are listed at the end of the table. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
45	Legal Services Capacity	+0.455	+0.455	0	Completed
46	ICT Review 1	+0.450	+0.450	0	Green
47	Workforce Strategy Review	TBC	-	-	Amber - There are no savings attributed to this area in 2024/2025. Opportunities to explore workforce options are being considered alongside transformation

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					work. Any savings are likely to be realised in 2025/26 at the earliest. It is recommended that this item is removed from the list.
48	Parish Compacts – it is recommended that this item is removed.	TBC	-	-	Red - An extension of parish compacts would provide a budget for every parish council. This has been assessed but is considered unaffordable to progress this year. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
In year	Recognising the increased level of Registration service income of £350k.	0	-0.350	-0.350	This will be a permanent change to deliver the Red ranked items above.
In year	Recognising the receipt of £45k of Police and Crime Commissioner grant income.	0	-0.045	-0.045	This will be a permanent change to deliver the Red / Amber ranked items above.
In year	Taking the underspend on phones in corporate services (mobiles and rental) compared to budget.	0	-0.060	-0.060	This will be a permanent change to deliver the Red / Amber ranked items above.
In year	Additional mitigations to balance to FR1 position of +£23k for corporate incl ICT.	0	-0.125	-0.125	These will be a mix of permanent and temporary items to assist the in-year position.

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	Economy and Growth Committee	+3.316	+0.728	-2.588	
49	Service Restructures within Place based Services	-0.787	0	+0.787	Red – achievement through permanent savings remains challenging without a full restructure – which is pending the LGA review. This item is being mitigated by the items at the end of the table which are a mix of permanent and temporary measures. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
50	Reduce opening hours for main offices	-0.050	-0.050	0	Completed
51	Office estate rationalisation	-0.550	-0.250	+0.300	Red - due to the timeline for the transfer of buildings being extended. This item is being mitigated by the items at the end of the table which are a mix of permanent and temporary measures. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
52	Tatton Park	-0.046	-0.046	0	Amber rating reflects the fact that the Tatton Vision capital programme is currently under review.
53	Transfer of Congleton Visitor Information Centre	-0.020	-0.020	0	Green - Transfer of Congleton VIC to the Town Council has already occurred.
54	Pension costs adjustment	-0.157	-0.157	0	Completed
55	Tatton Park ticketing and electronic point of sale (EPOS) upgrade	+0.005	+0.005	0	Green - A procurement process is currently underway to source a supplier who can ensure onsite and web-based delivery of a new system which aligns with present and future needs.
56c	West Park collection	+0.012	+0.012	0	Green - Cost for vital conservation and storage of West Park Museum collections and ongoing temporary storage requirements.
56d	CEC archives	+0.008	0	-0.008	Amber - Timescales for implementation of the Archives capital project have slipped due to grant funding decisions, with revised opening date of Spring 2026.
57	Property Information and Management System - Estates – Revenue Adjustment	+0.030	+0.030	0	Green - Procurement of new contract to commence shortly.
58	Housing	+0.035	+0.035	0	Green - Consultation on the Housing Restructure commences 22nd May and includes the post that the funding is attributed to. The new structure will be implemented by 1st August 2024
59	Environmental Hub Waste Transfer Station	+0.040	+0.040	0	Green - Project on track delivery Q1/2. The replacement of bay 1 in the Councils Environmental Hub Residual Waste Transfer Station building with a new design

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					more likely to provide long-term resilience to wear and tear, to enable the continuation of waste processing at the transfer station.
60	Rural and Visitor Economy	+0.045	+0.045	0	Green - Additional revenue support is required to cover the increase in electricity charges for the Rural and Culture Economy Service to maintain existing service provision at Tatton Park and Countryside sites.
61	Minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) - Estates - Revenue Adjustment	+0.079	+0.079	0	Amber – Prioritised negotiations with 3rd parties/tenants occupying premises being expedited to avoid delays on obtaining access for surveys, completing necessary improvement works and legally completing lease renewals.
62	Public Rights of Way Income Realignment	+0.115	+0.115	0	Completed. Adjustments made to budget forecasts 2024-25
63	Pay inflation	+0.788	+0.940	+0.152	 Red - NJC Pay Claim process has started - over spend against budget is based on £1,290 or 2.5% increase. Compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3%. This item is being mitigated by the items at the end of the table which are a mix of permanent and temporary measures. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
64	Crewe town centre maintenance and operation	+0.650	+0.630	-0.020	Green
65	Assets - Buildings and Operational	+3.119	+3.119	0	Green
66	Landfill Site Assessments revenue adjustment - Estates – CE Owned Landfill sites (53 sites) Review and Risk Assessment completions	-	-	-	Amber - £10k cost growth in for 25/26. Second stage of the review to commence shortly. Internal capacity within Environmental Service to be identified.
67	Tatton Park Estate Dwellings Refurbishment	-	-	-	Completed - Provision for response maintenance issues for 8 onsite dwellings to ensure properties meet standards required as part of tenancy agreements and the National Trust lease.
68	Improving Crewe Rented Housing Standards	-	-	-	Green
In year	Growth & Enterprise 2024/25 mitigations to balance back to finance review position	0	-2.984	-2.984	

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In year	Place Directorate 2024/25 mitigations to balance back to finance review position	0	-0.815	-0.815	

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	Environment and Communities Committee	-0.052	+0.558	+0.610	
69	Refresh wholly owned company overheads and contributions	-1.000	-1.500	-0.500	Green - ASDV Review recommendations have now been approved in full by Finance Sub-Committee in their role as shareholder of the wholly owned companies. The process of insourcing these services is now underway which will release an element of their reserves in year to meet this one-off contribution.
70	Strategic Leisure Review (Stage 2)	-1.305	-1.250	+0.055	Amber - Initial savings secured via committee decision on 11th March 2024. Proposals are being developed with EHL and town and parish councils to secure the residual £250k amount - dialogue is ongoing.
71	Mitigate the impact of contract inflation and tonnage growth	-0.490	-0.490	0	Completed - Mitigate the impact of contract inflation and tonnage growth.
72	Emergency reduction of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) to four core sites	-0.263	-0.200	+0.063	Red - Full saving on basis of original HLBC will not be achieved due to introduction of mobile provision offer as a result of Full Council decision and costs associated with trial of booking system. Following implementation of temporary closures final negotiations with supply chain are nearing conclusion in relation to savings in year, which include adjustment for waste diversion. This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
73	Libraries Strategy	-0.365	-0.200	+0.165	Red - Development of and consultation on Libraries Strategy ongoing. Need to secure committee decisions to implement final Strategy (target Nov 2024) – engagement with Town and Parish Councils undertaken to shape the Strategy proposals and seek funding contributions, which is continuing. This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
74	Reduce costs of street cleansing operations	-0.200	-0.200	0	Green - Value of saving now reduced from ANSA Management Fee for 2024/25, proposals to achieve which include immediate reductions in service resilience, due to removal of any vacancies and under utilised fleet.
75	Reduce revenue impact of carbon reduction capital schemes	-0.336	0	+0.336	Red – Carbon Neutral Council target deferred from 2025 to 27, as agreed at Full Council on 27.02.24, large scale prudential borrowing funded schemes spend now reprofiled to suit, however budget not sat within E&C Committee. Discussion with Corporate Financing team to re-allocate.

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					This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
76	Increase Garden Waste charges to recover costs	-0.045	-0.045	0	Green – Increase Garden Waste charges for the calendar year 2025 to recover costs
77	MTFS 80 (Feb 23) – Waste Disposal – Contract Inflation and Tonnage Growth (updated forecast)	+3.577	+3.977	+0.400	Amber – Amber rating due to fluctuations in waste markets relating to recyclates and continued levels of inflation, outside CEC control and not aligned to projections. Mitigation is to continue with monthly financial monitoring and detailed update of forecasting to year end, based on market intelligence from suppliers and historical seasonal trends data.
78	Pay Inflation – CEC & ASDV	+1.861	+2.397	+0.536	 Red - NJC Pay Claim process has started - over spend against budget is based on £1,290 or 2.5% increase. Compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3%. This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
79	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.151	-0.151	0	Completed
80	MTFS 90 (Feb 23) Strategic Leisure Review	+1.250	+1.250	0	Completed - Growth item budget adjustment only - replacing 2023/24 £1.3m savings target.
81	MTFS 91 (Feb 23) – Green Spaces Maintenance Review	-0.200	-0.200	0	Green - Year 2 saving - Policy now implemented and full saving secured from ANSA contract.
82	MTFS 92 (Feb 23) - Review Waste Collection Service - Green Waste	-3.150	-3.150	0	Green - Subscription levels in line with original business model.
83	Review MTFS 92 (Feb 23) Garden waste subscription financial model in line with latest subscription levels and with actual observed position on any waste migration	-0.429	-0.429	0	Green - Continued monitoring of subscription levels and any adverse impacts is already in place, update to original business plan assumptions.
84	MTFS 93 (Feb 23) Libraries - Service Review	-0.200	-0.200	0	Amber - Year 2 of Service Review - reduction in staffing levels have been implemented and now include vacancy management in year to ensure achievement of saving. Currently covered temporarily by vacancy savings

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85	Explore a Trust delivery model for Libraries and other services	+0.150	+0.020	-0.130	Green - Growth item to cover one off costs relating to implementation of alternative delivery model(s) for libraries service. Aligned to development of Libraries Strategy.
86	CCTV – Service Efficiencies	-0.030	-0.030	0	Green – Ongoing actions to increase customer base for existing services, identification of new chargeable services/customers and service efficiency savings as well as increased fees and charges to meet the target.
87	Congleton Town Council Collaboration Agreement – Grounds Maintenance	-0.062	-0.062	0	Completed - Congleton Town Council Collaboration Agreement on Grounds Maintenance Cheshire East Contribution reduced in line with reductions in Cheshire East Maintained green space.
88	Closed Cemeteries	+0.005	+0.005	0	Completed - Inflationary adjustment to previous budget allocation only.
89	Environmental Hub maintenance	+0.023	+0.023	0	Completed - Inflationary adjustment to previous budget allocation only.
90	Review Closed Landfill Sites	+0.300*	+0.300*	0	Completed - The Council has responsibility for a number of closed landfill sites across the borough for which it holds a provision.
91	Land Charge Income Adjustment	+0.050	+0.064	+0.014	Amber - Uncertainty around implementation timescales of HMLR changes to centralise some aspects of land charges functions hence understanding of actual impact, to be regularly monitored.
92	Building Control Income Alignment	+0.203	+0.403	+0.200	Red - Due to current national trend of downturn in planning and related building control income. To be monitored through more regular financial forecasting in service. This item is being partly mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2.
93	Local Plan Review	+0.255	+0.255	0	Completed - Budget adjustment to provide additional one-off funding towards development of new Local Plan, now commenced.
94	Planning income	+0.400	+0.910	+0.510	 Red – Forecast reduced income due to current national trend of downturn in planning applications and hence income. To be monitored through more regular financial forecasting in service. Partially mitigated by continued high level of vacancies and the item at the end of the table. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2. Recent planning reforms announced by Govt now subject to consultation process may help to alleviate the income position, but will require vacancies to be filled to cater for the likely increase in applications.

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95	Planning Service Restructure	-	-	-	Green - No action for 2024/25. Growth for 2025/26 to be kept under review.
96	Review of Household Waste Recycling Centres	+0.100	+0.100	0	Green - Additional one-off funding to support procurement of new contract permanent service provision of HWRCs.
In year	Environment & Neighbourhood Services mitigations 2024/25 to balance back to finance review position	0	-1.039	-1.039	

* Item represented a one-off saving in 2023/24. As it is not a permanent part of the budget, the value of the proposal is reversed in 2024/25.

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	Highways and Transport Committee	+4.869	+4.393	-0.476			
97	Highway maintenance savings	-0.750	-0.750	0	Green - Savings are being achieved through: - reducing the number of cuts on grass verges from 10 to 8; - directly employing staff to carry out surveys, rather than sub-contracting; - reductions in staffing and vacancy management; and - reliance on the council's adverse weather reserve for snow clearance. Service budgets have been reduced to reflect the savings being made.		
98	Introduce annual increases to car parking charges	-0.150	-0.150	0	Green - Annual inflation adjustment to existing P&D tariffs can be implemented by 1st July 2024, in advance of bringing charges into effect in the "free towns". This is 3 months earlier than planned.		
99	Pension Costs Adjustment	-0.052	-0.052	0	Completed		
100	Highways	-0.031	-0.031	0	Completed - This saving was delivered by changes to response times to defects in 2023/24.		
101	Safe Haven outside schools (Parking)	-0.023	-0.023	0	Amber - WARN procedure has been used for sole-source procurement of type- approved equipment from the supplier authority.		
102	Transport and Infrastructure Strategy Team - Restructure	+0.120	+0.120	0	Green - Vacancies in existing structure provide some flexibilities of resourcing and recruitment planning.		
103	Pay Inflation	+0.339	+0.351	+0.012	 Red - NJC Pay Claim process has started - over spend against budget is based on £1,290 or 2.5% increase. Compared to flat percentage budget increase of 3%. This item is being mitigated by the item at the end of the table which is a mix of permanent and temporary measures. Presentation will be reviewed for FR2. 		
104	Parking - PDA / Back Office System contract	+0.100	+0.100	0	Green - Market testing completed - exploring a direct award opportunity with implementation testing and data migration.		
105	Flood and Water Management Act 2010 SuDS & SABs Schedule 3 Implementation	+0.100	+0.100	0	Green - The requirement is to be ready to implement changes when regulations are implemented nationally. A training plan for existing staff has been identified. Recruitment is to be progressed.		
106	Energy saving measures from streetlights	+0.242	+0.242	0	Completed - This entry was in the MTFS to cancel an unachievable saving from 2022-3. There is no further action.		

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107	Parking	+0.245	+0.245	0	Amber - Following decisions in January 2024, arrangements are in place to adjust existing Pay & Display tariffs from 1st July 2024 and extend pay and display to car parks in "free towns" by October 2024. Statutory consultations on Sunday and Evening charges will start in July. A trial of demand-responsive tariffs will begin with the opening of the new multistorey car park in Crewe.
108	Highways Revenue Services	+2.479	+2.479	0	Completed - This is a growth item. The growth has been factored into 2024/25 service levels and business plans. No further action.
109	Local Bus	+2.250	+2.250	0	Green
110	FlexiLink Service Improvement Plan	-	-	-	Green - A bus service review consultation is underway, including proposals relating to flexible transport.
111	Highways Depot Improvements	-	-	-	Red - This later year saving is subject to the approval of the business case for capital investment in depots. This will be reviewed during 2024/25.
112	Bus Stop Advertising Revenue Generation	-	-	-	Amber - Opportunity to shadow CWAC council's extension of the existing contract in the interim period.
In year	Highways & Infrastructure 2024-25 mitigations to balance to finance review	0	-0.488	-0.488	

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Central Budgets	2024/25 £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Finance Sub-Committee	-19.667	-18.748	+0.919	
113	Capital Financing - Minimum Revenue Provision	+9.508	+9.903	+0.395	Amber – assumes use of reserve of £2.135m (not yet approved). Ongoing capital review seeking to significantly reduce spend funded by borrowing.
114	Central Bad Debt Provision adjustment	+0.600	+0.600	0	Completed - budget adjustment.
115	Use of Earmarked Reserves – MTFS Reserve	+0.255	+0.255	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
115	MTFS Reserve – reversal of 2023/24 use	+1.536	+1.536	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
116	Collection Fund Reserve - Use of Earmarked Reserves	-0.834	-0.834	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
116	Collection Fund Reserve – reversal of 2023/24 use of reserves	+2.234	+2.234	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
117	Brighter Futures Transformation – reversal of 2023/24 use of reserves	+1.271	+1.271	0	Completed - budget adjustment / planned use of reserve.
118	Use of General Reserves – Fund in-year budget shortfall [NEW]	-11.654	-11.654	0	Completed - Drawn down in line with the MTFS forecast.
Amber1 19	Council Tax - % increase	-13.527	-13.527	0	Green - Council tax and business rates income collection managed through the Collection Fund therefore no impact on current year funding target.
120	Council Tax – Base increase	-2.461	-2.461	0	Green - Council tax and business rates income collection managed through the Collection Fund therefore no impact on current year funding target.
121	Business Rates Retention Scheme – use of S31 compensation grants	-1.350	-1.350	0	Green - Grants to be received in line with final settlement from MHCLG.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Central Budgets	2024/25 £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2024/25 (RAG rating and commentary)
122	Unring-fenced Grants + Revenue Support Grant	-5.245	-5.245	0	Green - Grants to be received in line with final settlement from MHCLG.
123	Council Tax and Business Rates Collection [NEW]	TBC	-	-	Initial case was to implement a working group to review council tax collection. No savings value was assigned to the case. The intention now is to bring forward via an informal briefing to include options around the council tax support scheme review (FS2428)
124	Council Tax Support [NEW]		-	-	Preparations to be made during 24-25 with a view to amending the council tax support scheme in 25-26. No value is assigned to 24-25 as any savings/growth will be realised in 25-26. Consultation dates / material to come via Finance Sub-Committee for summer launch. Final decision point will be December Council meeting 2024.
In year	Adjustment to use of Earmarked reserves budgeted figure within Service Budgets		+0.525	+0.525	

Section 3: Revenue Grants for approval

- 3.1. Cheshire East Council receives two main types of Government grants; specific purpose grants and general use grants. Specific purpose grants are held within the relevant service with a corresponding expenditure budget. Whereas general use grants are held in central budgets with a corresponding expenditure budget within the allocated service area.
- 3.2. Spending in relation to specific purpose grants must be in line with the purpose for which it is provided.
- 3.3. **Table 1** shows additional specific purpose grant allocations that have been received over £1m that **Council** will be asked to approve.
- 3.4. **Table 2** shows additional specific purpose grant allocations that have been received which are over £500,000 and up to £1m, and are for **Committee** approval.

Table 1 – Council Decision

Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding (Specific Purpose) over £1,000,000

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Children and Families – Schools	Teachers Pay Additional Grant (Specific Purpose)	1,645	This grant is from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). In July 2023, alongside the increase for last financial year, an additional £900 million was announced in 2024 to 2025 to support schools with the 2023 teachers' pay award. The ESFA will pay the teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG) funding to local authorities for mainstream maintained schools.
Children and Families – Schools	Teachers Pension Grant (Specific Purpose)	2,393	This grant is from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) supports schools and local authorities with the cost of the increase in employer contributions to the teachers' pension scheme. Local authorities must follow the terms and conditions set out in the conditions of grant.
Children and Families – Children's Services	Household Support Fund (Specific Purpose)	2,200	This grant is from the Department for Work and Pensions. This is an extension to the Household Support Fund (HSF) and will cover the period from April 2024 to September 2024. The HSF is to provide crisis support to financially vulnerable households most in need.
Economy and Growth	Homelessness Prevention Grant (Specific Purpose)	1,054	This grant is from the Department for Levelling-Up and Communities (DLUHC). The purpose of the grant is to provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them in supporting local authorities to discharge their homelessness duties under homelessness legislation. The grant is ring-fenced for 2023-2024 and is to be spent in adherence with the following principles:
			1. To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness.
			2. Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention and reduce the use of unsuitable B&Bs for families.
			This grant is from the Home Office (HO). Available where an individual or family has settled in the borough, to provide ongoing integration support.

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Highways and Transport	Bus Service Improvement Plan+ (BSIP+) Phase 2 (Specific Purpose)	1,188	This a grant from the Department for Transport DfT). This is a continuation of the Bus Service Improvement funding and allows Local Authorities to support existing bus services and/or create new services with the overall aim of ensuring long term sustainability of this provision.This is the second phase of allocations.
Highways and Transport	Bus Service Improvement Plan+ (BSIP+) Phase 3 (Specific Purpose)	2,268	This a grant from the Department for Transport DfT). This is a continuation of the Bus Service Improvement funding and allows Local Authorities to support existing bus services and/or create new services with the overall aim of ensuring long term sustainability of this provision. This is the third phase of allocations.

Table 2 – Committee Decision

Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding (Specific Purpose) over £500,000 up to £1,000,000

Committee	Type of Grant	£000	Details
Adults and Health	OHID SSMTR Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment & Recovery Grant (Specific Purpose)	525	This grant is from the Department of Health and Social Care and is additional funding for drug and alcohol treatment recovery services as part of Local Authorities' public health responsibilities.

Section 4: Capital

Table 1: Financial Parameters for 2023/24 to 2026/27

Parameter		Value (£m)		
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Repayment of Borrowing				
Minimum Revenue Provision*	17.5	18.8	23.3	25.2
External Loan Interest	14.3	18.0	16.5	15.0
Investment Income	(3.8)	(3.8)	(2.1)	(1.8)
Contributions from Services Revenue Budgets	(1.2)	(1.3)	(2.0)	(2.7)
Total Capital Financing Costs	26.8	31.7	35.7	35.7
Use of Financing EMR	(7.9)	(2.1)	0	0
Actual CFB in MTFS	19.0	28.5	35.2	35.5
Budget Deficit	(0)	1.1	0.5	0.2
Capital Receipts targets*	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Flexible use of Capital Receipts	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

*Anticipated MRP based on achieving capital receipts targets

- 1.1. The revised programme is funded from both direct income (grants, external contributions) and the Council's own resources (prudential borrowing, revenue contributions, capital reserve). A funding summary is shown in **Table 2**.
- 1.2. Table 3 lists details of
 - Capital Supplementary Estimates over £500,000 and up to £1,000,000 that requires approval by Committee and
 - Capital Virements over £500,000 and up to and including £5,000,000 that requires Relevant Member(s) of CLT and Chief Finance Officer in consultation with Chair of the relevant Committee and the Chair of Finance Sub-Committee to approve.

Table 2: Capital Programme Update

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 - 2027/28											
	Forecast 2024/25 £000	Forecast 2025/26 £000	Forecast 2026/27 £000	Forecast 2027/28 £000	Total Forecast 2024-28 £000						
Committed Schemes - In Adults and Health	800	0	0	0	800						
Children and Families	36,127	0 21,515	16,356	17,749	91,747						
Highways & Transport	44,910	31,161	26,296	130,138	232,505						
Economy & Growth	45,786	30,397	41,366	64,065	181,614						
Environment & Communities	14,752	17,444	1,418	0,000	33,614						
Corporate Policy	11,710	6,998	3,276	1,834	23,818						
Total Committed Schemes - In	154,085	107,515	88,712	213,786	564,098						
Progress											
	Forecast 2024/25 £000	Forecast 2025/26 £000	Forecast 2026/27 £000	Forecast 2027/28 £000	i ota Forecas 2024-28 £000						
New Schemes	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000						
Adults and Health	0	0	0	0	(
Children and Families	1,738	7,200	5,248	3,000	17,186						
Highways & Transport	895	23,500	15,051	15,051	54,497						
Economy & Growth	3,124	0	0	0	3,124						
Environment & Communities	4,703	3,017	668	0	8,388						
Corporate Policy	0	0	0	0	(
Total New Schemes	10,460	33,717	20,967	18,051	83,195						
Total	164,545	141,232	109,679	231,837	647,293						
	Funding	Requiremen	t								
Indicative Funding Analysis: (See note 1)											
Government Grants	96,620	76,091	67,707	122,543	362,96 ⁻						
External Contributions	15,406	10,698	13,611	65,226	104,94						
Revenue Contributions	389	0	0	0	38						
Capital Receipts	252	877	18,181	16,289	35,59						
Prudential Borrowing (See note 2)	51,878	53,566	10,180	27,779	143,403						
	164,545	141,232	109,679	231,837	647,29						

Note 1:

The funding requirement identified in the above table does not currently represent a balanced and affordable position, in the medium term. The Council will need to transform the capital programme to reduce the number of schemes requiring Cheshire East Resources and the need to borrow. The level of capital receipts are based on a prudent approach based on the work of the Asset Management team and their most recently updated Disposals Programme.

Note 2:

The schemes marked **and highlighted in the MTFS cannot proceed until the Capital Programme Review has been completed. Any urgent reuests to continue prior to the reviews completion will require approval from the Chair of Finance Sub Committee and the S.151 Officer

Note 3:

Appropriate charges to the revenue budget will only commence in the year following the completion of the associated capital asset. This allows the Council to constantly review the most cost effective way of funding capital expenditure.

Table 3: Requests for Supplementary Capital Estimates (SCEs) andVirements

Committee	Capital Scheme	Amount Requested £	Reason and Funding Source						
Service Committee are asked to approve the Supplementary Capital Estimates and Virements									
Supplementary Capital Estimates above £500,000 up to and including £1,000,000									
Highways & Transport Transport									
	Department for Transport - Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant (TSOG)	577,003	Additional grant to upgrade traffic signal systems, replacing unreliable and obsolete equipment to improve reliability.						
Highways & Transport		577,003							
Total Supplementary Ca	pital Estimates Requested	577,003							
Capital Budget Virement	ts above £500,000 up to and including	£5,000,000							
Children & Families	Education and 14-19 Skills								
	WorkplaCE	1,000,000	Virement to Facilities to support the transfer out of Westfields						
Children & Families		1,000,000							
Corporate	ICT Hybrid Model	1,896,161	Virement from Infrastructure Investment Programme (IIP) to ICT Hyrid Model as project work funded from IIP now falls under the ICT Hybrid work programme						
Corporate		1,896,161							
Economy and Growth	Facilities Management								
	Premises Capital	1,140,086	Due to the change in scope in the "PSDS - 3B - Lot 1" scheme, Cheshire East funding previously allocated from the Premises Capital Programme as "match" funding to be returned for use in Future Years.						
Economy & Growth		1,140,086							
Total Capital Virements	requested	4,036,247							
Total Supplementary Ca	pital Estimates and Virements	4,613,250							

Section 5: Reserves

Management of Council Reserves

- 5.1. The Council's Reserves Strategy states that the Council will maintain reserves to protect against risk and support investment.
- 5.2. The opening balance at 1 April 2024 in the Council's General Fund Reserves was £5.6m, as published in the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2023/24.
- 5.3. The closing balance at 31 March 2025 in the Council's General Fund Reserve is forecast to reduce further still, to £4.5m.
- 5.4. The current balance on reserves is insufficient in order to provide adequate protection against established and newly emerging risks, such as inflation and particularly the DSG deficit, which is projected to rise to £121.6m by year end and has been highlighted in the MTFS as having no alternative funding.
- 5.5. The Council also maintains Earmarked Revenue Reserves for specific purposes. The opening balance at 1 April 2024 was £32.3m.
- 5.6. During 2024/25, a net total of £10.6m has been drawn down to the support the in-year deficit position. A further £6.2m is being forecast to fund expenditure specifically provided for by services. These balances fall within the forecasts approved during the MTFS budget setting process.
- 5.7. Additional drawdown requests, above those forecast during MTFS, have been made by various services to support specific expenditure totalling £6.0m. These drawdowns, as detailed in the tables below, will be subject to approval by the Section 151 Officer.
- 5.8. The closing balance at 31 March 2025, is forecast at £9.5m.
- 5.9. Unspent schools' budgets that have been delegated, as laid down in the Schools Standards Framework Act 1998, remain at the disposal of the school and are not available for Council use. These balances are therefore excluded from all reserve forecasts.

Table 1 - Reserves Position	2023/24 Outturn £m	2024/25 Forecast £m		
General Reserves	5.6	4.5		
Earmarked Reserves (Excluding Schools)	32.3	9.5		
Total Reserves Balance at 31st March	37.9	14.0		

Table 2 - Earmarked Reserves Summary

Committee Reserves	Opening Balance 1st April 2024 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Balance 31 March 2025 £000
Adults and Health	5,226	(2,795)	(90)	0	2,341
Children and Families	1,724	0	(1,593)	(131)	0
Corporate Policy	20,773	(6,551)	(2,680)	(4,695)	6,847
Economy and Growth	2,777	(662)	(1,004)	(765)	346
Environment and Communities	870	(390)	(402)	(78)	0
Highways and Transport	908	(205)	(415)	(288)	0
TOTAL EARMARKED RESERVE MOVEMENT	32,278	(10,603)	(6,184)	(5,957)	9,534

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' are subject to review and are yet to be approved.

* Total excludes schools' balances

Table 3 - Adults and Health Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 1 Apr 24 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Bal 31 Mar 25 £000	Notes
Adults Social Care Co	ommissioni	ing				
PFI Equalisation - Extra Care Housing	2,857	(2,795)	0	0	62	Surplus grant set aside to meet future payments on existing PFI contract and the anticipated gap at the end of the agreement.
Public Health						
Public Health Reserve	2,369	0	(90)	0	2,279	Ring-fenced underspend to be invested in areas to improve performance against key targets; including the creation of an Innovation Fund to support partners to deliver initiatives that tackle key health issues.
ADULTS AND HEALTH TOTAL	5,226	(2,795)	(90)	0	2,341	

Table 4 - Children and Families Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 1 Apr 24 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Bal 31 Mar 25 £000	Notes
Childrens Social Care	2					
Domestic Abuse Partnership	131	0	0	(131)	0	To sustain preventative services to vulnerable people as a result of partnership funding in previous years.
Strong Start, Family I	Help and Inte	egration				
Troubled Families Initiative	1,593	0	(1,593)	0	0	Crewe Youth Zone and ACT have been assigned funding from shared outcomes of the Supporting Families Programme.
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TOTAL	1,724	0	(1,593)	(131)	0	

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' not forecast as part of MTFS 24-28 are subject to review and are yet to be approved.

Table 5 - Corporate Policy Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 1 Apr 24 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Bal 31 Mar 25 £000	Notes			
Corporate Directorate	<u>)</u>								
Corporate Directorate	1,164	(935)	0	0	229	To support a number of widespread projects within the Corporate Directorate.			
Finance and Custome	Finance and Customer Services								
Collection Fund Management	8,154	(1,235)	(2,915)	0	4,004	To manage cash flow implications as part of the Business Rates Retention Scheme.			
Capital Financing Reserve	4,531	0	0	(4,531)	0	To provide for financing of capital schemes, other projects and initiatives			
MTFS Reserve	2,914	(741)	255	0	2,428	To support the financial strategy and risk management. £1.2m of the remaining reserve balance had previously been earmarked for future voluntary redundancy costs.			
Section 31 Revenue Grants	14	0	0	(14)	0	Unspent specific use grant carried forward into 2024/25.			

*Corporate Policy Committee reserves continued overleaf

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 1 Apr 24 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Bal 31 Mar 25 £000	Notes				
Governance and Comp	Governance and Compliance									
Insurance Reserve	3,098	(3,098)	0	0	0	To settle insurance claims and manage excess costs. The full reserve has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.				
Elections General	132	0	0	0	132	To provide funds for Election costs every 4 years.				
Brexit Funding	13	(13)	0	0	0	Residual reserve balance has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.				
Human Resources										
HR (CARE4CE Review, Culture Change, Pay realignment, Learning Mgt System)	59	(59)	0	0	0	Residual reserve balance has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.				
Pay Structure (M Grade Review)	54	0	0	0	54	Created to help fund ongoing changes to pay structure.				
Governance and Comp	oliance									
Brighter Futures Transformation Programme	490	(470)	(20)	0	0	To fund the Council's four year transformation programme and its five outcomes of Culture; Estates and ICT systems; Customer Experience, Commercial Approach and Governance.				
ICT										
Digital Solutions Architect	150	0	0	(150)	0	New reserve created in 23/24 to fund a role for the Digital Customer Enablement programme and will be key to realising the cost savings and efficiencies across the Council from the deployment of a number of digital initiatives.				
CORPORATE POLICY TOTAL	20,773	(6,551)	(2,680)	(4,695)	6,847					

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' not forecast as part of MTFS 24-28 are subject to review and are yet to be approved.

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 1 Apr 24 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Bal 31 Mar 25 £000	Notes				
<u>Directorate</u>										
Place Directorate	1,164	0	(473)	(385)	306	To support a number of widespread projects within the Place Directorate.				
Investment (Sustainability)	610	0	(427)	(143)	40	To support investment that can increase longer term financial independence and stability of the Council.				
Growth and Enterprise	<u>)</u>									
Legal Proceedings	212	0	(104)	(108)	0	To enable legal proceedings on land and property matters.				
Investment Portfolio	534	(534)	0	0	0	The full reserve has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.				
Homelessness & Housing Options - Revenue Grants	129	0	0	(129)	0	Grant committed for the purchase and refurbishment of properties to be used as temporary accommodation to house vulnerable families.				
Tatton Park Trading Reserve	128	(128)	0	0	0	The full reserve has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.				
ECONOMY AND GROWTH TOTAL	2,777	(662)	(1,004)	(765)	346					

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' not forecast as part of MTFS 24-28 are subject to review and are yet to be approved.

Table 7 - Environment and Communities Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 1 Apr 24 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Bal 31 Mar 25 £000	Notes
Environment and Neig	ghbourhoo	d Services				
Strategic Planning	568	(281)	(287)	0	0	To meet costs associated with the Local Plan - site allocations, minerals and waste DPD.
Trees / Structures Risk Management	139	(55)	(55)	(29)	0	To help respond to increases in risks relating to the environment, in particular the management of trees, structures and dealing with adverse weather events.
Air Quality	36	0	(17)	(19)	0	Air Quality Management - DEFRA Action Plan. Relocating electric vehicle chargepoint in Congleton.

*Environment and Communities Committee reserves continued overleaf

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 1 Apr 24 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Bal 31 Mar 25 £000	Notes
Licensing Enforcement	8	0	0	(8)	0	Three year reserve to fund a third party review and update of the Cheshire East Council Taxi Licensing Enforcement Policies.
Flood Water Mngmt (Emergency Planning)	2	0	(2)	0	0	Relating to Public Information Works.
Neighbourhood Planning	82	(41)	(41)	0	0	To match income and expenditure.
Spatial Planning - revenue grant	13	(13)	0	0	0	Residual reserve balance has been released to the general fund to support the in-year deficit pressure.
Street Cleansing	22	0	0	(22)	0	Committed expenditure on voluntary litter picking equipment and electric blowers.
ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES TOTAL	870	(390)	(402)	(78)	0	

Table 7 - Environment and Communities Committee Continued

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' not forecast as part of MTFS 24-28 are subject to review and are yet to be approved.

Table 8 - Highways and Transport Committee

Reserve Account	Opening Balance 1 Apr 24 £000	Transfers to General Fund £000	Forecast Movement in Reserves £000	Additional Drawdown Requests £000	Forecast Closing Bal 31 Mar 25 £000	Notes
Highways and Infrastructure						
HS2	385	(185)	(200)	0	0	To support the Council's committed costs in relation to Government's cessation of the HS2 rail network in borough.
Flood Recovery Works	400	0	(200)	(200)	0	To help the service manage risks such as the impact of adverse weather, specifically flooding or extensive periods where winter maintenance is
Highways Procurement Project	104	(20)	(15)	(69)	0	required. To finance the development of the next Highway Service Contract. Depot mobilisation costs, split over 7 years from start of contract in 2018.
LEP-Local Transport Body	19	0	0	(19)	0	Contribution to LEP transport studies/consultancy. Ongoing working around Transport Legacy issues.
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT TOTAL	908	(205)	(415)	(288)	0	

* All 'Additional Drawdown Requests' not forecast as part of MTFS 24-28 are subject to review and are yet to be approved.

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OPEN

Highways and Transport Committee

19th September 2024

Bus Service Review 2024 – Results & Recommendations

Report of: Tom Moody, Director of Highways and Infrastructure

Report Reference No: HTC/32/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

Purpose of Report

- 1 The report presents the findings of a strategic review of the Council's financial support for local bus services. The review was undertaken to ensure that spending provides value for money and best meets the needs of passengers within prevailing budget constraints.
- 2 The Council's existing supported bus contracts expire at the end of March 2025. The process to re-procure services is scheduled to begin in October, with new contracts due to start in April 2025. The outcomes from the bus service review and associated consultation have informed the service specifications and this report presents the proposed changes to the supported bus network.

Executive Summary

- 3 The bus network in Cheshire East plays a key role in providing access to jobs and services by connecting people to places. Buses are an essential component of an integrated transport network. They have a vital role in delivering key Council policy priorities for the economy, social cohesion, public health and environmental sustainability, including decarbonisation.
- 4 Currently the local bus network is made up of 37 bus services, of which 21 services are fully supported by the Council (57%), a further 8 are partially supported by the Council (22%), such as evening journeys. 8 services (22%) operate on a fully commercial basis. The Council currently spends £2.8m per annum supporting bus services which are

not commercially viable but are deemed important and socially necessary. In addition, the Council spends a further £541,564 on the provision of flexible transport (FlexiLink) provided by Ansa Transport (part of Ansa Environmental Services Ltd, a company wholly owned and controlled by the Council).

- 5 In line with our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), there is a need to safeguard current network stability through our supported bus services. The bus service review assessed opportunities to encourage more bus use and to transfer supported services to the commercial network. It also provides the opportunity to adjust service provision to improve performance and passenger uptake and get better value out of what the Council is spending.
- 6 The methodology for the review was approved by this Committee on 4th April 2024, incorporating the Council's adopted bus support criteria, performance data, accessibility analysis and an 8-week public consultation. This report includes a number of appendices which set out the detailed findings from the strategic review:
 - Appendix 1 Bus Service Review 2024 Summary Report
 - Appendix 2 Flexible Transport Review Summary
 - Appendix 3 Consultation Summary Report
 - Appendix 4 Supported Bus Network Proposals
 - Appendix 5 Equality Impact Assessment
- 7 As part of the review, careful consideration has been given to the blend between fixed route and flexible transport services. There are many lessons learnt from the DfT funded Go-Too pilot project which can be applied across the borough and there are clear opportunities to modernise the FlexiLink service and respond to consultation results from both September 2023 and May/June 2024.
- 8 This report seeks approval to adjust service provision, where appropriate, to maximise value for money and ensure the best possible coverage within financial constraints. The majority of the supported bus network is performing well with either stable or growing patronage, so the aim is to ensure continuity of service provision for residents from April 2025 onwards (see Appendix 4).
- 9 The recommended adjustments have been informed by public consultation and appointment of a suitable bus operator for each contract will be subject to competitive tendering.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways and Transport Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the findings of the Bus Service Review 2024 (see Appendix 1 and 2) and the associated Consultation Summary Report (see Appendix 3).
- 2. Approve the current proposals for a revised supported bus network, as below and in Appendix 4, whereby the Council will;
 - a) Cease revenue support for the 70 Nantwich to Tiverton (2 journeys daily) and replace with access to flexible transport (see below). Reconfigure the 72 and 73 Nantwich rural services (serving Wrenbury and Audlem) and provide a direct local bus service linking Nantwich to Leighton Hospital.
 - b) Increase frequency of service on the northern section of route 391/392 between Poynton and Stockport to hourly.
 - c) On a trial basis, extend FlexiLink hours of operation to include 16:30-21:00 and provision of a Saturday service (09:00-18:00) and make it available for use by all passengers who do not have access to a fixed-route bus service.
 - d) All other Council supported bus services are largely unchanged as a result of these recommendations (see Appendix 4).
- 3. Delegate authority to the Director of Highways and Infrastructure to:
 - a. finalise the remaining proposals for supported bus services, including any necessary service adjustments;
 - b. finalise supported bus service specifications for procurement;
 - c. identify the most cost effective delivery model for flexible transport which also meets the provision for home-to-school special educational needs & disability transport, in consultation with the Director of Education, Strong Start and Integration;
 - d. procure the Council's supported bus services including flexible transport;
 - e. award supported bus service contracts to start in April 2025.

Background

- 10 Since the Council's first BSIP was prepared in 2021, considerable progress has been made in stabilising the bus network following the Covid-19 pandemic. There were 2.8 million passenger journeys made between 2022 and 2023, which is a good base to build from, but it is recognised that we currently have relatively low passenger numbers in Cheshire East compared to other parts of the country.
- 11 Working with local bus operators as part of our Enhanced Partnership, our ongoing mission is to grow patronage in the context of the cost-ofliving crisis and changes to working and shopping patterns. The Council

continue to safeguard current network stability through our supported bus services.

- 12 The BSIP 2024 sets out an ambitious improvement programme for bus services, which is initially focused on quality enhancements to encourage network growth. Over the period of the BSIP (2024-2035), our vision is to transform the bus network to provide attractive, reliable and convenient connections, which enable more residents to choose the bus and make fewer car journeys.
- 13 The bus service review was progressed in the context of the overall BSIP vision and the Council's support for local bus services is a key component of network stability, whilst focusing on growing patronage and encouraging more services to become commercial over time.
- 14 The objectives of the bus service review are to:
 - a. Maximise opportunities to focus limited resources in the areas of greatest need.
 - b. Ensure supported services complement, not compete, with commercial services.
 - c. Maximise opportunities to extend the role of commercial services or transfer supported services to the commercial network.
 - d. Ensure that the network is coherent in terms of passenger needs, bus operations and value for money.
 - e. Work in partnership with operators to develop the best possible outcomes.
 - f. Identify opportunities to modernise flexible, demand responsive transport to complement fixed route bus service provision.
- 15 The methodology was based on an evidence-led approach which ensured our planning is informed and influenced by robust data and stakeholder consultation (see Appendix 1 and 2).

Consultation and Engagement

- 16 An 8-week consultation was undertaken from 7th May until 3rd July 2024. In total, 2,115 responses were received including 2,074 paper / online survey responses and 41 emails (see Appendix 3).
- 17 The consultation was mainly hosted online with paper versions made available at libraries and contact centres, as well as being posted directly to all FlexiLink service users (given the eligibility criteria of age 80+ and disability). It was promoted to:
 - Residents of Cheshire East and the general public
 - The Cheshire East Digital Influence Panel

- Town and Parish Councils
- Local stakeholders including relevant bus user groups, businesses, community groups and other organisations.
- 18 The consultation was promoted with press releases, social media outputs and direct emails to a wide variety of stakeholders, including education and health sector representatives and equality groups.
- 19 A Bus Enhanced Partnership Forum meeting was held in Sandbach on 8th May 2024, which provided the opportunity to launch the consultation and raise awareness amongst bus operators, user groups, town and parish councils, local businesses and wider stakeholders.

Reasons for Recommendations

20 The proposals in Appendix 4 ensure that the Council's expenditure on local bus services meets the needs of residents and continues to provide value for money. With supported bus contracts coming to an end on 31st March 2025, there is a need to review and adjust existing service provision to ensure the Council continues to provide services in a lawful manner. Implementing the review proposals ensures that spending provides value for money and best meets the needs of passengers within prevailing budget constraints.

Other Options Considered

21 If supported bus service contracts are not re-procured, contracts would expire and services would cease at the end of March 2025. The review provided the opportunity to evaluate the network and make appropriate adjustments which are expected to benefit passengers and maximise value for money within budget constraints.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do Nothing	Supported bus contracts will end and supported services will stop	Ceasing all supported bus services will have a knock-on effect on commercial routes
	operating in March 2025.	leading to their withdrawal (at least in part).
Do Same	Re-procure supported bus contracts as currently provided. The bus network will operate as it does currently without	No assessment of need or value for money and the opportunity for service adjustments to improve performance will not be realised.

maximising value for	
money.	

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 22 The statutory basis for subsidising public passenger transport services is found within Section 63 of the Transport Act 1985. A condition of a subsidy is where the service in question would not be provided, or would not be provided to a particular standard, without subsidy, and provided that open and competitive tenders are invited for the provision of the service.
- 23 In exercising or performing this function, the council must have regard to the transport needs of the elderly and the disabled.
- 24 The Council should keep any policies, plans and strategies under review and updated as necessary. The last bus service review took place in 2017 which predates the current adopted Local Transport Plan.
- 25 When the bus market was deregulated in the 1980s there was no clear definition of a socially necessary service. Rural areas are less likely to have bus services as there is less population density when compared to urban areas. It was expected that local authorities would be able to subsidise routes that bus operators did not find profitable, but there is no requirement for local authorities to provide socially necessary bus services. Over time, pressures on local authority budgets have made it more difficult for local authorities to fund services that are not commercially viable.
- 26 Local authorities have powers to provide services, under tender, to meet public transport requirements within their area that would not be met in any other way. This is common practice. Some services in any given area are likely to be subsidised as councils have deemed them important routes for social and economic reasons. Bus operators must give notice to the local authority and Traffic Commissioner that they plan to introduce, change or withdraw a bus route.
- 27 The procurement of the supported bus service contracts will need to be compliant with public procurement law as well as the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Ongoing support from Procurement and Legal will be required throughout the procurement process.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

28 The Council has a budget of £2,852,061 to support local bus services. In 2024/25 the forecast variance at first quarter is -£24,206.

Budget	2024/25	2025/26
Supported Bus Services	£2,852,061	£2,852,061
Flexible Transport	£541,564	£1,341,564*

* Council budget £541,564, plus £800,000 DfT BSIP grant (see table below)

- 29 The Council's flexible transport service (FlexiLink) is currently provided by Ansa Transport and the budget is therefore included in the Management Fee.
- 30 As the majority of the supported bus network is performing well with stable or growing patronage, the aim is to ensure continuity of service provision from April 2025 onwards.
- 31 The proposals under 'Recommendation 2' of this report have the following resource implications:

Consultation Proposal	Description
Proposal 1: Nantwich rural services	The proposal requires the same level of resource as currently provided (two vehicles and drivers) but the resource will be deployed in a different way to provide a link between Nantwich and Leighton Hospital and maximise value for money.
Proposal 2: 391/392 service*	The proposal will increase the resource requirement from two vehicles and drivers to three vehicles and drivers. This will enable the frequency on the northern section of route between Poynton and Stockport to be enhanced to hourly.
Proposal 3: Flexible Transport *– Trial Expansion	Additional hours of operation on a weekday (16:30- 21:00) and provision of a Saturday service (09:00- 18:00). The enhancement to the flexible transport service will be funded by the DfT BSIP grant (£800,000) which will supplement the Council's existing budget.

* These proposals remain subject to affordable tender prices being received from operators after a procurement exercise.

- 32 The proposed extension of flexible transport is intended to be a trial, funded by both the Council's existing budget for flexible transport (£541,564) and the DfT BSIP grant (£800,000) allocated in 2024/25, which will be carried forward into 2025/26 (see table below).
- 33 In 2024/25, the strategic transport team have incurred additional costs for consultancy support to work through the bus service review methodology, undertaking the consultation and using the results to inform the final proposals. These costs will not be incurred in 2025/26 and the expenditure will be transferred to fund 'Proposal 2' above.
- 34 The Council has been awarded BSIP funding from central government (see table below). DfT make clear in the terms and conditions of funding that the overall local authority supported bus budget must be maintained at least at the same level. The indicative delivery programme for the 2024/25 BSIP funding was approved by this Committee on 20th June 2024.

	2023/24	2024/25
BSIP + (Phase 2)	£1,187,596	£1,187,596
BSIP (Phase 3)	0	£2,268,000
Total	£1,187,596	£3,455,596

Policy

- 35 Cheshire East's Corporate Plan recognises the importance of the bus network in supporting key strategic objectives such as reducing air pollution, reducing carbon emissions, enabling housing and employment growth, improving quality of place and protecting the environment.
- 36 The Local Transport Plan (2019-2024) outlines the role transport will play in supporting the long-term goals to improve the economy, protect the environment, improve health and wellbeing and the quality of place. The methodology used to undertake the bus service review reflects this framework, considering social, economic and environmental impacts of bus services across the borough.
- 37 Cheshire East's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) sets out the ambition for the bus network to improve the speed, reliability and quality of public transport, to encourage more residents to choose bus, make fewer car journeys and contribute to carbon reduction.

An open and enabling organisation Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making. Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation. Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents	A council which empowers and cares about people Work together with our residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient. Reduce health inequalities across the borough.	 A thriving and sustainable place A great place for people to live, work and visit. To reduce the impact on our environment. A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel. Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all. To be a carbon neutral council by 2027 and borough by 2045.
		3

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

38 The Council has fully evaluated the equality implications of the bus service review through an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA). The EqIA has been updated and finalised following the public consultation, including feedback from protected equality groups, particularly young people, older people and people with disabilities. The EqIA is included at Appendix 5.

Human Resources

39 There are no direct implications for Human Resources. Depending upon the approach to procurement of the FlexiLink (flexible transport) service, there will need to be consideration of impacts on operational teams currently based in ANSA Transport, with possible TUPE implications to another service provider. These considerations will be included in the transformation plan for ANSA Transport.

Risk Management

40 In terms of governance and corporate oversight, a Bus Strategy & Delivery Programme Board has been established including colleagues from key enabling services, such as legal, finance, procurement, research and consultation, and communications. This has ensured that the process of undertaking a bus service review and associated consultation is robust. A detailed risk register for the bus service review has been developed and will be maintained during the re-procurement, contract award and mobilisation of services from April 2025 onwards.

Rural Communities

- 41 The Corporate Plan outlines targets to reduce areas of the borough not served by public transport. The Council has already demonstrated a commitment to this through its successful bid for DfT funding as part of the Rural Mobility Fund, subsequent operations of the Go-Too service and continued delivery of the boroughwide FlexiLink service. The proposed expansion of flexible transport provision (see Appendix 2) further supports accessibility for residents in rural communities.
- 42 The Corporate Plan also identifies the desire for thriving and active rural communities by 2025. The Council's Rural Action Plan (2022) highlights the importance of public transport links to help small businesses access markets or making it practical for employees to seek work in rural communities. Transport can also bring customers and tourists to local rural businesses such as shops, hotels and B&Bs. The importance of local buses for rural communities has been reflected within the review methodology through accessibility analysis, considering how best to serve areas of the borough that are not served by conventional fixed route services, whilst offering services that are value for money. This accessibility analysis ensures bus services remain accessible for those who need them most.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 43 It should be noted that the operation of FlexiLink (flexible transport) is interworked with provision of home-to-school SEND transport, utilising the same fleet of vehicles. Any changes to the provision of flexible transport must take account of the practical and cost implications that impact on home-to-school transport services (and vice versa). The methodology took account of requirements for home to school transport, including the current transformation programme that is working to optimise travel to and from schools and colleges, including through the provision of more Available Walking Routes to Schools.
- 44 The Corporate Plan outlines the significant pressures in Children's Services, particularly placements for looked after children and services for children with special educational needs, including home to school transport. A significant number of school children across the borough use buses to access educational establishments and the proposals in Appendix 4 do not impact on home to school transport provision.

Public Health

45 There are pockets of deprivation in Cheshire East related to income, health and life chances. Bus services enable a greater proportion of residents to access important services such as health care facilities. It should be noted the FlexiLink (flexible transport) is disproportionately use by elderly and vulnerable residents for access to healthcare, social care and welfare services and facilities. The continued delivery of these services therefore helps to address the Corporate Plan target to reduce health inequalities across the borough. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is currently used to prioritise services and has been used as part of this methodology to assess accessibility within highly deprived areas where bus routes provide a lifeline for these communities.

Climate Change

46 Cheshire East Council have committed to become carbon neutral by 2027 and to influence carbon reduction across the borough in order to become a carbon neutral borough by 2045. Growing patronage on local bus services is a key part of the programme to decarbonise of the transport network in the borough.

Access to Inform	Access to Information		
Contact Officer:	Richard Hibbert Richard.Hibbert@cheshireeast.gov.uk		
Appendices:	 Bus Service Review 2024 Summary Report Flexible Transport Review Consultation Summary Report Supported Bus Network Proposals Equality Impact Assessment 		
Background Papers:	Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2024		

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Bus Service Review 2024 Summary Report

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2024





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CEC Bus Service Review 2024

Document Title:	CEC Bus Service Review
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1	29/07/2024	Draft Bus Service Review Summary	СТ	JM	RH
2	09/09/2024	Final Bus Service Review Summary	СТ	JM	JM



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1.Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The bus network in Cheshire East plays a key role in providing access to jobs and services by connecting people to places.

The local bus network is made up of 37 bus services, of which 21 services are fully supported by the Council (57%), a further 8 are partially supported by the Council (22%), such as evening journeys, and 8 services (22%) operate on a fully commercial basis.

The Council currently spends £2.8m supporting bus services which are not commercially viable but are deemed important and socially necessary. The Council's existing supported bus contracts expire at the end of March 2025, so there is a need to review existing service provision to ensure tendered services offer value for money and provide the best possible coverage to meet the needs of users and residents.

The last bus service review was undertaken in 2017 and much has changed in that time. In 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic struck with significant impacts for passenger transport services.

This review looks for opportunities to encourage more bus use and get more supported services operating commercially, tweak services to improve performance and passenger uptake and get better value out of what the Council is spending.

As part of the bus service review, careful consideration has been given to the blend between fixed route and flexible transport services. There are many lessons learnt from the Go-Too Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) pilot project which can be applied across the borough and there are clear opportunities to modernise the FlexiLink service and respond to consultation results from September 2023. These services are included in the bus service review 2024.

A successful bus service is good for the economy, for the environment, for the cost of living and for the quality of life in the towns and villages across the borough. Outcomes of this bus service review will inform the specification of tenders for reprocurement of services after the review.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives for this review are listed below and have been formulated considering the needs of the bus network, bus industry and bus passengers within the borough.

- a) Maximise opportunities to focus limited resources in the areas of greatest need.
- b) Ensure supported services complement, not compete, with commercial services.
- c) Maximise opportunities to extend the role of commercial services or transfer supported services to the commercial network.



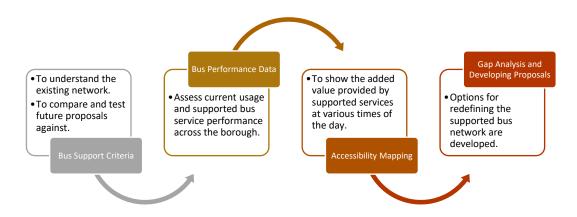
- d) Ensure that the network is coherent in terms of passenger needs, bus operations and value for money.
- e) Work in partnership with operators to develop the best possible outcomes.
- f) Identify opportunities to modernise flexible, demand responsive transport to complement fixed route bus service provision.



2. Methodology

2.1 Methodology

A methodology was developed split over several tasks. These tasks include the identification of a reference case for future service proposals to be built upon, comprehensive data analysis to assess the 'need' for bus services across the borough, and development of proposals to ensure continued service coverage whilst maximising value for money.



The Council engaged with bus operators through the Enhanced Partnership at key stages to ensure that industry knowledge, experience and expertise informed and influenced the review. There was also an 8-week consultation with residents, businesses and stakeholders from 7th May to 3rd July 2024.

2.2 Task 1: Bus Support Criteria (Reference Case)

The bus support criteria (approved by Committee in November 2023) enable existing and any potential future contracts to be tested using a fair, transparent and accountable process to manage contracts within budget constraints, provide maximum value for money and support wider strategic priorities in the Council. The application of the bus support criteria provided the reference case and a baseline against which future proposals have been tested. Task 1 is then supplemented by more detailed data and evidence outlined below.

2.3 Task 2: Bus Performance Data (Ticketer)

Since the previous bus service review in 2017 the quantity and quality of data available regarding supported services has improved considerably. The availability of various data sources, including ticketer data to show usage/patronage, negated the need for a detailed passenger survey on this occasion. Available data sources including ticketer have been analysed in detail to understand current service performance across the borough.

2.4 Task 3: Accessibility Mapping

Accessibility mapping has been undertaken to understand the impact of supported bus services by place, time of day and day of week. Mirroring the methodology adopted in 2017, and enabling a comparison between now and then, travel times



have been assessed to the 9 key service centres and 2 principal towns within the borough:



Accessibility by public transport has been analysed for the following time periods:

- · Morning peak period, weekdays
- Evening peak period, weekdays
- · Off-peak period, weekdays
- Evenings
- Sundays

This mapping helps to show the added value provided by services across the borough at various times of the day.

2.5 Task 4: Gap analysis and developing proposals

Utilising the evidence base, options for redefining the local supported bus network have been developed. Proposals have been drawn up considering the overarching Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) aims and objectives for the borough, the bus service review objectives, accessibility mapping, service patronage and an assessment of service need.

2.6 Task 5: Assessment of redefined network

At this stage the new network proposals have been tested to enable a comparison with the reference case / baseline from task 1. This task is important as it ensures the Council can respond to challenges about any impacts likely to result from service changes.

A gap analysis has also been conducted for the developed proposals to identify any locations where loss of accessibility could be experienced. It will then be necessary to consider the extent to which flexible transport could provide a solution (current provision is FlexiLink and Go-Too).

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3. Bus Support Criteria

To guide spending decisions, the Council prioritises revenue expenditure using a set of bus support criteria.

These criteria are used to assess the contribution of each bus service to our three objectives:

- · economy and environmental sustainability,
- access and social inclusion, and
- bus service performance.

The bus support criteria has been used to generate a prioritised list of supported services within Cheshire East. The ranked list is presented below, with 1 representing the best performing supported bus service.

Service	Description	Ranked Score	Level of Support
130	Macclesfield - Wilmslow - Handforth - Wythenshawe	1	Fully Supported
88	Macclesfield-Knutsford - Altrincham	2	Fully Supported
89	Northwich - Lostock Gralam - Pickmere - Knutsford-Altrincham	2	Fully Supported
39	Crewe - Walgherton - Nantwich	4	Fully Supported
12	Shavington - Crewe Bus Station - Leighton Hospital	5	Partially Supported
42	Crewe - Leighton Hospital - Congleton	6	Fully Supported
84	Crewe - Nantwich - Tarporley - Tarvin - Chester	7	Partially Supported
60, 60A	Macclesfield - Rainow - New Mills - Hayfield	8	Partially Supported
37	Crewe - Sandbach - Middlewich - Winsford - Northwich	9	Partially Supported
317	Leighton Hosp - Sandbach - Rode Heath - Alsager	10	Fully Supported
58	Macclesfield - Buxton / Chatsworth	11	Partially Supported
318	Alsager - Rode Heath - Kidsgrove - Congleton	12	Fully Supported
38	Crewe - Sandbach - Congleton - Macclesfield	13	Partially Supported (evening services)
92	Congleton - Buglawton Circular	14	Fully Supported
14A	Macclesfield - Sutton - Langley Circular	15	Partially Supported
90	Congleton - Bromley Estate (Circular)	16	Fully Supported
91	Congleton - Mossley Circular	17	Fully Supported
94, 94A	Congleton - Biddulph - Tunstall - Newcastle	18	Partially Supported
319	Sandbach - Holmes Chapel Circular	19	Fully Supported
19, 19A	Macclesfield - Whirleybarn - Prestbury	20	Partially Supported
391, 392	Macclesfield - Stockport	21	Fully supported
73	Nantwich - Wrenbury-Buerton - Audlem	22	Fully Supported
71, 72	Nantwich - Sound - Wrenbury - Audlem	23	Fully Supported
312	Handforth Dean - Wilmslow	24	S106 funded



316	Sandbach - Cookesmere Lane Circular	25	Fully Supported
70	Nantwich - Faddiley - Bunbury - Tiverton	26	Fully Supported

It is noticeable that some of the lowest scoring tendered services are the Nantwich rural services (consisting of the 70, 71, 72 and 73) and the 391/392 services that operate between Macclesfield and Stockport. The 391/392 serve Poynton where there is evidence of latent demand and an opportunity to grow patronage. Poynton currently only has a two-hourly service available, a settlement of this size should have more frequent bus services available.

The 312 and 316 services also score low, however the 312 is fully supported by (and dependent upon) Section 106 developer funding. This service began operation in February 2023 and has been pump primed to grow patronage and with success become part of the supported bus network. The 316 is a minor off peak service linked to the 319 that operates a small number of journeys and has a low contract cost with limited scope for change and is well used locally.

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4. Accessibility Mapping

Accessibility mapping has been undertaken to understand bus coverage across Cheshire East at different times of day and days of the week.

The following time periods have been analysed:

- Morning peak period, weekdays
- Evening peak period, weekdays
- Off-peak period, weekdays
- Evenings
- Sundays

Parts of the borough that are within 400m of a bus stop served by a fixed route service and provide travel to a key service centre in less than 40 minutes are considered 'accessible by bus'.

4.1 Weekday Morning

During a typical weekday morning peak (07:30-09:30) good accessibility is demonstrated around town centre and key service centre locations. However, sparse service provision is evident within rural parts of the borough and pockets of limited accessibility can be seen in Nantwich, Poynton and Wilmslow. When assessing the borough as a whole, 85% of residents have access to a bus service during the morning peak, with a 40 minute travel time to a key service centre.

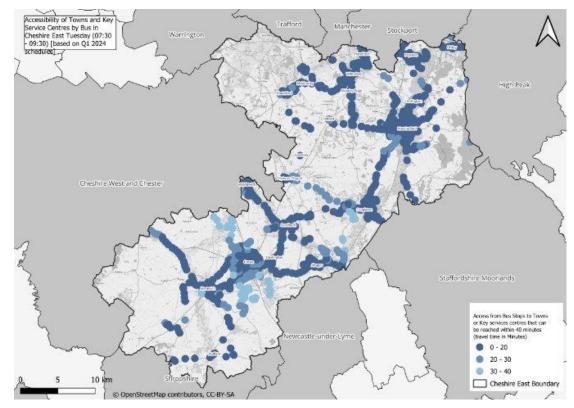


Figure 4-1: CEC Bus Accessibility during the morning peak



4.2 Weekday Evening and Off-Peak

Similar trends are evident when comparing the morning, evening and off-peak periods of a typical weekday. Generally, good coverage is evident for the key towns and service centres, with some pockets of lower accessibility and more sparse coverage in rural areas. Similar to the morning peak, a high percentage of the population have access to bus services during evening peak and off-peak periods:

- Evening peak 84% of residents with access to bus services
- Off-peak 88% of residents with access to bus services

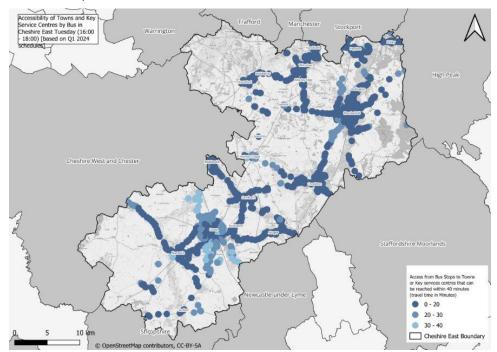


Figure 4-2: CEC Bus accessibility during the evening peak

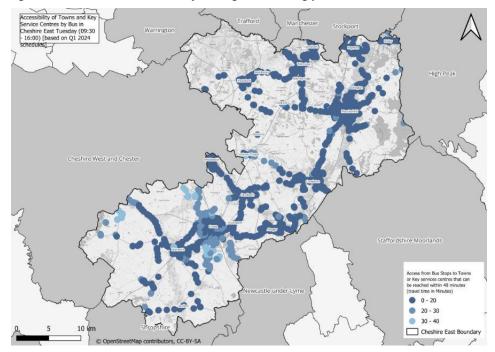


Figure 4-3: CEC Bus accessibility during the off-peak period



4.3 Evenings

When looking at evening services (18:00-23:59) there are notably fewer services available resulting in parts of the borough being less accessible by bus during this period compared to other times of the day. Based on current service provision during this evening period, 72% of all residents have an access to a bus service, which is notably lower than the peak periods.

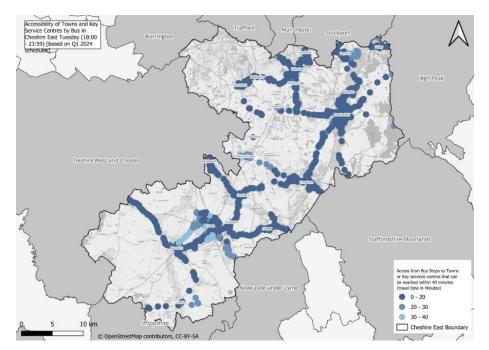


Figure 4-4: CEC Bus accessibility during the evening

4.4 Saturday

Bus service accessibility on Saturdays (09:30-16:00) is good, covering 84% of the population which is similar to the level of accessibility in weekday AM & PM peaks.

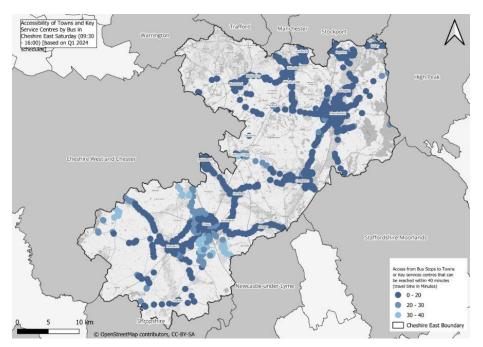


Figure 4-5: CEC Bus accessibility during Saturdays



4.5 Sunday

On Sundays, there are significantly fewer bus services available from 09:30-16:00 across the borough. The opportunity to make connections by bus between key service centres are therefore limited on Sundays. It is noticeable at the 84 is the main corridor in operation on Sundays alongside shorter, localised services. On Sundays, only 25% of the boroughs population have access to a bus service.

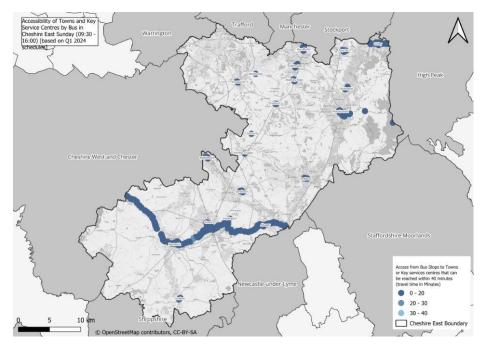


Figure 4-6: CEC Bus Accessibility during Sundays

During June 2024 bus service coverage on Sundays has been enhanced, funded by BSIP grants. This includes the introduction of the following services:

- 38 a 90-minute Sunday service, serving Crewe, Sandbach, Congleton and Macclesfield.
- 12 Hourly Sunday service, serving Crewe and Leighton Hospital
- 130 90-minute Sunday service, serving Macclesfield and Handforth Dean.

4.6 Summary

The accessibility mapping demonstrates better coverage across the borough on weekdays, ensuring a high proportion of Cheshire East residents have access to key service centres by bus. The households without access to a fixed route bus service (12% - 28% excluding Sundays) are located in rural areas of the borough where demand is dispersed across a large geographical area.

There is a need for improvements especially during weekday evenings and Sundays to provide greater service coverage.

Table 4-1: CEC Bus Accessibility

towns and key service centres (within 40 minutes)



Weekday AM Peak period (07:30-09:30)	85%
Weekday Inter Peak period (09:30-16:00)	88%
Weekday PM Peak period (16:00-18:00)	84%
Weekday Evening period (18:00-23:59)	72%
Saturday (09:30-16:00)	84%
Sunday (09:30-16;00)	25%



5.Potential Demand for Buses

Census data has been used to assess potential bus demand across Cheshire East. The mapping shows areas with high potential demand but limited bus services. This mapping has been used to identify any parts of the borough where there is likely to be a demand for more bus services.

- Most areas of highest potential demand are covered by a service of some description, including are Alsager, Congleton, Crewe, Macclesfield.
- Mapping shows limited bus service provision within Poynton and a level of unmet demand.
- Additionally smaller clusters of potential demand are around Middlewich, Nantwich and Wilmslow.

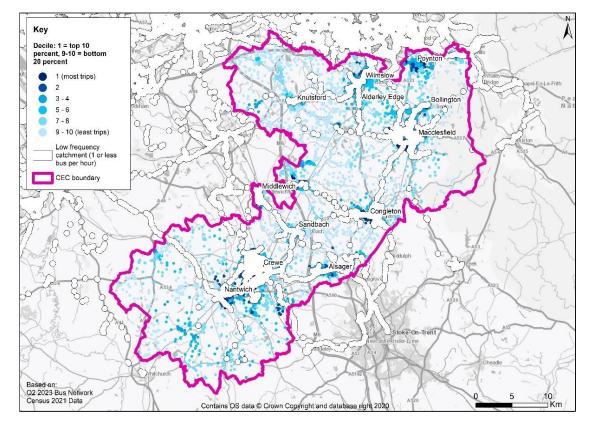


Figure 5-1: CEC Potential Demand for Buses

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6.Data Analysis Summary and Conclusions

The following conclusions have been drawn from this data analysis:

- Nantwich rural services (70, 71, 72, 73) and the Macclesfield-Poynton-Stockport (391/392) service are amongst the lower ranking supported services.
- Parts of Poynton and Nantwich are identified as having limited accessibility to key service centres.
- Low levels of bus service during evenings and Sundays across the borough.
- Poynton is identified as an area with the potential for more people to use bus services if a better level of service was provided.
- Potential bus demand is also evident in locations at the edge of towns/villages e.g. around Nantwich, Alsager, Middlewich, Congleton and Wilmslow.



7. Proposals

The data and evidence have led to three specific service proposals which seek to respond to the needs of local communities and provide better value for money. The three proposals include:

- 1. Nantwich Rural Services
- 2. 391/392 Macclesfield/Poynton/Stockport Service
- 3. Flexible Transport

7.1 Proposal 1: Nantwich Rural Services

The proposal affects services 70, 72 and 73 which operate in the rural areas to the south and west of Nantwich:

- Bus service 70, Nantwich-Tiverton would be withdrawn.
- The 72 and 73 bus services would be retained and improved on the busiest sections between Nantwich and Wrenbury, and Nantwich and Audlem with many journeys extended via Middlewich Road to Leighton Hospital. Lightwood Green and Burleydam would no longer be served by a fixed route service.

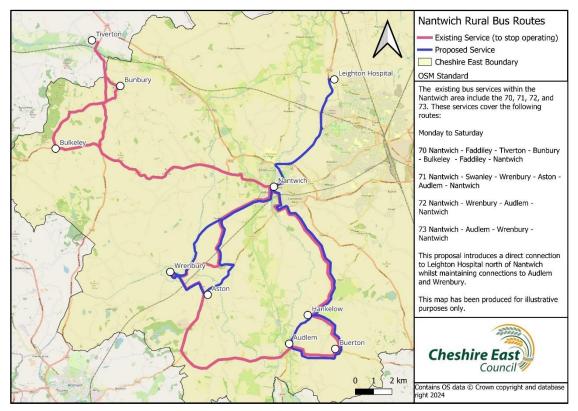


Figure 7-1: Proposal 1 – Nantwich Rural Services

Reducing the length of route would enable the provision of a direct service between Nantwich and Leighton Hospital. The proposal responds to feedback from local communities in Nantwich who told us that access to Leighton Hospital is indirect –



currently passengers have to travel to Crewe and change services at Crewe bus station in order to get to the Leighton Hospital resulting in a lengthy journey time.

For communities where the fixed route service would be withdrawn (i.e. Bulkeley, Bunbury, Lightwood Green and Burleydam), the proposal is to enhance the flexible transport offer (see proposal 3) and thereby provide transport in a different way.

There are no route changes proposed for bus service 71, Nantwich - Wrenbury. The journeys operating at school times would remain unaltered to support access to education.

Service No.	Description	Current Timetable	Proposed Timetable	Justification	Mitigation
70	Nantwich- Tiverton	2 journeys in each direction per day.	Fixed route service to be withdrawn and replaced with flexible transport.	Low levels of use and associated poor value for money.	Propose flexible transport as an alternative (see proposal 3) for affected communities in Bulkeley and Bunbury.
71	Nantwich- Wrenbury	1 journey in each direction per day.	1 journey in each direction per day.	No change.	None.
72	Nantwich- Wrenbury- Audlem- Nantwich	6 journeys Nantwich- Wrenbury- Audlem- Nantwich per day.	7 journeys Nantwich- Wrenbury per day. Lightwood Green and Burleydam no longer served.	Retained on busiest section with 4 journeys extended via Middlewich Rd to Leighton Hospital.	Propose flexible transport as an alternative (see proposal 3) for affected communities in Lightwood Green and Burleydam.
73	Nantwich- Audlem- Wrenbury- Nantwich	4 journeys Nantwich- Audlem- Wrenbury- Nantwich per day.	6 journeys Nantwich- Audlem per day. Lightwood Green and Burleydam no longer served.	Retained on busiest section with 4 journeys extended via Middlewich Rd to Leighton Hospital.	Propose flexible transport as an alternative (see proposal 3) for affected communities in Lightwood Green and Burleydam

Table 7-1: Proposal 1 service changes



7.2 Proposal 2: 391/392 Macclesfield-Poynton-Stockport Service

This proposal enhances the frequency of the service to hourly between Middlewood-Poynton-Stockport (via Stepping Hill Hospital), whilst maintaining a two-hourly service between Poynton and Macclesfield to the south. The proposal will require additional funding from the Council to bring a third bus into operation in order to enhance the frequency on the northern section.

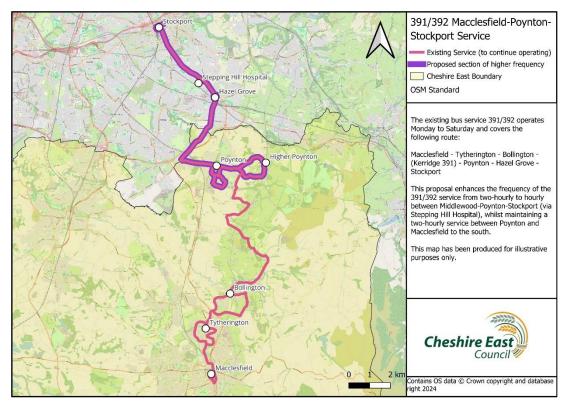


Figure 7-2: Proposal 2 – 391/392 Macclesfield-Poynton-Stockport Service

The data and evidence review found that there is potential unmet demand for bus service provision in the Poynton area and a need for improved frequency on the corridor between Poynton and Stockport, whilst also improving access to Stepping Hill Hospital for both healthcare and employment. The proposal responds to feedback from local communities to improve the frequency of the service.

Service No.	Description	Current Timetable	Proposed Timetable	Justification	Mitigation
391/392	Macclesfield - Poynton - Stockport	Every 2 hours on the whole route.	Increased to hourly between Middlewood- Poynton- Stockport using an additional vehicle.	Appears to be the busiest section of route and indications that Poynton has greater need of links into the Hazel Grove, Stepping Hill and Stockport area.	No communities are adversely affected by the proposal compared to the existing service provision.

Table 7-2: Proposal 2 service changes



7.3 Proposal 3: Flexible Transport

Flexible transport is a pre-bookable bus service (can be booked by telephone or app) available where no scheduled bus services are operating.

Two flexible transport services are currently in operation within Cheshire East:

FlexiLink provides travel for residents within Cheshire East who are either over 80 years of age, have a disability or are located beyond the reach of traditional bus services. Users of FlexiLink must register their journey 48 hours in advance of travel. The service is currently free to concessionary pass holders.

Go-Too operates in the rural area south and west of Nantwich. This service is funded by the Department for Transport's Rural Mobility Fund and operates from 7am to 9pm, Monday to Saturday. Go-Too is available to all residents in the operating area until the end of March 2025.

During August / September 2023, Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation to seek views on a set of potential proposals to expand and improve the FlexiLink service. In total 946 responses were received from current passengers and the wider community (those who are not current passengers). A recommended proposal for flexible transport within Cheshire East has been generated, following the analysis of feedback received.

The proposal is to combine the FlexiLink and Go-Too services into a single, prebookable service. Go-Too in its current form would cease to operate. The service will collect passengers from pick up points or offer a door-to-door service based on need (e.g., to those with limited mobility) and will be:

- Available to all age groups (where no alternative and/or suitable public transport is available)
- Available Monday Friday during the day (9:30am 2:30pm) and in the evenings (4:30pm 9:00pm)
- Available Saturdays (9:00am 6:00pm)
- Bookable using an online app, whilst retaining telephone booking
- Chargeable (£4 full fare and £2 concessions)



8. Consultation

A period of public consultation took place for 8 weeks between Tuesday 7th May and Wednesday 3rd July 2024.

Bus companies, service users, passenger groups, Town and Parish Councils, community groups, businesses, and residents were invited and encouraged to take part in the consultation.

8.1 Consultation Headlines

8.1.1 Proposal 1 – Nantwich Rural Services

46% of respondents agreed with proposal 1 compared to 14% who disagreed (40% neither agreeing or disagreeing). The majority of respondents who currently use the 71, 72 and 73 agreed with the proposal (65% and 63% respectively). However, current passengers of the 70 were less likely to agree (11% agreed and 57% disagreed).

It is recognised that the Bunbury area will be particularly affected by the loss of the 70 service and changes relative to the existing Go-Too service (reduced hours of operation). It may be feasible to have a dedicated vehicle operating a semi-fixed route into Nantwich on a Thursday (market day) and on Saturday (which has the highest demand on both the 70 and Go-Too services). The potential requirement for registration of such a service and implications for concessionary pass holders are still being considered. Many Bunbury residents need access to Tarporley, which is outside of the borough. The simplest solution may be to interchange with the scheduled 84 service at the Bunbury Road stops in Alpraham and the best ways to facilitate this are also still being considered.

In terms of impact, 11% would use the service for the first time and 18% would use it more often whereas 5% would use it less. 21% would use the service for the same amount whilst 24% would still not use.

47% of those who currently use the 71 & 72 bus services and 46% of those who currently use the 73 bus service stated that they would use them more if the proposal was approved. 33% would use the services for the same amount.

Those who disagreed with the proposal were concerned about those communities in which the services would be removed / no longer cover. They feared the change would lead to rural isolation and impact negatively on those who need the service the most. Flexible transport was not seen as a suitable alternative to some as it is more expensive, has more limited coverage and does not offer free concessionary travel, others provided suggestions for alternate routes / frequencies.

8.1.2 Proposal 2 – 391/392 Macclesfield-Poynton-Stockport service

56% agreed with proposal 2 and 7% disagreed. 75% of those who currently use the 391/392 bus service agreed with the proposal whilst 14% disagreed.

In terms of impact, 10% would use the service for the first time and 22% would use it more whereas 2% would use it less. 21% would use it for the same amount whilst 44% would still not use.



Encouragingly 46% of those who currently use the 391/392 service stated that they would use the service more if the proposal was approved, whereas 10% would use less. 33% would use it for the same amount.

A selection of respondents who disagreed with the proposal did so as they felt that the one-hour frequency should be applicable along the whole route whilst others gave alternative route suggestions. There was also a small selection of respondents who felt the increase in service was not required at all as it was an already wellconnected route which could be covered by other services for example the 192.

8.1.3 Proposal 3 – Flexible Transport

When asked why flexible transport should operate, the top three reasons chosen were:

- 1. 'To serve rural areas where no other public transport exists' (86%)
- 2. 'To provide transport for those physically unable to use timetabled bus services' (76%)
- 3. 'To serve urban areas where no other public transport exists' (50%).

In terms of the proposal, 69% agreed with the proposal and 11% disagreed. Those who are current passengers of the FlexiLink service were more likely to agree with the proposal (73% agreed whilst 8% disagreed) compared to those who are current passengers of the Go-Too service (51% agreed whilst 29% disagreed).

Users of Go-Too may be more likely to disagree with the proposal due to a loss of service during the morning peak with the proposal, as vehicles would need to undertake SEND home to school journeys during this time period.

In terms of impact, 21% would use for the first time and 22% would use it more whereas 4% would use it less. 22% would use the service for the same amount whilst 31% would still not use.

47% of those who currently use the FlexiLink service stated that they would use Flexible Transport more if the proposal was approved. 33% would use the service for the same amount whilst 5% would use less.

Those who currently use the Go-Too service were however less likely to use the flexible service more often: 26% stated that they would use it more whilst 19% would use it less.

Those who disagreed with the proposal highlighted several concerns, most notably the cost of the service and the hours of service being too restrictive. This provides a justification to disaggregate the fleet provision to enable SEND home to school journeys to take place separately from morning peak services (used for access to education, training and employment). There was also some apprehension around needing to pre-book the service, pick-up points, areas the service would cover and the eligibility criteria. Some respondents were disappointed by the loss of the Go-Too service whilst others simply preferred timetabled bus services.



9. Conclusions & Next Steps

9.1 Conclusions

Results from the public consultation demonstrate that most respondents agree with the proposals, including the majority of those who currently use the services. However, those respondents who would be most affected by the proposals (where the service would no longer serve their area) were more likely to disagree.

More broadly the consultation findings demonstrate that bus services (both timetabled or flexible) are seen as important for those with no alternative travel options in particular. Reliability and frequency are characteristics respondents value most alongside weekday services.

The table below outlines key consultation responses relative to the proposals and our recommended changes to align with these responses – demonstrating how the consultation results have informed and influenced the final proposals.

Proposal	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Comments	Final Recommendation
70, 71, 72, 73	46%	14%	Withdrawal of the 70 service would leave residents isolated (e.g. Bunbury and Bulkeley).	Potential to use a flexible transport vehicle to operate a semi-fixed route into Nantwich on a Thursday (market day) and on a Saturday (which has the highest demand on both the 70 and Go-Too service). Provide a feeder service that interchanges with the scheduled 84 service at the Bunbury Road stops in Alpraham providing onward connections to Tarporley and Chester.
391/392	seed		Would like to see one-hour frequency for the entire route.	Evidence suggests that the majority of journeys are northbound towards Stockport. There are also limited resources and funding to operate this corridor hourly for the full extent.
Flexible Transport	69%	11%	Fares are too expensive on flexible transport compared to fixed route. Fares are proposed for concessionary	Concessionary passes will be accepted on the flexible transport service allowing free travel at statutory times.



pass holders which is unfair. Operating hours do not cover the morning peak when services are needed.	The future delivery model for flexible transport is being considered (see Appendix 2).

9.2 Next Steps

The bus service review has informed bus service specifications for re-procurement of services to start from 1st April 2025. The timeline is as follows:

Table 9-1: Bus service review timeline for delivery

Task Name	Deadline
Finalise service specifications	04/10/24
Procurement Engagement Form	19/09/24
Highways & Transport Committee	19/09/24
Call in period	27/09/24
Spend Review Board (PEF) Submission	
Contract opportunities published	04/10/24
Clarification Question deadline	01/11/24
Contract opportunities close	11/11/24
Tender evaluation	20/11/24
Tender moderation	29/11/24
Authority to Let /ODR Sign off	06/12/24
De-brief letters and award letters issued	06/12/24
10-day stand-still (not mandatory)	16/12/24
Contract signing	06/01/25
Contract award date	06/01/25
Registration Period (with Traffic Commissioner)	10/01/25
Contracts commence	01/04/25

Flexible Transport Review

September 2024



Open Fair Green

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CEC Bus Service Review 2024

Document Title:	Flexible Transport Review
Revision:	R2
Date:	September 2024
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Project manager:	Jenny Marston
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Document history and status

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1. The Role of Demand Responsive Transport

1.1 A definition of Demand Responsive Transport

Department for Transport (DfT) guidance issued in 2022 defines Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) as a flexible service that provides shared transport to users who specify their desired location and time of pick-up and drop-off. DRT can complement fixed-route public transport services and improve mobility in low-density areas and at times of day when demand is low. DRT services run without a set timetable and typically use smaller vehicles than fixed-route bus services.

The National Bus Strategy for England, published by the DfT in 2021 and entitled "Bus Back Better", set out the role of DRT. It can offer a more personal, on-demand service, taking people from their doors or closer to their doors than a conventional bus service. DRT is seen as particularly useful to improve provision in rural areas, where there is very little bus provision, and in the evenings. Because it offers more of a door-to-door service, DRT can overcome the concerns of some users, particularly women, about taking public transport at night.

The DfT guidance indicated that DRT can have a range of purposes, including:

- Addressing suppressed travel demand, providing the opportunity for individuals to access a destination or service, such as for employment, education, healthcare or retail, or to connect to a transport hub to complete their journey.
- Providing a flexible service in place of a conventional fixed service.
- Acting as a feeder service to existing bus or rail services.
- Consolidating existing bus services, enabling one service to meet multiple needs, such as home-to-school, home-to-healthcare and home-to-work journeys
- Providing an alternative to private car journeys, encouraging people who do not use conventional bus services to use shared transport by providing a more flexible, personalised service. "Hop on, hop off' services can also serve tourists, for example, to provide access to rural walks, attractions or services.

1.2 Benefits of DRT

DRT can have a number of social and economic benefits, as well as helping to reduce the carbon impact of travel. Benefits include

- Replacing multiple single-occupancy car journeys
- Using smaller vehicles which are likely to be more efficient, both in fuel and carbon terms, than a large bus for transporting smaller numbers of passengers
- Providing equity of access to public transport for those living in sparsely populated rural areas



- Providing mobility for those on low incomes who cannot afford to buy or run a car
- Providing travel independence to disabled people, by customising rides to offer door-to-door service and providing vehicles equipped for wheelchair users
- Providing connectivity to fixed-route public transport services in rural areas
- Enabling older people to live independently in their own homes for longer than would otherwise be the case
- Enabling older and disabled people to maintain social contacts and access recreational opportunities, reducing the impacts of loneliness and social isolation¹.

It is recognised that DRT also has some limitations, which include:

- Vehicle capacity is less than a standard bus, reducing the number of passengers that can be carried on each journey
- Cost per passenger journey is generally significantly higher than for fixedroute bus services
- Potential lack of clarity and certainty for passengers regarding reliability of pick-up times
- Difficulty in communicating to the public how the service operates.

1.3 Local Transport Plan

For Cheshire East specifically, DRT has a role to play in supporting delivery of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) vision and objectives. Investment in DRT will help to deliver our vision: "Cheshire East's transport network will enable growth through improved connectivity, a better quality of life and enhanced quality of place."

Providing public transport accessibility for residents in rural areas is identified as a key challenge in the context of wider financial constraints. The LTP recognises that good accessibility is vital to ensuring rural areas continue to thrive economically and socially. Rural businesses require connections to labour, markets and suppliers whilst rural residents need access to jobs, services, friends and families. Within the LTP, we commit to exploring innovative ways of ensuring rural connectivity, including supporting community organisations to support transport services.

1.4 Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2024

The Council has published a Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP) which sets out the vision and strategic plan for local bus in Cheshire East, as well as how central government funding will be used to provide bus service improvements. An initial BSIP was published in 2021, which was revised in 2024. The vision for the BSIP is

¹ Research published in 2020 by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, using methods endorsed by HM Treasury Green Book, estimated the monetary impact of "moderate to severe loneliness" as at least £9,976 per person (in 2019 prices); <u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/loneliness-monetisation-report</u>



to "transform the bus network within Cheshire East to provide attractive, reliable and convenient connections that enable more residents and visitors to choose bus, make fewer car journeys, to contribute to our carbon reduction challenge and improve the health of our citizens".

The BSIP also set out the following "Ambitions for Bus":

- Improved frequencies on our town and inter-urban routes, with better access to health services, employment, education, transport hubs and leisure/retail.
- Continued support for socially necessary services, providing flexible and fixed-route services to link into the wider bus network.
- Reduced pinch-points on the network to improve journey times and reliability.
- Collaboration with local bus operators to improve the quality of the bus fleet and reduce emissions.
- More affordable journeys, within towns and for younger people.
- Improved integrated ticket offers between bus operators and modes.
- Improvements to waiting environments and bus stops to provide a safe travel experience.
- Our draft Bus Passenger Charter ensures bus users know their rights to certain standards of bus services and that these standards are met.
- Bus information readily available, easy to use and up-to-date.
- Improved journey planning and in-journey information.

DRT has a key role in providing rural services and access between rural areas and principal towns and key service centres. DRT services can be reconfigured to complement the fixed route network and ensure an appropriate blend between fixed route and flexible services and open up new travel options for service users.

1.5 Corporate Plan

DRT will also help to deliver several Corporate Outcomes, as shown in Table 1.

		Corporate Outcome	DRT Offer
	1.	Our local communities are strong and supportive	Provide residents with access to services and leisure opportunities, especially those living in more rural areas, enabling greater social inclusion and reducing rural isolation.
:	2.	Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy	Provide access to employment which would otherwise not be possible.
	3.	People have the life skills and education they need in order to thrive	Provide young people and adults with safe, affordable travel options to access skills, education and other opportunities.

Table 1 Corporate Outcomes Supported by DRT



	Corporate Outcome	DRT Offer
4.	Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place	Encourage mode shift from car to public transport, providing access to places of recreation and leisure to people who would otherwise only be able to travel by private car or taxi, or not travel at all.
5.	People live well and for longer	Increase the proportion of residents who are able to access key destinations, services and employment, further education and training opportunities by public transport, especially those living in more rural areas. Enable people to live independently for longer.



2. Local Context

2.1 Socio-Economic Context

2.1.1 Rural / Urban Classification

Data from the 2021 Census shows that the majority of the geographic area of Cheshire East is classified as "rural village and dispersed". However, with an average population density of around 0.5 people per hectare, only 15% of the population live in these areas. A little over 25% of the population live in edge of town areas surrounding the major settlements such as Crewe, Macclesfield, Wilmslow and Congleton, which are classified as "urban city and town". Despite the overall rural nature of the borough, over 60% of the population live in areas classified as "urban", which have a much higher population density.

The map below in Figure 1 shows the land areas classified as rural and urban in Census data in Cheshire East, overlaid with the bus route network. The purple colouring indicates a 400-metre buffer around each bus stop which is served by a fixed-route bus service; a distance that most people can walk within five minutes. People living within the area covered by the buffer are considered to have accessibility to bus services and includes approximately 85% of the population of Cheshire East. The remaining 15% of the population therefore does not have easy access to fixed-route bus services and may need to use a flexible transport service.

2.1.2 Ageing Population

Cheshire East also has an ageing population. Data from the 2021 Census showed that 22.3% of the population is aged 65 and over. This has increased since the 2011 Census and is a higher proportion that the equivalent age group in Cheshire West (21.3%), the North West (18.7%) and the whole of England (18.4%). Elderly adults are more likely to face mobility issues and are more likely to be reliant on public transport. If living in rural areas or beyond a reasonable walking distance to a bus stop, they are more likely to be reliant on DRT.

2.1.3 Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a useful tool for targeting services to help tackle deprivation. It provides a means of identifying the most and least deprived areas in England and to compare whether one area is more deprived than another. The latest IMD was compiled in 2019, in which the country was divided into 32,844 Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). These are geographic areas produced by the Office for National Statistics for the reporting of small area statistics. They comprise between 400 and 1,200 households and usually have a resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons. There were 234 LSOAs in Cheshire East in 2019.

The IMD is a combined measure of relative deprivation based on a total of 37 separate indicators that have been grouped into seven themes, or domains. Each of the domains reflects a different aspect of deprivation experienced by individuals living in an LSOA. For each of the domains, and for the overall IMD, the LSOAs are ranked from the most deprived to the least deprived. These are then grouped into deciles, each of which represents 10% of the LSOAs. The "Geographical Barriers to



Services" indicator is classed as a sub-domain of the "Barriers to Housing and Services" domain.

Physical distance from services and facilities presents a problem in rural areas such as Cheshire East and as such the Geographical Barriers to Services has a very different pattern across the borough to the other domains of deprivation. It relates to the physical proximity of local services and is made up of the following indicators, each of which is a measure of the mean distance to the closest of the following service for all of the people living in each LSOA:

- Distance (by road) to the closest post office
- Distance (by road) to the closest primary school
- Distance (by road) to the closest general store or supermarket
- Distance (by road) to the closest GP surgery

Figure 2 shows the Geographical Barriers to Services decile rankings for Cheshire East. Most of the geographical area of Cheshire East is in the lowest 2 deciles (i.e. the most deprived), with most if not all of the population centres, even the smaller settlements, in the highest deciles (the least deprived). This illustrates that most people in rural areas need to travel a significant distance to reach essential services. If they do not have access to a car or a fixed-route bus service, residents in these areas would be isolated without DRT service provision.

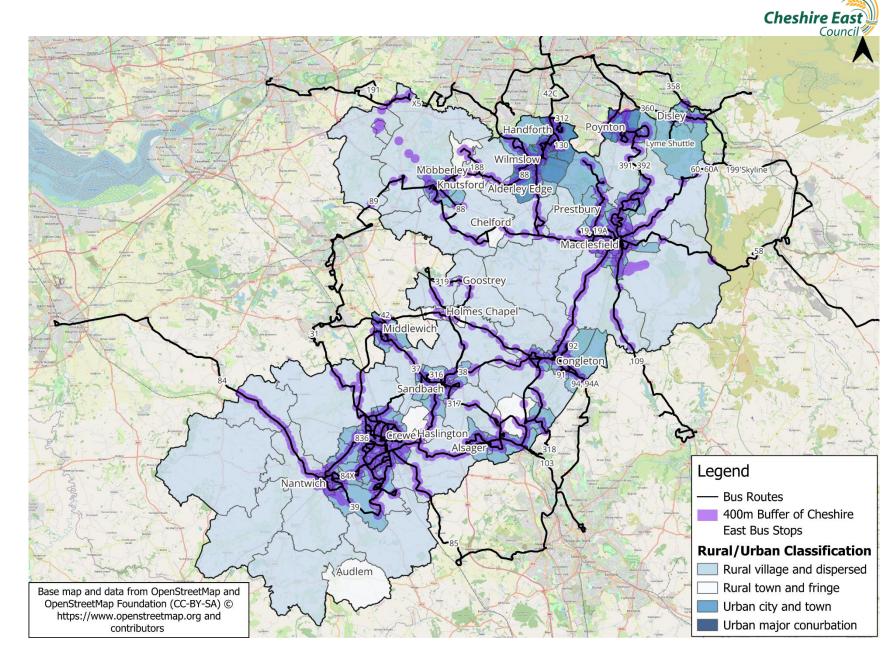


Figure 1 Map showing rural/urban land classifications along with accessibility to bus services

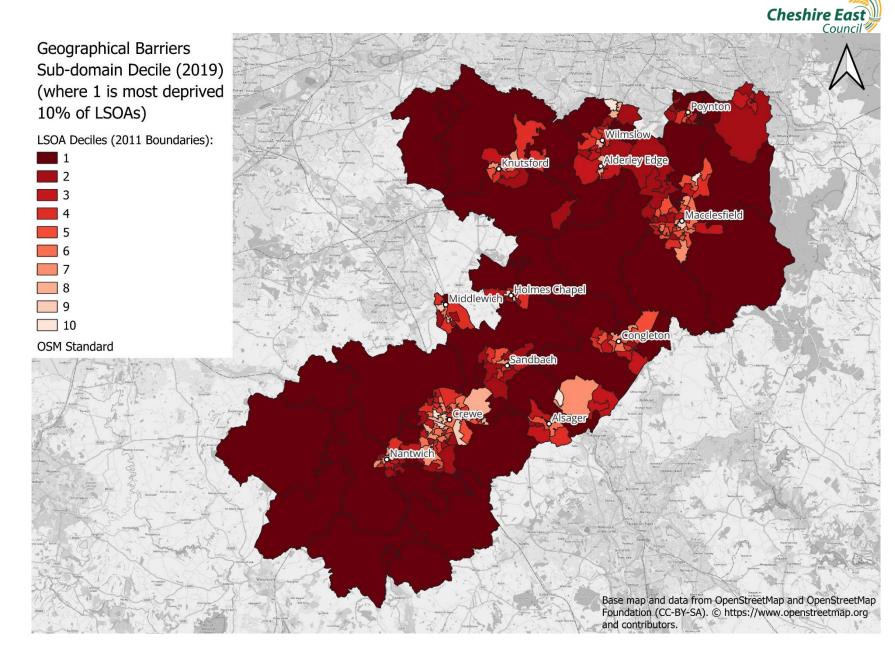


Figure 2 Map showing Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Geographical Barriers Sub-Domain Deciles



3.Current DRT Provision and Performance

3.1 Current DRT Provision

There are two DRT services operating within Cheshire East, as shown in Table 2.

The FlexiLink service was brought in-house from a local bus operator in 2019 and is funded by the Council. To be eligible to use the FlexiLink service, residents must be aged 80 or over, have a disability, or live beyond the reach of any other public transport. It has almost 1,000 registered users. The vehicle fleet is integrated with the provision of home to school transport for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Therefore, FlexiLink only operates between 09.30 and 14.30, Monday to Friday.

Go-Too is operated as a fixed-term pilot project, funded by the DfT's Rural Mobility Fund and will continue until 31 March 2025. It can be used by anyone travelling in the operating area to the south and west of Nantwich (see Figure 4 below) from 07.00 to 21.00, Monday to Saturday. It has almost 600 registered users (who have made at least 2 journeys since January 2024).

	FlexiLink	Go-Too
Operating Area All of Cheshire East		Rural area south and west of Nantwich (map below)
9		Available to all travellers in the operating area
Operating Times	Monday to Friday, 09:30 – 14:30	Monday to Saturday, 07:00 – 21:00
Fare Cost	£3 per journey, free for concessionary pass holders	£3 per journey, £2 for concessionary pass holders
Booking Process	Telephone or email	Online, phone app or telephone
Passenger Access	Door-to-door service	Pick-up points
Notice Period	From 1 month to 48 hours prior to travel	From 14 days up to 17:00* (telephone); or on-demand (app)
No of Vehicles	10 (+ 1 spare)	2 (+ 1 spare)
Funding Source	CEC	DfT Rural Mobility Fund

Table 2 DRT Services operating within Cheshire East

* Telephone bookings for Saturday travel must be made by 17:00 on Friday

Both services use minibuses with a maximum of 16 seats, see below, although many of the vehicles are configured for wheelchair users and therefore have lower seating capacity. A wheelchair assessment is required before the first booking can be made.





Go-Too



Approximately 80% of Go-Too bookings are made online using the Smartphone application, with the remaining 20% made by telephone. Go-Too uses route planning and scheduling software to optimise routes and maximise vehicle occupancy. FlexiLink bookings are taken by email or telephone (the booking line is open 3 hours per day). Passenger aggregation and route scheduling is carried out manually, with no automated routing or scheduling software.

The FlexiLink service operates across the borough and is loosely split into four separate operating areas, as shown below in Figure 3. Go-Too operates within the area shown below in Figure 4. Journeys can be made to and from anywhere within the dark green zone and between the dark green and light green zones.

3.2 FlexiLink Performance

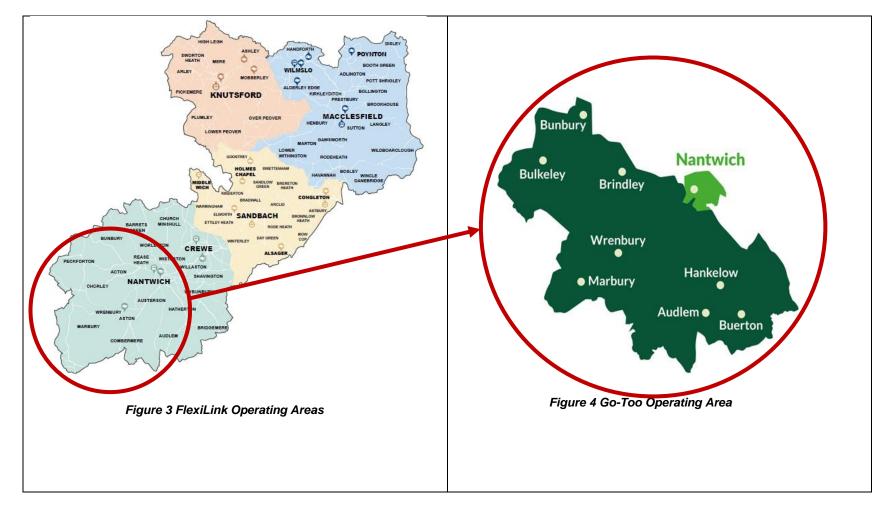
FlexiLink started operation in its current form in Autumn 2019, as shown in Figure 5. Nearly 5,000 passengers were carried in its first month of operation. This was the highest to date; no other month of operation has reached this level. Around 4,000 or more passengers were carried in each of the first few months, except for December 2019, however operations ceased in February 2020 with Covid-19 on the horizon.

The service resumed in August 2020, with strong initial growth, though this was suppressed by the return of travel restrictions in the winter of 2020. Patronage has grown steadily since Spring 2021, with some noticeable dips in the winter months, especially December. Patronage grew every quarter from 2021 Q1 to 2022 Q3, and from 2023 Q1 to 2024 Q2. In the first half of 2024, between 2,600 and 3,000 passenger journeys have been delivered each month. Over 3,000 passengers were carried in May 2024, the highest monthly total since February 2020. However, this is still only 60% of August 2019 patronage.

Passengers are asked their journey purpose when making a booking. Over the period from April 2022 to March 2024, over 68% of journeys were for shopping, 20% for clubs and day centres, 5% for general social activity and 4% for health-related travel. Analysis of driver run sheets found that the majority (88%) of journeys are regular bookings which are repeated at regular intervals (e.g. weekly) and 12% are ad-hoc journeys.

Most of the ten available vehicles are in regular usage, with eight or nine being deployed most days. Analysis of the total passenger numbers for the year-to-date and total operating hours available (if all 10 vehicles were operating and allowing for driver's statutory rest periods) shows that an average of 3.2 passengers were carried per operating hour.







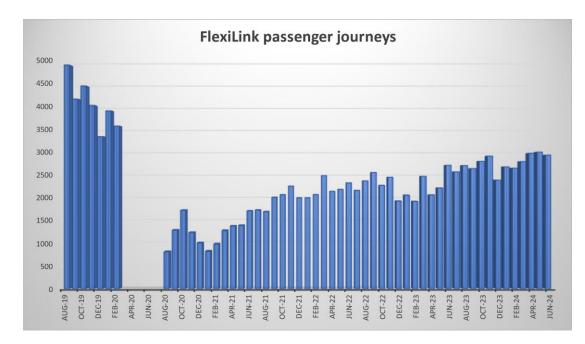


Figure 5 FlexiLink Passenger Journeys

Demand tends to be higher on Thursdays and Fridays than the rest of the week. Detailed analysis was carried out of FlexiLink vehicle usage over five separate weeks in the months of June, August, September and November 2022, and March 2023. This showed that the average number of passengers per journey across was four, see Table 3. There is some geographical variation; the average was above six for services in the northwest (route FT5). In the northeast (route FT2), the average was a little over two passengers per journey.

Operating Area	Average number of passengers per journey
FT2 – Macclesfield/Poynton/Disley	2.2
FT3 – Sandbach/Haslington/Alsager/Middlewich	4.4
FT4 – Crewe & Nantwich Area	3.7
FT5 – Knutsford/Handforth Dean/Wilmslow	6.3
Average across Borough	4.1

Table 3 Average Number of FlexiLink Passengers per Journey

Low vehicle occupancy results in a relatively high cost per passenger journey, although it is recognised that this does not reflect the wider social value of the service, in terms of enabling independence and reducing social isolation. The average number of passengers per journey needs to be balanced against vehicle utilisation to get a more rounded picture of performance.

The advantages and disadvantages of the current FlexiLink service are shown in Table 4 below.



Table 4 FlexiLink Service Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Provides travel independence to elderly	The restricted eligibility criteria result in
and disabled people, enabling the	low levels of demand and under-utilised
maintenance of social contacts and	vehicles.
access to recreational opportunities,	No automated routing and scheduling
reducing the impacts of loneliness and	software, resulting in inefficient vehicle
social isolation.	deployment.

3.3 Go-Too Performance

Go-Too started operation in October 2021, as shown in Figure 6. It has achieved generally steady growth, with a few peaks and troughs. Over 1,000 passenger journeys were completed for the first time in August 2022, a trend which continued until December 2022, then resumed in March 2023, after a slight dip to just under 900 per month in January and February. Passenger journeys grew to over 1,500 in July 2023 and have averaged almost that number over the last 12 months.

The average number of passengers per journey is lower than FlexiLink, at 1.3, which reflects the rural and sparsely populated nature of the operating area and the relatively low uptake of the service by local residents. Analysis of the total passenger numbers for the year-to-date and total operating hours available (with both vehicles operating and allowing for driver's statutory rest periods) shows that an average of 2.5 passengers were carried per operating hour.

Respondents to a Go-Too survey (281 respondents) carried out in February 2024 indicated that 60% of journeys were for leisure activities, 11% for commuting to work, 11% for "daily errands" (including shopping) and 10% were connecting to other public transport services. The remaining 8% comprised accessing community facilities, education, healthcare, childcare and other purposes.

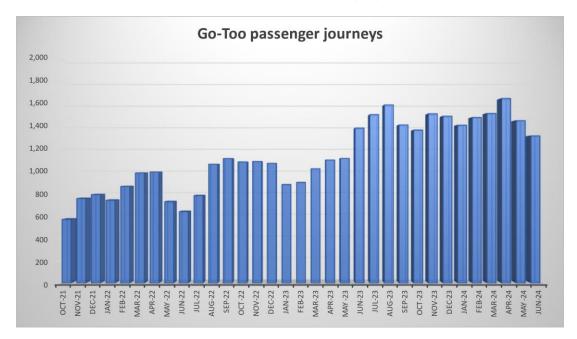


Figure 6 Go-Too Passenger Journeys



The Go-Too passenger survey also showed that 63% of respondents were female and 37% male. The majority of respondents were aged 55 and over (55%), but 9% were aged 16 - 24 (most likely to be in education, training or an apprenticeship) and a further 8% were aged 25 - 34. 71% said that they had a car available and 79% said that they had no long-term physical or mental disabilities which affect their use of the Go-Too service.

The Go-Too system uses dedicated industry standard software for booking and scheduling rides and optimising vehicle routing. The main benefits of this are as follows:

- Dynamic routing and matching algorithms to aggregate and direct trips
- · Passenger App for booking and real-time vehicle tracking
- Web application and phone support for passengers without smartphones
- Driver App providing directions, support, and real-time vehicle locations
- Easily accessed administrative console with a range of tools and functionalities
- Data analytics and reporting with granular operational data and trends

The data analytics and reporting provide a lot more management information than is the case with FlexiLink. The average number of Go-Too journeys operated per week in the year-to-date is 266 with an average of 336 passengers carried per week, as shown in Figure 7.

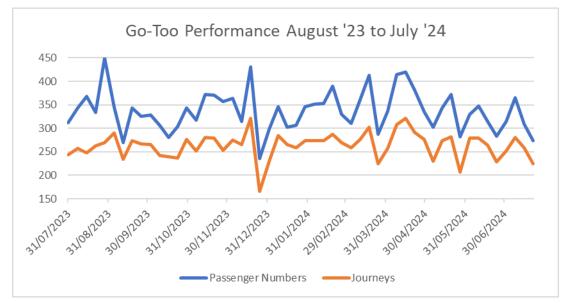


Figure 7 Go-Too Passenger Numbers and Journeys, Year to Date

The average number of passengers carried each day in the year-to-date was lowest on Monday (46), fairly consistent for Tuesday to Thursday (512 to 52, increased on Friday (61) and again on Saturday (85).

Go-Too services covered an average of 1,220 miles per week on passenger carrying journeys in the year-to-date. Figure 8 below shows how many passengers were carried as a proportion of this total mileage. Over 93% of mileage was taken up with the carriage of only one (62%), two (24%) or three (7%) passengers. Less than 7% of mileage was taken up with the carriage of four or more passengers. Passenger loadings will be closely monitored for any effects of the withdrawal of services 70, 72 and 73 (Nantwich rural services).



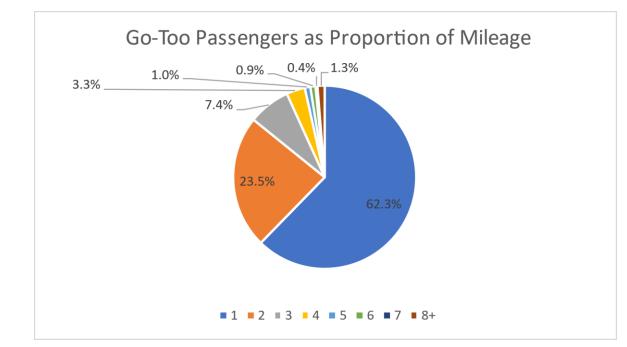


Figure 8 Go-Too Passengers Carried as Proportion of Operational Mileage

The advantages and disadvantages of the Go-Too service are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Go-Too Service Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Provides access to transport for travellers in a sparsely populated rural area.	Low levels of demand at times means that both vehicles are
Automated routing and scheduling software	not always fully utilised.
provides a passenger interface for booking and vehicle tracking and maximises efficiency of operations.	Low levels of demand result in low vehicle occupancy (over 85% of passenger mileage is
Used by a range of age groups for various purposes, mainly leisure related.	taken up with carrying one or two passengers).
50% of passengers surveyed are employed and 7% are students. Over 11% of journeys in the survey period were commuting to work.	The service will not be economically viable without DfT grant funding.

A summary of key performance metrics reported in the section above for both Go-Too and FlexiLink are shown in Table 6 (averages for the year-to-date).

 Table 6 Key Performance Metrics for FlexiLink and Go-Too

Performance metric	FlexiLink	Go-Too
Monthly average passengers	2,801	1,469
No of passengers per operating hour (annual average)	3.2	2.5
No of passengers per journey (annual average)	4.1	1.3
Vehicle Utilisation (average no trips per operating hour)	0.8	1.9
Weekly operational mileage carrying passengers	N/A	1,220



4. Passenger Perspective – Consultation Results

4.1 FlexiLink Consultation 2023

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, it is acknowledged that FlexiLink has not been operating efficiently or effectively in terms of vehicle utilisation and has therefore not been providing value for money. In response, the Council carried out a consultation on proposals to expand flexible transport services over 8 weeks in August and September 2023. Responses were received from 946 people, approximately 40% of these were from current passengers and 60% from people who are not currently passengers. A summary of key findings is shown in Table 7.

Table 7 FlexiLink Consultation Summary

Proposal	All respondents		Current Passengers		Non-passengers	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Make the service available to more age groups and regardless of ability	68%	18%	47%	31%	83%	9%
Introduce a fare for concessionary pass holders	40%	44%	30%	54%	46%	38%
Move from door-to-door service to designated pick-up points*	41%	47%	15%	77%	54%	33%

* passengers who are wheelchair users or with restricted mobility would still get a door-to-door service

A majority of all respondents agreed that the FlexiLink service should be available to more age groups and regardless of ability. Views on a proposal to introduce a fare for concessionary pass holders were mixed with 40% overall agreeing and 44% disagreeing. Non-current passengers were more likely to agree (46%) than disagree (38%). Current passengers also generally opposed a move to designated pick-up points to improve the efficiency of the service, with 77% against and only 15% in favour. Again, non-passengers took a different view, with 54% agreeing and only 33% disagreeing.

Respondents were also invited to comment on the proposals. 18 responses were critical of the introduction of a charge, some of which are shown below.

Charging concessions is unfair.

It should continue as a free service for over 65's with a bus pass.

If a charge is introduced, it should be negligible because people may not use service / or less often.

Mondays to Fridays during daytime hours should remain free, evenings and weekends could be chargeable.

No specific question was asked about operating times, but in the comments section respondents shared their views. For example, one respondent wrote:



"The hours of operation are still a constraint, especially the afternoon times reserved for school transport."

<u>Conclusion 1</u>: the FlexiLink service has very limited eligibility at present and there is general support for it to be available to a wider group of passengers. A majority of current passengers disagree with proposals to introduce a fare for concessionary pass holders and move to designated pick-up points. However, both of these proposals are more acceptable to people who are not currently passengers, with more respondents agreeing than disagreeing.

Respondents were also asked which days of the week they would like to use a revised service. Current passengers were more likely to select fewer options overall compared to non-passengers, for example 47% of current passengers selected one day of the week only, whereas 44% of non-passengers selected the full 7 days. Current passengers generally selected weekdays, with some interest in weekend services. 55% of non-passengers stated that they would be interested in a Saturday service compared to 11% of current passengers and 39% stated they would be

<u>Conclusion 2</u>: current passengers generally selected weekdays with nearly half selecting one day only, which seems likely to reflect current travel patterns. Over half of non-passengers indicate interest in a Saturday service.

interested in a Sunday service compared to 8% of current passengers.

When asked about operating times, weekday between 09.30 - 14.30 was by far the most popular time (84% of all respondents selected this option, 92% of current passengers and 79% of non-passengers). Very few current passengers showed interest in travelling at other times. Non-passengers showed more interest, with 44% selecting Saturday (07:00 - 21:00), 37% weekday early evening (16:30 - 19:00), 33% Sunday (09:00 - 18:00) and 23% weekday late evening (19:00 - 21:00).

<u>Conclusion 3</u>: responses to the questions on operating days and times indicate that attracting new passengers will be key to growing the use of the service.

When asked about booking procedures, 88% of current passengers were more likely to book the FlexiLink service via telephone with 12% preferring to book via a website or mobile app. Preferences were reversed among non-passengers, with 57% preferring to book via a website or mobile app and only 43% by telephone.

<u>Conclusion 4</u>: current passengers show a strong preference for telephone booking, which reflects the age profile of users. Non-passengers show a preference for mobile and online bookings, similar to the preferences of Go-Too users.

Feedback on journey purpose showed a marked contrast with usage of the current service, with respondents being able to select up to three options. Journey records indicate that 68% of current FlexiLink passengers use it for shopping, 20% for visiting clubs and day centres, 5% for general social activity, 4% for health-related travel and 3% for other purposes. The consultation findings are summarised in Table 8 below.



What would you most like to use FlexiLink for?	Current Passengers	Non-passengers	All respondents	
Travelling to/from shops	81%	64%	69%	
Health appointments such as visiting the hospital / doctor / dentist	65% 67%		65%	
Connecting to other transport e.g., to train / other bus services	15%	40%	30%	
Visiting leisure / recreational facilities	16%	22%	21%	
Visiting friends / relatives	12%	16%	16%	
Visiting community / day centres	16%	14%	16%	
Visiting rural walks / attractions	8%	12%	10%	
Travelling to/from a place of work	2%	8%	5%	
Other	4%	6%	5%	

Table 8 FlexiLink Consultation on Journey Purpose

There were also some comments in the survey which give an indication of the varying level of awareness of the service and that there is a latent ridership who have not yet experienced the service for themselves.

Let people know about the service, needs to be well advertised and promoted. This is the first time I have heard of FlexiLink. It is underused as people don't know about it.

More publicity / advertise more widely as not many people are aware of the service / not heard of the service before. More understanding of the service and the eligibility criteria.

About half of those attending [an unnamed group] had heard of FlexiLink but none had used it.

4.2 Go-Too Survey 2024

The Go-Too service has been well received by the community in which it operates (south and west of Nantwich). It is acknowledged that the service has a low number of passengers per journey and consequently a high cost per passenger journey. Therefore, it cannot be sustained in its current form. However, there are some good lessons learnt which can be applied more widely across the borough.

Some headline findings from a passenger survey carried out in February 2024 (which attracted 281 responses) are as follows:

 80% of respondents rated the service for its convenience, 64% for the locations served and 58% for its affordability



- 73% said it improved access within the area and 56% had benefited from improved social activities as a result of travelling with Go-Too
- 69% of riders would like the operational area to be extended (especially to Crewe rail station and Leighton Hospital)
- 60% said that their most frequent use of Go-Too was for leisure, 11% for commuting, 11% for "daily errands" (e.g. shopping or bank) and 10% to connect to public transport services. However, 23% also reported that they had connected to other forms of transport on their last Go-Too journey.
- 41% would have used a private car if the Go-Too bus was not available
- 30% of respondents used the service monthly, 25% weekly and 9% daily
- Only 19% of respondents hold a Concessionary Travel Pass

The most popular time to use the service was 13:00 - 16:00, selected by 55% of respondents. Other popular travel times were 16:00 - 19:00 (49% of respondents) and 10:00 - 13:00 (44%). Over 29% of respondents said they use the service between 07:00 - 10:00, a time period most likely to be associated with travel to work, education or training.

<u>Conclusion 5</u>: Go-Too is popular with service users; many depend on it, and it is mainly used by fare-paying passengers. However, without a replacement for the DfT funding, it is not possible to continue it in its present form and a different way of delivering flexible transport is required.

4.3 Bus Service Review Consultation 2024

Building on the results from the FlexiLink consultation in 2023, further consultation was undertaken in May and June 2024, as part of the wider bus service review. 2,115 responses were received. Responses to proposals to modify flexible transport services were positive on the whole.

All respondents were asked to select three reasons why they think flexible transport should operate. The top four reasons given were:

- 1. To serve rural areas where no other public transport exists (86%)
- 2. To provide transport for those physically unable to use timetabled bus services (76%)
- 3. To serve urban areas where no other public transport exists (50%)
- 4. To provide a feeder service to other transport services (40%)

Respondents were asked whether they use either of the current flexible transport services that operate within Cheshire East. 15% of respondents (301) used the FlexiLink service and 9% (169) used the Go-Too service. Those who used either FlexiLink or Go-Too were asked if they have any other transport available if they could not use FlexiLink or Go-Too, 40% stated they do whereas 55% do not.



Respondents were asked whether they agreed with a proposal is to combine the FlexiLink and Go-Too services into a single, pre-bookable service (details are provided in the following section). Responses are shown in Figure 9.

Overall, 59% of all respondents agreed with the proposed change to the flexible transport service and 9% disagreed. Those who are current passengers of the FlexiLink service were more likely to agree with the proposal (73% agreed whilst 8% disagreed) compared to those who are current passengers of the Go-Too service (51% agreed whilst 29% disagreed).

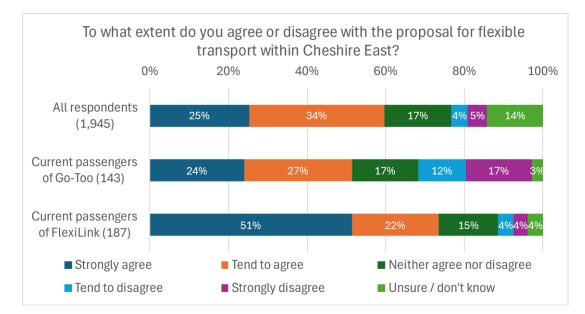


Figure 9 Consultation Response on Proposed Changes to Flexible Transport Services

Respondents who disagreed with the proposals were asked why this was the case. 230 respondents chose to leave a comment, which were coded into overall themes and sub themes. The most common concerns about the proposals were:

- Flexible transport is too expensive / needs to be affordable, mentioned by 51 respondents.
- Hours are too restrictive, 40 mentions.
- Concern over prebooking, booking online and pick- up points, 27 mentions.

Some of the detailed comments on affordability are shown below.

Needs to be affordable to those on low income. The cost would put me off. Suggest fares be in line with current price cap. There shouldn't be a charge for elderly people who can't use normal service. Concessionary travel must be available to pass holders.



Some of the detailed comments on operating hours are shown below.

Should be available before 9am people need to get to work before this time. Needs to operate at least 8am-10pm.

Flexibility should mean available all day.

Extended hours of operation and connections to key destinations would greatly enhance the offering and gain greater patronage.

FlexiLink ends too early in the afternoon; an extended service would be welcome.

Flexible transport needs to run throughout the day and not have gaps, makes it an 'inflexible' service which defeats the point.

When asked about the impact of the proposals on their usage of flexible transport, 14% of respondents stated that they would use it for the first time if the proposed change occurred, 15% would use it more whereas only 3% would use it less, as shown in Figure 10. Encouragingly 47% of those who currently use FlexiLink stated that they would use flexible transport more if the proposal was approved. 33% would use the service for the same amount whilst 5% would use it less. Currently Go-Too users were however less likely to use flexible transport more often: 26% stated that they would use it more, 31% for the same amount, whilst 19% would use it less.

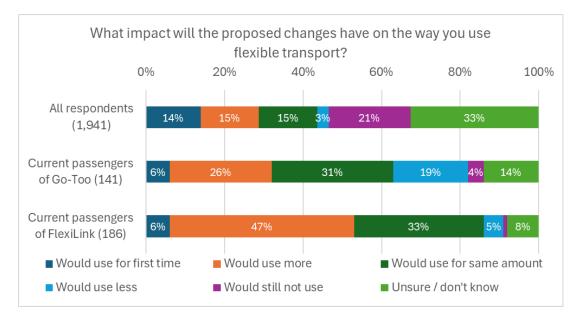


Figure 10 Consultation Response on the Impact of Proposed Changes on Usage

Some respondents made comments on the Go-Too service in their responses to the proposals. Some of these are shown below.

Go-Too operates until 9pm on a Saturday.

The Go-Too bus is a lifeline for a child to get to school and back.

Go-Too should be expanded upon and made more available

The Go-Too service is excellent and has opened up a lifeline for rural communities. The major obstacle is that it is not integrated with other key transport hubs so utilising it as an alternative to the car is not possible. Extended hours of operation and connections to key destinations would greatly enhance the offering and gain greater patronage.



<u>Conclusion 6</u>: Flexible Transport services are seen as important for those with no alternative travel options. The majority of respondents agree with the proposals including most of those who currently use the services. However, those respondents who would be most affected by the proposals were more likely to disagree. These included concessionary pass holders who would have to pay, people in the Go-Too area who would have a reduced service and people who would have to walk to a pick-up point.

4.4 Summary

- Go-Too is popular with service users; many users depend on it, and it is mainly used by fare-paying passengers
- However, Go-Too patronage is low and the occupancy on most trips is 1 or 2 passengers
- The FlexiLink service has very limited eligibility at present and there is general support for it to be available to a wider group of passengers
- It is not cost-effective to continue financial support for flexible transport services in their current form
- The FlexiLink operating hours are seen as too restrictive and there is demand for earlier and later services
- A majority of current FlexiLink passengers disagree with proposals to introduce a fare for concessionary pass holders and move to designated pick-up points. However, both of these proposals are more acceptable to people who are not currently passengers.
- In the Bus Services Review consultation, the majority of respondents agree with the proposals including most of those who currently use the services. However, those respondents who would be most affected by the proposals were more likely to disagree.



5.National Best Practice

5.1 Overall Summary

A review of DRT services in England and Wales has shown that there are a range of services operating in various rural locations. Specific details of service operation vary from location to location. A summary of key attributes is shown in Table 9 below.

All of the services reviewed, with the exception of itravel in Cheshire West, operate on Saturdays and half of them operate on Sundays. Operating hours at weekends can be shorter than on weekdays, though nearly half of the services reviewed operate the same hours every day. In the case of HertsLynx, services operate until 23:30 on Fridays and Saturdays, much later than Mondays to Thursdays, when operations finish at 19:00. The weekday start time for most of the services is between 06:00 and 07:00, with the exception of ArrivaClick in Liverpool, which starts at 08:05.

No services for which information is available online offer a door-to-door service for all travellers. Most collect passengers from and drop them off at pick-up points or virtual bus stops. ArrivaClick in Kent and Liverpool operates a corner-to-corner service. Pick-up points are usually at the corner closest to the pick-up location requested, where traffic is flowing in the direction of travel, but passengers may be asked to walk up to two streets to meet the vehicle.

A little over half of the services which were analysed use some form of distancebased or zonal pricing. Approximately half of the services for which information is available offer discounts for younger travellers. Most of the services for which information is available allow concessionary pass holders to travel free of charge, although some, such as Go2now in Sevenoaks and West Midlands Bus On Demand in Coventry charge pass holders a discounted fares.

Key attributes which were considered in the development of the recommended proposals include:

- Most other DRT services operate in the morning peak period
- Most other DRT services use a network of pick-up points, rather than offering a door-to-door service
- Most other DRT services allow concessionary pass holders to travel free of charge.



Table 9 DRT Services Operating in England and Wales - Key Service Attributes

Service	Area	Days	Hours	Collect / pick-up	Pricing	Free for concessions?
ArrivaClick	Ebbsfleet, Kent	Mon - Sun	06:00 - 01:00 (Mon - Sat) 06:00 - 24:00 (Sunday)	Nearest street corner	Distance-based fares from £1	Information not available
ArrivaClick	Liverpool (Speke area)	Mon - Sat	08:05 - 17:15 (weekdays) 08:45 - 17:15 (Saturday)	Nearest street corner	Distance-based fares from £1	Information not available
Callconnect	Lincolnshire	Mon - Sat	Information not available	Info not available	Information not available	Yes
Connecting Communities	Suffolk	Mon - Sat	07:00 - 19:00	Info not available	Average bus fare costs for journeys of the same or equivalent distance.	No
DigiGo	Essex (region round Braintree & Chelmsford)	Mon - Sun	06:00 - 22:00 (weekdays) 07:00 - 22:00 (weekends)	Virtual bus stops	Distance bands, adults £2.50 - £8 for over 6 miles, £2 cap applies, discount for Under 18s	Yes
Essex DaRT	Essex	Mon - Sun	06:00 - 20:00	Info not available	Distance bands, adults £2.50 - £8 for over 10 miles, £2 cap, discount for 11-18s, family tickets	Information not available
Go2now	Kent (Sevenoaks)	Mon - Sun	06:00 - 19:00	Bus stops	Distance bands, adults off-peak £2.40 - £14.40 for over 10 miles, peak £3.50 - £15.50 for over 10 miles	ENCTS 50% discount off- peak, young persons & scholars not accepted
HertsLynx	Hertfordshire (North & East Herts,	Mon - Sun (less in 3	07:00 - 19:00 (Mon- Thurs), 07:00 - 23:30	Virtual bus stops	£2 adults (capped)	Yes



	Dacorum & 3 Rivers)	Rivers & Dacorum)	(Fri/Sat), 10:00 - 16:00 (Sun & Bank Holidays)			
itravel	Cheshire West (northeast of Borough)	Mon - Fri	07:00 - 19:00 (excluding Bank Holidays)	Info not available	£2 single (£3 without cap) and half fare for under 19s	Yes
MK Connect	Milton Keynes	Mon - Sun	06:00 - 22:00 (Mon-Sat) & 09:00 - 18:00 (Sun & Bank Holidays)	Virtual bus stops	£4.10 in peak (06:00- 09:00, 14.00-17.00), £2.90 other times. £1.20 for All in 1 MK cards	Yes, after 09:30 & all weekend
Tees Flex	Tees Valley - Redcar, Hartlepool, Stockton & Darlington	Mon - Sat	07:00 - 20:00	Virtual bus stops	Distance bands, adults £1 - £4 for over 10 miles, returns & 50% fares for under-19s	Yes, after 09:30 & all weekend
West Midlands Bus On Demand	Coventry	Mon - Sun	06:00 - 23:00 (Mon-Fri), 08:00 - 23:00 (Sat), 08:00 - 15:30 (Sun)	Info not available	Distance bands, adults £2.50 - £7 for over 10 miles (crow flies), discount for Under 18s	From £1 - £2.50 for over 10 miles (crow flies)
fflecsi bus	Various rural locations in Wales. Details for Conwy Valley	Mon - Sat	06:30 - 19:00	Pick-up points	Zonal pricing, adult all- day singles £1 or £2. Multi-trip carnets, weekly & monthly tickets sold in some locations	Yes

6.Case for Change

6.1 Lessons Learned

A number of "lessons learned" can be drawn from the operation of the Go-Too pilot which have informed the development of the new proposal and will influence further detailed planning over the next few months. These include:

6.1.1 Maximising Passengers per Journey

Maximising the number of passengers per journey is an essential element in the efficiency of the operation but is difficult to achieve in practice. The routing and scheduling software used by Go-Too helps to achieve this, whereas FlexiLink is currently a manual operation. The Go-Too team has tried a number of algorithms to determine the level of deviation from the initial route which is permitted (either in distance or time) to pick up more passengers and thereby increase passenger loadings. This experience will be very useful in operating the new service.

Passengers specify a departure or arrival time when booking a trip. Some trips are time-critical (e.g. for an appointment or to interchange with another transport service), but most are not. If passengers can be encouraged to vary their departure time by a few minutes, it facilitates trip aggregation (and thereby increases passenger loadings) but is a difficult balance to strike.

6.1.2 Communication

Communication of exactly what DRT is (and is not) proved difficult at the start of the Go-Too operation. This will be required again to a much larger cohort of people if a single integrated service is rolled out borough wide.

6.1.3 Eligibility for Door-to-Door Service

Users with limited mobility are provided with a door-to-door service and extra time is allowed for in the journey schedule for wheelchair passengers to board and alight. Determining which passengers are eligible for this is not straightforward and there have been several instances where able-bodied passengers have been wrongly categorised as having limited mobility. This significantly increases the time taken for each journey, adds to costs, and reduces the number of other passengers that can book the service. Finding a way to accurately and fairly categorise who is eligible for a door-to-door service will be essential in maintaining the efficiency of the operation.

6.2 SWOT Analysis

Table 10 below shows an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the flexible transport services in Cheshire East, along with the opportunities and threats.

Table 10 SWOT Analysis of Flexible Transport Services in Cheshire East

Strengths	Weaknesses
FlexiLink provides travel independence to elderly and disabled people, giving	Low levels of demand at times resulting in under-utilised vehicles.
access to social and recreational	FlexiLink operating hours constrained by sharing fleet with SEND transport, so

opportunities, reducing the impacts of loneliness and social isolation. Go-Too provides travellers with public transport in a sparsely populated rural area. Go-Too automated routing and scheduling software provides a passenger interface for booking and vehicle tracking and maximises efficiency of operations.	cannot operate in morning peak or mid- afternoon. Go-Too operating area fairly small (to allow pilot project to operate with 2 vehicles), so services do not extend to the hospital or rail station in Crewe. FlexiLink services do not have access to routing and scheduling software.
Opportunities	Threats
Combining operations into a single service available to all age groups (where no alternative and/or suitable public transport is available) would be simpler and useable for all travellers. Using automated online booking system, routing and scheduling software for all services. Replace poorly performing fixed route services with flexible transport.	Demand may not be sufficient to make service cost-effective and financially sustainable.
Extend the operating times beyond the current FlexiLink times to provide a better service.	
Increase efficiency by collecting and dropping off able-bodied passengers at identified pick-up points rather than operating a door-to-door service.	

7. Recommended Proposal

7.1 Recommended Provision

Careful consideration has been given to the blend between fixed route and flexible transport services. There are many lessons learnt from the Go-Too pilot project which can be applied across the borough and there are clear opportunities to modernise the FlexiLink service and respond to the findings of the recent consultation results.

The consultation proposal was to combine the FlexiLink and Go-Too services into a single, bookable service from the end of March 2025, to extend the benefits of flexible transport to all those travelling in the borough who do not have a viable public transport service available to them.

The recommended proposal is to operate a new flexible transport service for a trial period of two years. Whilst our experience of operating both FlexiLink and Go-Too will be very useful, there a number of "unknowns" about the level of demand across the borough, the hours of operation (i.e. morning peak), the proposed operating areas (i.e. vehicle distribution across the borough), fare structure and procurement arrangements. Operating the service as a fixed-term trial will enable the service to be further developed, refined and improved. See Table 11 for details.

Proposal	Description	Justification	Next Step
1	Available to all age groups ²	Consultation data	Implementation
2	09:30 - 14:30 weekdays	Scope to grow patronage	Implementation
3	16:30 - 21:00 weekdays	Providing greater travel	Implementation
4	09:00 - 18:00 Saturdays	choice	Implementation
5	Booked using online app, or by telephone	Go-Too experience Enables automatic routing and scheduling	Implementation
6	Designated pick-up points ³	Required for efficient operation. Go-Too experience	Implementation
7	£4 full fare with reduction for concessionary pass holders	Provides value for money compared to taxi fare	Implementation

 Table 11 Recommended Provision for New Flexible Transport Service

² where no alternative and/or suitable public transport is available

³ or offer a door-to-door service to those with limited mobility

Proposal	Description	Justification	Next Step
8	Free travel for concessionary pass holders after 09:30 on weekdays	Required by conditions of BSIP+ funding Consultation feedback has shown opposition to charging pass holders	Under investigation
9	Replacement for 70 Service (Nantwich – Bunbury & Bulkeley) and areas affected by 72 and 73 route consolidation (Burleydam & Lightwood Green)	Fixed route services have very low utilisation and will be withdrawn by the operator from September. Demand responsive services will provide greater flexibility to travellers.	Implementation

One element of the proposals is still to be finalised, as shown in Table 12.

Table 12 Proposal Under Investigation

Proposal	Description	Justification	Next Step
10	Morning peak journeys before 09:30 weekdays (would require delivery of SEND transport	Serve passengers travelling to work, education and training.	Under investigation
	services separately from DRT)	In line with <u>National Best</u> <u>Practice</u>	

Fixed bus routes would be coded into the booking system, to ensure that flexible transport did not compete for passengers with timetabled bus services. The booking system would use routing and scheduling software which would automatically reject a trip request where there is already a viable public transport option.

As with the existing Go-Too service, passengers would board and alight at a network of pick-up points, which would typically be existing or disused bus stops, as well as a number of "virtual bus stops" which would be created in areas where few bus stops exist. These would be clearly visible in the booking app. Passengers with limited mobility would receive a door-to-door service, as with Go-Too at present.

A summary of the key attributes of the proposed new service, in comparison to the existing existing FlexiLink and Go-Too services, is shown in

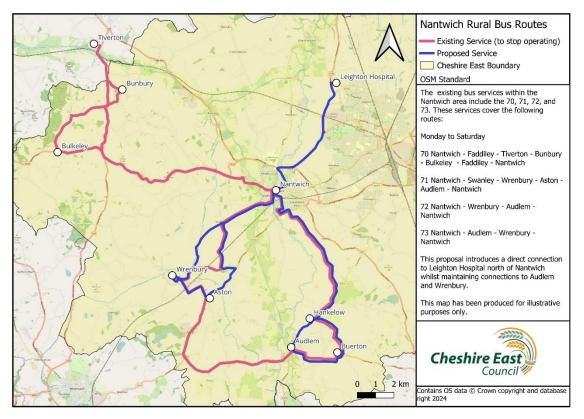
Table 13.

	FlexiLink	Go-Too	New service
Operating Area	All of Cheshire East	Rural area south and west of Nantwich	All of Cheshire East
Eligibility	Over 80, or disabled, or have no available public transport	All travellers in the operating area	All travellers who have no viable public transport service available
Operating Times	Weekdays 09.30 – 14.30	Monday to Saturday 07.00 – 21.00	Weekdays 09.30 – 14.30 & 16:30 – 21:00; Saturday 09.00 – 18.00
Fare Cost	£3 per journey, free for concessionary pass holders	£3 per journey, £2 for concessionary pass holders	£4 per journey, less for concessionary pass holders
Booking Process	Telephone or email	Online, phone app or telephone	Online, phone app or telephone
Passenger Access	Door-to door service	Pick-up points	Pick-up points

 Table 13 Key Attributes of the Flexible Transport Services

7.2 Implications for Passengers on 70, 72 and 73 Bus Services

The proposed flexible transport service would extend public transport services to the significant numbers of people who need to travel in the more rural parts of the borough where the operation of fixed-route bus services is not economically viable. In particular, it would provide a replacement service for current users of the 70, 72 and 73 bus services, who will be affected by the first of the Bus Service Review proposals. This recommends the withdrawal of the 70 service and changes to the 72 and 73 routes to remove the section which serves Burleydam and Lightwood Green (see map below).



It is recognised that the Bunbury area will be particularly affected by the loss of the 70 service and changes relative to the existing Go-Too service (reduced hours of operation and fare increase). It may be feasible to have a dedicated vehicle operating a semi-fixed route into Nantwich on a Thursday (market day) and on Saturday (which has the highest demand on both the 70 and Go-Too services). The potential requirement for registration of such a service and implications for concessionary pass holders are still being considered. Many Bunbury residents need access to Tarporley, which is outside of the borough. The simplest solution may be to interchange with the scheduled 84 service at the Bunbury Road stops in Alpraham and the best ways to facilitate this are also still being considered.

8. Future Delivery Models - Options

8.1 Introduction

Sharing the vehicle fleet with SEND school transport services (as with the current FlexiLink service) would make efficient use of current resources and share the operating costs. The proposed operating times would be significantly extended beyond the current FlexiLink times in weekday afternoons and evenings, and on Saturdays. However, it would not operate before 09:30 on weekdays, at a time when passengers who would use the service to get to work, education or training are most likely to travel. There are a number of other potential procurement options which would enable a wider range of operating models – these are set out below.

8.2 Current Fleet - Shared with SEND Home to School Transport

Sharing the vehicle fleet with SEND school transport services (as with the current FlexiLink service) would make efficient use of current resources and share the operating costs between the People and Place Directorates. It would also be relatively straightforward, as it would be a continuation of existing arrangements. However, the integration of the two services places considerable constraints on the operating hours for flexible transport. Notably, services could not start until 09:30 on weekdays and would not be available between 14:30 and 16:30 on weekdays. As can be seen from the <u>National Best Practice</u> section, the majority of flexible transport services in other parts of the country start much earlier in the day and operate throughout the day.

8.3 Current Fleet - Dedicated Flexible Transport

The vehicle fleet could be delivered using existing arrangements which would be used solely for flexible transport. Separate arrangements would then need to be made for the 86 SEND pupils who are carried in the current minibus fleet.

This would provide a much greater degree of flexibility in terms of operating hours but would require the full costs to be borne by the Place Directorate, instead of the current shared arrangement.

8.4 Current Fleet - Dedicated SEND Home to School Transport

The vehicle fleet could be delivered using existing arrangements which would be used solely for the 86 SEND pupils who are carried in the current minibus fleet. This would require all the associated costs to be borne by the People Directorate (instead of the current shared arrangement) and would require a separate solution to be found for flexible transport services.

8.5 Open Market Tender for Flexible Transport Services

Inviting tenders for the supply of vehicles and operation of the service by a commercial operator would take away the risks and responsibilities of day-to day operation from the Council and could deliver several benefits, including:

• Market tests the provision of flexible transport to ensure value for money

- Delivery by an established operator may bring greater flexibility in terms of operating times and areas
- A new operator may bring innovative solutions and technologies to improve efficiency and the passenger experience
- The contract could include a range of performance metrics and potentially penalties for non-compliance to help to ensure a high standard of delivery.

8.6 Innovative Delivery Methods

It may be possible to deliver flexible transport using alternative methods which could include taxibus. This is a type of public transport that operates similarly to a regular bus service but is run by a licensed Hackney Carriage or private hire operator. Taxibus services must be registered with the Traffic Commissioner. Services generally run on set routes and follow a published timetable, which could be one journey a week, or multiple journeys each day. Taxibuses have more flexibility to stop anywhere along the route (or could vary slightly off the main route) to pick up or drop off passengers. Passengers are expected to share the vehicle with other passengers making the trip. Passengers generally have to book the day prior to travel with the nominated operator.

Taxibus services have a number of strengths:

- They offer the potential to combine trips to reduce subsidy costs and fares
- They can make good use of existing taxi and private hire fleets which are lower cost compared to a minibus
- They can complement and/or supplement fixed route bus services e.g. providing early morning and evening and Sunday services when the subsidy costs of these could be prohibitive
- They can complement other modes e.g. interchange at rail/bus stations for longer distance travel
- There is generally scope to provide accessible vehicles.

However, they also have a number of potential weaknesses:

- There may be limitations on the supply of taxi and private hire services in some locations, particularly in more rural areas
- There may be limitations in the availability of taxis and private hire services at busy times, as they may undertake school contract services
- The maximum vehicle size for a taxi is 8 seats
- There can be difficulties in agreeing a suitable scheme with large number of small operators
- There will be set-up costs for a new operation, including any centralised booking facility, marketing, information etc, though the existing booking line operated by ANSA could be repurposed

- The quality and accessibility of vehicles is likely to be variable, although the Council has some influence and control as taxi licensing authority
- Variable quality of drivers and driver training.

9. Conclusion

This report sets out the results of a detailed review of flexible transport provision in Cheshire East and drawing on best practice in other parts of the country.

There has been a thorough review of operational data and two rounds of public consultation to inform and influence the recommended proposal set out in Section 7 <u>Recommended Proposal</u>.

In the coming weeks the service specification will be finalised and delivery models assessed to identify the most cost effective option.

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A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Review of Supported Local Bus Services Consultation

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FINAL

Executive summary and conclusions

Introduction

During May/July 2024 Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation to seek views on its review of supported local bus services.

In total, 2,115 responses were received including 2,074 paper / online survey responses and 41 emails.

Respondents' use of bus services

75% of respondents indicated that they currently use timetabled bus service in Cheshire East whereas 25% do not.

Those who currently use bus services were also asked how often they use them, on which days/times they usually travel and the main purpose of their bus journey. In summary:

- 67% used bus services once a week or more often.
- The most popular time for travel was on Monday Friday: off peak (between 9:30am 3:30pm), 74% selected this option.
- 'Travelling to /from shops' was the most selected purpose for bus journeys, 37% selected this option.

Bus services in Cheshire East

All respondents, regardless of whether they currently use timetabled bus services in Cheshire East or not, were asked a set of questions regarding certain aspects of the bus service and how important they felt they were.

The top three reasons chosen when asked why bus services should operate were as follows:

- 1. 'To offer travel opportunities for people with no reasonable alternative', 80% selected this option, followed by
- 2. 'To improve access to health and wellbeing facilities', (41%)
- 3. 'To offer a more sustainable mode of transport that is better for the environment', (39%)

Reliability and punctuality were the two most important characteristics of a bus service (98% and 95% stated that these characteristics were extremely or very important respectively).

In terms of days / times a bus service should run, respondents felt that services that run on Weekdays (Monday to Friday), and throughout the day and evening (from 5:30am -7:30pm) were the most important (98% and 82% stated these were extremely or very important respectively).

Bus linking towns was seen as the most important type of bus services (90%) closely followed by connections to rail, coach and other bus services (88%) and rural and village bus services (87%).

Views on the proposals

Proposal 1 – Nantwich Rural Services

- 45% of respondents agreed with proposal 1 compared to 14% who disagreed (when we exclude those who answered 'unsure / don't know').
 - Encouragingly, the majority of respondents who are current passengers of the 71, 72 and 73 agreed with the proposal (65% and 63% respectively). Current passengers of the 70 were however less likely to agree (11% agreed and 57% disagreed).
- In terms of impact, 11% would use the service for the first time and 18% would use it more often whereas 5% would use it less (when we exclude those who answered 'unsure / don't know'). 21% would use the service for the same amount whilst 24% would still not use.
 - Encouragingly 47% of those who currently use the 71 & 72 bus services and 46% of those who currently use the 73-bus service stated that they would use them more if the proposal was approved. 33% would use the services for the same amount.
 - Those who currently use the 70-bus service were however more likely to state that they would use the services less (33% would use less).

Those who disagreed with the proposal were concerned about those communities in which the services would be removed / no longer cover. They feared the change would lead to rural isolation and impact negatively on those who need the service the most. Flexible transport was not seen as a suitable alternative to some, others provided suggestions for alternate routes / frequencies.

Proposal 2 – 391/392 Macclesfield-Poynton-Stockport service

- 56% agreed with proposal 2 and 7% disagreed (when we exclude those who answered 'unsure / don't know').
 - Encouragingly 75% of those who currently use the 391/392 bus service agreed with the proposal whilst 14% disagreed.
- In terms of impact, 10% would use the service for the first time and 22% would use it more whereas 2% would use it less (when we exclude those who answered 'unsure / don't know'). 21% would use it for the same amount whilst 44% would still not use.
 - Encouragingly 46% of those who currently use the 391/392 service stated that they would use the service more if the proposal was approved, whereas 10% would use less. 33% would use it for the same amount.

A selection of respondents who disagreed with the proposal did so as they felt that the one-hour frequency should be applicable along the whole route whilst others gave alternative route suggestions. There was also a small selection of respondents who felt the increase in service was not required at all as it was an already well-connected route which could be covered by other services for example the 192.

Proposal 3 – Flexible Transport

The top three reasons chosen when asked why flexible transport should operate were as follows:

- 1. 'To serve rural areas where no other public transport exists' (86%), followed by
- 2. 'To provide transport for those physically unable to use timetabled bus services' (76%), and

3. 'To serve urban areas where no other public transport exists' (50%).

In terms of the proposal:

- 69% agreed with the proposal and 11% disagreed (when we exclude those who answered 'unsure / don't know').
 - Those who are current passengers of the FlexiLink service were more likely to agree with the proposal (73% agreed whilst 8% disagreed) compared to those who are current passengers of the Go-Too service (51% agreed whilst 29% disagreed).
- In terms of impact, 21% would use the service for the first time and 22% would use it more whereas 4% would use it less. 22% would use the service for the same amount whilst 31% would still not use it.
 - Encouragingly 47% of those who currently use the FlexiLink service stated that they would use Flexible Transport more if the proposal was approved. 33% would use the service for the same amount whilst 5% would use it less.
 - Those who currently use the Go-Too service were however less likely to use the flexible service more often: 26% stated that they would use it more whilst 19% would use it less.

Those who disagreed with the proposal highlighted several concerns, most notably the cost of the service and the hours of service being too restrictive. There was also some apprehension around needing to pre-book the service, the move from a door-to-door service to pick-up points, areas the service would cover and the eligibility criteria. Some respondents were saddened with the loss of the Go-Too service whilst others simply preferred timetabled bus services.

Bus service Improvement Plan and further comments

All respondents were asked what type of enhancement to local bus services they would prefer to see in the future. The option chosen by the most respondents was 'increased frequency of existing bus services', 37% chose this option.

There were many further comments provided on how bus services could be improved generally within Cheshire East, increased provision including frequency, days and reliability was mentioned the most by respondents. There was also a number of detailed comments provided for certain bus routes and areas.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Bus services (both timetabled or flexible) are seen as important for those with no alternative travel options in particular. Reliability and frequency are characteristics respondents value most alongside weekday services. Encouragingly the majority of respondents agree with the proposals including most of those who currently use the services. However, those respondents who would be most affected by the proposals (where the service would no longer serve the area) were more likely to disagree.

The Research and Consultation Team recommend that the details within this report are thoroughly reviewed and considered before finalising the recommended bus review proposals.

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

During May/July 2024 Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation to seek views on its review of supported local bus services. The last bus service review was undertaken in 2017 and much has changed in that time. The objectives for the review in summary were as follows:

- Maximise opportunities in areas of greatest need;
- Ensure services complement, not compete with commercial services;
- Develop stronger partnership working with commercial operators; and
- Identify opportunities to modernise flexible on-demand transport options.

Consultation methodology and number of responses

The consultation was mainly hosted online however paper versions were directly sent to current passengers of the Flexi Link service whom we had a postal address for, were made available at libraries and contact centres throughout Cheshire East and were also available on request. It was promoted to:

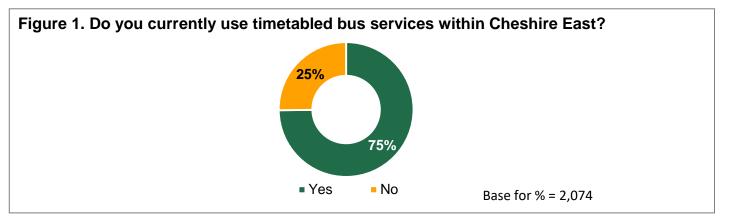
- Residents of Cheshire East and the general public
- The Cheshire East Digital Influence Panel
- Town and Parish Councils
- Local stakeholders including relevant bus user groups, community groups and other organisations.

In total, 2,115 responses were received including 2,074 paper / online survey responses and 41 emails. There was a good range of response from across the borough, see Appendix 3, Map 1.

A summary of the emails received can be seen in Appendix 2, Table 5. A breakdown of survey demographics can be viewed in Appendix 4.

Section 1: Respondents' use of bus services

Respondents were asked a set of questions regarding their use of timetabled bus services within Cheshire East including whether they currently use them or not. 75% of respondents indicated that they currently use timetabled bus service in Cheshire East whereas 25% do not, see Figure 1.



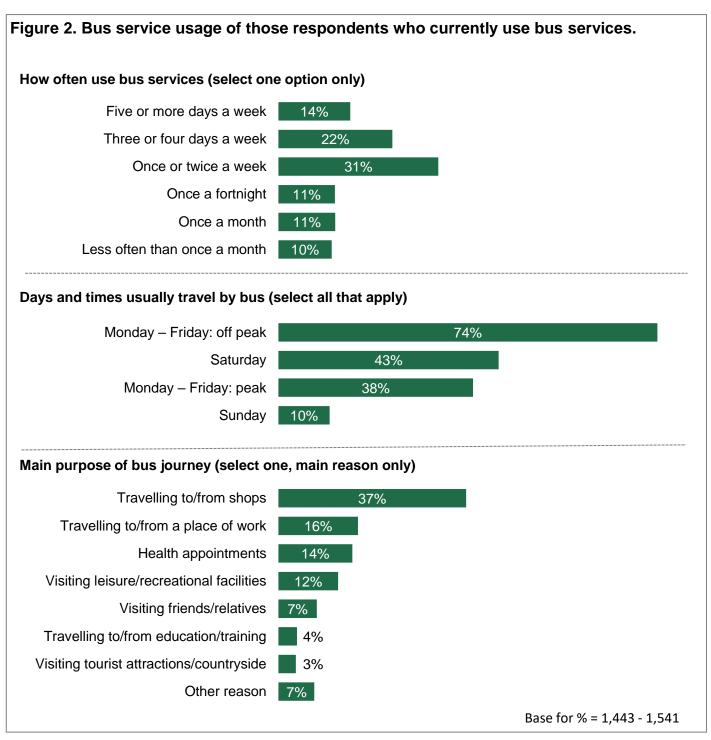
Those who indicated that they currently use timetabled bus services (1,552 respondents) were asked which services they use. Table 1 shows the full breakdown of results.

Table 1. Which timetabled bus service	s do you	ı use?	(Select all that apply)		
Bus Route	Count	%	Bus Route	Count	%
3 Crewe - Alsager - Hanley	150	10%	84 Crewe - Nantwich - Chester	404	26%
3 Macclesfield - Weston Estate	60	4%	84X Crewe - Nantwich	324	21%
8 Wistaston Green - Sydney	96	6%	85 Nantwich - Crewe - Newcastle	157	10%
10 Macclesfield - Bollington	148	10%	88 Macclesfield - Knutsford - Wilmslow - Altrincham	205	13%
12 Shavington - Leighton Hospital	283	18%	89 Northwich - Knutsford - Wilmslow - Altrincham	42	3%
14, 14A Macclesfield - Moss Rose - Langley	79	5%	90 Congleton - Bromley	18	1%
19, 19A Macclesfield - Upton Priory - Prestbury/Whirley Barn	99	6%	91 Congleton - Mossley	35	2%
31 Crewe - Winsford - Northwich	131	8%	92 Congleton - Buglawton	26	2%
37 Crewe - Sandbach - Northwich	245	16%	130 Macclesfield - Handforth - Wythenshawe	199	13%
38 Crewe - Congleton - Macclesfield	372	24%	199 Buxton - Disley - Stockport	72	5%
39 Crewe - Wybunbury - Nantwich	118	8%	316 Sandbach -Cookesmere Lane	8	1%
42 Crewe - Holmes Chapel - Congleton	139	9%	317 Alsager - Sandbach - Leighton Hospital	74	5%
58 Macclesfield - Buxton	135	9%	318 Alsager - Congleton	22	1%
60, 60A Macclesfield -Kettleshulme - New Mills -Hayfield	64	4%	319 Sandbach - Goostrey	23	1%
70 Nantwich-Tiverton	35	2%	391/392 Macclesfield -Stockport	223	14%
71, 72 Nantwich-Wrenbury-Audlem- Nantwich	104	7%	Other bus service (inc. 6, 42c, 94, 109, 312, 358, 393, T2 free bus)	52	3%
73 Nantwich - Audlem-Wrenbury- Nantwich	101	7%	Total Base for %	1,54	47

Those who currently use bus services were also asked how often they use them, on which days/times they usually travel and the main purpose of their bus journey. In summary:

- 67% used bus services once a week or more often.
- The most popular time for travel was on Monday Friday: off peak (between 9:30am 3:30pm), 74% selected this option.
- 'Travelling to /from shops' was the most selected purpose for bus journeys, 37% selected this option.

Figure 2 shows the full breakdown of response.



105 respondents (7%) gave an 'other' reason when asked what the main purpose of their bus journey was, the comments provided have been summarised into the following themes:

- Various reasons, most of above, main method of transport, 28 comments.
- Connecting with trains, airport, other public transport, 23 comments.
- Social purposes, to get out, to go on walks, hobbies, 13 comments.
- Evenings out, to visit pub, theatre, restaurants, and bars, 9 comments.
- For school runs, nursery pickup, 7 comments.
- To visit shops, bank, libraries, museum, church, 6 comments.
- Carer, care home visits, hospital visits, 5 comments.
- Work, volunteer purposes, 3 comments.

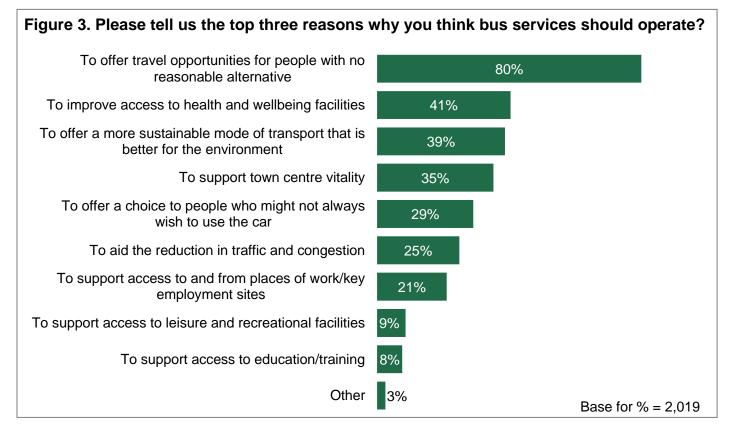
Section 2: Bus services in Cheshire East

All respondents, regardless of whether they currently use timetabled bus services in Cheshire East or not, were asked a set of questions regarding certain aspects of the bus service and how important they felt they were.

Respondents were asked to choose the top three reasons as to why they think bus services should operate. The top three reasons chosen were:

- 1. 'To offer travel opportunities for people with no reasonable alternative', 80% selected this option.
- 2. 'To improve access to health and wellbeing facilities', 41% selected this option.
- 3. 'To offer a more sustainable mode of transport that is better for the environment', 39% selected this option.

Figure 3. shows the full breakdown of response.

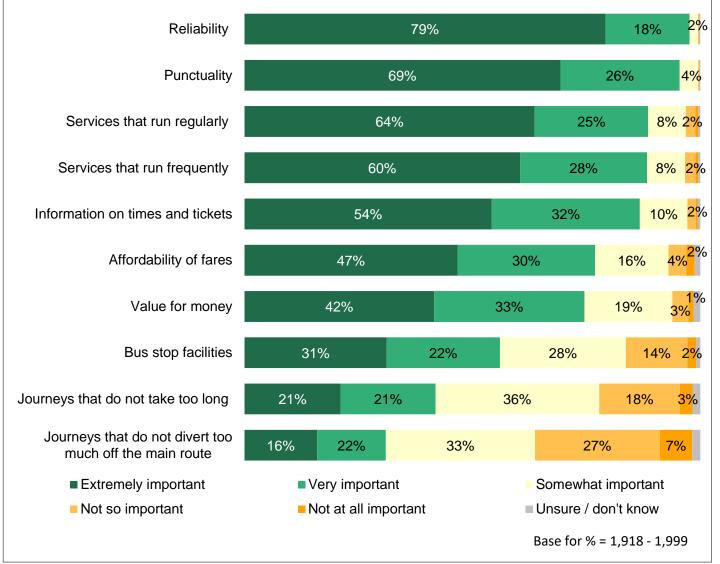


51 respondents (3%) gave another comment, the comments provided have been summarised into the following themes:

- All of the above, 10 comments.
- To reduce access inequality especially for people who cannot drive, the elderly and disabled, 10 comments.
- For onward travel connections e.g., to major rail stations, airport, 9 comments.
- To support mental wellbeing, quality of life, to visit friends, relatives & country walks, 7 comments.
- To provide a more sustainable, budget friendly option, 6 comments.
- To provide access to services for those in rural areas, 4 comments.
- They should run, to access shops, school, park and ride services, 4 comments.

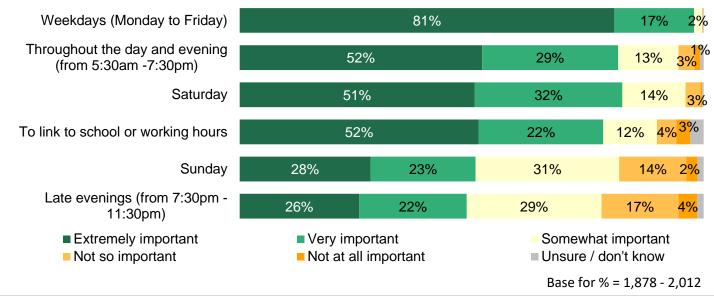
Reliability and punctuality were the two most important characteristics of a bus service (98% and 95% stated that these characteristics were extremely or very important respectively) whilst journeys that take longer / divert off the main route alongside bus stop facilities were not seen as important to respondents (42% and 31% selected extremely or very important respectively), see Figure 4.

Figure 4. Thinking about the bus services in Cheshire East, how important do you think each of the following characteristics are?



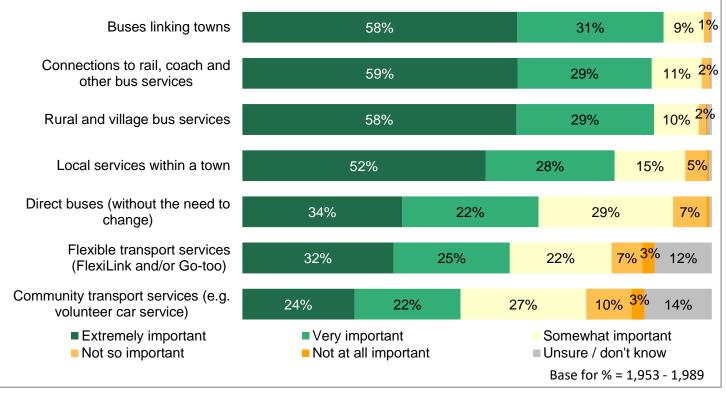
In terms of days / times a bus service should run, respondents felt that services that run on Weekdays (Monday to Friday), and throughout the day and evening (from 5:30am -7:30pm) were the most important (98% and 82% stated these were extremely or very important respectively). Services that run on a Sunday or during late evenings were not as important to respondents but still days / times the majority of respondents would consider as useful (if we include those who also stated 'somewhat important'). See Figure 5 for the full breakdown of results.

Figure 5. How important do you think it is for bus services to run on the following days and times?



Bus linking towns was seen as the most important type of bus services (90%) closely followed by connections to rail, coach and other bus services (88%) and rural and village bus services (87%), see Figure 6.

Figure 6. How important do you think the following types of bus service are in Cheshire East?



Section 3: Views on the proposals

Respondents were provided details of three bus service proposals and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with them.

Proposal 1 – Nantwich Rural Services

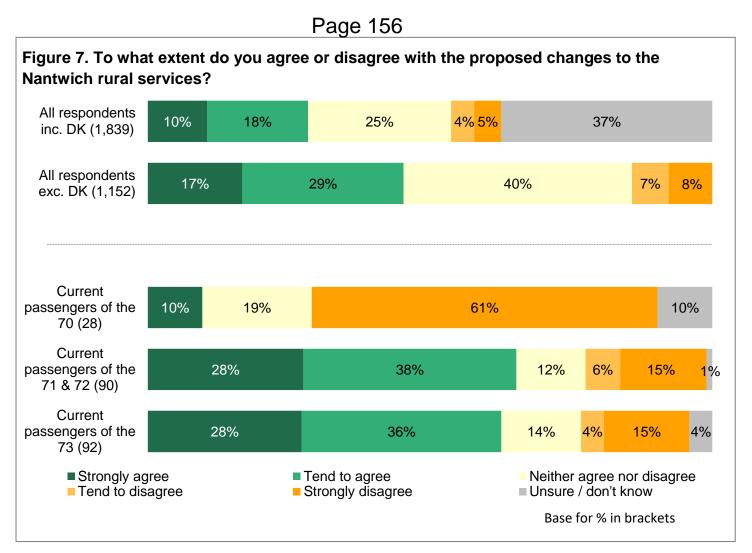
This proposal affects services 70, 72 and 73 which operate in the rural areas to the south and west of Nantwich. In summary:

- Bus service 70, Nantwich-Tiverton would be withdrawn.
- The 72 and 73 bus services would be retained and improved on the busiest sections between Nantwich and Wrenbury and Nantwich and Audlem with many journeys extended via Middlewich Road to Leighton Hospital. Lightwood Green and Burleydam would no longer be served.
- For communities where the fixed route service would be withdrawn (i.e., Bulkeley, Bunbury, Lightwood Green and Burleydam), the proposal is to enhance the flexible transport offer (proposal 3) and thereby provide transport in a different way.

Overall, 28% of respondents agreed with the proposed change to the Nantwich rural services and 9% disagreed. A large proportion of respondents selected 'unsure / don't know' (37%, 687).

If we remove those who selected 'unsure/don't know' the overall calculation then it gives a clearer indication of those who agreed with the proposal compared to those who disagreed: 45% agreed with the proposal and 14% disagreed when those answering 'unsure/don't know' are removed.

Encouragingly, the majority of respondents who are current passengers of the 71 & 72 bus services and the 73-bus service agreed with the proposal (65% and 63% respectively). Current passengers of the 70-bus service were however less likely to agree (10% agreed and 61% disagreed). Please note that the overall base for those who use the 70 service is low (based on 28 respondents) however the results still provide a good indication of the views of respondents who use that service. Figure 7 shows the full breakdown of results.



Respondents were asked why they disagreed with the proposal. In total 207 respondents chose to leave a comment. The comments provided were coded into the following overall themes and sub themes:

Services should not be reduced / withdrawn or replaced with flexible transport:

- Disagree with services being reduced withdrawn generally, 42 mentions.
- Disagree with withdrawal of bus route 70, 32 mentions.
- Flexible transport is not a suitable alternative, 20 mentions.
- Disagree with change to bus routes 72 and 73, 15 mentions.

Suggestions for alternatives routes / frequency of the 70, 72 or 73:

- Suggestions for bus route 72 and 73, 14 mentions.
- Suggestion on frequency for bus service 70, 6 mentions.
- Suggestion on frequency for bus service 72 and 73, 6 mentions.

Service not needed:

• Extra service not needed, 3 mentions.

Other comments:

- Don't know / Don't use these services, 37 mentions.
- Link to hospital much needed / flexible service seems to work well / agree if service underused, 30 mentions.
- Other bus route suggestions, 13 mentions.
- Need further information / clarity, 9 mentions.

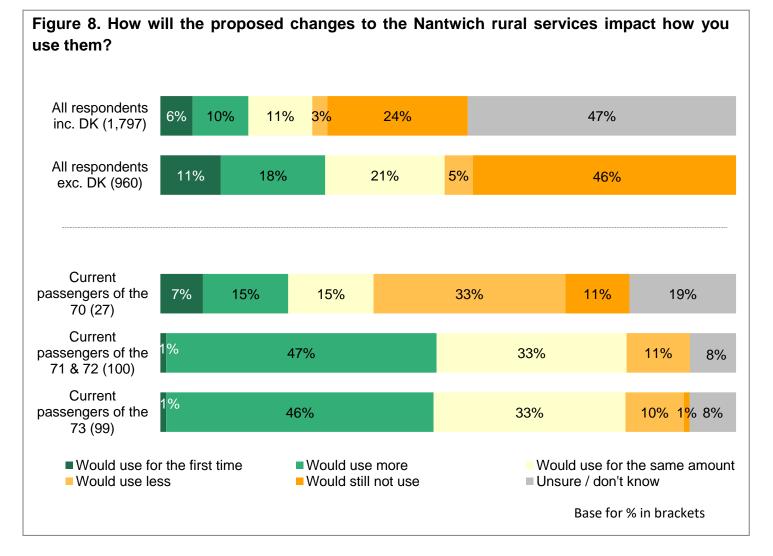
Some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The full summary of the comments received by theme and sub theme is presented in Table 1 on the next page.

In terms of impact, 6% of all respondents stated that they would use the Nantwich Rural services for the first time if the proposed change occurred and 10% would use the service more often whereas 5% would use the service less. 11% would use the service for the same amount whilst 24% would still not use. A large proportion of respondents selected 'unsure/don't know' (47%, 837).

If we remove those who answered 'unsure/don't know' from the overall calculation it provides a clearer indication of those who said they would use the service for the first time/more often compared to those who would use it less/still not use: 11% would use the service for the first time and 18% would use it more often whereas 5% would use it less. A visual representation of these results by postcode can be seen in Appendix 3, Map 2. 21% would use the service for the same amount whilst 24% would still not use.

Encouragingly 47% of those who currently use the 71 & 72 bus services and 46% of those who currently use the 73-bus service stated that they would use them more if the proposal was approved. 33% would use the services for the same amount.

Those who currently use the 70-bus service were however more likely to state that they would use the services less (33% would use less). Figure 8 shows the full breakdown of results.



Appendix 3

Table 1: Reasons as to why respondents disagree with the Nantwich Rural Service proposals			
Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions	
Services should not be reduced	/ withdrawn or replaced with flexible transport	109	
Disagree with services being reduced withdrawn generally	Service should be increased not decreased. Services should be maintained. Reduction in any service unacceptable. May affect those with no other mode of transport. Cancelling bus routes in a rural area adversely affects the most vulnerable and the elderly who need the service the most. Communities should not be isolated, it's a vital link for people.	42	
Disagree with withdrawal of bus route 70	Bus service for Bunbury is vital. Withdrawing route 70 will isolate people in the Bunbury area, lead to rural isolation, impact on the elderly and those who do not drive. Rely on this service for shopping, meeting friends and appointments. The 70 is necessary for members of the ALIVE group who are elderly and have no alternative transport. It is a lifeline for teenage children to link to Chester and meet up with friends. The reason it is not used is because it runs infrequently, at inappropriate times, and was not included in the £2 fare cap. Not used from Bulkeley due to lack of maintenance at the bus stop.	32	
Flexible transport is not a suitable alternative	Don't think flexible transport offers a suitable replacement, it is not what passengers want. The flexible transport service always seems to be booked up, often never arrives and has limited hours of operation. Not a good option for those digitally excluded. If you are unable to get a signal, you do not know what time the bus will be waiting for you, as the route changes you do not know how long journeys will take which can be a problem if have a set appointment or travel links to make. If plans change you still get charged. Flexible transport is not cost effective, to cover route 70 would need at least 2 extra vehicles.	20	
Disagree with change to bus routes 72 and 73	No buses through Lightwood Green / Burleydam would mean being completely cut off, they are small but important communities. The break in the link between Audlem and Wrenbury is unacceptable. People who don't drive will be isolated, affecting mental health, they are a lifeline which allow independence, attend GPs, meet friends, do shopping and attend the community centre. The extension of this route to Leighton will make it unreliable due to traffic congestion on Middlewich Road.	15	
Suggestions for alternatives rou	ites / frequency of the 70, 72 or 73	26	
Suggestions for bus route 72 and 73	Nantwich to Leighton hospital important but should be routed via Wistaston Green to maximise patronage / should operate via Wistaston- there are new homes in Wistaston with no bus service. Leighton section should go via Queens Park, Marshfield and Minshull New Road as well. One of the buses should be routed sown Crewe Road instead of Middlewich Road. 72 needs to run through Whitchurch. Why can't the bus from Wrenbury include Norbury and Marbury. Instead of axing the estates of both just have one of the routes go around the estates so it still retains connection for people. Any changes should not disrupt the early /late bus Audlem to Nantwich and vice versa.	14	
Suggestion on frequency for bus service 70	Instead of withdrawing the 70 service it would be better if it was 2 days a week as previous (e.g., Thursday and Saturday) and shorten the route to save money. The route of the 70 should be increased to provide a decent transport service – only does 2 journeys and sits idle.	6	

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Suggestion on frequency for bus service 72 and 73	Feel the proposed frequency of service won't be enough to get people put of cars and onto public transport. A lot will depend on frequency and interval time - need to be able to have time to shop, visit hospital – times will vary. Need a regular service from 8am until at least 6pm to be of any use. Needs to be more regular to Bishops Wood Estate.	6
Service not needed		3
Extra service not needed	Stop the service. Why are buses to Nantwich being supported when Crewe is disadvantaged. Nantwich doesn't need a service they have direct 85 to Crewe, adding buses to an already existing network.	3
Other comments		89
Don't know / Don't use these services	Would not use, don't know the area, don't use the service. Not affected, not my bus.	37
Link to hospital much needed / flexible service seems to work well / agree if service underused	Access to the hospital from Nantwich without going to Crewe is essential. Would make getting to hospital appointments much easier. Important to have bus direct to hospital as parking is a nightmare and taxis are expensive. Would reduce health inequalities by making it easier to access hospital. The flexible service seems to work well at a reasonable cost. If unused no point keeping / uneconomic route.	30
Other bus route suggestions	There should be more buses to different places, what about Wybunbury and Hough. Can Cheshire East speak to Stagecoach to extend the Crewe-Nantwich-Chester Service to serve Bulkeley, Bunbury and Tiverton. This would require 1 extra bus, avoid Taporley/Tarvin to make up time and would reduce overcrowding on the 84 route. Have to travel to Crewe via bus 12 to get but 84 from Crewe to Chester. Potential option to divert current 85 route to take to hospital, recall former 78 service for a more regular and direct route to hospital from Nantwich Town centre. Can't find any option to use the bus to commute to workplace in Audlem from Crewe. Audlem bus services are extremely infrequent. Number 37 and 38 no Sunday service.	13
Need further information / clarity	Map is incorrect – bus also serves Swanley and Ravensmoor, there is also only one bus a day in each direction not two. Retained routes look good - need to see alternative options for other villages. Need to be reviewed based on demand and success of amendments after a period of 12 months. What kind of flexible transport. Assume these buses aren't utilised much. Assume there is an existing 84 service from Crewe to Chester. Only if service to Aston is kept.	ç

Proposal 2 – 391/392 Macclesfield-Poynton-Stockport service

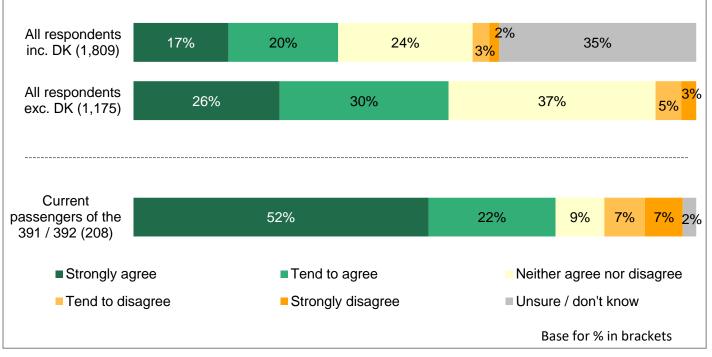
This proposal enhances the frequency of the 391/392 service to hourly between Middlewood-Poynton-Stockport (via Stepping Hill Hospital), whilst maintaining a two-hourly service between Poynton and Macclesfield to the south.

Overall, 36% of all respondents agreed with the proposed change to the 391/392 service and 5% disagreed. A large proportion of respondents selected 'unsure / don't know' (35%, 634).

If we remove those who answered 'unsure/don't know' from the overall calculation, then it gives a clearer indication of those who agreed with the proposal compared to those who disagreed: 56% agreed with the proposal and 7% disagreed when those answering 'unsure/don't know' are removed.

Encouragingly 75% of those who currently use the 391/392 bus service agreed with the proposal whilst 14% disagreed. Figure 9 shows the full breakdown of results.

Figure 9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to the 391/392 Macclesfield-Poynton-Stockport service?



Respondents were asked why they disagreed with the proposal. In total 153 respondents chose to leave a comment. The comments provided were coded into the following overall themes and sub themes:

Suggestions for alternatives routes / frequency of the 391 / 392:

- Should be hourly across the whole route, Macclesfield to Stockport, 41 mentions.
- Alternative route suggestions for 391/392, 12 mentions.

Increase in service is not needed / extend 192 service instead:

- Work with Transport for Greater Manchester to extend the 192, 11 mentions.
- Increase in service is not needed, 9 mentions.

Other comments:

- Don't know / Don't use these services, 35 mentions.
- Good to see improvement being made / change needed, 30 mentions.
- Other bus route suggestions / improvements, 13 mentions.
- Other general negative comment, 12 mentions.

Some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The full summary of the comments received by theme and sub theme is presented in Table 2, on the next page.

In terms of impact, 6% of all respondents stated that they would use the 391/392 service for the first time if the proposed change occurred and 13% would use it more whereas 1% would use it less. A visual representation of these results by postcode can be seen in Appendix 3, Map 3. 12% would use the service for the same amount whilst 25% would still not use. A large proportion of respondents selected 'unsure/don't know' (43%, 769).

If we remove those who selected 'unsure/don't know' from the calculation it provides a clearer indication of those who would use the service for the first time/more often compared to those who would use it less/still not use: 10% would use the service for the first time and 22% would use it more whereas 2% would use it less. 21% would use it for the same amount whilst 44% would still not use.

Encouragingly 46% of those who currently use the 391/392 service stated that they would use the service more if the proposal was approved, whereas 10% would use less. 33% would use it for the same amount. Figure 10 shows the full breakdown of results.

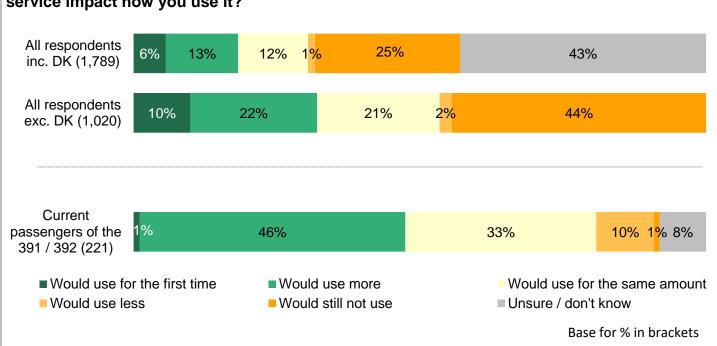


Figure 10. How will the proposed change to the 391/392 Macclesfield-Poynton-Stockport service impact how you use it?

Appendix 3

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Suggestions for alternative	es routes / frequency of the 391 / 392	53
Should be hourly across the whole route, Macclesfield to Stockport	Macclesfield to Stockport should be hourly as well, not everyone can get the train. Should include the full route to Bollington and Macclesfield. Service from Macclesfield to Stockport is crucial due to the high demand for the connection. Lots of people at Macclesfield bus station need to get to Stockport quickly, access Stockport for work, need to get to Stepping Hill hospital. The reduction in service (between Poynton and Macclesfield) has impacted ability to use the service for work. Needs to also run later.	41
Alternative route suggestions for 391/392	Would be beneficial if the hourly service extended to the Boars Head bus stop. The service has now cut out Marlborough drive & Tytherington Drive. Would it be possible for the bus to go down the A523 Hazel Grove? The route takes a lot longer due to meandering around Middlewood & Poynton. The 2 hourly service from Macclesfield should be routed via the 393 route and perhaps a circular covering the Middlewood & Pedley Hill areas. For the southern sections of the 391/392, they need to run faster into Macclesfield as too slow, then have a new little town route linking into the Tytherington estates, even if it's the same frequency as now. The 392 no longer operates around Crossfield Road where there are bungalows for the elderly, why run the bus down Clarke Lane instead of Crossfield Road – please re-instate.	12
Increase in service is not n	eeded / extend 192 service instead	20
Work with Transport for Greater Manchester to extend the 192	Should really be part of the Bee Network / TfGM Network. Cheshire East should work with TfGM to extend a 192 from Hazel Grove Station to Poynton and Disley. Increase the service from Macclesfield to 192 termini in Hazel Grove, giving a more frequent service to Stockport. Get a 192 through service to improve patronage and options for transport.	11
Increase in service is not needed	Why increase it when cutting services elsewhere, take from rural Nantwich and put in Macclesfield doesn't seem fair. Present system is sufficient. Its already served, doesn't need a third bus when there are other areas without. This area always seems to get more investment that the Crewe/Sandbach area. Railway is on that route; money should be put elsewhere. The route between Hazel Grove and Stockport is one of the best served – question whether this needs to be duplicated at the expense of taxpayers' money. Perhaps the route needs to run between Stepping Hill and Macclesfield only at an hour frequency to connect to the hospital and the 192 for Stockport to Manchester.	9
Other comments		86
Don't know / Don't use these services	Would not use, don't know the area, don't use the service. Not affected, not my bus.	35
Good to see improvement being made / change needed	Any improvement is welcome. Will help those who work out of town as the train isn't always available. Two-hour service is not practical. Bus is busy between these stops. Encourages model shift away from cars. Hope the service change will reduce health inequalities by providing access to the hospital, better transport to Stepping Hill is needed.	30
Other bus route suggestions / improvements	More buses are needed. Having more accessible public transport would be beneficial. Better links into main county centre and hospital. Any chance of extending the peak 191 journeys to start at Middlewood, work with Derbyshire & Staffordshire	13

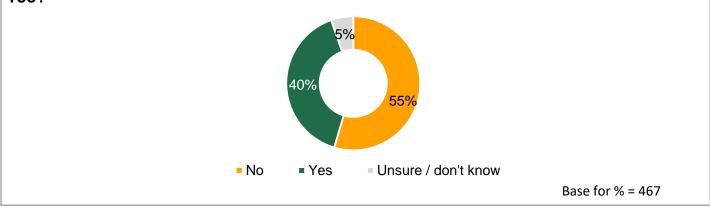
Table 2: Reasons as to why	y respondents disagree with the 391/392 Macclesfield-Poynton-Stockport service proposal	
Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
	to reinstate the Derby-Manchester or 2 hourly 393 via Bollington. Please look at the lack of provision in Wistaston can only get to hospital via Crewe on the 84, cannot get to Dr on Rope Lane at all.	
Other general negative comment	Bus services are essential shouldn't be cut, hourly is hardly enough for public transport. There should be alternatives to the car on all routes. 391/392 service is unreliable. The flexible transport service never turns up.	12

Proposal 3 – Flexible Transport

Respondents were asked whether they use either of the current flexible transport services that operate within Cheshire East. 15% of respondents (301) used the FlexiLink service and 9% (169) used the Go-Too service.

Those who used either FlexiLink or Go-Too were asked if they have any other transport available if they could not use FlexiLink or Go-Too, 40% stated they do whereas 55% do not as shown in Figure 11.

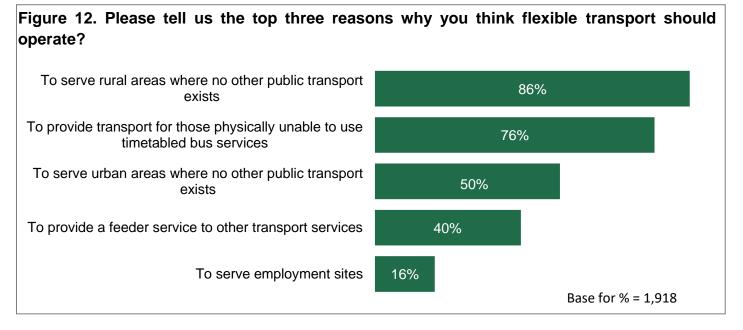
Figure 11. Do you have alternative transport available if you could not use FlexiLink or Go-Too?



All respondents were asked to select the top three reasons as to why they think flexible transport should operate. The top three reasons given were:

- 1. 'To serve rural areas where no other public transport exists' (86%), followed by
- 2. 'To provide transport for those physically unable to use timetabled bus services' (76%), and
- 3. 'To serve urban areas where no other public transport exists' (50%).

Figure 12 shows the full breakdown of results.



In summary, the proposal is to combine the FlexiLink and Go-Too services into a single, prebookable service. Go-Too in its current form would cease to operate. The service will collect

passengers from defined pickup points or offer a door-to-door service based on need (e.g., to those with limited mobility) and will be:

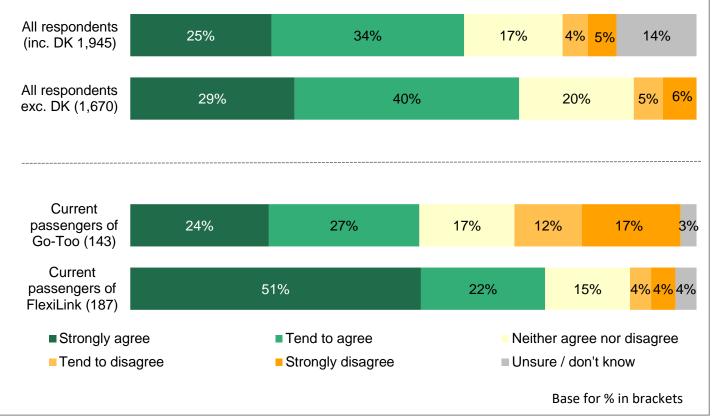
- Available to all age groups (where no alternative and/or suitable public transport is available)
- Available Monday Friday during the day (9:30am 2:30pm) and in the evenings (4:30pm 9:00pm)
- Available Saturdays (9:00am 6:00pm)
- Bookable using an online app, whilst retaining telephone booking
- Chargeable (£4 full fare single journey and £2 concessions single journey)

Overall, 59% of all respondents agreed with the proposed change to the flexible transport service and 9% disagreed.

If we remove those who answered 'unsure / don't know' from the overall calculation, then it provides a clearer picture of those who agreed with the proposal compared to those who disagreed: 69% agreed with the proposal and 11% disagreed when those answering 'unsure/don't know' were removed.

Those who are current passengers of the FlexiLink service were more likely to agree with the proposal (73% agreed whilst 8% disagreed) compared to those who are current passengers of the Go-Too service (51% agreed whilst 29% disagreed). Figure 13 shows the full breakdown of results.





Respondents were asked why they disagreed with the proposal. In total 230 respondents chose to leave a comment. The comments provided were coded into the following overall themes and sub themes:

Concerns with / suggestions for the Flexible Transport proposal:

- Too expensive / needs to be affordable, 51 mentions.
- Hours are too restrictive, 40 mentions.
- Concern over prebooking, booking online and pickup points, 27 mentions.
- Go-Too service would be lost, 18 mentions.
- Concern over eligibility criteria, 16 mentions.
- Service should run on a Sunday, 14 mentions.
- Extend to / cover more areas, 13 mentions.

Disagree with Flexible Transport generally:

- Prefer timetabled bus services, 28 mentions.
- Waste of money / service unreliable, 7 mentions.

Other comments:

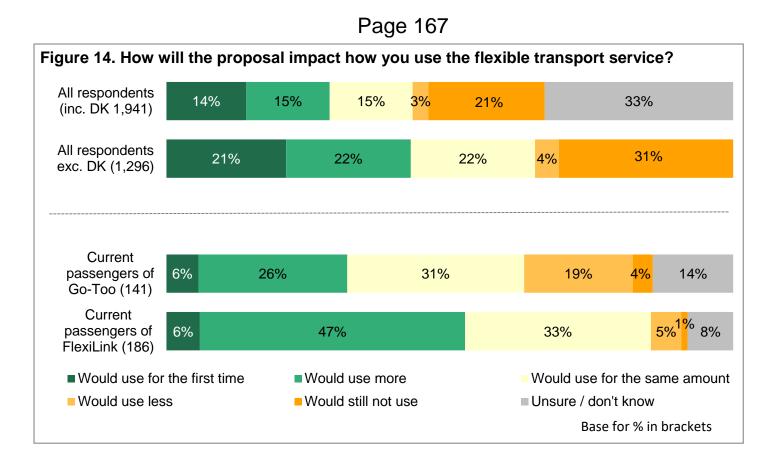
- Flexible transport service would be beneficial, 33 mentions.
- Other general negative comment, 10 mentions.
- Need further information / clarity, 6 mentions.

Some respondents will have referred to more than one theme, therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The full summary of the comments received by theme and sub theme is presented in Table 3, on page 24.

In terms of impact, 14% of respondents stated that they would use the flexible transport service for the first time if the proposed change occurred and 15% would use it more whereas 3% would use it less. 15% would use the service for the same amount whilst 21% would still not use it.

If we remove those who answered 'unsure / don't know; (33%) from the calculation it provides a clearer indication of those who would use the service for the first time/more often compared to those who would use it less/still not use: 21% would use for the first time and 22% would use it more whereas 4% would use it less. 22% would use the service for the same amount whilst 31% would still not use it.

Encouragingly 47% of those who currently use the FlexiLink service stated that they would use Flexible Transport more if the proposal was approved. 33% would use the service for the same amount whilst 5% would use less. Those who currently use the Go-Too service were however less likely to use the flexible service more often: 26% stated that they would use it more whilst 19% would use it less. Figure 14 shows the full breakdown of response.



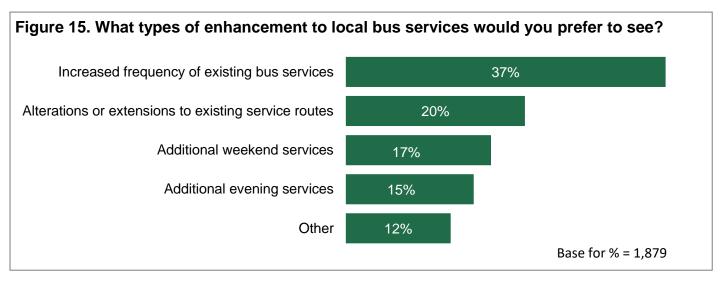
Appendix 3

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Concerns with / sugges	tions for the Flexible Transport proposal	129
Too expensive / needs to be affordable	£8 for a return journey isn't cheap. Charge should be for there and back not just 1 journey. May be more expensive than a taxi at £4 per person. Would be cheaper to use a car. Needs to be affordable to those on low income. The cost would put me off. Suggest fares be in line with current price cap. There shouldn't be a charge for elderly people who can't use normal service. Concessionary travel must be available to pass holders. This is an increased cost compared to the current Go-Too service, with a reduced service.	51
Hours are too restrictive	Hours seem restrictive / inconvenient to passengers. Having a two-hour break on a weekday could cause problems. Should be available before 9am people need to get to work before this time. Should be offered on late evenings. A 6pm finish on a Saturday is far too early. Hours of service are being reduced. Needs to operate at least 8am-10pm. Flexibility should mean available all day.	40
Concern over prebooking, booking online and pickup points	Pre-booking is prohibitive for some disabled people and takes away the flexibility. Can't pre-book as partially deaf and cannot use the phone. It's not always easy to book in advance. Apps aren't always elderly friendly; they can be difficult to navigate for those not digitally aware. Elderly residents do not have access to booking services online, do not have mobile phones. The app in unwieldy and inflexible, doesn't' allow booking even though bus is passing your door. Pre-booking is often impossible, often says it is full, with no availability then when manage to book it isn't full. Important for the elderly to still be able to get door pick up as pickup points might not be close enough. The nearest designated pick-up point has no pedestrian access other than walking over 400m along a busy road.	27
Go-Too service would be lost	The Go-Too service would be lost, I like the way it operates as is. Stopping the Go-Too service is not an acceptable solution. There is a need for both services. It wouldn't be as flexible as Go-Too, it would be harder to book with the shorter operating times and more people wanting to use it. Go-Too operates until 9pm on a Saturday. The Go-Too bus is a lifeline for child to get to school and back. Go-Too bus allows visits to Audlem and Nantwich and not have to drive. Go-Too should be expanded upon and made more available.	18
Concern over eligibility criteria	The criteria for using the service is far too restrictive. Service should be open to everyone who would like to use. Shouldn't be limited to areas without public transport as should be aimed at those who struggle to use. Restrictive use to those with limited mobility would inhibit that have supported the service so far. Will not be eligible as not disabled, just retired. I am below 80 but also need that option.	16
Service should run on a Sunday	Need a Sunday service. Poynton would remain isolated on Sundays. Other bus services are running on a Sunday - failing to offer a Sunday service for people with mobility difficulties could be considered disability discrimination.	14

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Extend to / cover more areas	Not sure what areas it would serve, would the operating area be extended. Go-Too service did not cover enough rural areas. Could the service be used for medical appointments. Service in place for Nantwich only and Crewe continues to be disadvantaged, need bus to hospital and doctors within Crewe. Useful if the service was extended from Leighton hospital and Crewe railway station. Need something within Wistaston where there is no transport at all. Needs extending to Wybunbury. Please include Woleston in the area covered. Make the service bookable from the major estates in Audlem. If this was available between Macclesfield and Manchester airport it would be useful.	13
Disagree with Flexible ⁻	Fransport generally	35
Prefer timetabled bus services	Regular bus services are always preferable. No substitute for a proper service. Is a good idea if it runs alongside a regular 70 route/ operates as a supplementary service. Need reliable bus service not 'inflexible' flexible transport initiatives. Need to have a regular bus service that overs rural areas. Would prefer regular service from Bunbury to Chester. Might be good for the elderly and disabled but no one other than these groups would use it. Maybe follow the Wilshire model whereby the is a fixed timetable but the bus can divert between some key points if needed.	28
Waste of money / service unreliable	Waste of money, Wrenbury Go-Too bus always empty. Go-Too is unreliable, often never turns up. Too many last-minute alterations to pickup places and times. No backup in case of breakdowns or driver sickness.	7
Other comments		49
Flexible transport service would be beneficial	This is a very much needed form of transport especially for the elderly / disabled. Service vital. Flexible service sounds great. Good to connect rural areas / semi-rural areas where no bus services run. Better way to serve overall communities. Not everyone has access to a car. Need for hospital appointments.	33
Other general negative comment	Not good enough, the offer should be improved not reduced. Don't withdraw. Would take up the possibility of potential drivers for timetables services, the Go-Too is in direct competition with the services it seeks to amend. It was meant for rural not urban use. Let people use taxis as they do now.	10
Need further information / clarity	Depends on how many would use the bus. Only if you have the drivers. Would it make journey times longer having to travel round a larger catchment area. Would like to know when and where FlexiLink goes and at what times. Query how the system would work equitably – would the proposal give more or less availability?	6

Section 4: Bus service Improvement Plan and further comments

As part of the bus service improvement plan Cheshire East Council has been awarded central government funding to enhance local bus services. All respondents were asked what type of enhancement to local bus services they would prefer to see in the future – the one they would use most if available. The option chosen by the most respondents was 'increased frequency of existing bus services', 37% chose this option as shown in Figure 15.



212 respondents (12%) gave another comment, the comments provided have been summarised into the following themes:

- Additional bus services / routes, more direct buses, 71 comments.
- Sunday / bank holiday services, 24 comments.
- Improvements to the buses (e.g., smaller, electric, talking buses) and bus stops (e.g., digital signs), 21 comments.
- Retain services for e.g., Bus route 70,71 &73 re-instate services e.g., 2, 9, 39 & 78, 18 comments.
- Increased reliability and frequency, 13 comments.
- Earlier and later journey times for workers, 11 comments.
- Expand FlexiLink service, keep it free for passholders. Retain Go-Too service, 11 comments.
- All improvements are needed, 10 comments.
- Additional, more robust rural services, 10 comments.
- More affordable transports fares, 6 comments
- Bus services that connect to rail, airport, park & ride, 5 comments.
- Other comment e.g., happy as is, divert money into other areas, whatever the majority want, 9 comments.

Respondents were asked to provide any further details of how they considered bus services could be improved within Cheshire East. A total of 1,079 comments were left to this section which were coded into three broad themes: service route improvements, named location-based improvements and general borough wide improvements:

Named service improvements:

The most frequently commented on routes were:

- 12, Shavington Leighton Hospital: Issues with service reliability and requests to run on the evenings and a Sunday service, 26 mentions
- 84, Crewe Nantwich Chester: Route should be extended to include Wistaston village, needs to be more regular and run in the evenings,17 mentions
- 130, Macclesfield Handforth Wythenshawe: Route should accommodate the timing needs of children travelling to Wimslow and Fallibroome Academy. Could use better integration with the 130/312 and the Tesco free bus current timings leave large gaps, 18 mentions.
- 391/392, Macclesfield Stockport: Service should be hourly and later into the evening. Could integrate better with TfGM services, 16 mentions.

Location based improvements:

The most commented on areas were:

- Nantwich: reinforced the need for a direct bus to Leighton hospital without the need to change at Crewe, 56 comments.
- Macclesfield: Improvements needed at the bus station which is very poor. Bus services to the Treacle Market would be welcome as there is no transport currently, 44 comments.
- Crewe: Better linkage to retail parks and out of town shopping needed. Routes requested from Wistaston and Willaston, 39 comments.

General / across borough improvements

- Increase service provision (e.g., increase frequency, days, reliability), 403 mentions.
- Need more and /or better bus links / connections, 196 mentions.
- Improve the bus fleet/ infrastructure, 94 mentions.
- Promotion and communication, 87 mentions.
- Rely on the buses / bus services are vital, 78 mentions.
- Bus ticketing / operator comments, 37 mentions.
- Bus priority on roads / reduction in traffic, 28 mentions.
- General negative comment, 13 mentions.
- General positive comment, 8 mentions.

Some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The full summary of the comments received by theme is presented in Appendix 1, Table 4.

41 emails were also received during the consultation 32 from individuals e.g., local residents and 9 from a group / organisation / council or councillor. There were comments within these in relation to the proposals however the majority were in relation to improvements to other bus services. The full summary of the comments received by theme is presented in Appendix 2, Table 5.

Appendix 1: Further details of how respondents consider bus services could be improved within Cheshire East.

Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Comments naming a specific bus route	
3 (Crewe – Alsager – Hanley)	4
Would like this bus to go to Leighton hospital instead of having to change at Crewe. Restore late evening bus services on this route.	
3 (Macclesfield – Weston Estate)	1
Service very unreliable, often two of the three last buses do not appear.	
8 (Wistaston Green – Sydney)	3
Needs to run earlier to allow access to Crewe bus station for connecting buses into Leighton hospital for 8am, needed by NHS workers. Needs to weekends. Suggest the bus turns left in Henry Street instead of going under the Cumberland Bridge and then right onto Queen Street, right towar people have a chance to get off at junction retail park or carry on to the bus station.	
10 (Macclesfield – Bollington)	7
Should run into the evenings and also run on Sundays. Evening services finish too early as the last bus is 17:50 from Macclesfield. Should run the	e bus through the Crossfield
Road and nearby estate, wouldn't take too much rerouting. Bus is not punctual or reliable. Review the rerouting away from Tytherington Drive see	
Road and nearby estate, wouldn't take too much rerouting. Bus is not punctual or reliable. Review the rerouting away from Tytherington Drive see benefit of no-one, could this be reverted?	
Road and nearby estate, wouldn't take too much rerouting. Bus is not punctual or reliable. Review the rerouting away from Tytherington Drive see benefit of no-one, could this be reverted? 12 (Shavington – Leighton hospital) Needs to be more reliable/ run on time, covering weekends and evenings at greater frequency. This service has become extremely unreliable with running services or adherence to timetables, should be duly censured. Should run in the evening and on Sundays. Do not start later than 6:28 or facilitate return trips from rail station. Promote Sunday/BH services between Leighton and Rope so Sunday services can extend to Shavington co	ems to have been done to the 26 h operator consistently not I cannot work. Needs to ommercially. Links to the retai
Road and nearby estate, wouldn't take too much rerouting. Bus is not punctual or reliable. Review the rerouting away from Tytherington Drive see benefit of no-one, could this be reverted? 12 (Shavington – Leighton hospital) Needs to be more reliable/ run on time, covering weekends and evenings at greater frequency. This service has become extremely unreliable with running services or adherence to timetables, should be duly censured. Should run in the evening and on Sundays. Do not start later than 6:28 or facilitate return trips from rail station. Promote Sunday/BH services between Leighton and Rope so Sunday services can extend to Shavington co park would be welcome. Happy with this link to town and hospital. Could this route connect with the Persimmons Estate and the new Anwgl Estate 14/14A (Macclesfield – Moss Rose – Langley)	ems to have been done to the 26 h operator consistently not I cannot work. Needs to ommercially. Links to the retai
Road and nearby estate, wouldn't take too much rerouting. Bus is not punctual or reliable. Review the rerouting away from Tytherington Drive see benefit of no-one, could this be reverted? 12 (Shavington – Leighton hospital) Needs to be more reliable/ run on time, covering weekends and evenings at greater frequency. This service has become extremely unreliable with running services or adherence to timetables, should be duly censured. Should run in the evening and on Sundays. Do not start later than 6:28 or facilitate return trips from rail station. Promote Sunday/BH services between Leighton and Rope so Sunday services can extend to Shavington co park would be welcome. Happy with this link to town and hospital. Could this route connect with the Persimmons Estate and the new Anwgl Estate	ems to have been done to the 26 h operator consistently not I cannot work. Needs to ommercially. Links to the retain te to get easier travel? 15 eved by extending a couple of a got three buses an hour and e. Taking in the Moss Estate

31 (Crewe – Winsford – Northwich)	4
Unreliable and hourly in insufficient for this area and makes trips very difficult. A local 30-minute service would be appreciated. Bus is always full ar walkers. Later service. Move this service back to Underwood Lane and launch a new Leighton-Brookhouse circular to connect people and offer mo	
37 (Crewe – Sandbach – Northwich)	10
A Sunday service. Unreliable service. Currently taking an hour to get to Winsford industrial estate from Crewe bus station, would like to see that im benefit from an increase in frequency. Later service.	proved in the future. Would
38 (Crewe – Congleton – Macclesfield)	10
Unreliable service. Bring back the late service i.e., after 23:00. More than one bus an hour in the morning for warehouse staff. Link into the Conglet sufficient time to make the connection. Sunday services on this route. Would benefit from running every 30 minutes rather than an hour as it is use people.	
39 (Crewe – Wybunbury – Nantwich)	8
This is a vital route. Increase the frequency of this bus service. Run this bus on Sundays. Service takes too long to get to Nantwich to Shavington, route would be more acceptable. Route is extremely important for those with no other means of transport, an extension of the hours would encoura second bus on the opposite hour to the 39 via Brookhouse, Jack Mills Way, Shavington then Newcastle Road to Nantwich, could help with punctual	age more use. Offer a
second bus on the opposite noul to the 39 via brownlouse, sack while way, shavington then newcastle road to Nantwich, could help with punctus	anty on the 55.
42 (Crewe – Holmes Chapel – Congleton)	15
	15 e. Stop at Holmes Chapel
42 (Crewe – Holmes Chapel – Congleton) Larger buses at school times for the 42 bus, often too many kids standing or not allowed on as the bus is too small. Need more buses on this route train station 15 minutes before the train to the airport. Sunday service needed. A bus every hour would be better. Saturday timetable should be the	15 e. Stop at Holmes Chapel
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Table 4: Further details of how respondents consider bus services could be improved within Cheshire East

Summary of comments received

Bus to go through Willaston on a Sunday and after 18:00 in the evenings. All late buses to go through Willaston. Buses having issues at Willaston Stores Corner due to parking, perhaps parking enforcements need to be applied to help buses navigate this part of the route. Punctuality is a bit of an issue. Buses should run more frequently. Bus needs to continue through Willaston. This route should be extended to come through Wistaston village to open up the service to more people, there are already unused bus stops on Church Lane near the school. Needs to be more regular, two hour wait if one is cancelled. Service is rarely on time and needs to be a double decker bus. 84X to continue running on Sunday. Please stop this bus going down the narrow roads of Wistaston Road and Coppice Road it can carry on up Nantwich Road, it's not far to walk down to get the bus and it rocks house foundations. Run until 11PM.

85 (Nantwich – Crewe – Newcastle)

Increase the reliability and frequency of this route. Additional early morning and evening services for workers. Service takes too long. Sunday service needed, work with Staffordshire to operate every two hours.

88 (Macclesfield – Knutsford – Wilmslow – Altrincham)

Punctuality, often the bus either misses Bank Square stop in Wilmslow driving straight from the train station to Water Lane, or it doesn't turn up at the interchange to Altrincham to go to Wilmslow, no communication when this happens. Running every half hour like it used to be. The most unreliable service. 1st bus starts at 6:50AM and then 8:15AM if the timing of the second bus could be changed a bit earlier i.e., to 7:50AM it would allow people to get to work before 9AM which would be good. Work closely with TfGM to introduce a 30 minute service during peak hours as this route has significant numbers of travellers from Greater Manchester and East Cheshire. Allow connection with the 312 from Wilmslow to Handforth Dean, the 312 leaves 3 minutes before the 88 arrives leaving passengers with a one hour wait before the next bus. Timetabled to pass Chelford station in line with the railway timetable to provide commuting links with Barclays, Radbroke Hall, Knutsford. Could reduce the times it runs in the day, frequently see empty buses. Stop interworking between 88/89/188, the current arrangement has long gaps and doesn't suit the needs of commuters or people attending Macclesfield hospital. Could be altered to run from Macclesfield to Warrington via Knutsford as the route from Knutsford to Altrincham is served by the 89 from Northwich.

89 (Northwich - Knutsford - Wilmslow – Altrincham)

Extend the 89 service so Pickmere is served more regularly into late afternoon and evenings on all days. Current times are too early or too late for work/school/shopping/entertainment.

92 (Congleton – Buglawton)

Service does not connect with other services at all. 6PM finish isolates Buglawton. Returning from Crewe rail or Congleton is not possible after teatime.

130 (Macclesfield – Handforth – Wythenshawe)

Should carry on in the evening for hospital visits, needs to run more frequently especially on a Saturday. Service does not accommodate the timing needs of children traveling to and from Wilmslow to Fallibroome academy, could be fixed with a small tweak around school times. Could this service detour to Mottram St Andrew and answer the problem of this area not having a bus service. Service should run past 5:45PM and on Sundays. Why no 130 bus from Macclesfield during evening rush hour? Try and sort a more convenient and economical route combining the 130/312 and the Tesco free bus Wimslow to Handforth Dean. The 312 leaves 53 mins to the hour, a few minutes before the free bus. The 130 leaves at 3 minutes past, why not space out to provide a half-hourly service? Extend to Manchester.

199 (Buxton - Disley – Stockport)

Service is very unreliable not running to time or not turning up at all. Buses are often crowded, maybe buses doing shorter route, or a circular route would be better.

317 (Alsager – Sandbach – Leighton hospital)

Number of mentions

6

12

1

1

18

1

3

Table 4: Further details of how respondents consider bus services could be improved within Cheshire East Number of Summary of comments received mentions Last bus from Leighton is 17:15 after that a taxi is needed, need a Saturday and Sunday service to allow better access. Route needs to be amended to include a stop at the pink church, the road is too dangerous to walk, the parish council has regularly asked to get this service restored. Saturday and Sunday service to facilitate travel to the football/cricket club. 5 319 (Sandbach – Goostrey) Service only available two mornings per week which makes it unusable for appointments. Needs to operate more days in a week. Service would be improved by operating Mon-Sat. Service is essential to residents living in villages along this route. 391/392 (Macclesfield – Stockport) 16 Online tracking for this route. Later service to allow use in the evenings, should be 23:00 to facilitate social activities. Reduce the wait time, 2 hours is stupid, should be hourly. Keep this service to join Macclesfield and Stockport daily. Service would be improved by making it all an hourly service between Macclesfield and Stockport. Could integrate between with Aguinas Sixth Form College as waits for buses can be too long. Why does the 391/392 not terminated at the 192 terminus in Hazel Grove? This would allow the same number of buses and allow a better connection to the 199. Should terminate at Stepping Hill and come to a transfer arrangement with TfGM. Use smaller but more accessible buses on this route, vehicles currently used are too big for country roads on the route to Macclesfield. This doesn't look like a bus, very easy to miss the vehicle with a small note in the window saying 391. FlexiLink / Go-Too 38 υ Positive comment about the drivers. Needs to be advertised more as a service. Would like the hours extended to 4pm to allow attendance and return from a veteran's club. age FlexiLink is a lifetime / great service as do not drive any more. If service is not needed should be replaced by community-based volunteer services, seek local advice on what is necessary. Couldn't manage without FlexiLink. Query of the flexible bus criteria. Disagree with asking people with bus passes to pay to use this service, why penalise them? A FlexiLink service from Wilmslow to Macclesfield hospital would be most welcome. FlexiLink ends too early in the afternoon; an extended service would be welcome. 75 Retain Go-Too service for small villages where there are no timetabled options / don't change time / restrict time of the Go-Too bus. Expand Go-Too areas. Card payment on Go-Too. Go-Too is essential in rural areas. Increase FlexiLink provision, currently only once a week. More destinations for FlexiLink and longer time at locations. Booked in advance but was cancelled 10 minutes before, poor service. Flexible transport needs to run throughout the day and not have gaps, makes it an 'inflexible' service which defeats the point. **Removed routes** 6 Bring back number 2 bus to serve Thornton Square area of Macclesfield. Bring back the 78 that went down Birchin Lane. Used to use the 78 to get to Leighton hospital but that has stopped, we need a bus again rather than going to Crewe bus station and back out. Return the 6 from Leighton to Shavington. Bring back the 8 for Sydney, would be cheaper than flexible transport. Bring back the 11 which did not have to negotiate a route which is a nightmare for the drivers and keep the 391 to the main road, no wonder the drivers keep leaving. Comments naming a specific area 9 Audlem Leighton hospital and Crewe railway station are two locations not currently available via the timetabled or flexible services to people living here. A Saturday service to Whitchurch and Nantwich would be good, has been missed by many since it was taken off. Buses on Sunday from Audlem to Nantwich. Bus to Market Drayton even if only one a week on market day. More regular service which would increase usage. Alsager 4 A shopping bus. Alsager is somewhat remote and needs better links to local places such as Rode Heath, Congleton and Holmes Chapel. The route traveling through Hassell Green is missed.

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11

Crewe

Would like a bus service on Church Lane to Crewe – Nantwich. Run to Chester to Crewe service in the evening every hour, better service from Crewe to Chester needed especially at weekends. Both provided services are bad and arrive at the same time. Sunday service to connect Crewe and Betley. Stop needed outside ASDA as the bus station is a fair walk away for those with shopping. Route from Leighton – Crewe – Brookhouse – Jack Mills Way hourly.

Need a bus service from Crewe – Nantwich -Sandbach to Leighton hospital. Urgently need bus service from Crewe to Leighton on a Sunday. Bus service from Leighton to Nantwich and Macclesfield. Reinstate the bus from Leighton from Marshfield. Improved services for Weston. Improved services for Wistaston. If outlying villages South of Nantwich can have a bus surely Wistaston can be incorporated into existing services, link needed to Rope medical centre and Crewe town centre. A bus that goes from Willaston to Ropegreen medical centre.

Open the bus stop by Next on Grand Junction retail park and run into Crewe town centre. Have a bus that runs from the rail station to the bus station and back. Ensure all buses to Crewe town go via the railway station. Circular route from the bus station to the retail park to the new Lidl and Tesco. Later buses provided between Crewe and Nantwich. Victoria Avenue/ Wistaston Road is one of the main roads into Crewe town centre yet there are no buses along this road and no buses to Leighton hospital the other way. Would like better connections between communities rather than just into large centres such as a service that runs from Crewe to Haslington, Weston and Shavington in a loop.

Congleton

Congleton has no bus service at all on a Sunday and the frequency of the train services are also poor. Additional service to Crewe or Macclesfield would allow people to travel further or use facilities/shopping in those towns.

Better links from West Heath to Congleton railway station and from West Heath to other parts of Congleton. Link to the airport which is just 25 minutes away. More links from Congleton to the north, there is no service to Alderley Park, Wilmslow or the airport despite many that travel this way for work/leisure. Residents of West Heath and Lower Heath need a regularly service, even if it meant reducing others to hourly to spread service about. Bus to Barn Road shopping area needed. No link to Castaway or Little Moreton Hall.

The new commercial and housing developments on Viking Way, Hulme Walfield next to Congleton Tesco is not serviced by a bus route, similar issue on the A34 from the ambulance station to the new Quarry roundabout including many developments and a proposed school on the Redrow site. These need linking to Congleton, Macclesfield, the airport and the hospitals. Shelter at Congleton hospital should be closer to the hospital rather than further away.

Handforth

Poorly served with bus services. The estate near the bypass has no bus service, would be nice if this could be added to the 312 or 130 route.

Holmes Chapel

Would use services to Macclesfield or Knutsford if available, provide a service along the A50 to Knutsford to allow use of the links there. Services to cover Northwich. Cranage and Allostock. Need a bus service to Nantwich or Crewe shopping centre if possible. Bus service that operates weekdays to Macclesfield hospital and return.

Knutsford

Reinstate the service between High Legh and Knutsford, this was previously coordinated with Warrington via Lymm. Bus services are poor, bring back the circular bus. Better links to places such as Goostrey. Route from Crewe to Knutsford without the need to change on an already lengthy route. Work with neighbouring councils to extend bus service from Altrincham to Knutsford via Tatton Park with a stop at Gauntlet Birds of Prey. Link Manchester airport to Knutsford via Altrincham. No service connectivity with Lower Peover and Plumley with Knutsford. Provide regular services linking Knutsford, Lymm and High Legh. Better links to Macclesfield and Macclesfield college to support employment.

A route from Knutsford, Mobberley, Wilmslow to the airport and employment centres would pay for itself after a few months. Links to Holmes Chapel.

Macclesfield

Would be good to have an evening connection between Macclesfield and Wilmslow. Provide a direct fast link / more frequent between Bollington – Macclesfield – Manchester airport. A bus service to the airport that is regular and doesn't take hours. Reinstate the service between Macclesfield and Buglawton, it was used a lot until it became unreliable. More buses running in the centre of Macclesfield, the stops in the centre have been closed. Sunday service into Macclesfield needed. A bus service down Chester Road would be nice, no buses on this side of town. Evening/ Sunday bus service in Bollington. A service that drops off at Barracks Mill. Make buses run on estates not just the shortest route to the town. Bus stop on Adlington Road or near to newer estate on Browns Park. Provide a school bus from Tytherington to Fallibroome. Provide extra services for market days and on the Treacle Market, there is no transport on a Sunday.

We need a bus service bought back to the Hurdsfield estate, it's too far to walk for the 10. People don't go out since the services has stopped and would also help the environment. Not enough bus stops in Macclesfield. Macclesfield Town Council is working hard to revitalise the town centre with the Sunday Treacle Market and investment in the nighttime economy, the bus service must support this. Still no direct bus from Disley to Macclesfield via Poynton. A shuttle bus from Hazel Grove to Macclesfield every half hour would be an improvement. Go from the 192 terminus stop and stay on the main road to Macclesfield bus station. Links to Leek and Bosley needed. Macclesfield train station buses that serve Hurdsfield at peak hours (morning 8-10 and afternoons 4-6.30)

Improvements to Macclesfield bus station including television screens on next services and which bay they go from. Replace the netting with proper glass panels to improve insultation. No information point provided and no staff available to help. Toilets should be reopened even if you had to pay would be beneficial.

Middlewich

Reinstate the bus stop on Elm Road, the Warmingham Lane bus stop has a very bus road to cross to use, spend a little of the money to improve bus services on the Elm Road bus stop. D&G keep taking this service off. Services to Northwich. 56

Nantwich

Need a good bus service/ direct/ regular bus service between Nantwich and Leighton hospital, asking people to travel to Crewe and change is no good and car parking can be a nightmare at Leighton. Going via Crewe bus often do not fit in with appointment times. Following the old 28 bus through Willaston, Wistaston, Crewe would work for this.

A link to Tarporley in the evenings to allow workers to use it. A direct service to Sandbach would be really useful. A bus that serves Worleston would be helpful. A direct bus from Nantwich to Crewe railway station. A route that would take in Church Minshull directly to Nantwich. Local service to and from the new Kingsbourne housing estate to Nantwich.

Too many buses use Crewe Road Nantwich as a route compared to Mill Lane Nantwich via Newcastle Road/London Road, yet the other route has only a few buses a day passing even more housing that Crewe Road. Crewe Road is well serviced, London Road isn't.

Poynton

1 bus linking Poynton to Hazel Grove is not enough. If you can't provide proper services let us join Stockport. Quicker route needed from Poynton to Disley. Direct bus to Manchester from Poynton, trains are overcrowded at peak times. Sunday services needed. There needs to be service along London Road North to connect to the 191 service at Hazel Grove. There is no route from Carpet World along A523 into Poynton but bus stop markings all along the road. A link between Poynton and Wilmslow.

Priority should be more frequent buses, links to Stockport bus and train station, park and ride, a service to Wilmslow and Sunday service. Link from Poynton to Macclesfield is poor. Important to have good connections to students travelling to Aquinas college and Stockport college. Reinstatement of some of the bus stops not in use such as Dicken's Lane where there are new housing developments and no operating stops.

OFFICIAL

Sandbach

Please provide some form of transport through Sandbach to Crewe, Winsford and Macc on a Sunday. There are no buses at all on a Sunday or bank holiday.

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15

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33

Shavington	16
Weekend / Sunday and bank holiday services for Shavington. More frequent service / easier service to Nantwich, be useful to have an evening service to Nantw o Nantwich without having to go via Crewe. Crewe – Shavington – Nantwich direct and return bus, more regular buses between Shavington and Crewe. Should evening service through 106 funds from Persimmon (Shavington Park Estate), where is that (see planning reference 12/3114N)	
Stockport	2
mproved service to Stockport/Manchester. Used to travel on the 378 service to Stockport but this no longer operates.	•
Wilmslow	12
Area is poorly served with buses, must change routes at larger hubs. Would like a link to Stockport and beyond. Need a route that goes down Adlington Road to cransport options into Manchester, Crewe and Macclesfield. Needs a joined up plan with Greater Manchester transport, especially in the evening to allow travel for events. Would be nice to have buses later in the day/evening. A route covering Great Warford/ Chelford area to Wilmslow. Access to Stockport, Poynton, Chelford area to a to the chelford area to the the tot the tot area to tot area to the tot area to the tot area to tot area to tot area to tot area to the tot area to tot area to tot area to tot area to the tot area to tot area tot area to tot area tot area tot area tot area to tot area	to Manchester nester,
Expand the TfGM services 42C and 42B to Wilmslow to improve overall connectivity.	
Other area	16
The 310 to go through Styal, we have no bus service and trains are frequently cancelled. Cannot walk out of Styal village as it is too dangerous. Mere has no a service. No service to Quarry Bank Mill any more. Provide a service which runs from Bunbury to Chester. Link Disley to other places in Cheshire. Comments on Northw Winsford service. No service to Mottram St Andrew. Keep the T2 free bus, will be much missed! Need a link between Bunbury and Tarporley. Bus to the Nation _yme, either new or modified existing service to reduce congestion on the A6. Bus service to Brereton Green.	ich and
General / across borough improvements	
ncrease service provision (e.g., increase frequency, days, reliability)	403
ncrease frequency of buses, should be hourly/ half hourly. Increase frequency and hours to rural areas. Important to have frequent buses to avoid mental healt beak times/school times need to run more buses or double decker buses.	
Reinstate weekend services, should have 7 days a week service. Sunday buses a priority as no alternative on a Sunday, even at a reduced service. Better runr (both earlier and later services).	
	nreliability of

Links to employment sites, e.g. AstraZeneca. Better links to the hospitals / doctors, especially to fit in with visiting times. Links to community hubs, affordable transport to and from local day services. Provide bus services for events and activities such as party in the park, pop up markets, National Trust sites, and transport festivals.

Direct links between towns to reduce travel times. Rural provision / rural villages should be a priority and do not need to operate at a profit to exist. Alter existing routes to encompass poorly provided villages. Bus service to link with out-of-town stores / supermarkets such as Tesco, Boots, M&S and B&M and retail parks. Direct links to schools from out-of-town locations.

Bus services to connect with train timetables and other buses where possible. Express service to all airports within 60 miles. Integration with GM services / cross-border Bee Network routes / Chester/ Cheshire West, including road, rail and tram. Better joined up services to other buses, too many buses are running together on the same route.

Improve the bus fleet/ infrastructure

Look at renewing the bus fleet, some vehicles are old and dirty. Unreliability of bus fleet causing issues on D&G and High Peak routes. Would like to see electric buses. Use smaller vehicles, especially on very rural routes / would smaller buses be more cost-efficient?

Better accommodation of mobility scooters /walking aids often can't get on suitable vehicles. More spaces for carrying bikes on buses/ allow bikes. Easy access buses needed as some struggle to climb up and down multiple steps to get on and off the bus. Ensure bus pass readers are working, many times they are not so it appears few passengers are onboard than there actually are. Need more bus shelters, especially ones with seating as many bus users are elderly and disabled. Timetables need updating and cleaning as do bus shelters. Better lighting at bus stops, especially for winter. Unable to walk to the nearest bus stop. Cannot use buses as am blind and won't know where I am as there are no spoken bus stop announcements.

More comfortable vehicles. Vehicles which don't break down / better servicing of buses. Updates to the bus station. Some bus stops have no signs, especially on the main road so you're not sure where to get on and off the bus. Policing of bus policies by drivers such as passengers smoking, swearing and other anti-social behaviour on buses. General code of conduct for bus passengers to follow. USB charging ports very useful on buses.

Promotion and communication

Cheshire East to promote bus services to increase patronage rather than cuts being implemented. Communicate alterations to bus services and promote new services. Promote and advertise more, especially around the £2 fare. Updates if a bus in cancelled / information when waiting for buses that don't come, especially when due to scheduled road works/ road closures.

Print timetables / timetables in large print available e.g., in libraries, not everyone has access to the internet/smartphone. Ensure up to date information and timetables at all bus stops. Serious issue with timetable information, some dated from 2017/2018. Live tracking to be made available for all buses/ real time information / app that shows where services are. Improve publicity for FlexiLink to increase usage, most people have never heard of it. Visit schools and colleges to speak to students.

Rely on the buses / bus services are vital

Preserve public transport for the vulnerable and elderly people in outlying communities for whom it is a vital resource. Buses are a vital service within the niche they operate. Bus vital for social habits and to improve local shopping, contribute to the wellbeing of rural residents. Don't use buses frequently but would use/rely on in the future. Rely on buses to meet caring duties. Anxiety and stress caused by buses either not showing up, running late or leaving individuals stranded. Miss withdrawn bus service, go out less now. Stop removing already infrequent services, results in added hardship for elderly people affected. Lack of transport is a real concern for some, especially in rural areas. Rural areas at risk of isolation.

Can't afford taxis, don't have a car / unable to drive. Taxis not always available. No other way of getting into town other than walking which wouldn't be possible while carrying shopping. Train alone is not suitable alternative for all journeys or for everybody. Difficult to run a car due to the introduction of car park charges.

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Bus ticketing / operator comments

Allow day tickets it should be transferable on all routes. Allow cross/multi operator tickets. Return tickets should be valid with all operators. Allows the use of cards not contactless. Price rises to be reasonable. Continue with the £2 fare. Arriva offered a 46 week pass for £250 the D&G equivalent is a 52 week pass for £450. Minimum fare for short rides, e.g., 2/3 stops to make buses competitive with taxis. Remove the 9:30AM starting time for the bus pass. Buses should be cheaper for children / children's tickets for school travel. Introduce bus passes for 16–25-year-olds like the rail cards. Bus passes for carers.

Since Arriva left the buses have been more unreliable. Ask Stagecoach to take up some routes as they are more reliable and don't breakdown all the time like D&G. Glad D&G took over the bus services rather than them being removed. Buses should be re-nationalised. Customer service training needed for bus drivers. Complaints about D&G customer service. Drivers do not stop at scheduled stops, need training. Security needed on buses. Lobby for more government money to provide for services. When two operators have similar routes would prefer better spacing of times between different operators. Allow dogs on buses.

Bus priority on roads / reduction in traffic

Introduce parking restrictions on bus routes to help with timings. More bus lanes. We should be driving less and using buses, need to get people out of their cars. Stop highway engineers from favouring motorists, provide some bus only access in places and give buses priority over other traffic. Rural areas need buses to reduce traffic, which is dire, services should increase to improve quality of life. If you're serious about climate change improvement there should be a lot more buses. Keep fares low to get people to switch from the car.

General negative comment

Public transport is inadequate and expensive. Why if there's funding are you decimating rural routes? You are withdrawing routes and then asking what routes could be altered/extended – totally illogical. Transport should not be subsided by taxpayers money. Operate within your means why expand services that may cost more and set services up to fail long term. Liquidate ANSA. Other general negative comment about the Council or consultation.

General positive comment

Current service suitable / ok. Routes used are very efficient. Important that current service continues. Talking to neighbours and friends there is a lot of enthusiasm for the proposals.

28

13

8

Appendix 2: Email responses

Table 5: Summary of Email comments received

Individual responses e.g. local residents

Removal of the 70 bus service (3 mentions)

Removal of the 70-bus service will be very difficult for older generation who have no transport and need to get to Nantwich for appointments. Cannot get into town for shopping, have no computer or mobile phone. Will be isolated, please do not take this lifeline away completely, cannot afford taxis. Agree it has low levels of use, rather than withdrawing the service suggest the frequency be reduced instead, would make sense to run the service Tue-Thurs and Sat like before, it was well used. Don't need it every day - twice a week will do.

Extension of the 72 & 73 bus service (3 mentions)

The plan for a direct bus from Nantwich to Leighton Hospital needs to be prioritised. This will ensure that vulnerable individuals, including the elderly, can attend appointments. Would use this service on a regular basis to attend appointments at Leighton Hospital as it is impossible to find a parking place. For residents of Nantwich the ability for the elderly to get into town or keep medical or dental appointments has been dire.

Go-Too / FlexiLink Service (3 mentions)

The Go-Too service is excellent and has opened up a lifeline for rural communities. However, the service provision is poorly communicated. The major obstacle to the transport is that it is not integrated with other key transport hubs so utilising it as an alternative to the car is not possible. Extended hours of operation and connections to key destinations would greatly enhance the offering and gain greater patronage. Please can you allow Go-Too users to bring their dog on board, after a long walk one way, would be nice to catch the bus back home. The Dial A Ride service has to be booked in advance and people who have used it say that it is not always reliable.

Updates to bus services generally

Would use the buses more often if they were reliable. Would like to see the Chester Road bus reinstated. If the buses to Leek were more frequent than every two hours would use more often. Buses running later in the evening would be an asset. Macclesfield bus station needs updating, it is cold waiting for buses and no public toilets is a great concern.

Please consider changing the times for bus service 130, so that it has better start and finish times for 9:30am to 5:30pm workers.

Previously could use no 8 bus to travel directly into town from Hungerford Road (journey time approx. 10 mins) but now the bus travels into town via other estates. Please revert to original journey time. The outward journey is excellent, on time and friendly caring drivers.

Bring back the smaller buses that used to travel around Alsager and surrounding villages. This was a great service, would encourage me to leave the car at home.

Would like either the No. 39 bus or the No. 12 bus to go to Nantwich more frequently - preferably every hour in the daytime.

After the no. 2 Service was withdrawn in Macclesfield it left many people without a bus service, please consider the following:

1. The existing no. 3 service turns onto Congleton Rd. at the Flowerpot Pub and goes turns into Thornton Av. and then turns again into Valley Rd and then turns back onto Ivy Lane and continues its normal route. This could be reversed on its return journey.

2. The no. 3 route again turns onto Congleton Rd. Thornton Av. but then continues up Thirlmere, Kenilworth av. Kendal Rd. and the back onto Ivy Road and keeps to its existing route, again this would be reversed on its return journey.

Route B - Crewe rd. Nantwich after The Peacock & route A Newcastle rd. after Cheerbrooks - is it not possible to have a few buses diverted from Crewe Rd., to go down Newcastle Rd. instead as with extra housing it means a good 20-minute walk for the elderly to get into town easily. Use the buses daily, but with a disability now it is proving more difficult, as not every bus stop has a seat, and cannot stand for long

In terms of Middlewich larger buses are needed for schools. Bus's unreliable, late or don't turn up and no one is tracking or monitoring. Weekend services are needed to reduce car usage. Holmes chapel high school and Sandbach high school journeys have lots of issues. Bus stops near new houses are needed. Bus stops nearer bungalows and nursing homes. Would be nice to have bus every 30 min, as its always late anyway. Needs to be a bus that goes directly to Northwich instead of all round the houses to Winsford first. There is no bus service on Sundays. Return to the half hourly service for the 37 at busy times please.

Disappointed that there are no bus services to and from the town centre from the Kingsbourne Estate in Nantwich

Use the No.12 Route at least 3 times per week to travel into Crewe and onto Leighton Hospital and rely on the service a great deal.

Support initiative for the No12 bus to be available on Sundays to Rope & for the Bus 84 to service Willaston at late nights. Vote for the frequency of the bus No. 12 & 84 services, & the extensions of the existing bus routes. Hope to see that buses maintain hygienic conditions; seats are improved & that drivers are more considerate to the elderly passengers.

The greatest limiting factors to bus use, are: Ticketing. Customers must pay separately on each bus. There is no 'through ticket' or day pass, which is valid on all routes Day passes and weekly tickets need to cover all routes within the region, so that people can get to where they want to go without paying twice. Routes. In Crewe, almost all buses use Edleston Road, Edleston Road is slow, delays occur. This right turn could be banned to cars, which can use the next road (High St) to make their right turn. Also, no bus goes directly along Nantwich Road, from Crewe Railway station to Aldi. All deviate to the town centre & back. This discourages passengers from Nantwich & Wistaston areas from using the bus to get to the railway station. Lack of Bus priority lanes. There are few, not enough, the bus needs to be faster and cheaper than the car. Parked cars. So many routes have to navigate parked cars, to help keep road clear for buses, is essential.

Please run a service to Didsbury again as do not drive and unable to see family who live there very much.

The bus 92 to Buglowton along Buxton Road may need to go further down with Buxton Road uptown the new estate Hudson meadows. It's a long walk on a steep terrain.

Pleased that the 130 Sunday service has been reinstated. Very satisfactory when I used it, driver on time and very pleasant.

Would use the service more if it returned to every hour and a half, or better still, hourly as it once was. Travel from Hazel Grove to Poynton to do some shopping and have to stay in Poynton each time for 2 hours and 45min, as there is no alternative bus service to return home.

Is there any good reason why the distance between the successive bus stops at the Free Life Church/Westbury Close and corner of Whirlow Road/Laidon Avenue is at least twice the distance between other adjacent bus stops? Why is there no stop in the vicinity of the Fuller Drive/Chalfield Close corner?

Willaston C84 bus service does not have a last nightly bus in the village. This bus could be from Nantwich at a later time than at present. It would allow us to watch a film at the civic hall and return by public transport.

I live in Holmes Chapel, and we have a very limited bus service to Congleton and Crewe. With an ageing population we need more and better services, particularly to Northwich, Knutsford, Altrincham and Wilmslow.

When train schedules were disrupted, I was unable to go to Greater Manchester by train. Instead, I realised there are bus connections. From Macclesfield to Wilmslow, by 130 bus. Then onto Handforth where one can get a connecting service 42C from shopping centre and on to Manchester. Also, one can go on the 130 service to Manchester airport to connect to buses/trams.

The new bus station/car park is already perfect, however, there might be a few additions that would make it more so e.g. have one or two recycle-bins inside the waiting area, a self-operating service search, some Sunday bus services, new bus routes may be introduced, which would be very useful serving supermarkets, hospital visitors.

Crewe Grand Junction only served by 1 bus route, bus station to retail park takes too long (25 minutes) would make sense to operate the Elm Drive/Sydney part of the urney as a circular service. Sometimes use 85 service but if I miss the bus, it is a 1 and a half hour gap until the next one. Suggest the it be split at Crewe into two separate routes Crewe-Nantwich and Crewe-Newcastle to enable to Nantwich route to operate on an hourly pattern. Endorse re-instatement of 78 Nantwich – Leighton bus route has a good chance of being viable.

Preserve rail bus links previously supplied by trains services, in support of the rail link restoration group.

Group / organisation / council or councillor responses

ALIVE group

The elderly who use the bus state it is their only means of getting to Nantwich. The Go-to bus has to be booked online or by phone and payment is made on line. Updates about pickup times are on your smart phone. None of the ALIVE group would be able to do this. What happens about their bus pass. The Go-to costs £4 for a return journey so the elderly are being penalised. If the Go-to service is extended to include Leighton hospital a cut off time of 2.30pm would exclude afternoon appointments. Bunbury appears to be forgotten - cannot even get to Tarporley from the village.

Shavington-cum-Gresty Parish Council

Improve the No. 39 bus service and implement the evening service, which was funded through S106 money, in connection with Shavington Park. Consider improvements to ticketing by implementing through-ticketing principles. This will help avoid multiple charges and encourage bus use. Consider various highway improvements, such as implementing one-way systems and adding double yellow lines in selected areas, to improve bus mobility and provide better service to residents, ultimately encouraging more bus use.

Knutsford Town Councillor

Have concerns about the lack of bus service in our town and to/from our town. In Knutsford we have a wonderful bus station which is lacking only in buses. If you work in Northwich the 89 service doesn't service needs, not early or late enough. Similarly, the 88 service is restrictive and not nearly often enough. If we had buses every 15 minutes which cost £1 per journey I believe they would be well used by people. Also need a well-established town bus which will take people around town and into the main shopping area, doctors, library, schools which costs £1 per journey.

Poynton Town Council

Welcome the increase to an hourly service between Middlewood, Poynton and Stockport. Ideally the Town Council would like to see an hourly service to Macclesfield and later evening and Sunday services but appreciate that this might not be possible at this time. In addition, the Town Council welcomes the improvement in the Flexible bus service.

Bunbury Councillor

It is very much in my own and the Councils interests not to isolate the rural ward of Bunbury. More than happy to meet to work through any possible ideas.

- 1. Residents would like to keep the public transport with the opportunity to travel to both Tarporley and Nantwich more frequently.
- 2. Residents do not wish to rely on the Go-Too service. It does not accept concessionary travel, more complicated to use, subject to availability giving reduced options to plan ahead, and does not go out of borough. Problems with the Go-Too service in that disabled passengers have reported replacement services do not have wheelchair access. Digital exclusion for passengers subject to rural lack of broadband and telephone facilities. Concessionary users feel aggrieved that having paid taxes all their lives, they can't use the passes on the flexible system proposed.
- 3. Bunbury village suffers from a lack of walkable school routes. Many school transport buses enter and leave the village but there is no facility for those to be used by residents.
- 4. There are no bus shelters in the village. This is a deciding factor for vulnerable residents as to whether they can travel in the winter or bad weather days.
- 5. Connection to the existing 84 bus is only a few miles away, but currently not available.
- 6. Removal of a dedicated service would remove it from further government grant funding that might become available.
- 7. Residents are rightly wary of giving out bank card details over the phone or online. Age UK proactively advise against this and not enough has been communicated to residents to increase assurance.
- 8. Bunbury medical centre is partnered with Tarporley medical centre. Bunbury residents have access to Tarporley War Memorial Hospital, but without public transport to get there.
- 9. School children predominantly attend Tarporley High School. Meeting with friends can be difficult and they often feel disconnected during school holidays.
- 10. Town centres need visitors excluding rural communities without the means to travel independently. Market Day in Nantwich is especially popular.
- 11. A large part of the south of the borough would have no public transport which is against our own CEC open, fair, green policy.
- 12. I arranged a village get together with CEC representative from several services in January of this year. We ran a survey and lack of public transport came out as top of that survey.
- 13. The ALIVE group for the over 50's in Bunbury village is run by two volunteers who regularly provide transport to doctors and hospital appointments in Tarporley, Nantwich and Leighton. This is not a sustainable solution.

Cranage Parish Council

Losses of regular local bus services in recent years can cause social isolation and also prevent rural living for residents who cannot drive. The return of the 319-bus service to a frequent and regular Monday – Friday service is requested, to provide connectivity into Holmes Chapel and from there on to Crewe and Congleton.

Holmes Chapel Parish Council

Holmes Chapel Parish Council supports the plan to introduce more Demand Responsive Transport, particularly noting that it would be inclusive of all ages with fixed fares and reduction for concessions. This would need to be complementary to the fixed timetable service. This approach would be welcomed in the area around Holmes Chapel. From an environmental perspective we believe that the Council should move to make the town centred bus service, an all-electric bus fleet. We would finally urge that serious consideration is given to an APP based real-time bus tracker that provides users with the information they need to plan and use local bus services with confidence.

Congleton Town Council

The Town Council congratulates Cheshire East on securing an additional £3.455m to improve bus services across the borough and for the improvements already made on the 38 route.

Proposal 3. Congleton Town Council welcomes the proposals for the FlexiLink/ Go Too merger and increasing the offer of these services by extending the hours to include the evenings and Saturdays and making the service available to all age groups where there is no alternative or suitable service. Key points: the definition of no alternative or suitable service needs to be made clear. Increasing the prices to £2 for concessions and £4 for full fare-payers may be too much too quickly and it would be better to offer reduced fares (half this price) to establish the service. The service needs greater promotion. Service user eligibility should be kept under review. The booking process needs to be as easy as possible.

Improvements to buses in Congleton: The growth of Congleton Town and the surrounding parishes means many areas of Congleton are not within a 10-minute walk of a bus stop. We would like to see extensions and changes to the local bus services. Extend and improve the round-town services so that it reaches more areas of Congleton. Review routes so they go further into estates (like Henshall Hall and Bath Vale) so no house is more than 500m away, Add a West Heath circular route, add new round-town services for new housing estates e.g. off Manchester Road and Back Lane. Add services to industrial estates like Radnor Park and Viking Way to facilitate local employment travel, add a bus service between the shopping centres in Congleton (Town Centre, Barn Road, West Heath), Offer more mini-buses aligned with needs e.g. lunch clubs, blood clinics, and on-demand services, Implement connecting services from every part of town to the station without changing buses, to fit with key commuter trains from 7-9am and 5-7pm, Align buses at Macclesfield and Holmes Chapel train stations to link with the last trains back from Manchester, Create day/week/monthly passes that can be used for bus travel, regardless of the company, Invest in tap-in, tap-out technology for travel, Have clear information at the bus stops about the buses servicing that stop, Have clear information about bus timing, ideally real-time information at the stop, but if not well-advertised bus apps with the real-time information. Ideally, we would like to see all buses being able to take wheelchairs and power chairs. There was also concern about how to flag down a bus when you are visually impaired and struggle to distinguish the noise of a bus from other large vehicles and concern about the positioning and clarity of information at bus stops.

Bollington Town Council

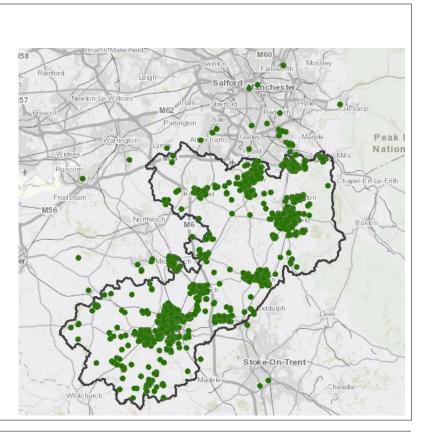
The Number 10 and 391/392 bus services are widely used and relied on by a significant number of Bollington residents, particularly for transport to Macclesfield and to a lesser extent to Stockport on a daily basis.

Proposal 2. We consider it most important that the current level of these services for the southern leg through Bollington is maintained on at least an hourly basis. Proposal 3. FlexiLink provides an important service but is somewhat restricted in availability at present. With the projected increase in numbers of persons aged over 65 in future years we suggest that this service be developed to allow for persons over 65 and that the service be made more flexible in booking arrangements. We would prefer to see more effort made to introduce linked local shuttle services in those towns identified as local service centres. The proposal to provide an improved Flexilink service collecting passengers from prescribed pick-up points or door to door on need is supported but the booking arrangements must be flexible and preferably same day with say 2hour notice. We believe that there would be an increase in usage with an improved more flexible service. to serve urban areas where public transport is inadequate. The increase in central government funding of £3.455 m is a welcome improvement – of the options offered we would prefer to see this used to restore Sunday services, extend evening services and to fund extensions to existing service routes to cover services to Macclesfield District Hospital and to the Barracks Mill Retail Park. With increasing emphasis on climate change it is important to encourage people to use public transport where possible and convenient. To do this, the bus service must be available on a regular and reliable basis throughout the day at a reasonable cost. Support must be provided for the increasing numbers of elderly people which inevitably will include more people with mobility and health issues. The present bus service can be improved by ensuring that it is available all day and every day including Sundays.

Appendix 3: Supporting maps

Map 1: All respondent postcodes

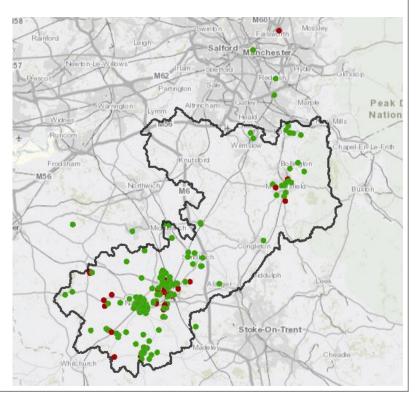
This map plots all respondent postcodes that were provided as part of the consultation. There was a good spread of response from across the borough and some response from neighbouring areas.



Map 2: Impact on how respondents would use the Nantwich Rural services if the proposed changes occurred by postcode.

This map plots respondent postcodes by those who stated that they would use the service for the first time or more often than they do now – indicated by the green dots compared to those who stated that they would use the service less – indicated by the red dots.

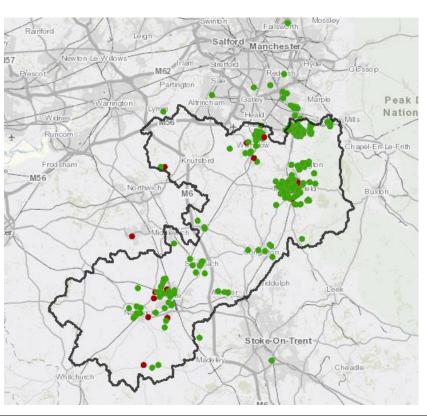
Those who indicated that there would be no change in service (those who answered for the same amount or would still not use) are not included within the map.



Map 3: Impact on how respondents would use the 391/392 service if the proposed changes occurred by postcode.

This map plots respondent postcodes by those who stated that they would use the service for the first time or more often than they do now – indicated by the green dots compared to those who stated that they would use the service less – indicated by the red dots.

Those who indicated that there would be no change in service (those who answered for the same amount or would still not use) are not included within the map.



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Appendix 4: Demographic breakdowns

A number of demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to ensure there was a wide range of views from across different characteristics. All of the questions were optional and therefore won't add up to the total number of responses received.

Table 6: Number of survey respondents by representation		
Category	Count	Percent
As an individual (e.g., local resident)	1,978	96%
As an elected Cheshire East Ward Councillor, or Town/Parish Council / Clerk /Councillor	33	2%
On behalf of a group, organisation or club	16	1%
On behalf of a local business	6	< 1%
Cheshire East staff member / employee	< 5	< 5%
Other e.g., bus operator, on behalf of child / family member who takes the bus, health employee	16	1%
Grand Total	2,055	100%

Table 7: Number of survey respondents by gender				
Category	Count	Percent		
Male	755	40%		
Female	1,082	57%		
Other gender identity	< 5	< 5%		
Prefer not to say	50	3%		
Grand Total	1,890	100%		

Table 8: Number of survey respondents by age group		
Category	Count	Percent
16-24	74	4%
25-34	81	4%
35-44	143	7%
45-54	216	11%
55-64	287	15%
65-74	452	24%
75-84	435	23%
85 and over	170	9%
Prefer not to say	52	3%
Grand Total	1,910	100%

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Table 9: Number of survey respondents by ethnic origin		
Category	Count	Percent
White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish	1728	92%
Any other White background	31	2%
Asian/Asian British	17	1%
Black African/Caribbean/Black British	10	1%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	9	< 1%
Other ethnic origin	< 5	< 5%
Prefer not to say	88	5%
Grand Total	1,885	100%

Table 10: Number of survey respondents by religious belief		
Category	Count	Percent
Christian	1088	58%
No Religion	542	29%
Buddhist	7	< 1%
Hindu	5	< 1%
Muslim	5	< 1%
Jewish	< 5	< 5%
Other religious belief	17	1%
Prefer not to say	205	11%
Grand Total	1,877	100%

Table 11: Number of survey respondents by limited activity due to health p disability	problem /	
Category	Count	Percent
Yes, a lot	487	26%
Yes, a little	393	21%
Not at all	886	47%
Prefer not to say	136	7%
Grand Total	1,902	100%

Report produced on 24/07/2024 by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council, Email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for further information.

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Service Number	Route Description	Change Proposed	Description of Change/Justification	Bus Support Criteria - Rank	Level of support	Peak Vehicle Requiremen t
130	Macclesfield - Wilmslow - Handforth - Wythenshawe	Yes – minor	To extend some journeys currently starting or finishing at Handforth back to Wythenshawe (Metrolink). Enabling more opportunities for travel into the TfGM area.	1	Fully Supported	3
88	Macclesfield- Knutsford - Altrincham	Yes – minor	Some afternoon journeys retimed to later in the evening. Vehicle capacity increases. To meet school needs in CEC and TfGM.	2	Fully Supported	4
89	Northwich - Lostock Gralam - Pickmere - Knutsford- Altrincham	Yes – minor	Withdraw some placing journeys. Low utilisation at the moment and rail alternative is available.	2	Fully Supported	Linked with service 88
39	Crewe - Walgherton - Nantwich	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated moderate patronage growth over the last 12 months.	4	Fully Supported	1
12	Shavington - Crewe Bus Station - Leighton Hospital	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated moderate patronage growth over the last 12 months.	5	Partially Supported	1
42	Crewe - Leighton Hospital - Congleton	Yes – minor	Some evening journeys retimed to be earlier to better fit with school times at Holmes Chapel.	6	Fully Supported	3
84	Crewe - Nantwich - Tarporley - Tarvin - Chester	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated moderate patronage growth over the last 12 months.	7	Partially Supported	Evening & Sunday CWAC Contract
60, 60A	Macclesfield - Rainow - New Mills - Hayfield	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated moderate patronage growth over the last 12 months.	8	Partially Supported (Derbyshire Contract)	2

Appendix 4 – Supported Bus Network Proposals

Service Number	Route Description	Change Proposed	Description of Change/Justification	Bus Support Criteria - Rank	Level of support	Peak Vehicle Requiremen t
37	Crewe - Sandbach - Middlewich - Winsford - Northwich	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated slight patronage growth over the last 12 months.	9	Partially Supported	Evening Contract joint with CWAC
317	Leighton Hosp - Sandbach - Rode Heath - Alsager	Yes – minor	Extend all journeys through to Close Lane, currently off peak only. To increase passenger numbers.	10	Fully Supported	2
58	Macclesfield - Buxton / Chatsworth	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated moderate patronage growth over the last 12 months.	11	Partially Supported (Derbyshire Contract)	2
318	Alsager - Rode Heath - Kidsgrove - Congleton	No	No change proposed at this stage. Patronage numbers have shown slight growth.	12	Fully Supported	1
38	Crewe - Sandbach - Congleton - Macclesfield	No	No change proposed at this stage. Patronage numbers have shown slight growth.	13	Partially Supported (evening services)	Evening Contract
92	Congleton - Buglawton Circular	No	No change proposed at this stage. Patronage numbers have shown slight growth.	14	Fully Supported	0.67
14A	Macclesfield - Sutton - Langley Circular	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated substantial patronage growth over the last 12 months.	15	Partially Supported	0.5
90	Congleton - Bromley Estate (Circular)	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated moderate patronage growth over the last 12 months.	16	Fully Supported	0.67
91	Congleton - Mossley Circular	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated substantial patronage growth over the last 12 months.	17	Fully Supported	0.67

Service Number	Route Description	Change Proposed	Description of Change/Justification	Bus Support Criteria - Rank	Level of support	Peak Vehicle Requiremen t
94, 94A	Congleton - Biddulph - Tunstall - Newcastle	No	No change proposed at this stage. This service has demonstrated substantial patronage growth over the last 12 months.	18	Partially Supported	1
319	Sandbach - Holmes Chapel Circular	No	No change proposed at this stage. Patronage numbers are stable.	19	Fully Supported	0
19, 19A	Macclesfield - Whirleybarn - Prestbury	No	No change proposed at this stage. Patronage numbers are stable.	20	Partially Supported	1
391, 392	Macclesfield - Stockport	Yes – Major	Increase frequency on section Middlewood- Stockport to hourly. To meet passenger needs on the busiest section of route providing access to health facilities and other services. There is evidence of latent demand and a desire to travel north to Stockport.	21	Fully supported	2
73	Nantwich - Wrenbury-Buerton - Audlem	Yes – Major	Focus on busiest section of route and extend to Leighton Hospital via Middlewich Road with some journeys covering Church Lane. To provide a link to the hospital from Nantwich and a more attractive service.	22	Fully Supported	1
72	Nantwich - Sound - Wrenbury - Audlem	Yes – Major	Focus on busiest section of route and extend to Leighton Hospital via Middlewich Road with some journeys covering Church Lane. To provide a link to the hospital from Nantwich and a more attractive service.	23	Fully Supported	1
312	Handforth Dean - Wilmslow	No	Fully supported by S106 Funding. This service launched in February 2023 pump primed with external funding with the intention	24	S106 funded	1

Service Number	Route Description	Change Proposed	Description of Change/Justification	Bus Support Criteria - Rank	Level of support	Peak Vehicle Requiremen t
			to grow patronage to become part of the supported bus network.			
316	Sandbach - Cookesmere Lane Circular	No	Minor off peak service with small number of journeys and low contract cost, linked to the 319. However, this is an important provision for communities and is well used.	25	Fully Supported	0
70	Nantwich - Faddiley - Bunbury - Tiverton	Yes - Major	To withdraw the service due to low usage and poor value for money. The service withdrawal will be mitigated by Flexible Transport in operation within the area.	26	Fully Supported	0

*Externally funded by neighbouring authorities.

Flexible Transport proposals are included in Appendix 2.

Appendix 5 – Bus Service Review 2024

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Engagement and our equality duty

Whilst <u>the Gunning Principles</u> set out the rules for consulting 'everyone', additional requirements are in place to avoid discrimination and inequality.

Cheshire East Council is required to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Act 2010 simplified previous anti-discrimination laws with a single piece of legislation. Within the Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149) has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, by consciously thinking about equality when making decisions (such as in developing policy, delivering services and commissioning from others)
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, by removing disadvantages, meeting their specific needs, and encouraging their participation in public life
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not

The Equality Duty helps public bodies to deliver their overall objectives for public services, and as such should be approached as a positive opportunity to support good decision-making.

It encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs. By understanding the effect of their activities on different people, and how inclusive public services can support and open up people's opportunities, public bodies are better placed to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective. Complying with the Equality Duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as this is allowed by discrimination law. For example, it may involve providing a service in a way which is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic, such as providing computer training to all people to help them access information and services.

The Equality Act identifies nine 'protected characteristics' and makes it a legal requirement to make sure that people with these characteristics are protected from discrimination:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity

- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Applying the equality duty to engagement

If you are developing a new policy, strategy or programme you may need to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment. You may be able to ascertain the impact of your proposal on different characteristics through desk-based research and learning from similar programmes, but you also need to carry out some primary research and engagement. People with protected characteristics are often described as 'hard to reach' but you will find everyone can be reached – you just need to tailor your approach, so it is accessible for them.

Contacting the <u>Equality and Diversity mailbox</u> will help you to understand how you can gain insight as to the impacts of your proposals and will ensure that you help the Council to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Section 1 – Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure

Proposal Title	Bus Service Review 2024
Date of Assessment	August 2024
Assessment Lead Officer Name	Chris Taylor/ Richard Hibbert
Directorate/Service	Highways and Transport
Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.	The bus network in Cheshire East plays a key role in providing access to jobs and services and connecting people and places. Buses are an essential component of an integrated transport network. They have a vital role in delivering key Council policy priorities for the economy, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, including decarbonisation.
	The local bus network is made up of 37 bus services, of which 21 services are fully supported by the Council (57%), 8 are partially supported by the Council (22%), such as evening journeys, and 8 services (22%) are fully commercial. The Council currently spends £2.8m supporting bus services which are not commercially viable but are deemed important and socially necessary.
	The last strategic bus service review was undertaken in 2017 and much has changed in that time. In 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic struck with significant impacts for passenger transport services and government published the National Bus Strategy in March 2021, which set out to rebuild bus patronage to 2019 levels and beyond.
	A methodology has been adopted based on an evidence-led approach which ensures our planning is informed and influenced by robust data and stakeholder consultation. The key tasks in the methodology are set out as in Appendix 1 to the Committee report, including the bus support criteria, performance data, accessibility mapping and gap analysis.

	An 8-week consultation was undertaken between 7 th May and 3 rd July 2024 to seek the views of bus operators, service users, local businesses and residents.
	With supported bus contracts due to come to an end on 31 st March 2025, there is a need to review the existing service provision to ensure retendered services offer value for money and the best possible coverage to serve residents of the borough with the right services in the right places. This bus service review will help to inform the process of retendering of services.
	In 2021, the Council was awarded £1.2m from the DfT Rural Mobility Fund to deliver a flexible, demand responsive transport (DRT) service in the south and west area of Nantwich – Go-Too was launched in October 2021 as a 3-year pilot project.
	As part of the bus service review, careful consideration has been given to the blend between fixed route and flexible transport services. There are many lessons learnt from the Go-Too pilot project which can be applied across the borough and there are clear opportunities to modernise the FlexiLink service and respond to consultation results from September 2023. These services will be included in the bus service review 2024 and associated consultation process.
Who is Affected?	 Three proposals were developed and consulted upon. These include: Nantwich rural service adjustments Poynton-Stockport frequency enhancement Flexible transport / DRT reconfiguration
	 Based on these proposals the following groups are likely to be directly impacted: Nantwich residents (particularly those in rural areas) Residents of Poynton FlexiLink users Go-Too users
	Looking at a wider picture of who might be affected by these proposals the below could also be affected:

 The general public (including residents and visitors to the borough); Cheshire East Council stakeholders; Public transport operators and staff; Local businesses/organisations; Schools and education establishments; Neighbouring local authorities; Governmental bodies (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership); Statutory transport bodies (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership); Statutory transport bodies (e.g. Department for Transport and Transport for the North). Partner organisations Town and Parish Councils; Umbrella organisations for people with specialist transport needs; such as: Age UK Space4Autism Disability Information Bureau (DIB) Cheshire Centre for Independent living Deafness Support Network ADCA Medical Transport Service Congleton Disability The Stroke Association Transport interest groups; such as: Grewe & District Bus Users Group Transport interest groups; such as: Crewe & District Bus Users Group Transition Wilmslow Active Travel Congleton Travel Cheshire 	
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 Transition Wilmslow Active Travel Congleton Travel Cheshire Environmental groups 	Transport interest groups; such as:
 Active Travel Congleton Travel Cheshire Environmental groups 	 Crewe & District Bus Users Group
 Travel Cheshire Environmental groups 	 Transition Wilmslow
Environmental groups	 Active Travel Congleton
	 Travel Cheshire
• MPs	Environmental groups
	• MPs

	This list has been devised considering the current users of bus services across the borough who would be affected positively or negatively by service adjustments.
Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.	Cheshire East's corporate plan recognises the importance of the bus network in supporting key strategic objectives such as reducing air pollution, reducing carbon emissions, enabling housing and employment growth, improving quality of place and protecting the environment.
	The Local Transport Plan (2019-2024) outlines the role transport will play in supporting the long-term goals to improve the economy, protect the environment, improve health and wellbeing and the quality of place. The methodology used to undertake the network review reflected this framework, considering social, economic and environmental impacts of bus services across the borough.
	Cheshire East's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) sets out the ambition for the bus network to improve the speed, reliability and quality of public transport, to encourage more residents to choose bus, make fewer car journeys and contribute to carbon reduction.

How does the service, service	Ensuring pre-consultation engagement takes place prior to a formal consultation will provide better
change, strategy, function or evidence as to how the Council is fostering good relations and advancing equality o	
procedure help the Council meet	
the requirements of the <u>Public</u>	Conducting a bus service review and public consultation exercise will ensure that any changes to the
Sector Equality Duty?	supported bus network will, where possible, not impact users who are considered to have protected
	characteristics.

Section 2- Information – What do you know?

What do you	What information (qualitative and quantitative) and/or research have you used to		
know?	commission/change/decommission the service, strategy, function, or procedure?		
Information	Patronage data for the Council's supported bus network reveals that a significant number of passengers use		
you used	 concessionary passes. As of February 2024, this equates to over 24,000 passengers which is 36% of total travellers on supported bus services. This data is informed by regular passenger number updates that are received from bus operators of these services. These concessionary pass holders are likely to have one or multiple protected characteristics, including disabilities and being of young or old age. Bus services across Cheshire East are available to all people and therefore any service changes as a result of the bus service review and consultation have the potential to impact others with protected characteristics, including gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religious or faith groups, sex and sexual orientation. 		
	As part of the consultation undertaken between 7 th May and 3 rd July 2024, the following responses were received regarding the proposals put forward at that time:		
	 Proposal 1 – Rural Nantwich: Will lead to rural isolation for those with no other modes of transport potentially impacting mental health and leading to loss of jobs. 		

•	 Will impact on the elderly – as the Nantwich rural bus services are the means of reaching Nantwich for shopping, access to the hospital, opticians, dentists, and meeting friends. Withdrawal would leave those with reduced mobility and reduced vision housebound and isolated. Alternative (flexible transport) not suitable to those who are digitally excluded such as those within low-income households and those who do not have a mobile phone / access to internet. Concessionary passes cannot be used on flexible transport creating a disadvantage compared to the fixed route services. Young people use the bus (70) to connect onto Chester on the 84 – gives them independence and freedom – lifeline for them to meet up with friends and get out of the house.
Propos	sal 2 – Route 391/392 (not directly related to the proposal, however some suggestions for improvement):
•	Disabled people aren't able to get on the 391/392 bus service because of limited access – ageing buses difficult to embark / disembark.
•	Recent changes to the 392 service (taking the 392 bus off Crossfield and South West avenue) has made it difficult for disabled and older residents to access the service as they must walk to the main road.
Propos	sal 3 – Flexible Transport:
•	Needs to be affordable for those on low income.
•	Important that the elderly can still get door-to-door pick up and drop off.
•	Service should be free for the elderly; the charge is unfair to those with passes.
•	Many elderly people cannot use apps or smart phones a phone line should always be available.
•	Pre-booking is prohibitive for some disabled people.
•	Should also be available for carers of disabled people as unable to travel without assistance.
•	09:30-14:30 is not useful to all disabled people as carers do not always arrive on time and can take people a long time to get dressed, eat, etc.
•	Some residents use Go-Too to get to school, as they are not able to secure a place on the school bus and there is no other way to get there.

Gaps in your	There is a higher incidence of bus use amongst young people, older people, people with disabilities and women. We
Information	therefore anticipate that any alterations to services will disproportionately impact on these population groups.
	Currently data regarding certain protected groups and bus utilisation is sparse. The public consultation provides an
	opportunity to have greater engagement with these groups to ensure any proposals consider the potential impact and
	potential mitigation measures.

3. What did people tell you?

What did people tell you	What consultation and engagement activities have you already undertaken and what did people tell you? Is there any feedback from other local and/or external regional/national consultations that could be included in your assessment?
Details and	Pre-consultation engagement with Poynton Town Council helped to understand the needs of bus users (in particular
dates of the	those with protected characteristics) and to help build improved relationships with the Council. This engagement
consultation/s and/or	allowed for the needs of residents to be understood early in the process and mitigation built into the proposals.
engagement activities	The Council also receives regular communication from bus users and engagement with bus user groups who have raised concerns about the lack of direct access from Nantwich to Leighton Hospital. This was considered as part of the process and mitigation built into the proposals.
	A period of consultation took place for 8 weeks during 7 th May and 3 rd July 2024. The findings of this consultation are presented in detail within the consultation summary report. There was broad agreement with all proposals during this consultation period.
Gaps in consultation and	At this stage a list of key stakeholders was developed to ensure a wide range of views were captured and reflected as part of the consultation process. Ongoing engagement will be undertaken through email and telephone correspondence, as well as focus group sessions with interested stakeholders.

engagement	
feedback	

4. Review of information, consultation feedback and equality analysis

Protected	What do you know?	What did people tell you?	What does this mean?
characteristics	Summary of information used to inform	Summary of customer and/or staff	Impacts identified from the
groups from the Equality Act 2010	the proposal	feedback	information and feedback (actual and potential). These can be either positive, negative or have no impact.
Age	A key market for bus services across Cheshire East are both residents of old and young age. Within Cheshire East there are over 40,000 young people and 80,000 people of retirement age (Census, 2021). This is demonstrated within the consultation sample, where 56% of respondents were over the age of 65. Alterations may result in services operating in a different way, which may have a disproportionate impact on older people and young people. UK Statistics (Age UK) show that those aged 70-84 are the most likely to use the bus at least weekly (61.2% do so), followed by those aged 85+ (57.1%,	Consultation responses have been provided from a range of age groups: 16-24 4% 25-34 4% 35-44 7% 45-54 11% 55-64 15% 65-74 24% 75-84 23% 85 and over 9% For all age groups the majority agree with the three proposals that have been put forward. However, some concerns have been raised regarding the withdrawal of	The information tells us that the majority of people from all age groups are in favour of the proposals. This is a positive response and allows us to progress towards implementation of these proposals. There are some concerns regarding the withdrawal of some Nantwich rural services and the impact this has on accessibility for elderly residents. This will need to be carefully managed and supplemented by flexible transport, where possible, which will be used to mitigate the negative impact of service

whilst people aged 60-69 are least	some Nantwich rural services,	withdrawal within rural Nantwich,
likely to use the bus weekly (39.3%).	replacement with DRT and the impact	providing service to key service
	this will have, particularly on elderly	centres from areas previously
Alternatively, UK statistics (National	residents.	served by the 70 service (i.e.
Travel Survey 2022) show that those		Bunbury and Bulkeley).
aged 17 to 20 made the highest	Residents are wary of DRT and giving	
proportion of their trips using public	out bank card details over the phone	
transport modes (22%).	or online. Age UK proactively advise	
	against this and not enough has been	
Conversations with user groups	communicated to residents to increase	
revealed that they have a higher proportion of elderly residents and	assurance.	
highlighted the importance of bus	It is also noted that concessionary	
services. The group felt that Cheshire	fares are being charged on DRT	
East and bus operators cannot only	services which would be a	
focus on what is best for the masses as	disadvantage for existing bus users	
their bus services cover rural locations	who travel for free. Concessionary	
and are a lifeline to many elderly and	users feel aggrieved that having paid	
infirm residents.	taxes all their lives, they can't use the	
	passes on the flexible system	
	proposed.	
	Nantwich residents also outlined that	
	school children predominantly attend	
	Tarporley High School. Meeting with	
	friends can be difficult and they often	
	feel disconnected during school	
	holidays.	

		The ALIVE group for the over 50's in Bunbury village is run by two volunteers who regularly provide	
		transport to doctors and hospital	
		appointments in Tarporley, Nantwich	
		and Leighton. This is not a sustainable	
		solution and residents believe fixed	
		route bus services should be available.	
Disability	Disability and accessibility statistics for	FlexiLink users must be over the age of	The consultation responses reveal
	England demonstrate that disabled	80 and/or have a disability.	that disabled residents are in
	adults appear to rely more on the bus	These existing users have been	favour of the proposals put
	than non-disabled adults. Adults with	targeted as part of this consultation to	forward. This positive response
	disabilities made a greater proportion	ensure their views inform and	allows us to progress with these
	of their travel by bus (7%) compared	influence any service changes.	proposals.
	with 5% for adults without disabilities.		
		187 existing users responded to the	However, concerns regarding
	Of those completing the survey a	consultation and 73% of these agreed	service withdrawals and
	significant proportion (47%) outlined	with the FlexiLink proposals.	concessionary fares will need to be
	that their activity is limited due to		mitigated prior to service delivery.
	health problems/disability.	We also received strong support from	These mitigations will be co-
		Nursing Homes, Carers Hubs and	designed considering the
	Any alterations to services as a result	community groups for improved bus	consultation outcomes and
	of the review may adversely impact on	connections to Leighton Hospital,	through discussions with key
	disabled transport users. This is	which is being delivered as part of our	partners (operators, users, user
	possible as disabled residents	Nantwich rural service enhancement.	groups).
	represent a significant proportion of		
	bus users (with limited transport	Residents raised concerns with the Go-	From 1 st April 2025 it is proposed
	alternatives) and are dependent on	Too service in that disabled passengers	that the flexible transport service

	bus services. Any service adjustments that reduce the level of service or introduce passenger fares (where free concessionary travel was previously available) will be seen as a negative impact.	have reported replacement services do not have wheelchair access. There is a perception that this would leave disabled residents at a disadvantage if flexible transport was to replace fixed route services.	operates at designated pick-up points, with the reassurance of a door-to-door service for those with limited mobility.
Gender reassignment	No information reviewed at present		
Pregnancy and maternity	No information reviewed at present		
Race/ethnicity	No information reviewed at present		
Religion or belief	No information reviewed at present		
Sex	Nationally public bus services are generally used more by women than by men – consequently any alteration to bus service provision may have a greater effect on women. A study by TfL revealed that within the UK women are more likely to use the bus at least once a week (64%) than men (57%).	Consultation responses had good representation from male and female genders. 40% male, 57% female and 3% other. In all gender categories there was broad agreement with the proposals.	A positive response has been received from all genders allowing us to progress with the proposals to implementation.

Sexual orientation	No information reviewed at present	
Marriage and civil partnership	No information reviewed at present	

5. Justification, Mitigation and Actions

Mitigation	What can you do?
	Actions to mitigate any negative impacts or further enhance positive impacts
Please provide justification for the proposal if negative	A wide range of engagement has been undertaken with residents, businesses,
impacts have been identified?	stakeholders and Council members to ensure the needs of the bus users are
Are there any actions that could be undertaken to mitigate, reduce or remove negative impacts?	understood and proposals were sufficiently designed to meet these needs.
	During these discussions the need for a connection from Nantwich to Leighton
Have all available options been explored? Please include details of alternative options and why they couldn't be	Hospital was revealed as a key concern and low bus frequencies within Poynton were identified. Service proposals have been designed to address these local concerns.
considered?	Where services are to be withdrawn in rural Nantwich (service 70) there was a risk that vulnerable groups, including the elderly and disabled, will be without a reliable
Please include details of how positive impacts could be further enhanced, if possible?	mode of transport, leading to isolation.
	To mitigate this, a single integrated flexible transport service is proposed from 1 st
	April 2025 to fill the gap in rural communities such as Bunbury, Bulkeley, Lightwood
	Green and Burleydam and ensure a service is available.
	Concessionary passes will be accepted on the flexible transport service allowing free
	travel at statutory times. This should provide a viable alternative to disabled and elderly residents.

The flexible transport service will also have a telephone booking system, as well as online bookings, to avoid isolation for those without digital connectivity.
The flexible transport service will operate at designated pick-up points with the reassurance of a door-to-door service for those with limited mobility.
The flexible transport service will use fully accessible vehicles to ensure equal access for people with disabilities under normal service conditions.

6. Monitoring and Review -

Monitoring and	How will the impact of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure be
review	monitored? How will actions to mitigate negative impacts be monitored? Date for review of the EIA
Details of monitoring activities	Service changes as a result of the bus service review will be subject to performance monitoring (in terms of patronage by time of day and day of week), analysis of complaints post implementation, and equality monitoring data through passenger surveys and Transport Focus' Your Passenger Journey Survey.
	This monitoring will also evaluate information on whether actions to mitigate negative impacts have achieved their desired outcome.
Date and responsible officer for the review of the EIA	Richard Hibbert – July 2025

7. Sign Off

When you have completed your EIA, it should be sent to the <u>Equality</u>, <u>Diversity and Inclusion Mailbox</u> for review. If your EIA is approved, it must then be signed off by a senior manager within your Department (Head of Service or above).

Once the EIA has been signed off, please forward a copy to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer to be published on the website. For Transparency, we are committed to publishing all Equality Impact Assessments relating to public engagement.

Name	Tom Moody
Signature	Thomas Moody
Date	10 th September 2024

8. Help and Support

For support and advice please contact EqualityandInclusion@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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OPEN

Highways and Transport Committee

19 September 2024

Crossing Facilities Strategy

Report of: Tom Moody, Director of Highways and Infrastructure

Report Reference No: HTC/07/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of Report

1. This report brings forward the Cheshire East Crossing Facilities Strategy (Appendix 1) for adoption into formal Council practice.

Executive Summary

- 2. Demand for crossing facilities exceeds the Council's available funding each year. There is a need for a consistent approach to the prioritisation of locations for controlled crossings (i.e. those controlled by traffic signals).
- 3. There is no statutory requirement or obligation to provide crossing facilities. Provision is considered within affordability of capital and maintenance as part of prioritisation of funding based upon consideration of safety issues.
- 4. The Council's current Crossings Policy dates from 2011 and was based on Department for Transport (DfT) guidance from 1995, which was withdrawn and superseded in 2019.
- 5. Following a decision by this committee in January 2023 the Council has developed and consulted upon a revised strategy for considering requests for crossings facilities. The proposed strategy will help the Council improve the way it manages and maintains the local highway network by providing a consistent process for considering crossing requests and determining the priority for funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways and Transport Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Approve the adoption of the Cheshire East Crossing Facilities Strategy in Appendix 1.
- 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Highways and Infrastructure to make technical amendments to the Cheshire East Crossing Facilities Strategy and its Prioritisation Matrix and update the Highways and Transport Committee on any significant changes as required.

Background

- 6. The Council's Crossing Policy was approved in December 2011, and sets out the criteria for selecting controlled crossings. This policy was based upon advice in the Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/95 and used the PV² method of calculating the degree of conflict between vehicles and pedestrians.
- 7. The policy context is that LTN 1/95 was withdrawn in December 2019 and was superseded by the Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 6 Traffic Control (2019) ("TSM"). The TSM promotes a qualitative approach to assessing potential controlled pedestrian crossing points. The Council strategy on crossing facilities should therefore be with reference to the TSM.
- 8. A Notice of Motion proposed at Council in October 2022 requested changes to the process for considering pedestrian crossings. A report outlining actions to address the issues was provided in January 2023.
- 9. A new approach and Priority Matrix has been produced to change the criteria for prioritisation. It also includes a formalised qualitative assessment and informal consultation with the ward members and relevant Town or Parish Council. This new approach will also enable greater consideration to be given to trip generators such as shop locations, schools and other community facilities.
- 10. The aim of this approach is to identify suppressed demand for crossings and to factor in local support for the proposals. It is considered that this information will help give wider consideration at an earlier stage in the assessment, determination of the type of crossing and help establish relative priority with other sites.
- 11. Traditionally, the national approach to traffic signal design has tended to prioritise vehicular movement over pedestrians. Department for Transport design documents such as Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2 have shifted focus to considering the wider street scape and the types of users in an area.
- 12. The setting of traffic signal timings is intrinsically linked to traffic conditions and pedestrian movements. Timings are outlined in the TSM Chapter 6. Any future amendments to traffic signal timing in the Borough must be linked to this.

Consultation and Engagement

- 13. On 23 November 2023, this Committee resolved to consult on the draft Crossing Facilities Strategy. The consultation was carried out for 6 weeks between 29 January and 10 March 2024.
- 14. The consultation was promoted to a wide range of stakeholders and a total of 149 consultation responses were received.
- 15. The full consultation report is shown in Appendix 2.

Questionnaire Feedback

- 16. A significant proportion of respondents agreed the proposed strategy should be adopted by the council (65% agree, 26% disagree).
- 17. Those in agreement the strategy should be adopted welcomed the improvements to it and felt it represented a step forward. They were also pleased to see a move on from the PV² method of assessing locations.
- 18. Survey respondents were also asked to rate the Prioritisation Matrix Areas with respect to whether the right measure was used and whether the proposed scores for each measure were appropriate.
- 19. Key findings were as follows:
 - Area G Supporting growth saw the highest levels of support (71% agreed the right measures had been used, 67% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate);
 - b. Area A Casualty Reduction 50% agreed the right measures had been used, 41% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate; and
 - c. Area B Sustainable Travel saw the lowest levels of support. 40% agreed the right measures had been used, 33% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.
- 20. Survey respondents also made various suggestions around items that should be added to the Strategy and Prioritisation Matrix.
- 21. Amendments to the Crossing Facilities Strategy and Prioritisation Matrix following the consultation are shown in Appendix 3.

Reasons for Recommendations

22. This strategy aligns with the Cheshire East Corporate Plan 2021-2025 aim of being 'A thriving and sustainable place' under the priority 'A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel'.

- 23. Adoption of the strategy will improve outcomes provided by the highways service by:
 - a. Enabling a uniform approach to manage new and existing pedestrian crossings on the highway network.
 - b. Ensuring the management of new and existing pedestrian crossings is aligned with the latest industry guidance on traffic signal control.

Other Options Considered

24. The alternative to implementing a revised strategy is to continue with the existing (2011) policy. This would mean that the strategy is inconsistent with the 2019 changes to the Traffic Signs Manual, which is not acceptable.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer / Legal

25. There are no legal implications associated with the implementation of this strategy.

Section 151 Officer / Finance

- 26. There is no statutory obligation to provide crossing facilities. Decisions to construct crossings facilities are subject to the prioritisation of capital fundings within the Council's affordability and the availability of revenue resources for maintenance and liability arising across the whole life of the asset. Any schemes identified will be managed through a prioritisation process to ensure existing highway budgets are not exceeded.
- 27. Decisions to install crossings facilities will be prioritised using the strategy, with an emphasis of reducing revenue implications where controlled crossings are not necessary.

Policy

28. This Strategy aligns with the following strategic aims and priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25:

An open and enabling organisation.	A council which empowers and cares about people	A thriving and sustainable place
Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making.	Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient.	A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel

An open and enabling organisation.	A council which empowers and cares about people	A thriving and sustainable place
Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation	Reduce health inequalities across the borough	
Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents	Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs	

29. Where crossing facilities have been requested to be installed to make developments acceptable from a transport perspective (e.g. under s106 agreements) but have yet to be constructed, decisions to proceed with those crossings will be reviewed against this strategy prior to proceeding with schemes.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 30. An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted to ensure that this strategy considers the needs of all community members and avoids discrimination.
- 31. Where pedestrian crossings are considered, this will benefit vulnerable road users with protected characteristics such as children, the elderly and those with mobility impairments and disabilities, both visible and non-visible.

Human Resources

32. This strategy will be implemented by the existing Highways service alongside Cheshire East Highways. There are no additional or changed HR requirements as a result of this decision.

Risk Management

33. The proposed strategy sets out a clear and consistent approach for how the Council will manage new and existing crossing facilities. The strategy is aligned with current guidance. This will reduce the reputational risk regarding consistency of considering crossing requests.

Rural Communities

34. The proposed strategy relates to the whole of the local roads network in Cheshire East, recognising the differences between urban and rural roads. There are no specific rural community impacts arising from the proposed strategy.

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Children and Young People / Cared for Children

35. Children and young people are a recognised group of vulnerable road users. As such, they are expected to benefit from improved pedestrian crossings in Cheshire East. There are no specific issues related to children and young people / cared for children associated with the implementation of the proposed strategy.

Public Health

36. Improved pedestrian crossings can positively contribute to public health improvements by reducing road accidents and encouraging active travel. There are no specific Public Health impacts associated with the proposed strategy.

Climate Change

37. Improved pedestrian crossings can encourage greater levels of active travel, as an alternative to motorised travel, thereby contributing to the Council's objectives for reducing transport-related carbon emissions. There are no specific Climate Change impacts associated with the implementation of this strategy.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Domenic de Bechi Head of Highways Domenic.deBechi@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 Crossing Facilities Strategy Appendix 2 Consultation Summary Appendix 3 Changes Following Consultation
Background Papers:	<none></none>



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July 2024

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Document history and status

Rev	Date	Description	Ву	Review	Approved
R1	Sept 2022	Draft Crossing Facilities Strategy	F Price		
R2		Revised following feedback from consultation	D. Mitchell		

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1. Strategy background

1.1 Overview

The Council recognises that having a strategy for the provision of pedestrian crossings is important for the safe movement of those crossing the highway. It also supports realising the council's Local Transport Plan objectives of enabling greater active travel and promoting a healthier active lifestyle.

This Crossings Strategy governs the installation of both controlled and uncontrolled crossings to aid the safe passage of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. The Council receives many requests for crossings and it is important that the most deserving locations are prioritised against the available budgets.

This document predominantly applies to provision of facilities for pedestrians but also includes cyclists and horse riders, whilst accommodating vulnerable road users.

While there is no statutory requirement to provide crossings, they are provided as amenities to give access and easier movement across our highways. Generally, the provision of crossings should be targeted to assist those who experience the most difficulty and potential danger whilst also providing higher quality facilities that encourage walking and cycling wherever possible.

The type of crossing installed depends on several factors and should be appropriate to the circumstances of the location. There are many advantages and disadvantages to each type of available crossing facility with the demands and behaviour of road users being a key consideration.

To protect crossing users and to help them cross the highway, we provide different types of crossings at road junctions and busy crossing points. These include:

- Uncontrolled crossings
- Pedestrian islands / refuges
- Zebra crossings
- Puffin crossings
- Toucan crossings
- Pegasus crossings
- Parallel crossings
- School Crossing Patrols

To cross the highway safely, sufficient crossing opportunities in traffic flow are required, along with pedestrians being able to estimate vehicle speeds. Most people can cross without the provision of a controlled crossing if there are sufficient crossing opportunities. At locations with higher vehicular flows, particular groups of pedestrians, may require a crossing facility before they feel it is safe enough to cross.



2. Introduction

2.1 Background

Creating safer crossing points plays a crucial role in encouraging pedestrian activity, especially for vulnerable road users.

The right type of crossing in the right location is key as different types of crossing are appropriate at different locations. The factors such as road character, traffic speed, along with vehicle and pedestrian numbers should be taken into consideration.

It is necessary to evaluate and prioritise requests for new installations as the whole life costs of crossings needs to be considered. The Council's budget constrains the number of crossing facilities that are provided and maintained.

Propensity for active travel is greatly linked to local affluence of an area.

This Strategy aims to achieve consistency in the assessment and provision of pedestrian crossings across the Borough prioritising locations where they are most needed.

2.2 Scope

This Strategy applies to:

- Cheshire East's existing road network;
- New roads constructed by or on behalf of Cheshire East Council; and
- New roads constructed by others for adoption by Cheshire East Council.



3. Policy Context

3.1 National Guidance

For roads with a speed limit of 40mph or under, we adhere to the current government guidance on the assessment and design of crossings outlined in 'Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 6 Traffic Control'. This supersedes the previous guidance given in Local Transport Notes:

- LTN 1/95 The Assessment of Pedestrian Crossings; and
- LTN 2/95 The Design of Pedestrian Crossings.

For roads with speed limits above 40mph, the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) may be more appropriate. The current standards for the design and assessment of crossings are:

- GG 142 Walking, Cycling and Horse-riding Assessment and Review; and
- CD 143 Designing for Walking, Cycling and Horse-riding.

Where a crossing is desired to support a cycle route the requirements of the guidance set out in Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN1/20) should be considered.

Additionally, where a crossing is desired, the Department for Transport (DfT) guide titled Inclusive Mobility, A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure, should be considered.

Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 6 Traffic Control, recommends that authorities develop their own policy to set out which types of crossing are to be provided in what circumstances, and why to ensure local policy is applied consistently and road users are clear of what is expected of them.

The choice of crossing type and their design is also complemented by further advice in Manual for Streets.

3.2 Cheshire East Council context

This policy recognises that the highway network is for use by all. Its strategic aims are promoting sustainable active travel, help create healthy communities and reduce carbon emissions through the introduction of crossing facilities to support our local communities.

3.3 Local Transport Plan

The Local Transport Plan sets out a framework for how transport will support wider policies to improve our economy, protect our environment, make attractive places to live, work and play and the role transport will play in supporting the long-term goals of the Council.

This strategy helps deliver the priorities of the Local Transport Plan by setting out how the Council manage requests for crossing facilities and the types of crossing facility that can be accommodated in the Borough. This is alongside the active travel aspirations of the Council when considering implementation of a crossing.

The Strategy also recognises that to support economic growth some locations should be prioritised for the consideration of crossing facilities. This is illustrated in the Prioritisation Matrix identified in Section 5.



4. Crossing Types

4.1 Introduction

There are two categories of formal pedestrian crossings: Uncontrolled and Controlled. The following sections outline the categories and illustrate the crossing types in each category.

4.2 Uncontrolled Crossings

An uncontrolled crossing can significantly benefit wheelchair or motorised scooter users as the kerb is lowered to be in line with the carriageway. They are usually used in areas of high footfall, low traffic and where a controlled crossing cannot be justified.

The two main types of uncontrolled pedestrian crossing points are:

- Dropped kerbs
- Dropped kerbs with a pedestrian refuge

Before implementing uncontrolled crossings, site assessments will be undertaken and considered alongside the engineering judgement of the assessing highway engineer.



4.2.1 Dropped Kerbs

Figure 1 Example of a dropped kerb

Dropped kerbs are used in low-traffic areas to support pedestrian routes.

A dropped kerb is mainly to be used when traffic volume and speed is low. Although they are subject to site constraints, they can be introduced without a formal consultation.

Dropped crossings support pedestrian routes for vulnerable road users. New dropped crossings will include tactile paving to assist visually impaired people to locate the dropped crossing point.

The tactile paving also provides a warning to help pedestrians differentiate between where the footway ends, and the carriageway begins.



Tactile paving should be installed in accordance with the latest revision of DfT guidance Document 'The use of Tactile Paving Surfaces' guidance, wherever possible, whilst ensuring the 'right solution' in the 'right location'.

Drivers should give way to those waiting to cross a road.

4.2.2 Dropped Kerb with a pedestrian refuge



Figure 2 Example of a dropped kerb with a pedestrian refuge

A dropped kerb with a pedestrian refuge is considered where the road width exceeds 10 metres. It provides a refuge for pedestrians and cyclists and narrows the carriageway, which may also reduce speed of traffic.

This type of crossing may help pedestrians cross quicker, as a gap in traffic is only required from one direction at a time. However, capacity can be an issue if a large number of pedestrians need to stand on the refuge.

4.3 Controlled Crossings

Controlled crossings use a combination of road markings, signs and signals as the control mechanism for pedestrians and traffic.

For all new controlled crossings, the asset register should include notes on the reason for the installation of the crossing facility.

The introduction of a controlled crossing should be in line with the latest Department for Transport, DfT, guidance such as Traffic Signs Manual chapter 6 or Local Transport Note LTN 1/20.

All new or upgraded crossing facilities should include:

- Adequate drainage;
- Ducting for cabling with sufficient capacity for future upgrades;
- Adequate lighting levels in line with national guidance or standards;
- Low energy consumption equipment; and
- Tactile paving.



Signalised crossing facilities may include audible 'bleepers' if this has been assessed as necessary by a suitably qualified and experienced design engineer. They should also consider the use of assistive technology to support vulnerable road users.

The waiting time for pedestrians at signalised crossing facilities will be no more than 30 seconds at peak times unless the crossing facilities are linked to junction signals.

When considering the installation of controlled crossing facilities the Council will use the most appropriate type for the location in line with national guidance such as Local Transport Note, LTN, 1/20 and Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, DMRB.

The types of crossing outlined in sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.8 are the most commonly used types.

4.3.1 Zebra Crossing



Figure 3 Example of a zebra crossing

Zebra crossings are usually considered where pedestrian flows are relatively low and traffic flows are no more than moderate, as well as considering wider context and design factors.

The likely effect of a Zebra crossing can be tested by checking the availability of gaps in the traffic. Gaps of around five seconds are needed for an able person to cross a 7-metre carriageway.

Vehicle delays are typically five seconds for a single able person crossing but can be much

more where irregular streams of people cross over extended periods.

Where gaps in traffic flows are few, and waiting times long because people feel it may be hazardous to establish precedence, a Zebra crossing is likely to be unsuitable. Where traffic speeds are higher than 30 m.p.h., people will require longer gaps in the traffic flow or be exposed to the risk of more serious injury if precedence is not conceded for any reason.

Zebra crossings should not be installed on roads with an 85th percentile speed of 35 mph or above.

Zebra crossings should not be considered where there are significant numbers of vulnerable road users.

Additional LED lighting in posts and around the flashing beacon may also be considered.



4.3.2 Parallel Crossing



Figure 4- Example of a parallel crossing

Parallel crossings operate similarly to zebras. However, they also include the provision for cyclists to cross without having to dismount. The parallel crossing consists of a standard zebra crossing as above. However, an adjacent area to the zebra is marked with a broken white line for cyclists to cross to provide a continuous route for cyclists.

Those on the road must stop when they see a crossing user about to cross.

4.3.3 Signalised control crossings

Signalised Controlled Crossings are more suitable where:

- Vehicle speeds are high, and other options are considered unsuitable;
- There is normally a greater than average proportion of vulnerable road users;
- Vehicle flows are very high and pedestrians have difficulty in asserting precedence;
- There is a specific need for a crossing for cyclists or equestrians;
- The crossing could be confused by traffic management measures, such as a contraflow bus lane;
- There is a need to link with adjacent controlled junctions or crossings;
- The numbers of people crossing are high and delays to vehicular traffic would otherwise be excessive.

The Council does not install count down timers for crossing users at standalone controlled crossings.



4.3.4 PUFFIN Crossings (Pedestrian User Friendly Intelligent Crossing)



Figure 5- Example of a Puffin Crossing

Puffin crossings can take account of the overall crossing time, which is established each time by on crossing pedestrian detectors. The green person signal only represents an invitation to cross and is followed by an adjustable 'all red period'. This period is determined by the on-crossing pedestrian detectors and is extended sufficiently to allow a pedestrian to safely cross the carriageway.

The demand for the crossing is triggered by the push button unit but kerbside pedestrian detectors can be fitted to cancel demands that are no longer required (when a person crosses before the green man lights). At some crossings a demand can also be registered through use of a 'Smart app' or 'Smart Cross' device to support those with visual impairments.

Puffin crossings have the red person / green person signals above the push button unit on the approaching traffic side of the crossing. This layout encourages pedestrians waiting at the crossing to look at the approaching traffic at the same time as looking at the red person / green person signal.



4.3.5 TOUCAN Crossings (Two can cross)



Toucan crossings are designed for both pedestrians and cyclists and are typically used adjacent to a cycle-path. Cyclists should dismount to cross the road using Zebra, Pelican or Puffin crossings.

There is a green / red cycle symbol alongside the green / red person. At Toucan crossings the crossing time is established each time by oncrossing detectors in the same way as Puffins. The cost of a Toucan is similar to that of a Puffin. However, a Toucan crossing has four push buttons and the crossing point is wider to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians simultaneously.

A toucan crossing can only be sited where it links sections of a cycle route.

The installation of a Toucan crossing is determined following assessment against LTN1/20.

Figure 6 Example of Toucan crossing

4.3.6 Pegasus Crossings



Pegasus crossings are similar to Toucan crossings but have a separate corralled area with a higher mounted red / green horse symbol and push buttons to allow horse riders to cross.

This type of crossing is only used where many equestrian crossing movements are made across a busy main road.

A pegasus crossing can only be sited where it links sections of bridleway.

Figure 7 Example of a pegasus crossing



4.3.7 Crossing facilities at signalised junctions



Figure 8 Example of crossing facilities at signalised junction

Crossing facilities should be considered at all signalised junctions by default, supporting safe pedestrian movement.

4.3.8 Advanced Cycle Signals



Figure 9- Example of Advanced cycle signals

These are used to connect cycle routes across or through junctions. The distinguishing feature is the use of detectors which differentiate for cyclists at an advanced stop line.

These crossings are purely for use by cyclists and are only found at signal controlled junctions.

4.3.9 School crossing patrols

School crossing patrols help children and adults cross the road safely on their way to and from school.

This type of crossing involves a person using a school crossing patrol sign (lollipop) to manage the priority of drivers and pedestrians.



4.3.10 Other crossing types

The Council may consider the installation of alternative crossing types which support modal shift and active travel. The type of crossing will be informed following assessment and consideration against national design guidance.



5. **Prioritisation of Crossing Requests**

5.1 Introduction

The Council receives many requests for pedestrian crossings, both controlled and uncontrolled each year. There is no statutory obligation to provide crossing facilities and it is not possible to consider every location in detail within the available resources. Therefore, a mechanism for prioritising locations for further consideration is important. This ensures all requests are considered against consistent criteria, allowing the impact of limited budgets to be maximised.

5.2 **Prioritisation**

A prioritisation matrix, Appendix A, will be used to determine a score for each location. The top percentile of locations will be investigated further for location assessment, possible crossing type and deliverability within the budgets available.

The top percentile of locations will be determined annually and taken forward for further investigation as part of the annual programme for the following financial year. Locations that are then progressed to detailed design and implementation will be informed by the budgets available.

A request for crossing facilities at a specific location will only be considered once every three years, unless a material change to the local environment, such as development or highway infrastructure changes warrants the location to be reconsidered sooner.

Locations that remain on the prioritised list for more than three years will be reassessed to determine whether the location has changed in priority for further investigation.

The prioritisation matrix considers various elements and features across eight key areas:

- Casualty reduction;
- Sustainable travel;
- Accessibility and capacity;
- Amenity;
- Neighbourhood engagement;
- Local concern;
- Supporting growth; and
- Protecting and improving the environment



6. Further Investigations for prioritised requests

6.1 Introduction

There are three criteria that should be used when assessing what type of crossing is most appropriate: safety, convenience and accessibility.

The decision whether or not to provide a crossing, and its type, should be a balanced judgement based on consideration of:

- the location
- national guidance
- the benefits of installing a crossing facility,
- the likely implementation and future maintenance costs
- latent demand
- proximity of alternative crossing points
- engineering judgement of a professional traffic or design engineer

Should it appear that the location has a record of collisions resulting in injury to vulnerable road users, then the location may be considered for inclusion in the Casualty Reduction programme.



7. Changes to crossing type

7.1 Introduction

Changes to the Traffic Signs, Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) 2016 have resulted in pelican crossings no longer being best practice to support the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, once such assets reach end of life, they must be reviewed to determine the most suitable crossing type for the location.

Other instances where a review of crossing type could be undertaken are where:

- Controller equipment at the roadside is obsolete; or
- Changes in the local environment change the nature and use of the highway.

Despite signalised crossings being implemented, pedestrians often choose to cross the road when there are gaps in traffic rather than waiting for the signal. This can not only increase the risk of an accident happening at the crossing, but also question the general need for signalised crossings in certain locations where a zebra crossing would also suffice.

7.2 Review process

Regardless of the reason for reviewing the crossing provision at a location, the review should consider the following points alongside design guidance or requirements and the engineering judgement of a highway engineer undertaking the review:

- Visibility- the location needs to be clear of obstructions (trees, buildings, junctions, railings, etc.).
- Pedestrian activity levels.
- Ratio between vehicles and pedestrians at peak hours.
- Classification of pedestrians and proportion of vulnerable road users.
- Collision data.
- Type and proximity of other crossings in the area.
- Gaps in traffic for crossing opportunities.
- Crossing time.
- Waiting time to cross.
- Crossing desire lines.
- Route linkage.
- Active travel priorities for the location.

The outcome of the review will be a reasoned conclusion on the actions to be taken converting it to a PUFFIN signalised crossing or a zebra crossing.



8. Development Sites

The need for controlled crossing facilities where development sites are planned or have taken place are identified following a Transport Assessment requested by the Local Highway Authority as part of the planning process.

However, all development sites will include at least one uncontrolled crossing, with tactile paving, on the adjacent adopted highway network to support pedestrian routes to destinations such as town centres, schools, health care facilities and other local amenities.

Where a crossing is implemented by or on behalf of a developer, a commuted sum for future maintenance and liability must also be provided.



Appendix A – Prioritisation Matrix

Pr	ioritisation	Matrix for re	equests for crossing	g facilitie	es to progress f	or further	inves	tigation
		Please ensure all	light grey cells are set to "Blank" and Type only in th Please create a COPY of this she	he Light Grey Cel	ls	ation score.		
	Assessment by:				·		Ref No:	
	Date of assessment Location							
	Has this location been assessed in the past 3 years?	Blank						
	Road Classification: CEC Political Ward	Blank Blank	Speed Limit: Is the location within a Conservation area?	Blank Yes	Environment: Blank Is this for an aids to pedestrian	Blank		
		Diam		105	movement program?			
						DO NOT LE	AVE ANY BOX	AS 'BLANK'
Pre 1	Will this location be cons S106, STEPS, Active Tr (If Yes all scores 0, No =	avel, S106 etc.)	tive programme of work? (E.g. Road Safety,	Blank			0	
1	A - CASUALTY REDUC Have there been any col pedestrians or cyclists cr (Yes = 3, No = 0)	llisions (Excluding Driving Unde	r the Influence incidents) that have involved	Blank			0	
2		mpensation claims submitted to	the council at this location?	Blank			0	
	<u>B – SUSTAINABLE TR</u>	AVEL						
3	(Yes in the TDP = 2, Cyc	Fransport Development Plans? cle route but not in the TDP = 1,		Blank			0	
4	(near market)) https://ww		ommuting, Scenario - Government Target 0% = 1)	Blank			0	
	C - ACCESSIBILTY AN	D CAPACITY						
5	Footway Provision (No footways = 0, Footw		on both sides- 1 side wider than the other = 2,	Blank			0	
6	Is traffic flow one way or (One way = 1, 2 way = 2			Blank			0	
7	Is there a barrier betwee (Yes = 3, No = 1)	en the two directions of traffic flo	Ŵ	Blank			0	
8	How many traffic lanes a (up to 2 = 1, up to 4 = 3			Blank			0	
9	(Yes = 0, No = 4)	ns to the footways such as bolla		Blank			0	
10	Are there any civil engin restrictions, topography (Yes = 0, No = 6)		n such as under & overground services, land	Blank			0	
11	Distance to the nearest of (Under 100m = 0, 100m)	controlled crossing point - 500m = 5 Over 501m = 10)		Blank			0	
	D - AMENITY							
12	Supermarkets, Hair & Be Museums, Garden Centr	eauty establishments, Cafes, Re re, Gardens, Historic Houses, G	cilities are in close proximity? (I.e. Shops, staurants, Takeaways, Bars, Hotels, yms, Playgrounds, Parks, etc.)	Blank			0	
13	(Under 3 = 1, 4 to 12 = 2 How many Education fac (0 = 0, 1 to 2 = 5, 3 or Mo	cilities are in close proximity? (I.	e. Nurseries, Schools, Colleges, Universities.)	Blank			0	
14	How many Health Care I Dentists) (0 = 0, 1 to 3 = 5, 4 or M		? (I.e. Doctors, Hospitals, Care homes,	Blank			0	
15	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	orship are in close proximity?		Blank			0	
16	Would a crossing facility (Yes = 10, No = 0)	r provide access to an education	al establishment?	Blank			0	

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<u> </u>		



	E – NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT					
17	Political Support - Ward Member $(Yes = 5, No = 0)$		Blank		0	
18	Stakeholder Support - Town or Parish Council (Yes = 3, No = 0)		Blank		0	
19	Political Support - Other $(Yes = 2, No = 0)$		Blank		0	
20	Other organisations (E.g. Resident association, Disability g $({\sf Yes}=5,{\sf No}=0)$	roups)	Blank		0	
21	Is there a school travel plan to support a crossing facility? (Yes = 5, No = 0)		Blank		0	
	F - LOCAL CONCERN					
22	Number of unique recorded resident and/or stakeholder conear misses notified to the council on CONFIRM (In Past 3 $(0 = 0, 1 \text{ to } 2 = 5, 3 \text{ or More} = 10)$		Blank		0	
23	Does this location directly link into existing or proposed act (Links to an existing scheme = 10, Links to a proposed or s a 'wish list' = 4, Does not link to any active travel scheme =	cheme in design = 7, Links to a 'scheme on	Blank		0	
24	Score for population in the ward 65 and over			_	0	
25	Score for population in the ward 16 or under				0	
	G - SUPPORTING GROWTH					
				ſ		
26	Will a crossing facility at this location help improve or prov (Yes = $5 \text{ No} = 0$)	ide a link to a town or village centre?	Blank		0	
27	Will a crossing facility in this location help improve or prov $({\rm Yes}=5~{\rm No}=0)$	ide a link to an employment site?	Blank		0	
	H - PROTECTS AND IMPROVES THE ENVIRONMENT					
28	No. of other active travel measures the location ties into or (No other active travel measure = $0,1$ other active travel n = 2, 3 or more active travel measures = 3)		Blank		0	
29	Would a crossing facility provide access to a transport hub cycle hub or taxi rank? (Yes = 5 , No = 0)	? i.e. Railway or bus station, bus stop,	Blank	-	0	
30	Is there a school crossing patrol in operation at this location (Yes = 10, No = 0)	1?	Blank		0	
31	Is location an Air Quality Management Area site? (Yes = 0, No = 2)		Blank		0	
				L		
				Assessment score total	0	
				Overall Deprivation score	0	
Ref no	Location	Assessed by	Date of assessment	Г	Final Score	
	ч 	v	00/01/1300		v	



a summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Crossing Strategy Consultation 2024





Research and Consultation | Cheshire East Council

Executive Summary

Introduction

Cheshire East Council consulted on an updated draft of its Crossing Strategy 2024 between 29 January and 10 March 2024. The updated strategy proposed a consistent approach which the council would take to managing new and existing pedestrian crossings on the highway network.

The consultation was promoted to a wide range of stakeholders, and received 149 responses in total, including 116 survey responses and 33 email responses.

General support for the strategy

A significant proportion of survey respondents, 65%, agreed the proposed strategy should be adopted by the council, while 26% disagreed.

Those agreeing the strategy should be adopted welcomed improvements to it, feeling it represents a step forward, and were pleased to see a move on from the PV^2 method of assessing locations.

General consultation feedback

Some respondents felt that the main emphasis of the prioritisation matrix and strategy should be on amenity, convenience and safety of the local community. They felt the assessment matrix should focus more on the perspective of pedestrians needing to cross the roads and the community using those roads, and that all communities should have safe places marked out for crossing roads, not just some.

They felt the safety concerns of residents should be given greater weight in the decision-making process, and that safe road crossings should be prioritised according to greatest risk of casualties.

Some felt that the strategy and prioritisation matrix appear to provide the council with reasons to avoid action, and questioned where funding for extra crossings would come from.

Others felt the strategy and prioritisation matrix:

- Is "urban centric"
- Is biased towards school locations.
- Does not address the needs of the disabled community.
- Scores should be binary for example for measure 11 the score should depend on the scale of the engineering constraint, from mild inconvenience to complete showstopper.

Rating each Area of the Prioritisation Matrix

The updated strategy proposed a new "prioritisation matrix" to help assess where new crossings are needed. This prioritisation matrix consists of 8 areas A to G, containing a total of 34 measures which would be scored against to assess each potential crossing location.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the measures and scores proposed for each Area, with respondent ratings for each Area shown in the following table – Area G saw the highest levels of support, while Areas A and B saw the lowest levels of support:

Prioritisation Matrix Areas	% agreeing the right measures are used	% agreeing the proposed scores are appropriate
Area G - Supporting growth	71%	67%
Area D - Amenity	68%	59%
Area C - Accessibility and capacity	64%	55%
Area F - Local concern	60%	58%
Area H - Protects and improves the environment	60%	57%
Area E - Neighbourhood engagement	57%	53%
Area A - Casualty reduction	50%	41%
Area B - Sustainable travel	40%	33%

Feedback for each Area of the prioritisation matrix

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to feed back on each Area – a very brief summary of feedback is provided below.

Area G – Supporting growth

This Area received the highest levels of support – a few minor amendments to wording were suggested by consultees.

Area D – Amenity

This Area also received high levels of support. Feedback about this Area included:

- Assigning scores based on numbers of facilities only (e.g. retail, educational, health, hospitality) may be misleading, as single units in some places can be as busy as 3 smaller units in other places. Some felt any facility should score at least 1 point.
- There are too many categories and too many measures for different type of facilities, meaning scores could be disproportionate in some locations, and that this might disadvantage small villages.

Area C – Accessibility and capacity

This Area also received high levels of support. Some were unclear why this Area had been included in the matrix, and others felt measure 10 about "obstructions" needed clarifying.

Area F – Local concern

This Area also received high levels of support. There was some confusion as to what "CONFIRM" and the "Tartan Rug" are. Others felt the Tartan Rug is useful at a Ward level, but not at a more local level.

Area H – Protects and improves the environment

This Area also received high levels of support. Some felt this Area is urban-centric and discriminates against rural areas. There was also concern some of the measures duplicate measures from other Areas of the matrix e.g. some felt measure 31 duplicates measure 26, and measure 33 duplicates measures 18, 19 and 24.

Area E – Neighbourhood engagement

This Area also received fairly high levels of support. Concern was expressed about this Area in regard to:

- The level of influence of politicians on the framework, and the lack of influence given to public opinion / community wishes. Some felt less weighting should be given to politicians generally.
- Measures 20 & 21 Concern that Town and Parish Councils should have the same weighting as Ward Councillors, as it is felt Town and Parish Councils know the local area better. Some felt it divisive to award different scores to different stakeholders.

Area B – Sustainable travel

This Area received lower levels of support. The main opposition to this Area seemed to be due to the amount of focus on cycling at the expense of pedestrians. Some felt cyclists shouldn't be given so much focus, while others felt cycle routes are too disconnected, and roads too dangerous, for people to cycle at all.

Other concerns raised about Area B included:

- If you have no infrastructure to promote sustainable travel, you score low, if you have no infrastructure to promote sustainable travel, people will not feel it is safe to cycle, so they don't, so you score low.
- For measure 4 no area in Cheshire East would score higher than 1, so the scoring needs looking at.

Area A – Casualty reduction

This Area received the lowest levels of support. The main concerns about this Area seemed to be:

- Opposition to measure 1 Respondents felt the council shouldn't wait until someone is hurt before putting in a crossing, and felt near misses should also be included as a measure as these are serious issues. Some felt DUI incidents should not be ignored.
- Opposition to measure 2 Some felt a score of 10 is too high for claims, especially in comparison to the score of 3 for collisions in measure 1. They queried why the score for claims is over 3 times the score for a collision, and wondered if the council is attempting to reduce its exposure to financial risk.

Suggested extra measures for the matrix

Consultation respondents suggested extra measures they felt could be included in the prioritisation matrix, and these included:

- Access to playgrounds
- Access to the countryside and walking routes
- Connectivity and travel desire lines
- Consideration of local planning consents in the area
- Considerations of the number of elderly and/or disabled in the local area
- Distance from the current nearest safe crossing point
- Level of speeding or traffic signal violations in the area
- The number of homes in the vicinity of a crossing
- The number of near misses as well as collisions in the area
- Traffic severance, flow, speed, composition and volume
- Whether communities are split by busy roads
- Whether the road is close to a bypass or motorway

Confusion at the strategy and matrix

There was significant confusion expressed from some respondents with the consultation and prioritisation matrix. Some felt it is not user friendly, complicated, and difficult to understand. Others felt an explanation of the prioritisation matrix is needed, as it gives no justification for the measures or scores provided.

Examples of specific terms or abbreviations in the prioritisation matrix that consultees felt need better explanation included:

- Measure 2 What are "claims"?
- Measure 8 What does a road being "divided" mean?

- Measure 11 What are "civil engineering constraints"?
- Area D How is "close proximity" defined, what distance exactly?
- Measure 19 How are "routes to a Primary School" defined?
- Measure 25 What is "CONFIRM"?
- Measures 26 & 27 What is the "Tartan Rug"?
- Area G How is "this location" defined?
- Measure 29 How are "town or village centres" defined?
- Measure 30 How are "employment sites" defined, does this include corner shops, hairdressers or pubs for example?
- Measure 34 What is an "AQMA site"?

There was also some confusion over the scoring e.g. for yes / no there is a difference of 4 or 6 versus 10 to 0 on other questions, and why some measures are "1" for no rather than "0".

Summary of email feedback

In total 33 emails were received as during the consultation. Detailed summaries of these emails have been provided in Appendix 1.

24 email comments were requests for new crossings or comments on current highway arrangements at specific locations. The most commonly mentioned location needing a new crossing was the crossroads of Badger Avenue and Frank Webb Avenue in Crewe, for which 11 emails were received – this is connected to a campaign being run by Councillor James Pratt on this issue.

8 email responses were formal written responses from local Town and Parish Councils, local Councillors, and the national organisation Cycling UK. These full formal written responses can be found in Appendix 1, some of which include extremely detailed feedback.

There was detailed discussion, particularly in the formal written response from Cycling UK, about the impact of the different types of crossings listed within the strategy on cyclists.

Conclusions

Overall it is extremely positive to see strong net support for the proposed strategy and prioritisation matrix – this reflects well on the amount of effort taken to put the strategy together.

Despite the strategy receiving strong net support, there is an enormous amount of detailed feedback received about the strategy and prioritisation matrix, and while much of this is summarised in the Executive Summary, consideration must be given to the detailed feedback included in the main report, to ensure the final strategy and

prioritisation matrix accounts for all feedback received. Much of the feedback is incredibly detailed, and sometimes contradictory, so careful consideration will be needed as to where improvements to the strategy can be made. The formal written responses included in Appendix 1 especially will require detailed consideration.

Some respondents also called for the prioritisation matrix to be simplified, and so considering the feedback received, while also simplifying what has already been proposed will be a challenge. It is clear that some consultees did not understand the prioritisation matrix – care should be taken to explain the terms used in the matrix, and to set out how the matrix will be used, and to justify the scores included, as this is not clear to all.

There may also be significant measures that are missing from the matrix which may need to be considered for inclusion – some respondents were concerned that the matrix misses the point of why crossings are required, and there is a danger that if the measures are not comprehensive, and if the scoring is not balanced correctly, this will bias locations for new crossings towards some areas over others e.g. urban areas over rural ones, school locations over non-school locations etc. The matrix may need rigorous testing before it is brought into use.

Respondents did also raise some significant queries about a number of Areas and measures, particularly for Areas A, B and E which were rated lowest, and these Areas should probably be given most attention when reviewing the strategy in light of the consultation feedback.

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Report produced 14 March 2024 by Ben Buckley of the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council. Email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for further information.

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

Cheshire East Council's first crossing strategy was approved for adoption in December 2011, and set out how locations for new pedestrian crossings in Cheshire East would be identified.

The council consulted on an updated draft of this Crossing Strategy 2024 between 29 January and 10 March 2024. The updated strategy proposed a consistent approach which the council would take to managing new and existing pedestrian crossings on the highway network.

A copy of the consultation material can be found in Appendix 2.

Consultation methodology

Consultation responses were invited from anyone who wished to respond – the consultation was not run as a referendum nor as a statistically robust random sample survey. Results should therefore be interpreted within the context in which they were gathered.

The consultation was promoted to a wide range of stakeholders including:

- All Cheshire East Council Ward Members (Councillors)
- All local Town and Parish Councils
- All council employees

The consultation was promoted through the following mediums:

- Media releases
- The council's Consultation Portal
- Social media
- Paper consultation packs and posters distributed in all libraries in the borough
- Council Members Briefings

Number of consultation responses

In total there were 149 consultation responses, including:

- 115 online survey responses
- 1 paper survey responses
- 33 email responses

Reading this report

The main sections of this report contain an analysis of the survey responses received during the consultation.

Other consultation feedback received is summarised in the appendices.

Overall views of the strategy

Agreement whether the strategy should be adopted

65% of respondents agreed the proposed strategy should be adopted by the council, 26% disagreed.

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree the proposed strategy should be adopted by Cheshire East Council?

	65%	9%	26%
	■Agree	or disa	
Number of responses = 98		101 015a	gree Disagree

Overall comments on the strategy

Towards the end of the survey respondents were asked if they wanted to comment on any other aspect of strategy.

In total, 85 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

General support for the strategy	9
Improvement on the current strategy is welcomed, it is a step forward. It is good that CEC wants to be less simplistic than traffic accidents to determine road crossings. This review is long overdue so very pleased to see it, particularly with ditching the outdated PV2 method of assessing a location. However, without more funding it seems like there will be a continuation of current criteria in practice.	8
If a new system of assessment is introduced, all locations should be eligible for assessment immediately, regardless of when last assessed.	1

General opposition to the strategy and consultation	21
The consultation is not user friendly, is confusing, complex and difficult to understand. It is unclear what is being consulted on, with unclear terms and	
abbreviations having been used. The survey is badly designed, it needed to be more straightforward. An explanation of the scoring matrix is needed.	10
There is a deficiency in addressing the needs of the disabled community within decision-making processes. Reports concerning disability-related issues are frequently disregarded by the CEC primarily due to a lack of comprehension regarding the challenges faced by disabled individuals. It is imperative to introduce representation from wheelchair users on the board	4

responsible for making decisions regarding infrastructure, particularly in matters concerning highways. Such representative could be provided by groups such as Congleton Access Group for example.	
It is a waste of time and money putting this strategy together, this is a tick box exercise.	3
This would cost too much to implement when funding is desperately needed elsewhere e.g. to fix potholes.	1
This seems to be an overly complex way of determining the need for a road crossing.	1
The strategy doesn't get to the root of the problem.	1
The proposed strategy is unfit for purpose. The use of Appendix A, a subjective scoring across 34 questions will give a totally random outcome bearing very little relation to considerations of suppressed demand. All the research literature on expert judgement (or engineering judgement) is don't do it this way!	1

General comments on the strategy	24
All communities should have safe places marked out for crossing roads, not just some. The safety concerns of residents should be given greater weight in the decision-making process. Some roads are too dangerous to cross, people speed a lot, and even when crossings are in place they are dangerous. Safety of sites need to be given a greater weighting in the prioritisation matrix e.g. Near misses should be recorded too. Constantly asking about if people can get to their employment or school is great but at the end of the day you also need to make it a safety issue. Safe road crossings should be prioritised according to greatest risk of casualties, everything else is arbitrary. Do a simple risk assessment of the likelihood of casualties including factors such as speed limit, volume of traffic, pedestrian ability/ disability.	10
This strategy is urban-centric and discriminates against rural communities who cannot compete in the context of criteria that focus on urban highway design, layout and high population densities. There are specific rural locations where their proximity to a service centre (<3 miles) is curtailed by lack of a crossing, but where a crossing would deliver school transport savings, help reduce social isolation and related health and care issues in the elderly and disabled. Rural communities should not be disadvantaged by using criteria which are biased to urban areas. The points system is lacking, as it allows niche cases to rack up large amounts of points by qualifying on two criteria e.g. getting points both for an employment site existing and for it having 1 employee. Small villages are split in 2 by large main roads, yet would lose out on several criteria by not having a large amount of shops or cafes.	3
This strategy doesn't do enough to promote Active Travel, there is too much focus on accidents, traffic and facilities.	3

The strategy appears to solely provide CEC with reasons to avoid any action. The focus should be more on where a crossing is essential, then work out how it can be done, rather than finding reasons to justify not having a crossing.	2
People in communities should be listened to, not just data analysis and liaison with political organisations. Remove the political questions and focus on safety and importance to local residents, particularly children.	2
School crossings should not have to measured against this matrix, it should be the default position that all schools have crossings.	1
Stop building so many houses then we won't be so congested	1
What is the relationship between this crossing strategy and Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 6? For example in TSMC6 is says in paragraph 13.1.10 that a "site assessment should be carried out by an experienced practitioner "An assessment will enable the designer to make an informed decision about whether a crossing is needed and if so, what type it should be". Does this mean that the "experience practitioner" can overrule the strategy? At the very least, the experienced practitioner must include the matrix results in their assessment otherwise what is the point of it?	1

Sp	ecific strategy edits	23			
Su	ggested extra measures for the prioritisation matrix included:				
•	Access to playgrounds				
•	Access to the countryside				
•	Access to walking routes such as canal towpaths and streets which get				
	pedestrians away from main roads				
•	Connectivity and travel desire lines				
•	Consideration of any local planning consents in the area which will				
	increase population and school intakes in the near future				
•	Considerations of the number of elderly and/or disabled in the local area	16			
•	Distance from the nearest safe crossing point				
•	Level of speeding or jumping red traffic signals in the area				
•	Number of homes in the vicinity of a crossing				
•	The need to increase the uptake of walking and cycling				
•	Traffic severance, flow, speed, composition and volume				
•	Whether communities are split by busy roads / whether the road is a main				
	arterial road				
•	Whether the road is close to a bypass or motorway				
The strategy misses out a key component, that of side crossings that support					
the	the revision of the highway code, see the Highways Magazine. The strategy 2				
does not mention some really important elements around crossings at minor					
side roads.					
Se	Section 4.3 – Why 30 seconds? It should be related to the time a pedestrian				
is p	is prepared to wait before taking a chance to cross on red.				

4.3.1 to 4.3.3 – Terms like relatively low, no more than moderate, high and very high vehicle flows are vague. Quantify instead!	1
6.1 – The last paragraph implies that if people want a crossing locally, they have to find one or two vulnerable users to act as martyrs!	1
5.1 – "The council receives many requests for pedestrian crossings, both controlled and uncontrolled each year." This could be re-written to clarify if the requests or the crossings are uncontrolled.	1
4.21 – It needs to be explicit that dropped kerbs are needed on both sides of a road. Those on only one side are surprisingly common, disadvantaging those with wheelchairs etc. who cannot enter/exit the crossing on one side.	1

Specific crossing related comments	8
Crossings are needed: in Chelford; St Anns Road, King Edward Street and Nantwich Road Middlewich; Sydney Road Crewe.	4
Dropped Kerbs – Dropped kerbs should not only consider a pedestrian refuge, but also consider reducing the width of the road instead, this is particularly useful at junctions as it not only reduces the walking distance, but also reduces vehicle speed. This strategy is endorsed by Active Travel England. Please review access points to crossings and the use of dropped kerbs. They are a hazard for so many because they cause an uneven undulating pavement, making it difficult for all on the many slopes when icy. The undulating pavements are hard to use by mobility-impaired people (on crutches, with walking stick, using a wheelchair or mobility scooter). Instead use entry kerbs, which are sloping kerbs that give wheeled access between a road and a level pavement, as used extensively in the Netherlands (hence referred to as Dutch entry kerbs).	2
Unlit Zebra Crossings / Side Road Zebra Crossings – While this is currently not an allowed surface treatment or crossing standard, Highways England have these designs under review. Any crossing strategy that is designed to be robust and not require updating in the near future should allow for integration of this crossing solution once it has been adopted in a new standard.	1
Rectify ponding at crossing points that are present during wet conditions. It renders the crossing dangerous to use.	1

Rating the measures and scores for each Prioritisation Matrix Area

For each of the 8 Areas in the prioritisation matrix of the new strategy, survey respondents were asked to rate whether:

- The right measures had been used
- The proposed scores for each measure were appropriate

Survey respondents were asked to rate these on the scale:

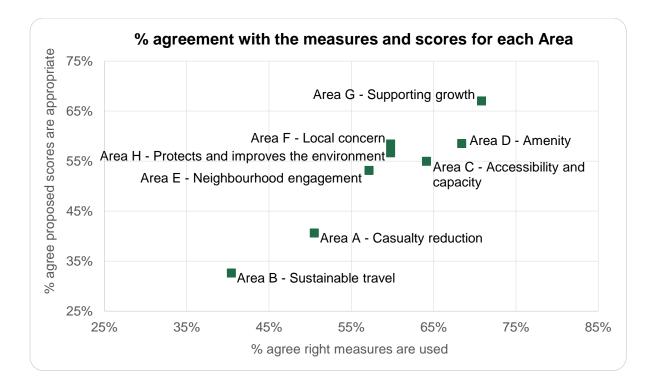
- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree.

"Area G – Supporting growth" saw the largest percentage agreeing the right measures were used (71%), and the largest percentage agreeing the proposed scores were appropriate (67%).

"Area B – Sustainable travel" saw the lowest percentage agreeing the right measures were used (40%), and the lowest percentage agreeing the proposed scores were appropriate (33%).

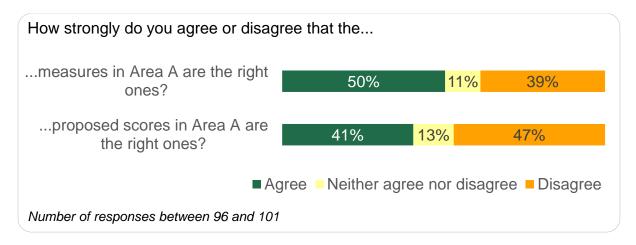
The ratings for each Area are shown in the table below, and in the chart on the following page.

Prioritisation Matrix Areas	% agreeing the right measures are used	% agreeing the proposed scores are appropriate
Area G - Supporting growth	71%	67%
Area D - Amenity	68%	59%
Area C - Accessibility and capacity	64%	55%
Area F - Local concern	60%	58%
Area H - Protects and improves the environment	60%	57%
Area E - Neighbourhood engagement	57%	53%
Area A - Casualty reduction	50%	41%
Area B - Sustainable travel	40%	33%



Area A – Casualty reduction

For "Area A – Casualty reduction", 50% agreed that the measures were the right ones, and 41% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.



Comments About Area A

Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area A.

In total, 81 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Measure 1 comments:	51
Near misses should also be included as a measure, these are a serious issue. Actual casualty statistics do not accurately reflect the level of danger. Near misses (which can be measured anecdotally, verified by human or camera surveillance) provide the real risk metric in line with normal health and safety principles. We shouldn't wait for a collision to happen BEFORE taking action; the approach should be preventative, not reactive. This measure should be 'likelihood of collision' based on traffic volumes, desire lines, and who needs to cross the specific road and why.	19
The council shouldn't wait until someone is hurt before making changes, it really shouldn't take injury or worse to consider a solution to an obvious problem. Crossing should be seen as preventative safety measures to prevent accidents. Crossing points can still be dangerous even if there haven't been any collisions.	17
This is a ridiculous measure as if a road is too dangerous people won't try and cross it, and so accidents won't happen. Number of collisions are not a good measure for determining the need for a road crossing. The need for a collision before considering a road crossing is a flawed measure. People cross at desire lines, the most direct route from A to B. If there hasn't been a	8

collision at that point, that does not mean there is no need for a crossing. There are many crossing sites which are so obviously dangerous that people avoid them or cross slowly with caution and anxiety so the number of incidents and claims doesn't really reflect the problem. It's like saying no one has been injured walking across the M6; incidents are rare because people don't.	
Why have DUI collisions been excluded? They should be counted as well.	3
Scores shouldn't be "binary", but should vary depending on severity of incident. It depends on whose faut it is – no fault, collisions or driver/pedestrian fault. Drivers and pedestrians lose awareness on occasions. If it is the former then a crossing is needed.	2
Add aguastrians and a second to the list as well as nodestrians and evolute	<u> </u>

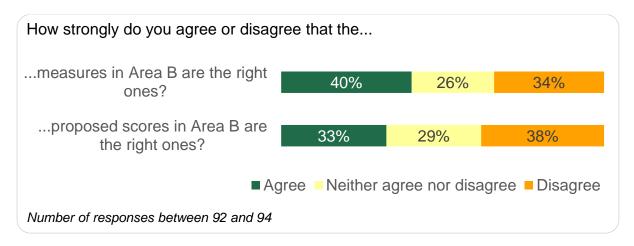
Add equestrians and e-scooters to the list as well as pedestrians and cyclists. 2

Measure 2 comments:	26
Scoring of 10 is too high, and measure 1 scoring of 3 is too low comparatively. Why is so much more weight given to "claims" over "collisions"? Why should a claim result in a score more than 3 times that for a collision? A claim could be for anything such as bump because of a pot hole, while a collision is potentially more serious.	17
What does "claim" mean? All claims or just successful claims? Do you mean a legal claim against someone for an accident or a claim that there are near miss collisions or reckless driving at a crossing etc. Including claims as a criterion will be biased to affluent residents who have the capacity to pursue them.	6
Do you only care about road safety where claims have been made against the council for failing to put in the necessary crossings regardless of how many actual living persons have been hit by speeding motorists or by poor visibility. The number of "claims" is not useful to determine need unless the hidden agenda is to reduce the council's exposure to financial risk. The council's exposure to claims is irrelevant to the need of people to cross the road.	2
It should say "casualties" rather than "claims".	1

Other comments	4
Confused by the question. The survey too confusing to be sure of giving accurate answers.	2
Request for a crossing on the hill by the Coop in Sandbach	1
Pedestrians need to take responsibility for themselves	1

Area B – Sustainable travel

For "Area B – Sustainable travel", 40% agreed that the measures were the right ones, and 33% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.



Comments About Area B

Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area B.

In total, 51 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Measure 3 comments:	8
Opposed to this measure, it shouldn't matter if a cycleway is in the TDP or not. TDP routes don't reflect the fact that people cycle door to door and their particular journey doesn't always follow a designated cycle route. This score only rewards those on journeys that coincide with cycle routes.	3
This measure should consider National Cycle Network and LCWIP aspirations for the area. Local routes are important, but in addition to the TDP, the LCWIP and NCN should be given an uplifted score. Crossings acts as a major severance for users and will stop less confident users from adopting active travel.	2
This measure should have more priority – scoring should be 3, 3, 0.	2
This measure favours developed urban areas.	1

Measure 4 comments:	7
Not convinced about 'propensity for cycling in local area'. This will favour	
more affluent areas where more people already cycle, rather than helping to	2
encourage cycling in other areas. It will perpetuate the status quo rather than	3
create new safe cycling routes to encourage more cycling.	

This measure needs a rethink. The PCT is outdated with data used from 2011. This would need updating to reflect 2024 cycling.	1	
This depends on how safe roads are to use in an area.	1	
It is impossible to comment on the proposed score because the question does not define what criteria are to be used in the PCT search. For example what scenario and for what trip purpose? The PCT result is very different depending on what is selected within the PCT tool.	1	
This measure is unclear. What metric is being proposed to be judged? Commuting, schools? And what scenario under PCT is being assessed? Go Dutch, Go Cambridge, E-Bikes? This needs to be clear.	1	

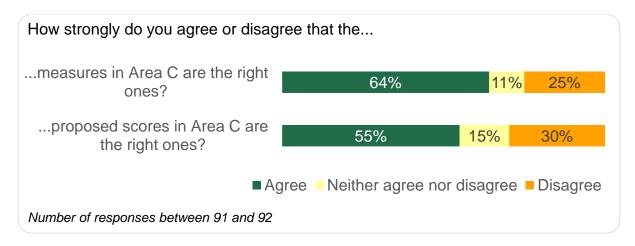
Measure 5 comments:	9
The scoring for this measure looks too high. Scoring in section 5 is too wide & builds in bias. Why is the score lower if there is a shared use path, shouldn't it be the other way round?	3
Opposed to shared use paths as a blind person. It is vital that any cycle routes do not put wheelchair users, those with limited mobility, those who are visually impaired, those with dementia or mums with buggies at risk. Shared footpaths don't work, hedges and grass overgrow on the pedestrian side which forces them into the cyclist side.	3
I don't understand the measure 5 – it appears to say that if there is a shared path then a low priority need to cross a road. People need to cross roads whether there are shared paths or not. Confusing! The scores for this measure are unclear. Why would a shared use path negatively impact the scoring of the metric?	3

Comments on cyclists and pedestrians	21
Money shouldn't be spent on cyclists and considerations for cyclists shouldn't come into play. Spend money fixing potholes rather than on cyclists. Why is a significant weighting offered to cycling routes over and above that of pedestrians. It would be better to focus sparse resources on providing crossings to expand the safe walking routes to school.	6
Roads are too dangerous to cycle on. We need more dedicated cycleways.	6
Cycle routes are so disconnected they are not used. Never see any cycle routes through towns in my part of Cheshire East so not really relevant. Routes in the TDP are unfunded and unlikely to happen.	4
This Area should take into account pedestrians as well as cyclists. Pedestrians should take priority over cyclists. Sustainable travel is not just about cyclists, what about pedestrians, walkers, walking groups, families, parents and children walking to school and the local shops, instead of using the car.	4
This does not encourage cycling and walking. Having better infrastructure everywhere encourages cycling and walking.	1

Other comments	6
Consideration should be given to local demographics instead.	1
This is a ridiculous measure – If an area is difficult to cross people don't try	1
and either use cars as an alternative or go somewhere else.	1
This area doesn't capture footpaths and bridleways.	1
Scores for this area should be lower.	1
This consultation / survey is a waste of time and money.	1
Confused at the question. Are you asking if the crossing is on a cycle route?	1

Area C – Accessibility and capacity

For "Area C – Accessibility and capacity", 64% agreed that the measures were the right ones, and 55% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.



Comments About Area C

Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area C.

In total, 38 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Measure 6 comments:	4
Opposed to this measure, if a footway is narrow on one side, it's more of reason for someone to cross the road to a wider easier path. So I don't think should be a counter reason to a crossing. Equal and unequal pavements should be the same score. Unsure about why the scoring for this measure has been applied.	it 4
Measure 7 comments:	3
A 2-way road is more than twice as hard to cross, the score should be 4. An extra 1 point for 2 lanes is too low.	2

It shouldn't matter if a road is one way or 2 way, some one way roads can be just as difficult to cross as 2 way ones.

Measure 8 comments:	1
What do you mean by "divided"? Need to be more specific is this via a road marking or a bollard etc?	1

Measure 10 comments:

The presence of obstructions on the footway is irrelevant to need for a crossing and penalises potentially high priority sites just because of normal street furniture. Problems like street furniture can be solved. The obstructions and engineering issues need to be resolved if this is where a crossing is most needed, not used as a scoring mechanism to stop something that is needed.	4
"Obstructions" does not cover enough. Where a crossing is in my village there are numerous shops, flashing lights, speeding cars and bad parking that all affect people trying to cross the road as there is too much going on for drivers. You need a section about distractions too.	2
Parking on pavements need inclusion. Pavement parking is a huge problem for blind people.	2
Measure 10 is irrelevant.	1
For obstructions it should specify the proximity to the proposed crossing e.g. within 5 metres.	1
The scoring for this measure should be on a sliding scale, rather than being binary, depending on the scale of the obstruction. Strong consideration should be given to whether or not the obstruction can be removed/relocated.	1
What about poor or no drop kerbs? These are a major issue for people with mobility issues and prevent some people from being able to access events, activities and the outdoors.	1

Measure 11 comments:	3
This measure should be on a sliding scale, rather than being binary, depending on the scale of the engineering constraint, from mild	2
inconvenience, to complete showstopper. Using this scoring as proposed would mean that anything slightly difficult would be rejected.	2
What is the definition of a "civil engineering constraint"?	1

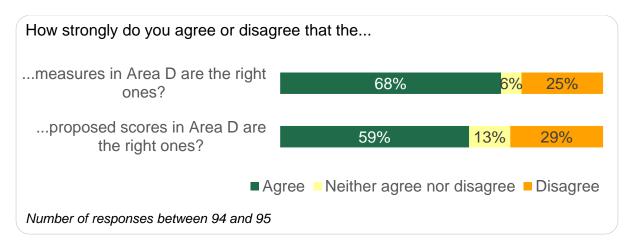
Other comments	10
Unclear how this Area will help people cross the road more safely? The volume of traffic and ease with which people can safely cross without a crossing should be the main priority. If this is the right place for a crossing, and a crossing is needed on safety grounds with a high footfall count due to need, why should it matter how many lanes it is?	3
Better footpaths are needed, wider and with drop kerbs. Footpath condition needs improving. Measure needed re. the condition of the pavements?	4
Don't waste money on this, fix the roads instead.	1
Some of the measures suggest cost concerns and not safety concerns.	1
The criteria are very urban-centric in terms of definitions and highway design. It is difficult to assess the real value of this scoring scheme in villages where for example, there is an excellent pavement on one side of a busy two-lane road adjacent to open countryside but ALL the housing development is on the opposite side of the road. The nearest schools and service centre is 1.5 miles	1

away but is effectively inaccessible in sustainable transport terms because residents are unable to safely cross the road. There are few accidents because residents feel they must drive everywhere.

Confusion over the measures and scoring	5
Not clear what a lot of the terms used mean, and what the overall principles are. What are the meaning of the terms used? Examples needed of what is meant and what the scores/answers mean?	2
Unclear why some scoring for yes / no is a difference of 4 or 6 (versus 10-0 on other questions) and why one is "1" for no rather than 0	1
Difficult to assess as the outcome impact is not possible without a full scoring matrix.	1
Unsure if a higher number or a lower number determines whether a road crossing is needed.	1

Area D – Amenity

For "Area D – Amenity", 68% agreed that the measures were the right ones, and 59% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.



Comments About Area D

Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area D.

In total, 39 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Measure 12 comments:	7
Give more weighting to this measure. A score of 0 for less than three retail units is much too low. It is common for there to be just one retail unit in a location which is very popular, but this would get a score of 0. Scores for retail should be doubled. A lone convenience shop has high footfall, including children, but gets zero. There are only 2 retail outlets (chip shop and Coop)	6
but they are extremely busy and are the only ones in the vicinity. Measures 12 and 15 should be grouped together, they are very similar	1

Measure 14 comments:	1
It shouldn't matter how many doctors/ dentists there are, if there's 1 there	
should be a crossing if the road requires it. Having 4 or more shouldn't mean	
there is more need, the need is the same for 1 or 10 e.g. 1 Doctors surgery	1
may serve 1000 people whereas 5 Doctors surgeries may only have 200	
people each, the need is the same.	

Measure 15 comments:	2
The presence of any hospitality facilities should score at least 1. Hospitality	2
scores seem low.	2

Measure 18 comments:	8
This measure should be given more weight. Safe routes to schools to enable children to walk to and from school should be a priority. Nationwide it should be mandatory that there is a crossing where there is a school. This scoring is too simplistic with no scales e.g. a high school with 1,0000 children should be given a higher weighting than a primary school with 100 children. Access to a 16+ college or university should score highly too as people walk further to these institutions from a wider area.	6
This measure should be given less weight.	1
School children crossing to catch a bus for school travel should also be considered.	1

Measure 19 comments:	5
This measure should be given more weight. This should also include an additional score for Route to Secondary School / Academy. School buses might drop off on one side and pick up on the other, is this another weighting requirement?	3
"Route to a Primary School" should be clearly defined.	2

	-
"Close proximity" needs to be defined. What is the close proximity distance. 1 mile, less? The wording for the measures 12 to17 needs to be the same that	Λ
in measure 19, so rather than "close proximity" it's the location being "on a	4
route".	
Area D – There are too many categories and too many measures for different	

Area D – There are too many categories and too many measures for different type of establishments. Applying scores for lots of different establishments will give too much weighting for an area. It disadvantages small villages with no existing crossing and could cause them to lose a lot of points compared to larger areas that do already have crossings relatively nearby. The number of facilities in each category isn't really that relevant. A single street of twenty shops/cafes doesn't necessarily need more crossings than a small village with five. This unnecessarily complicates the assessment and should be deleted from the matrix.

Should it matter if there is only 1 church or 1 school or 1 shop, the need for pedestrians to cross the road to have access to these areas should have a designated crossing place which should be clearly marked out for their use. 2 The inclusion of more points for a greater number of facilities does not really cover the need.

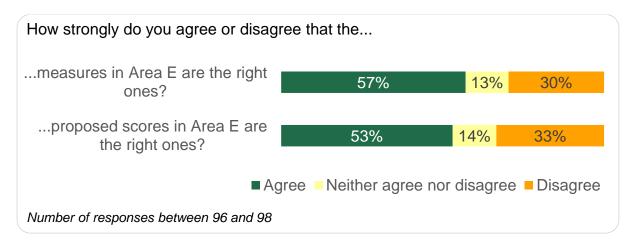
The scoring seems inconsistent. If a yes is a 3 in one box, why change it to a 10 in another? Scores are too low for yes responses on measures 12 to 17 and 19.

2

There is no measure for public open spaces for leisure walking and exercise. This needs both including and having a big weighting factor.	1
Crossings need to be moved closer to schools.	1
Encourage people out of their cars.	1
Fix the roads, don't waste money on this.	1
The framework fails to adequately take into account the elderly.	1

Area E – Neighbourhood engagement

For "Area E – Neighbourhood engagement", 57% agreed that the measures were the right ones, and 53% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.



Comments About Area E

Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area E.

In total, 47 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Measure 20 and 21 comments:	7
Measures 20 & 21 should have the same scoring, Town and Parish	
Councillors should score the same as Ward Councillors. Town and Parish	
Councils know their town, they know what is needed. Town and Parish	6
Councils should not have a lower score than community groups. Town and	
Parish Councils should be a key partner in their locality.	
Scoring for measure 20 should be higher.	1

Measure 23 comments:	2
Support for this measure, they know best what is needed and where, they	2
know their town.	2

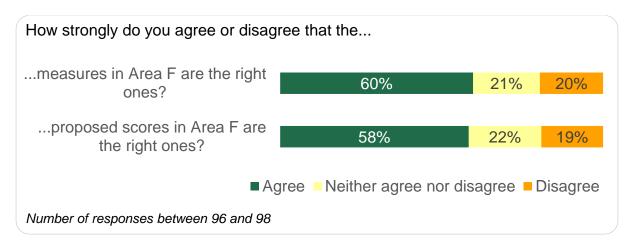
Measure 24 comments:	5
Scoring for measure 24 should be higher.	3
Opposed to measure 24. Few schools have a school travel plan, and children should not be published because of that. Children still need to go to school regardless of any plan. Many schools do not have school travel plans because the process to put them in place is convoluted and complicated, discouraging schools from creating one.	2

Comments on local politics and the community voice	28
Councillors should not be involved, scores should just be based on public opinion, and on what the community wishes. "Neighbourhood engagement" should not be measured by council or support from elected individuals, it should be measured by direct engagement from the community. Be careful of giving too much weight to politicians, nepotism and corruption follow "political support". Often Members don't live in the local area and are very reluctant to engage in any contact with the public. Often they are not interested and are too busy with their own political aims. The views of ward members, the vast majority of whom drive, are not as important as groups with experience of the crossing issue locally. There is no provision within the framework to include local resident campaigns or wishes e.g. local area petitions should also be considered. For example if there was a petition raised and signed by the entire population of the area supporting the proposal it would be wholly overruled by over factors.	20
As councillors and parish councillors hear from the communities directly, greater points should be awarded here. Residents and ward members should have a strong influence as they know the area well and more than a visit from an officer would.	3
Area E support – Good to see that the local community does have some say in this. This Area should be given a higher weighting, local communities know what is needed.	3
It is divisive to award different scores to different stakeholders suggesting certain politicians have more influence than others. All scores in Area E should be the same at 2 for each measure.	2

Other comments	5
As with all these plans, disability/accessibility groups must be consulted. There is a new one set up and run by Congleton Town Council.	1
If a small hamlet or village does not have a local parish council or any other political support, should their lives be any less important than those in a larger community?	1
Define what "stakeholder support" means.	1
CEC don't listen to responses to consultations. CEC is urged to be more transparent with decisions – for all consultations not just this specific one. We don't have to have the same views and I do acknowledge that CEC has to make difficult decisions as they can't please everyone. What I'd encourage is for CEC to advise the rationale for whatever decision is made be it cost reasons or whatever. Just be honest with the residents.	1
Fix the roads, don't waste money on this.	1

Area F – Local concern

For "Area F - Local concern", 60% agreed that the measures were the right ones, and 58% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.



Comments About Area F

Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area F.

In total, 39 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Measure 25 comments:	9
What is CONFIRM? Provide links to explain what it is. How are people meant to know what this measure means?	8
There are many reasons why people in less affluent areas are less likely to have registered concerns officially so I don't think measure 25 is a good and fair reflection of actual need and concerns.	1

Measure 26 comments:	5
Opposition to this measure. It penalises potentially much needed stand-alone crossings in favour of locations where investment has already been committed. Why should the lack of a Travel Plan, which might be needed but hasn't been done, be a factor is this assessment?	2
Support for this measure. Scoring should be higher for "links to proposed or scheme in design" and "links to a scheme on a wish list". Many of the wish lists items are unfunded are unlikely to ever be funded. There are also little in the way of active travel schemes in many of the towns and villages.	1
All new roads and resurfaced roads must include facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.	1

1

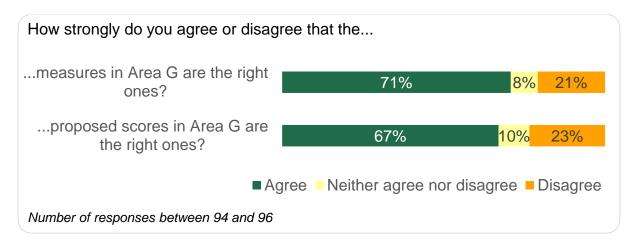
Existing or proposed schemes should have same weighting as this could be the first step in the proposed scheme.

Measure 27 and 28 comments:	13
What is the "Tartan Rug"? What is the impact of using it? Does it weight infrastructure towards the areas with the most social and health needs? The scores from the "Tartan Rug" for measures 27 and 28 are obscure. The tartan rug seems dated and is difficult to read. Plus uses dated terminology.	6
Opposed to these measures. The tartan rug shouldn't be used for this purpose. As has been discussed recently at the Health & Well-being Board, the JSNA Tartan Rug is a useful strategic indicator at Ward level but does not provide a useful 'local' picture in specific locations, in this case where a crossing may best be sited. Ward data should not be used, as it doesn't give a good representation of the whole town's demographic.	4
Support for these measures.	2
Scores are not provided, so impossible to judge.	1

Other comments	12
Not sure what much of this means. This question is unanswerable as a lay person, it is not possible to understand the implications of these scores.	4
Where is the measure asking where people in the community want crossings? People living in these areas need to be canvassed. The residents know best how useful a crossing would be, and how dangerous and difficult it is to cross a road without one.	3
There should be a measure for numbers of visually impaired and mobility impaired within the ward, and for town centres, within the town.	2
Fix the roads, don't waste money on this	1
More dropped curbs are needed.	1
Crossings tend to be requested where there is a specific vulnerable population e.g. school children or a concentration of older persons housing, or where there is a specific employment centre, higher density populations etc. Again this is highly urban-centric model and discriminates in rural areas where statistics may appear favourable but ignore the local experience in specific location.	1

Area G – Supporting growth

For "Area G – Supporting growth", 71% agreed that the measures were the right ones, and 67% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.



Comments About Area G

Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area G.

In total, 24 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Area G comments:	15
General support to Area G. Area G measures should have higher scores, they should score 10 for yes. Given that any measure that improves safe access to town/village centre and /or place of employment must be a worthwhile undertaking, the low scores proposed are wholly disproportionate to the level of scores proposed in other measures.	5
General opposition to Area G. People still need to cross the road regardless of these criteria. These are unnecessary measures in assessing the need for a crossing point, and the scores are totally inappropriate to the benefit provided. There are far more important categories than this one. Employment opportunities don't come anywhere close to schools, health services, transport links. Most people in employment are capable adults, unless the road is a busy A road then it should be low priority.	5
The phrase "This location" used in Area G should be defined e.g. is it within 1 mile? Much of the growth and development is outside of the towns and there is no idea of scale on this. This works better in areas that are within a reasonable walking distance of a service centre (2-3 miles) provided it's understood that the crossings best location may not be in the service centre.	3
Area G should include doctors, clinics, cycle routes.	2

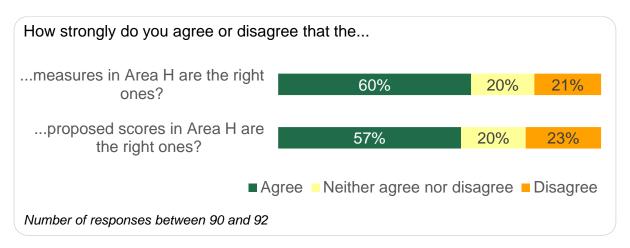
Measure 29 comments:	1
Use of phrase 'town or village centre' is ambiguous and will likely	1
disadvantage rural communities.	

Measure 30 comments:	4
Measure 30 shouldn't use binary scores, but should be a sliding scale e.g. what if the employer is a major one like Astra Zeneca. The scores are not sensible – an employment site with 2 employees would rack up an extra 6 points compared to no employment site, which seems ridiculous.	2
What is the definition of an "employment site"? This needs explaining. A corner shop, hairdresser, pub are all employment sites, would these be included in this measure?	2

Other comments	4
A count of traffic would give a more meaningful measure	1
Provide crossings everywhere.	1
There should also be a measure for support from the employers on the sites, and whether they are able to contribute to funding even in a small way, and whether they have an Active Travel Plan (that may include this route).	1
Fix the roads, don't waste money on this.	1

Area H – Protects and improves the environment

For "Area H – Protects and improves the environment", 60% agreed that the measures were the right ones, and 57% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.



Comments About Area H

Survey respondents were asked if they had any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area H.

In total, 40 comments made in response to this question have been analysed, and these comments have been grouped into categories and summarised below.

Area H comments:	7
General opposition to this Area. These criteria are unfair on small towns and villages where there are none of these, but they may still have a busy dangerous road, therefore these criteria are favouring more built-up areas only. Again this is urban-centric and effectively rules out any score for rural communities who have no access to these elements. It is a perverse section when considering the extensive rurality of Cheshire East Borough and the paucity of public transport in rural areas. An unnecessary section.	5
General support for this Area. Scores should be higher as compared others.	2
Measure 31 comments:	4

	-
This measure duplicates measure 26, and so should be removed.	2
General opposition to this measure. It is biased in favour of locations w	where
considerable investment has already occurred to the detriment of stan	nd-alone
crossings with potentially high value. Active travel for cyclists seem to	be the 2
only voice heard. Shoppers and other pedestrians needing to access of	doctors,
dentists, social activities, hairdressers etc are not considered.	

Measure 32 comments:	5
Scoring for measure 32 should be higher. Crossings to transport hubs by foot or cycle are incredibly valuable and directly stimulate modal shift to public transport. The score for measure 32 should be at least 20. Measures 32 and 33 should be the same.	3
General support for measure 32.	1
This measure shouldn't have binary scoring, there should be scoring for different and multiple transport types e.g. a train station with a taxi rank should score lower than one with a taxi rank, cycle hub, and bus stop.	1

Measure 33 comments:	10
Opposition to measure 33. School crossings should not gain so many points, as these tend to be on smaller and less busy roads where the need for a crossing might be less than on a major road with no school. The score could be considered too high as it's really hard to get a school crossing in place and is not only dependent on need but staffing and affordability so favours more affluent locations with very socially responsible residents – not needed.	2
Measure 33 should also consider if a school crossing HAS been in existence but is not currently for example due to the patrol person having retired and the replacement not yet recruited. This makes the need for the crossing even more important.	2
Measure 33 duplicates measures 18, 19 and 24 – Too much weighting is being given to schools in the framework.	2
Measure 33 should be a higher score.	1
It is unclear what is meant by a current school crossing in operation, is this a lollipop person?	1
Surely no crossing at all should score higher?	1
Traffic controls should not be used to 'replace' a manned school crossing. Children feel safer with manned crossings and should be preserved.	1

Measure 34 comments:	6
What is a AQMA site? Was this survey designed for the general public?	3
Opposition to measure 34. An area being an AQMA site should not be a reason not to have a road crossing.	2
Confusion as to why AQMA sites have lower scores.	1

Other comments	8
Definitions and explanations are needed to help guide people. The questions are unanswerable by a lay person who had no knowledge of the thinking in the mind of the question setter.	4
Fix the roads, don't waste money on this	2
The framework seems to be stacked against providing pedestrian crossings.	1
Cycling is too dangerous to do.	1

Conclusions

Overall it is extremely positive to see strong net support for the proposed strategy and prioritisation matrix – this reflects well on the amount of effort taken to put the strategy together.

Despite the strategy receiving strong net support, there is an enormous amount of detailed feedback received about the strategy and prioritisation matrix, and while much of this is summarised in the Executive Summary, consideration must be given to the detailed feedback included in the main report, to ensure the final strategy and prioritisation matrix accounts for all feedback received. Much of the feedback is incredibly detailed, and sometimes contradictory, so careful consideration will be needed as to where improvements to the strategy can be made. The formal written responses included in Appendix 1 especially will require detailed consideration.

Some respondents also called for the prioritisation matrix to be simplified, and so considering the feedback received, while also simplifying what has already been proposed will be a challenge. It is clear that some consultees did not understand the prioritisation matrix – care should be taken to explain the terms used in the matrix, and to set out how the matrix will be used, and to justify the scores included, as this is not clear to all.

There may also be significant measures that are missing from the matrix which may need to be considered for inclusion – some respondents were concerned that the matrix misses the point of why crossings are required, and there is a danger that if the measures are not comprehensive, and if the scoring is not balanced correctly, this will bias locations for new crossings towards some areas over others e.g. urban areas over rural ones, school locations over non-school locations etc. The matrix may need rigorous testing before it is brought into use.

Respondents did also raise some significant queries about a number of Areas and measures, particularly for Areas A, B and E which were rated lowest, and these Areas should probably be given most attention when reviewing the strategy in light of the consultation feedback.

Appendix 1 – Email responses

In total 33 emails were received during the consultation. The comments made in these emails are summarised in the table below, with the 8 formal written responses and those received on behalf of organisations published further down.

Request for a new	19
crossing at the crossroads of Badger Avenue and Frank Webb Avenue in Crewe. There are lots of accidents occurring at this junction, people use it "as a racetrack". There are lots of near misses and lots of cats have been killed here. This junction is used by children getting to school. Could a 20mph speed limit be imposed? Parking restrictions also need to be tighter. Please can you advise when the risk assessment was undertaken and, how often it is reviewed for the Frank Webb/Badger Avenue Junction? This email is in support of Councillor James Pratt's campaign to make the junction of Frank Webb Avenue and Badger Avenue safer for both pedestrians and traffic. The markings are also worn on the junction.	11
crossing on Altrincham Road, Wilmslow, opposite Hickories	1
crossing on Buxton Road in Disley for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders using Upper and Lower Greenshall Lane.	1
crossing on Cumberland Street in Macclesfield. This would enable an active travel route following the desire lines between town centre, Sainsbury's, West Park and the hospital, and would allow cyclists to avoid two extremely dangerous roundabouts at each end of Cumberland Street.	1
crossing on the A533 outside the GP surgery in Sandbach. Cars drive very fast here and there have been a lot of near misses.	1
crossing on the A538 Altrincham Road in Wilmslow, by the junction of Kings Road. An important link between south Wilmslow to Kings Road, Twinnies Bridge/The Carrs, Styal Mill, Handforth and Lacey Green.	1
crossings on the A6 East of Disley. There are no crossing facilities whatsoever for about 1.4km between Redhouse Lane and Meadowside. There is a clear need for a Puffin crossing near the junction with Dryhurst Lane.	1
intervention at Mossley crossroads in Congleton (crossroads at Biddulph Road, Leek Road and Reade's Lane). There are lots of near misses at this site, the lights turn too quickly to get across the road safely, it is not safe for children trying to get to school.	1
traffic light in Macclesfield, at the crossroads of Oxford Road and Chester Road	1
Comment that	5

the current crossing in Chelford is dangerous. Cars are going too fast, cars parked on both sides of the street make it dangerous. There have been lots of near misses here. See the video as supporting evidence.	2
improvements are needed at the Peacock roundabout and Park Road, near Newbold Way, Nantwich.	1
the road surface along Sydney Road and Remer Street is terrible and needs repair.	1
traffic calming measures are needed in Middlewich from the junction with Woodland Gardens towards Remer Street.	1

Other comments	5
An extra measure is needed in Area D - Amenity along the lines of "Would a crossing facilitate use of a countryside site / park?".	1
Car use in Cheshire needs to be reduced, if there were less cars then pedestrian crossings would not be required. Crewe is hazardous to pedestrians due to the volume of cars.	1
Consultation cynicism - Spending money on yet another survey which will no doubt be totally ignored. More tax payers money being frittered away.	1
General support for the strategy.	1
The survey is overly detailed.	1

Formal written response on behalf of... (see appendix 1 for full responses)

Bollington Town Council – summary of feedback: Bollington residents do not feel safe using uncontrolled crossings as drivers do not give way at these crossings, more safe crossing points should be introduced on the main B5090 road.

Uncontrolled crossings could be improved by making their presence clearer to drivers by markings across the road.

The prioritisation matrix on which future crossing locations will be based gives no justification for the measures or scores provided, with both being arbitrary, over complicated and not fit for purpose.

The prime criteria to be considered should be the amenity, convenience and safety of the local community. The whole approach of the assessment matrix of Appendix A should be thoroughly reviewed from the perspective of pedestrians needing to cross the roads and the community using those roads. **Congleton Town Council - summary of feedback:**

1

8

Measure 1 - How can the scheme be adapted to take account of known risk, near misses or routes being actively avoided by parents because of the danger?

Measure 1 - Is it right to ignore collisions where the driver was under the influence of alcohol or drugs?

Measure 2 - Is it right to give so many more points to accidents where there has been a claim, rather than acknowledging all actions?

Measure 4 - It's a bit of chicken and egg if there were more safe crossings more people may choose to cycle or walk.

Measure 5 - Not sure why if there is a shared path they are marked down for a crossing point compared to where there is no shared path?

Area D - There is no sense of scale with the amenities – which makes it very simplistic. The section is biased towards schools. No definition given to 'close proximity'.

Measure 15 - More emphasis should be given to the hospitality industry.

Area E - Confusion over the scoring system.

Measure 21 - More weighting should be given to the voices of Town and Parish Councils.

Measures 27 & 28: How will "tartan rug" points be allocated?

Area F - Those with mobility issues and visually impaired should also be considered.

Measure 33 - Maybe this should consider if there has been a school crossing point in operation in the past 10 years and the school is still in place?

Measure 34 - Why are AQMA sites relevant?

General comments - How many points would a scheme need to score to be put forward to the next stage? It feels wrong that there needs to be accidents and injuries to make a risky crossing place qualify for assistance. How much funding will be allocated towards crossings?

Councillor Robert Douglas - summary of feedback:

2 recommendations given:

- the necessity for formal feedback to requests for new pedestrian crossings
- the necessity for a pedestrian crossing on Jackson Road, Congleton for the safety of pupils of Eaton Bank Academy.

Cycling UK - summary of feedback:

Detailed discussion on the following sections of the strategy, with reference to how these impact on cyclists: 4.2.1 (Dropped kerbs), 4.2.2 (Dropped kerbs with pedestrian refuge), 4.3.1 (Zebra crossings), 4.3.2 (Parallel crossings), 4.3.3 (Signalised control crossings), and 4.3.8 (Advanced Cycle Signals).

Measure 4 - I tend to disagree with this measure as no area in Cheshire East would score higher than 1. I recommend to set a more realistic target to score 3 points.

1

Measure 4 - Should the scoring for this measure be the other way round?

Measure 25 - What does "on CONFIRM" mean?

Measures 27 & 28 - What are the scores? I am unable to see it on the tartan rug.

General comment - The document is called Crossing Facilities Strategy and in 1.1 also Pedestrian Crossing Strategy.

Holmes Chapel Parish Council - summary of feedback:

Holmes Chapel Parish Council welcomes Cheshire East Council's wish to1produce a strategy, but have concerns that the matrix appears overlycomplex, confusing and not transparent.

Holmes Chapel Partnership - summary of feedback:

Area A - The council shouldn't wait until someone dies before putting measures in place.

Area B - If you have no infrastructure to promote sustainable travel, you score 1 low, if you have no infrastructure to promote sustainable travel, people will not feel it is safe to cycle, so they don't, so you score low.

Area C - This prioritises large urban centres over smaller communities with equally dangerous crossing conditions.

Area D - The points system here disadvantages small villages and towns in favour of larger urban centres.

Area F - Some Parish Councils have applied for Active Travel Funding and been turned down by Cheshire East Council. Points go to those areas that have already had investment in Active Travel, even though it was CEC policy to concentrate that where they have. This penalises small communities a second time round, which is doubly unfair.

Area H - If there was a School Crossing Patrol there may be less necessity for a Controlled Crossing! Some Parish Councils have applied for School Crossing Patrols but were turned down. We have no School Crossing Patrol, although it is desperately needed, but on this matrix we would lose 10 points towards a controlled crossing.

Sandbach Town Council - summary of feedback:

Introduction: The historical focus on pedestrian crossings for safety has led to a decline in active travel, with increased car usage in response to growing traffic levels. Despite climate and health considerations, crossing policies in Cheshire East have made limited progress in the past 14 years. New developments often fund crossings, but the distribution appears uneven, neglecting older areas with higher pedestrian demand.

Background and Policy Evolution: In 2011, there was a recognition of the environmental and health benefits of active travel, prompting a crossing policy. However, Cheshire East has made slow progress, especially in older areas. The 2020 pandemic emphasized the need for local active travel, but the current strategy falls short of addressing these concerns effectively.

Consultation Report Analysis:

Prioritization Matrix: The report acknowledges budget constraints and introduces a prioritization matrix. However, it seems biased towards school locations, potentially neglecting other important areas. Active travel and by implication climate change mitigation is not a priority of Highways budgeting.

Further Investigations: Criteria for assessing crossing types focus on safety and convenience, maintaining a car-oriented approach.

Changes to Crossing Type: Acknowledging legislative changes, the criteria for reviewing crossing types are thorough but appear to lack a defined process for consideration of other traffic management alternatives.

Development Sites: The inclusion of controlled crossings in development aligns with planning but may neglect existing areas with higher demand.

Appendix A Prioritisation Matrix Critique:

D - Amenity: Excluding rural areas and favouring town centres and schools may disadvantage active travel routes with longer journey times.

E & F - Neighbourhood Engagement and Local Concern: While community involvement is encouraged, the scoring system is rightly skewed towards car safety. Fact-based and community requests should be considerations more relevant than political.

G & H - Supporting Growth and Protects/Improves the Environment: These sections contribute to a holistic evaluation but seem biased towards caroriented priorities, with over emphasis on existing active travel projects. Section G is the focus on embryonic active travel but 'nearby' is undefined.

Overall Assessment: The document is well-structured, but biases persist, reflecting historical prioritization of car-centric policies. It may evolve with budgetary alignment to council objectives. However, it falls short of being a comprehensive strategy for pedestrian safety and active travel promotion. The policy should align more closely with council objectives, prioritizing pedestrian safety and active travel; but choices quite rightly bias toward safety first (likely in practice safety only); a continuation of current policy. Considerations for active travel need more emphasis in the scoring criteria. Vague terms and unclear definitions should be addressed with a glossary for clarity. The 3-year cycle may result in delayed response to pedestrian needs, suggesting a need for more frequent assessments of possible lower cost alternatives. Budget constraints limit the potential impact of the policy in improving road safety and promoting active travel.

In conclusion, the policy has potential but requires refinement and alignment with council objectives for it to be truly effective in promoting pedestrian safety and active travel.

Shavington-cum-Gresty Parish Council - summary of feedback:

The Parish Council urges Cheshire East Council to uphold any existing agreements in place and complete the work as previously agreed.

Formal email response #1 – Bollington Town Council

Summary of consultation response:

Based on a Bollington Neighbourhood Plan survey, Bollington residents do not feel safe using uncontrolled crossings as drivers do not give way at these crossings. A large proportion of residents agree that more safe crossing points should be introduced on the main B5090 road. Uncontrolled crossings could be improved by making their presence clearer to drivers by markings across the road (of the zebra crossing type) as used in a number of continental countries and warning signs for the area that drivers should give way to pedestrians waiting to cross. The prioritisation matrix on which future crossing locations will be based gives no justification for the measures or scores provided, with both being arbitrary, over complicated and not fit for purpose. The prime criteria to be considered should be the amenity, convenience and safety of the local community. The whole approach of the assessment matrix of Appendix A should be thoroughly reviewed from the perspective of pedestrians needing to cross the roads and the community using those roads.

Full response:

RESPONSE OF BOLLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL TO CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL 'CROSSING STRATEGY CONSULTATION'

Cheshire East Council is currently holding a consultation on its proposed Pedestrian Crossing Strategy to determine priorities for the most deserving locations against available budget constraints. The present document sets out the response of Bollington Town Council to this consultation. It should be noted that a review of the Bollington Neighbourhood Plan is currently in progress and a Questionnaire/Survey has been issued to all residents which seeks their views on a wide range of issues including those concerning traffic and pedestrian movements and safety so that this response is informed by views from our community.

Types of Crossing

The strategy document firstly summarises the different types of crossing based on National Guidance and CEC practice. These are divided into uncontrolled crossings with dropped kerbs and no road markings, and a number of types of controlled crossings with combinations of signals and road markings.

For uncontrolled crossings the strategy states that drivers should give way to those waiting to cross the road. Along the main B5090 road through Bollington there appear to be 14 crossings 12 of which are "uncontrolled". The experience of Bollington residents is that drivers do not give way to those waiting to cross the road at uncontrolled crossing points and that drivers are largely unaware of or ignore the presence of such crossings. As a result, uncontrolled crossings do not achieve their

objective as residents do not feel safe trying to cross the road at such crossings. In the current Bollington Neighbourhood Plan Update Questionnaire, 84.5% of respondents have replied 'Strongly agree or Slightly agree' to the proposition that 'More safe crossing points should be introduced on the main B5090 road'.

Proposed CEC prioritisation of requests

The basis of the proposed prioritisation of requests for crossings is an assessment matrix given in Appendix A of the document which sets out a scoring system based on eight criteria. No justification is given for either the criteria or the scores allocated to them. We consider the proposed system to be arbitrary, extremely over complex and not fit for purpose. The prime criteria to be considered should be the amenity, convenience and safety of the local community. Criteria such as 'sustainable travel', 'neighbourhood engagement', 'supporting growth' and improvement of the environment' are subjective issues requiring arbitrary judgement and are secondary to the principal requirements for crossings of safety and convenience. The whole approach of the assessment matrix of Appendix A should be thoroughly reviewed from the perspective of pedestrians needing to cross the roads and the community using those roads. It should be replaced by a system based on recommendations from local Town / Parish councils of need for a crossing and perceived safety by residents based on speed and numbers of vehicles and visibility to the proposed crossing point.

Concluding remarks

The current system of types of crossing and the proposed system of prioritisation are both unsatisfactory and unfit for purpose. A much cheaper and safer system can be obtained for uncontrolled crossings by making their presence clearer to drivers by markings across the road (of the zebra crossing type) as used in a number of continental countries and warning signs for the area that drivers should give way to pedestrians waiting to cross. This would also act as a significant traffic calming measure to reduce excessive speeds. Whilst the use of such a system would give substantial savings in costs and improvements in safety and convenience, prioritisation should be based on a case made by the local Town / Parish Council based on amenity, perceived safety and traffic/geometry data for proposed locations.

Formal email response #2 – Congleton Town Council

Summary of consultation response:

Measure 1 - How can the scheme be adapted to take account of known risk, near misses or routes being actively avoided by parents because of the danger?

Measure 1 - Is it right to ignore collisions where the driver was under the influence of alcohol or drugs?

Measure 2 - Is it right to give so many more points to accidents where there has been a claim, rather than acknowledging all actions?

Measure 4 - It's a bit of chicken and egg if there were more safe crossings more people may choose to cycle or walk.

Measure 5 - Not sure why if there is a shared path they are marked down for a crossing point compared to where there is no shared path?

Area D - There is no sense of scale with the amenities – which makes it very simplistic. The section is biased towards schools. No definition given to 'close proximity'.

Measure 15 - More emphasis should be given to the hospitality industry

Area E - Confusion over the scoring system.

Measure 21 - More weighting should be given to the voices of Town and Parish Councils.

Measures 27 & 28: How many will "tartan rug" points be allocated?

Area F - Those with mobility issues and visually impaired should also be considered.

Measure 33 - Maybe this should consider if there has been a school crossing point in operation in the past 10 years and the school is still in place?

Measure 34 - Why are AQMA sites relevant?

General comments - How many points would a scheme need to score to be put forward to the next stage? It feels wrong that there needs to be accidents and injuries to make a risky crossing place qualify for assistance. How much funding will be allocated towards crossings?

Full response:

Response from Congleton Town Council's Community Committee - Crossing Strategy

Congleton Town Councillors discussed Congleton Town Council's response to the Cheshire East Council consultation on the Crossing Strategy at a Community Meeting held on the 29th of February.

The Committee resolved that there should be a response to the paper raising the points raised in the Committee paper, in the discussion and raised at the Integrated Transport Working Group meeting held on the 28th of February.

An online response has been completed on behalf of the committee, but the form didn't allow for all the points raised, therefore we are also taking the opportunity to respond via letter. There was also a few points of clarification that the committee wanted to ascertain. They were:

- The understanding of the points raised from the 'tartan rug' demographics. More points will be added for under 16s and over 65s – but it wasn't clear what the allocation would be. This would help us to conduct our own surveys to see which of the most needed and already identified crossing points needed in Congleton are likely to score the highest on the new ranking, if the proposal is adopted.
- 2. Is there any indication of how many points a scheme would need to score to be likely to be put forward to the next stage?
- 3. The new scheme appears to be very evidence-based, but how do you collate evidence around a perceived or actual risk. It feels wrong that there needs to be accidents and injuries to make a risky crossing place qualify for assistance to help pedestrians and cyclists.
- 4. Town and Parish Councils work closely with people across their community and know the areas which need to be addressed more weighting should be given to the voice of the Town or Parish Council.
- 5. Can we expect in the next couple of years that most of the funding set aside for crossings will be used to upgrade current crossings that do not meet the needs of the equalities act?
- 6. Are Cheshire East Council highways actively exploring all funding opportunities to get new crossings installed. There are six crossing schemes in the approved Local Transport Plan all of which are needed, but not currently funded. Can the Town Council help support funding bids for these crossings

Crossings listed for Congleton in the Local Transport Delivery Plan.

- CO66 Introduce a pedestrian crossing at the A34 Clayton Bypass near the fire station and Dane Street.
- C0124 Installation of a pedestrian crossing on Rood Hill close to the junction of Daisybank Drive
- CO127 Pedestrian Crossing at Mossley Traffic Lights
- CO130 Controlled crossing at Eaton Bank
- C0132 Pedestrian crossing at the Mount, A34 Newcastle Road
- CO133 Improved surface and lighting at Tommy's Lane and a pedestrian crossing on Brook Street

Other points raised

Section A Casualty Reduction:

A. This measure only considers actual casualties and claims on a road. When local people are aware that an area is dangerous, action needs to be taken ahead of

casualties occurring. How can the scheme be adapted to take account of known risk, near misses or routes being actively avoided by parents because of the danger?

B. Is it right to give so many more points to accidents where there has been a claim, rather than acknowledging all actions. Most claims are settled out of court – would these count?

C. Is it right to ignore collisions where the driver was under the influence of alcohol or drugs? We would suggest that these should also be counted. Just because traces of drugs or alcohol may be found, the incident shouldn't be ignored.

Section B - Sustainable Travel

D. It's a bit of chicken and egg if there were more safe crossings more people may choose to cycle or walk? This measure is weighted to help those areas where cycling or walking is already well established. These measures should also be about creating the change, rather than reactive.

E. Not sure why if there is a shared path they are marked down for a crossing point compared to where there is no shared path? If there is a path leading to a place where many people then have difficulty crossing the problem needs to be thought through – shared or not shared.

Section C: Accessibility and Capacity

F. The section on footpaths assumes that there are appropriate footpaths in the area. There are some places in Congleton where there is a crossing needed but also a path needs to be installed to create a safe walking/ cycling route in an area that was rural and is now built-up due to the expansion of housing estates.

Section D Amenity

G. There is no sense of scale with the amenities – which makes it very simplistic. The footfall will be very different for a small parade of shops versus a supermarket.

H. The section is biased towards schools, not a bad thing as safe routes to school need to be encouraged – but potentially 23 points in this section is for schools – with more points in other sections too. We would welcome Cheshire East making an upfront and positive push to create safe routes to schools across the borough. Don't hide it in the form. If this is a top priority say so.

I. We would like to see CEC give a bit more emphasis to the hospitality industry. Hospitality venues attract many visitors to our town during the day and evening and their requests for safe crossing points are valid. Congleton now has one of the most active evening economies in Cheshire East and the needs of these users needs to be considered. J. No definition given to 'close proximity' - is this within 1/4 mile, 200m? 5 minutes walk?

Section E: Neighbourhood Engagement

K express concerns over a three-year period it is worth 10 points. If the Town Council supports an application it is worth 3 points. If the ward member supports it is worth 5. (If three ward councillors does that mean 15 points or still 5?). We believe Town and Parish Councils are well placed to know what is most needed in their locality, and CEC should use this 'most local tier' of local government to help with the decision making, rather than just allocating 3 points to its view out of 200 + points available.

Section F: Local Concern

L. It would be useful to know the weighting given for the age demographics.

M. The number of people with mobility issues and visually impaired should be considered in addition to the characteristic of being under 16 or over 65.

Section H - Protects and Improves the Environment

N. Not sure about the relevance of the AQM zones – I assume that the aim is to stop more traffic from idling– but is it right that pedestrians and those wishing to cross the road are penalised?

O. There are 10 points if there is a school crossing in operation. Maybe this should consider if there has been a school crossing point in operation in the past 10 years and the school is still in place? It's a role that seems to have been lost in many places due to budget cuts, but the fact that at one time funding was found to help people cross the road would indicate that help and assistance crossing that road is needed.

<u>Overall</u>

Due to the financial state of Cheshire East Council, it feels as though the whole exercise is a bit futile as it appears that there will be very little funding available for crossings across the borough. Rather than making it almost impossible to reach the top of the pile to achieve funding, maybe CEC needs to consider what it really needed and then work out a plan to make those crossings happen?

The Town Council also feels it is crucial that planning for adequate crossings needs to be at the time of development, rather than fitting retrospectively. For areas still being developed we would urge Cheshire East Planning to ensure that opportunities are taken to upgrade crossings close to new estates to help residents to walk to local amenities.

We hope you find our comments useful. If a member of Highways team would like to explore any of the ideas raised in this response we would be happy to discuss and would like to contribute in a positive way to working towards safer and appropriate crossings in Congleton. Please contact the Town Council on 01260 270350 ext 1 or email info@congleton-tc.gov.uk in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Officer, Congleton Town Council.

Formal email response #3 – Councillor Robert Douglas

Summary of consultation response:

2 recommendations given:

- the necessity for formal feedback to requests for new pedestrian crossings
- the necessity for a pedestrian crossing on Jackson Road, Congleton for the safety of pupils of Eaton Bank Academy.

Full response:

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please include as part of your responses to the Crossing Strategy Consultation 2023, the statement that I made at your November 2023 Highways and Transport Committee meeting, which is attached, including taking account of

- the necessity for formal feedback to requests for new pedestrian crossings
- the necessity for a pedestrian crossing on Jackson Road, Congleton for the safety of pupils of Eaton Bank Academy.

Many thanks.

QUESTION FOR CHESHIRE EAST HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT MEETING 23RD NOVEMBER 2023

The Pedestrian Crossing Strategy makes no reference to consultation with or follow up engagement with local communities and organisations such as schools.

There should be formal procedures in place within this Strategy requiring feedback on the results of prioritisation matrices and future plans with those who have raised concerns about the lack of a pedestrian crossing.

Can we please include this feedback and follow up within this document to demonstrate that there will be dialogue between Cheshire East Council and local communities, which is so important.

On 22nd September, 2022, this committee discussed the necessity for safer school streets. The accident in 2022 in which a schoolgirl was knocked down on Jackson Road, which is just outside Eaton Bank Academy, was detailed on page 187 of that committee's agenda papers.

With the full support of the Headteacher of Eaton Bank Academy, Ed O'Neill, I advised this committee on 22nd September 2022 of the proposals that had been put forward to Cheshire East Highways to improve safety around Eaton Bank Academy, which included a zebra crossing to be installed on Jackson Road.

Eaton Bank Academy inform me that since then they have had little feedback on these proposals.

Can you please advise

- whether a prioritisation matrix for crossing facilities has been completed for Jackson Road, or if not, could one please be generated?
- Could the results of such a prioritisation matrix for Jackson Road be given to Eaton Bank Academy for further discussion as part of an engagement process given the necessity for such a crossing to be installed on Jackson Road?

Councillor Robert Douglas, 16th November, 2023.

Formal email response #4 – Cycling UK

Summary of consultation response:

Detailed discussion on the following sections of the strategy, with reference to how these impact on cyclists: 4.2.1 (Dropped kerbs), 4.2.2 (Dropped kerbs with pedestrian refuge), 4.3.1 (Zebra crossings), 4.3.2 (Parallel crossings), 4.3.3 (Signalised control crossings), and 4.3.8 (Advanced Cycle Signals).

Measure 4 – Disagree with this measure as no area in Cheshire East would score higher than 1. I recommend to set a more realistic target to score 3 points.

Measure 4 – Should the scoring for this measure be the other way round?

Measure 25 – What does "on CONFIRM" mean?

Measures 27 & 28 – What are the scores? I am unable to see it on the tartan rug.

General comment – The document is called Crossing Facilities Strategy and in 1.1 also Pedestrian Crossing Strategy.

Full response:

Dear Consultation team, thank you very much for making this consultation available.

Cycling UK's headline message: reduce pedestrian refuges

Please see my comments.

4.2.2 Dropped Kerb with a pedestrian refuge

The draft strategy fails to assess pedestrian refuges in relation to cycling. This is in contrast to the existing 2011 crossings policy which states that pedestrian refuges "can cause potential problems for the cyclist travelling along the road because of the reduced width available for motorised traffic to pass." (page 1). Furthermore research [1] suggests that pedestrian refuges can cause significant stress for cyclists and appear to provoke negative attitudes about cyclists in drivers (as cyclists may obstruct them at the narrowing they create). Please see an example of the problems cyclists encounter.

P48PPP overtakes through pedestrian refuge (youtube.com)

The draft Strategy states pedestrian refuges "... narrow the carriageway which may also reduce speed of traffic." However, there is no evidence to support the claim of reduced speed in the literature used, Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter 6, Traffic Control, or LTN 1/20. On the contrary, the fact that pedestrian refuges create a pinch-point means that drivers often speed up to try and narrowly overtake a cyclist just before the refuge.

Can you please provide literature confirming the speed reduction and under which conditions, i.e. with a narrow or wide gap or when the driver is held up by a cyclist?

The Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter 6, Traffic Control, states that "a minimum gap of 4 m is recommended". This gap is generally not met, for example at any of the pedestrian refuges on Crewe Road in Haslington. It is met however, for example at the pedestrian refuge on Middlewich Road at Moorland Road in Sandbach. Cycling there is still very stressful, especially westbound, for a number of reasons.

Additionally, to avoid being held up by a cyclist drivers sometimes use the wrong side of the pedestrian refuge, increasing risk to pedestrians.

Pedestrian refuges do not provide any legal priority for pedestrians and are of very little use for pedestrians with impaired sight or mobility.

Instead, on a road with parked cars, I recommend to create a pedestrian crossing point with a build-out from the side of the road - and preferably to make drivers cross a raised table - rather than by creating pedestrian refuges. The attached DS.113 Southwark Council, Traffic Islands guidance states at 3.1.2.a for 30 mph roads that

"... pedestrian islands may be introduced where it can be demonstrated that one of the following threshold criteria are met": "It can be demonstrated that the residual carriageway width after introduction of edge build outs could not be reduced to \leq 8m." (iv)

Overall, pedestrians deserve proper crossing points, i.e. either zebras or signalised crossings.

Further comment on this chapter:

Chapter 4.2.2, Dropped Kerb with a pedestrian refuge, follows 4.2.1, Dropped Kerbs.

4.2.1 Dropped Kerbs



Figure 1 Example of a dropped kerb

As chapter 4.2.2 is a continuation I would expect a photo similar to figure 1 Example of a dropped kerb (on what I assume is a straight road).



4.2.2 Dropped Kerb with a pedestrian refuge

Figure 2 Example of a dropped kerb with a pedestrian refuge

However, figure 2 Example of a dropped kerb with a pedestrian refuge, is located at a T-junction. Whether pedestrian refuges reduce speed is a moot point, as mentioned above. However, figure 2 is not a good example for pedestrian refuges that "... narrow the carriageway which may also reduce speed of traffic.", mentioned immediately below figure 2. Car traffic in either direction slows down here significantly due to the corners and the requirement to give way at a T-junction, rather than due to the pedestrian refuge. I recommend using for example Crewe Road at Forge Fields in Wheelock/Sandbach which would be an example of a straight road, similar to figure 1.



Pedestrian refuges at controlled crossings

Pedestrian refuges should also be viewed in a critical way at controlled crossings. Figure 5 in 4.3.4 for example shows two pedestrian refuges in one picture, indicating how frequently they are used.



Figure 5- Example of a Puffin Crossing

As a local example I would like to show Old Mill Road at the entrance to the Capricorn development in Sandbach. A pedestrian refuge was installed at a toucan crossing, in my opinion unnecessarily, resulting in pinch-points for cyclists.

Research and Consultation | Cheshire East Council



4.3.1 Zebra Crossing

The draft Strategy states "Where gaps in traffic flows are few, and waiting times [for pedestrians, MB] long because people feel it may be hazardous to establish precedence, a Zebra crossing is likely to be unsuitable."

I disagree and would like to use the zebra crossing on the A534 London Road in Elworth/Sandbach as an example. At around 18,000 vehicles a day this is a busy location, however I was unable to see that "people feel it may be hazardous to establish precedence." The crossing worked well. However the zebra crossing was replaced by a puffin crossing a couple of years ago, at a cost of around £80,000. I felt that was unnecessary and would like to see a much stronger road safety case for choosing signalised crossings over zebra crossings. I understand Zebra crossings are around half the price of a signalised crossing.

4.3.2 Parallel Crossing (zebra crossings for pedestrian and cyclists, MB)

I welcome this type of crossing.

4.3.3 Signalised control crossings

"Signalised Controlled Crossings are more suitable [than zebra crossings, MB] where:

The numbers of people crossing are high and delays to vehicular traffic would otherwise be excessive."

I still recommend zebra crossings here as I see the "delays to vehicular traffic" as a side benefit, encouraging drivers to reassess their transport habits.

4.3.8 Advanced Cycle Signals

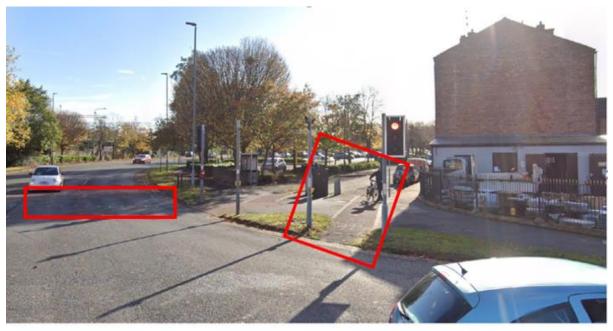


Figure 9- Example of Advanced cycle signals

The location is Market Street/Vernon Way/Badger Avenue/Middlewich Street in Crewe and shows a wide Advanced Stop Line on Vernon Way to the left and a cyclist-only traffic light on the right at the end of Market Street (highlights made by MB)

I was unable to find the term Advanced Cycle Signals in the literature. In the draft Strategy they are explained by three sentences:

"These are used to connect cycle routes across or through junctions." This would refer to the cyclist-only traffic light at the end of Market Street.

"The distinguishing feature is the use of detectors which differentiate for cyclists at an advanced stop line." This would refer to the Advanced Stop Line on Vernon Way. LTN 1/20 mentions at 10.6.39 an "Early release" function and states "LLCS [Low level cycle signal] used in this way are programmed to turn green a few seconds before the main traffic. LLCS are generally used with an ASL ..." But that function is not available at either location here.

These crossings are purely for use by cyclists and are only found at signal controlled junctions." This would again refer to the cyclist-only crossing at the end of Market Street.

The consultation asks for "Sections of the strategy to give feedback on". Please see below:

Prioritisation Matrix Area B - Sustainable Travel:

"Measure 4: Propensity for cycling in the local area https://www.pct.bike/

Measure 4 scoring: Over 30% = 5, Between 20% and 30% = 3, Less than 20% = 1

On this measure I "tend to disagree" as no area in Cheshire East would score higher than 1. I recommend to set a more realistic target to score 3 points.

"Measure 5: Is there a shared use path at this location?

Measure 5 scoring: Yes = 1, No = 6."

I assume the scoring should be the other way round.

Prioritisation Matrix Area F - Local Concern

"Measure 25: Number of unique recorded resident and/or stakeholder concern for vulnerable road user safety on CONFIRM? (in past 3 years)"

What does "on CONFIRM" mean?

"Measure 27: Score for population in the ward 65 and over

Measure 28: Score for population in the ward 16 or under

Measure 27 [&28] scoring: Matrix score has been derived from the tartan rug." (Overviews of health and wellbeing (cheshireeast.gov.uk)

What is the score? I am unable to see it on the tartan rug.

Finally a general comment. I notice the document is called Crossing Facilities Strategy and in 1.1 also Pedestrian Crossing Strategy.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have further questions.

Regards, Cycling UK, Sandbach.

References

[1] Driver's perceptions of cyclists - TRL549 (Basford et al, 2002), The effect of road narrowings on cyclists - TRL621 (Gibbard et al, 2004), Road safety report no.100 – Interaction between speed choice and road environment (Jamson et al, 2008)

Formal email response #5 – Holmes Chapel Parish Council

To Whom it May Concern

Holmes Chapel Parish Council wishes to make the following comment regarding the proposed Crossing Strategy:

Holmes Chapel Parish Council welcomes Cheshire East Council's wish to produce a strategy, but we have concerns that the matrix appears overly complex, confusing and not transparent.

Formal email response #6 – Holmes Chapel Partnership

Summary of consultation response:

Area A - The council shouldn't wait until someone dies before putting measures in place.

Area B - If you have no infrastructure to promote sustainable travel, you score low, if you have no infrastructure to promote sustainable travel, people will not feel it is safe to cycle, so they don't, so you score low.

Area C - This prioritises large urban centres over smaller communities with equally dangerous crossing conditions.

Area D - The points system here disadvantages small villages and towns in favour of larger urban centres.

Area F - Some Parish Councils have applied for Active Travel Funding and been turned down by Cheshire East Council. Points go to those areas that have already had investment in Active Travel, even though it was CEC policy to concentrate that where they have. This penalises small communities a second time round, which is doubly unfair.

Area H - If there was a School Crossing Patrol there may be less necessity for a Controlled Crossing! Some Parish Councils have applied for School Crossing Patrols but were turned down. We have no School Crossing Patrol, although it is desperately needed, but on this matrix we would lose 10 points towards a controlled crossing.

General comments – The scoring system seems biased towards larger communities. Another criterion would help redress the balance: Is the road a through road/ transit

route with no alternative road? There seems to be very little emphasis on supporting "latent demand" i.e. getting people out of their cars.

Full response:

Comments on the Prioritisation Matrix for Requests for Crossing Facilities

A Casualty reduction

This is the old criterion – something will be done once someone has died. Rather than trying to be proactive and prevent death or serious injury.

B Sustainable Travel

3 If you have no infrastructure to promote sustainable travel, you score low

4 If you have no infrastructure to promote sustainable travel, people will not feel it is safe to cycle, so they don't, so you score low

C Accessibility and Capacity

9 How many lanes are there? This clearly prioritises large urban centres over smaller communities with equally dangerous crossing conditions.

D Amenity

12-17 The points system here disadvantages small villages and towns in favour of larger urban centres. On the whole in the centre of larger towns residents do not have to compete with through traffic (not just cars but HGVs) in order to cross the road. Because the number of amenities is lower in smaller communities, the score would be correspondingly low but arguably the need for safe places to cross is greater.

F Local Concern

26 Holmes Chapel has applied for Active Travel Funding and been turned down on every occasion by Cheshire East Council. The points go to those areas that have already had investment in Active Travel and it was CEC policy to concentrate that on the towns. This is understandable when trying to get the maximum return on the investment but to penalise communities a second time round when requesting pedestrian infrastructure seems doubly unfair.

H Protects and Improves the Environment

31 See comment on 26 above.

33 If there was a School Crossing Patrol there may be less necessity for a Controlled Crossing! In Holmes Chapel we applied for a School Crossing Patrol on Macclesfield

Road and were turned down by CEC. We have no School Crossing Patrol, although it is desperately needed, but on this matrix we would lose 10 points towards a controlled crossing.

Overall deprivation score. Is this relevant? Either a road is too busy to cross safely or it's not, regardless of the economic standing of the community. If wealthier communities had the right to fund or part fund their own crossings (through the Parish/Town Council or crowdfunding) if they see the need, it would be more understandable. Reducing car use is surely the principle objective.

General Comments

- The scoring system seems biased towards larger communities even though for the most part these have a bypass which takes away through traffic from the centre where people access amenities on foot.
- Another criterion would help redress the balance: Is the road a through road/ transit route with no alternative road?
- There seems to be very little emphasis on supporting "latent demand" ie getting people out of their cars. People drive in Holmes Chapel because they perceive it as dangerous to walk and cycle and often it is. All Cheshire East Council's promotion of Active Travel for health and environmental reasons is worth nothing, if it is almost never supported by infrastructure which enables these activities.

Holmes Chapel Partnership (vice Chair).

Formal email response #7 – Sandbach Town Council

Summary of consultation response:

Introduction:

The historical focus on pedestrian crossings for safety has led to a decline in active travel, with increased car usage in response to growing traffic levels. Despite climate and health considerations, crossing policies in Cheshire East have made limited progress in the past 14 years. New developments often fund crossings, but the distribution appears uneven, neglecting older areas with higher pedestrian demand.

Background and Policy Evolution:

In 2011, there was a recognition of the environmental and health benefits of active travel, prompting a crossing policy. However, Cheshire East has made slow progress, especially in older areas. The 2020 pandemic emphasized the need for local active travel, but the current strategy falls short of addressing these concerns effectively.

Consultation Report Analysis:

Prioritization Matrix: The report acknowledges budget constraints and introduces a prioritization matrix. However, it seems biased towards school locations, potentially neglecting other important areas. Active travel and by implication climate change mitigation is not a priority of Highways budgeting.

Further Investigations: Criteria for assessing crossing types focus on safety and convenience, maintaining a car-oriented approach.

Changes to Crossing Type: Acknowledging legislative changes, the criteria for reviewing crossing types are thorough but appear to lack a defined process for consideration of other traffic management alternatives.

Development Sites: The inclusion of controlled crossings in development aligns with planning but may neglect existing areas with higher demand.

Appendix A Prioritisation Matrix Critique:

D - Amenity: Excluding rural areas and favouring town centres and schools may disadvantage active travel routes with longer journey times.

E & F - Neighbourhood Engagement and Local Concern: While community involvement is encouraged, the scoring system is rightly skewed towards car safety. Fact-based and community requests should be considerations more relevant than political.

G & H - Supporting Growth and Protects/Improves the Environment: These sections contribute to a holistic evaluation but seem biased towards car-oriented priorities, with over emphasis on existing active travel projects. Section G is the focus on embryonic active travel but 'nearby' is undefined.

Overall Assessment:

The document is well-structured, but biases persist, reflecting historical prioritization of car-centric policies. It may evolve with budgetary alignment to council objectives. However, it falls short of being a comprehensive strategy for pedestrian safety and active travel promotion.

The policy should align more closely with council objectives, prioritizing pedestrian safety and active travel; but choices quite rightly bias toward safety first (likely in practice safety only); a continuation of current policy.

Considerations for active travel need more emphasis in the scoring criteria.

Vague terms and unclear definitions should be addressed with a glossary for clarity.

The 3-year cycle may result in delayed response to pedestrian needs, suggesting a need for more frequent assessments of possible lower cost alternatives.

Budget constraints limit the potential impact of the policy in improving road safety and promoting active travel.

In conclusion, the policy has potential but requires refinement and alignment with council objectives for it to be truly effective in promoting pedestrian safety and active travel.

Full response:

Response of Sandbach Town Council to Crossing Strategy Consultation 2024

Executive Summary and recommendations are [lower down]

Historically the only objective of a crossing was the protection of those crossing. In many places in the past years where traffic levels increased those who could travel on foot felt unsafe and moved to car travel as a safer and more convenient travel method. Of course, this in turn made those same roads more unsafe and increased this shift. So, for provisioning choices fewer users and more need. As car ownership became widespread often the criteria for number of current beneficiaries to a crossing scheme was not met, Increased road traffic meant more spend on roads and fewer places meeting pedestrian criteria for crossings outside of the very center of towns. Over the last 40 years the emergence of the 2-car family further fed this process.

The increasing awareness of the environmental and health impact evolved so that by the last policy considerations in 2011 it was identified a crossing policy would have a benefit to Cheshire Easts aspirations for Climate change and Health improvement by residents leaving the car at home more and participating in active travel. Indeed, Central government also suggested improvements in crossing provision will give confidence for users to take up more active travel and should be a feature of provisioning by local councils.

And then in 2020 Covid made many move to homeworking and think about life choices for themselves including transport methods locally, active travel possibilities and the ease of these became more important to many.

Since identification of this active travel contribution of crossings Cheshire East has made little progress over the last 14 years despite having re-enforced its desires to combat climate change and support active travel.

Across Cheshire East we see crossing provision attached to new developments funded by site developers under S106 arrangements. Often these are in areas where a crossing of some type is provided on a forecast demand basis at the insistence of planners and does not form part of an obvious larger active travel plan by Highways and appears not to meet any of the proposed or past criteria for council to fund a crossing.

Residents therefore see an unfair distribution of crossing provision where areas with busy roads in older developments do not figure in provision consideration, despite such provision being more sensible than that required of developers to service their developments. More sensible in older areas as these locations often support larger and often older populations and are more likely to be used for active travel as journey times are shorter, and usually form a waypoint on the active travel journey from newer developments into the town center.

That is not to say provision of crossings at new developments is not desirable it merely demonstrates a dual standard applied across the borough and a lack of priority shown by highways in funding such improvements adequately to date in favour of what seems a continuing obsession with prioritising funding of road development for car use above all else with Highways own main budget.

The amended policy attempts to address the issue of demand for crossings for active travel introduction, safety and confidence and retain its core safety first for current users agenda and at long last bring in formally suppressed demand for crossings and to factor in local support for the proposals.

The Consultation Report we note in sections ...

5.1 Introduction

This section provides a clear context for the need to prioritize pedestrian crossings due to self-imposed budget choices in favour of other spending areas politically described as budget constraints. It emphasizes the importance of a systematic approach to ensure consistency and efficient use of limited resources. Effectively could be re-worded as crossings, active travel and by implication climate change mitigation is not a priority of Highways budgeting.

5.2 Prioritisation

The introduction of a prioritization matrix is a systematic approach, which includes eight key areas for evaluation. The use of a point / percentile-based system to select locations for further investigation helps in resource optimization. The proposal is a light touch reworking of existing schemes which does begin to consider other factors.

While it quite rightly will continue to prioritise traditional safety issues if highways budget did expand to want to support active travel and crossings then this is a format to develop to support such a change in budget policy if this ever came to pass. The proposal offers a potential of 35% of points if petitioners are a school or educational establishment so is inherently biased to these locations which is understandable.

6 Further Investigations for prioritized requests

This section introduces criteria for assessing the type of crossing, considering safety, convenience, and accessibility. The inclusion of factors such as location, national guidance, benefits, costs, demand, and engineering judgment demonstrates a continuation of a car orientated approach to decision-making for budget allocation.

The issue of recurring intermittent peaks in traffic flow should feature in considerations. Road and motorway closures and accidents impact towns like Sandbach changing the whole safety dynamics of roads in minutes.

7 Changes to crossing type

Acknowledging legislative changes and the need to review crossing types is a proactive measure. The criteria for review, including visibility, pedestrian activity, collision data, and others, contribute to a thorough assessment.

Traffic Management including Refuges appears omitted from consideration / suggestions.

It may be possible to create more crossing opportunities by:

- the provision of a refuge or
- installing traffic calming measures or
- build outs or narrowing the carriageway (to reduce the crossing time).

8 Development Sites

The inclusion of controlled crossings in development sites aligns with the planning process. The requirement for a commuted sum for future maintenance from developers should ensure sustainable support for pedestrian facilities, regrettably this is and will be at the continued expense of existing older developments with greater need which will appear more expensive in the longer term. Such S106 funds are also far too often diverted from pursuing sustainable travel projects with a specific local benefit to borough benefitting road schemes as a matter of policy.

Within Appendix A Prioritisation Matrix we note.

Age demographics from highways of tartan rug point scoring is not detailed so comments are based around related weightings between sections and topics actually scored in the matrix.

D-Amenity

This section excludes all rural and areas where active travel to amenity is possible but one assumes the 'close proximity' rule excludes most routes to places not in

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close proximity. Therefore, active travel made possible by the existence of a crossing where journey time is not short is by default disadvantaged.

Clarification of this close proximity definition should be stated. The scoring system allocating 25% of points to this section and favours town centers and proximity to school locations and not routes just out of town suffering with traffic issues from passing and town bound traffic.

Highways E - NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT and F - LOCAL CONCERN

These sections provide a scoring system based on political and stakeholder support, school travel plans, and resident concerns. The inclusion of these factors should enrich the prioritization matrix and should offer community involvement in decision-making. However, the weighting of these areas is skewed towards a Highways decided car safety only agenda.

The fact ward member political support is scored a 5 and local resident petition requests a maximum 2 under we assume 'other political support' seems wrong.

Political support should not figure at all in a fact-based approach and resident petitioning is far more relevant.

The 'CONFIRM' system/process seems unknown to residents as a registration method for vulnerable users represents a 6% rating and seems a substitute to age profile assumptions.

This Confirm Enterprise Asset Management could be described as a physical item/location Customer Relationship Management system. How do residents register issues on this system?

Highways G - SUPPORTING GROWTH and H - PROTECTS AND IMPROVES THE ENVIRONMENT

These sections consider aspects such as links to town centers, employment sites, and environmental impact. They contribute to a holistic evaluation of the benefits and implications of installing a crossing facility.

Section G is the embryonic 6% only weighting toward active travel but only to 'nearby' locations.

Section H sounds impressive and merits 12% 'PROTECTS AND IMPROVES THE ENVIRONMENT 'but in reality, can be seen as 'will a crossing support travel investment we have already made or is near a school'

Overall Assessment

The document appears to be well-structured, with a systematic approach to prioritization and assessment. The inclusion of multiple criteria in the prioritization matrix and the consideration of various factors in the review process demonstrate a comprehensive if biased methodology. Regrettably it is still skewed to perpetuating historic crossing decisions but a format that could evolve to something more in line with councils policies if budgets where actually aligned with council policy objectives.

Recommendations / Conclusion

The policy is regrettably falling short of its aspirations in detail and not the FULL crossings strategy many had hoped for, designed for pedestrian safety and also to encourage and enable active travel in existing communities where it is desired.

Regrettably it still shows a continuation of highways low prioritisation of crossing provision for health or active travel reasons unless it is part of other transport investments often part or mainly funded by central government and this is reflected in scoring.

As a rationed decision-based process on relative probability of accidents being likely or risk increasing the policy appears to work in this context and is rightly focused on schools which have specific traffic and safety issues. This is of course the prime historic purpose of a crossing, so this is to be welcomed.

As a 3-year cycle of consideration is planned it means once every 3 years a request could get on a short list of crossing projects to be investigated for progression. So effectively a 2 to 4 year at best request to delivery and only those fundable in the following year will be investigated.

More positively the suppressed demand or desire of local residents for active travel is noted by highways in this proposal but to a degree that it will not be acted upon without very significant elements of the current selection policy being applicable too. It does however offer a point of consideration that has not featured before and could be expanded in its importance in coming years.

The scoring criteria use of vague terms like 'close proximity' is an issue. Along with other terms that are unclear so a glossary would be useful for those entering the process. It is refreshing to see a recognition by highways of tartan rug socio economic differences in a policy. However, the weighting of this element is unclear.

The scoring process in a 'non-close to school' setting requires it seems travel destinations in close proximity on both sides of the road for higher scores so outlying communities without facilities of a significant scale' needing to cross busy 'feeder roads' to our towns facilities and shops will be scored lower and continue to be ranked lower on the priority list.

Budget Constraints are designated by the highways committee itself in spite of Cheshire East Council policy. The inability of Cheshire East Highways to offer any meaningful community delivery of the borough environment policy through Highways due to its continued funding choices is to be lamented. It is a missed opportunity to go along with a policy proposal that funded appropriately could make some if biased impact to improve road safety and active travel opportunity.

Executive Summary

Introduction:

The historical focus on pedestrian crossings for safety has led to a decline in active travel, with increased car usage in response to growing traffic levels. Despite climate and health considerations, crossing policies in Cheshire East have made limited progress in the past 14 years. New developments often fund crossings, but the distribution appears uneven, neglecting older areas with higher pedestrian demand.

Background and Policy Evolution:

In 2011, there was a recognition of the environmental and health benefits of active travel, prompting a crossing policy. However, Cheshire East has made slow progress, especially in older areas. The 2020 pandemic emphasized the need for local active travel, but the current strategy falls short of addressing these concerns effectively.

Consultation Report Analysis:

Prioritization Matrix: The report acknowledges budget constraints and introduces a prioritization matrix. However, it seems biased towards school locations, potentially neglecting other important areas. Active travel and by implication climate change mitigation is not a priority of Highways budgeting.

Further Investigations: Criteria for assessing crossing types focus on safety and convenience, maintaining a car-oriented approach.

Changes to Crossing Type: Acknowledging legislative changes, the criteria for reviewing crossing types are thorough but appear to lack a defined process for consideration of other traffic management alternatives.

Development Sites: The inclusion of controlled crossings in development aligns with planning but may neglect existing areas with higher demand.

Appendix A Prioritisation Matrix Critique:

D- Amenity: Excluding rural areas and favouring town centers and schools may disadvantage active travel routes with longer journey times.

E & F - Neighbourhood Engagement and Local Concern: While community involvement is encouraged, the scoring system is rightly skewed towards car safety. Fact-based and community requests should be considerations more relevant than political.

G & H - Supporting Growth and Protects/Improves the Environment: These sections contribute to a holistic evaluation but seem biased towards car-oriented priorities, with over emphasis on existing active travel projects. Section G is the focus on embryonic active travel but 'nearby' is undefined.

Overall Assessment:

The document is well-structured, but biases persist, reflecting historical prioritization of car-centric policies. It may evolve with budgetary alignment to council objectives. However, it falls short of being a comprehensive strategy for pedestrian safety and active travel promotion.

The policy should align more closely with council objectives, prioritizing pedestrian safety and active travel; but choices quite rightly bias toward safety first (likely in practice safety only); a continuation of current policy.

Considerations for active travel need more emphasis in the scoring criteria.

Vague terms and unclear definitions should be addressed with a glossary for clarity.

The 3-year cycle may result in delayed response to pedestrian needs, suggesting a need for more frequent assessments of possible lower cost alternatives.

Budget constraints limit the potential impact of the policy in improving road safety and promoting active travel.

In conclusion, the policy has potential but requires refinement and alignment with council objectives for it to be truly effective in promoting pedestrian safety and active travel.

We Recommend Specifically

- Consider providing more details on the prioritization matrix definitions in Appendix A for clarity.
- Definition of 'close proximity' should be specified in distance or time.
- Additionally, periodic reviews of the entire process could ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance should be defined.
- Remove or reduce scoring of political considerations entirely in favour of resident petitioning with informal councillor representations.
- Describe how to register need on CONFIRM system.

- Describe the criteria that other road crossing methods and possibilities could be considered. E.g a request for a pedestrian crossing could be discounted on cost but a cheaper engineered solution like central refuge is possible and achieve a similar benefit. Will highways highlight the possibilities or do applicants need to request a specific crossing type?
- Expand or append the proposal with a request process or scoring matrix to include scenarios where highways would support externally funded or part-funded crossing engineering proposals including the provision of a refuge, installing traffic calming measures, build outs or narrowing the carriageway (to reduce the crossing time).
- Any carriageway narrowing, or refuge should be designed in a way to not unduly compromise the ease of passage for cyclists

Formal email response #8 – Shavington-cum-Gresty Planning Committee

Full response:

On 7 February 2024, the Shavington-cum-Gresty (Parish Council) Planning Committee reviewed the DRAFT Crossing Strategy 2024 and agreed to submit the following comment for consideration:

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council supported the following statement to be submitted as part of the Crossing Strategy Consultation 2024:

'That the Parish Council urges Cheshire East Council to uphold any existing agreements in place and complete the work as previously agreed.'

Appendix 2 – The consultation material

Crossing Strategy Consultation 2024

Purpose of this consultation



Cheshire East Council's current crossing strategy was approved for adoption in December 2011, and sets out how locations for new pedestrian crossings in Cheshire East are identified.

The council is now consulting on an updated draft of its crossing strategy. The updated strategy proposes a consistent approach which the council will take to managing new and existing pedestrian crossings on the highway network.

Reasons for updating the strategy

The demand for pedestrian crossings exceeds the council's available funding each year, meaning the council needs a consistent way of prioritising which locations should receive new crossings, and which should not.

Within the current strategy, assessments for new pedestrian crossings are mainly based on a simple formula which measures the level of traffic against the level of pedestrian activity in an area, to determine whether a pedestrian crossing is needed. This formula is called the PV² method, and is felt to be too simplistic.



Within the updated draft strategy, a new prioritisation matrix has been proposed to help assess where new crossings are needed. This prioritisation matrix consists of 8 areas, and incorporates a formal qualitative assessment of sites, as well as an informal consultation with the Ward Councillor/s and relevant Town or Parish Council. This new approach will also take into account local facilities that generate pedestrian trips, such as shops, schools and other community facilities.

The aim of the new proposed approach is to identify suppressed demand for crossings and to factor in local support for the proposals. This will provide a greater depth of information at an earlier stage in the assessment, to help inform decisions about where new pedestrian crossings should be located.



Give your feedback

You can give your feedback on this consultation by:

- Completing this paper version of this survey and returning it to us using the freepost return envelope included in the consultation pack
- Completing this survey online at [consultation closed]
- Emailing [consultation closed]
- Calling [consultation closed]

This consultation will close on [consultation closed].

Contact us



For any queries about this consultation e.g. if you would like to receive this questionnaire in an alternative format, or submit your response in a different way, please email the Research and Consultation team at RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

If you do not have email access call Customer Services on 0300 123 55 00, and they will forward your enquiry to us on your behalf.

Keeping your data safe



Any personal information you give us will remain private, be stored securely, and be used in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. To read more about how we use your data read our Privacy Notice, a copy of which is included in the consultation pack.

The draft strategy and prioritisation matrix

View a copy of the draft Crossing Strategy 202, a copy of which is included in this consultation pack. The proposed new prioritisation matrix can be found in Appendix A of this draft strategy.

The prioritisation matrix will be used to determine a score for potential pedestrian crossing locations, with the top percentile of locations then being investigated further using national standards for location assessment, possible crossing type and deliverability within the budgets available.

The top percentile of locations will be determined annually and taken forward as the annual program the following financial year. Locations that are then progressed to detailed design and implementation will be informed by the budgets available.

Prioritisation Matrix Area A – Casualty reduction

Within the Prioritisation Matrix, the following measures and scores have been proposed for Area A - Casualty reduction.

Area A – Casualty Reduction	Proposed scoring
Have there been any collisions (excluding driving under the influence related collisions) that have involved pedestrians or cyclists crossing the road?	Yes = 3 No = 0
Have there been any claims at this location?	Yes = 10 No = 0

How strongly do you agree or disagree that... Tick one box only in each row

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	•	Tend to Strongly disagreedisagree	
the measures in Area A are the right ones? the proposed scores in Area A are appropriate?			Ū		

Do you have any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area A? This might include suggestions for extra measures or alternative scores which you feel should be included in Area A *Write in below*

Prioritisation Matrix Area B – Sustainable travel

Within the Prioritisation Matrix, the following measures and scores have been proposed for Area B - Sustainable Travel.

Area B – Sustainable Travel	Proposed scoring
On a cycle route in the Transport Development Plans?	Yes in the TDP = 2 Cycle route but not in the TDP = 1 No cycle route = 0
Propensity for cycling in the local area https://www.pct.bike/	Over 30% = 5 Between 20% and 30% = 3 Less than 20% = 1
Is there a shared use path at this location?	Yes = 1 No = 6

How strongly do you agree or disagree that... Tick one box only in each row

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	0	Tend to Strongly disagreedisagree	
the measures in Area B are the right ones? the proposed scores in Area B are appropriate?			5		

Do you have any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area B? This might include suggestions for extra measures or alternative scores which you feel should be included in Area B *Write in below*

Prioritisation Matrix Area C – Accessibility and capacity

Within the Prioritisation Matrix, the following measures and scores have been proposed for Area C - Accessibility and Capacity.

Area C – Accessibility and Capacity	Proposed scoring
Footway provision	No footways = 0 Footway on 1 side only = 1 Footway on both sides with 1 side wider than the other = 2 Footway on both sides equal width both sides = 3
Is the road one way or 2 way?	One way = 1 2 way = 2
Is the road divided?	Yes = 3 No = 1
How many lanes are there?	Up to 2 = 1 Up to 4 = 3 Up to 6 = 5
Are there any obstructions to the footways? (e.g. street furniture)	Yes = 0 No = 4
Are there any civil engineering constraints at this location?	Yes = 0 No = 6

How strongly do you agree or disagree that... Tick one box only in each row

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	-	Tend to Strongly disagreedisagree	
the measures in Area C are the right ones? the proposed scores in Area C are appropriate?			C		

Do you have any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area C? This might include suggestions for extra measures or alternative scores which you feel should be included in Area C *Write in below*

Prioritisation Matrix Area D – Amenity

Within the Prioritisation Matrix, the following measures and scores have been proposed for Area D - Amenity.

Area D – Amenity	Proposed scoring
How many retail facilities are in close proximity? (e.g. shops, supermarkets, hair & beauty establishments)	Under 3 = 0 4 to 12 = 1 13 or more = 2
How many education facilities are in close proximity? (e.g. nurseries, schools, colleges, universities)	0 = 0 1 to 2 =5 3 or more = 10
How many health care institutions are in close proximity? (e.g. doctors, hospitals, care homes, dentists)	0 = 0 1 to 3 = 5 4 or more = 10
How many hospitality facilities are in close proximity? (e.g. cafes, restaurants, takeaways, bars, hotels)	0 = 0 1 to 10 = 1 11 or more = 2
How many places of worship are in close proximity?	0 = 0 1 to 2 = 1 3 or more = 2
How many tourist attractions or leisure facilities are in close proximity? (e.g. museums, garden centre, gardens, historic Houses, gyms, parks, etc)	0 = 0 1 to 3 = 1 4 to 6 = 2 7 or more = 3
Would a crossing facility provide access to an educational establishment?	Yes = 10 No = 0
Is this location on a route to a Primary School?	Yes = 3 No = 0

How strongly do you agree or disagree that... Tick one box only in each row

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	-	Tend to Strongly disagreedisagree	
the measures in Area D are the right ones? the proposed scores in Area D are appropriate?			-		

Do you have any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area D? This might include suggestions for extra measures or alternative scores which you feel should be included in Area D *Write in below*

Prioritisation Matrix Area E – Neighbourhood engagement

Within the Prioritisation Matrix, the following measures and scores have been proposed for Area E - Neighbourhood Engagement.

Area E – Neighbourhood Engagement	Proposed scoring
Is there evidence of political support from a ward member?	Yes = 5 No = 0
Is there evidence of stakeholder support from a town or parish council?	Yes = 3 No = 0
Is there evidence of other political support?	Yes = 2 No = 0
Is there evidence of support from other organisations (e.g. resident associations, disability groups)	Yes = 5 No = 0
Is there a school travel plan to support a crossing facility?	Yes = 5 No = 0

How strongly do you agree or disagree that... Tick one box only in each row

	Tend	Neither		Don't
Strongly	to	<u> </u>	Tend to Strongly	
agree	aaroo		disagreedisagree	Not
	agree	disagree)	sure

...the measures in Area E are the right ones? ...the proposed scores in Area E are appropriate?

Do you have any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area E? This might include suggestions for extra measures or alternative scores which you feel should be included in Area E *Write in below*

Prioritisation Matrix Area F – Local concern

Within the Prioritisation Matrix, the following measures and scores have been proposed for Area F - Local Concern.

Area F – Local Concern	Proposed scoring
Number of unique recorded resident and/or stakeholder concern for vulnerable road user safety on CONFIRM? (in past 3 years)	0 = 0 1 to 2 = 5 3 or more = 10
Does this location directly link into existing or proposed active travel schemes?	Links to an existing scheme = 10 Links to a proposed or scheme in design = 7 Links to a 'scheme on a 'wish list' = 4 Does not link to any active travel scheme = 0
Score for population in the ward 65 and over	Matrix score has been derived from the tartan rug. https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council _and_democracy/council_information/js na/overviews-of-health-and- wellbeing.aspx
Score for population in the ward 16 or under	Matrix score has been derived from the tartan rug. https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council _and_democracy/council_information/js na/overviews-of-health-and- wellbeing.aspx

How strongly do you agree or disagree that... Tick one box only in each row

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

...the measures in Area F are the right ones? ...the proposed scores in Area F are appropriate?

Do you have any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area F? This might include suggestions for extra measures or alternative scores which you feel should be included in Area F *Write in below*

Prioritisation Matrix Area G – Supporting growth

Within the Prioritisation Matrix, the following measures and scores have been proposed for Area G - Supporting Growth.

Area G – Supporting Growth	Proposed scoring
Will a crossing facility at this location help improve or provide a link to a town or village centre?	Yes = 5 No = 0
Will a crossing facility in this location help improve or provide a link to an employment site?	Yes = 5 No = 0
Size of employment site	10 or fewer employees = 1 Over 10 but fewer than 100 employees = 3 Over 100 employees = 5

How strongly do you agree or disagree that... Tick one box only in each row

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree		Tend to Strongly disagreedisagree	
the measures in Area G are the right ones? the proposed scores in Area G are appropriate?			C		

Do you have any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area G? This might include suggestions for extra measures or alternative scores which you feel should be included in Area G *Write in below*

Prioritisation Matrix Area H – Protects and improves the environment

Within the Prioritisation Matrix, the following measures and scores have been proposed for Area H - Protects and Improves the Environment.

Area H – Protects and Improves the Environment	Proposed scoring
No. of other active travel measures the location ties into or links to	No other active travel measure = 0 1 other active travel measure = 1 2 other active travel measures = 2 3 or more active travel measures = 3
Would a crossing facility provide access to a transport hub? e.g. railway or bus station, bus stop, cycle hub or taxi rank	Yes = 5 No = 0
Is there a school crossing in operation at this location?	Yes = 10 No = 0
Is location an AQMA site?	Yes = 0 No = 2

How strongly do you agree or disagree that... Tick one box only in each row

	Strongly agree	το	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to Strongly disagreedisagree	
the measures in Area H are the right ones? the proposed scores in Area H			0		

are appropriate?

Do you have any comments about the proposed measures or scores for Area

H? This might include suggestions for extra measures or alternative scores which you feel should be included in Area H *Write in below*

The full strategy

Generally speaking, how strongly do you agree or disagree the proposed strategy should be adopted by Cheshire East Council? *Tick one box only*

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

If you wish to comment on any other aspect of the strategy, please do so below: *Write in below*

About you

It would help us if you could answer the questions below - the information will be used to see if there are any differences in views for different groups of people. You do not need to answer any of the following questions if you do not wish to.

How are you responding to this survey? Tick all that apply

As a resident of Cheshire East As a visitor to Cheshire East As a Cheshire East Council Ward Councillor As a Town or Parish Councillor As a Cheshire East Council employee On behalf of a group, organisation, club or local business Other *(write in below)*:

If you are responding on behalf of a group, organisation, club or local business, please write its name in the box below: *Write in below*

What is your home postcode? We ask this so we can be sure we have obtained a range of views from across the borough *Write in below*

What is your gender identity? Tick one box only

Male Female Prefer not to say Prefer to self describe *(write in below)*

What age group do you belong to? Tick one box only

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

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

Yes No Prefer not to say

You have now reached the end of the survey, thank you.

Appendix 3 – Survey respondent demographics

Gender

45% of survey respondents were female, 45% male.

Gender	Count	Percent
Female	52	45%
Male	52	45%
Prefer not to say	6	5%
-	5	4%
Cyborg	1	1%
Total valid responses	116	99%

Age group

Survey respondent numbers by age group were as follows:

Age Group	Count	Percent	
16-24	1	1%	
25-34	8	7%	
35-44	20	17%	
45-54	16	14%	
55-64	24	21%	
65-74	28	24%	
75-84	6	5%	
85 and over	0	0%	
Prefer not to say	7	6%	
-	6	5%	
Total valid responses	116	100%	

Health or disability status

Survey respondent numbers by health or disability status were as follows:

Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? This includes problems related to old age.	Count	Percent
Yes	21	18%
No	85	73%
Prefer not to say	5	4%
-	5	4%

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116

Total valid responses

100%



OPEN

Changes following consultation

- 1. The following changes have been made to the Crossings Facilities Strategy following the consultation.
- 2. School Crossing Patrols have been included in the Strategy and are now one of the options available when considering what type of crossing should be installed at a location. The Prioritisation Matrix will also be used to prioritise sites for School Crossing Patrols. This takes into account feedback received from the Council's Strategic Infrastructure and Parking Service. School Crossing Patrols are not a statutory requirement and locations remain subject to funding by the council.
- 3. The terminology within the Prioritisation Matrix has been reviewed to make it easier to understand.
- 4. Some of the areas within the Prioritisation Matrix have been adjusted in line with feedback, as follows.
 - a. Area B Sustainable Travel has been updated to make it clearer which 'Scenario and 'Trip Type' are used when utilising the 'Propensity to Cycle Tool'. The measure asking whether the location is adjacent to a shared use path has also been removed to remove a potential bias over one type of route.

The main opposition to this area which was due to a perceived focus on cycling at the expense of pedestrians. These comments have not been addressed. Measures related to cycling are included within the matrix as it is a mode of Active Travel. The promotion of Active Travel aligns with the 'Green' aim set out within the council's Corporate Plan therefore it was deemed appropriate for this area to be retained with the minor adjustments as detailed above.

- b. Area C Accessibility and capacity has been updated to further clarify what each measure represents, addressing feedback that some of the terminology was difficult to understand. An additional measure has also been added referencing the distance to the nearest controlled crossing point. This was deemed a valid suggestion that should be considered as part of the prioritisation process.
- c. Area D Amenity has been condensed to address feedback that there are too many categories and measures for different types of facilities. This led to concerns that scores would be disproportionate in some locations and that smaller villages may be disadvantaged. Measures 12, 15 and 17 have been combined as a result. The scores

have also been adjusted for this combined measure to ensure any facility scores at least 1 point.

- d. Area F Local concern has been updated to include near miss reporting. This is to address feedback received about Area A – Casualty reduction - where there was concern that "the council has to wait for someone to be hurt before a crossing is introduced". No further changes to Area A are proposed.
- 5. No changes are proposed to the following areas, for the following reasons, and the reason for this is as follows:
 - a. Area G Supporting growth. This received the highest level of support therefore despite some suggestions that the scores should be increased. It is not proposed to amend the measures or scores.
 - b. Area H Protects and improves the environment. This also received high levels of support (60% agreed the right measures had been used, 57% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate). Despite some concerns being raised over this area being "urban-centric", it is not proposed to amend the measures or scores.
 - c. Area E Neighbourhood engagement. This also received a good level of support (57% agreed the right measures had been used, 53% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate). However, concern was raised around the influence of politicians on the framework and the weightings given to particular stakeholders. No amendments are proposed on the basis that the primary role of members is to represent the ward for which they are elected and act as an advocate for their residents. Therefore it is considered acceptable for members' feedback to be given a higher weighting.
- 6. Some respondents expressed a view that the prioritisation matrix was complex. While this view is understood, it needs to be appreciated that the matrix is an assessment tool used by professionals within the Highways service. As such, it necessitates a level of complexity to reflect the multitude of factors that are taken into consideration regarding crossings.



Highway and Transport Committee

[19th September 2024]

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 –Part III, Section 53, Application No: CO/8/48: Application for the Addition of a Public Footpath from Mill Lane to the Junction with Footpath No8 Hassall, Hassall.

Report of: Peter Skates, Acting Executive Director of Places

Report Reference No: HTC/29/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: Hassall.

Purpose of Report

- 1. This report outlines the investigation into the application was made by Mr Meewezen on the 25 August 2015 to amend the Definitive Map and Statement to add a Public Footpath between Mill Lane (UY1177) to junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall from A-B-C-D-E (see Appendix 1).
- 2. This report includes a discussion of the consultations carried out in respect of the claim, historical documentary evidence, witness evidence and the legal tests for a Definitive Map Modification Order to be made. The report makes a recommendation based on that information, for quasi-judicial decision by Members as to whether an Order should be made to add a Public Footpath to the Definitive Map and Statement.
- 3. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Corporate Plan aim of "A thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Executive Summary

4. The report considers the evidence submitted and researched in the application to add a Public Footpath in the Parish of Hassall. The evidence consists of five historical ordnance survey maps that demonstrate the existence of a physical feature for the part of the claimed route for more than 30 years. The report determines whether on the balance of probabilities the status of Public Footpath has been acquired.

OFFICIAL

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways & Transport Committee is recommended to:

 Decide that the application to add a footpath as shown between points A-B-C-D-E on Plan No. WCA/043 at **Appendix 1** is refused on the grounds that there is not any robust evidence to overturn the legal presumption that the Definitive Map and Statement are correct.

Background

- 5. The application that was initially made by Mr Meewezen on the 25 August 2015 to amend the Definitive Map and Statement to add a Public Footpath between Mill Lane (UY1177) to junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall from A-B-C-D-E (see Appendix 1). The application consisted of a number of five ordnance survey maps and no user evidence forms.
- 6. The claimed route commences at point A (Grid Ref: SJ 76490,58527) Mill Lane (UY1177) and then proceeds along track in a southerly direction to point B (Grid Ref: SJ 76497,58445). It then continues in a easterly direction along a track through a farm yard to point C (Grid Ref: SJ 76589, 58408), then continuing in a southerly direction along a field boundary to point D, (Grid Ref: SJ 76629, 58245), continuing in a southerly direction along a field boundary to it termination with junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall, (Grid Ref: SJ 76603,58122).
- 7. The width of the route from Points A-B-C is approximately 3 metres wide between boundaries and is a physical track like feature for its length. It is bounded by stone wall and boundary hedge and is a clear bounded feature. From Points C-D-E the route continues along a field boundary approximately 2 metres wide (as per guidance).
- 8. There is only one registered landowner for the entire claimed route.

Legal matters

- 9. Section 53(2)(b) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 requires that the Council shall keep the Definitive Map and Statement under continuous review and make such modifications to the Map and Statement as appear requisite in consequence of the occurrence of certain events:-
- 10. Section 53(3)(c)(i) is relevant were

"(c) the discovery by the authority of evidence which (when considered with all other relevant evidence available to them) shows: -

- (i) that a right of way which is not shown on the map and statement subsists or is reasonably alleged to subsist over land in the area to which the map relates, being a right of way such that the land over which the right subsists is a public path, a restricted byway or, subjection to section 54A, a byway open to all traffic.
- 11. The evidence can consist of documentary/historical evidence or user evidence or a mixture of both. All the evidence must be evaluated and weighed, and a conclusion reached whether, on the 'balance of probabilities' the rights subsist. Any other issues, such as safety, security, suitability, desirability or the effects on property or the environment, are not relevant to the decision.
- 12. Where the evidence in support of the application is user evidence, section 31(1) of the Highways Act 1980 applies. This states: -

"Where a way.....has been actually enjoyed by the public as of right and without interruption for a full period of twenty years, the way is deemed to have been dedicated as a highway unless there is sufficient evidence that there was no intention during that period to dedicate it."

13. This requires that the public must have used the way without interruption and as of right; that is without force, secrecy, or permission. Section 31(2) states that "the 20 years is to be calculated retrospectively from the date when the right of the public to use the way is brought into question".

> In the case of, *R* (on the application of Godmanchester Town Council) v Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2007), the House of Lords considered the proviso in section 31(1) of the Highways Act 1980:

> "...unless there is sufficient evidence that there was no intention during that period to dedicate it".

14. The proviso means that presumed dedication of a way can be rebutted if there is sufficient evidence that there was no intention to dedicate the way, during the relevant twenty-year period. What is regarded as 'sufficient evidence' will vary from case to case. The Lords addressed the issue of whether the "intention" in section 31(1) had to be communicated to those using the way, at the time of use, or whether an intention held by the landowner but not revealed to anybody could constitute "sufficient evidence". The Lords also considered whether use of the phrase "during that period" in the proviso, meant during the whole of that period. The House of Lords held that a landowner had to communicate his intention to the public in some way to satisfy the requirement of the proviso. It was also held that the lack of intention to dedicate means "at some point during that period", it does not have to be continuously demonstrated throughout the whole twenty-year period.

15. For public rights to have come into being through long use, as stated above, a twenty-year period must be identified during which time use can be established. Where no challenge to the use has occurred, this period can be taken as the twenty years immediately prior to the date of the application. In this case the date of challenge was the date of the application being 16th May 2007.

Consultation and Engagement

- 16. On the 29 February 2024, consultation with all the statutory consultee's landowners, parish councils and local councillors.
- 17. Hassall Parish Council was contacted on two occasions and at the time of writing this report failed to respond. There was no response from any of the user groups and none from the landowner.
- 18. There was only one response from the consultation and that was from Ward Councillor, who stated '*I have no objection to the proposal*'.

Historical Evidence

Ordnance Survey Records

- 19. Ordnance Survey mapping was originally for military purposes to record all roads and tracks that could be used in times of war; this included both public and private routes. These maps are good evidence of the physical existence of routes, but not necessarily of status. Since 1889 the Ordnance Survey has included a disclaimer on all of its maps to the effect that the depiction of a road is not evidence of the existence of a right of way. It can be presumed that this caveat applied to earlier maps.
- 20. **Ordnance Survey 1 inch to a mile, 1842.** The map shows Mill Lane but doesn't show the claimed route.
- 21. **Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1:25 inch, c1875.** The map does show the claimed route. It's shown as double dashed lines A-B, leading to a farm building and part C leading from the farmyard to the adjacent fields. Then annotated as a single dashed line along the field boundary C-D-E.
- 22. **Ordnance Survey 1:25 inch c1898.** The map does show the claimed route. It's shown as double dashed lines A-B, leading to a farm building and part C leading from the farmyard to the adjacent fields. Then annotated as a single dashed line along the field boundary C-D-E.
- 23. **Ordnance Survey 1:25 inch c1910.** The map does show the claimed route. It's shown as double dashed lines A-B, leading to a farm building

and part C leading from the farmyard to the adjacent fields. Then annotated as a single dashed line along the field boundary C-D-E.

Old County Commercial maps

- 24. These are small scale maps made by commercial mapmakers, some of which are known to have been produced from original surveys and others are believed to be copies of earlier maps. All were essentially topographic maps portraying what the surveyors saw on the ground. They included features of interest, including roads and tracks. It is doubtful whether mapmakers checked the status of routes or had the same sense of status of routes that exist today. There are known errors on many mapmakers' work and private estate roads and cul-de-sac paths are sometimes depicted as 'cross-roads'. The maps do not provide conclusive evidence of public status, although they may provide supporting evidence of the existence of a route.
- 25. Burdett map of 1794, the Swire and Hutching map 1830 and the 1831 Bryant map are of very limited use as it doesn't show the claimed route only surrounding major roads.

Tithe Map 1841

- 26. Tithe Awards were prepared under the Tithe Commutation Act 1836, which commuted the payment of a tax (tithe) in kind, to a monetary payment. The purpose of the award was to record productive land on which a tax could be levied. The Tithe Map and Award were independently produced by parishes and the quality of the maps is variable. It was not the purpose of the awards to record public highways. Although depiction of both private occupation and public roads, which often formed boundaries, is incidental, they may provide good supporting evidence of the existence of a route, especially since they were implemented as part of a statutory process. Non-depiction of a route is not evidence that it did not exist; merely that it did not affect the tithe charge. Colouring of a track may or may not be significant in determining status. In the absence of a key, explanation, or other corroborative evidence the colouring cannot be deemed to be conclusive of anything.
- 27. The Tithe Map, Township: Hassall dated 1841, reference EDT 190/2, does not show the claimed route.

Finance Act Map 1910

30. The Finance Act of 1910 involved a national survey of land by the Inland Revenue so that an incremental value duty could be levied when ownership was transferred. Land was valued for each owner/occupier and this land was given a hereditament number. Landowners could claim tax relief where a highway crossed their land. Although the existence of a public right of way may be admitted it is not usually described or a route shown on the plan. This Act was repealed in 1920.

31. The valuation book from Cheshire East Archives, reference NVA 2/9, for the Sandbach, Wheelock was reviewed and there was no entry for the claim route.

Deposit Plans

- 32. These relate to turnpike, railways, and canals, each of which required an Act of Parliament to authorise construction. Detailed plans were submitted showing the effect on the land, highways, and private accesses crossed by the proposed route. The Acts, plans and accompanying books of reference should be considered together.
- 33. Railway and Canal developments from 1794 onwards it was a requirement for detailed plans of the proposed development to be drawn up and placed on deposit for public consultation. Plans were accompanied by a book of reference which itemised fields, houses, roads etc. on the line of the utility and identified owners and occupiers. These documents are generally regarded as strong evidence however, many proposed lines were never constructed, some proposals could have failed or been rejected because of poor and inaccurate plans.
- 34. Plan of the Proposed Turnpike Road from Wheelock Wharf in Sandbach and Book of Reference, 1834, ref QDP 115, the claimed route is outside of the area shown on the plan and there is no entry within the Book of Reference for the plan.
- 35. Section of intended Railway plan from Warrington and Newton, county palatine of Chester 1829, and Book of Reference, ref QDP 88. The claimed route is outside of the area shown on the plan and there is no entry within the Book of Reference for the plan. The railway was never built.
- 36. The North Staffordshire Railway, Trent & Mersey Navigation: plans and sections, and book of reference, 1890, ref QDP 667. The claimed route is outside of the area shown on the plan and there is no entry within the book of reference for the plan. The railway was never built.
- 37. Congleton and Crewe Railway: Plan & Book of Reference to plans of lands in Hassall and Wheelock, 1845, ref QDP 217. The plan shows part of the claim route, and where the route is not shown the parcel of land is numbered "23a & 24a". The railway was never built.
- 38. The Book of Reference entry for numbers "23a & 24a" describes this parcel of land as *"Public footpath, Field and footpath"* this I believe is

reference to an annotated footpath running along the adjacent field boundary and not for the full length of the claimed route.

39. The Railway Clearing House plan dated 1913, does not show the claimed route.

The Definitive Map records.

- 40. The Definitive Map and Statement is based on surveys and plans produced in the early 1950s by each parish in Cheshire, of all the ways they considered to be public at that time. The surveys were used as the basis for the Draft Definitive Map.
- 41. The Definitive Map, Provisional and Draft Map do not show any of the claimed route marked and only existing nearby Public Footpaths.

Aerial Imagery

42. Aerial Imagery from 1971 to 2015 was consulted with to see if there are indicators that the route has been used, reviewing the five aerial photographs Mill Lane and the entrance to Hassall House Farm and through the farmyard, points A-B-C can be clearly seen. Although once the claimed route goes onto the adjacent fields C-D-E the claimed route isn't shown

Strava details

43. Strava data shows that the route has been used, but very infrequent. While the Strava data shows use it doesn't distinguish between the general public or the local residents, making this data source unreliable.

User evidence

44. There are no user evidence forms submitted in support of this application.

Conclusion on Evidence

- 45. Documentary evidence for the claim was old Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, part show the claimed route has been a physically defined feature back to the 18th century. The OS maps do not alone prove the case that a public footpath exists with only part of the route being shown. The other documents either show part of the route or not at all and does not provide evidence that support the OS maps that a public footpath subsists along the route.
- 46. The Congleton and Crewe Railway: Plan & Book of Reference to plans of lands in Hassall and Wheelock, 1845, shows part of the route and describes in parcel no. 23a & 24a as 'Public footpath, field and footpath'.

Whist, this would be good evidence if showing the entire route, it misses a large section in the north.

- 47. There was no user evidence to consider with this application.
- 48. While the local councillor had no objections to make to the proposal, the user groups and the landowner made no response to the consultation.
- 49. The Balance of documentary evidence does not support the case that a public footpath subsists along the route between points A-B-C-D-E as shown on plan No. WCA/043 at **Appendix 1.**

Recommendation

50. It is therefore considered that the requirements of Section 53(3)(c)(i) have not been met and it's recommended that the application is refused on the grounds that there is insufficient evidence to make a Definitive Map Modification Order to record a public footpath between Mill Lane & footpath No.8 Hassall. For the reasons explained in this report has not been satisfied to meet the legal tests and make an Order.

Council Policies

51. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Corporate Plan aim of "A thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Other Options Considered

52. Not applicable – this is a non-executive matter.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

53. The legal implications in relation to highways law are set out in the Legal matters section of this report (paragraphs 9-15).

The Human Rights Act is also of relevance. Whilst article 1 to the first protocol (peaceful enjoyment of property) and article 8 (right to respect for family, private life and home) are engaged, it is important to note that these rights are qualified, not absolute, which means that they can be interfered with in so far as such interference is in accordance with domestic law and is necessary in a democratic society for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. It is considered that any interference occasioned by the making of a Modification Order is both in accordance with domestic law (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) and is in the public interest as it is necessary in a democratic society for the public who wish to use the way.

Should Members resolve that a Modification Order be made in accordance with highways legislation, this is merely the start of the legal process. Once a Modification Order is made, it must be publicised, and any person will have an opportunity to formally object to it. Should objections be received, the Modification Order would have to be referred to the Secretary of State who would usually hold a Public Inquiry before deciding upon whether or not to confirm the Modification Order.

Please note that the Council will not disclose the user evidence forms that form part of the background documentation at this stage in the process. The Council considers that the information provided within the user evidence documentation is exempt information under s1 & 2 Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, there is no such statutory right prior to an Order having been made - persons affected are entitled to the information in the event that an Order is made following the Committee decision.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

54. If objections to an Order lead to a subsequent hearing/inquiry, the Council would be responsible for any costs involved in the preparation and conducting of such. The maintenance of the Public Right of Way, if added to the Definitive Map and Statement, would fall to the landowner and Council in line with legislation. The associated costs would be borne within existing Public Rights of Way revenue and capital budgets.

There are no financial implications.

Policy

55. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Vision of the Corporate Plan of a greener Cheshire East, with the aim of "thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Vision – An open, fairer, greener Cheshire East

Aim - A thriving and sustainable place

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- Reduce impact on the environment.
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel.
- · Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

56. The legal tests under section 53 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 do not include an assessment of the effects under the Equality Act 2010.

Human Resources

57. There are no direct implications for Human Resources.

Risk Management

58. There are no direct implications for risk management.

Rural Communities

59. There are no direct implications for Rural Communities.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

60. There are no direct implications for Children and Young People

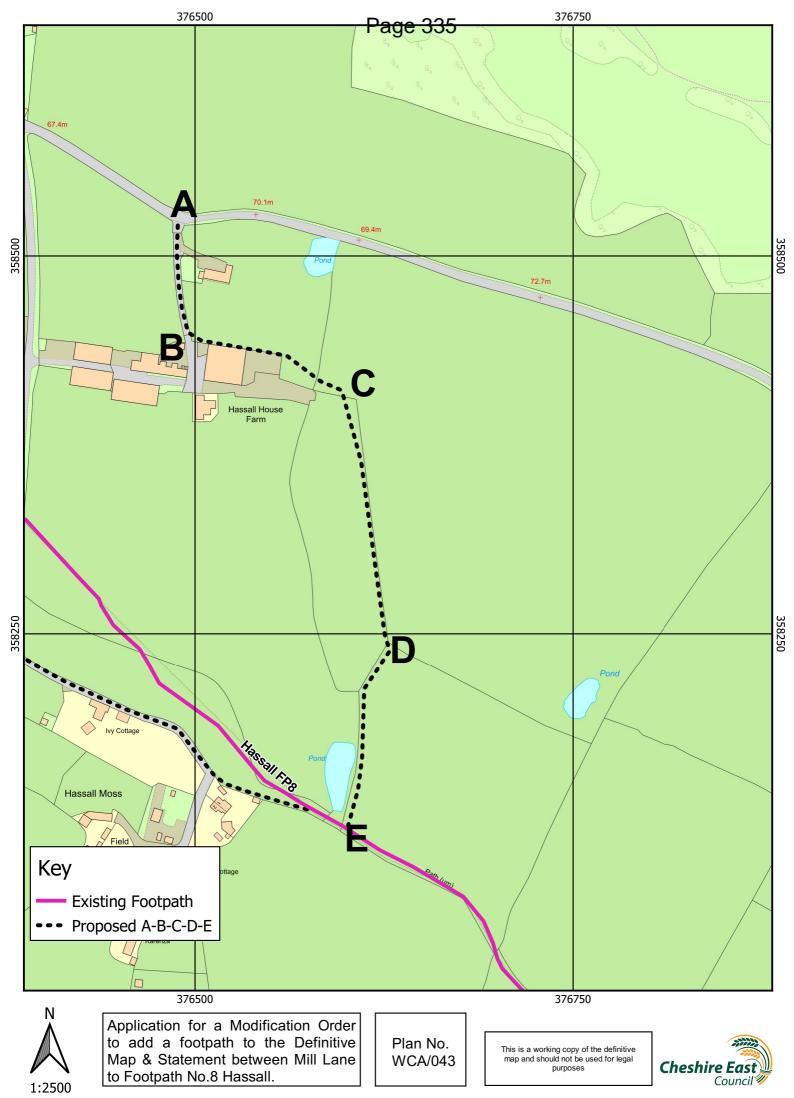
Public Health

61. The recommendations are anticipated to offer a positive overall impact on the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents.

Climate Change

62. The recommendations will help the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve environmental sustainability by reducing energy consumption and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Access to Information		
Contact Officer:	John Lindsay	
	john.lindsay@cheshireeast.gov.uk	
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Plan no: WCA/043	
	Appendix 2 – Archive List	
Background Papers:	File no: CO/8/48	



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APPENDIX 2

List of Archive Documents – Application No. CO/8/35 Claim for Footpath in the Parish Hassall

PROW = Public Rights of Way CRO = Cheshire Record Office

Primary Sources	Date	Site Shown/Mentioned	Reference Number/Source
Burdett	1794	Claimed Route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Swire & Hutching	1830	Claimed Route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Bryants	1831	Claimed Route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Bartholomew Half-inch to a mile	1940 - 47	Claimed Route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Tithe Map	1841	Claimed Route not shown	CRO EDT 190/2
Enclosure Records		None available	N/A
Finance Act		None available	N/A
Valuation Book	1910	No entry for the claimed route	CRO NVA 2/9
Ordnance Survey 1inch to a mile.	1842	Claimed Route not shown	Ordnance Survey Maps - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)
Ordnance Survey 1 st Edition 1:25 inch	1875	Shows full length of the claimed route	Ordnance Survey Maps - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)
Ordnance Survey, 1:25 inch	1898	Shows full length of the claimed route	Ordnance Survey Maps - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)
Ordnance Survey, 1:25 inch a mile of England. Sheet 11.	1910	Shows full length of the claimed route	Ordnance Survey Maps - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)
Plan of proposed Turnpike Road from Wheelock	1834	Claimed route outside of area shown, no entry in the BoR	CRO QDP115

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		1	
Wharf to Sandbach & BoR			
intended Railway plan from Warrington and Newton, county palatine of Chester & BoR	1829	Claimed route outside of area shown, no entry in the BoR.	CRO QDP 88
North Staffordshire Railway, Trent and Mersey Navigation: plans and sections, and book of reference	1890	Claimed route outside of area shown, no entry in the BoR.	CRO QDP 667
Congleton and Crewe Railway: Book of Reference to plans	1845	The plan shows part of the claim route, entry number "37, 23a & 42a" .and described as 'field, footpath and occupation road'.	CRO QDP 217
The Railway Clearing House plan	1913	Claimed route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Aerial Photographs	1971 to 2015	Part claimed route shown	CRO Cheshire Tithe Maps Online (cheshireeast.gov.uk)
Draft Definitive Map	1950	Claimed route not shown.	PROW/Cheshire East Council Offices
Parish survey sheets	1952	Claimed route not shown.	PROW/Cheshire East Council Offices
Provisional Definitive Map Definitive Map	1953 1953	Claimed route not shown. Claimed route not	PROW/Cheshire East Council Offices PROW/Cheshire East Council
& Statement		shown.	Offices



Highway and Transport Committee

[19th September 2024]

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 –Part III, Section 53, Application No: CO/8/35: Application for the Addition of a Public Footpath from Footpath No.9 Hassall to the Junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall, Hassall.

Report of: Peter Skates, Acting Executive Director of Places

Report Reference No: HTC/30/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: Hassall.

Purpose of Report

- 1. This report outlines the investigation into the application that was made by Mr Meewezen on the 24 August 2015 to amend the Definitive Map and Statement to add a Public Footpath between Footpath No.9 Hassall (junction with Hassall Moss, UY1177) to junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall from A-B-C Plan ref: WCA/042 (Appendix 1).
- 2. This report includes a discussion of the consultations carried out in respect of the claim, historical documentary evidence, witness evidence and the legal tests for a Definitive Map Modification Order to be made. The report makes a recommendation based on that information, for quasi-judicial decision by Members as to whether an Order should be made to add a Public Footpath to the Definitive Map and Statement.
- 3. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Corporate Plan aim of "A thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

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Executive Summary

4. The report considers the evidence submitted and researched in the application to add a Public Footpath in the Parish of Hassall. The evidence consists of use on foot by individual witnesses over a period of over twenty years and historical documents that demonstrate the existence of a physical track feature for the part of the claimed route for well more than 30 years. The report determines whether on the balance of probabilities the status of Public Footpath has been acquired.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways & Transport Committee is recommended to:

 Decide that the application for the addition of the footpath as shown between points A-B-C on Plan No. WCA/042 at **Appendix 1**, be refused on the grounds that there is not any robust evidence to overturn the legal presumption that the Definitive Map and Statement are correct.

Background

- The application that was initially made by Hassall Parish Council 26 May 2007. On 4 July 2011 the Parish Council wrote to CEC withdrawing their application as a result of a parish meeting. The application was later resubmitted by Mr Meewezen (former Hassall Parish Council Clerk and then Footpath Secretary, The Ramblers, Congleton Group) on the 24 August 2015 to amend the Definitive Map and Statement to add a Public Footpath between Footpath No.9 Hassall (junction with Hassall Moss, UY1177) to junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall from A-B-C (Appendix 1). The application consisted of 4 user evidence forms and some photographs (2007 application). The 2015 application consisted of a number of ordinance survey maps.
- The claimed route commences at Point A (Grid Ref: SJ 76362,58255) Footpath No.9 Hassall (junction with Hassall Moss, UY1177) and then proceeds along track in a north easterly direction to Point B (Grid Ref: SJ 76511,58160). It continues in a north easterly direction along a field boundary to Point C, junction with Footpath No.8 Hassall, (Grid Ref: SJ 76589,58133)
- 7. The width of the route from Points A-B is approximately 3 metres wide between boundaries and is a physical track like feature for its length. It is bounded by stone wall and boundary hedge and is a clear bounded feature. From Points B-C the route continues along a field boundary and is approximately 2 metres wide (RoW policy & DEFRA guidance).

8. There is only two registered landowners on the claimed route from point B-C and section A-B of the claimed route is un-registered.

Legal matters

- 9. Section 53(2)(b) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 requires that the Council shall keep the Definitive Map and Statement under continuous review and make such modifications to the Map and Statement as appear requisite in consequence of the occurrence of certain events:-
- 10. Section 53(3)(c)(i) is relevant were

"(c) the discovery by the authority of evidence which (when considered with all other relevant evidence available to them) shows:-

- (i) that a right of way which is not shown on the map and statement subsists or is reasonably alleged to subsist over land in the area to which the map relates, being a right of way such that the land over which the right subsists is a public path, a restricted byway or, subjection to section 54A, a byway open to all traffic.
- 11. The evidence can consist of documentary/historical evidence or user evidence or a mixture of both. All the evidence must be evaluated and weighed, and a conclusion reached whether, on the 'balance of probabilities' the rights subsist. Any other issues, such as safety, security, suitability, desirability or the effects on property or the environment, are not relevant to the decision.
- 12. Where the evidence in support of the application is user evidence, section 31(1) of the Highways Act 1980 applies. This states: -

"Where a way.....has been actually enjoyed by the public as of right and without interruption for a full period of twenty years, the way is deemed to have been dedicated as a highway unless there is sufficient evidence that there was no intention during that period to dedicate it."

13. This requires that the public must have used the way without interruption and as of right; that is without force, secrecy or permission. Section 31(2) states that "the 20 years is to be calculated retrospectively from the date when the right of the public to use the way is brought into question".

> In the case of, *R* (on the application of Godmanchester Town Council) v Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2007), the House of Lords considered the proviso in section 31(1) of the Highways Act 1980:

"...unless there is sufficient evidence that there was no intention during that period to dedicate it".

- 14. The proviso means that presumed dedication of a way can be rebutted if there is sufficient evidence that there was no intention to dedicate the way, during the relevant twenty-year period. What is regarded as 'sufficient evidence' will vary from case to case. The Lords addressed the issue of whether the "intention" in section 31(1) had to be communicated to those using the way, at the time of use, or whether an intention held by the landowner but not revealed to anybody could constitute "sufficient evidence". The Lords also considered whether use of the phrase "during that period" in the proviso, meant during the whole of that period. The House of Lords held that a landowner had to communicate his intention to the public in some way to satisfy the requirement of the proviso. It was also held that the lack of intention to dedicate means "at some point during that period", it does not have to be continuously demonstrated throughout the whole twenty-year period.
- 15. For public rights to have come into being through long use, as stated above, a twenty-year period must be identified during which time use can be established. Where no challenge to the use has occurred, this period can be taken as the twenty years immediately prior to the date of the application. In this case the date of challenge was the date of the application being 16 May 2007.

Consultation and Engagement

- 16. Only a few responses were received during consultation, these where from two of the landowners and three user groups. There are two further handwritten letter of objection from other landowners dated 4 June 2007 and dated 30 June 2007.
- 17. Hassall Parish Council was contacted on two occasions and at the time of writing this report failed to respond.
- 18. Sandbach Footpath Group responded stating 'that they have consulted with members of the group and we all strongly support the DMMO application to add this footpath'.
- 19. The Open Spaces Society "the applicant", responded by 'I made the application before being appointed to represent the society in Cheshire East. In addition to the historical evidence to support the claim, users have walked the path for many years, unchallenged. I for example have walked the route unchallenged since the summer of 1994, until it was obstructed. The society considers that this application is well founded and support unreservedly'.
- 20. The Peak and Northern Footpath Society responded stating '*that it will* be a valuable addition to the network'.

21. Landowner 1 responded in January 2024 by stating 'that historically prior to occupying one of the cottages there was a gated access used by No.1 & No.2 Hassall Moss and properties off field view; (possible farm workers historically) accessing existing footpath No.8 Hassall at the side of No.1 Hassall Moss'. 'Residents have also confirmed that they have used the gate prior to it becoming obstructed/hedge being allowed to become overgrown'.

'It's understood that the overgrowth has been deliberate by the landowner'.

'They would like to point out that the cart lane is utilised by tractors/horses etc. so, in effect it would be a bridleway rather than a footpath for that section, but would be a cul-de-sac'. 'If the claim is successful would the Council replace the gate?'. 'With the increase in traffic and deterioration along the Cart Lane would the Council provide material to repair the Cart Lane on an annual basis.

22. Landowner 2, in January 2024 states, 'The farm has been in the family for the duration of the claim. His brother still lives at the farm and jointly owns the fields which the route is claimed to run and was aware that there was a gap in the field boundary but is not aware that the public have been using the lane to walk down'.

'The gap was there for the farm workers to access the fields from the farm cottages at the end of the lane as a short cut'. 'This hasn't been used for a long time and from all accounts the access is overgrown and fallen into disrepair'.

23. The handwritten objection letter dated 5 June 2007, from the landowners – state, 'we are objecting to the varying/adding of the footpath and the opening of the private stile at the corner of Hassall Moss by No's 1 & 2 Hassall Moss Cottages'. 'This opening was never a Council stile; it was a homemade stile with just two pieces of wood for the farm workers to use to get to the farm'. 'The above-mentioned cottages belong to the farm and were used to house farmworkers.

'My husband has lived at the farm since 1957 and I myself since1971 and the stile has never been maintained'. 'Approximately ten years ago there was sheep grazing in the field and some kept popping out of the gap in the hedge, so we placed a small pallet in the gap to stop the sheep escaping'.

'Eight years ago, horses grazed that part of the field and a pallet was placed there and is still in place, there has never been any maintenance'.

24. The handwritten objection letter dated 30 June 2007, from a landowner, states, 'we would like to formally object to this application, I have lived

here for 67 years and my wife for 45 years and my son for 41 years, for the last eight years we have farmed the farm next to ours'.

'The stile in question as always been for farm workers and has been blocked off for at least twelve years or more'. 'The hedge has been cut back every year and that part of the hedge has never been disturbed, this in itself tells you that nobody has ever used that entrance in the last twelve years or so'.

'The road down Hassall Moss is a private gravelly road and certainly unsuitable for a footpath, the road is narrow – a single car width only with no passing place'. 'Where will walkers go when they meet a car or delivery van, let's hope common sense prevails in this decision'.

Historical Evidence

Ordnance Survey (O.S.) Records

- 25. Ordnance Survey (O.S) mapping was originally for military purposes to record all roads and tracks that could be used in times of war; this included both public and private routes. These maps are good evidence of the physical existence of routes, but not necessarily of status. Since 1889 the Ordnance Survey has included a disclaimer on all of its maps to the effect that the depiction of a road is not evidence of the existence of a right of way. It can be presumed that this caveat applied to earlier maps.
- 26. **Ordnance Survey 1 inch to a mile, 1842.** The map shows Hassall Moss but doesn't show the full extent of the claimed route.
- 27. Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1:25 inch, c1875. The map shows the full length of the claimed route. Along Hassall Moss it's shown as a clear physical feature bounded by solid double lines indicating a other road (poor or unmetalled). Then leaving annotated as a single dashed line indicating a footpath along the field boundary.
- 28. **Ordnance Survey 1:25 inch c1898.** The map shows the full length of the claimed route. Along Hassall Moss it's shown as a clear physical feature bounded by solid double lines indicating another road (poor or unmetalled). Then leaving annotated as a single dashed line indicating a footpath along the field boundary.
- 29. Ordnance Survey 1:25 inch c1910. The map shows the full length of the claimed route. Along Hassall Moss it's shown as a clear physical feature bounded by solid double lines indicating another road (poor or unmetalled). Then leaving annotated as a single dashed line indicating a footpath along the field boundary.

Old County Commercial maps

- 30. These are small scale maps made by commercial mapmakers, some of which are known to have been produced from original surveys and others are believed to be copies of earlier maps. All were essentially topographic maps portraying what the surveyors saw on the ground. They included features of interest, including roads and tracks. It is doubtful whether mapmakers checked the status of routes or had the same sense of status of routes that exist today. There are known errors on many mapmakers' work and private estate roads and cul-de-sac paths are sometimes depicted as 'cross-roads'. The maps do not provide conclusive evidence of public status, although they may provide supporting evidence of the existence of a route.
- 31. Burdett map of 1794 and the Swire and Hutching map 1830 are of very limited use as it doesn't show the claimed route only surrounding major roads and routes. By the 1831 Bryant map shows part of the claimed route (Hassall Moss) as two solid lines.

Tithe Map 1841

- 32. Tithe Awards were prepared under the Tithe Commutation Act 1836, which commuted the payment of a tax (tithe) in kind, to a monetary payment. The purpose of the award was to record productive land on which a tax could be levied. The Tithe Map and Award were independently produced by parishes and the quality of the maps is variable. It was not the purpose of the awards to record public highways. Although depiction of both private occupation and public roads, which often formed boundaries, is incidental, they may provide good supporting evidence of the existence of a route, especially since they were implemented as part of a statutory process. Non-depiction of a route is not evidence that it did not exist; merely that it did not affect the tithe charge. Colouring of a track may or may not be significant in determining status. In the absence of a key, explanation, or other corroborative evidence the colouring cannot be deemed to be conclusive of anything.
- 33. The Tithe Map, Township: Hassall dated 1841, reference EDT 190/2, shows part of the claimed route (Hassall Moss, A-B) bounded by solid double line & dashed line.
- 34. The owners in 1841 for plot No. 42a on the Tithe Map was Thomas Sumner, plot named Hassall Moss. The owners in 1841 for plot no.49 (named Rye Stubble) was Messieurs Timmis and occupied Samuel Oakes.

Finance Act Map 1910

35. The Finance Act of 1910 involved a national survey of land by the Inland Revenue so that an incremental value duty could be levied when ownership was transferred. Land was valued for each owner/occupier and this land was given a hereditament number. Landowners could claim tax relief where a highway crossed their land. Although the existence of a public right of way may be admitted it is not usually described or a route shown on the plan. This Act was repealed in 1920.

36. The valuation book from Cheshire East Archives, reference NVA 2/9, for the Sandbach, Wheelock was reviewed and there was no entry for the claim route.

Deposit Plans

- 37. These relate to turnpike, railways, and canals, each of which required an Act of Parliament to authorise construction. Detailed plans were submitted showing the effect on the land, highways, and private accesses crossed by the proposed route. The Acts, plans and accompanying Books of Reference should be considered together.
- 38. Railway and Canal developments from 1794 onwards it was a requirement for detailed plans of the proposed development to be drawn up and placed on deposit for public consultation. Plans were accompanied by a Book of Reference which itemised fields, houses, roads etc. on the line of the utility and identified owners and occupiers. These documents are generally regarded as strong evidence however, many proposed lines were never constructed, some proposals could have failed or been rejected because of poor and inaccurate plans.
- 39. Plan of the Proposed Turnpike Road from Wheelock Wharf in Sandbach and Book of Reference, 1834, ref QDP 115, the claimed route is outside of the area shown on the plan and there is no entry within the Book of Reference for the plan.
- 40. Section of intended Railway plan from Warrington and Newton, county palatine of Chester 1829, and Book of Reference, ref QDP 88. The claimed route is outside of the area shown on the plan and there is no entry within the book of reference for the plan. The railway was never built.
- 41. The North Staffordshire Railway, Trent & Mersey Navigation: plans and sections, and book of reference, 1890, ref QDP 667. The claimed route is outside of the area shown on the plan and there is no entry within the book of reference for the plan. The railway was never built.
- 42. Congleton and Crewe Railway: Book of Reference to plans of lands in Hassall and Wheelock, 1845, ref QDP 217. The plan shows part of the claim route, parcel numbered "42a" and where the route is not shown the parcel of land is numbered "37". The railway was never built.

- 43. The Book of Reference entry for number "37" describes this parcel of land as "*Field, Footpath and Occupation Road*" this I believe is reference to an annotated footpath running along the adjacent field boundary and not where the claimed route is alleged to go. The track is described as an occupation road. Entry for number "42a" describes this parcel of land as "*Occupation Road and Footpath*". These I believe is reference to an annotated footpath running along the adjacent fields and not where the claimed route is alleged to go. The track is described as an occupation road.
- 44. The Railway Clearing House plan dated 1913, does not show the claimed route.

The Definitive Map records

- 45. The Definitive Map and Statement is based on surveys and plans produced in the early 1950s by each parish in Cheshire, of all the ways they considered to be public at that time. The surveys were used as the basis for the Draft Definitive Map.
- 46. The Definitive Map, Provisional and Draft Map do not show any of the claimed route marked and only existing nearby Public Footpaths.

Aerial Imagery

47. Aerial Imagery from 1971 to 2015 was consulted with to see if there are indicators that the route has been used, reviewing the five aerial photographs Hassall Moss can be clearly seen. Although once the claimed route goes onto the adjacent fields B-C there is not shown.

User evidence

- 48. There are 4 user evidence forms supporting the claim. The User Evidence Forms (UEFs) were completed by local people living in the area (including the applicant), with two giving evidences of at least 20 years + use of the claimed route, with one user mention use going back to the 1930's and one user evidence form covering four family member. Since 2007 when the user evidence forms where submitted, one user is deceased, one has moved away, and the four family members didn't respond to being contacted. Only one user had a follow up interview. Detailed user evidence charts showing year of use can be seen at **Appendix 3**.
- 49. The route claimed is clearly identified by all user's map sketches at the back of the UEF's. But the information given to the questions in the forms was limited and needed exploring more by follow up interviews.

- 50. The date when the first challenge to public use wasn't made clear in the UEF's, but the initial claim was submitted 19 May 2007 (date on the application) so it can take this as the relevant date for the application. All users refer to a wooden pallet/barrier being put up off Hassall Moss, and before that there was a wooden stile that allowed access to the field, no dates where provided.
- 51. Within the period 1987-2007, only two of the users have used the path throughout the 20-year period, with the other claiming use over 10 years of use during that period. All users have considered the route being a public footpath, and none ever asked permission and the use was always by foot.
- 52. The frequency of use is low with three users using the route occasionally, and one only weekly. The use was majority for recreational and leisure, with the user with the longest use, used the route to go to and from school when a child.
- 53. The evidence given by the users in their UEFs show that no actions appear to have been taken by the landowner, to challenge the public's belief that the route enjoys public rights.
- 54. Interview took place during April 2024 with the applicant. Unfortunately, the other two have been difficult to contact. The user interviewed remembers a clear through route.

Conclusion on Evidence

- 55. Documentary evidence from old Ordnance Survey (OS) maps show all of the claimed route has been a physically defined feature back to the 18th century. OS map evidence is good in support of other documents, but reviewed in isolation are very weak as they tend to show all routes that are not necessarily public routes. Other documents reviewed do not show the entire claimed route and does not provide evidence that support what the OS maps show that a public footpath subsists along the claimed route.
- 56. The user evidence submitted with the application was lacking in detail and numbers to establish use over 20-year period.
- 57. While the user groups all support adding the claimed route to the Definitive Map and Statement, the landowner's evidence since 2007 to 2024 has been consistent stating that the gap in the hedge was there for farm workers to access the fields and has been modified throughout the years due to the change in land use. The deposit plan ref QDP 217 Book of Reference describes the claimed route as a "footpath, occupation road" which would support the use by farmworkers.

58. The balance of user evidence combined with documentary evidence does not support the case that a public footpath exists along the route between points A-B-C as shown on plan No. WCA/042 at **Appendix 1.**

Recommendation

59. It is therefore considered that the requirements of Section 53(3)(c)(i) have not been met and it's recommended that the application is refused on the grounds that there is insufficient evidence to make a Definitive Map Modification Order to record a public footpath between footpath No.9 & footpath No.8 Hassall. For the reasons explained in this report (sufficient use of the route for 20 years has not been satisfied to meet the legal tests to make an Order).

Council Policies

60. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Corporate Plan aim of "A thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Other Options Considered

61. Not applicable – this is a non-executive matter.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

62. The legal implications in relation to highways law are set out in the Legal matters section of this report (paragraph 9-15).

The Human Rights Act is also of relevance. Whilst article 1 to the first protocol (peaceful enjoyment of property) and article 8 (right to respect for family, private life and home) are engaged, it is important to note that these rights are qualified, not absolute, which means that they can be interfered with in so far as such interference is in accordance with domestic law and is necessary in a democratic society for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. It is considered that any interference with domestic law (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) and is in the public interest as it is necessary in a democratic society for the public who wish to use the way.

Should Members resolve that a Modification Order be made in accordance with highways legislation, this is merely the start of the legal process. Once a Modification Order is made, it must be publicised, and any person will have an opportunity to formally object to it. Should objections be received, the Modification Order would have to be referred to the Secretary of State who would usually hold a Public Inquiry before deciding upon whether or not to confirm the Modification Order.

Please note that the Council will not disclose the user evidence forms that form part of the background documentation at this stage in the process. The Council considers that the information provided within the user evidence documentation is exempt information under s1 & 2 Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, there is no such statutory right prior to an Order having been made - persons affected are entitled to the information in the event that an Order is made following the Committee decision.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

63. If objections to an Order lead to a subsequent hearing/inquiry, the Council would be responsible for any costs involved in the preparation and conducting of such. The maintenance of the Public Right of Way, if added to the Definitive Map and Statement, would fall to the landowner and Council in line with legislation. The associated costs would be borne within existing Public Rights of Way revenue and capital budgets.

There are no financial implications.

Policy

64. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Corporate Plan priority "A thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Vision – An open, fairer and sustainable place

Aim - A thriving and sustainable place

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- Reduce impact on the environment
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel.
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

65. The legal tests under section 53 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 do not include an assessment of the effects under the Equality Act 2010.

Human Resources

66. There are no direct implications for Human Resources.

Risk Management

67. There are no direct implications for risk management.

Rural Communities

68. There are no direct implications for Rural Communities.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

69. There are no direct implications for Children and Young People

Public Health

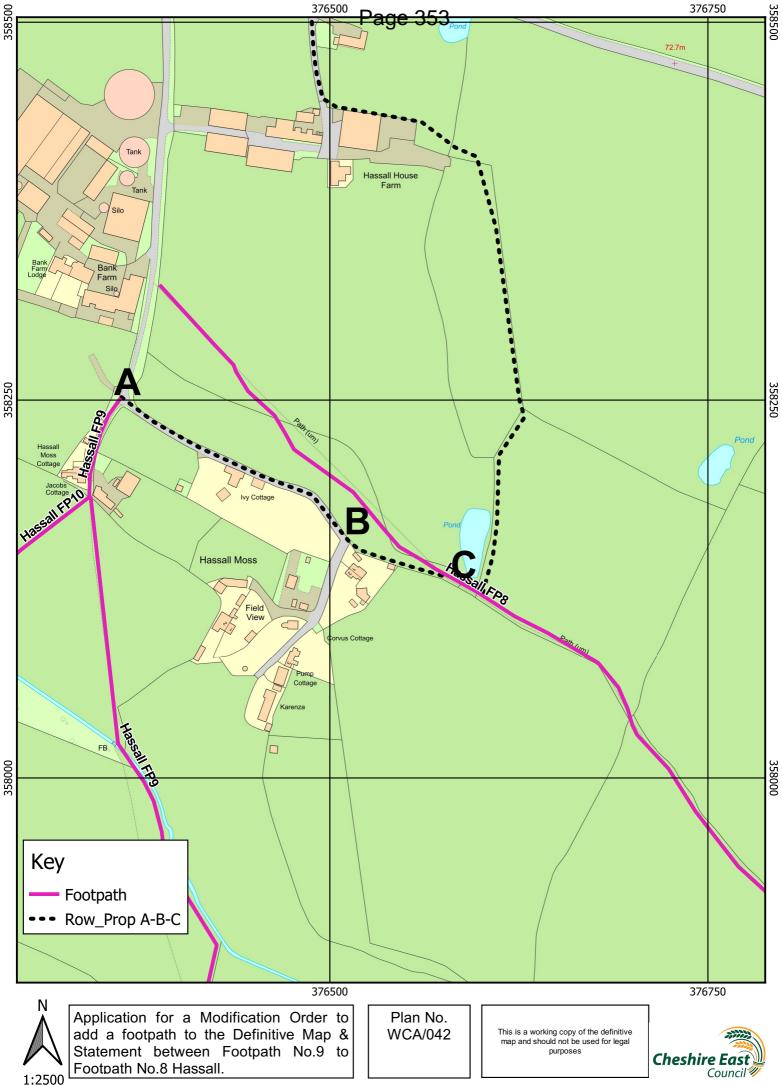
70. The recommendations are anticipated to offer a positive overall impact on the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents.

Climate Change

71. The recommendations will help the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve environmental sustainability by reducing energy consumption and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Access to Information		
Contact Officer:	John Lindsay	
	john.lindsay@cheshireeast.gov.uk	
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Plan no: WCA/042	
	Appendix 2 – Archive List	
	Appendix 3 – User Evidence Chart	
Background Papers:	File no: CO/8/35	

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APPENDIX 2

List of Archive Documents – Application No. CO/8/35 Claim for Footpath in the Parish Hassall

PROW = Public Rights of Way CRO = Cheshire Record Office

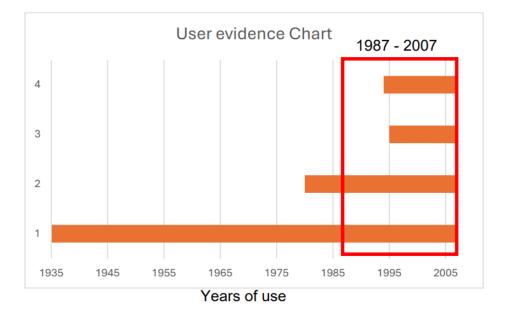
Primary Sources	Date	Site Shown/Mentioned	Reference Number/Source
Burdett	1794	Claimed Route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Swire & Hutching	1830	Claimed Route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Bryants	1831	Claimed Route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Bartholomew Half-inch to a mile	1940 - 47	Claimed Route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Tithe Map	1841	Part of the claimed Route shown	CRO EDT 190/2
Enclosure Records		None available	N/A
Finance Act		None available	N/A
Valuation Book	1910	No entry for the claimed route	CRO NVA 2/9
Ordnance Survey 1inch to a mile.	1842	Full length of Claimed Route not shown	Ordnance Survey Maps - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)
Ordnance Survey 1 st Edition 1:25 inch	1875	Shows full length of the claimed route	Ordnance Survey Maps - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)
Ordnance Survey, 1:25 inch	1898	Shows full length of the claimed route	Ordnance Survey Maps - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)
Ordnance Survey, 1:25 inch a mile of England. Sheet 11.	1910	Shows full length of the claimed route	Ordnance Survey Maps - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)
Plan of proposed Turnpike Road	1834	Claimed route outside of area	CRO QDP115

OFFICIAL UNCLASSIFIED

from Wheelock Wharf to Sandbach & BoR		shown, no entry in the BoR	
intended Railway plan from Warrington and Newton, county palatine of Chester & BoR	1829	Claimed route outside of area shown, no entry in the BoR.	CRO QDP 88
North Staffordshire Railway, Trent and Mersey Navigation: plans and sections, and book of reference	1890	Claimed route outside of area shown, no entry in the BoR.	CRO QDP 667
Congleton and Crewe Railway: Book of Reference to plans	1845	The plan shows part of the claim route, entry number "37, 23a & 42a".	CRO QDP 217
The Railway Clearing House plan	1913	Claimed route not shown	https://maps.nls.uk/counties/cheshire
Aerial	1971 to 2015	Area shown but	CRO Cheshire Tithe Maps Online
Photographs		claimed route not shown	(cheshireeast.gov.uk)
Draft Definitive Map	1950	Claimed route not shown.	PROW/Cheshire East Council Offices
Parish survey sheets	1952	Claimed route not shown.	PROW/Cheshire East Council Offices
Provisional Definitive Map	1953	Claimed route not shown.	PROW/Cheshire East Council Offices
Definitive Map & Statement	1953	Claimed route not shown.	PROW/Cheshire East Council Offices

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APPENDIX 3



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Highways and Transport Committee

19th September 2024

Wildlife and Countryside act 1981 – Part III Section 53 Application No CN-7-29 Application for the varying of particulars of Public Footpath 17 Crewe

Report of: Peter Skates, Acting Executive Director of Place

Report Reference No: HTC/34/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: Crewe East

Purpose of Report

1. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Corporate Plan aim of "A thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Executive Summary

- 2. The report considers the evidence submitted and researched in the application to modify the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way ("the DM") by varying the location of a part of Public Footpath 17 Crewe. This includes a discussion of the consultations carried out in respect of this application, the historical evidence, the witness evidence and the legal tests for making a decision. The report makes a recommendation based on the evidence from the investigation for a quasi-judicial decision by Members as to whether an Order should be made.
- 3. The evidence supporting the application comprises six statements and a conveyance deed. The report determines whether on the balance of probabilities part of a public footpath can be shown to have been incorrectly recorded. Various historical documents have been viewed

including maps such as Ordnance Survey maps and Tithe and Finance Act documents. This report also includes a review of the process and mapping for the DM.

4. The investigation found that the statements and documents were new pieces of evidence and satisfied the tests for reviewing the DM. The evidence, however, was not significant enough on the balance of probabilities to prove the DM was incorrect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways and Transport committee is recommended to decide:

That the application for the variation of part of Public Footpath 17 Crewe be refused on the grounds that it cannot be demonstrated that the Definitive Map and Statement needs modifying

Background

- 5. The application was made to the Council in 2015 prompted by a dispute between the former landowner(s) and the council over the last section of the route of Public Footpath 17 Crewe, terminating at the junction with Waldron's Lane. It is understood that the former landowner(s) accept that there is a public footpath, it is the line of that public footpath that they dispute.
- 6. To the extent that it is material to the determination of the subsequent application for a Definitive Map Modification Order ("DMMO") what prompted the issue to be raised with the Council in 2014 was the removal of part of a hedge and the erection of a bridge and stile to enforce the legal line of the footpath. The applicant claims the alignment of the footpath identified on the ground by the council is in error and that the DM is therefore incorrect.

Description of the application route

7. Public Footpath 17 Crewe commences on Stoneley Road (UY556) at OS grid reference SJ 706 575 and runs in a generally northerly direction along the west side of a hedge line to terminate on Waldron's Lane (UY580) at OS grid reference SJ 706 579. The allegation is that the footpath crossed a ditch at OS grid reference SJ 706 578 (Point B on the plan) and ran in a northerly direction on the east side of a ditch and between hedges to Waldron's Lane (Point C on the plan). 8. The application for a DMMO would be for an Order to delete the line shown as A-B on the plan WCA/41 and add the line shown B-C on the plan.

Legal Issues

- 9. Section 53(2)(b) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (the "81 Act") requires that the Council shall keep the DM under continuous review and make such modifications to the Map and Statement as appear requisite in consequence of the occurrence of certain events:-
- 10. One such event, section 53(3)(c) is where "the discovery by the authority of evidence which (when considered with all other relevant evidence available to them) shows:-
- 11. (i) that a right of way which is not shown on the map and statement subsists or is reasonably alleged to subsist over land in the area to which the map relates, being a right of way such that the land over which the right subsists is a public path, a restricted byway or, subject to section 54A, a byway open to all traffic. AND
- 12. iii) that there is no public right of way over land shown in the map and statement as a highway of any description, or any other particulars contained in the map and statement require modification
- 13. The Definitive Map and Statement is the legal record of public rights of way in England and Wales. Section 56(1) of the 81 Act states the depiction of a path on the DM is conclusive evidence that at the relevant date a public right of way existed over that path. Inclusion of a route in the DM is legally conclusive evidence of the public's right, at the relevant date without prejudice to the existence of other public rights.
- 14. The evidence can consist of historical evidence or user evidence or a mixture of both. All the evidence must be evaluated and weighed, and a conclusion reached whether, on the 'balance of probabilities' the claim could be proven. Any other issues, such as safety, security, suitability, desirability or the effects on property or the environment, are not relevant to the decision.
- 15. The evidence considered in this report is listed in the appendix, together with other documents and case law.
- 16. It will be noted that there is no provision for an Order to simply amend the line of a right of way shown on the DM. In order to make a 'positional correction' it is necessary to conclude that there is no public right of way on the alleged incorrect line and that instead there is a

public right of way, not currently shown on the DM on the alleged correct line.

- 17. The case of R (on the application of) Leicestershire County Council v Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [2003] EWHC 171 (Admin) provides the Council with guidance on how it should approach the matter of an application that seeks a 'positional correction'. Particularly relevant to this case are paragraphs 27-29 of the judgment which is explained in paragraph 16 above.
- 18. It should also be noted for an application to be successful it is necessary for there to be 'discovery' of evidence which when considered with all other available relevant evidence shows that an Order or Orders should be made. It is this 'discovery' of evidence rather than the fact that there has been an application that is the trigger for any Order making process.

Definitive Map Process

- 19. The DM was a requirement of the National Parks and Countryside Act 1949 and is based on surveys and plans produced in the early 1950s by each parish in Cheshire, of all the ways they considered to be public at that time. The surveys were used as the basis for the Draft Map and for the Nantwich district, the date of the survey is 1955 which is referred to as the "relevant date".
- 20. The parish survey for Crewe was undertaken in 1951 on a 1:6" OS base map. Footpath 17 is described as commencing on Stoneley Road "runs in a northerly direction" and terminates at Waldron's Lane. It was noted that the path and stiles were in good condition. The detailed description of the path commences; "access to the path is at the northern side of Greig House, Stoneley Road. From this point the path follows a northerly course via a stile No 1 and 2 to a gap in the fence at the junction with Waldrons Lane." The parish map shows a purple line drawn over the pecked line of a footpath on the base OS map. Where the northern section runs, the base map graphic is dense and a colour line is drawn on top so that the exact location cannot be seen.
- 21. The Draft Map is hand drawn on to a 1:6" OS base map. There is no schedule with this map, but the notations on the map describe "gap 1" at the commencement of FP17. The path runs in a northerly direction, noting "S.2"(stile 2) at the junction with FP16. "S.3" (stile 3) is noted at the southern point of the "roadway" and "Gap.4" at the junction with Waldron's Lane. The footpath at the northern section is coloured between single weight lines (which seems to be the "roadway" discussed later in this report at paragraphs 47-48). Although there were

objections to other routes shown on the Draft Map in the parish of Crewe, no record of an objection was found for Footpath 17.

- 22. The Provisional Map, which was the Draft Map following any determined appeals modifying the map, is on a 1968 OS base map at 1:10560 scale. Notice of its preparation was published in 1969 in the London Gazette and the local press at which point owners, lessees and occupiers were allowed to apply to the Crown Court for a change. The footpath is denoted by a purple line running from Stoneley Road in a northerly direction, the line is drawn to the west of the n-s field boundary through to Waldrons Lane. A double line is visible to the east of this line, which indicates the footpath is west of the "roadway". This map would have to be shown to be incorrect to prove the case that the DM needs a correction. No appeals regarding the footpath have been found, although it does appear that the line of the footpath has changed between the Draft Map and Provisional Map.
- 23. The DM was published in 1973. It comprises the public rights of way shown on the Provisional Map with any successful appeal modifying the map. The line for the footpath is purple and is drawn to the west of the n-s field boundary lines. The Provisional and Definitive Maps are consistent in showing the location of the footpath.

Historic Documents prior to the DM

Tithe Awards

- 24. Tithe Awards were prepared under the Tithe Commutation Act 1836, which commuted the payment of a tax (tithe) in kind, to a monetary payment. The purpose of the Award was to record productive land on which a tax could be levied. The Tithe Map and Award were independently produced by parishes and the quality of the maps is variable. The 1836 Act relieved the Tithe Commissioners of the need to certify all maps. The Church Coppenhall Award is however, certified by the commissioners and so is viewed as a first-class map.
- 25. It was not the purpose of the Awards to record public highways. Although depiction of both private occupation and public roads may provide good supporting evidence of the existence of a route, especially since they were implemented as part of a statutory process. Colouring of a track may or may not be significant in determining status. In the absence of a key, explanation, or other corroborative evidence, the colouring cannot be deemed to be conclusive of anything.
- 26. The Church Coppenhall Tithe Map field configuration is similar to the current field layout. From Waldron's Lane, running south a field boundary separates two fields on the west side and one field on the

east. There is a short section of enclosed "track", number 170 described as occupation road [the "roadway"] linking Waldron's Lane to the second field on the west side, number 200 and in the same ownership of the track; Charles Pooley. George Pooley was the owner of farm numbered 193 and now known as "Race Farm". The public roads are separated on this Tithe Award under number 170 and so the "occupation road" can be considered to be a private access.

Finance Act

- 27. The Finance Act of 1910 involved a national survey of land by the Inland Revenue so that an incremental value duty could be levied when ownership was transferred. Land was valued for each owner/occupier and this land was given a hereditament number. It is thought that exclusion of highways on the maps came under S35(1) of the Act not to charge on land or an interest in land held by a rating authority. Landowners could claim tax relief where a highway crossed their land. Although the existence of a public right of way may be admitted it is not usually described or a route shown on the plan. This Act was repealed in 1920.
- 28. The map available did not include the hereditaments for the area relevant to this enquiry which is Church Coppenhall. The schedule is available, and it is notable that only one property in the township applied for a public right of way reduction. That property was Moss Villa, not relevant to the area under consideration. The document provides no evidence in this case.

Ordnance Survey ("OS") Mapping

29. OS mapping was originally for military purposes to record all roads and tracks that could be used in times of war; this included both public and private routes. These maps are good evidence of the physical existence of routes, but not necessarily of status. Since 1889 the Ordnance Survey has included a disclaimer on all its maps to the effect that the depiction of a road is not evidence of the existence of a right of way. It is argued that this disclaimer was solely to avoid potential litigation. Dr Yolande Hodson has written widely on the interpretation of the OS map. Dr Hodson was formerly employed by the Military Survey and then by the Map Room of the British Museum. In publication, she has described the tension in the twentieth century within the OS to agree on what would be shown on the maps, at which scale and for which audience and what symbols should be used to depict the condition and status of roads and ways. She has indicated that the OS is good evidence of the existence of a way or path and can

support any other evidence claiming public rights of way, but they are limited in proof for public status

- 30. OS 6" 1882; A single broken line indicative of a footpath running from the southern direction (ie Stoneyford Lane) on the west side of a solid line indicative of a field boundary. The broken line continues in a northerly direction and crosses to the east side of a solid line field boundary at the last field before Waldrons Lane.
- 31. OS 6" 1899; A Single broken line indicative of a footpath, running on the west side of a north-south field boundary which then switches to the east side.
- 32. OS 6" 1910 and 1946 Sheet XLIX SE shows a single broken line running from the south on the west side of a north-south solid line indicative of a field boundary. From a cross over point south of Waldron's Lane, running north there is a double solid line indicative of an enclosed track and field boundaries either side. This is labelled as "F.P." indicative of a public footpath.
- 33. OS 6" 1968 sheet SJ 75NW shows a broken line labelled "path" running from Broughton Road (west) towards the n-s field boundary then turning north running on the west side. The path ends at the fields adjacent to Waldron's Lane. There is a solid line labelled drain, parallel to a double line track. The map does not show the location of a path at the relevant location.
- 34. The OS maps are evidence of a footpath with an indication that a footpath was located east of the hedge line. As the OS maps are not conclusive of public rights of way, this evidence is not significant, on its own, to change the DM.

Aerial photographs

- 35. The Council holds a series of aerial surveys taken from 1940 to 2021. The surveys were undertaken by a number of commercial companies and are sometimes very good indicators of the layout at ground level. Normally the quality of the image is not good enough to look in more detail. For the location of FP17 the tree line usually obscures the detail on the ground. A 1940 aerial photograph shows no field boundaries on the west side of the n-s field boundary (northern length) suggesting a path on that line would be without limitations. A double hedge line can be seen on this image but not enough detail to identify a stile crossing.
- 36. A 1985 aerial image shows the north-south field boundary is very thick, and there are no substantive indications of routes being walked on either route. The images do not show where the connection would

be at the Waldron's Lane end of the footpath. The vegetation from this period onwards is generally too thick to identify a route within the hedge line east of the DM line. A final aerial image of 2005 date shows the fields to the west are being cropped, the verge adjacent to the crop is in shadow and there are no trodden lines to compare.

37. The applicant relies on the statements from witness evidence. They have also supplied documents relating to the title of the landownership which it is alleged, demonstrates where the correct route runs.

Witness evidence.

- 38. There are 6 witness statements in support of the claim. All witnesses were contacted, and the applicant and 4 witnesses made themselves available to speak with. All had used the route at an early period, referring to the 1940's through to the 1970's. There is consistent description from these witnesses that the footpath crossed from the southern field and then ran to the east side of the main ditch and north-south hedge line. The witnesses said the footpath was regularly used by people. The witnesses were unable to say how the main ditch was crossed, two people thought there was a stile another person referred to a bridge. The surface is described as having been cindered and narrow and then deteriorated so that in winter it was described as a quagmire. Comments were made by the witnesses that the ditches and hedges had used to be maintained by the "council". And that at some point this maintenance stopped and the footpath and hedges became overgrown.
- 39. The document submitted with the application is a conveyance of the land and buildings of Holly Tree Farm and is dated 13 January 1930. The document includes a reference to a right of way over a section of land (a track) running between Waldron's Lane and the fields to the rear of Holly Tree Farm. This is shown on a plan and described as "roadway". The document indicates the ownership of the land incorporating the roadway was the same as the field to the east. The document type is illustrative of private rights only. The roadway appears to be the same as shown on the tithe map which described the roadway as an occupation road. The presence of a roadway is a good indication that at the time of use of the roadway, it is possible that it was used by walkers in preference, if it was a surface and width suitable for vehicles.
- 40. The witness evidence indicates that some people, if not all, were using the track created as a farm access which runs on the east side of the legal line of the footpath possibly in preference to the legal line. The witnesses were unclear about the furniture on the path and how the path crossed the ditch to the field side east. All indicated the route they considered to be the footpath, running over the track was overgrown

and impassable at some point in the mid to late 1970s. The witness evidence however, is not conclusive that the claim line is the legal line. The evidence does confirm that the route claimed, over a roadway, was very overgrown in approximately the 1970s.

Consultation and Engagement

- 41. Crewe Town Council have no comments to make on the application. Ward Councillor Faddes sent in comments that she had personal experience of using the footpath and recalled a bridge between fields and the overgrowth from brambles. It was noted a few years ago the ground towards Waldron's Lane was flooded.
- 42. Notice of the application was advertised on the unregistered land from 19 April 2024 to 18 May 2024. There was no response.
- 43. Landowner 1 of land to the east has been in contact and made an initial objection. They have not submitted any further comments or evidence to support an objection.
- 44. Landowner 2 of land on the west side and formerly owned by the applicants have obtained the land for development. They have not objected to the application. They have submitted a representation of documents relating to the planning permissions on the land. The planning permission incorporates the DM line of the public footpaths. If the current claim were successful, it would have no impact on the land as the planning permission would create a footpath as shown on the permitted site layout and the owners have indicated no intention to change the permissions.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 45. New information was brought forward claiming that part of the line of Public Footpath 17 Crewe was incorrectly shown on the DM and should be shown on a different alignment. There was no dispute that a public footpath existed, only the location was in dispute.
- 46. The length of path in dispute was at the northern end, a section that terminated at a junction with Waldron's Lane. Aerial photographs and Tithe and OS maps have also been consulted as well as a conveyance document provided by the applicant together with witness statements.
- 47. A review of the DM documents shows that the Provisional Map, which was a publicly consulted document and the DM were consistent in showing the footpath on the west side of a hedge line. Witness evidence suggests that the claim route, over a private roadway east of

the same hedge line, was used but mainly impassable at a date in the 1970s.

- 48. The applicant had evidence to show walkers had used a track, which was shown on a conveyance document as a private easement. The use was said to be regular up to a date sometime in the 1970s. This was at a time when the DM was going through the consultation process and the Provisional Map was published. The possibility is that the public were using a line to the west of the hedge line. The witnesses state the route they had walked was overgrown and not available in this period. The DM shows the line of the footpath as it was drawn on the Provisional Map.
- 49. Landowner 1 made representations but did not object to the claim, although they were clear in stating the intention to provide a footpath on the same line as the DM on the development layout. The second landowner indicated they would object but have not submitted any evidence.
- 50. The evidence submitted with the claim, it is considered, is not strong enough to show the DM is incorrect. There was a track referred to as "roadway" which was early on described as an occupation road and which was used by walkers in a period prior to publication of the Provisional Map. The Provisional Map was publicly consulted and showed a footpath to the west of the hedge line and attracted; it seems no objection or appeal of being incorrect. The DM replicates the location of the footpath and until recently has not attracted an objection to the depiction of the footpath. The evidence submitted is not conclusive that the DM is incorrect and the recommendation is to refuse to make the Order that is requested.
- 51. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Green aim of the Corporate Plan, the "thriving and sustainable place" priority, and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Other Options Considered

52. If the authority was to do nothing it would not comply with Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which requires the Council to keep the Definitive Map and Statement under continuous review and make such modifications to the Map and Statement as required.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 53. The legal implications in relation to highways law are set out in the Legal matters section of this report (paragraphs 9-18).
- 54. The Human Rights Act is also of relevance. Whilst article 1 to the first protocol (peaceful enjoyment of property) and article 8 (right to respect for family, private life and home) are engaged, it is important to note that these rights are qualified, not absolute, which means that they can be interfered with in so far as such interference is in accordance with domestic law and is necessary in a democratic society for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. It is considered that any interference occasioned by the making of a Modification Order is both in accordance with domestic law (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) and is in the public interest as it is necessary in a democratic society for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others, namely the public who wish to use the way. Should Members resolve that a Modification Order be made in accordance with highways legislation, this is merely the start of the legal process. Once a Modification Order is made, it must be publicised, and any person will have an opportunity to formally object to it. Should objections be received, the Modification Order would have to be referred to the Secretary of State who may hold a Public Inquiry before deciding upon whether or not to confirm the Modification Order.
- 55. Please note that the Council will not disclose the user evidence forms that form part of the background documentation at this stage in the process. The Council considers that the information provided within the user evidence documentation is exempt information under s1&2 Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, as amended.
- 56. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 there is not statutory right prior to an Order having been made persons affected are entitled to the information in the event that an Order is made following the Committee decision.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

57. If objections to an Order lead to a subsequent hearing/inquiry, the Council would be responsible for any costs involved in the preparation and conducting of such. The maintenance of the Public Right of Way, if added to the Definitive Map and Statement, would fall to the landowner and Council in line with legislation. The associated costs would be borne within existing Public Rights of Way revenue and capital budgets.

Policy

58. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Vision of the Corporate Plan of a greener Cheshire East, with the aim of

a "thriving and sustainable place" and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Vision – AN open, fairer, greener Cheshire East

AIM - A thriving and sustainable place

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- Reduce impact on the environment
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

59. The legal tests under section 53 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 do not include an assessment of the effects under the Equality Act 2010.

Human Resources

a. There are no direct implications for Human Resources.

Risk Management

b. There are no direct implications for risk management.

Rural Communities

c. There are no direct implications for Rural Communities.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

d. There are no direct implications for Children and Young People

Public Health

e. The recommendations are anticipated to offer a positive overall impact on the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents.

Climate Change

f. The recommendations will help the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve environmental sustainability by reducing energy consumption and promoting healthy lifestyles.

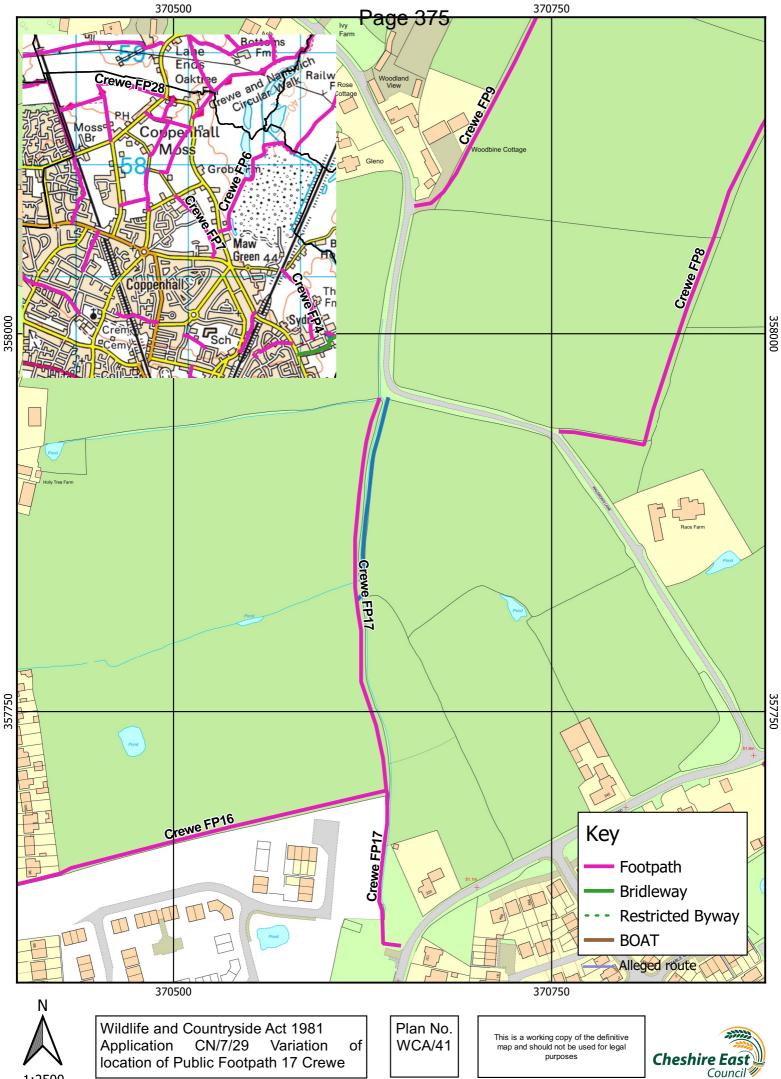
Access to Information		
Contact Officer:	Adele Mayer	
	adele.mayer@cheshireeast.gov.uk	
Appendices:	Appendix 1 document list	
	Appendix 2 Plan	
	Appendix 3 Photographs	
Background Papers:	File CN-7-29	

Appendix 1 – Document List

Primary Sources	Date	Reference Number/Source
Tithe Records		
Tithe Map	1840 Church Coppenhall	Cheshire Record Office ("CRO") EDT 108/2
Ordnance Survey Maps		
O.S. 6"	1882, 1899, 1910	Scottish Map Library ("SML")
OS 6"	1968	SML
OS 25"	1898,	SML
		PROW
OS 25"	1909	SML
Finance Act		
Map and Book of Reference	1910	CRO NVA XLIX.15 and NVB
Local Authority Records		
PRE-DM	1930s	PROW
Parish Survey Schedules and Maps	1955	PROW
Draft Map	1950's	PROW
Provisional Map	1952	PROW

Definitive Map & Statement	1953	PROW
Additional records		
Photos	2024	PROW– see photo sheet
Conveyance	1930, 1949	Private document
Witness statements x 6	2015	Application
Case Law	2003	R (on the application of) Leicestershire County Council v Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [2003] EWHC 171

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Application CN-7-29 for variation of part of Public Footpath 17 Crewe

Point A Junction at Waldron's Lane, facing south.





Running south from Point A (west side of hedge line)





Point B footbridge crossing ditch

Point B facing north with alleged route on right (east) side





Point B junction between two fields

Point B towards Point C Alleged route running between hedges (overgrown)



For comparison, route in December 2014 Point A at Waldron's Lane







Point B junction between two fields

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Highways and Transport Committee

19 September 2024

Wildlife and Countryside act 1981 – Part III Section 53 Two applications Nos. CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 to vary the location of Public Footpaths 34 and 36 in the Parish of Odd Rode

Report of: Peter Skates, Acting Executive Director of Place

Report Reference No: HTC/33/24-25

Ward Affected: Odd Rode

Purpose of Report

1 The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Corporate Plan aim of "A thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Executive Summary

- 2 This report outlines the investigation into two applications made in 2008 by the agent for the owner of land in Odd Rode. The applications seek to delete the line of Public Footpaths 34 and 36 Odd Rode and add a public footpath on a different line to the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way (the "DM"). There is no dispute that these are public footpaths. Public Footpath 34 Odd Rode is shown on the plan WCA/045 and Public Footpath 36 Odd Rode is shown on the plan WCA/044 both plans at Appendix 2A and 2B.
- 3 The applications allege that at the time of submission of the applications the public footpaths were running over land which was not the legal line. The application plans do not show which line it is alleged was incorrect. The plans only show the current legal line of the public footpaths.

- 4 The applications, having been properly registered, must be investigated and determined. The documentary evidence that has been examined is referred to below and a list of all the evidence taken into consideration can be found at Appendix 1.
- 5 This report includes a discussion of the consultations carried out in respect of the applications, the documents and legal tests for the modifications that are requested. There is also a detailed discussion of the records relating to the DM process.
- 6 The investigation found that the statements supporting the applications were new pieces of evidence and satisfied the tests for reviewing the DM. The applications however do not have a plan which identifies the route that was alleged to be incorrect and on the balance of probabilities of lack of evidence, the DM is not proved to require modification.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways and Transport committee is recommended to decide:

1. That the applications for variation of Public Footpath 34 and 36 in the parish of Odd Rode be refused on the grounds that it cannot be demonstrated that the Definitive Map and Statement needs modifying.

Background

- 7 The applications were made to the former Cheshire County Council, in 2008. Internal correspondence indicates that the Land Agent disputed the location of the public footpaths which prompted him to make these applications. Internal correspondence with the Agent in 2007 suggests that there was a Council review of the DM. The routes apparently declared by the Agent differed from the DM.
- 8 The Council was conducting a revision of the digital map showing public rights of way and correcting any anomalies. This programme was to support consolidation of the DM and was initiated in 2008. This would create a DM on a modern map base with all the changes that had been made since the last publication. The project was presented to the Cheshire and Warrington Local Access Forum and Cheshire County Council Public Rights of Way committee held on 18 April 2008.
- 9 The programme was made possible by the electronic scanning of the DM sheets and subsequent checking and correction of map anomalies on the GIS system. A number of map anomalies had long been

identified on the paper maps that had been created by human error due to the hand drawn transcription process, both on the DM and the electronic working copy. A protocol was put in place so that any change was recorded and verified by the cumulative archive of the DM. The effect was that the correction of the human errors makes the DM reflective of the accuracy of the original public rights of way survey. It is possible that Footpaths 34 and 36 were corrected in this process, however there is no record of a correction.

10 The two applications were placed on a statutory register regulated under Schedule 14 of the 81 Act. Since the application plans do not show the change desired it has made this investigation difficult to follow, however the Authority has a duty to investigate the evidence and determine all applications that are registered. These applications have been considered on the basis that if an error can be found in the documents it will be determined that the DM needs modifying.

Description of the application routes

- 11 The Definitive Statement for Public Footpath 34 Odd Rode describes the commencement of the footpath from Old School Lane (UC/3/75) in a westerly direction to FP28. The name of School Lane is now replaced by Holehouse Lane (UY1167). The footpath is shown on Plan WCA/045.
- 12 Public Footpath 36 Odd Rode is described on the Definitive Statement commencing from the unclassified county road (UC/3/102) (Old Knutsford Road (UY1193)) generally in an easterly direction to FP32 [Odd Rode]. The footpath is shown on Plan WCA/044.

Legal Matters

- 13 Section 53(2)(b) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (the "81 Act") requires that the Council shall keep the DM under continuous review and make such modifications to the Map and Statement as appear requisite in consequence of the occurrence of certain events.
- 14 It will be noted that there is no provision for an Order to simply amend the line of a right of way shown on the DM. In order to make a 'positional correction' it is necessary to conclude that there is no public right of way on the alleged incorrect line and that instead there is a public right of way, not currently shown on the DM on the alleged correct line.
- 15 The case of R (on the application of) Leicestershire County Council v Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [2003] EWHC 171 (Admin) provides the Council with guidance on how it should approach the matter of an application that seeks a 'positional

correction'. Particularly relevant to this case are paragraphs 27-29 of the judgment explained at paragraph 14 above.

- 16 Events listed under Section 53(2) or the 81 Act includes section 53(3)(c) where "the discovery by the authority of evidence" which (when considered with all other relevant evidence available to them) shows:-
- 17 (i) that a right of way which is not shown on the map and statement subsists or is reasonably alleged to subsist over land in the area to which the map relates, being a right of way such that the land over which the right subsists is a public path, a restricted byway or, subjection to section 54A, a byway open to all traffic. AND
- 18 iii) that there is no public right of way over land shown in the map and statement as a highway of any description, or any other particulars contained in the map and statement require modification
- 19 The Definitive Map and Statement is the legal record of public rights of way in England and Wales. Section 56(1) of the 81 Act states the depiction of a path on the DM is conclusive evidence that at the relevant date a public right of way existed over that path. Inclusion of a route in the DM is legally conclusive evidence of the public's right, at the relevant date without prejudice to the existence of other public rights.
- 20 In order for an application to be successful it will have to bring forward a "discovery of evidence" (Section 53 of the 81 Act). It has to be shown that it is new evidence that is considered rather than the evidence that had been originally considered before the DM was published. The reason for this is set out by "Burrows v Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2004)."
- 21 The evidence can consist of historical evidence or user evidence or a mixture of both. All the evidence must be evaluated and weighed, and a conclusion reached whether, on the 'balance of probabilities' the claim could be proven. Any other issues, such as safety, security, suitability, desirability or the effects on property or the environment, are not relevant to the decision.
- 22 The evidence considered in this report is listed in the appendix, together with other documents, case law and guidance. The new evidence is landowner statements.

The Definitive Map Process

23 The DM was a requirement of the National Parks and Countryside Act 1949 and is based on surveys and plans produced in the early 1950s by each parish in Cheshire, of all the ways they considered to be public at that time. The surveys were used as the basis for the Draft Map and for the Congleton district, the date of the survey is 1953 which is referred to as the "relevant date".

- 24 The parish survey for Odd Rode was conducted in 1950/51 on a "1:6" OS base map. The schedule from the parish describes FP34 a footpath commencing at Old School Lane 140 yards west of "Boarded Barn Smithy and runs in a westerly direction" to terminate at a stile on FP28 "200 yards north east of "Pearhouse"". The schedule lists a field gate and bridle gate and "stile 1", then "stile 2" a hurdle stile and "stile 3" which is 4 foot from stile 2 and is a ladder stile type. The description is of a path that is "well marked". The path is recorded as being 7 foot wide and a cinder track along the "s side of hedge". The parish map records a field gate at the junction with the lane, and the second stile at the junction with FP28.
- 25 The Parish Survey Schedule for FP36 describes the path commencing from "Knutsford Road (UC/3/102)" as "200 yards north of Snapes Aqueduct" and "runs in an easterly direction to terminate "northwest of Brick House Farm at the junction with FP32". The furniture is logged so that from a stile numbered "S4" the path runs into Bratts Wood to "FB5" of two planks running to "S6" to "S9". The schedule description is consistent with the accompanying map, with particular note of the location of stiles at field boundaries matching those on the south side of the woods.
- 26 The Public Rights of Way team hold records that pre-existed the DM process and date to approximately 1930. This is represented by a DM (for Congleton) which recorded the footpaths and has a record of the maintenance issues. A hand drawn red line on the OS base map shows Footpath 36 running alongside the south of Bratt's Wood. Footpath 34 runs along a field boundary, but it is not clear to see on the map if the path is south of the boundary.
- 27 There is consistency with how the parish survey recorded the location of FP34 and FP36 and the successive maps of the DM process.
- 28 Draft Map for Footpath 36 is a hand drawn purple line drawn on an OS base map of 6" to 1 mile. The footpath commences on the unclassified road and runs easterly through Bratt's Wood and turns on the south side of the woods to a northeast direction. The stiles coincide with the field boundaries on the south side of the woods, indicating the path was running alongside and not in the woodlands. The Draft Map for Footpath 34 shows the path commencing on the unclassified road, runs in a westerly direction to join Footpath 28 and lists a field gate from the road, and a stile which coincides with a field boundary on the south side. The path reflects the routes shown on the parish survey.

- 29 The Provisional Map is hand drawn onto an OS Map at 6" to 1 mile. Footpath 36 is shown by a purple line, running from the unclassified road easterly to and through Bratt's Wood and turning to run on the south side of the woods in a north easterly direction. The underlying OS map has a corresponding double dashed line and "F.P." indicating the route of a path. Footpath 34 is similarly drawn over a double dashed line on the OS map base, labelled "F.P." and running on the south side of a boundary line.
- 30 The three maps all reflect the route that is shown on the DM. In the case of Footpath 36 the footpath runs through Bratt's Wood to turn and run south of the woodland. There is no indication that other than crossing through the woods, the footpath continues a run within the woodland. Footpath 34 is consistently shown to run from the road, Holehouse Lane, on the south side of a field boundary. The routes shown are currently depicted on the electronic map (the GIS map) on the same alignment.

Ordnance Survey maps

- 31 OS mapping was originally for military purposes to record all roads and tracks that could be used in times of war; this included both public and private routes. These maps are good evidence of the physical existence of routes, but not necessarily of status. Since 1889 the Ordnance Survey has included a disclaimer on all its maps to the effect that the depiction of a road is not evidence of the existence of a right of way. It is argued that this disclaimer was solely to avoid potential litigation.
- 32 OS 1st Edition County Series (6" to 1mile 1882, 1888 and 1910 Sheet L, LI and LVII) showing a double broken line running from the Knutsford Road, crosses fields, runs through woodland and then running on the easterly and south side of woodland to "Brick House" consistent with the alignment for FP36. On sheet LI a single broken line running westerly from the unnamed lane is shown on the alignment of FP34 on the south side of a field boundary. The series doesn't change and is consistent with the location of the footpaths on the DM.

Tithe Map Odd Rode 1836

33 Tithe Awards were prepared under the Tithe Commutation Act 1836, which commuted the payment of a tax (tithe) in kind, to a monetary payment. The purpose of the award was to record productive land on which a tax could be levied. The Tithe Map and Award were independently produced by parishes and the quality of the maps is variable. It was not the purpose of the awards to record public highways. Although depiction of both private occupation and public roads, which often formed boundaries, is incidental, they may provide good supporting evidence of the existence of a route, especially since they were implemented as part of a statutory process. Non-depiction of a route is not evidence that it did not exist; merely that it did not affect the tithe charge. Colouring of a track may or may not be significant in determining status. In the absence of a key, explanation or other corroborative evidence the colouring cannot be deemed to be conclusive of anything. In Cheshire there appears to be no tithe map which has produced a map key

34 The map depicts a single broken line indicative of FP36 running easterly from Knutsford Road, to plot number 593 "Beatts Wood" and continuing along the south side of the wood running north easterly to plot 625 "lane with pit". The plot names do not indicate where a footpath runs. A single broken line running along the edge of a field, parcel number 514, from "School Lane" (now Holehouse Lane) on the south side of a field boundary.

Consultation and Engagement

- 35 The applicant is no longer in post but the Landowner has been in contact to discuss the applications. The discussion with the Landowner was to confirm the landowner statements that had been submitted with the application. The Landowner has agreed that the applications are not relevant since the location of the footpaths are on the correct alignment as they believe and as shown on the DM and no correction is currently desired.
- 36 The Odd Rode Parish Council has also confirmed that they have walked the paths as they are on the ground and on their records and have no representations to make.
- 37 Representations from the Peak and Northern Footpath Society have not objected to the application.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 38 Evidence was brought forward claiming that Public Footpaths 34 and 36 Odd Rode were incorrectly shown on the DM and should be shown on a different alignment. There was no dispute that a public footpath existed, only the location was in dispute.
- 39 A review of the DM documents shows that the successive maps for the DM process were consistent in showing the footpaths as they are currently shown on the DM and as they appear on the ground.

- 40 The Landowner was not able to find the evidence originally relied on regarding plans of the footpaths but has agreed that no Orders are required since the current and legal line of the footpaths are correct.
- 41 The evidence submitted with the claim, it is considered, is deficient in setting out the perceived error. The investigation found all the documents for the DM consistent, and consultation agreed that the current and legal line is correct. The recommendation is to refuse the applications.
- 42 The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Green aim of the Corporate Plan, the "thriving and sustainable place" priority, and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Other Options Considered

43 If the authority was to do nothing it would not comply with Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which requires the Council to keep the Definitive Map and Statement under continuous review and make such modifications to the Map and Statement as required.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 44 The Council are complying with their duties under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which are set out in the Legal Matters section of this report (Paragraphs 15-25 above).
- 45 The Human Rights Act is also of relevance. Whilst article 1 to the first protocol (peaceful enjoyment of property) and article 8 (right to respect for family, private life and home) are engaged, it is important to note that these rights are qualified, not absolute, which means that they can be interfered with in so far as such interference is in accordance with domestic law and is necessary in a democratic society for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. It is considered that any interference occasioned by the making of a Modification Order is both in accordance with domestic law (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) and is in the public interest as it is necessary in a democratic society for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others, namely the public who wish to use the way. Should Members resolve that a Modification Order be made in accordance with highways legislation, this is merely the start of the legal process. Once a Modification Order is made, it must be publicised, and any person will have an opportunity to formally object to it. Should objections be received, the Modification Order would have to be referred to the Secretary of State who may hold a Public

Inquiry before deciding upon whether or not to confirm the Modification Order.

- 46 Please note that the Council will not disclose the user evidence forms that form part of the background documentation at this stage in the process. The Council considers that the information provided within the user evidence documentation is exempt information under s1&2 Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, as amended.
- 47 Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, there is no such statutory right prior to an Order having been made persons affected are entitled to the information in the event that an Order is made following the Committee decision.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

48 If objections to an Order lead to a subsequent hearing/inquiry, the Council would be responsible for any costs involved in the preparation and conducting of such. The maintenance of the Public Right of Way, if added to the Definitive Map and Statement, would fall to the landowner and Council in line with legislation. The associated costs would be borne within existing Public Rights of Way revenue and capital budgets.

Policy

49 The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Vision of the Corporate Plan of a greener Cheshire East, with the aim of "a thriving and sustainable place" and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Vision – An open, fairer, greener Cheshire East

Aim-A thriving and sustainable place

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- Reduce impact on the environment
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

50 The legal tests under section 53 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 do not include an assessment of the effects under the Equality Act 2010.

Human Resources

51 There are no direct implications for Human Resources.

Risk Management

52 There are no direct implications for risk management.

Rural Communities

53 There are no direct implications for Rural Communities.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

54 There are no direct implications for Children and Young People.

Public Health

55 The recommendations are anticipated to offer a positive overall impact on the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents.

Climate Change

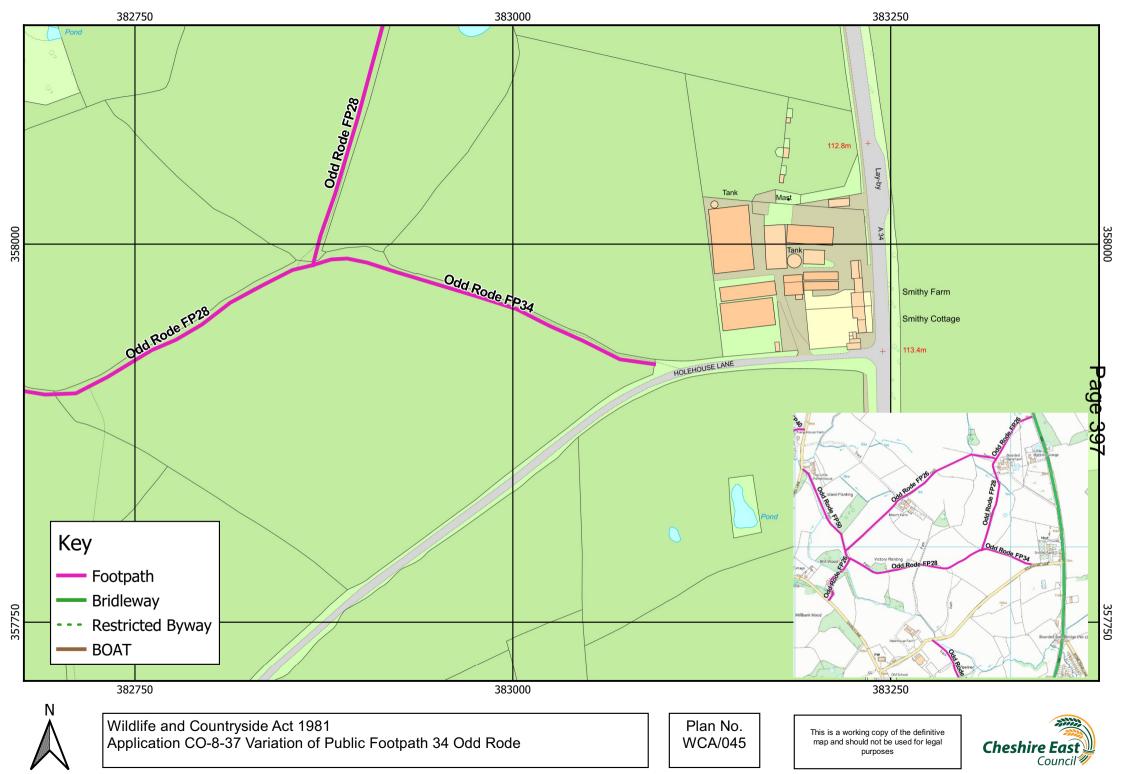
56 The recommendations will help the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve environmental sustainability by reducing energy consumption and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Access to Information		
Contact Officer:	Adele Mayer	
	adele.mayer@cheshireeast.gov.uk	
Appendices:	Appendix 1 list of resources : Appendix 2 Report Plans : Appendix 3 Site photographs	
Background Papers:	Case Files CO-8-37 and CO-8-38	

Appendix 1

Primary Sources	Date	Reference Number/Source
Tithe Records		
Tithe Map	1838	Cheshire Record Office ("CRO") EDT 309/2
Ordnance Surve	y Maps	
O.S. 6"	1882,	Scottish Map Library ("SML")
	1888, 1910	Sheet L, LI and LVII
Local Authority Records		
Parish Survey	1953	PROW
Schedules and Maps		
Draft Map	1953 (relevant date)	PROW
Provisional Map	1968	PROW
Definitive Map & Statement	1971	PROW
Correspondence	2007-2009	PROW
Additional records		
Photos	2024	PROW– see photo sheet
Witness statements x2	2008	Application
Case Law	2003	R (on the application of) Leicestershire County Council v Secretary of State for the Environment, Food

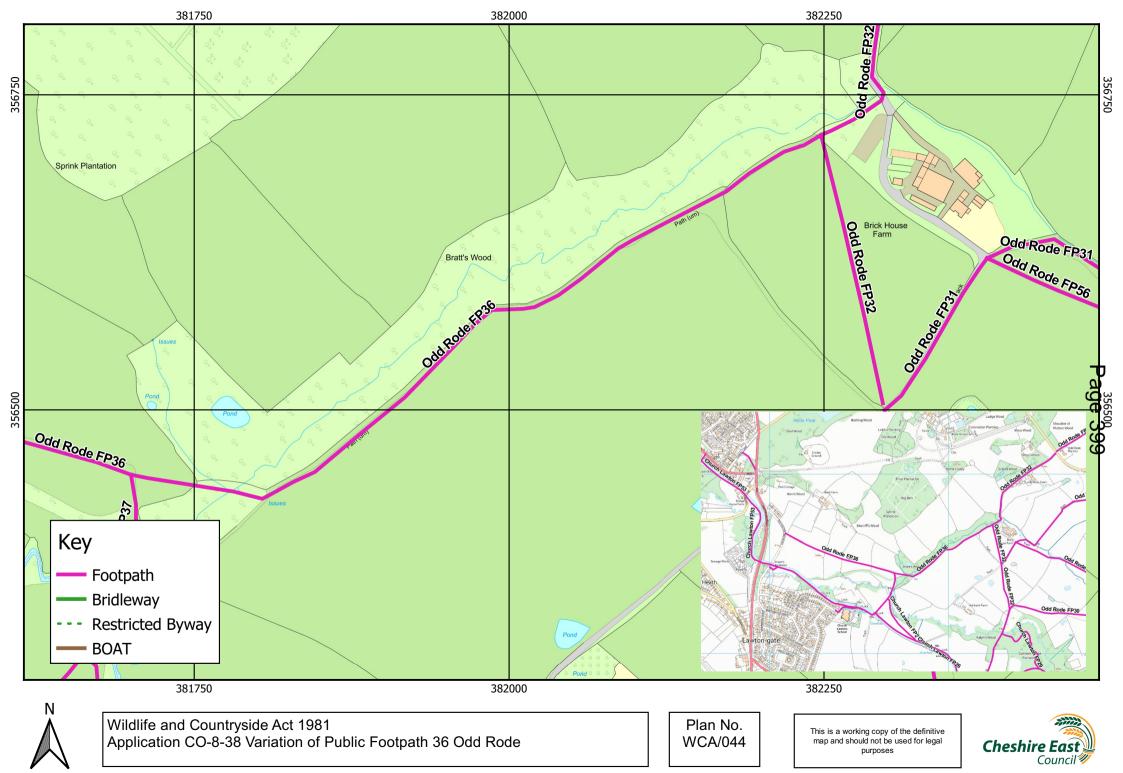
	and Rural Affairs [2003]
	EWHC 171



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Appendix 3 Applications CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 Site Photographs 12 June 2024

Public Footpath 36

Photographs commencing from north west of Bratt's Wood.



Foot bridge crossing of stream running through woods



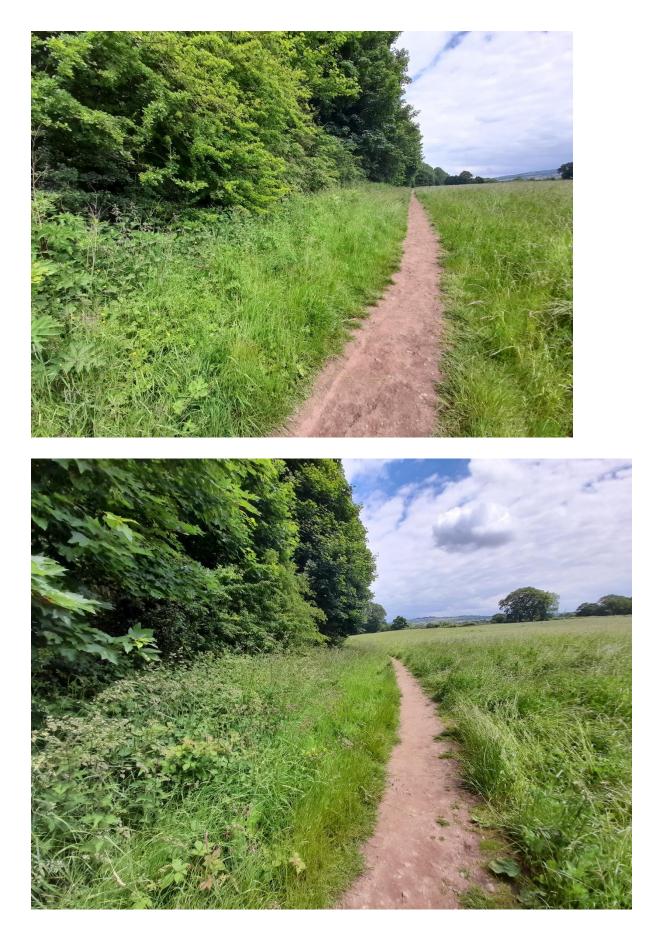
Appendix 3 Applications CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 Site Photographs 12 June 2024

Exit from woods on south side and continuation along the southern boundary of the woods

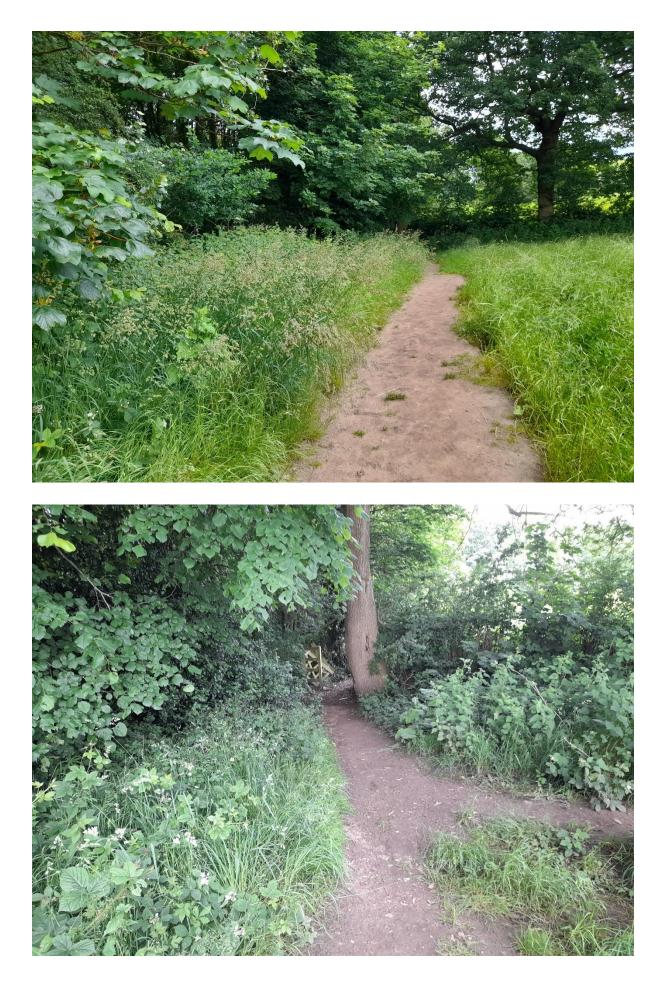




Appendix 3 Applications CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 Site Photographs 12 June 2024



Appendix 3 Applications CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 Site Photographs 12 June 2024



Appendix 3 Applications CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 Site Photographs 12 June 2024



Appendix 3 Applications CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 Site Photographs 12 June 2024



Appendix 3 Applications CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 Site Photographs 12 June 2024



Termination on Public Footpath 32



Appendix 3 Applications CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 Site Photographs 12 June 2024

Public Footpath 34 Odd Rode Commencing on the junction with Holehouse Lane facing west



Path continues on south side of field boundary.



Appendix 3 Applications CO-8-37 and CO-8-38 Site Photographs 12 June 2024



Path terminates at junction with Footpath 28

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OPEN

Highways and Transport Committee

19th September 2024

Proposed Public Path Creation Agreement: Hulme Walfield Public Footpath No. 2

Report of: Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise

Report Reference No: HTC/31/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: Brereton Rural

Purpose of Report

- 1. This report seeks approval to enter into a Public Path Creation Agreement with the owner of land over which a Public Footpath runs, to change its legal status to that of Public Bridleway.
- 2. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Corporate Plan aim of "A thriving and sustainable place" and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Executive Summary

3. The Council has the agreement of a landowner to enter into a Public Path Creation Agreement to change the legal status of Hulme Walfield Public Footpath No. 2 to Public Bridleway so that it may be used by walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders. The proposal to do so was included within planning consent granted for a housing development, with the route being constructed for that purpose. This report seeks the decision to enter into the Agreement to enact the change of the legal status of the route.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways and Transport Committee is recommended to:

- Decide that a Public Path Creation Agreement be entered into under Section 25 of the Highways Act 1980 to change the legal status of Public Footpath No. 2 in the Parish of Hulme Walfield, as illustrated on Plan No. HA/151, to Public Bridleway.
- 2. Decide that public notice of the making of the Agreement be given.
- 4. Bloor Homes (North West) Ltd. secured planning consent (ref. 16/3107C) for the Alderley Gate development in the Parish of Hulme Walfield on the outskirts of Congleton. Under that planning consent, Hulme Walfield Public Footpath No. 2, which runs from Giantswood Lane to Lomas Way along the edge of the development site, was constructed to a specification suitable for use by cyclists as well as walkers and wheelers to aide both active travel and leisure. The aspiration of local horse riders to change the legal status of the route to Public Bridleway had also been logged through consultation on the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 5. Now that the estate roads have been adopted, the landowner is in a position to enter into a Public Path Creation Agreement under section 25 of the Highways Act 1980 to change the legal status of the Public Footpath to that of Public Bridleway. This will mean that it can be signed and mapped as a bridleway so that walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders can use the route.
- Hulme Walfield Public Footpath No. 2 commences at its junction with Giantswood Lane (C315) at Ordnance Survey grid reference SJ 8574 6435 and runs for approximately 381 metres to its junction with Lomas Way (UY3607) at Ordnance Survey grid reference SJ 8594 6467. The route is shown on Plan No. HA/151 running between points A and B. Giantswood Lane forms part of the National Cycle Network route No. 55.
- 7. The route was constructed to a 3m width and runs within a green infrastructure corridor maintained under the arrangements for the public open space of the development site. A proposal to install dropped kerbs at the ends of the route to ease onward travel is being assessed by Cheshire East Highways presently.

Consultation and Engagement

- 8. The proposal to change the legal status of the Public Footpath to Public Bridleway was included within the consultation undertaken for the development, and was captured within the planning consent.
- 9. Due to the proximity of the route to boundaries, consultation regarding the proposed Public Path Creation Agreement has been undertaken with the Ward Member of Brereton Rural Ward, and also that of Congleton West and Gawsworth. No comments were received.
- 10. Again due to the proximity of the route to boundaries, consultation regarding the proposed Public Path Creation Agreement has been undertaken with Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Parish Council and Congleton Town Council.
- 11. Congleton Town Council considered the matter at its Planning Committee meeting held on 8th August 2024. The draft minutes of the meeting read that the Committee "*Resolved to support the proposal*".
- 12. Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Parish Council responded with the following comments. A response was provided as stated in italics against each point below. This response was acknowledged by the Parish Council and circulated to Parish Councillors. No further comments or questions were received.
 - "We welcome the proposal for the upgrade of this important public path. It will form part of a fitness trail which is presently being planned jointly with Redrow for the benefit of residents including the Bloor and Redrow developments. This is part of our wider plan to improve our network of active recreation routes, complementing the West East Greenway."

Response: Noted.

2) "We request further details of the surface and edging of the path. It needs to be appropriate for horse riders, and ideally not tarmac, with a slight curved profile from centre to edge to promote drainage. It should also reflect the rural nature of this hedge/tree lined avenue."

Response: The route has already been constructed suitable for use as a bridleway - this was delivered through the planning process. The route is made of compacted stone and has a 3m width of surfacing set within a wider green corridor. 3) "The legacy gate stoop to Giantswood Lane should be incorporated in the design along with suitable safety measures/barriers on both sides of FP2 Giantswood Lane. This must include appropriate statutory highway signs to advise motorists of the need to slow down and take care of all users crossing."

Response: The stone gate posts and bollards at Giantswood Lane would remain in place - there is no proposal to change that arrangement. Highway signs to advise motorists are not normally installed unless a promoted walking/cycling route meets a road in a derestricted area. However, I will include your comments in the committee report and have passed your comments on to the Highways team assessing the proposed installation of dropped kerbs.

The Highways team subsequently commented that the current bollards are considered consistent with the national guidance document Cycle Infrastructure Design Local Transport Note 1/20. However, they will assess the need for additional signage for motorists, the cutting back of vegetation at the exit of Public Footpath No. 8 opposite the entrance of the proposed Bridleway and whether any measures are required to slow users of the proposed Bridleway as they approach Giantswood Lane.

4) "In this respect and recognising the forthcoming East West Greenway crossing of Giantswood Lane at Mount Pleasant Farm, that a new speed limit of 30 mph order should be promoted from the present Giantswood Lane 30 mph end through at least to the link road overbridge and cycle way junctions if not onwards to the north end of Hulme Walfield settlement, to promote the safety of all residents and active recreation users. There is no public footpath beyond existing development but increased recreational activity in the vicinity warrants speed reduction on this relatively narrow part of a National Cycleway route."

Response: This request is beyond the scope of the decision to be presented to the Highways and Transport Committee. However, I will include your comments in the committee report and have passed your comments on to the Highways team assessing the proposed installation of dropped kerbs.

The Highways team subsequently commented that the speed limit on Giantswood Lane would have been assessed under the Speed Management Strategy, with the current speed limit considered appropriate. 5) "That an appropriate barrier be incorporated at the junction of FP2 and Lomas Way. This issue has been raised previously and is required to ensure the safety of all but particularly young children and cyclists, due to the reduced visibility on the right hand side of the Lomas Way junction."

Response: There are already bollards in place at the junction of FP2 and Lomas Way as installed through the consented plans under the planning process. Many cyclists and those using wheelchairs etc. are keen to see the removal of barriers, and the Council receives requests for the removal of such structures, particularly in the Congleton area. That said, the visibility at this location has been highlighted to the Highways team assessing the proposed installation of dropped kerbs and I have passed your comments on to them.

The Highways team subsequently commented that the current bollards are considered consistent with the national guidance document Cycle Infrastructure Design Local Transport Note 1/20, with the change in direction on the route acting to reduce users' speed before approaching the carriageway.

6) "That consideration be given to a statutory 20 mph limit on both Redrow and Bloor developments, promoting great safety for children, residents and active recreation users. This complements and reinforces the 30mph design standards in the approved consents."

Response: This request is beyond the scope of the decision to be presented to the Highways and Transport Committee. However, I will include your comments in the committee report and have passed your comments on to the Highways team assessing the proposed installation of dropped kerbs.

Highways Development Control subsequently explained that highway design would have been considered as part of the planning application and a mandatory 20mph speed limit was not applied to the development as the internal road design was engineered to 20mph, and included speed reducing measures.

7) "It was also commented that it would be excellent if this Bridleway could be linked into the other footpaths. There is a small gap between FP8 and the Bridleway. I appreciate this may not be something you are looking to do under this particular project, but long term, this would go a long way to improve the bridleway and footpath network within the Parish." Response: The small gap between Footpath No. 8 and Giantswood Lane ... will likely form part of the extent of the highway of Giantswood Lane. Upgrade of any other footpath to bridleway status would involve separate landowners and therefore have to form part of a separate project, resources permitting.

13. Public notice of any Public Path Creation Agreement would be placed in a local newspaper, as required in the Highways Act 1980, as well as on site and on the Council's website.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 14. In accordance with Section 25 of the Highways Act 1980 it is within the Council's discretion to enter into a Public Path Creation Agreement with any person having the necessary power for the dedication of a bridleway.
- 15. The entering into of a Public Path Creation Agreement would form the legal process through which the change of status from Public Footpath to Public Bridleway that was agreed through the planning process can be enacted.
- 16. The Act creates a duty of the Council to have due regard to the needs of agriculture (including the breeding or keeping of horses) and forestry, and to the desirability of conserving flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features. It is considered that these matters have been assessed and accommodated through the planning process which consented the physical construction of the route.

Options Considered

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	Not entering into the Public Path Creation Agreement would leave the public with uncertainty as to the legal status of the Public Right of Way and may cause inconvenience to the landowner with regards to the transfer of the land to their management company.	Failure to complete the legal process could leave the Council open to challenge and negative publicity in light of the preceding planning consent.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 17. Under s25 Highways Act 1980 a Public Path Creation Agreement can be made in respect of a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway. A Public Path Creation Agreement under s25 Highways Act 1980 shall be entered into with the landowner if the recommendations are supported by the Committee.
- 18. From the date stated in the Public Path Creation Agreement the path will become a public path of the description given in the agreement and become maintainable at the public expense.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

18. There are no financial implications that require an amendment to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Policy

19. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Vision of the Corporate Plan of a greener Cheshire East, with the aim of "a thriving and sustainable place" and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Vision – An open, fairer, greener Cheshire East

Aim - A thriving and sustainable place

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- Reduce impact on the environment
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel.
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

20. There are no direct equality, diversity and inclusion implications.

Human Resources

21. There are no direct human resources implications.

Risk Management

22. There are no direct risk management implications.

Rural Communities

23. There are direct positive effects from the Public Rights of Way network for rural communities, through connectivity, access to services, leisure and active travel.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

24. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

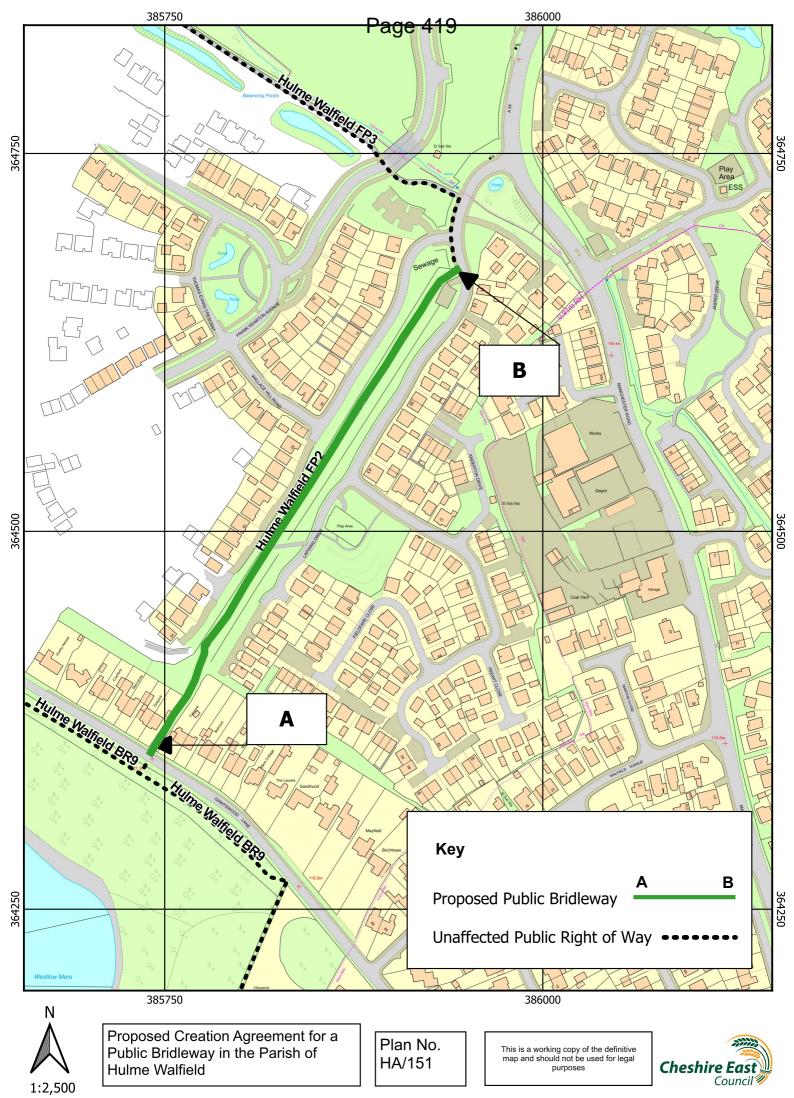
Public Health

25. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents.

Climate Change

- 26. The Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2027 and to encourage all businesses, residents and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint.
- 27. The work of the Public Rights of Way team encourages a reduction in carbon emissions and increased environmental sustainability by reducing energy consumption and promoting healthy lifestyles through active travel.

Access to Information					
Contact Officer:	Genni Butler Countryside Access Development Manager genni.butler@cheshireeast.gov.uk				
Appendices:	Plan No. HA/151				
Background Papers:	The background papers and file relating to the report can be inspected by contacting the report writer.				



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Highway and Transport Committee

19th September 2024

Highways Act 1980 Section 119

Extension to Proposed Diversion of Public Footpath No. 35 (parts) in the Parish of Nantwich (formerly Public Footpath No. 4 in the Parish of Henhull)

Report of: Peter Skates, Acting Executive Director of Place

Report Reference No: HTC/35/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: Bunbury

Purpose of Report

- 1 The report outlines an extension to the current diversion of Public Footpath No. 35 in the Parish of Nantwich.
- 2 The report makes a recommendation for a quasi-judicial decision by Members as to whether or not a diversion Order should be made to include this extension of public footpath.
- 3 The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Corporate Plan aim of "A thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Executive Summary

- 4 This report outlines an extension to the diversion of Public Footpath No. 35 in the Parish of Nantwich. It was not considered necessary to undertake further consultation on the diversion as the extension does not technically change the walked experience or significantly alter the alignment.
- 5. The recommendation will be that a Public Path Diversion Order be made under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980, as amended by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to divert parts of Public Footpath

No.35 in the Parish of Nantwich by creating new sections of public footpath and extinguishing the current path as illustrated on Plan No. HA/154 on the grounds that it is expedient in the interests of the landowner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways & Transport Committee is recommended to:

- Decide that a Public Path Diversion Order be made under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980, as amended by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981to divert parts of Public Footpath No.35 in the Parish of Nantwich by creating new sections of public footpath and extinguishing the current path as illustrated on Plan No. HA/154 on the grounds that it is expedient in the interests of the landowner.
- 2. Decide that public notice of the making of the Order be given and in the event of there being no objections within the period specified, the Order be confirmed in the exercise of the powers conferred on the Council by the said Act.
- 3. Note that in the event of objections being received, Cheshire East Borough Council be responsible for the conduct of any hearing or Public Inquiry.

Background

- 6. On 12th March 2018, committee approval was granted to make a diversion Order to divert parts of Public Footpath No.35 in the Parish of Nantwich to enable construction of the Kingsborne residential development to go ahead. As approved, the diversion was progressed under section 257 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 but the building of a house on the current route of the footpath meant that this diversion was then void as development had already gone ahead. Consequently, diversion under this legislation could no longer be used and the diversion was progressed under section 119 of the Highways Act 1980. Committee were informed of this change on 13th September 2021, and committee approval to make a diversion Order was granted on 6th December 2021.
- 7. The developers had constructed the new diversion route by the time the Order was ready so this was surveyed to ensure the path on the ground mirrored the alignment in the Order. It was noted that one section had been slightly realigned and another section which was supposed to follow the definitive alignment of the current route, had been installed a few meters to the west of it. The realigned and extended sections are shown on the Order plan (Plan No. HA/154) by bold dashed black lines running between points I-J and J-K respectively.

8. The changes to the Order do not constitute a technical change to the original diversion detailed within the committee report and minutes of 6th December 2021. They simply realign a short section and place the current footpath on the alignment of the path on the ground, so that the definitive records will reflect the physical circumstances of the path on the ground.

Consultation and Engagement

9. Given that the alignment changes detailed in the 'Executive Summary', are not technically different and do not significantly alter the walking experience for the public compared to the diverted footpath were these alignment changes not made, then informal consultation is not considered necessary, especially as this diversion has not attracted any objections (as detailed in the report presented to committee on 6th December 2021).

Reasons for Recommendations

- 10. In accordance with Section 119(1) of the Highways Act 1980 it is within the Council's discretion to make the Order if it appears to the Council to be expedient to do so in the interests of the public or of the owner, lessee or occupier of the land crossed by the path. It is considered that the proposed diversion is in the interests of both the landowner and the public.
- 11. Section 119 of the Act also stipulates that a public path diversion order shall not alter the point of termination of the path if that point is not on a highway, or, where it is on a highway, otherwise than to another point which is on the same highway, or a highway connected with it, and which is substantially as convenient to the public.
- 12. In considering whether or not to confirm the Order, in addition to the matters discussed at paragraphs 6 to 9 above, the Secretary of State where the Order is opposed, or the Council where the Order is unopposed, must be satisfied that the path or way is not substantially less convenient as a consequence of the diversion having regard to the effect:
- The diversion would have on the public enjoyment of the path as a whole.
- The effect that the coming into operation of the Order would have as respects other land served by the existing public right of way

- The effect that any new public right of way created by the Order would have as respects the land over which the rights are so created and any land held with it.
- 13. In confirming an Order the Secretary of State where the Order is opposed, or the Council where the Order is unopposed, will also have regard to any material provision of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan prepared by the local highway authority and the effect of the path or way on the needs of agriculture, forestry and biodiversity.
- 14. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Green aim of the Corporate Plan, the "thriving and sustainable place" priority, and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Other Options Considered

15. If the authority was to do nothing the development would obstruct the Public Right of Way.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

16. Once an Order is made it may be the subject of objections. If objections are not withdrawn, this removes the power of the Local Authority to confirm the Order itself, and may lead to a hearing or Public Inquiry. It follows that the Committee decision may be confirmed or not confirmed. This process may involve additional legal support and resources.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

17. If objections to an Order lead to a subsequent hearing/inquiry, the Council would be responsible for any costs involved in the preparation and conducting of such. The maintenance of the Public Right of Way would continue to be the responsibility of the landowner and Council in line with legislation. The associated costs would be borne within existing Public Rights of Way revenue and capital budgets.

Policy

18. The work of the Public Rights of Way team contributes to the Vision of the Corporate Plan of a greener Cheshire East, with the aim of "a thriving and sustainable place", and the policies and objectives of the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Vision - An open, fairer, greener Cheshire East Aim - A thriving and sustainable place

A great place for people to live, work and visit Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods Reduce impact on the environment A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all Be a carbon neutral council by 2027

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

19. An assessment in relation to the Equality Act 2010 has been carried out by the Public Rights of Way Network Management and Enforcement Officer for the area and it is considered that the proposed diversion would be no less convenient to use than the current one.

Human Resources

20. There are no direct implications for Human Resources.

Risk Management

21. There are no direct implications for risk management.

Rural Communities

22. There are no direct implications for Rural Communities.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

23. There are no direct implications for Children and Young People

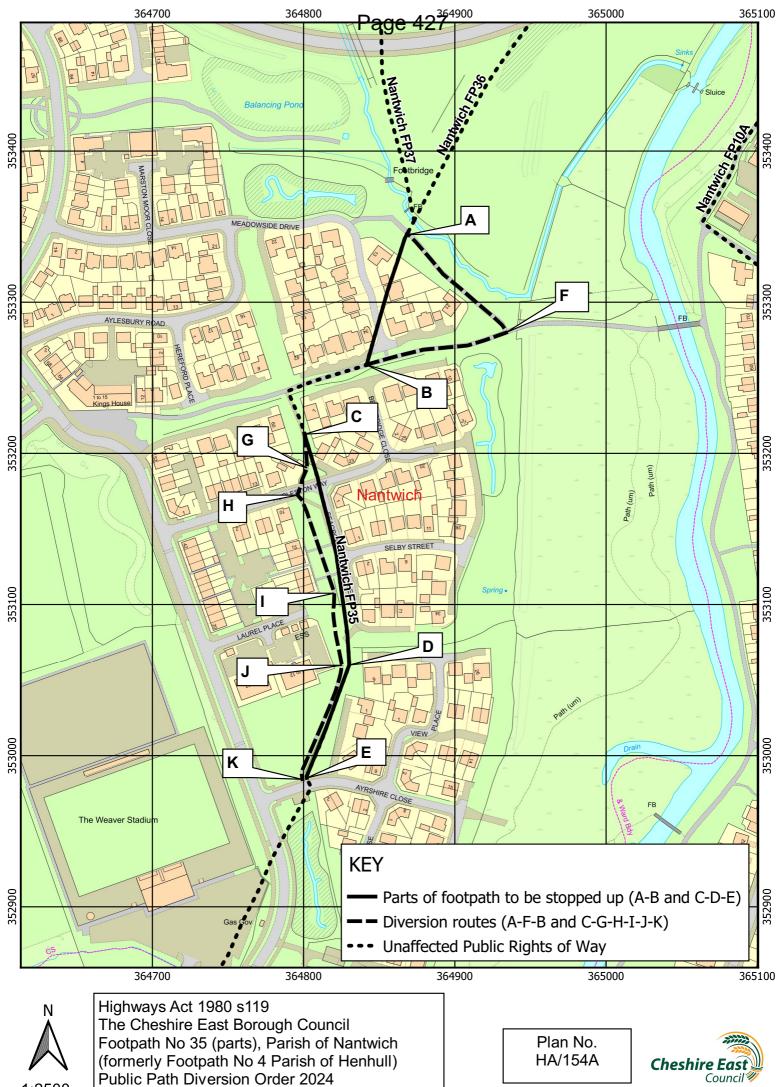
Public Health

24. The recommendations are anticipated to offer a positive overall impact on the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents.

Climate Change

25. The recommendations will help the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve environmental sustainability by reducing energy consumption and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Access to Inform	Access to Information					
Contact Officer:	Marianne Nixon					
	Marianne.nixon@cheshireeast.gov.uk					
Appendices:	Appendix 1 Plan No. HA/154					
Background Papers:	The background papers (including committee reports and minutes) relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Marianne Nixon and quoting the following file references:					
	File No. 154D/553 – original diversion under TCPA 90 s257					
	File No. 154D/595 - ongoing diversion under HA80 s119					



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Highways & Transport Committe e	Report Reference	Title	Purpose of Report	Corporate Plan Priority	Lead Officer	Exemp t Item	Consultatio n	Equality Impact Assessmen t	Part of Budget and Policy Framewor k	Is the report for decision or scrutiny?
Nov 24										
21/11/24	HTC/09/24/2 5	National Parking Platform Update	To provide committee with a status update on the development of the National Parking Platform and to consider its application in Cheshire East	Open	Executiv e Director of Place	No	No	TBC	No	To Note/Scrutiny
21/11/24	HTC/20/24- 25	Second Financial Review of 2024/25 (Highways and Transport Committee)	To note and comment on the Second Financial Review and Performance position of 2024/25, including progress on policy proposals and material variances from the MTFS and (if necessary) approve Supplementary Estimates and Virements.	Open	Director of Finance & Custome r Services	No	No	No	Yes	Scrutiny/Decisio n

21/11/24	HTC/22/24- 25	Medium Term Financial Strategy Consultation 2025/26 - 2028/29 (Highways & Transport Committee)	All Committees were being asked to provide feedback in relation to their financial responsibilities as identified within the Constitution and linked to the budget alignment approved by the Finance Sub- Committee in March 2024. Responses to the consultation would be reported to the Corporate Policy Committee to support that Committee in making recommendation s to Council on changes to the current financial strategy.	Open	Director of Finance & Custome r Services	No	No	No	Yes	Scrutiny/Decisio n
January 25										
23/01/25	HT/26/21-22	Flowerpot Junction Improvement Scheme	Authorise to make Compulsory Purchase Orders and Side Roads Orders for the delivery of the Flowerpot Junction	Green	Executiv e Director of Place	Yes	No	No	Yes	Decision

			Improvement Scheme. Approve the forward funding of the additional developer contributions in accordance with the capital programme							
23/01/25	HTC/09/23- 24	Tree Planting and Verge Maintenance (Nature Based Approach) Policy	To seek approval for highways to adopt a tree planting and verge maintenance policy to allow its implementation from 2024/25 onwards.	Open;#Green	Executiv e Director of Place	No	Yes	No	Yes	Decision
23/01/25	HTC/14/24- 25	Application to approve a Lane Rental Scheme	To outline the process required to develop a Lane Rental Scheme and to consider implementation of the scheme	Open	Executiv e Director of Place	TBC	No	Yes	No	Decision
23/01/25	HTC/21/24- 25	Third Financial Review of 2024/25 (Highways & Transport Committee)	To note and comment on the Third Financial Review and Performance position of 2024/25, including progress on policy proposals and material variances from the MTFS and (if	Open	Director of Finance & Custome r Services	No	No	No	Yes	Scrutiny/Decisio n

			necessary) approve Supplementary Estimates and Virements.							
23/01/25	HTC/24/24- 25	Medium Term Financial Strategy Consultation 2025/26 - 2028/29 Provisional Settlement Update (Highways & Transport Committee)	All Committees were being asked to provide feedback in relation to their financial responsibilities as identified within the Constitution and linked to the budget alignment approved by the Finance Sub- Committee in March 2024. Responses to the consultation would be reported to the Corporate Policy Committee to support that Committee in making recommendation s to Council on changes to the current financial strategy.	Open	Director of Finance & Custome r Services	No	No	No	Yes	Scrutiny/Decisio n
April 25										
03/04/25	HTC/23/24- 25	Service Budgets 2025/26 (Highways &	The purpose of this report is to set out the allocation of	Open	Director of Finance &	No	No	No	Yes	Scrutiny

Transport	approved	Custome			
Committee)	budgets for	r			
	2025/26 for	Services			
	services under				
	the Committee's				
	remit, as				
	determined by				
	Finance Sub				
	Committee				

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Middlewich Eastern Bypass

URGENT DECISION MADE ON BEHALF OF THE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Summary of Decision

Council/Committee Procedure Rule 2.10 and 2.11, and a general delegated authority to the Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive

Contact Officer:	Brian Reed
Email:	Brian.reed@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Contact Number:	07973754722

1.0 Background

- 1.0 The Full Business Case for the Scheme was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in October 2023. On 18th April 2024, the DfT formally wrote to the Council requested additional information on the Scheme, which has resulted in a further delay to Ministers approving the Full Business Case. The DfT identified weaknesses in the calculation for the Value for Money of the Scheme
- 1.1 Following a series of meetings with DfT the Council has been able to identify how these weaknesses can be resolved, improving the Value for Money calculation for the Scheme; the Council now intends to submit a revised Full Business Case in September 2024.

2.0 Reasons for Urgency of Decision

Even a short delay will have very large impacts on the Scheme Cost.

2.1 It is currently not clear what the impact on the overall Scheme cost of the Full Business Case (FBC) delays are and this is a consideration which is heavily time dependent, due both to the seasonal sensitivities of the major construction activities and the effects of continuing construction cost inflation. The sooner the new Business Case can be submitted, the lower the risk of additional costs.

Even a short delay has major impacts on the Delivery Programme.

2.2 The deadline of w/c 2 September 2024 is geared to ensure that this matter can be placed before the November DfT Investment Committee. Failure to submit the revised Full Business Case by 6 September 2024 will result in the November DfT Investment Committee being missed, or by other matters outside the control or influence of the Council. Previous experience suggests

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that a delay of up to 3 months may be encountered which has significant impacts on the construction programme.

The current programme for the revised Full Business Case submission and subsequent construction works is identified by the key dates below:

Key critical dates are:

- Submit Full Business Case w/c 2 September 2024
- Department for Transport Investment Committee November 2024
- Full Business Case Approval February 2025
- Construction Start of Works September 2025

Business Case

2.3 The Cost Benefit Ratio (BCR) for the scheme is very sensitive to costs. A delay to the approval is linked to the submission of the revised Full Business Case risks the scheme having a lower BCR; harming its chances of support from the Government, leading the Council having to manage the costs already sunk into the project to date at a time of financial pressure.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The recommendation is to progress with the completion and submission of the revised Full Business Case in the shortest timescale. Scheme costs presented in the revised Full Business Case will be based upon the March 2024 Target Cost submission from Contractor, Balfour Beatty, avoiding any need for further time to assess price changes.
- 3.2 The recommendation leads to the quickest delivery of the bypass and minimises the Council's exposure to further construction cost inflation.
- 3.3 Opportunities to reduce costs through the implementation of selected descoping options will be pursued in parallel to the Full Business Case approvals process.
- 3.4 The decision relates to the submission of the Business Case only and does not commit the Council to build the Bypass. A separate decision will be required to let a construction contract when the Government has decided on their funding contribution.

4.0 DECISION

4.1 That the Chief Executive on behalf of Cheshire East Council:

Approves and agrees to the submission of the revised Final Full Business Case for the Middlewich Eastern Bypass.

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