



Crewe Green
Cheshire
CW1 5UW

30th August 2026

Cheshire East Council (Strategic Planning Team)
Delamere House
Delamere Street
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Re. Response to the Cheshire East Local Plan Scoping Consultation

Introduction – what kind of Cheshire East do we want in 2045?

I attended the Cheshire East Local Plan Community Assembly on 18th August 2026 and actively participated in the activities and discussions, including a SWOT analysis of Cheshire East today, consideration of key issues and priorities and an exercise imagining what Cheshire East should look like in 2045.

The themes identified (housing and affordability, jobs and the economy, transport and connectivity, the natural environment, climate change, town centres, health and wellbeing, infrastructure, community and equality) are fundamentally interconnected. The new Local Plan must therefore consider these issues collectively rather than allowing housing delivery to become the overriding driver of the spatial strategy.

I was born in Cheshire East and have lived here all my life. I am now 42 and am raising two young children here. I have witnessed significant change, particularly over the last decade, and I am increasingly concerned about the direction in which the area is heading. When I imagine Cheshire East in 2045, I want my children to inherit somewhere with identifiable villages, accessible countryside, productive farmland, functioning infrastructure, thriving communities and a strong sense of place. This is not opposition to development. It is a concern about where, how and at what cumulative cost development takes place.

Once agricultural land is built upon, wildlife habitats are fragmented, rural landscapes altered and settlements physically joined together, these changes cannot simply be reversed. The Local Plan therefore has a responsibility to consider not just how many homes can be accommodated, but what kind of place Cheshire East is becoming. Against this background, we wish to highlight several key issues that we believe should be considered as part of the scoping consultation, as outlined below.

1. Protect the Crewe Green–Haslington–Crewe Green Strategic Green Gap and prevent coalescence

Having lived in the parish of Crewe Green for the last ten years, I have particular concerns about the future of Crewe Green, Haslington and the surrounding countryside on the eastern edge of Crewe.

My strongest concern is the potential erosion of the existing Crewe–Haslington Strategic Green Gap and the consequent coalescence of Crewe, Crewe Green and Haslington.

This is not simply countryside that residents would prefer to remain undeveloped. The adopted Local Plan specifically identifies Crewe/Haslington as a Strategic Green Gap. Policy PG5 states that Strategic Green Gaps are intended to:

- provide long-term protection against coalescence;
- protect the setting and separate identity of settlements; and
- retain the existing settlement pattern by maintaining openness.

These are precisely the qualities now at risk.

The purpose of the Green Gap was established in the previous Local Plan. It is therefore perplexing that land which was considered important enough to protect from coalescence is now potentially being viewed as an opportunity for substantial further development. The Council should not allow the Green Gap to be eroded incrementally through a series of individual developments. A development can appear acceptable in isolation while contributing to a cumulative outcome that is entirely contrary to the purpose of the Green Gap. The test must therefore be the long-term cumulative effect on settlement separation, not simply whether an individual site can technically accommodate development.

Once Crewe, Crewe Green and Haslington become physically and visually joined, the separate identity of these communities will be permanently diminished. The new Local Plan should retain and strengthen the strategic purpose of this Green Gap and establish a clear presumption against development that would materially contribute to settlement coalescence.

2. Protect the identity and character of Crewe Green and surrounding villages

Crewe Green is not simply undeveloped land on the edge of Crewe. The emerging Weston & Crewe Green Neighbourhood Plan describes Crewe Green as a geographically large rural area, much of it historically associated with the Duchy of Lancaster, with a well-wooded and very rural character comprising scattered cottages and farms. The Neighbourhood Plan also recognises the importance of retaining settlement character, protecting rural edges and maintaining green gaps which provide effective separation between settlements. It specifically seeks to contain settlement spread and preserve the surrounding countryside. This principle needs to be reflected in the new Local Plan.

There is a fundamental difference between small-scale development which responds sensitively to an existing settlement and large-scale suburban expansion which effectively extends Crewe into the surrounding countryside. I am particularly concerned about the latter. The prospect of large, standardised developments by major housebuilders such as Redrow, Bovis and others surrounding existing rural properties would fundamentally change the character and setting of Crewe Green. These are not simply additional houses; collectively, they risk replacing a distinctive rural landscape and settlement pattern with a generic suburban extension of Crewe.

This is especially difficult to reconcile with the fact that Cheshire East planning officers have previously recognised our properties and the surrounding area as rural and of character typical of Crewe Green. I recognise that previous planning decisions do not prevent future development. However, the Council should apply its recognition of the area's rural character consistently when determining the appropriate scale and form of future growth.

The new Local Plan should therefore protect the distinctive identity of Crewe Green and Haslington and require development to respond to existing settlement pattern, landscape character, scale, views and rural setting. The objective should not simply be to avoid technically unacceptable development; rather, it should be to avoid creating a place that no longer resembles the community that existed before the development took place.

3. The emerging Weston & Crewe Green Neighbourhood Plan should inform the new Local Plan

The emerging Weston & Crewe Green Neighbourhood Plan provides important local evidence about the character, capacity and pressures facing these communities. It identifies approximately 650 homes associated with South Cheshire Growth Village and more than 800 homes associated with Basford East, alongside significant employment development. It recognises that this level of growth will have substantial implications for traffic, infrastructure and quality of life. It also recognises that several communities are poorly served by public transport, making private vehicles essential for many residents.

The plan's housing policy states that development should be in character with existing settlements, while its settlement policies seek to protect surrounding countryside and maintain effective green gaps between settlements. Its environmental evidence also identifies the importance of agricultural land, mature trees and hedgerows and the risk that continued development will fragment habitats and isolate wildlife populations. Hence, the new Local Plan should build on this evidence, rather than undermine the locally expressed objective of retaining the character and separation of these settlements.

4. Development must be assessed cumulatively, not site by site

One of my greatest concerns is that development is too often considered on a site-by-site basis, whereas residents experience the combined effect of all development.

The relevant question should not simply be “*Can this individual site accommodate housing?*”. Rather, it should be “*What will the combined effect of all existing, permitted, committed and potential development be on Crewe, Crewe Green, Haslington and the surrounding countryside by 2045?*” The cumulative assessment should include housing numbers, highway and junction capacity, school places, GP and dental capacity, public transport, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, drainage and sewerage, flood risk, biodiversity and ecological connectivity, agricultural land and farming businesses, landscape character, settlement identity and the continuing erosion of the Strategic Green Gap.

The area has already absorbed substantial growth. A collection of developments may each appear individually defensible while collectively producing precisely the urban sprawl and settlement coalescence that strategic planning is intended to prevent. The new Local Plan should therefore establish a clear cumulative impact assessment requirement for areas experiencing concentrated growth.

5. Infrastructure must genuinely lead development

I strongly support an infrastructure-led approach to development. The Council's new Local Plan process recognises the importance of infrastructure, including schools, transport links, green spaces and community facilities. However, the experience of communities is that housing can be delivered considerably faster than the infrastructure required to support it and that promised improvements do not always materialise. Furthermore, the presence of a GP surgery, school or other facility within or near a village does not demonstrate that there is capacity for thousands of additional residents and before allocating further large-scale housing, Cheshire East should demonstrate sufficient capacity in primary and secondary schools, GP services, NHS dentistry, highway capabilities, public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure, drainage and sewerage and community facilities.

Infrastructure should be secured and delivered alongside development, rather than treated as an aspiration that may follow later.

6. Haslington Primary Academy demonstrates the limitations of relying on proximity

Haslington Primary Academy provides a clear example of why infrastructure capacity and actual travel behaviour matter. The school has a published capacity of 315 pupils and is effectively at capacity. Children also travel into Haslington from surrounding areas of Crewe, including newer housing developments. There is no school bus provision serving all of these journeys and public bus services are not a realistic alternative for many parents because of their frequency and reliability. Consequently, many families have little practical option other than travelling by car.

This is particularly important because a development should not be deemed sustainable simply because a school is geographically nearby. The school itself identifies congestion on Crewe Road at school times. The school car park is primarily for staff and official visitors, meaning that additional demand places pressure on surrounding roads and residential areas.

The situation is even more concerning for residents such as ourselves, living on Slaughter Hill. We live only a few hundred yards from the primary school, yet Slaughter Hill is currently too dangerous for us to walk our children to school, owing to speeding vehicles and the volume of buses and HGVs using this narrow stretch of road. These road-safety concerns have been raised repeatedly with Cheshire East Council over several years, but we have not seen adequate action to address them. This raises serious concerns about the safety of children walking to school and the suitability of further development in an area where existing transport infrastructure already presents significant safety challenges.

The Local Plan should therefore consider actual school capacity, travel patterns, school transport, public transport frequency, peak-time congestion, parking, pedestrian safety and the cumulative effect of future development.

7. Transport and connectivity

Transport and connectivity were identified as key themes at the scoping consultation, yet the proposed concentration of growth around Crewe and its eastern fringe risks increasing car dependency rather than reducing it. Crewe Green Roundabout and the surrounding road network already experience significant pressure, while the emerging Neighbourhood Plan recognises the transport challenges associated with existing and planned development.

If the Council is serious about climate change, net zero and sustainable transport, it must question the sustainability of developments where residents will remain heavily dependent on private cars. Transport assessments should consider actual observed conditions, not solely theoretical modelling, and must assess the cumulative effect of existing, permitted and proposed development.

8. Agricultural land, tenant farmers and food security

The countryside around Crewe Green and Haslington is not simply "greenfield land". It is productive agricultural land supporting farming businesses and, in some cases, tenant farmers whose livelihoods depend upon continued access to that land. Development can, therefore, result in more than the loss of a field. It can fragment farms, remove agricultural businesses, displace tenant farmers and permanently reduce the area's capacity to produce food. This is increasingly important in the context of national food security.

The Government's UK Food Security Report 2024 recognises land use, agricultural production, soil health and the resilience of food supply as important components of

UK food security. The Government's Land Use Framework for England, published in 2026, similarly recognises that England has finite land and that decisions must balance competing demands including housing, infrastructure, food systems, nature and climate resilience. The new Local Plan should therefore give full and proper consideration to the quality and productivity of agricultural land, cumulative land loss, the viability of farms and tenant farmers, soil health, food production and resilience, and the long-term consequences of permanently converting productive farmland to development, land that, once lost, cannot simply be recreated elsewhere.

9. Brownfield land should be prioritised

I strongly support a brownfield-first approach.

I recognise that not every brownfield site is suitable for housing and that brownfield land alone may not meet the entire housing requirement. Nevertheless, before productive agricultural land is released, the Council should demonstrate that suitable previously developed land has been properly identified and prioritised.

A relevant local example is Crewe 335 on Weston Road, a 335,403 sq ft logistics facility constructed on the former Old Tea Factory site. It was completed in April 2025 and is currently being marketed for occupation. I am not suggesting that a logistics facility should simply be converted into housing. The wider point is that Cheshire East continues to develop substantial amounts of previously developed land and employment floorspace while simultaneously considering the release of productive countryside. The new Local Plan should therefore provide transparent evidence of available brownfield land, vacant and underused previously developed sites, realistic development capacity and why additional agricultural greenfield land is required.

The short-term cost or convenience of developing greenfield land must not automatically outweigh its much greater long-term environmental, agricultural and social value.

10. Natural environment, biodiversity and climate resilience

The natural environment and climate change were rightly identified as key consultation themes. The countryside around Crewe Green and Haslington provides more than visual amenity. Agricultural land, mature trees, hedgerows, watercourses and connected habitats contribute to biodiversity, carbon storage, natural drainage, climate resilience and health and wellbeing. The emerging Neighbourhood Plan recognises the importance of these features and the risk of habitat fragmentation.

Biodiversity Net Gain should not be treated as sufficient justification for the loss of established countryside. A development may achieve an individual biodiversity calculation while the wider landscape becomes progressively fragmented. The new Local Plan should therefore consider biodiversity at a landscape and cumulative scale, protecting established ecological networks, hedgerows, mature trees, wildlife corridors and important habitats.

11. Health, wellbeing and community

Health and wellbeing should be considered more broadly than whether a development contains a small area of public open space. The loss of accessible countryside, increased traffic, congestion, reduced opportunities for walking and cycling, pressure on healthcare services and greater dependence on private vehicles all affect quality of life. The countryside around Crewe Green and Haslington is used by local residents and community groups, including young people through organisations such as Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies, Guides and similar groups.

There is a wider issue here. Young people are taught about protecting nature and the environment while simultaneously witnessing the gradual loss of the very spaces they are encouraged to value. The Local Plan should consider the legacy of its decisions for future generations, not simply the immediate economic benefits of development.

12. A responsibility to preserve local identity and history

There is a wider principle underpinning these concerns. The villages and parishes of Cheshire East have developed over generations. Their character is reflected in their landscapes, farms, lanes, buildings, communities and the physical separation between settlements. We are not simply owners of the land around us; we are custodians of it for the generations that follow. That does not mean that land must remain completely unchanged. It means that change should be responsible, proportionate and properly planned.

We have a responsibility to make every reasonable effort not to erase local history, landscape character and community identity through cumulative overdevelopment and poor spatial planning. A succession of large, standardised housing estates may meet a numerical housing target, but if the consequence is that distinctive parishes and villages become indistinguishable extensions of larger towns, then something of considerable value has been lost. That loss cannot be measured simply in housing numbers.

13. What I believe the new Local Plan should deliver

I ask Cheshire East Council to ensure that the new Local Plan:

1. Retains and strengthens the Crewe–Haslington Strategic Green Gap and prevents settlement coalescence.
2. Protects the distinct identity and rural character of Crewe Green, Haslington and surrounding villages.
3. Prevents the gradual replacement of distinctive rural communities with standardised suburban extensions.
4. Assesses the cumulative impact of all existing, permitted, committed and potential development.

5. Adopts an infrastructure-led approach, with capacity demonstrated before further large-scale housing is allocated.
6. Considers actual travel behaviour, car dependency, school journeys and public transport provision.
7. Protects productive agricultural land and considers impacts on farms and tenant farmers.
8. Gives proper weight to the strategic importance of agricultural land for food security, soil health, biodiversity and climate resilience.
9. Protects mature trees, hedgerows, habitats and wildlife corridors and assesses ecological impacts at a landscape scale.
10. Prioritises suitable brownfield and previously developed land and transparently demonstrates why further greenfield land is required.
11. Ensures drainage, sewerage and flood risk are assessed cumulatively and at an appropriate catchment scale.
12. Protects the landscape setting, views and character of existing settlements.
13. Ensures infrastructure is delivered alongside development rather than retrospectively.
14. Uses the 2045 vision to determine what Cheshire East should become, rather than simply how much development it can accommodate.

Conclusion

I recognise that Cheshire East needs new homes, employment opportunities and investment. I am not opposed to appropriate development. My concern is that the cumulative impact of development is changing the character of Cheshire East faster than communities can adapt to it, while infrastructure, transport and services struggle to keep pace.

The Crewe Green–Haslington area is a particularly important example. The Strategic Green Gap exists to prevent coalescence and protect the separate identity of settlements. The emerging Weston & Crewe Green Neighbourhood Plan reinforces the importance of rural character, green gaps, settlement identity and the surrounding countryside. The new Local Plan should not undermine those principles through incremental development. The question is not simply whether another housing development can be accommodated. The question is whether, when all the developments are considered together, Crewe Green and Haslington will still be recognisable as the communities they are today.

I urge Cheshire East Council to consider the long-term consequences of its spatial strategy and to resist the temptation to regard agricultural land and countryside simply as a housing reserve. We are custodians of this land for generations to come.

We have a responsibility to make every reasonable effort to protect the landscape, history, agricultural heritage, biodiversity and distinct identity of our communities rather than allowing them to be progressively erased by overdevelopment and poorly integrated planning.

When I think about Cheshire East in 2045, I want my children to inherit a place that has evolved, but has not lost itself. The proposals set out in this scoping consultation make me concerned about whether that future can be achieved without fundamentally changing the character of the places we call home. Growth should enhance Cheshire East, not erase the villages, landscapes and communities that make it Cheshire East.

Summary

Cheshire East needs new homes and investment, but growth must be planned around the long-term wellbeing and identity of its communities. The new Local Plan should prevent settlement coalescence, protect villages such as Crewe Green and Haslington, assess development cumulatively, ensure infrastructure keeps pace, prioritise brownfield land, and protect productive farmland, biodiversity and countryside. Development should enhance communities, not replace them with standardised suburban extensions. We are custodians of this land for generations to come; decisions made today will shape the Cheshire East our children inherit. Growth should enhance Cheshire East, not erase the places that make it Cheshire East.

Dr Kirsty A. Roberts