



## New local plan for Cheshire East

### Issues paper (draft)

March 2024

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Front cover images (clockwise from top-left):

- Crewe Market Hall and Municipal Buildings
- Arclid north plant site and lake (image supplied by Bathgate Silica Sand Ltd)
- Jodrell Bank Observatory
- Lamberts Lane Bridge, Congleton
- Tabley Park, Northwich Road, Knutsford

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# 1 Introduction

## A new local plan

**1.1** A local plan sets out how new development should take place in the future. It shows what sort of development is acceptable and where, for example homes, business growth and infrastructure. It also contains policies to protect and enhance the environment and create attractive places that help people live active and healthy lives.

**1.2** The current Cheshire East Local Plan runs to 2030. Last year the council decided that a new one should be prepared to replace it. Maintaining an up-to-date local plan is important, to make sure that the borough's future development needs are being met in a plan-led way.

**1.3** The new local plan will take several years to complete, and this issues paper is the first important step in preparing it. It provides an initial opportunity for you to tell us how the new local plan could help tackle local priorities including meeting our diverse housing needs, supporting good health, tackling the climate crisis and enhancing nature. It does not set out any form of draft policies yet. That will happen later and there will be further opportunities for you to help shape these.

**1.4** The way in which local plans are prepared is changing because of national planning reforms by the government. In future, it is expected that local plans will be shorter, more locally focussed, quicker to prepare and updated more frequently. Much of the detail about how the new plan-making system will work has still not been confirmed, however plans will continue to be informed by a range of studies and reports, so there is clear justification for the policies they contain.

**1.5** One significant change under the new, reformed planning system will be the publication of National Development Management Policies by the government<sup>1</sup>. These will cover planning considerations that apply regularly in planning application decision-making across the country, such as general policies for conserving heritage assets, and preventing inappropriate development in the Green Belt and areas of high flood risk. These more general policies will no longer need to be included in individual local plans.

## Supporting reports

**1.6** At the same time as inviting feedback on the issues paper, we are also seeking your views on a number of draft reports that will help inform the new plan. These are:

- **Proposed land availability assessment methodology.** The methodology sets out how a land availability assessment will be prepared. The land availability assessment will be an important evidence source to inform plan making which identify what land may be available to help meet the future development needs of the borough – housing, employment and other uses. The land availability assessment will be used alongside a suite of relevant technical reports and analysis, to inform the development strategy for the plan area and subsequently, to

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<sup>1</sup> More information about National Development Management Policies is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy#full-publication-update-history>

inform the site selection process and formation of policy criteria. It will also be used to identify available land for inclusion in the Part 1 Brownfield Land Register. At this stage feedback is being invited on how the assessment of sites should be carried out.

- A '**call for sites**' is also taking place, enabling landowners, developers and others to submit sites for consideration, including potential development sites to be assessed through the land availability assessment once the methodology has been finalised. There is also a separate submission form for potential minerals and waste sites, and another to invite submissions of sites that may be suitable for the delivery of the biodiversity net gain required from other developments.
- **Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.** All local plans must be informed by a sustainability appraisal through which emerging policies and proposals are assessed against a list of environmental, social and economic considerations. The appraisal helps to inform decisions about how policies are written and how development proposals should come forward. This initial stage will set the scope of the assessment and feedback is invited about whether all the relevant considerations have been captured.
- **Proposed settlement hierarchy review methodology.** The Local Plan Strategy sets out the current settlement hierarchy. There are four levels in the current hierarchy – principal towns, key service centres, local service centres and other settlements and rural areas. The establishment of a clear settlement hierarchy helps to inform, alongside other information, how future development needs will be met. The current settlement hierarchy provides a helpful starting point for this work. At this stage we are inviting feedback on the approach that should be taken in to update this to inform the new local plan.

**1.7** You can find out more information, view all the supporting reports, and submit your comments and sites via our website at [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/newlocalplan](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/newlocalplan).

## Topic papers

**1.8** This issues paper is organised under a number of subject areas, each set out under its own chapter heading. There is also a separate background topic paper for each subject area, setting out further information and statistics. These topic papers are also available to view on the council's website:

- Responding to the climate emergency
- Healthy and safe communities
- Design
- Our natural environment
- Homes for everyone
- Town centres and retail
- Jobs, skills and economy
- Transport and infrastructure
- Historic environment
- Towns and villages
- Rural matters

- Minerals
- Waste

## Planning policies for minerals and waste

**1.9** When the new local plan is completed and adopted, it will replace the current Local Plan Strategy (adopted 2017) and Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (adopted 2022). In section 13 of this issues paper, a question is raised about whether the new local plan should incorporate policies for minerals and waste development. Currently, new planning policies for minerals and waste are being progressed within a separate Minerals and Waste Plan. If minerals and waste policies were to be included within the new local plan, it would also replace (when adopted) the saved policies from the Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan (1999) and Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan (2007).

## Neighbourhood plans

**1.10** Many local communities across the borough have prepared or are preparing neighbourhood plans. These provide an opportunity for local people to put in place planning policies to guide new development, in a way that reflects local circumstances, including locally identified priorities. The council will continue to work closely with town and parish councils and the steering groups preparing neighbourhood plans. This will include providing advice about the relationship between emerging neighbourhood plans and the emerging new local plan.

## The new local plan programme

**1.11** National planning reform has created quite a lot of uncertainty around plan-making<sup>2</sup>. Until the government confirms the details of its new system for plan-making, it is not possible to provide a firm programme for the completion of the new local plan. Once a clear and detailed legal and national policy framework has been established, a timetable for the new plan will be published and then regularly updated on the council's web site.

## Responding to the issues paper

**1.12** The issues paper is organised under a number of chapter headings, and it asks various questions on the matters that the new local plan should address under each. There is also a final question in chapter 15 which asks about any other issues that you may wish to raise. You can view the issues paper:

- online at [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/newlocalplan](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/newlocalplan)
- at all libraries across the borough during their normal opening hours<sup>3</sup>; and
- at the council's offices between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays):
  - Sandbach - Westfields, Middlewich Road, CW11 1HZ

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2 For the latest information regarding the reforms to the plan-making process see <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation>



- Crewe - Delamere House, Delamere Street, CW1 2LL
- Macclesfield - Town Hall, Market Place, SK10 1EA

**1.13** Please respond online if you can. You can also pick up a paper comments form from one of the council's offices or your local library and post it to the Strategic Planning Team, Cheshire East Council, c/o Delamere House, Delamere Street, Crewe, CW1 2LL.

**1.14** Unfortunately, we cannot accept anonymous comments. Your personal data will be processed in line with the Strategic Planning Privacy Notice<sup>4</sup>:

**1.15** If you have any questions about the issues paper, the supporting reports, the call for sites, or need assistance responding to any of them, please get in touch with the Strategic Planning Team by email to [localplan@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:localplan@cheshireeast.gov.uk) or telephone on 01270 685893 (please leave your details and we will call you back).

## Deadline for comments

**1.16** Your feedback must reach us by 5pm on [INSERT DATE].

## Potential plan period

**1.17** A key element of preparing a new local plan is deciding how long it should run for. The current local plan has a 20 year plan period, running from 2010 to 2030. Local plans take several years to prepare due to the extensive engagement and public examination processes involved. Current national planning policy says that local plans should have a minimum period of 15 years still to run once they are completed. Based on this, the earliest possible end date for the new Cheshire East Local Plan would likely be 2043. Other options could involve linking the plan period to greenhouse gas net zero commitments. The government has made it a legal requirement for the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050<sup>5</sup> and Cheshire East Council has adopted the more aspirational target for the borough to be net zero by 2045<sup>6</sup>. In the future, local plans will also need to be updated regularly - at least every five years.

### Question 1a

What date do you think the new local plan period should run to, giving reasons why you think it would be appropriate?

3 For library locations and opening hours see <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/libraries/nearest-library/libraries-and-opening-hours.aspx>

4 Our privacy notice is available on the council's website at [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/council\\_information/website\\_information/privacy-notice/spatial-planning-including-neighbourhood-planning-team-privacy-notice.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/website_information/privacy-notice/spatial-planning-including-neighbourhood-planning-team-privacy-notice.aspx)

5 On 12 June 2019 the government laid the draft Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 to amend the Climate Change Act 2008 by introducing a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is otherwise known as a net zero target because some emissions can remain if they are offset by removal from the atmosphere and/or by trading in carbon units. The Order came into force on 27 June 2019.

6 See <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment/carbon-neutral-council/carbon-neutral-by-2045.aspx>

## Creating a vision and objectives

**1.18** The local plan will need to have a vision statement. It will need to be realistic, achievable and distinctive to Cheshire East.

**1.19** The vision statement will set a clear direction which all policies and proposals will need to support. It should reflect the Cheshire East Corporate Plan<sup>7</sup> so that planning policies and proposals can help deliver the overall priorities for the borough. A series of objectives will sit under the vision to explain in more detail how it will be achieved.

**1.20** The Cheshire East Corporate Plan promotes a shared vision for the borough and is headlined by its three aims of 'Open, Fair and Green':

- Open - to provide strong community leadership and work transparently with residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition in Cheshire East
- Fair - to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents
- Green - to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development

**1.21** A new corporate plan is currently being prepared in collaboration with a range of other organisations and shaped through public consultation.

**1.22** The new local plan will need to recognise different priorities and try to protect and enhance what is special about the borough whilst addressing the area's development needs by providing for sufficient growth.

### Question 1b

How can the local plan's vision complement and add land use specific details to the vision and aims of the current Cheshire East Corporate Plan?

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/your\\_council/council\\_finance\\_and\\_governance/corporate-plan.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/your_council/council_finance_and_governance/corporate-plan.aspx)

## 2 Responding to the climate emergency

### Introduction

**2.1** Responding to the climate emergency is one of the greatest challenges facing the world. Emissions of greenhouse gases (including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases) trap extra energy in the atmosphere and cause global warming. The global temperature has already risen by more than 1.1°C since pre-industrial times and will continue to rise further in the coming decades.

**2.2** International agreements aim to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C and there is common acceptance that a rise of more than 2°C will lead to catastrophic impacts upon natural habitats and resources.

**2.3** Urgent and radical action on a global scale is required immediately to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The UK Government has set a legally binding target to reduce our emissions to net zero by 2050 and Cheshire East Council has pledged to make our borough carbon neutral by 2045. There is a legal obligation for the local plan to contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

**2.4** Given the scale of the issue, the urgency with which we must act, and the importance placed on responding to the climate emergency in national policy and laws, addressing climate change will need to be central to the strategy for future development in the new local plan. It will need to be reflected through every aspect of the plan and placed at the forefront of planning decisions. Further information on the climate emergency and the response in Cheshire East can be found in the 'Responding to the climate emergency topic paper'.

### Reducing our contribution to climate change

**2.5** There are many measures to reduce emissions outside of the scope of the planning system. But there are also many that can be influenced by planning, and it will be essential for the new local plan to place this at the heart of the strategy for future development.

### Reducing emissions

**2.6** Emissions from the built environment (including buildings of all types) are the largest source of emissions in the borough and new development built today is likely to remain standing for generations to come. Therefore, current developments will need to be fit for a zero carbon future if the borough is to reach its net zero objectives by 2045.

**2.7** It will be essential for energy consumption to be minimised in new buildings by designing them to very high energy efficiency standards and obtaining energy from clean, renewable sources. This will include domestic renewable energy projects, district networks, as well as commercial renewable developments to help decarbonise the National Grid. It also means that heating/cooling systems and appliances will need to employ low and zero carbon technologies, rather than traditional forms of heating such as burning natural gas or oil. Designing new buildings to be zero carbon in their operation will avoid the need for costly retrofitting measures later.

**2.8** A significant challenge will be to reduce the embodied carbon that is emitted as part of the construction process. Research in this area is still developing and it is likely that changes outside of the scope of the planning system (such as updates to the Building Regulations) will play an increasingly important role in this area.

**2.9** New buildings will be responsible for a fairly small proportion of the total emissions attributed to the built environment and an ongoing challenge will be the need for an extensive programme of retrofitting measures to deliver emissions reductions in existing buildings. These measures can often be delivered without the need for planning consent and the local plan's influence in this area may be limited, but it will be important to consider how retrofitting can be supported through the planning system wherever possible.

**2.10** The other major source of emissions in the borough is from the transport network and particularly from road-based transport. It is likely that emissions from private vehicles will reduce in the coming decades as sales of petrol and diesel cars are due to be phased out by 2035. The adoption of electric vehicles in their place will require the development of appropriate charging and other infrastructure.

**2.11** In addition to this transition to electric vehicles, it will be equally as important to support a reduced demand for travel and a modal shift towards sustainable and active travel, including public transport, walking and cycling. The local plan can help by locating development in sustainable locations, with good access to services, facilities and the public transport network. It can also assist with the delivery of new infrastructure and prioritising the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in the public realm. It will also be important to support digital infrastructure which can reduce the need to travel and there may be potential to reduce freight/logistics travel through the development of improved infrastructure enabling more efficient routes and fewer empty vehicle journeys.

**2.12** The local plan will also have a role in reducing the use of resources by recycling and re-using materials in new developments and by supporting residents and businesses to increase recycling rates and reduce the quantity of waste.

## Sequestration and offsetting

**2.13** Measures to improve the sequestration and storage of carbon will also be important on the journey to net zero and to reduce our impact on climate change. Many of these measures will also help us to adapt to the effects of climate change.

**2.14** It will be essential for the new local plan to support and encourage nature-based solutions, such as tree and hedge planting, and the restoration of other ecosystems. We should aim to increase tree coverage in the borough, both forest/woodland and lone tree coverage. Peatland habitats are great carbon stores, and the new local plan should aim to protect these and encourage their restoration.

**2.15** Urban greening will have an important role and it may be appropriate to consider minimum levels of tree coverage in new developments and incentivise developers to retain and plant trees. The local plan will also look at green space requirements and consider whether these should be more ambitious than at present.

**2.16** Other ways of offsetting emissions could be through funding renewable energy schemes or financial contributions to carbon reduction funds. Although net zero development is the overall aim, current building regulations and technologies mean that this may not be achievable in the shorter term for all developments. The new local plan should consider possibilities for considering offsetting once all other means of reducing emissions in new development have been explored.

### Question 2a

Have we identified the correct issues for the local plan to address in terms of reducing our emissions and contribution to climate change? Are there any other issues that the local plan should consider?

## Adapting to the effects of climate change

**2.17** Whilst a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a journey to net zero is essential to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change, those greenhouse gases emitted already and on the journey to net zero will remain in the atmosphere for a long time. This means that the effects of climate change will continue to increase for many decades to come and it will be very important for the new local plan to include measures to build resilience and adapt to the effects.

**2.18** The impacts of climate change are wide ranging including extreme weather events, heavy rainfalls, higher sea levels, flooding, droughts, more and longer-lasting heat waves, air pollution, reduced production of major crops, illnesses and diseases, deaths, extinction of species and reduced economic growth.

**2.19** The new local plan will need to make sure that new development is designed to help us adapt to the effects of climate change. Adaptation measures for new and existing buildings may include matters such as:

- Cooling features, such as shutters to reduce solar gain and other openings to allow for natural ventilation.
- Use of materials that reflect sunlight instead of absorbing and reradiating it back into the environment, as well as green roofs and walls.
- Water efficiency measures to conserve water.

**2.20** To address an increased risk of flooding, new development should be steered away from current and future flood risk areas, and not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere over its lifetime. In some cases, there may be a need to incorporate physical protection measures. The use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will also be important to minimise and manage surface water run-off.

**2.21** Landscaping schemes and other green infrastructure will need to consider the changing climate, incorporating appropriate planting that is resilient to increased dry and warm weather in the summer, providing shading and cooling and also helping to reduce surface water run-off.



**2.22** To assist the shift to renewables in the National Grid, new developments should also include measures to flex their energy demand to closer match intermittent renewable energy supplies, such as using embedded energy storage, smart electric vehicle chargers, and other demandshifting technologies.

### Question 2b

Have we identified the correct issues for the local plan to address in terms of adapting to the effects of climate change? Are there any other issues that the local plan should consider?

## Additional benefits of taking action

**2.23** Importantly, many measures to reduce our contribution to climate change and to adapt to its effects have multi-functional benefits and can bring enhanced value to a development. For example, green infrastructure not only has climate resilience benefits but can also help improve mental health and wellbeing as well as providing space for biodiversity. It is also important to acknowledge that incorporating climate adaptation measures during the initial construction is much cheaper than retrofitting later.

**2.24** Some other benefits include:

- Health improvements – investing in measures such as active travel (such as walking and cycling) and green spaces will help to improve health and wellbeing, through increased physical activity and reduced air pollution.
- Quality of place – less traffic congestion, reduced waste and greener, quieter neighbourhoods.
- Environmental – through investments in natural solutions to climate change such as tree planting and peatland management, increasing biodiversity.
- Economic – such as energy cost savings due to increased energy efficiency, job creation in the low carbon/green technologies sector, reduced NHS costs due to health improvements, increased productivity through greater health and wellbeing. Further information about the ‘green economy’ is set out in the jobs, skills and economy chapter of this issues paper.

## Other climate emergency matters

### Question 2c

Are there any other matters related to the climate emergency that the new local plan should consider?

## 3 Healthy and safe communities

### Introduction

**3.1** Good physical and mental health and wellbeing go hand in hand with economic growth and prosperity. Whilst access to good quality health services is important, most of the things that make us healthy are unrelated to health care.

**3.2** We all need access to suitable housing, education, employment, sufficient income, infrastructure (including green spaces, leisure, and cultural opportunities) and good quality information that helps us to make positive choices in relation to our lifestyles. These ‘building blocks’ of health and wellbeing are connected and complement each other.

**3.3** Set out below are a list of sub-topics that fall under the heading of healthy and safe communities. If you would like to read more about these sub-topics, then please see the accompanying ‘Healthy and safe communities topic paper’.

### Open space and recreation

**3.4** Open spaces and the opportunities they offer are highly valued by the community and link crucially with both physical and mental health. Open spaces have been associated with a decrease in health complaints, blood pressure and cholesterol, improved mental health and reduced stress levels and perceived better general health. The presence of open space also has other benefits: it encourages social contact and integration, provides space for physical activity and play, improves air quality, and reduces urban heat island effects.

**3.5** The borough contains several formal parks and gardens, and many play areas, as well as indoor sports facilities. There are also miles of canal towpaths to enjoy and public rights of way including public footpaths, public bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic.

#### Question 3a

Given the importance of open space for everyone, are there any specific approaches that the local plan should consider?

### Pollution and contamination

**3.6** The effects from air quality, water and soil pollution, land instability, noise, and vibration, can negatively impact the environment and residents of the borough. Pollution from development can be detrimental to human health, the environment, the amenity of neighbouring or nearby users, and the users of the development itself.

**3.7** Air pollution is associated with several adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society, children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions<sup>8</sup>.

**3.8** Cheshire East is comprised mostly of rural areas and some urban towns. These urban towns have pocket areas that suffer from poorer air quality because of traffic and/or vehicular related emissions. This has resulted in those areas having concentrations of pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide exceeding the national Air Quality Objective. Areas with these exceedances are designated Air Quality Management Areas<sup>9</sup>.

**3.9** There is increasing awareness of the impact light pollution can have on wildlife, such as disrupting migration, reproduction and feeding patterns. Light pollution can also affect the wellbeing of people, including through sleep disruption.

### Question 3b

How can the local plan minimise the effects from all types of pollution and contamination around the borough?

### Question 3c

How can the local plan help to improve air quality across Cheshire East?

## Safety

**3.10** Safety and security are essential to successful, sustainable communities. Places should be well-designed, attractive environments to live and work in, where there is freedom from crime, and from the fear of crime. The Safer Cheshire East Partnership Annual Strategic Intelligence Assessment 2022-2025 (SIA)<sup>10</sup>, reviewed yearly, focusses on crime and disorder using data and intelligence supplied by partner agencies across Cheshire East. The SIA identifies the following priority issues:

- violence intimidation against women and girls
- exploitation of adults and children (the manipulation and exploitation of vulnerable people to gain power and control often, often for financial gain), for example county lines gangs and home invasion
- cybercrime

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8 [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/environmental\\_health/local\\_air\\_quality/air-quality-awareness/air-quality-awareness.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/environmental_health/local_air_quality/air-quality-awareness/air-quality-awareness.aspx)

9 [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/environmental\\_health/local\\_air\\_quality/aqma\\_area\\_maps.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/environmental_health/local_air_quality/aqma_area_maps.aspx)

10 <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/environment/community-safety/strategic-intelligence-assessment-2022-2025/strategic-intelligence-assessment-sia-2022-2025-final-censored-v2.pdf>

- serious and organised crime
- domestic abuse
- knife crime
- road safety

### Question 3d

How can the local plan help to create communities and areas where everyone feels safe?

## Health and wellbeing inequalities

**3.11** Health inequalities are avoidable and unfair differences in health status between groups of people or communities. According to the Cheshire East health and wellbeing strategy<sup>11</sup>, there are stark differences across Cheshire East that need to be addressed. For example, there is a noticeable difference in life expectancy of around 12.6 years between the lowest rates in Crewe Central and the highest in Gawsworth for women, and a 12.7 year gap between the lowest rate in Crewe Central and the highest in the Sandbach, Ettiley Heath and Wheelock ward for men. In general, there is more ill health in Crewe and parts of Macclesfield than in other areas. We know that this coincides with areas of deprivation, poorer housing, and lower educational achievement and employment. The numbers of people who smoke, drink and are obese are also correspondingly higher and pressures on primary, secondary and social care services are similarly higher.

### Question 3e

How can the local plan help to reduce health inequalities across the borough?

## Other healthy and safe communities matters

### Question 3f

Are there any other matters related to healthy and safe communities that the new local plan should consider?

<sup>11</sup> The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Population of Cheshire East 2023-2028, NHS and Cheshire East Council <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/council-and-democracy/health-and-wellbeing-board/joint-health-wellbeing.pdf>

## 4 Design

### Introduction

**4.1** Design is a cross-cutting discipline that permeates all development decisions and is crucial to securing positive outcomes across a range of indicators subject to their own policy areas (environmental improvements, transport and movement solutions, inclusive spaces etc).

**4.2** Good design is central to the creation of attractive, accessible, inclusive, successful, and sustainable places. High-quality, well-designed developments, including the design of buildings, contribute positively to the quality of place in the borough and make the best use of land. Development should be inclusive, creating places and spaces where everyone can access and benefit from a full range of opportunities available to members of society. Thoughtful, responsive design can enable all people to fully participate in the built environment through consideration of not only the aesthetic of development but its layout, orientation, the space dedicated to private and public areas, transport connections and the integration of natural features that support habitats and manage the effects of climate change.

**4.3** Good design should respond to the local character of an area reinforcing the special qualities of place whilst seeking to address the challenges of urban and rural living. To support the achievement of good design, the council adopted its design guide in 2017, which provides a baseline assessment of the various character areas within the borough and provides advice on how applicants should respond to their site locations to achieve good design and create a sense of place consistent with the prevailing characteristics of a given area.

**4.4** Since 2017 the government has introduced a renewed emphasis on design through changes to the NPPF and the introduction of the National Model Design Code. Further information on the design in Cheshire East can be found in the 'Design topic paper'.

**4.5** Under the government's proposed reforms to plan making, councils will no longer be able to prepare supplementary planning documents, which are material considerations in planning decisions but do not have the status of development plans (their content is not policy but does provide advice on how adopted policy should be applied or interpreted). Instead, new 'supplementary plans' may be prepared as additions to the local plan. Such 'supplementary plans' will be development plan documents and therefore have the ability to establish new policy and be afforded full weight in decision making. Supplementary plans will also be subject to examination by the planning inspectorate, in the same way as the local plan. The council needs to consider whether to prepare a design code as a separate supplementary plan or integrate the design code as part of the new local plan.

### Good design

**4.6** Successful design responds to the particular characteristics of a site within its wider place context and should seek to align multiple factors toward an optimum solution. The layout, orientation, and aesthetic quality and character of buildings can



provide a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging whilst wider design considerations can address how development supports active and healthy lifestyles, how buildings can work with the landscape and how the natural environment can be supported through integrating habitats and sustainable drainage. Good design is a holistic outcome from a process that incorporates multiple different needs, constraints, ambitions and requirements of development.

**4.7** The government is promoting good design through the National Design Guide<sup>12</sup> and National Model Design Code<sup>13</sup>, published in January 2021. The NPPF stresses the importance of design in making high quality places and highlights the importance of responding to local character. It also strongly encourages the use of plans, design policy, guidance, and codes, to provide clarity on local design expectations.

**4.8** A design code is a set of design requirements for the physical development of a site or area. It is made up of rules that are clear, specific and unambiguous, and it should normally include extensive graphical illustrations. A design code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.

**4.9** The council intends to follow guidance set out in the National Model Design Code (NMDC) when producing its own design code. The NMDC sets out various themes that should be addressed in a design code including nature, environment, built form, identity, public space, movement, use, resources and lifespan. The council expects to address the themes set out in the NMDC in its own design code and is considering what an appropriate level of detail would be for the borough.

**4.10** In developing its own design code, the council needs to consider the scope and approach to be employed, and in particular, whether the code should be a strategic level code, whether it should include area specific guidance, whether it should address design by area type or use type (residential/employment) or whether a combination of approaches would be best.

### Question 4a

What approach should be taken in preparing the Cheshire East Design Code? For example, should it be a strategic level code or be broken down into smaller areas and/or development types? How should residents, site promoters and stakeholders be involved in the process? Should the design code be prepared as part of the new local plan or as a separate development plan document?

## Other design matters

### Question 4b

Are there any other matters related to design that the new local plan should consider?

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>

## 5 Our natural environment

### Introduction

**5.1** The natural environment is one of the borough's greatest assets and is highly valued by residents and visitors alike. The local plan has a key role in protecting and enhancing the environment for this generation and future generations.

**5.2** The Environment Act (2021)<sup>14</sup> sets out mandatory targets around the natural environment and establishes a framework for the introduction of more detailed regulations. The Act followed the government's 25-year Environment Plan which brought together the government's ambitions for the UK's natural environment. Priority areas for action include air quality, water, biodiversity, resource efficiency and waste reduction. The Act and follow-on regulations recognise that the natural environment is an irreplaceable resource that must be protected and valued in a measured way in the face of ever-increasing development pressures, both locally and globally, and acknowledges its role in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

**5.3** Further information on the natural environment in Cheshire East can be found in the 'Our natural environment topic paper'.

### Biodiversity

**5.4** There has been an alarming loss of biodiversity in the UK over many years. As examples, between 1932 and 1984 we lost 97% of our species-rich grassland, five species of butterfly have disappeared from England in the last 150 years, and indicators showing the state of birds dependent on farmland stand at less than half their value compared to 1970<sup>15</sup>.

**5.5** The Environment Act introduced the need for a biodiversity net gain of at least 10% on development sites, to be calculated using a nationally set biodiversity metric. This being applied through the planning system during 2024, starting with larger scale developments.

**5.6** It will require developers and the council to identify and agree sites in Cheshire East where biodiversity net gains could be achieved either on development sites or "off set" on another site if they cannot be achieved on the development site itself. Offsite delivery is not limited to sites within Cheshire East, however, the metric calculator has built in penalties where delivery is in a location further away from the development site. Sites in the borough proposed for biodiversity net gain can be highlighted to the council through the 'call for sites' taking place in parallel with this issues paper consultation.

**5.7** National planning policy says that local plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and that local strategic policies must provide for conservation and enhancement of landscapes and biodiversity. The new local plan will need to recognise and give appropriate protection to nature conservation sites and areas where priority species and habitats need to be conserved.

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14 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>

15 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-environment-bill-strengthened-to-halt-biodiversity-loss-by-2030>

**5.8** The introduction of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) is aimed at achieving a co-ordinated area wide approach for nature and environmental improvement. Each LNRS will, agree priorities for nature's recovery, map the most valuable existing areas for nature and map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals. Cheshire East Council is working with Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington councils to prepare a LNRS for the three boroughs. The new local plan will need to draw on this information to demonstrate that the national policy requirements for plans to protect and enhance biodiversity have been met.

### Question 5a

What approaches or measures should be incorporated in the new local plan to protect and improve biodiversity?

## Landscape and geodiversity

**5.9** Cheshire East has a rich and diverse landscape including the Cheshire Plain, the Pennine foothills and the Derbyshire and Staffordshire boundaries. It includes the southern part of the Sandstone Ridge (currently being considered by Natural England as a potential Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The Cheshire Plain is a mosaic of clay plain, heathland, meres and mosses, shallow river valleys and salt related landscapes.

**5.10** National planning policy also says that 'to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should: plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale...; identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites...; promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations...; and aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests'.

**5.11** Assessing the impact of proposed developments upon the landscape is a key part of the planning process. The Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment was updated in 2018 and, in parallel a review of Local Landscape Designations (LLDs) was carried out. The special qualities of these areas are described, including their distinctiveness, perceptual character, landscape and scenic quality, natural character, cultural character and function.

### Question 5b

How can the new local plan help to make sure that developments take proper account of, and respect, the landscapes of Cheshire East?

## Other natural environment matters

### Question 5c

Are there any other matters related to our natural environment that the new local plan should consider?

## 6 Homes for everyone

### Introduction

**6.1** A key role of the local plan is to provide a strategy to help meet the housing needs of Cheshire East in terms of the quantity, size, type and tenure of new homes. It will aim to ensure that the housing needs of all types of households are provided for in a sustainable manner.

**6.2** Set out below are a list of issues that fall under the heading of homes for everyone. If you would like to read more about these issues, then please see the accompanying 'Homes for everyone topic paper'.

### The need for new homes

**6.3** The National Planning Policy Framework expects local plans to provide a framework for meeting housing needs, including an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.

**6.4** To determine the minimum number of houses needed, councils are expected to prepare a local housing need assessment using the standard method for calculating housing need which is set out in planning practice guidance. The outcome of the standard method calculation will be an advisory starting-point for establishing a housing requirement for the area. As set out in the Written Ministerial Statement on 19th December 2023<sup>16</sup>, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has confirmed that some local authorities may wish to deliver more homes than the standard method calculation. However, where a local authority considers the standard method outcome unachievable, robust evidence must be provided for departing from it.

**6.5** For Cheshire East the standard method calculation is currently 1,014 dwellings per annum. National policy tells us that there may be exceptional circumstances which justify a different approach and such circumstances could include the demographic characteristics of an area, making provision to meet the housing needs of neighbouring areas or reflecting growth ambitions linked to economic development or infrastructure investment.

**6.6** The new local plan will consider the need for housing and a new local housing needs assessment will be prepared.

#### Question 6a

Should the standard method calculation of 1,014 new homes per annum be used when preparing the new local plan? If not, what are the circumstances that would warrant a different approach?

16 <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-12-19/hcws161>



## Housing types and sizes

**6.7** The standard method for calculating housing need does not identify the type, tenure or sizes of homes that will be needed in the borough. Understanding these needs and supporting the delivery of a wide range of housing sizes and types in new developments is important as it helps to create balanced communities.

### Housing size

**6.8** The local plan could include policies that support the provision of a mix of house sizes to respond to local evidence of need. The current local plan identifies that the greatest need for market housing is 3 bedroomed properties (53%) followed by 2 bedrooms (23%). For affordable housing, the greatest demand is for 2 bedroomed properties for both intermediate (53%) and affordable for rent (42%) tenures. There is opportunity to take forward the existing requirements from the current local plan or a different approach based on evidence.

#### Question 6b

How could the local plan influence the mix of housing sizes within new developments?

### Housing for older persons and people with disabilities

**6.9** The demographic profile of the borough is expected to change over the next 20 years as a result of an ageing population. This change will give rise to the need for proposals for different forms of housing including adaptable homes and specialist accommodation such as retirement or sheltered accommodation, extra care or housing-with-care, residential care and nursing homes.

**6.10** Given that it is likely that future demographic changes will result in greater demands for housing suitable for older people and those with disabilities, there will be a clear need for the inclusion of policies for older persons and specialist accommodation in the new local plan.

#### Question 6c

How can the local plan address the needs of an ageing population?

#### Question 6d

What types of specialist or older people's housing are needed in Cheshire East and why?

## Housing diversification and providing for small and medium sized sites

**6.11** Diversifying the housing market is a key aspect of the government's housing policy and the white paper 'Fixing our broken housing market' (2017)<sup>17</sup> set out plans to boost the supply of new homes in England, including measures to build homes faster and diversify the housing market. The National Planning Policy Framework includes the requirement to accommodate at least 10% of the housing requirement on small and medium sized sites. The local plan will need to take account of this requirement when considering options for meeting our development needs.

### Question 6e

How could the local plan support the delivery of small and medium sized housing sites in Cheshire East?

## Self and custom build housing

**6.12** National planning policy sets out that planning policies should reflect the needs of different groups, including people wishing to commission or build their own homes. Opportunities should be sought through policies and decisions to support small sites to come forward for self and custom build housing.

**6.13** The council has a statutory duty to grant enough planning permissions for self and custom build to meet demand within the borough. Historically, this demand has been met<sup>18</sup>.

**6.14** The existing local plan includes a policy for self and custom build housing which supports the provision of self and custom build housing in suitable locations and requires housing developments of 30 or more dwellings to provide a proportion of serviced plots where there is evidence of unmet need.

**6.15** There is opportunity to take forward these policies again in the new local plan. However, different approaches could be looked at to encourage a greater supply of self and custom build including on small sites.

### Question 6f

How could the new local plan support the delivery of self and custom build housing including small sites?

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market>

<sup>18</sup> Further information is available in the Cheshire East Authority Monitoring Report which is available at [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire\\_east\\_local\\_plan/authority-monitoring-report/authority-monitoring-report.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/authority-monitoring-report/authority-monitoring-report.aspx)

## Community-led housing

**6.16** National planning policy encourages councils to seek out opportunities through planning policies to support community-led housing development on small sites and as exceptions sites. Community-led development is housing that has been built or brought back into use by local people. It is defined in national planning policy as:

*‘A development instigated and taken forward by a not for-profit organisation set up and run primarily for the purpose of meeting the housing needs of its members and the wider local community, rather than being a primarily commercial enterprise. The organisation is created, managed and democratically controlled by its members. It may take any one of various legal forms including a community land trust, housing co-operative and community benefit society. Membership of the organisation is open to all beneficiaries and prospective beneficiaries of that organisation. The organisation should own, manage or steward the homes in a manner consistent with its purpose, for example through a mutually supported arrangement with a Registered Provider of Social Housing. The benefits of the development to the specified community should be clearly defined and consideration given to how these benefits can be protected over time, including in the event of the organisation being wound up.’*

**6.17** The council will need to consider how the local plan could support community-led housing including in locations that would not normally be suitable for rural exceptions sites or housing sites. Community-led housing exceptions sites must make provision for affordable housing, be adjacent to existing settlements, proportionate in size to them, not compromise protected areas or assets of particular importance and comply with local design policies and standards.

### Question 6g

How could the new local plan support the development of community-led housing including small sites and exceptions sites?

## Affordable housing

**6.18** The new local plan will need to ensure that sufficient affordable housing is provided to meet local needs. Housing affordability is a challenge for many households in Cheshire East with median house prices currently being 8.14 times median gross earnings<sup>19</sup>. Access to housing for those on lower incomes is only likely to be achieved through the provision of affordable housing at below market rent or price levels. The local plan has an important role to play in the delivery of affordable housing and ensuring that the benefits of housing delivery go to a wider section of the community.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian>

**6.19** Affordable housing is housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers). There are various types of affordable housing including affordable housing for rent, build to rent, First Homes, community-led housing and discount market sales housing.

**6.20** Most affordable housing is built as a developer contribution on market housing schemes and the existing local plan requires that on sites of 15 homes or more in principal towns and key service centres, and on sites of 11 or more elsewhere, a target of 30% affordable homes will need to be provided. The council's current preference is for a mix of these homes to be affordable for rent (65%) and then intermediate housing (35%) which includes shared ownership or other discount products.

**6.21** The new local plan will consider the need for affordable housing and the different types, and a new housing needs assessment will be prepared.

### Question 6h

How could the local plan address the need for affordable housing? Should the same approach be used across Cheshire East?

## First Homes

**6.22** First Homes were introduced in the Affordable Homes Update Written Ministerial Statement (24 May 2021)<sup>20</sup> and remains extant government policy. First Homes are a form of affordable discounted market sale housing. National planning practice guidance<sup>21</sup> states that First Homes are now the preferred form of discount market housing for first time buyers. At least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered by developers as part of their planning obligations on sites of 10 or more homes should be First Homes.

**6.23** There are basic eligibility criteria for First Homes including that purchasers should be a first-time buyer, should have a combined annual household income not exceeding £80,000 and purchasers should have a mortgage or home purchase plan to fund at least 50% of the discounted purchase price. The government have also specified that the minimum discount should be 30% off the market price of an equivalent home.

**6.24** The council could set additional eligibility criteria for its First Homes policy. For instance, setting lower maximum income thresholds, a local connection test or a higher minimum discount from the market price of an equivalent home if it can be demonstrated that there is a need for this, and the development will remain viable.

**6.25** First Homes can also be delivered as exceptions sites which are small sites brought forward outside of development plans in order to deliver affordable housing. National planning policy says that councils should support the development of First

20 <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-05-24/hcws50>

21 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/first-homes>

Homes exception sites unless the need for such homes is already being met within the local authority's area. The local plan will need to consider the need for First Homes and how delivery of this form of affordable housing could be supported.

### Question 6i

How could the new local plan address the need for First Homes including exceptions sites? Should additional eligibility criteria for First Homes be introduced and should the same approach be used across Cheshire East?

## Rural exceptions housing

**6.26** Rural exceptions sites are normally small sites used for affordable housing which are in locations which would not normally be supported by housing policies. Sites are normally adjacent to a rural settlement and seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.

**6.27** The current local plan includes a policy for rural exceptions sites, and this places a limit on site size (no more than 10 dwellings) and location (sites must be adjacent to a local service centre or settlements within the other settlements tier of the settlement hierarchy).

### Question 6j

How could the new local plan encourage the provision of new homes through rural exceptions developments?

## Housing standards

**6.28** The majority of physical standards that new homes must adhere to are addressed through Building Regulations<sup>22</sup>, including reducing carbon emissions and energy efficiency measures. However, local planning authorities can set optional technical standards<sup>23</sup> and nationally described space standards<sup>24</sup> in the policies of the next local plan. These standards cover matters such as the internal layout of dwellings and the size of rooms.

**6.29** Existing local plan policies have already brought into effect accessible and adaptable standards and the nationally described space standards. It is likely in the future that some of these standards will be addressed through a future update to the

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22 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1141098/The\\_Merged\\_Approved\\_Documents\\_Mar23.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1141098/The_Merged_Approved_Documents_Mar23.pdf)

23 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-optional-technical-standards>

24 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>

Building Regulations. If standards such as wheelchair adaptable and accessibility and nationally described space standards are to be included again in the new local plan, the council will need to justify this.

### Question 6k

Should the local plan include wheelchair and accessibility standards and what proportion of new homes and specialist housing should comply with those standards?

### Question 6l

Should the next local plan require all new homes to meet the nationally described space standard and, if not, why?

## Accommodating the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpersons

**6.30** The National Planning Policy for Traveller Sites ("PPTS")<sup>25</sup> makes clear the requirement for local authorities to assess the need for traveller sites and to plan for these in a sustainable manner over a reasonable timescale. Providing permanent sites for good quality pitches and plots for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople can help improve opportunities for access to health care and education to support people in meeting these basic needs.

**6.31** Planned site provision can also help reduce the number of unauthorised sites and encampments which can be a source of conflict between the travelling and settled communities. It will aid in resisting future speculative planning applications which may be in less sustainable locations.

**6.32** The government recently changed the definition of a Gypsy and Traveller in its last update to the PPTS (19th December 2023) following a recent legal case. Alongside the changes made, the government has also announced that it intends to review the approach to this area of policy and case law in 2024.

**6.33** An updated study on accommodation needs for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople will be prepared to help inform both the current nature of provision and the level and type of needs for future provision and this will take account of relevant government policy.

**6.34** The preparation of the new local plan provides an opportunity to review existing allocated sites if no development has taken place and to identify new sites for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation if they are needed.

25 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites#full-publication-update-history>



### **Question 6m**

How could the council meet future needs for pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and plots for Travelling Showpeople?

## **Other housing matters**

### **Question 6n**

Have we identified the correct housing issues for the local plan to address? Are there any other matters related to homes for everyone that the new local plan should consider?

## 7 Town centres and retail

### Introduction

**7.1** The services and facilities that town centres and other retail centres provide are vital for local communities. Thriving and diverse retail centres with a range of shopping, services and leisure facilities enable vibrant and sustainable communities, providing the facilities and services that people need, in sustainable locations that can be easily accessed.

**7.2** Cheshire East has a diverse retail offer. There are many town centres of varying sizes and each with its own character, local neighbourhood parades of shops, and a number of dedicated retail parks and supermarkets. There are also several markets in our larger centres.

**7.3** Within the new local plan, we will need to define the network of town centres and primary shopping areas within them. We will also need to consider whether there is a need for any new retail provision and, if there is, then plan will need to allocate a range of sites to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed.

**7.4** Further information on retail and town centres in Cheshire East can be found in the ‘Town centres and retail topic paper’.

### Future of town centres

**7.5** Our town centres are important to residents, and a thriving town centre, in terms of the activities as well as the retail and services on offer, is frequently named as one of the most important factors in residents’ opinions about their community. They are also the most accessible locations for many of our residents, including those from disadvantaged groups, and play an important role in providing access to retail facilities, services and leisure opportunities.

**7.6** In line with national policy, the new local plan will continue to promote a “town centre first” approach to retail development (other than for local shops), leisure, entertainment, many indoor sport and recreation uses, offices, and arts/culture/tourism development. This means that there is a preference for these types of development to be located within town centres wherever possible. Town centres are usually the most accessible locations, and locating these types of developments in them helps to:

- Concentrate activity within them, increasing footfall and supporting their diversification.
- Provide the most equitable access to services and jobs for all groups.
- Increase demand for public transport, walking and cycling, and reducing single trip car journeys and reducing congestion, pollution and carbon emissions.

**7.7** Town centres across the whole country are facing unprecedented challenges. Changes in how we shop, including the growth in online shopping, the increased popularity of retail parks, and other technological changes (such as online banking) have contributed to significantly decreased footfall in town centres and the closure of numerous stores as well as other important services, such as banks. These trends have

been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, with a further increase in online shopping and an increased number of people working at home for all or part of the week leading to a decline in office workers in many town centres. The results are that many centres are struggling to maintain footfall and their retail offer, and they need to find other ways to attract people.

**7.8** The new local plan will need to include policies to help our town centres adapt to their changing role. When defining the primary shopping areas, we may need to consider whether some consolidation of retailing is needed in some towns, to re-focus a reduced level of retail in a core area within those town centres. With an increasing number of people working at home, there may also be a reduction in the amount of office space required in town centres in the future.

**7.9** The national changes to the Use Class Order and Permitted Development Rights have increased the flexibility to re-use redundant retail and office buildings for alternative uses, without the need for planning permission. Whilst some changes in town centres will come forward without any interventions, the local plan will need to consider what policies or frameworks are needed to support the changing role of town centres. There may be a need to consider the role of temporary uses to support this changing role and enable different land uses that support the town centre.

**7.10** The role of the town centre as a community hub and a destination, used for leisure, entertainment, dining and other social activities will be increasingly important. Encouraging a range of uses to set up alongside retailers, like food and drink establishments, entertainment venues and community facilities (including health and education) is a positive way of attracting visitors and supporting our high streets to stay lively throughout the day and into the evening. Retaining and promoting the local distinctiveness of each town centre will also be important to provide a positive experience.

**7.11** Open spaces, greening and improved public realm also play a role in supporting our town centres, acting as venues for larger gatherings such as markets or entertainment events as well as promoting interaction and community events. Space for people to dwell and relax encourages people to use town centres and stay longer, meaning they are more likely to visit the shops and cafés, supporting local businesses. Town centres should be exemplars of good quality, well-managed public realm and the impacts that new developments have on the public realm should also be considered.

**7.12** Increasing the number of people living in and around the town centre can also help to support businesses and increase the vibrancy in the evenings as well as in the daytime, and new residential development should be encouraged in our town centres, particularly on brownfield and under-used sites. The potential reduction in the need for retail and office premises in future years could allow for new residential properties in some towns, particularly in our larger centres. This would also contribute towards the need for new housing in the borough and given that town centres are a focus for services, facilities and public transport, it would also help in meeting other aims such as providing development in sustainable locations and reducing the need to travel.

**7.13** Accessibility of town centres will also be important to continue attracting people to them. As well as improvements to walking, cycling and public transport, it will be important to maintain a good level of parking provision for visitors, residents and workers and extending into the evening to support the night-time economy. The provision of

charging infrastructure in town centre car parks will assist in the transition to electric vehicles as part of the climate emergency response, but could also encourage people to use the town centre facilities whilst charging.

**7.14** Some town centres will face more challenges than others, and it is likely that the scale of change may be greater in larger centres. The plan will also need to provide the policy context to facilitate particular regeneration schemes, such as those already ongoing in Macclesfield and Crewe.

### Question 7a

Have we identified the correct town centres issues for the new local plan to address? Are there any other issues that the new local plan should consider?

## Other retailing

**7.15** Small neighbourhood parades of shops and village shops have an important role in providing for the day to day needs of people in their local area. Changes in lifestyles over previous decades (such as the increase in car ownership and the emergence of large supermarkets) mean that many people can now travel further and more easily to shop for food, other goods, and to access services. However, local facilities continue to play an important role for day to day convenience, particularly for those residents who have difficulty accessing the town centre or out of town superstores.

**7.16** The local plan will need to consider how best to encourage the retention of local retail facilities. When planning for significant new developments, consideration should be given to the everyday retail needs of the immediate local community, looking at how they can access their nearest neighbourhood shops preferably by walking or cycling.

**7.17** The presence of out of town retail also has a part to play in the overall retail offer and historically, out of town retail parks have provided for access to more specialised retail such as hardware and DIY stores, warehouse retailing, garden centres, furniture stores etc. where a larger store footprint is required and car use to transport goods is more essential due to the nature of the items purchased. However, in more recent years some of these out of town locations have begun to offer more general retail functions, often involving existing retailers relocating away from town centres. This has consequences for the health of town centres, but as out of town locations are often less accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, it also disadvantages those without access to a car and encourages more single trip car journeys, increasing congestion, pollution and carbon emissions.

**7.18** Whilst the preference remains for retail facilities to be located within town centres (as required by national policy), there will remain a role for many of those existing out of centre retail parks and supermarkets. In some city areas, signs of a reversal of the trend for out of centre retail parks have started to emerge and high land values mean that some lower quality out of centre retail parks are starting to be re-purposed for other uses. Whilst this trend has not yet been seen in Cheshire East, the plan could consider whether to actively encourage other uses in certain out of town retail locations.

### Question 7b

Have we identified the correct retailing issues for the local plan to address? Are there any other issues that the local plan should consider?

## Other town centres and retail matters

### Question 7c

Are there any other matters related to town centres and retail that the new local plan should consider?

## 8 Jobs, skills and economy

### Introduction

**8.1** A well-performing local economy is vital for the development of sustainable communities. As stated in the council's Corporate Plan 2021 to 2025<sup>26</sup>. Cheshire East has one of the most successful and resilient economies in the UK, which was valued at £14.4bn as of December 2019 (Gross Value Added). The borough's economy includes successful multinational companies such as Bentley, Waters, AstraZeneca, Barclays, Royal London, and Mornflake, as well as a buoyant range of small and medium size enterprises. Furthermore, the borough has a rich cultural, heritage and visitor economy that contributes more than £920m to its overall economic output.

**8.2** Set out below are a list of sub-topics that fall under the heading of jobs, skills, and economy. If you would like to read more about these sub-topics, then please see the accompanying 'Jobs, skills and economy topic paper'.

### Employment land and premises

**8.3** The borough is home to several thriving and successful sectors including life sciences, advanced manufacturing, digital and carbon zero industries. The combination of a vibrant economy operating within a beautiful environment with great connectivity is a significant asset that can attract more businesses to invest in the area, which will provide more and better paid local jobs for residents.

**8.4** However, education, public administration as well as general administrative and support services underperform in relation to employment share in Cheshire East. Employment share in these areas is lower than the Northwest and England averages<sup>27</sup>.

#### Question 8a

How can the local plan support new and existing businesses?

#### Question 8b

Are there any sectors that borough does not currently make provision for, and should? If so, please expand on your answer.

26 Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-2025 <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/council-and-democracy/corporate-plans/cec-corporate-plan-2021-to-2025.pdf>

27 Employment by industry, Cheshire East, North West and England, 2016 and 2021 Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics (ONS), NOMIS. Crown Copyright.



## Green economy

**8.5** The green economy is an economic system or sector that is based on or guided by environmentalist principles: energy efficiency, low carbon, sustainable development.

**8.6** Cheshire East is committed to reducing carbon emissions and becoming a carbon neutral borough by 2045, which could be through initiatives such as<sup>28</sup>:

- setting a best practice low-carbon example across the council's own operations,
- working with strategic partners locally to deliver projects (for example using local suppliers for procurement and commissioning)
- encouraging carbon reduction measures through policy decisions
- bringing together stakeholders to act collectively in partnership
- linking climate action to other objectives in the borough
- lobbying national government for greater ambition
- providing education and guidance to stakeholders and residents
- sharing resources as a trusted source of information

### Question 8c

What approaches can the local plan take to support the green economy?

## Freight and logistics

**8.7** The UK's freight and logistics sector – a network of ports, airports, roads and railways, together with all the warehousing in between - is world class, however it also contributes to pollution and congestion in the UK's urban areas<sup>29</sup>. The availability of land for freight distribution centres and other infrastructure is crucial for the efficient operation of the sector and will be even more important in the future for enabling optimised last mile operations<sup>30</sup>.

**8.8** The growth in on-line shopping is leading to a substantial rise in parcel deliveries<sup>31</sup>. As people work more flexibly and more goods are delivered to peoples' homes during the day (and night) there is likely to be an increased demand for last mile logistics (the movement of goods, most likely from a transportation hub, to the final delivery destination)<sup>29</sup>. However, the growth of e-commerce and delivery businesses can have a negative impact on the UK transport system and the environment.

28 Cheshire East Council, Borough-wide Baseline & Carbon Reduction Options, Menu of Options, November 2022, p108 <http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s100844/Appendix%201%20for%20Carbon%20Neutral%20ProgressUpdate.pdf>

29 Future of freight; a long-term plan, Department for Transport, 2022 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1085917/future-of-freight-plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1085917/future-of-freight-plan.pdf)

30 Better delivery: the challenge for freight. Freight final study report, National Infrastructure Commission, April 2019 <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Better-Delivery-April-2019.pdf>

31 Position statement on last mile logistics, Department for Transport, June 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-last-mile-logistics-2019/position-statement-on-last-mile-logistics>

**8.9** The government's 'Position statement on last mile logistics' (June 2020) suggests several potential technical solutions: light vans, e-cargo bikes and similar, autonomous ground vehicles, drones, tunnels and tubes with cargo pods on tracks (typically using linear motors), and neighbourhood manufacturing sites employing 3D printing<sup>31</sup>.

**8.10** The UK freight and logistics sector is operated by private sector companies who invest in infrastructure (ports, rail terminals and airports) and equipment (trucks and rolling stock) without government support. The public sector invests in the road and rail network that is used by freight transport operators<sup>29</sup>.

### Question 8d

How should the local plan address the future need for logistics?

### Question 8e

How can this be balanced with the need to minimise negative impacts on the environment and the transport network?

### Question 8f

What evidence is needed to support appropriate planning policies?

## Tourism

**8.11** Tourism has a vital role to play in the continuing economic success and development of both Cheshire East and the Northwest region.

**8.12** A diverse range of visitor destinations attract tourists from across the UK and overseas. Great houses such as Tatton Park or Lyme Park reflect the wealth and influence of a borough that is still one of the most prosperous in Britain. Other major attractions include Jodrell Bank (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), Quarry Bank Mill, the canal network, and the Peak District National Park. There are several National Trust properties in Cheshire East including Little Moreton Hall, Nether Alderley Mill, Tatton Park, Lyme Park, and Quarry Bank Mill. Additionally, the extensive footpath, cycleway and bridleway network is a key attraction of the borough.

### Question 8g

How can the local plan support tourism and the visitor economy?

## Skills

**8.13** In January 2021, the government published the ‘Skills White Paper, Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth’<sup>32</sup>. The White Paper highlights that there are significant skills gaps at higher technical levels, with a growing employer demand for the skills that these levels provide.

**8.14** In terms of skills development and knowledge transfer, the borough has major educational assets in the form of Crewe Engineering and Design University Technical College, South Cheshire College, Reaseheath College and Macclesfield College. Jodrell Bank is a world leader in radio astronomy-related research and technology development, with the Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics being the astronomical research centre of The University of Manchester. Cheshire East also has convenient access to higher education, with many major universities within a 2-hour journey time. Jodrell Bank is also the headquarters of the Square Kilometre Array, an international project involving brilliant scientists that is trying to find out the answers to some of the biggest questions in space.

### Question 8h

How can the local plan help minimise the skills gap and make sure that local people can take advantage of opportunities?

## Other jobs, skills and economy matters

### Question 8i

Are there any other matters related to jobs, skills and economy that the new local plan should consider?

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32 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth>

## 9 Transport and infrastructure

### Introduction

**9.1** An effective transport and infrastructure network supports the sustainable functioning of existing communities and helps enable opportunities for further growth within the borough. Transport connects people to jobs, community services and facilities, recreation, friends and family. The planning system can be used to help improve accessibility and implement national objectives around reducing car use and encouraging more sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling or public transport. The local plan represents one element of a wider suite of transport policies and strategies that are intended to operate in a co-ordinated way at the national, regional, borough-wide and local level.

**9.2** Other forms of infrastructure are also important to the wider well-being of society such as the suitable provision of utilities (water, gas and electricity), telecommunications networks, green space networks (parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors etc), and social and community facilities. The identification and implementation of the infrastructure improvements required to support growth in the borough is a fundamental requirement for the successful development of a new local plan. The council will prepare a new infrastructure delivery plan to provide these details and help it secure developer contributions from planning applications in the future.

**9.3** Further information on transport and infrastructure in Cheshire East can be found in the 'Transport and infrastructure topic paper'.

### Active travel

**9.4** Active travel refers to modes of travel that involve a level of activity and is considered the least carbon intensive way to travel. The term refers mostly to walking and cycling but can also mean other forms of wheeled activity such as trips made by wheelchair, mobility scooters, adapted cycles, e-cycles, scooters and cycle share schemes. These types or modes of travel can provide health and economic benefits, through improved physical / mental well-being as well as decreased congestion and air / noise pollution. Therefore, the aim is to make cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, and for it to also form part of longer journeys

**9.5** The council does not currently have a specific planning policy on active travel but this issue is incorporated within other existing local plan policies such as Local Plan Strategy Policy CO 1 'Sustainable Travel and Transport', Policy CO 2 'Enabling Business Growth Through Transport Infrastructure', Policy CO 4 'Travel Plans and Transport Assessments' and through Policy INF 1 'Cycleways, bridleways and footpaths'<sup>33</sup>.

#### Question 9a

How can we support active travel through policies in the new local plan?

33 Available to view at [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan)

## Public transport

**9.6** Increasing the use of travel by bus or rail will also help reduce car use and deliver wider goals around sustainability. The 2021 census shows that car use in Cheshire East is significantly higher than the national and regional average. This reflects the size and geographical spread of settlements in the borough, the distance to main employment centres and the higher costs associated with delivering public transport in a rural setting.

### Bus

**9.7** Bus services in Cheshire East provide access between and within the major settlements, as well as provide an important role in connecting users to local services including employment, schools and recreation. The Cheshire East bus network comprises a mix of commercial and supported services with Cheshire East Council responsible for coordination and information provision.

**9.8** The council published its first five year Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) on 31 October 2021 with the aim of improving the speed, reliability and quality of service. The council has set out how it intends to deliver the identified aims in association with bus operators through its Enhanced Partnership Scheme<sup>34</sup>. The proposals identified represent what is considered achievable without any additional funding from central government.

**9.9** The council recognises that traditional, scheduled bus services may not be feasible in all areas of the borough or meet the needs of all residents and communities in Cheshire East. Where bus services are not the best solution, it may be advantageous to consider 'demand responsive' flexible transport solutions. Community transport can offer an alternative mode of transport, particularly in more rural areas. A number of such schemes are in place across the borough including dedicated parish minibuses and community car schemes.

### Rail

**9.10** The Cheshire East area plays an important role in rail connectivity, with Crewe providing a nationally significant hub for connections on the West Coast Mainline. The borough also possesses access to inter-city services from Macclesfield and Wilmslow, as well as a number of inter-urban connections that are essential to the ongoing vitality of the economy. The borough has 23 stations on the national rail network. The number of passengers carried by rail services has grown strongly since privatisation in 1994, but this has been limited in certain instances in Cheshire East by the availability and capacity of services with some stations only providing an hourly service. The recent decision to cancel HS2 north of Birmingham (to Crewe and Manchester) means that the potential to free up capacity for more local services has been greatly reduced.

**9.11** The railway line through Middlewich is currently used solely for freight. Re-opening the Northwich to Sandbach line for passenger services would increase travel choice, improve accessibility and enable sustainable growth in Middlewich. An area of land at Brooks Lane has been safeguarded for this purpose and work has been

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34 The Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme are available at [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public\\_transport/transport\\_strategies.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/transport_strategies.aspx)

undertaken to consider the feasibility of this proposal. In addition, the section of the railway between Crewe and Alsager requires investment; double tracking this section of railway would enable service increases on the Crewe to Derby line.

### Question 9b

How can public transport be supported through policies in the new local plan?

## Car parking

**9.12** Parking provision in the borough supports accessibility for residents, businesses, shoppers, workers and commuters. Parking provision has the potential to impact on surrounding areas both negatively and positively. When parking is well managed it can support thriving businesses, provide access to services and enable active social lives; but when not well managed parking can encourage car travel to areas which suffer unduly from congestion as well as causing other environmental and social issues.

**9.13** The council has published a High Level Parking Strategy (2017)<sup>35</sup> for Cheshire East which seeks to manage on and off street parking (to positively affect the capacity and flow of the road network), whilst encouraging more sustainable travel patterns where these alternatives are available.

**9.14** The parking standards that the council currently applies to new development is set out in Appendix C of the Local Plan Strategy<sup>36</sup>. These represent minimum standards for residential development and recommended levels for other uses.

### Question 9c

Are the current parking standards suitable and is there anything further in planning policy that the council should do in relation to parking?

## Developer contributions

**9.15** Developer contributions are sought by the council through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and through legal agreements via Section 106 planning obligations and S278 highway agreements.

## Community Infrastructure Levy

**9.16** The Community Infrastructure Levy is a planning charge that local authorities can use to support the development of their area. It is a set charge on most new development based on the gross internal floorspace of buildings and is used to help fund

35 <https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/documents/s62470/Local%20Transport%20Plan%20Refresh%20-%20app%204a.pdf>

36 Available at [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplanstrategy](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplanstrategy)



the infrastructure needed to address the cumulative impact of development across the borough. It has been charged in Cheshire East since March 2019. Only two types of development in Cheshire East are liable to pay a CIL charge. These are housing (excluding affordable housing and apartments) and retail development at two specific locations (the Crewe Grand Junction and Handforth Dean retail parks). All other development has a zero CIL charge for economic viability reasons. The council's CIL charging schedule sets out its CIL charging rates<sup>37</sup>.

## Section 106 Obligations

**9.17** Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables a local planning authority to enter into a negotiated agreement or planning obligation to mitigate the impact of a specific development and make it acceptable in planning terms. The planning obligation might, for example, require the provision or contribution to a new or improved road, school, health facility or local green infrastructure. Local planning authorities can also seek planning obligations to secure a proportion of affordable housing from residential developments. Further details on planning obligations can be found on the government's website<sup>38</sup>.

**9.18** Our annual Infrastructure Funding Statement<sup>39</sup> summarises information on CIL and other developer contributions, as well as the projects funded and those the council is seeking to fund.

### Question 9d

Is there any more the council should be doing regarding the seeking and use of developer contributions that is achievable within the strict planning regulations framework that governs this matter?

## Infrastructure

**9.19** The term 'infrastructure' is broadly used for planning purposes to cover all the service requirements that are needed to make places function efficiently and effectively, thereby helping to create sustainable communities. It is commonly split into categories such as physical, social / community and environmental infrastructure.

**9.20** Physical infrastructure generally refers to the transport and telecommunication networks, the supply of utilities (water, gas and electricity), the management of waste or flood risk, the treatment of wastewater and the public realm (street lighting, seating, planting etc). Social / community infrastructure includes facilities relating to health, education, social care, leisure and culture, as well as places of worship and community

37 Further details on CIL rates and CIL more generally is available at [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire\\_east\\_local\\_plan/community-infrastructure-levy/community-infrastructure-levy.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/community-infrastructure-levy/community-infrastructure-levy.aspx)

38 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations>

39 Available at <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/infrastructure-funding-developer-contributions.aspx>

centres. Environmental infrastructure refers to the network of green and blue corridors within and between settlements. This can include parks, gardens, woodlands, countryside, rivers, lakes and canals.

**9.21** In preparing a new local plan, it is important for the council understands what new and improved infrastructure is required to overcome existing issues and help accommodate any proposals for growth in the borough. To achieve this the council will work with infrastructure providers to prepare a new Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)<sup>40</sup>. This will provide a prioritised list of the strategic infrastructure needed to successfully deliver the local plan. It should include information on the timescale for delivery, the estimated cost of provision, how it will be funded and who will be responsible for its provision. The IDP will be subject to public consultation as part of the wider local plan preparation process.

### Question 9e

Are there any particular requirements for new or improved infrastructure that you consider are needed to support further development in the borough and should be provided for as part of the new local plan process?

## Other transport and infrastructure matters

### Question 9f

Are there any other matters related to transport and infrastructure that the new local plan should consider?

<sup>40</sup> The current IDP can be viewed at <https://cheshireeast-consult.objective.co.uk/kseapi/public/files/4094467>

# 10 Historic environment

## Introduction

**10.1** Cheshire East has one of the richest historic legacies in the north of England. Renowned for its numerous stately homes, extensive gardens and parklands, and industrial heritage, the borough has a magnificent heritage that the new local plan will seek to preserve and enhance. Further information on the historic environment in Cheshire East can be found in the ‘Historic environment topic paper’.

## General policies for heritage assets protection

**10.2** Cheshire East contains a varied and unique heritage, which includes formally designated assets such as conservation areas and listed buildings. It also has many non-designated assets. These can include buildings, monuments and sites that are considered to have a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

**10.3** The council aims to make sure that all historic assets are adequately protected against loss or unacceptable change, by having appropriate planning policies in the local plan.

**10.4** Currently, national planning policy requires local plans to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect and decay. This must include the ability to sustain or enhance the significance of heritage assets, by allowing viable uses consistent with their conservation.

**10.5** However, as part of the government’s ongoing reforms to the planning system it is expected that general policies relating to the protection of heritage assets will be published at a national level, as part of a suite of National Development Management Policies (NDMPs). NDMPs will cover matters that are currently addressed by policies within local plans in a very similar way up and down the country. So, it is likely in the future that general heritage protection policies will not need to be included within individual local plans.

### Question 10a

If general policies relating to the protection of heritage assets are included within National Development Management Policies in the future, are there other heritage matters that would still need to be included within the policies of the new local plan?

## Jodrell Bank

**10.6** In July 2019, in recognition of its internationally significant heritage, science and cultural impact, Jodrell Bank Observatory was awarded UNESCO<sup>41</sup> World Heritage Site (WHS) status and has been inscribed on the World Heritage List.

**10.7** This places the observatory on an equal heritage footing with places such as Stonehenge and the Taj Mahal recognised by UNESCO's international community as sites of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). The WHS inscription acknowledges Jodrell Bank's tremendous scientific endeavours and its role in achieving a transformational understanding of the universe.

**10.8** The current local plan has a vital role in protecting the observatory and this is currently achieved through Local Plan Strategy Policy SE 14 'Jodrell Bank' and Policy HER 9 'Jodrell Bank World Heritage Site' in the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document. It is expected that a policy which similarly makes sure that appropriate protection is given to this historic asset of the very highest significance will be included in the new local plan. It is also expected that the new local plan policies map will show the World Heritage Site and the buffer zone that has been defined around it.

**10.9** The council is also preparing a Jodrell Bank Observatory Supplementary Planning Document<sup>42</sup>. It will provide further guidance on how applicants should consider the impact of their proposals on Jodrell Bank and how they can demonstrate that the requirements of local plan policies have been met.

### Question 10b

Do you agree with the proposed approach to provide appropriate protection to the Jodrell Bank Observatory World Heritage Site?

## Other historic environment matters

### Question 10c

Are there any other matters related to the historic environment that the new local plan should consider?

41 UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. For more information about UNESCO see <https://www.unesco.org/en>

42 For more information about the Jodrell Bank Supplementary Planning Document, see <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire-east-local-plan/supplementary-plan-documents/supplementary-plan-documents.aspx>

# 11 Towns and villages

## Introduction

**11.1** Cheshire East is a large borough, covering a wide geographic area. It has a large number of towns and villages which vary greatly in their size, character, function and form.

**11.2** The new local plan will need to consider the development needs and opportunities in each settlement and set a strategy for the distribution of development. It will also need to consider community facilities and there is the opportunity to address any particular issues identified in individual towns and villages.

**11.3** Further information on the approach to towns and villages can be found in the 'Towns and villages topic paper'.

## A hierarchy of settlements

**11.4** The new local plan will need to review and update the existing hierarchy of settlements in the current plan. This current hierarchy has four tiers and sets a strategy for development in each:

- Principal towns (Crewe and Macclesfield): significant development will be encouraged to support their revitalisation, recognising their role as the most important settlements in the borough. Development will maximise the use of existing infrastructure and resources to allow jobs, homes and other facilities to be located close to each other and accessible by public transport.
- Key service centres (Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow): development of a scale, location and nature that recognises and reinforces the distinctiveness of each individual town will be supported to maintain their vitality and viability.
- Local service centres (Alderley Edge, Audlem, Bollington, Bunbury, Chelford, Disley, Goostrey, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Mobberley, Prestbury, Shavington and Wrenbury): small scale development to meet needs and priorities will be supported where it contributes to the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities.
- Other settlements and rural areas: growth and investment should be confined to proportionate development at a scale commensurate with the function and character of the settlement and confined to locations well related to the existing built up extent of the settlement, in the interests of sustainable development and the maintenance of local services. It may be appropriate for local needs to be met within larger settlements, dependent on location.

**11.5** Within the 'other settlements and rural areas' tier, the current plan also lists 35 'infill villages', where limited infilling is appropriate within the defined village boundary. These are: Acton, Adlington, Arclid, Ashley, Astbury, Aston, Brereton Green, Church Minshull, Cranage, Eaton, Gawsworth, Hankelow, Hassall Green, Henbury, High Legh, Higher Hurdsfield, Higher Poynton, Hough, Langley, Lawtongate and Lawton Heath,

Lyne Green, Mount Pleasant, Mow Cop, Over Peover, Pickmere, Plumley, Rainow, Rode Heath, Scholar Green, Styal, Sutton Lane Ends, The Bank, Winterley, Wybunbury and Wychwood Village.

**11.6** A draft methodology<sup>43</sup> for defining an updated settlement hierarchy has been produced, which proposes to categorise settlements into a five tier hierarchy by looking at the following factors for each settlement: level of services and facilities; availability of sustainable transport options; population size; employment role and the number of jobs; retail role and the number of retail units; spatial form (whether the settlement is a clear cluster of development or whether it is more dispersed and sparsely populated).

**11.7** The draft methodology proposes to use similar names to the current tiers of the hierarchy to label the five proposed tiers: Principal towns, Key service centres, Local service centres, Infill villages/sustainable villages, and Rural areas. However, we recognise that these are rather technical labels and not easily understood. We would be interested in hearing suggestions for naming the proposed five tiers in the settlement hierarchy.

**11.8** Further information about the proposed approach is set out in the draft methodology report and we also invite your comments on this document

**11.9** It is important to highlight that a new settlement hierarchy will not determine, on its own, how much development will be proposed in a particular town or village under the new local plan. It will help to inform such decisions, but alongside the consideration of other important pieces of evidence. These will include (amongst others) an assessment of the borough's future development needs, to be carried out later in the plan making process. This is considered further in the next section.

### Question 11a

Do you agree with the proposed approach to reviewing and updating the settlement hierarchy? Are there any other factors that we should consider?

## Meeting our future development needs

**11.10** As required by national policy, the new local plan will need to set out an overall strategy for the scale and pattern of development. In addition to infrastructure, community facilities and conservation/enhancement of the natural and built environment, the new local plan will specifically need to make sufficient provision for housing (including affordable housing), employment development (such as offices, industrial units, and warehouses), and retail/leisure/commercial development.

<sup>43</sup> The draft methodology for determining the settlement hierarchy can be viewed at [\[INSERT LINK\]](#)



## Distribution of development

**11.11** The issues related to the overall amount of each of these types of development are considered in the 'Homes for everyone', 'Jobs skills and economy', and 'Town centres and retail' chapters of this issues paper. Once the overall amount of development has been determined, the new local plan will need to set a strategy for the distribution of this development across the borough.

**11.12** A large range of factors will influence the distribution of development, and may include matters such as:

- Housing demand and availability, house prices and affordability ratios, level of affordable housing need, need for specialist housing (such as for older people), availability of jobs, commuting patterns, infrastructure capacity and constraints and the level of services and facilities. Some of these matters will help to determine the new local plan settlement hierarchy.
- Landscape character, nature and ecology issues, heritage matters, flood risk, agricultural land quality, open spaces and other green infrastructure, Green Belt and strategic green gap designations.
- Amount of brownfield and urban land that may become available for re-use, availability of development sites, market attractiveness of locations, development viability.

### Question 11b

Have we identified the right matters to take into account when considering the distribution of development across the borough? What else should be considered?

## Making the best use of land

**11.13** As required by national policy, the new local plan will need to set out a strategy to accommodate the overall needs for development in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed (brownfield) land.

**11.14** Since the start of the current local plan period in 2010, around 39% of new homes and 48% of employment floorspace has been developed on brownfield sites.

### Question 11c

How can the local plan best support and encourage the re-use of previously developed and urban land whilst making sure that sufficient development comes forward to meet needs?

## Site selection

**11.15** The plan will also need to provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward and at a sufficient rate to enable the needs for development to be met over the plan period. Further work will need to be carried out to assess the capacity of sites to accommodate new development, but it is likely that additional development sites will need to be allocated to meet needs.

**11.16** To make sure that the most appropriate sites are chosen, we will need to appraise all candidates using a site selection methodology, so that all sites can be assessed on a consistent basis. The previous site selection process<sup>44</sup> considered factors including viability, landscape, settlement character and urban form, strategic green gaps, neighbouring uses, highways, heritage assets, flooding, drainage, ecology, Tree Preservation Orders, air quality, mineral resources, accessibility to important services and facilities, public transport, brownfield land, agricultural land quality, contamination, loss of employment facilities, the distance to employment sites and Green Belt issues.

**11.17** The government is considering the use of standard templates for some aspects of local plan evidence gathering, and it might be that in future the methodology for selecting sites for inclusion in a plan is prescribed at a national level. However, there is currently no certainty in this respect and until there is, we will need to consider the appropriate factors for us to apply when selecting sites.

### Question 11d

Have we broadly identified the right matters to take into account when considering which sites to include in the local plan? What else should be considered?

## Community facilities

**11.18** Community facilities can make a positive contribution to the social or cultural life of the community. Facilities such as public houses; places of worship; village halls and other meeting places; schools; and local shops are important to the communities that they serve, and they improve the sustainability of towns, villages, and rural areas. Cheshire East has a variety of different communities, ranging from large towns to villages and rural settlements. There is also a network of formal and informal community groups, which together provide an enormous range of activities, support, and services.

### Question 11e

How can the local plan support existing and/or proposed community facilities?

<sup>44</sup> Available at [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire\\_east\\_local\\_plan/site-allocations-and-policies/sadpd-examination/documents/examination-library/ED07-Site-Selection-Methodology-Report.pdf](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/site-allocations-and-policies/sadpd-examination/documents/examination-library/ED07-Site-Selection-Methodology-Report.pdf)

## Your town or village

**11.19** The new local plan may also be able to include policies to address specific issues in specific towns or villages. For example, the current plan includes specific policies to guide the regeneration and improvement of Crewe town centre and Macclesfield town centre. Other ways in which it could help include (for example) the provision of affordable housing for local people, directing development to locations where it can help to contribute towards the provision of a particular piece of infrastructure, or allocation of smaller sites in villages to help maintain local shops and facilities.

**11.20** Cheshire East is one of the leading areas in the country for the production of neighbourhood plans, with 38 completed neighbourhood plans<sup>45</sup> in place. These plans form part of the statutory development plan for Cheshire East and their policies must be considered in making decisions on planning applications. They are produced by local town or parish councils, with their preparation often led by a neighbourhood planning working group to draw in wider community participation and support. Place specific issues are often best addressed in these more local neighbourhood plans, but there may be a role for the new local plan to reflect local aspirations and priorities as well.

### Question 11f

Are there any specific issues in your town, village or local area that the new local plan should help to address? Please tell us what the issue is, which town or village it affects and how you think the new local plan could help to address the issue.

## Other towns and villages matters

### Question 11g

Are there any other matters related to towns and villages that the new local plan should consider?

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<sup>45</sup> Completed neighbourhood plans are all available at <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-plans/completed-neighbourhood-plans.aspx>

## 12 Rural matters

### Introduction

**12.1** Cheshire East is in large part a rural borough. The area contains many large and medium-sized towns, and other parts are influenced by the major Greater Manchester and Potteries conurbations, but there are also many deeply rural areas. The Cheshire countryside is highly valued by residents, visitors and businesses alike. From the sandstone ridge, across the Cheshire Plain and up to the Peak District Fringe, the borough's countryside is cherished for its scenic, recreational, aesthetic and productive qualities. The countryside in Cheshire East is also a working environment. Much of the land is fertile and the borough is an important area for food production. Many people live and work in the countryside, and rural tourism is an important part of the borough's economy.

**12.2** Further information on rural matters in Cheshire East can be found in the 'Rural matters topic paper'.

### Agriculture

#### Supporting agriculture

**12.3** Agriculture is vital for our food security and is an important part of the Cheshire East economy, employing around 4,000 people. Whilst many agricultural developments do not require planning permission and are allowed under "permitted development" rights set nationally, some types of developments do still fall within the remit of planning control and the current local plan includes a number of policies that are designed to support agriculture in Cheshire East. These include support for new agricultural buildings, proposals for farm diversification, and new dwellings for agricultural workers where there is an essential need for them to live at or close to their place of work.

#### Question 12a

What policies should be included in the new local plan to support the role of agriculture in Cheshire East?

#### Protection of agricultural land

**12.4** As Cheshire East is a food-producing area with a significant agricultural economy, but it also faces significant pressures for new development, the protection of agricultural land is of particular importance in the borough.

**12.5** The Agricultural Land Classification categorises land into grade 1-5 (with Grade 3 being subdivided into Grade 3a and Grade 3b). National policy defines the "best and most versatile agricultural land" as Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3a land. The

agricultural land in Cheshire East is predominantly Grade 3, with some areas of Grade 2 land on the Cheshire Plain and also some areas of Grade 4/Grade 5 land, particularly in the upland areas to the east of the borough.

**12.6** Under national policy, local plan policies should “take account of the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land” (Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3a), and the current local plan includes policies to protect this best and most versatile land wherever possible. However, given the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, this policy protection does not currently extend to lower quality agricultural land.

### Question 12b

What policies should be included in the new local plan to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land? How can the plan also recognise and promote the benefits of other agricultural land?

## The countryside

**12.7** National policy requires local plan policies to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, but recognises that some types of development should be allowed in rural areas. It requires the local plan to enable development to support the rural economy (including development for businesses, tourism, leisure and community facilities), support opportunities to bring forward rural affordable housing and allow homes for essential rural workers, such as those employed in agriculture or forestry.

**12.8** The current local plan establishes a more restrictive approach to development in the countryside than it does within our larger towns and villages. It allows for different types of development, provided it respects the character of the countryside, including agriculture, outdoor recreation, businesses, tourism, equestrian uses, infrastructure, some limited infilling, small affordable housing schemes, re-use or replacement of buildings, and limited extensions to buildings.

### Question 12c

What types of development should the new local plan allow for in countryside areas? What types of uses are appropriate in a rural area?

**12.9** Maintaining the character of the countryside whilst supporting the livelihoods of those who live and work there are significant and enduring tensions in Cheshire East. We also recognise that there are particular issues facing communities in more rural areas, such as the availability of public transport and access to education, community facilities and services.

**Question 12d**

Are there are other local plan policies that could help to support the sustainability of rural communities?

**Green Belt land**

**12.10** “Green Belt” is a planning policy designation with the fundamental aim of preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Green Belts have been defined around many of the country’s largest cities and conurbations, to prevent urban sprawl extending outwards into the surrounding areas. The term “Green Belt” is different from “greenfield”. A Green Belt covers a wide area and may include buildings, infrastructure, brownfield land and other degraded land, as well as large areas of undeveloped land. Greenfield land refers to all land (whether in the Green Belt or not) that has not been previously developed.

**12.11** There are areas of Green Belt in the north and south of Cheshire East, which are part of the Green Belts surrounding the Greater Manchester and Potteries conurbations.

**12.12** Development within Green Belt areas is restricted by national policy, but some types of development are allowed, such as agriculture, limited extensions, replacements buildings, limited infilling in villages, small affordable housing schemes and the re-use of previously developed land.

**12.13** As set out in national policy, the permanence of Green Belts is very important, and their boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances. The current local plan maintained the general extent of the Green Belt but did make alterations to the detailed Green Belt boundaries to identify enough land to meet development needs to 2030. It also identified areas of “safeguarded land”. This involved taking additional land out of the Green Belt to potentially assist in meeting longer-term development needs.

**Question 12e**

Are there any “exceptional circumstances” that would justify making further alterations to the Green Belt boundaries in the next local plan?

**Strategic green gaps**

**12.14** The area around Crewe lies beyond the Green Belts surrounding Greater Manchester and The Potteries. As Crewe has grown since the arrival of the railways in the 1830s, the loss of the gaps between Crewe, Nantwich and several other settlements has caused some settlements to merge into the Crewe urban area and very narrow gaps to remain in other cases.

**12.15** There has been a long-term local “green gap” policy that sets additional restrictions to development than the normal policy for the countryside and seeks to prevent settlements from merging, whilst protecting their separate identities and settings. The current policy protects the gaps between Crewe/Nantwich/Willaston/Wistaston, Crewe/Shavington/ Rope/Willaston, Crewe/Shavington/Basford/Weston, and Crewe/Haslington.

**12.16** In addition, there are a number of neighbourhood plans that include more local “gap” policies.

#### **Question 12f**

What approach should be taken to the strategic green gaps in the new local plan? Are there any other gaps that would warrant additional protection in the plan?

## **Other rural matters**

#### **Question 8i**

Are there any other rural matters that the new local plan should consider?



# 13 Minerals

## Introduction

**13.1** Minerals are an essential component in the creation of both a successful economy and a good quality of life. Aggregates and other types of construction minerals are needed to build homes, factories, offices, and transport infrastructure. Other minerals are used in industry, food production, agriculture and for leisure uses. Energy minerals like oil and gas provide the country with power and heating.

**13.2** Further information on the mineral resources and issues in Cheshire East can be found in the ‘Minerals topic paper’.

## Preparation of minerals and waste policies

**13.3** The council consulted on a draft minerals and waste plan in late 2022 but is now considering producing a single local plan to include all planning policies for its area. If this happens, all the responses and sites received following the previous 2017 and 2022 consultations will be considered during the preparation of the new draft local plan. The new minerals policies once approved will replace the saved policies contained within the Minerals Local Plan<sup>46</sup> prepared by Cheshire County Council, as well as Policy SE 10 in the Local Plan Strategy.

**13.4** A first step in preparing the minerals approach in the new local plan is to understand the mineral resource that is present in the borough, the likely required demand for each mineral over the plan period and the constraints that may limit the areas or amount of extraction that can occur, such as the impact on communities or the natural and historic environment.

### Question 13a

Should the council prepare a single local plan including minerals and waste policies, or should these continue to be progressed in a separate plan? Please give reasons for your answer.

## Background

### National planning policy

**13.5** The NPPF states ‘It is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy, and goods that the country needs. Since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long-term conservation.’ The NPPF also requires mineral planning authorities to ‘take account of the contribution that

46 Available at [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/saved\\_and\\_other\\_policies/cheshire\\_minerals\\_local\\_plan/cheshire\\_minerals\\_local\\_plan.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/saved_and_other_policies/cheshire_minerals_local_plan/cheshire_minerals_local_plan.aspx)

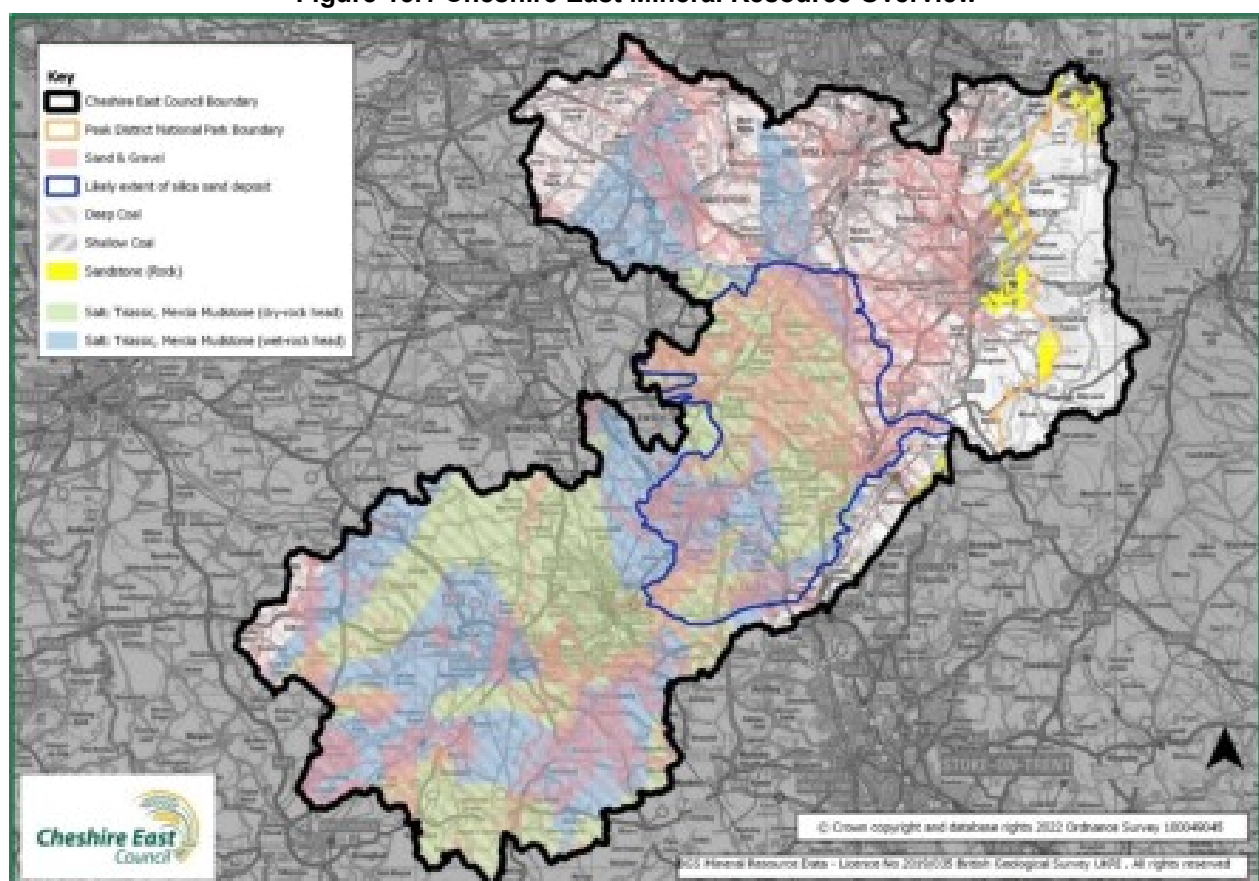
substitute, or secondary and recycled materials and minerals waste would make to the supply of materials, before considering extraction of primary materials, whilst aiming to source minerals supplies indigenously.

**13.6** The NPPF requires mineral planning authorities to safeguard mineral resources by defining mineral safeguarding areas and adopting appropriate policies so that known locations of specific minerals resources of local and national importance are not sterilised by non-mineral development where this should be avoided (whilst not creating a presumption that the resources defined will be worked). It also requires minerals planning authorities to plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates and industrial minerals, by making provision for the maintenance of landbanks of at least 7 years for sand and gravel; at least 10 years for crushed rock; and by maintaining a stock of reserves at silica sand (and other individual industrial mineral) sites of at least 10 years.

## Geological information

**13.7** The geology underlying Cheshire East is diverse and provides a range of mineral resources including clay, peat, coal, hydrocarbons (oil & gas), salt, sandstone, and sand (see Figure 13.1 below).

**Figure 13.1 Cheshire East Mineral Resource Overview**



## Permitted mineral extraction sites

**13.8** At the end of 2022 there were seventeen permitted mineral sites<sup>47</sup> within Cheshire East. Further detail on the status of each aggregate site can be found in the Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA 2023)<sup>48</sup>. However, White Moss Quarry is not included in the permitted reserve of aggregate sand sites owing to sand quality issues preventing its inclusion but is listed in the Table 1 below for completeness. The seventeen permitted sites comprise the following mineral types: peat (two sites); salt (brine) (one site); silica (industrial sand) four sites; construction sand (one site); and sandstone (nine sites).

**Table 13.1 Permitted mineral sites in Cheshire East**

Site	Mineral type	Commentary
White Moss Quarry, Nr Alsager	Peat	
Lindow Moss, Nr Wilmslow	Peat	
Warmingham Brinefield	Salt (brine)	
Arclid Quarry, Arclid, Nr Sandbach	Silica (industrial) sand	Mainly industrial sand with small quantities of construction sand
Bent Farm Quarry, Congleton	Silica (industrial) sand	Mainly industrial sand with small quantities of construction sand
Eaton Hall Quarry, Congleton	Silica (industrial) sand	Mainly industrial sand with quantities of construction sand
Rudheath Lodge Nr Allostock	Silica (industrial) sand	Mainly industrial sand with quantities of construction sand
White Moss Quarry Nr Alsager	Construction sand	Construction sand, due to poor sand quality this site is excluded from the overall sand reserves in the borough
Bridestone Quarry, Congleton	Sandstone	Building/dimension/ ornamental stone
Bridge Quarry, Kerridge, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building/dimension/ ornamental stone
Endon Quarry, Kerridge, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building stone and aggregate
Marksend Quarry, Kerridge, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building stone and aggregate
Gawsworth & Rough Hey Quarry, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Aggregate

<sup>47</sup> Peat and salt minerals and the permitted sites fall outside the scope of the LAA and are not reported within that assessment

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/researchand-evidence/minerals-and-waste/cec-laa-2023-2022-data-v2-ratified.pdf>

Site	Mineral type	Commentary
Lee Hills (also known as Croker Farm Quarry) Macclesfield	Sandstone	Aggregate
Ralph Henshaw Rainow, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building stone and aggregate
Sycamore Quarry Kerridge, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building stone and aggregate

**13.9** The current activity on these sites is summarised below by mineral type:

- Sand - At the end of 2022, there were five active sand sites extracting aggregate and silica (industrial) sands, although White Moss is excluded from the sand reserve. The former Dingle Bank Quarry in Chelford was in its restoration/aftercare phase.
- Sandstone - There were six active sandstone quarries and three were inactive.
- Salt - Controlled Solution Brine Mining - Warmingham Brinefields for salt (brine) was active.
- Peat - Lindow Moss, Wilmslow, the commercial extraction of peat cessation is linked to a planning permission for a small housing development which was permitted<sup>49</sup>. This means that peat extraction can only take place if it is required for restoration purposes i.e., rewetting of the peat bogs.
- White Moss Quarry, near Alsager has an extant planning permission which allows peat extraction to 2028.

## Meeting the requirements for minerals

**13.10** Further information on whether the council is currently meeting any national requirements of need is provided below by mineral type.

### Salt

**13.11** The Cheshire salt resource is one of the most significant nationally and accounts for some 85% of UK production. Rock salt is extracted from below ground via a mine-head located in Winsford in the neighbouring council area of Cheshire West and Chester, controlled solution brine mining takes place at the Warmingham Brinefields below Cheshire East and is piped directly to the British Salt production facility at Middlewich for processing. This salt is used as an essential raw material in chemical, pharmaceutical manufacturing and food production and is supplied to end users nationwide. As salt extraction within Cheshire is essential to both the local and national economy, the local plan will need to ensure that there will be a steady and adequate supply of salt throughout the plan period.

<sup>49</sup> The S106 on the housing permission (15/0016M) says in Schedule 1 that there shall be no commencement of development on the housing site until they have commenced development on the restoration permission. Additionally condition 1 of the permission on the peat site says that there shall be no further peat extraction within the application site other than where required for the implementation of the restoration scheme.

## Sand

**13.12** Sand extraction is also important in Cheshire East with the sand resource consisting of both aggregate (construction) and silica (industrial) sand. The borough has historically been a major regional resource for construction sand for use both as mortar and fill material, but this has declined in the last decade owing to existing aggregate sand quarries being worked out and the permitted reserve not being replenished through new sites or planning permissions.

**13.13** Silica sand remains a nationally and locally significant resource of industrial sands with extraction taking place at four quarries. Whilst silica sand is the primary material extracted at these quarries, varying amounts of aggregate sand is also produced depending on the characteristics of the permitted area being worked.

**13.14** To meet the requirements of the NPPF, Cheshire East needs to make provision for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates. The latest ratified LAA 2023 (2022 data) reported an aggregate sand and gravel landbank of 5 years based on average sales over the past 10 years. The council's preferred local rate method identified an even smaller landbank of four years. Both methodologies are below the NPPF requirement of at least seven years with a declining sand reserve of less than two years remaining (at the end of 2022).

**13.15** The entire sand reserve in Cheshire East at the end of 2022 was estimated to be 14.5 million tonnes, with the majority being silica (industrial) sand. The extent of the aggregate sand and gravel reserve will of course fluctuate each year depending on the actual rate of extraction and the extent to which they are replenished through new planning permissions.

## Silica (industrial) sand

**13.16** The borough contains high quality silica sands which are nationally relatively scarce. The British Geological Survey (BGS) have identified the Cheshire resource as one of the most important in the country providing almost 44% of the total production in England in 2018. Silica sand is used primarily for specialist purposes due to its physical and chemical composition. It is referred to as an industrial mineral.

**13.17** At the end of 2022, the council estimated that two of the four silica sand quarries met NPPF requirements of having a stock of reserves equivalent to at least average sales in the past 10 years, whilst the other two quarries did not.

## Sandstone (crushed rock)

**13.18** The NPPF requires Cheshire East to make provision for a steady and adequate supply of crushed rock aggregate, with a landbank of at least 10 years over the plan period. Whilst there is a sandstone reserve of approximately 4.86 million tonnes and the permitted sites having planning permission beyond 2035, these supply the building/dimension or ornamental stone markets rather than the aggregate market. The sites previously used for producing aggregate crushed rock in the borough have been inactive for a prolonged period. In view of this position, it has been determined that there is currently no permitted crushed rock aggregate reserve in Cheshire East. This means that the council is currently entirely reliant on crushed rock imports from outside of the

borough. The LAA 2023 presents the methodology for forecasting demand for crushed rock aggregate for the Cheshire sub region (which includes Cheshire West and Chester Council) based on the average of the 2014 and 2019 import data for crushed rock of some 1.84 million tonnes. This is the base date starting point for forecasting future demand over the period 2023 to 2042 and has been updated to the 2022 baseline of 1.91 million tonnes. Annual demand for the Cheshire sub region is 2.36 million tonnes with a total requirement of 47.3 million tonnes between 2023 to the end of 2042.

**13.19** The forecasts and supply requirements for aggregate minerals are currently based on the draft Minerals and Waste Plan which had a timescale to the end of 2041. Clearly as the new local plan period is determined, the supply requirements and forecasts of need will be extrapolated to the new local plan end date.

## Energy minerals

**13.20** Energy minerals include coal, oil, and gas. They remain an important source of energy that underpins much activity in the modern world. This includes powering industry to produce everyday goods, heat homes, as well as provide fuel for transport to supply and carry people and goods.

### Coal

**13.21** Coal is present beneath much of Cheshire East. It is mostly buried at great depths beneath much younger geological layers. There are currently no active coal workings in the borough. There is a history of mining around Poynton and Mow Cop where coal seam come closer to the surface. The council does not think it is necessary to make specific provision for coal mining in the plan. Government proposals centre around reducing climate change by scaling up the development of clean power generation and energy efficiency measures. These include accelerating efforts towards the phasing down of unabated coal power and phasing out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. Therefore, the council will consider any proposals for coal extraction against the relevant development plan policies and the NPPF.

### Hydrocarbons (oil and gas)

**13.22** Reserves of oil and gas are referred to as either conventional or unconventional hydrocarbons depending on the nature of the geology where they are found, and, as a result, how easy they are to extract. Conventional hydrocarbons are relatively easy to extract through normal oil and gas wells. While some hydrocarbon exploration has taken place in the past, there are no wells or planning permissions associated with conventional hydrocarbon activity in Cheshire East.

**13.23** Unconventional hydrocarbons refer to oil and gas that is trapped within rocks of low permeability and, as a result, these hydrocarbons are more difficult to extract. The unconventional resources likely to be of relevance to Cheshire East are shale gas and coalbed methane. Hydraulic fracturing commonly known as “fracking” is a technique used in the extraction of gas from shale rock. Coalbed methane occurs when methane is bound within coal by a process known as adsorption, namely where gas molecules adhere to surfaces or fractures within the coal. It is extracted by borehole in a similar



process to shale gas but, instead of injecting water at high pressure to fracture the rock, the gas is released from the coalbed by pumping out the water that occurs naturally in coal seams.

**13.24** The exploration, appraisal and extraction of hydrocarbons are controlled by the government through a licensing system, with relevant consents being required from the MPA, Environment Agency and Health and Safety Executive. The latest (14th) round of Petroleum Exploration and Development Licences (PEDL) were announced in December 2015, with companies invited to bid for exclusive rights to specific areas. There are six PEDL areas covering ten grids of land within or partly within Cheshire East, which were issued through the 14th Onshore Licensing round. The licences convey no permission for operations on land but give exclusivity for exploration operations against other oil and gas exploration companies within a defined area. The PEDLs issued in Cheshire East all have extant status.

**13.25** No applications have been made to date within the borough because of the issuing of these licenses and no sites in Cheshire East have planning permission to explore, appraise or extract unconventional hydrocarbons such as shale gas. In addition, the government moratorium on fracking related applications and activity in England remains in place. However, the council considers it prudent to include a hydrocarbon policy in the new plan that includes for unconventional hydrocarbon extraction in case this position should change during the plan period.

## Safeguarding of mineral resources and infrastructure

**13.26** The NPPF requires mineral planning authorities to use Mineral Safeguarding Areas to identify and safeguard mineral resources in their area. These provide long-term protection for mineral resources to ensure they are not sterilized by major non-mineral development, thereby making them available as a potential resource for use by future generations. The MSAs and mineral supply sites / infrastructure that have been identified in the council's draft Minerals and Waste Plan (MWP) are shown on the council's interactive mapping. These are based on BGS geological maps and the recommendations contained within the Cheshire Sand Study 2019<sup>50</sup>, which indicates the likely extent of the silica sand resource in Cheshire East beyond that previously shown on the 2006 BGS Mineral Resource Map of Cheshire.

**13.27** In response to received comments on the draft MWP consultation, the council is considering whether to extend the identified mineral safeguarding areas to include a proposed safeguarding buffer zone of 250m beyond the known resource. This may better define the MSA for the purposes of planning application consultations.

### Question 13b

Do you have any comments on the policies the council should develop to meet national requirements around the safeguarding of mineral resources and the need to provide for a steady and adequate mineral supply?

50 <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire-east-sand-study-2019-20-final-report.pdf>



## Other minerals matters

### Question 13c

Are there any other minerals matters or specific issues that the development of mineral policies should address in the new local plan?

# 14 Waste

## Introduction

**14.1** Cheshire East Council is the waste planning authority (WPA) for the borough excluding the area within the Peak District National Park. This means it is responsible for creating a planning policy framework for waste that will:

- take account of the wider policy context for waste set out at the national level
- safeguard existing waste management capacity
- provide for suitable additional provision, and
- help determine waste related planning applications

**14.2** Further information on the waste matters in Cheshire East can be found in the 'Waste topic paper'.

**14.3** The council consulted on a draft minerals and waste plan in late 2022 but is now considering producing a single local plan to include all planning policies for its area (including those on minerals and waste). Further information and a question about this issue is set out in the previous section on minerals. If this happens, all the waste responses and sites received following the previous 2017 and 2022 consultations will be considered during the preparation of the new draft local plan.

## Waste planning policy

### National

**14.4** National guidance on waste is set out in the 2014 National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW) document. This requires waste planning authorities to drive waste up the waste hierarchy. It also recognises the need for a mix of types and scale of facilities, considers the need for additional waste management capacity of more than local significance, and recognises the positive contribution that waste management can bring to the development of sustainable communities. The NPPW should be read in conjunction with the NPPF, The Waste Management Plan for England and National Policy Statements for Waste Water and Hazardous Waste.

### Local

**14.5** At the local level, waste specific policies can be found in the 2017 Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (namely Policy SE11 'Sustainable Management of Waste') and the saved policies of the 2007 Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan prepared by Cheshire County Council. These waste policies together with other relevant policies in the council's development framework are currently used to help determine any planning applications for waste in the borough. All these policies will be replaced once the new local plan is adopted.

## Developing the evidence base for waste

### Waste needs assessments

**14.6** The council periodically commissions a waste needs assessment to understand the waste context and challenge for Cheshire East. Its purpose is to identify the amount and type of waste currently produced in the borough; forecast the amount of waste likely to be produced over the plan period; understand the extent to which existing facilities can satisfy the identified capacity requirements; determine the waste management capacity gap; and assess the extent to which this gap can be sustainably met by using available sub-regional capacity outside of the borough. The waste needs assessment (WNA) is a key evidence document that the council has prepared to enable such considerations to take place.

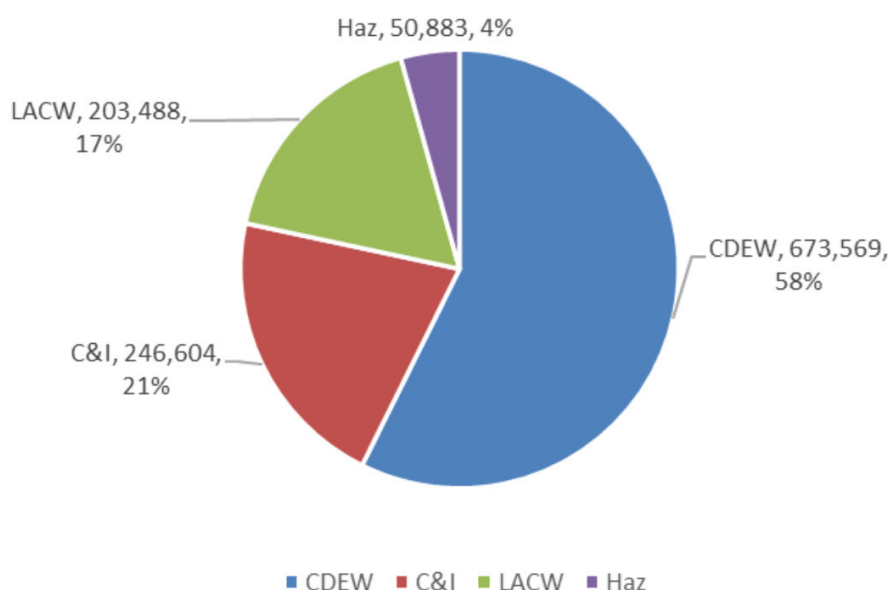
**14.7** The latest WNA was prepared in 2023 and covers period 2021 to the end of 2041. It considered the following waste streams:

- local authority collected waste (municipal/household)
- commercial and industrial
- construction, demolition and excavation
- hazardous
- low level radioactive
- agricultural, and
- wastewater

### The findings of the 2023 waste needs assessment

**14.8** The latest WNA found that over 1.2 million tonnes of waste arose in the Cheshire East plan area in 2021, comprising the following principal waste streams: local authority collected waste (LACW) 203,488 tonnes (17%); commercial, demolition and excavation waste (CDEW) 579,569 tonnes (58%); commercial and industrial waste (C&I) 246,604 tonnes (21%); and hazardous waste (Haz) 50,883 tonnes (4%).

**Figure 14.1 Principal waste streams**



**14.9** It concluded that there appears to be sufficient existing consented capacity within Cheshire East to meet the predicted management requirements for waste required for the following waste streams up to the end of 2041:

- recycling and composting,
- inert recovery; and
- hazardous waste.

**14.10** It also confirmed that no specific new management provision was considered necessary for the following waste streams to the end of 2041:

- low level radioactive waste,
- agricultural; and
- wastewater

**14.11** The predicted principal shortfall in capacity to the end of 2041 was found to be for capacity to manage residual waste (predominantly comprising LACW and C&I waste that cannot be recycled). However, the WNA considered that the predicted shortfall in non-inert landfill could be met initially (until 2037) at the Kinderton Lodge facility in the neighbouring borough of Cheshire West and Chester Council. The report considered that any shortfall in capacity required after 2037 could be more than met by remaining non-inert landfill capacity elsewhere in the northwest region.

**14.12** The WNA also predicted a shortfall in 'other' recovery capacity throughout the entire Plan period which may be met by existing capacity elsewhere in the northwest region.

## Safeguarding of waste management facilities

**14.13** It is likely that the council will propose to safeguard all waste management sites (where these are in existing lawful use), have a planning permission for waste management but are yet to be developed, or will help provide a borough wide network of waste management provision. This ensures that the impact of non-waste related development on existing facilities, and on future sites and areas allocated for waste management, is acceptable and does not interfere with the efficient operation of waste facilities.

**14.14** It is likely that the council will propose to include for a 250 metre buffer on the interactive mapping that accompanies the new local plan to indicate where proposals for development will require the applicant to submit appropriate information to demonstrate that their development proposals do not create unreasonable restrictions on the waste facilities. If unacceptable impacts are found to occur the applicant should demonstrate how those impacts can be successfully mitigated. This information may be required, at the discretion of the planning authority, for proposals within 400 metres of an operational or safeguarded waste site and in more limited cases, for proposals at a greater distance if it is considered that significant adverse impacts are reasonably likely to arise.

**14.15** Currently Cheshire East has a network of seven household waste recycling centres (HWRC), The network of HWRCs plays an important role in the delivery of sustainable waste management in the borough and contribute to the reuse and recycling

of waste by local residents and driving waste management practices up the waste hierarchy. Therefore, the draft local plan is likely to safeguard the HWRCs as strategic sites.

#### **Question 14a**

Should the council safeguard all waste sites or just those considered to be of strategic importance?

#### **Question 14b**

Should the council have a dual safeguarding approach of identifying a minimum buffer around waste management facilities and infrastructure, as well as a wider buffer where this is considered appropriate?

### **Other waste matters**

#### **Question 14c**

Are there any other waste matters or specific issues that the development of waste policies should address in the new local plan?

# 15 Other issues and next steps

## Other issues

**15.1** This issues paper sets out a number of topics and issues that the new local plan will need to address.

### Question 15

Are there any other issues that the new local plan should address, that are not covered within any of the topic areas set out in this issues paper?

## Next steps

**15.2** The consultation closes on XXXXX. All the responses will be published on our planning policy consultation portal, accessed via our website [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/newlocalplan](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/newlocalplan). Responses will include the name and organisation of the person making the response in line with our privacy notice.

**15.3** We will also produce a report of consultation, summarising the responses made which will be published on our website.

**15.4** The issues paper is the first stage in starting to shape the new local plan and there will be a number of further engagement opportunities to help shape the plan. The details and timing of these will be dependent on the government's anticipated local plan reforms.

**15.5** Updates on the progress of the new local plan will be published on the council's website.