Cheshire East Council Plan
Community Engagement Report

Prepared by PLACED
December 2023

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Report Summary

Cheshire East Council is in the process of creating a new plan for the borough that will shape its direction and priorities for the next few years. PLACED (Place Education CIC) was commissioned to deliver a series of community engagement events to inform the development of this new plan for Cheshire East.

As part of this commission, engagement was undertaken to explore local people's priorities and encourage reflections on the identity of Cheshire East as a large borough with significant diversity and socio-economic division. Engagement consisted of public 'pop-up' events in Crewe and Macclesfield, two of the borough's larger towns. These in-person events would complement Cheshire East Council's own engagement, including their online survey ('Shaping Our Future Survey 2023').

Response to PLACED's community engagement was largely positive with local people keen to see their priorities, needs, and interests represented in the new plan for the borough. Some residents did express some apathy and 'engagement fatigue' having participated in many past consultations. However, residents were, to a great extent, happy to share their views and participate in engagement activities.

The following report provides an overview of the community engagement activities that were delivered by PLACED for the new Cheshire East plan. It outlines the key findings drawn from both the qualitative and quantitative data that was gathered.

The key findings of the community engagement delivered include:

Roads and Pavements: The condition and quality of roads and pavements in Cheshire East was flagged at all the engagement events, but particularly in Macclesfield. Potholes were frequently mentioned as were issues affecting wheelchair accessibility such as pedestrian pathways with uneven paving and cars parking on pavements.

Public Transport: Many residents felt that public transport in the borough was not affordable and frequent enough. High fares and bus route cuts in Crewe and Macclesfield were frequently raised as an issue affecting people's day-to-day experiences living and working in the borough as well as when travelling into town centres.

Shopping Facilities: As the quantitative data gathered revealed, there was a great demand for better-quality shopping facilities in Crewe and Macclesfield town centres. Residents said that their town centres have many coffee shops, eateries, and pubs, but very little quality shopping facilities. Along with this, there was interest in seeing a greater mix of shops, more independent and local businesses, and empty retail units filled to revive commerce and foot traffic.

Car Parking: There was significant interest in more affordable car parking provision in Crewe and Macclesfield town centres. Many residents said they wished to see more affordable and allocated car parking, particularly for business owners and people with disabilities. Several residents we spoke to complained about there being free parking in wealthier areas of Cheshire East, whilst in areas of greater socio-economic deprivation, residents are required to pay for parking.

Youth Groups and Activities: During all of the engagement events, residents highlighted the lack of groups and activities for children and young people, with most showing greatest concern for teenagers. Some people suggested that if local teenagers had more groups or activities to engage them, they would be less likely to get involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. It was also recommended that efforts should be made to reach young people who are outside of conventional educational environments.

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Introduction

Cheshire East Council is in the process of creating a new plan for the borough, which will shape its direction and priorities for the next few years. Including the voices of communities in the development of the plan is crucial. The new plan will help to ensure that the day-to-day work of the council and its partners is focused on local priorities. By having a robust plan, the council can ensure that it has the funding and resources in place to deliver the services that people need. The plan will be launched in March 2024 and will cover the period April 2024 – March 2028.

Cheshire East Council commissioned PLACED (Place Education CIC) to deliver community engagement activities for their new plan. During November 2023, PLACED delivered a series of 'pop up' community engagement events in Crewe and Macclesfield, two large towns in Cheshire East. These free public events aimed to engage people

in the development of the new plan for Cheshire East, helping to ensure that its priorities align with those of local people. The community engagement delivered by PLACED aimed to explore local people's priorities, interests, and needs and encouraged reflections on the identity of Cheshire East as a large borough with significant diversity and socio-economic division.

Cheshire East Council have delivered their own engagement activity during this period, including internal engagement with staff. The council have delivered some online engagement ('Shaping Our Future Survey 2023') in order to obtain further responses to inform their new plan for Cheshire East. PLACED's community engagement work during November 2023 aimed to supplement and compliment all of this coinciding consultation and community engagement work of the council.

Engagement Overview

With support from volunteers from Cheshire East Council, PLACED delivered a series of community engagement events in Crewe and Macclesfield, two large towns in Cheshire East.

Crewe Market Hall:

- Wednesday 15th November, 11.30am – 3.30pm (40 attendees)

- Thursday 16th November, 3.30pm – 7pm (39 attendees)

Macclesfield Grosvenor Shopping Centre:

- Wednesday 22nd November, 11.30am – 3.30pm (74 attendees)

- Thursday 23rd November, 2pm – 5.30pm (48 attendees)

All of these engagement events were promoted online through PLACED and Cheshire East Council social media channels. In total, we engaged with approximately 200 residents and stakeholders. The people who attended our events at Crewe Market Hall and the Grosvenor Shopping Centre in Macclesfield included residents, people from nearby towns, town and parish council officers and staff, local business owners, community groups, and landlords.

Attendees at our events were predominantly residents of Crewe and Macclesfield, but some came from the areas and towns of Nantwich, Alsager, Weston, Sutton, Tytherington, Disley, Wildboarclough, Prestbury, and Bollington. The majority of those we spoke to, however, were Macclesfield residents. Of the members of the public, we have spoken to older people, young people and children, families, people with disabilities, and people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

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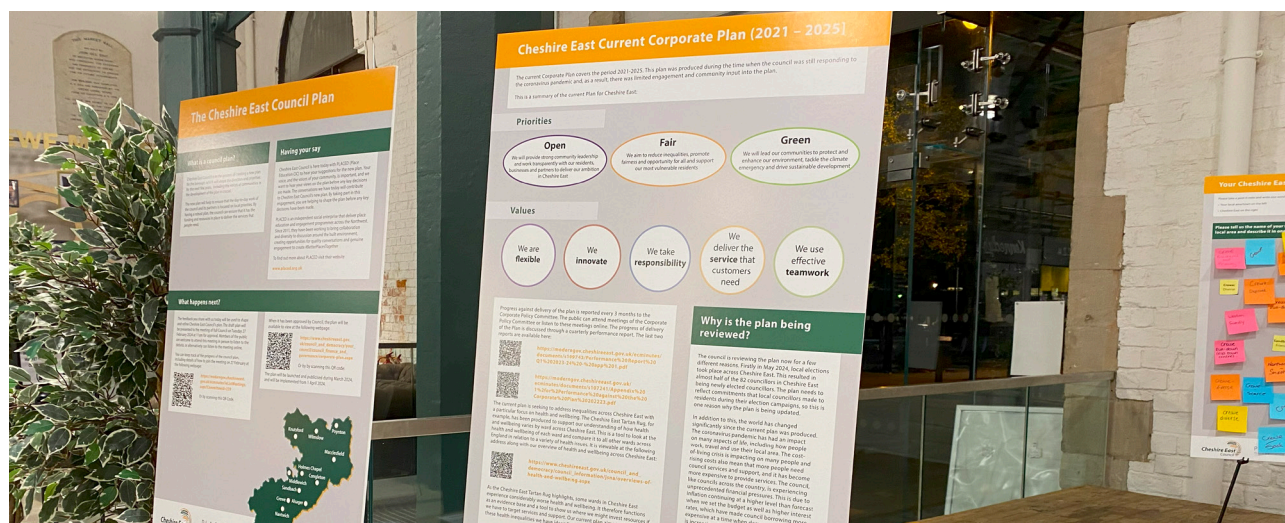
Findings from the Pop-up Events

The following is a summary of the findings from our 'pop-up' community engagement events held in Crewe and Macclesfield during November 2023.

In the following engagement activity, we explored how residents and local stakeholders would characterise or define Cheshire East. It was flagged in our project initiation meeting with Cheshire East Council that, as a sizable borough with a great deal of socio-economic division, Cheshire East is generally felt to lack a unified identity.

We firstly asked participants to **1) tell us the name of their town and describe it in one word.** We then asked them to **2) describe Cheshire East in one word.** On average, participants found it is easier to describe their hometown than Cheshire East. However, participants did provide us with some valuable insight into how Cheshire East could be characterised as a unified borough.

On the following pages, we have presented the data we gathered for this activity in word clouds in which the size of each word indicates its frequency The data collected at Crewe and Macclesfield has been differentiated and is demarcated by titles.

Question 1: Tell us the name of your town and describe it in one word

a) Crewe

Above: Responses from Crewe: 'Tell us the name of your town and describe it in one word'

At Crewe Market Hall, we spoke to residents from Crewe, Weston, Alsager, and Nantwich. When we asked residents to describe their hometown, we received mixed responses.

Some words participants used highlighted the friendly and hardworking nature of residents and the racial and cultural diversity that exists in the Cheshire East towns listed above.

Some responses were slightly more critical raising the demand for regeneration. Town centres were described as being run-down and deprived. Resident apathy and socio-economic inequality were also mentioned, with contrasting opinions between residents from Crewe and Nantwich in particular.

b) Macclesfield

Above: Responses from Macclesfield: 'Tell us the name of your town and describe it in one word'

At the Grosvenor Shopping Centre, we spoke to residents from Macclesfield, Disley, Prestbury, Bollington, Sutton, Tytherington, and Wildboarclough. Although not presented on the word cloud above, we also spoke to residents from Leek. Just as in Crewe, responses were mixed.

Many people mentioned the beautiful countryside and rural parts of where they live as well as the vibrant and evolving urban areas.

The more negative descriptions were represented by words like 'disappointing', 'dangerous', 'bleak', and 'forgotten'. These words related to more urbanised areas and town centres rather than rural areas. Rundown town centres with a lack of quality shopping facilities were mentioned here along with high rates for businesses and empty retail units.

![PLACED — PLACE EDUCATION]
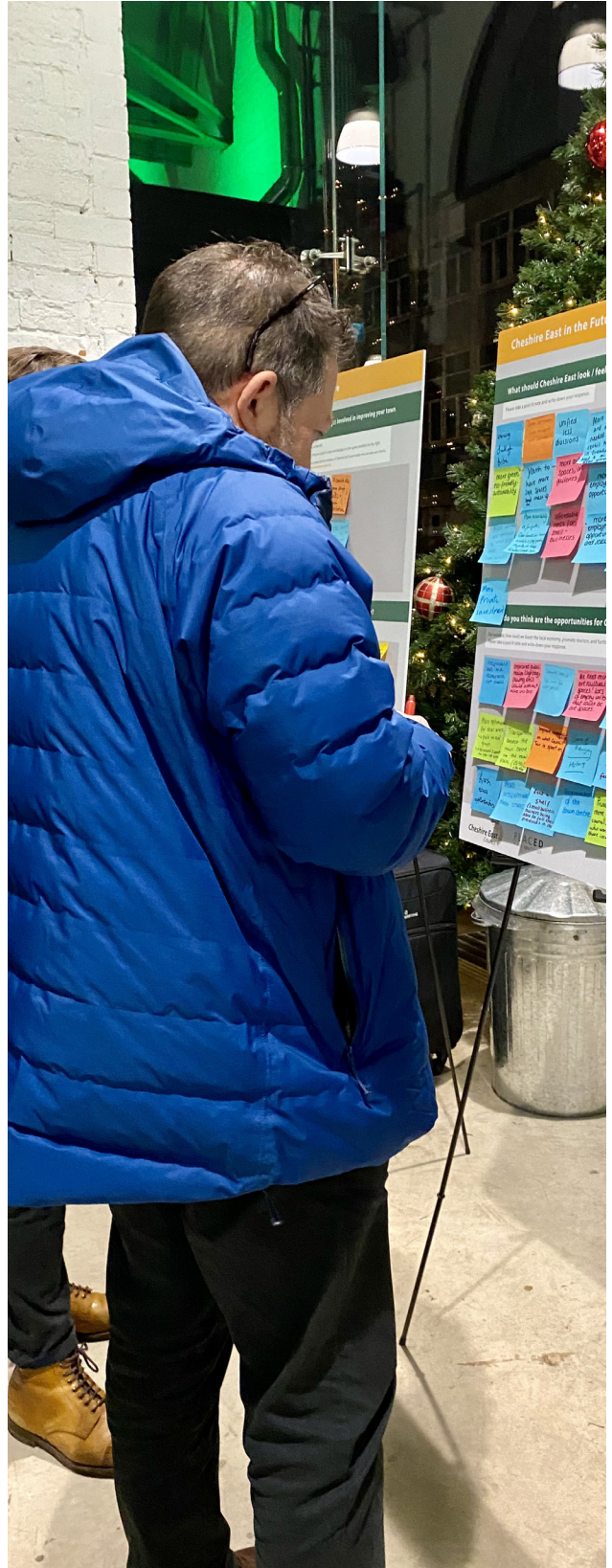
Question 2: Describe Cheshire East in one word

a) Crewe

inequality
sparse
potential
conservative
diverse
economic
travel
macclesfield
active
posh disparity
divided polycentric

b) Macclesfield

exciting
complacent empty green
countryside
beautiful large east
cheshire shared
frustrated
pathetic
varied

Above: Response from Crewe: 'Describe Cheshire East in one word'

Above: Response from Macclesfield: 'Describe Cheshire East in one word'

Participants suggested Cheshire East is divided, with the North of the borough being recognised as wealthier. Adjectives such as 'posh', 'inequality', and 'divided' support this claim.

The word 'polycentric' referred to Cheshire East being made up of various town centres.

Being a fairly new local authority, participants described Cheshire East as a place with 'potential', due to its assets including the countryside, active travel infrastructure, and diverse population.

In Macclesfield, participants showed less consensus when describing Cheshire East. Whilst some people described the countryside as 'beautiful' and 'green', others claimed the borough was 'large' and 'empty' due to its large rural landmass.

It is recognised that some participants misunderstood this activity, describing Cheshire East as a local authority rather than as an area. Comments here were more critical. Residents shared their frustration of not seeing visible outcomes from past consultations and the council's previous plan.

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Question 3: How would you like Cheshire East to feel?

Shifting towards a focus on sense of place and more emotive responses, we asked residents three questions to explore how they would like Cheshire East to feel in the future.

Below summarises our key findings from this activity.

Residents and local stakeholders want Cheshire East to feel:

- More connected (both public and digital infrastructure),
- Friendly, inclusive and more community oriented,
- Happy and positive,
- Family-friendly,
- Responsive to homelessness,
- Like somewhere that has thriving town centres with many shops,
- Listened to by local authorities.

They would like to see more:

- Public and community transport,
- Shops, particularly small independents,
- Community events,
- Places to meet family and friends,
- Long-term solutions,
- Greater presence of police officers,

- Social housing,
- Better promotion of community events and activities (not just online),
- Consultation involving active listening that results in visible outcomes.

And less:

- Services that are only available in certain areas (e.g. Crewe and Macclesfield),
- Anti-social behaviour,
- Businesses and shops closing down in town centres,
- Bars and pubs,
- Short-term and 'blue-sky thinking',
- Following trends.

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Question 4: What should be the key priorities for Cheshire East?

In this engagement activity, we asked residents what they think should be the key priorities for Cheshire East.

Some participants firstly expressed reluctance to vote for some priorities as they believed the council would not have the ability to implement changes in these areas. This engagement activity highlighted that many residents are unaware of what Cheshire East Council has the ability to change. It flagged a lack of knowledge and understanding of what the council does as well as its responsibilities. We explained that all of the priorities listed in this activity were things that Cheshire East Council could impact and change.

Above: Images of highest scoring priorities.

Overall Findings

Below is the quantitative data we received for this activity across all four events in Crewe and Macclesfield.

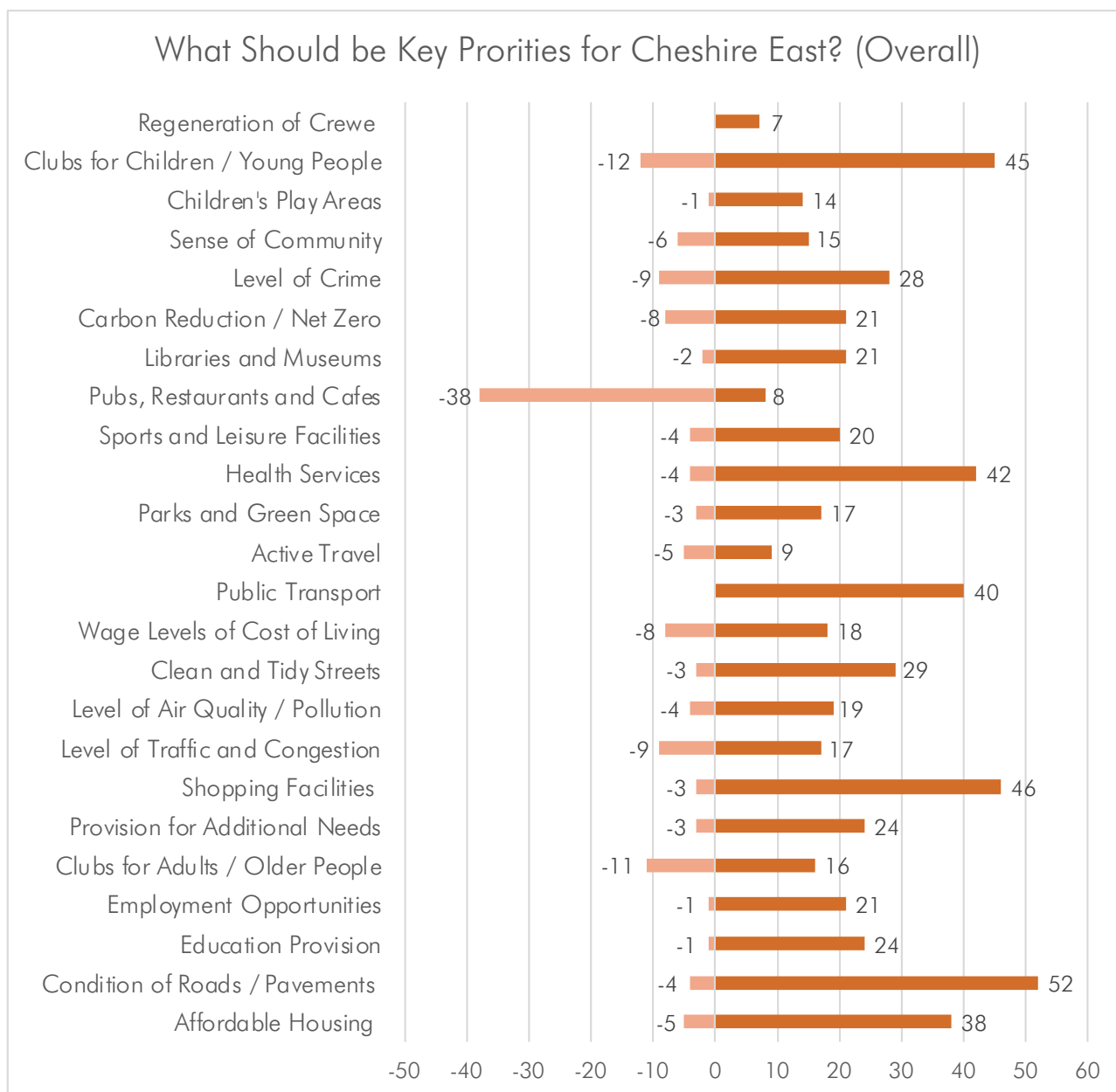The most popular priority overall was 'Condition of Roads/Pavements' (52 votes) and this was followed by 'Shopping Facilities' (46 votes) and 'Health Services' (42 votes).

The ideas that received the most downvotes and were therefore suggested to be less of a priority were 'Pubs, Restaurants and Cafes' (38 downvotes) and 'Clubs for Adults/Older People' (11 downvotes).

[Please see graph on following page]

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What Should be Key Prorities for Cheshire East? (Overall)

Priority	Downvotes	Upvotes
Regeneration of Crewe		7
Clubs for Children / Young People	-12	45
Children's Play Areas	-1	14
Sense of Community	-6	15
Level of Crime	-9	28
Carbon Reduction / Net Zero	-8	21
Libraries and Museums	-2	21
Pubs, Restaurants and Cafes	-38	8
Sports and Leisure Facilities	-4	20
Health Services	-4	42
Parks and Green Space	-3	17
Active Travel	-5	9
Public Transport		40
Wage Levels of Cost of Living	-8	18
Clean and Tidy Streets	-3	29
Level of Air Quality / Pollution	-4	19
Level of Traffic and Congestion	-9	17
Shopping Facilities	-3	46
Provision for Additional Needs	-3	24
Clubs for Adults / Older People	-11	16
Employment Opportunities	-1	21
Education Provision	-1	24
Condition of Roads / Pavements	-4	52
Affordable Housing	-5	38

'Condition of Roads/Pavements' was the top priority overall with many residents mentioning potholes and uneven surfaces being an issue for both pedestrians and road users.

'Pubs, Restaurants and Cafes' received the most downvotes. In both, Crewe and Macclesfield people said that there is already a lot of food and beverage facilities. However, participants highlighted that smaller neighbouring areas and towns do not have as many pubs and eateries.

Crewe and Macclesfield residents wished to see a greater variety of shops rather than food and beverage facilities.
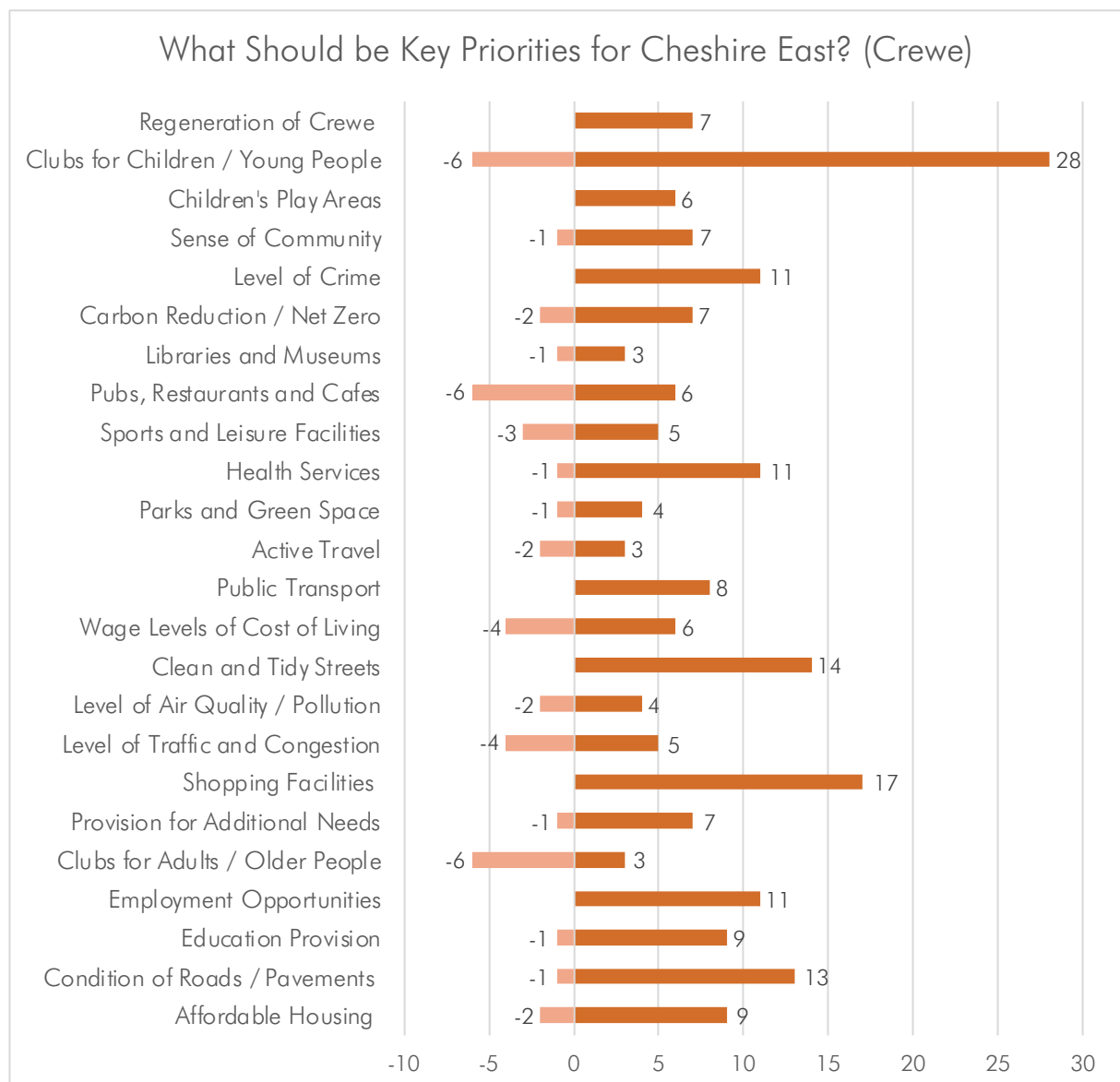
Crewe

Below is the quantitative data we received for this activity at the pop-up events delivered at Crewe Market Hall.

The most popular priority in Crewe was 'Clubs for Children/Young People' (28 votes) and this was followed by 'Shopping Facilities' (17 votes) and 'Clean and Tidy Streets' (14 votes).

The ideas that received the most downvotes and were therefore suggested to be less of a priority were 'Pubs, Restaurants and cafes' and 'Clubs for Adults/Older People' which both received 6 downvotes and far less upvotes than the other priorities we had presented.

What Should be Key Priorities for Cheshire East? (Crewe)

Priority	Downvotes	Upvotes
Regeneration of Crewe		7
Clubs for Children / Young People	-6	28
Children's Play Areas		6
Sense of Community	-1	7
Level of Crime		11
Carbon Reduction / Net Zero	-2	7
Libraries and Museums	-1	3
Pubs, Restaurants and Cafes	-6	6
Sports and Leisure Facilities	-3	5
Health Services	-1	11
Parks and Green Space	-1	4
Active Travel	-2	3
Public Transport		8
Wage Levels of Cost of Living	-4	6
Clean and Tidy Streets		14
Level of Air Quality / Pollution	-2	4
Level of Traffic and Congestion	-4	5
Shopping Facilities		17
Provision for Additional Needs	-1	7
Clubs for Adults / Older People	-6	3
Employment Opportunities		11
Education Provision	-1	9
Condition of Roads / Pavements	-1	13
Affordable Housing	-2	9

13

At our pop-up event in Crewe, one resident added in their own priority ('Regeneration of Crewe'), and this received several votes from other activity participants (7 votes). In accordance with the other data we gathered, this highlighted how some Crewe residents feel that their town centre is rundown and deprived, hence the need for regeneration.

'Clean and Tidy Streets' was discussed by various business owners, with one stating they felt the poor appearance of the public realm impacted their footfall. They specifically complained about the street lighting being outdated and unkept, stating they had reported this in the past but are disappointed with the lack of response and change.

Although it was recognised that there is an aging population in the area, 'Clubs for Adults/Older People' received the most downvotes along with 'Pubs, Restaurants and Cafes' as residents felt there is already enough clubs and activities for older people in Crewe.

Macclesfield

Next is the quantitative data we received for this activity at the pop-up events delivered at the Grosvenor Shopping Centre in Macclesfield.
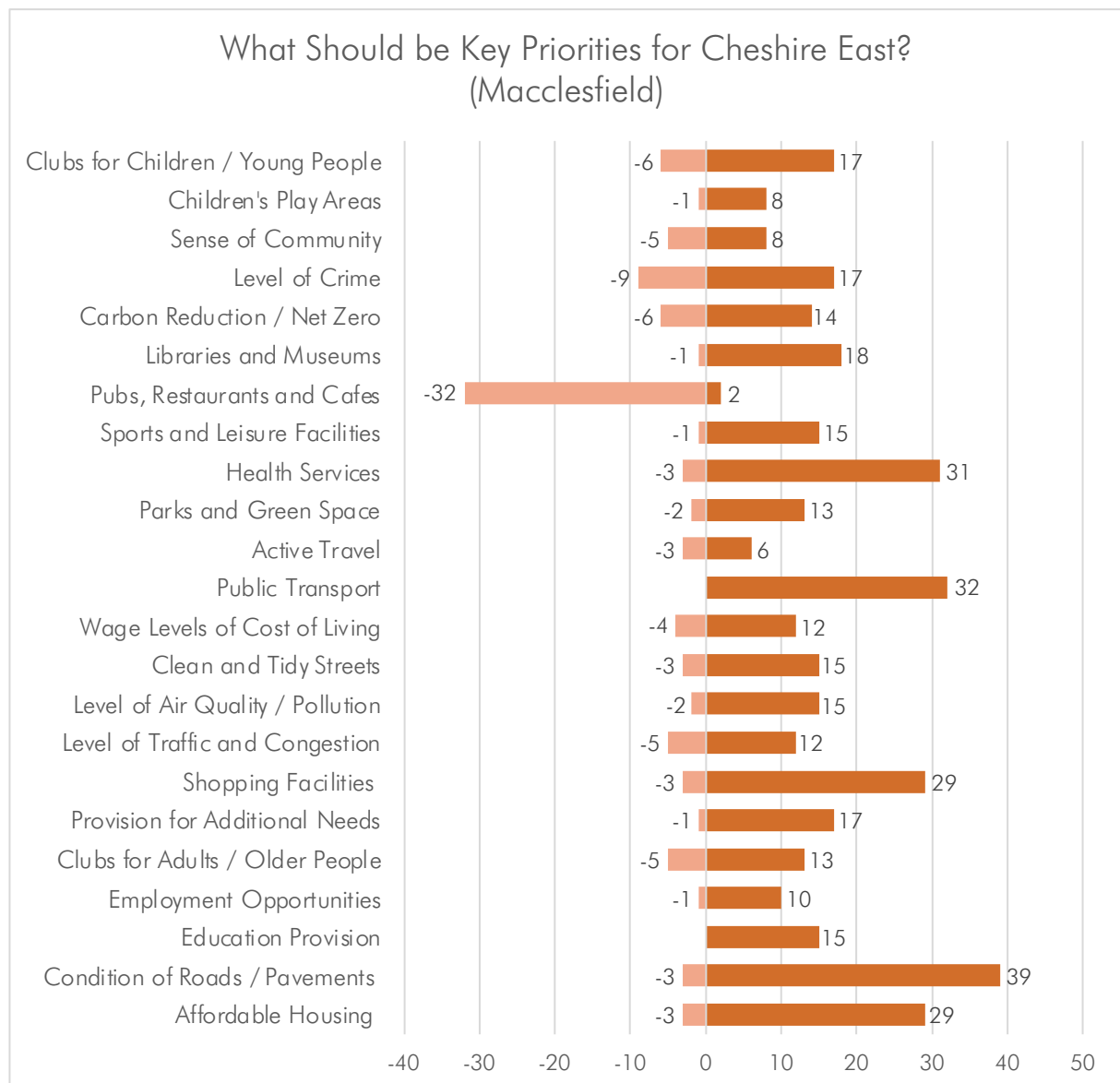
The most popular priority in Macclesfield was 'Condition of Roads/Pavements' (39 votes), followed by 'Public Transport' (32 votes) and 'Health Services' (31 votes).

The ideas that received the most downvotes and suggested to be less of a priority were 'Pubs, Restaurants and Cafes' (32 downvotes) and 'Level of Crime' (9 downvotes).

[Please see graph on following page]

At our pop-up events in Macclesfield, 'Condition of Roads/Pavements' was the most significant priority, with many residents stating poor road surfaces and potholes had resulted in their cars becoming damaged overtime.

What Should be Key Priorities for Cheshire East? (Macclesfield)

Priority	Downvotes	Upvotes
Clubs for Children / Young People	-6	17
Children's Play Areas	-1	8
Sense of Community	-5	8
Level of Crime	-9	17
Carbon Reduction / Net Zero	-6	14
Libraries and Museums	-1	18
Pubs, Restaurants and Cafes	-32	2
Sports and Leisure Facilities	-1	15
Health Services	-3	31
Parks and Green Space	-2	13
Active Travel	-3	6
Public Transport		32
Wage Levels of Cost of Living	-4	12
Clean and Tidy Streets	-3	15
Level of Air Quality / Pollution	-2	15
Level of Traffic and Congestion	-5	12
Shopping Facilities	-3	29
Provision for Additional Needs	-1	17
Clubs for Adults / Older People	-5	13
Employment Opportunities	-1	10
Education Provision		15
Condition of Roads / Pavements	-3	39
Affordable Housing	-3	29

Poor surfaces on pedestrian pathways was also raised, with some residents highlighting that this often creates issues for wheelchair users.

The priority Macclesfield residents felt needed the least attention in the new plan was felt to be 'Pubs, Restaurants and Cafes', the same as Crewe. Residents said there is already enough pubs, restaurants and cafes and that they would like to see less of these things in favour of more shopping facilities.

'Level of Crime' received the second most amount of downvotes. Whilst some people felt that crime was not an issue for Macclesfield, one person who works within the town centre highlighted issues surrounding drug-use.

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Question 5: What are key challenges for Cheshire East, and what could possible solutions look like?

In this engagement activity, we asked residents and local stakeholders what they think are the key challenges for Cheshire East and what possible solutions might look like.

We presented participants with several themes to consider:

- **Children and Young People,**
- **Economy and Growth,**
- **Environment and Communities,**
- **Health and Wellbeing,**
- **Highways and Transport,**
- **Service Improvement,**
- **Other.**

Participants were asked to think of key challenges relating to these themes. We then asked participants to write these challenges down on one of the thematic postcards and to suggest possible solutions.

The following summarises the key findings from this activity.

Children and Young People

Problems

- Lack of constructive out-of-school activities and clubs where teenagers can develop interests and express themselves.
- Teenagers getting involved in anti-social behaviour and petty crime. Along with this, young people also show a lack of respect towards their environment and public spaces, leaving litter and rubbish.
- Lack of activities and youth clubs and available activities are costly.
- Poor education provision for children with disabilities as they sometimes do not have fluency in speech, and many families are currently paying to send their children to SEN schools outside of their town or local area.

Solutions

- Proper policy presence with more youth clubs, community activities, sports teams, and social spaces for young people to access where they can develop interests and channel their energies.
- More funded facilities and clubs for young people and children that educate them on different topics such as the impact of anti-social behaviour and the importance and value of looking after where they live.
- Further provision for SEN within the local area and frequent health worker visits to check on growth of children.

Economy and Growth

Problems

- There is an aging population, but it is the younger people in the area who arguably need more support. Young people need more careers support and are getting involved in anti-social behaviour and petty crime.
- Town centres are rundown with many empty retail units.
- Insufficient parking for businesses and disabled people, particularly those who work in and visit the town centre and Crewe Market Hall.
- Town centres are rundown and deprived in Chesire East because of empty shops, high rent, poor variety of shops, low foot traffic, unfinished development and regeneration projects, and shopping facilities outside of town centres (i.e. out of town retail parks).
- Not enough jobs available for different age groups.
- Not using beautiful countryside and history as a resource to promote the area. These are underappreciated and underpromoted assets.

Solutions

- More diverse jobs and career pathways.
- Improving the appearance of empty shops to make them look attractive or using them for 'meanwhile' uses such as art and exhibition spaces.
- Free and allocated car parking especially for business owners and disabled driver.
- Lower car parking charges in town centres, particularly for business owners and disabled people.
- More investment, development and regeneration in town centres.
- More affordable rents for commercial properties. Reducing taxes and reviewing vacant buildings could make town centres livelier.
- Improved connections between town centres and out-of-town retail parks. In tandem with this, better quality shopping facilities in town centres.
- More employment opportunities and high paid jobs for all ages.
- Using Cheshire East's history, heritage and historical landmarks to attract visitors and encourage greater foot traffic to town centres e.g. Macclesfield Silk Museum.

Environment and Communities

Problems

- Potholes and uneven road surfaces which get flooded and cause damage to cars.
- Poor pavement conditions cause accessibility issues for wheelchair users.
- There is a lack of an active nighttime environment in town centres, especially on weekdays. Many businesses close by 5pm making town centres less active and busy at night.
- Some roads and streets are not well lit which make them dangerous to drive through.
- Lack of regeneration, particularly of town centres.
- There are growing concerns in the community over environmental damage from projects encroaching on precious greenbelt like Dane Moss.
- Biodiversity loss and air/noise pollution, particularly in Disley.
- New administrative fees collecting green bins anger citizens as recycling gets mandated nationwide without sufficient local infrastructure.
- Poor online access to planning applications.
- Not having enough litter bins, especially in and around industrial areas/business parks.

Solutions

- Develop an active nighttime environment in town centres, particularly on weekdays and Sundays and stable community spaces.
- Significant improvements to road surfaces and pavements.
- Solar powered streetlamps to keep the roads well lit.
- Residents want council to revisit outdated planning for Dane Moss as they feel this contradicts sustainability initiatives now centred on net-zero carbon reductions.
- Community recommend banning plastic grass lawns to nurture neighbourhood biodiversity.
- Transparency in decision-making process.
- Fix traffic lights in areas like Highlane, Windlehurst Road as this will help reduce congestion, improve air quality and reduce pollution.
- Recycling collection should be free and more litter bins.

Health and Wellbeing

Problems

- Lack of mental health services.
- Difficulties with making doctor appointments and long waits with drug addicts at Accident and Emergency.
- Not enough activities for young people.
- Lack of affordable sports and leisure facilities for people of all ages.
- Many services are mostly located in Crewe and Macclesfield and are therefore inaccessible to some residents.
- Due to poor public transport provision and car dependency for daily commutes, people are less active.

Solutions

- Prioritise funding related to healthcare provision and mental health services.
- Accident and Emergency should separate regular patients and those with drug addictions.
- Introduce new clubs and services for young people.
- More affordable sports and leisure facilities and memberships.
- More services outside of Crewe and Macclesfield.
- More council promotion of active travel (cycling or walking).

Highways and Transport

Problems

- Unexpected bus cancellations and poor public transport links to and from different towns.
- Bus fares are expensive, services have been lost in some areas, and there is a lack of regular bus services, especially after 5pm.
- Road planning tends to prioritise cars over cycling infrastructure and cycling lanes, limited options for active travel.
- High parking fees across Crewe and Macclesfield. Several residents we spoke to complained about there being free parking in wealthier areas of Cheshire East, whilst in areas of greater socio-economic deprivation, residents are required to pay.
- Parking on pavements reduces pedestrian footway space.
- Footways often lack adequate lighting at night, have overgrown vegetation, and become slippery from leaves, creating hazardous conditions.
- Potholes and very poor road surfaces compound issues with high traffic congestion and broken cross junctions.

Solutions

- Improved public transport links to retail parks, town centres, and train stations and displaying delays/cancel notices of buses.
- Lower parking costs in town centres and provide more free parking in economically deprived areas.
- Lower speed limits around town centres.
- Promotion of active travel.
- Enhanced traffic flow from promised bypass projects and coordinated signals.
- Improved road surface and prompt pothole repairs, minimising temporary patchwork, increased municipal budgets prioritising congestion reduction and integrated mobility options.
- Emphasis on regular public transport, especially in the evening.
- Parking charges should be standardised and similar across different towns/areas.
- Pedestrian pathways with improved lighting and street signs accommodating diverse needs, especially at Bishopton Drive to Pavilion Way in Macclesfield.
- Speed enforcement penalties and reviewed school transport fees against long-term costs of neglect and forced car dependency.

Service Improvement

Problems

- Very rundown town centres with no diversity in shops, and people do not know what services are available.
- Poor lighting and pavements in town centres.
- In town centres, there is no regular waste collection, mostly restaurants and cafes (as opposed to shops), no public toilets, and a loss of community gathering spaces like 'Knit and Natter Club'.
- Service reductions like decreased library hours and access.
- New fees for previously free green bin disposal raising illegal dumping concerns/fly tipping.
- Insufficient mental health resources and bed-blocking from lack of affordable social care were raised.
- Inadequate infrastructure to support approved housing developments frustrate residents.

Solutions

- Upgrade the town centre by bringing different businesses and shopping facilities with notice boards informing about the different services available.
- Make town centres more welcoming by upgrading lighting and pavements.
- Town centres need public toilets and litter bins need to be emptied more often (better waste management).
- Invest in affordable social care and mental health services.
- In town centres, there needs to be more shops as opposed to restaurants and cafes. Also, shops should be more diverse and there needs to be affordable rents for local and independent business owners.
- Maintain library services and offer better access to them, along with using grants to provide flexible co-working spaces.
- The cost of bin collection should be lowered, or it should be included in the council tax. Also, there should be someone designated to enforce the collection of green bins.

Other (Additional Comments)

- Poor disabled access in some buildings, restricting people's access to the services that are located there.
- Emergency housing and greater support for people who are homeless.
- More adult education and training opportunities are needed.

Question 6: What are the key ingredients of a good place to live?

With an aim to explore placemaking themes and resident aspirations for Cheshire East, we asked people what they think are the key ingredients of a good place to live?

Unlike our activity exploring resident priorities for Cheshire East, this activity was less place-specific, allowing participants to think with a more aspirational mindset.

Overall Findings

Below is the quantitative data we received for this activity, across all four events in Crewe and Macclesfield.

Overall, the most popular idea was 'Shopping Facilities' (20 votes), followed by 'Parks and other open green spaces' (17 votes) and 'Good Public Transport (Bus and Rail)' (15 votes).

The idea that received the least number of votes was 'Clubs for adults and older people' (3 votes), followed by 'The level of air quality/pollution', 'Children's Play Areas' and 'Pubs, restaurants and Cafes' which all received only 4 votes.

What are the Key Ingredients of a Good Place to Live? (Overall)

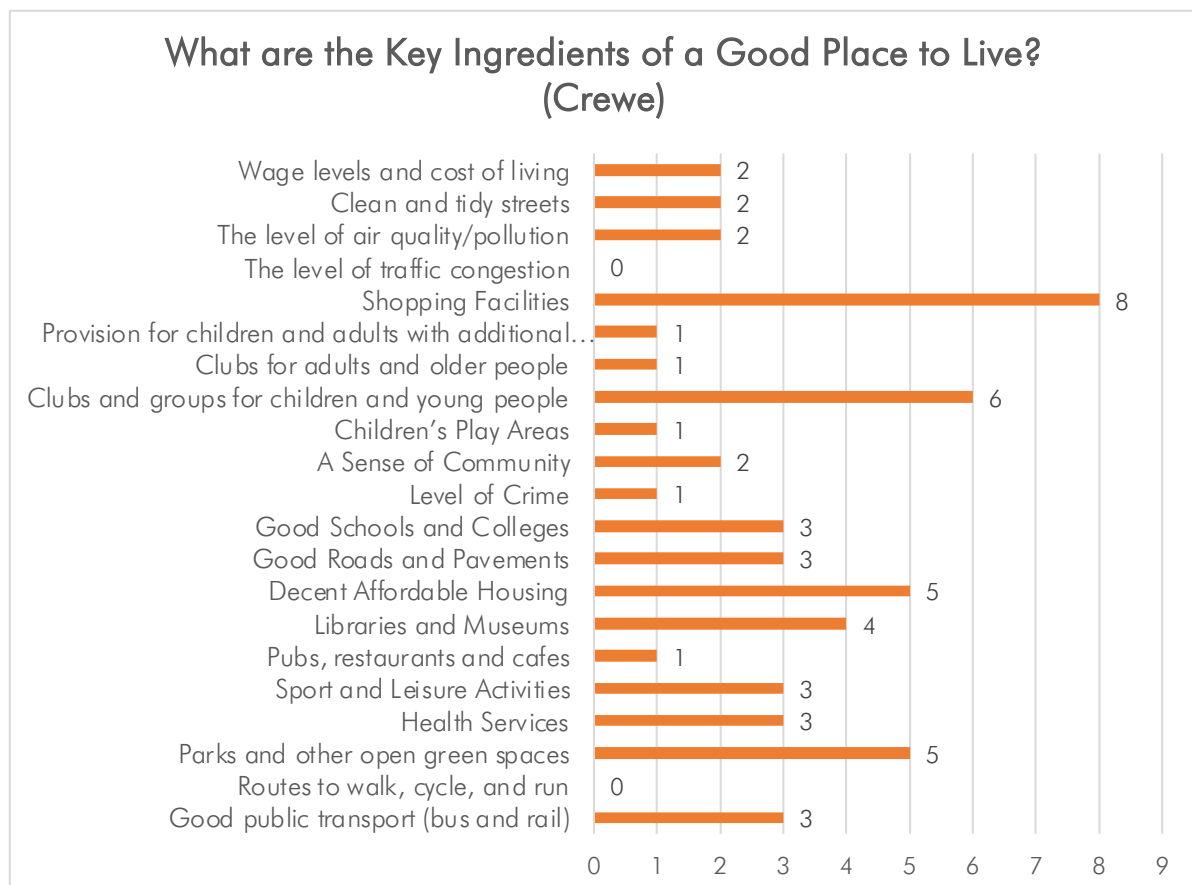| Category	Votes
Wage levels and cost of living	6
Clean and tidy streets	8
The level of air quality/pollution	4
The level of traffic congestion	7
Shopping Facilities	20
Provision for children and adults with additional…	5
Clubs for adults and older people	3
Clubs and groups for children and young people	11
Children's Play Areas	4
A Sense of Community	10
Level of Crime	6
Good Schools and Colleges	9
Good Roads and Pavements	13
Decent Affordable Housing	14
Libraries and Museums	11
Pubs, restaurants and cafes	4
Sport and Leisure Activities	8
Health Services	14
Parks and other open green spaces	17
Routes to walk, cycle, and run	9
Good public transport (bus and rail)	15

Crewe

Below is the quantitative data we received for this activity at the pop-up events delivered at Crewe Market Hall.
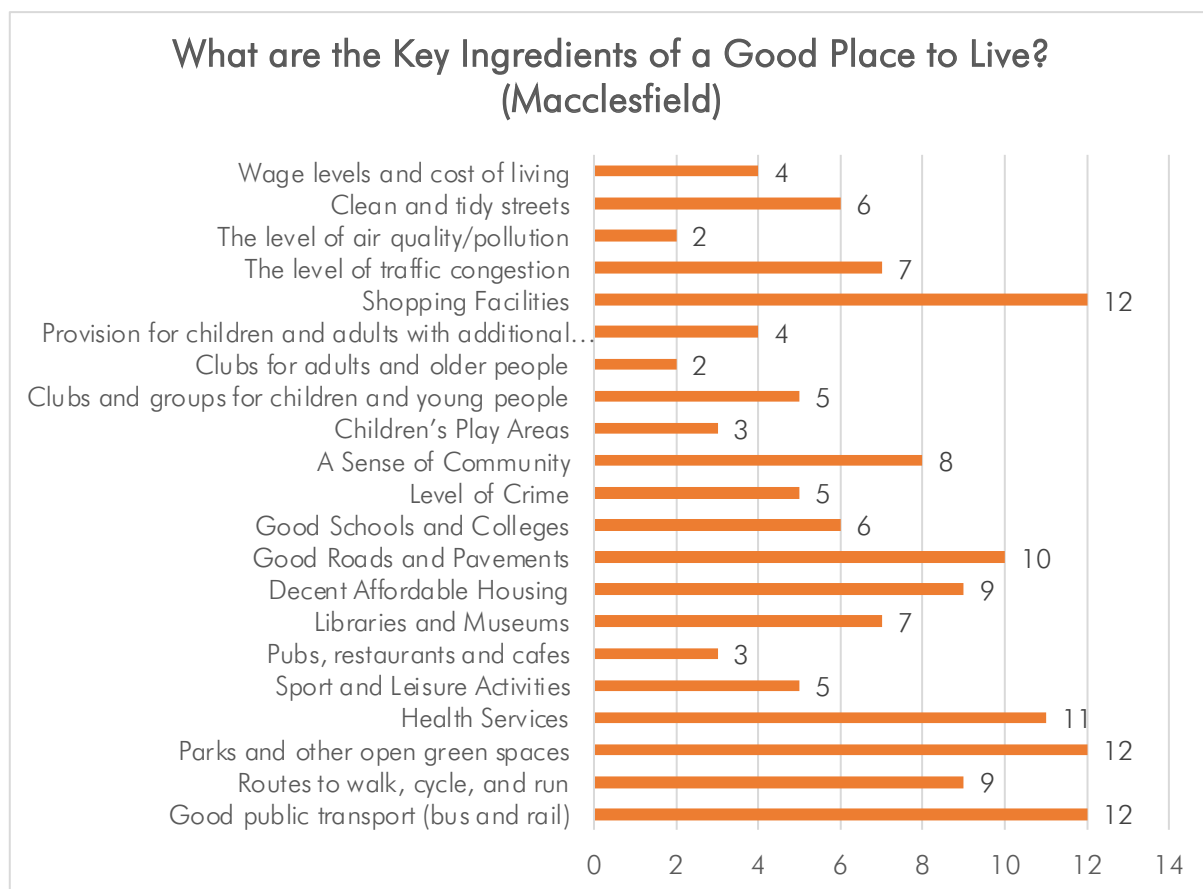
The most popular ideas were 'Shopping Facilities' (8 votes), followed by 'Clubs and Groups for Children and Young People' (6 votes).

The ideas that received least votes were 'The level of traffic congestion' and 'Routes to walk, cycle, and run' which both recieved no votes.

Above: Images of highest scoring 'ingredients'

What are the Key Ingredients of a Good Place to Live? (Crewe)

Ingredient	Votes
Wage levels and cost of living	2
Clean and tidy streets	2
The level of air quality/pollution	2
The level of traffic congestion	0
Shopping Facilities	8
Provision for children and adults with additional…	1
Clubs for adults and older people	1
Clubs and groups for children and young people	6
Children's Play Areas	1
A Sense of Community	2
Level of Crime	1
Good Schools and Colleges	3
Good Roads and Pavements	3
Decent Affordable Housing	5
Libraries and Museums	4
Pubs, restaurants and cafes	1
Sport and Leisure Activities	3
Health Services	3
Parks and other open green spaces	5
Routes to walk, cycle, and run	0
Good public transport (bus and rail)	3

What are the Key Ingredients of a Good Place to Live? (Macclesfield)

Category	Votes
Wage levels and cost of living	4
Clean and tidy streets	6
The level of air quality/pollution	2
The level of traffic congestion	7
Shopping Facilities	12
Provision for children and adults with additional…	4
Clubs for adults and older people	2
Clubs and groups for children and young people	5
Children's Play Areas	3
A Sense of Community	8
Level of Crime	5
Good Schools and Colleges	6
Good Roads and Pavements	10
Decent Affordable Housing	9
Libraries and Museums	7
Pubs, restaurants and cafes	3
Sport and Leisure Activities	5
Health Services	11
Parks and other open green spaces	12
Routes to walk, cycle, and run	9
Good public transport (bus and rail)	12

Macclesfield

Above is the quantitative data we received for this activity at the pop-up events delivered at the Grosvenor Shopping Centre in Macclesfield.

The most popular ideas were 'Shopping Facilities', 'Parks and other green spaces' and 'Good public transport' which all recieved 12 votes.

The ideas that received least votes were 'The level of air quality/pollution' and 'Clubs for adults and older people' which both recieved 2 votes.

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Question 7: What should Cheshire East look like in the Future?

Our concluding engagement activities were a series of questions regarding the future of Cheshire East. These questions, which are listed below, explored how residents felt about community building, and getting involved with improving their town or local area.

We also enquired here into resident aspirations for Cheshire East and what local people and stakeholders thought could be potential opportunities.

The data collected at Crewe and Macclesfield has been differentiated and is demarcated by titles.

We asked the following questions:

a) Are you interested in ways you can get involved in improving your town and/or local area?

b) How could the community of Cheshire East work better together?

c) What should Cheshire East look/feel like in the next five years?

d) What do you think are the opportunities for Cheshire East?

a) Are you interested in ways you can get involved in improving your town and/or local area?

Some residents said that they would be interested in getting involved in improving their town or local area and shared their details with staff from the Communities team at Cheshire East Council who were present at all engagement events. Particularly in Crewe, we met residents who were happy to get involved in where they live by contributing various skills and talents – amongst those mentioned were holistic therapy and youth work.

Another participant highlighted the lack of support for arts and craft activities, specifically for adults with learning disabilities and autism. Despite showing both interest and concern for this activity, this resident did not wish to volunteer their time for this; however, they seemed keen to get involved with similar paid work.

It is recognised that this question did receive a low level of engagement and response. However, we did speak to many residents who said they were already involved in various schemes and volunteering activities with the likes of local schools, community events (e.g. Barnaby Festival), adopting tree schemes, and litter picking events.

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b) How could the community of Cheshire East work better together?

Crewe

- **Unified Community:** The community thinks they can work better together by focusing on what they have in common, promoting inclusivity, and having civic pride. Several residents suggested that more in-person community groups and activities could prevent people from spending too much time in online spaces where conflicts can often arise.
- **Existing Groups and Organisations:** Some people said that there is already a sense of community in the town. Therefore, it was recommended that existing community groups and organsiations, who are already doing effective and valuable work, need to connect with each other and collaborate more.
- **Community Art:** Residents could create community art together such as murals on walls and bridges and public art installations.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime**: Young people need to be educated about the negative impacts of anti-social behaviour, crime and drug abuse, both inside and outside of educational institutions.
- **Cleaner Streets:** People need to be encouraged to use litter bins more frequently to keep areas clean, tidy, and well maintained.

Macclesfield

- **Active Listening:** Residents suggested Cheshire East Council could more actively listen to their problems, clearly sharing what has been done to respond to these (i.e. 'you said, we did...'). They said that consultation needs to be improved and lead to visible outcomes and changes.
- **Sharing Experiences:** Macclesfield residents recommended sharing successes and achievements in the community as well as sharing experiences of what works well.
- **Existing Work in the Community:** One participant suggested focusing on supporting the already existing work in the community that is successful. Other residents agreed that efforts need to be made to support already existing community initiatives and schemes such as 'Saving Dane Moss'.
- **Community Gathering:** Ensuring that existing community groups like 'Knit and Natter Club' are protected and remain in spaces like local libraries.

c) What should Cheshire East look/ feel like in the next five years?

Crewe

- **Vibrant:** Residents want to see busy and thriving town centres that attract more private investment and visitors. Improved public realm was also suggested here.

- **Green:** More green spaces with eco-friendly and sustainable design.
- **Accessible and Clean Pathways:** Clean streets with litter bins, and accessible pedestrian pathways for mobility scooters. Pavements that are free from parked cars.
- **Employment:** Many residents said that they wanted to see more employment opportunities in Cheshire East in the future. They also said they would like to see public funding and private investment for new infrastructure to support the creation of more jobs. Further, there was demand to see a greater mix of job opportunities in Crewe Town Centre for young people as those that currently exist are mostly just retail jobs.
- **Safe Spaces:** More safe spaces for women and girls in town centres, particularly public squares as well as more spaces for young women to get support. Better lighting is needed in some areas to make them feel safer to walk through at night.
- **Public Transport:** Improved local transport and services (bus and rail).
- **Education:** More educational opportunities for children.
- **Creative Spaces:** Cheshire East should have more art spaces and galleries.
- **Affordable Rents:** More affordable rents in town centres to encourage more small and independent businesses.

Macclesfield

- **Car Parking:** Many resident and business owners said that they would like to see more affordable parking charges in Macclesfield Town Centres. One participant suggested that these charges could be used to fund active travel.
- **Nighttime Environment:** Enhanced nighttime environment in town centres with better leisure and entertainment offer and more businesses open until later hours. A more active nighttime environment could support greater safety.
- **Regeneration of Town Centres:** Regeneration of Macclesfield Town Centre with a better mix of retail and independent shops, not just places to eat and drink.
- **Affordable Rents:** More affordable rents in town centres to encourage more small and independent businesses. There are many empty units in Macclesfield Town Centre and resident suggested more affordable rents could help counter this issue.
- **Road and Pathways:** Cleaner and tidier public realm with more accessible and level pavements. Less potholes and better-quality road surfaces.
- **Additional Comments:** More affordable housing, well-paid jobs, and educational provision for young people with additional needs. Several Macclesfield residents stressed that they would like to see the priorities of the new council plan delivered.

d) What do you think are the opportunities for Cheshire East?

Crewe

- **Regeneration:** Regeneration of Crewe Town Centre with more investment and future planning focusing on its maintenance. Alongside building developments, improved public realm and attractive outdoor spaces to attract more visitors. Some residents also suggested repurposing the former Marks and Spencers' building into a 'meanwhile' creative space or independent retail.
- **Diversity of Shops:** Encouraging more local/independent businesses and international food stores in Crewe Town Centre.
- **Arts Spaces:** Some residents in Crewe suggested that there could be more arts and cultural spaces to promote local artists and provide economic support to creative groups.
- **Services:** Schemes like 'rent a shelf' should be available for small businesses and library services for older people.
- **Public Transport Links:** Several residents said they would like to see improved public transport links between Crewe Town Centre and the retail park at Mill Street/Vernon Way. More people are visiting the better-quality shops in the retail park, so better connections could increase foot traffic in the town centre.
- **Communication:** Residents expect improved communication on how council tax has been spent.

- **History and Heritage:** Cheshire East towns have a lot of heritage and history that could be used to promote tourism as well as build upon its sense of identity.

Macclesfield

- **Communication:** Residents said they think there is opportunity for the council to clearly communicate to residents what happens next after this consultation, showing how the information collected has been used and put into action.
- **Town Centre:** More events and retail units with affordable rents to promote Macclesfield Town Centre e.g. the market on last Sunday of every month.
- **Promoting Assets:** Many residents suggested promoting Cheshire East's assets to encourage tourism e.g. countryside and heritage/history attractions.
- **Public Transport:** Improved public transport (bus and rail) for people to commute to town centre.
- **Education and Training:** More education and training opportunities for both young people and adults including more provision for young people with additional needs/SEN.
- **Additional Comments:** Celebrating what makes each Cheshire East town unique/disctinctive, having the greenest council in the UK, and technology hubs.

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Conclusion

In closing, the residents and local stakeholders who attended our events said they would like to see Cheshire East become a more connected borough where all feel welcome. Residents seek a greater sense of togetherness in Cheshire East – a borough that many feel has much socio-economic division. They wish to see a borough where local governance and services reflect the values of local people, responding to their needs, concerns and priorities.

During all the engagement events delivered, it was clear that Cheshire East residents want to see more shopping facilities in their local town centres, including a greater mix of retail outlets and independent businesses. Further, many residents wish to see town centres regenerated and empty retail units filled to revive commerce and foot traffic. There is also a great desire amongst residents to see improved public transport (bus and trains) that connects different areas of towns as well as more affordable car parking in town centres.

Another clear takeaway was that the quality of roads and pavements needs improving and this appeared to be a demonstrable priority for the majority of the residents we spoke to. Also mentioned was affordable housing development, educational provision for young people with additional needs, youth groups and activities, community events, and public consultation resulting in long-term solutions and visible

outcomes. It was suggested that with greater focus in these key areas that foster connected, community-centred places, Cheshire East can feel more unified. At the same time, people said that they wanted to see less food and beverage offer in the town centre (in favour of more shops), anti-social disturbances, services available in only specific areas, and the loss of services like buses and libraries.

Overall, the response to the engagement delivered was positive with productive and constructive discussion. Some residents expressed some apathy and 'engagement fatigue' having participated in many past consultations. However, the majority of residents encountered at events were happy to share their views and participate in order to help shape Cheshire East's new plan.

Recommendations

- We are aware that Cheshire East Council are delivering their own engagement for their new plan. However, to ensure that the plan is as representative as possible of resident priorities, we would recommend that the council aims to engage residents in areas and towns that our work was unable to reach due to unavoidable funding, scope and time limitations.

- As the community engagement outlined in this report only pertains to Crewe and Macclesfield, we believe further engagement would be beneficial, especially engagement involving residents of smaller towns and rural areas whose voices tend to be lesser heard.

- We would recommend more in-person engagement as there are many residents without online access. In-person events allow for a more relational and interactive approach, therefore resulting in a higher quality of communication and trust building.

- We believe that residents and local stakeholders would appreciate updates on the development and progress of the new plan. As highlighted in this report, residents mentioned wanting to see visible outcomes following consultation. We would recommend that Cheshire East residents are kept informed and updated so they can see how their contributions have genuinely helped to shape the new plan.

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