



Consultation Report

Congleton Neighbourhood Plan

Prepared on behalf of Congleton Town Council

July 2025

Urban Imprint Limited

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The following Consultation Report seeks to provide an overview of the consultation and engagement of stakeholders in preparation of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan. The document collates work sourced from a range of different types of events and methods, all of which have sought to collect the views of local residents, landowners and agents, businesses, statutory bodies, and local groups. The range of different methods used within engagement relating to the Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that all those who want to input into the Neighbourhood Plan's preparation have the opportunity to do so, and the plan seeks to represent all stakeholders.

Timeline

- 1.2. Congleton Town Council originally began to engage in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan in Summer 2014, becoming formally designated on 6th November 2014. Following this, the Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan working group, aided by an independent planning consultant, began to prepare a neighbourhood plan, successfully progressing the plan throughout several regulation stages up to the plan's examination in 2018. These stages include early stakeholder and public engagement, the preparation of a regulation 14 consultation draft plan, undertaking of regulation 14 consultation, implementing changes post-consultation and an eventual submission of the Neighbourhood Plan to Cheshire East Council in Autumn 2018.
- 1.3. The examination of the original Congleton Neighbourhood Plan began in December 2018, however, due to a number of substantial issues raised by the Inspector during that examination, the Town Council subsequently decided to withdraw the plan from examination.
- 1.4. In 2023, Congleton Town Council sought assistance from Urban Imprint in an attempt to overcome the original issues from the original plan's examination. Following a review of the original plan and the Inspector's concerns with a number of elements, the decision was made by the Town Council to restart the Neighbourhood Plan process from the start, carrying forward remaining appropriate policies from the original draft plan into a new plan. Urban Imprint has since assisted with the plan's progression since this point, which includes the preparation of a draft plan, undertaking of regulation 14 consultation and the carrying out of amendments pursuant to comments received as part of that consultation process.
- 1.5. As a result of this complex timeline, this Consultation Report seeks to provide details of all engagement and consultation which has taken place since the beginning of the new plan's preparation in 2023. However, this should be read in conjunction with Appendix 1, which provides a copy of the original consultation statement which formed part of the original regulation 15 submission in 2018.

- 1.6. Whilst ultimately now relating to a Neighbourhood Plan of different contents relative to that now formally submitted, it nonetheless provides important details of the early stage stakeholder involvement which has continued to form the basis for the plan now submitted. Paired with information relating to more recent consultation and engagement from 2023 onwards, this report holistically demonstrates the extent to which the plan has been led by feedback from stakeholders at various different stages of preparation since 2014.
- 1.7. Within this report, key findings from each form of consultation are recorded and summarised in order to draw out the key themes and concerns raised by residents and stakeholders. The comments will be grouped and ranked according to the frequency that they are raised.

Neighbourhood Plan designation area

- 1.8. The Congleton Neighbourhood Plan area was originally designated on 6th November 2014 and then redesignated on 1 October 2024. The designation letter and neighbourhood plan area which relate to the most recent designation are available in Appendix 2.

The project team

- 1.9. In order to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan, the Town Council created a working group (sometimes referred to as steering group). The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group has had a number of members over its lifetime but has generally had a core membership of Town Councillors. The members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group have kept the Town Council up to date with the development of the plan through updates provided to the Town Council Planning Committee and at other Town Council committee meetings. The community more widely has been kept informed through:
- The Parish Council website
 - Updates in monthly and quarterly newsletters
 - The use of Parish noticeboards
 - Reports to the annual town meeting

2. Overview of consultation activities

2.1. The following table sets out the range of consultation activities which have taken place in respect of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan. Asterisked activities denote activities undertaken prior to Urban Imprint's involvement. The details of these activities has been extracted from Appendix 1, where further detail can also be found.

Activity	Date	Method	Output
<i>Original designation of the NP area*</i>	November 2014	Formal consultation and subsequent designation by Cheshire East Council	NP area designated Boundary (now superceded)
<i>Opening Questionnaire*</i>	May – June 2015	11,500 physical questionnaires delivered to all households in postcode CW12 1–4. Further physical copies made available at other locations in the town, with an electronic version added to websites.	Helped publicise the start of the Neighbourhood Plan process and obtained baseline information.
<i>Initial Consultation*</i>	May - June 2015	Competition for young people within the community to help engage them within the NP process and obtain opinions. Meetings also held with developers to understand their aspirations.	Helped publicise the start of the Neighbourhood Plan process and obtained baseline information.
<i>Detailed Questionnaire*</i>	December – January 2016	Online questionnaire with physical paper copies as necessary. Publicised using banners, press releases and newsletters.	Helped to obtain needs, desires and opinions which drove the creation of original Neighbourhood Plan policies
<i>Topic Specific Consultation*</i>	Throughout 2016	More detailed, topic specific consultation with local groups, organisations and professional bodies to help refine the policies within the plan.	Input and recommendations to help refine Neighbourhood Plan policies
<i>Regulation 14 consultation*</i>	October – November 2017	Consultation on the first draft of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Formal consultation with responses received via feedback form, online survey and letter	Comments received and taken onboard. Updated and amended Neighbourhood Plan document

Neighbourhood Plan withdrawn from Examination			
A. Topic Specific Consultation	Throughout 2024	Informal consultation with specific groups in order to refine policy contents and understand concerns and desires	Input and recommendations to help refine Neighbourhood Plan policies
Re-designation of new NP area	1 October 2024	Formal consultation and subsequent designation by Cheshire East Council	NP area designated Boundary (Appendix 2)
B. Regulation 14 Consultation	October - December 2024	Consultation on the second draft of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Formal consultation with responses received via online survey and letter.	Comments received and analysed. Recommendations report prepared, and Neighbourhood Plan updated and amended.

A. Topic Specific Consultation

What was the aim?

- 2.2. Having engaged the services of Urban Imprint to assist with progressing the Neighbourhood Plan forwards again, the working group began to re-visit policies in order to ensure that they incorporated the views of local groups and organisations. The primary objective of this exercise was to investigate whether the feedback obtained throughout 2016 from the same groups and organisations was still relevant and/or accurate.

What happened?

- 2.3. This informal round of consultation consisted of:
- Issuing of the draft plan to a range of groups including:
 - Congleton Sustainable Travel Group
 - Ruth Benson (author of the Landscape Character Assessment)
 - Equal Access Advisory Group to Congleton Town Council
 - Congleton Sustainability Group
 - Congleton Climate Action Group; and
 - other individuals formerly part of the Neighbourhood Plan steering group.

Turn out and response

- 2.4. Feedback was received from each group, with comments provided on each section of the Plan most immediately relevant to a group's specific interests. The feedback provided was considered at subsequent meetings of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and changes made to the plan in response.

B. Regulation 14 consultation 2024

What was the aim?

- 2.5. This is the statutory period of consultation for a Neighbourhood Plan and was therefore conducted in a formal manner in line with the requirements set out within the relevant regulations. The Neighbourhood Plan itself was published in a graphical format and sought to be accessible and in written plain English wherever possible. Maps and visuals also sought to be simple and easy to comprehend.

What happened?

- 2.6. An eight week period of consultation ran between 10 October and 9 December 2024. The draft Congleton Neighbourhood Plan was made available online on the Parish Council's website, with hard copies provided in various locations (Appendix 3). An online survey was created using Survey Monkey and a hard copy questionnaire was also available.
- 2.7. In order to publicise the plan and the ongoing consultation, the following methods were used as a means of advertisement and engagement:
- Updates within Newsletters, explaining how individuals can respond (Appendix 4);
 - A range of social media campaigns and adverts, including information relating to drop-sessions (Appendix 5);
 - Running of Stalls within the Town Centre on Saturday mornings and at the Congleton Makers Market, attended by Councillors (Appendix 6);
 - Leaflets prepared and handed out at various events (Appendix 7);
 - Consultation advertised on Notice Boards within the Town (Appendix 8);
 - Emails sent to statutory bodies (Appendix 9); and
 - Columns within local newspapers (Appendix 10)
- 2.8. A timeline indicating the methodology and organisation of the planned consultation events and outreach methods can be found within Appendix 11.

Turn out and response

- 2.9. Almost 400 responses were received in total via an online survey, letters and emails. Responses were received from members of the public, local groups and organisations, local landowners and developers. Appendix 12 provides a specific Regulation 14 Consultation Report, presenting analysis of feedback received as part of the consultation for the working group to digest.
- 2.10. As part of this feedback analysis, a series of detailed comments were provided by Cheshire East Council. As a result, a meeting was held between the Neighbourhood

Plan Working Group, Urban Imprint and planning policy officers at Cheshire East Council in order to discuss the comments and to agree a way forward in respect of amendments. Minutes of that meeting can be viewed at Appendix 13.

- 2.11. Having analysed the feedback which had arrived as part of the consultation, Urban Imprint proceeded to prepare a Recommendations Report (Appendix 14). This provided a starting point for the Council's working group to begin to consider how they could consider amending or revising the plan in order to take account of the feedback received.
- 2.12. Throughout Spring and early Summer 2025, the Town Council discussed amendments to the plan in conjunction with Urban Imprint. This has led to the preparation of a final draft Neighbourhood Plan now submitted to the Borough Council via the regulation 15 process.

3. Appendices (provided as separate PDFs due to filesize)

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