

Cheshire East Scoping Consultation

Land at Bradwall Road, Sandbach

Rowland Homes Limited

August 2026



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. These representations have been prepared by Marrons on behalf of Rowland Homes in response to the Cheshire East Local Plan Scoping Consultation. They are made in the context of Rowland Homes' land interest at Bradwall Road, Sandbach, which is summarised in Section 2 of this report.
- 1.2. The consultation seeks stakeholders' views on what the new Local Plan for Cheshire East should contain and how future consultation and engagement should be undertaken. It is understood that the new Local Plan will set the vision for the future development of the borough, include planning policies, allocate sites for development, and form the basis for determining planning applications through to the 2040s.
- 1.3. At the outset, Rowland Homes supports the Council's ambition to prepare a new Local Plan for Cheshire East. Its preparation presents an opportunity to return to a plan-led approach to growth across the borough, where there have been no up-to-date strategic policies in place since July-2022. The breadth of the initial scoping exercise is also welcomed, as it provides the Council with an opportunity to ensure that both the process followed in preparing the new Local Plan and the evidence base underpinning it are robust. Furthermore, it provides the Council and stakeholders with an opportunity to review elements of the current Local Plan that have not delivered as anticipated.
- 1.4. These representations begin by outlining the site and development opportunity at Bradwall Road, Sandbach, including details of the submission made through the recent Call for Sites exercise. The report then responds to those topics and questions most relevant to Rowland Homes' land interests at Bradwall Road, Sandbach.
- 1.5. The remainder of these representations is structured as follows:
 - **Section 2** provides an overview of Rowland Homes' land interests at Bradwall Road, Sandbach, including details of the Call for Sites submission made in March 2026.
 - **Section 3** sets out a response to the information and context included in the Scoping Consultation relating to housing.
 - **Section 4** sets out comment on the information contained in the Scoping Consultation that relates to the settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution.
 - **Section 5** sets out a response to the context and information included in the Scoping Consultation relating to site selection.
 - **Section 6** responds to the information relating to the plan preparation process and its relationship with other elements of the development plan and supporting evidence

base, including its interaction with any future Strategic Development Strategy (SDS), National Development Management Policies (NDMPs), neighbourhood plans, and design guidance.

- **Section 7** summarises these representations.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1. This section provides a summary of Rowland Homes' land interests at Bradwall Road, Sandbach. It is acknowledged that this consultation does not relate to specific sites or draft allocations. However, a summary of the development opportunity at Bradwall Road, Sandbach is provided in this section to inform the context of the representations that follow. The site was submitted to the Cheshire East Call for Sites exercise in March 2026, as summarised in paragraphs 2.10-2.11 below.

Site and Locational Context

- 2.2. The site comprises approximately 21 hectares of agricultural land located on the northern edge of Sandbach. It is situated between Cookesmere Lane to the west and Bradwall Road to the east, with Small Brook forming the northern boundary. Existing residential development associated with Sandbach adjoins the site to the south, including properties accessed from Cookesmere Lane and Dove Close. The south-eastern part of the site adjoins land which is subject to a resolution to grant planning permission for up to 180 dwellings (ref. 25/2405/OUT).
- 2.3. The site is relatively flat, although it exhibits a gentle gradient falling from east to west towards Cookesmere Lane. Existing access to the site for agricultural purposes is taken from both Bradwall Road and Cookesmere Lane.
- 2.4. A Site Location Plan showing the extent of the site is appended to these representations at Appendix A.
- 2.5. The site is sustainably located. Sandbach Railway Station lies approximately 1.2km to the west and provides regular services to Crewe and Manchester. In addition, nearby bus stops on Cookesmere Lane and Congleton Road provide direct services to Congleton, Macclesfield and Crewe, offering future residents a genuine choice of travel modes.
- 2.6. A broad range of services and facilities are accessible within walking distance of the site. Offley Primary School is located approximately 350 metres to the south, while Sandbach High School is situated around 600 metres away. Local convenience shopping is available at the neighbourhood centre on Queen's Drive and Sweettooth Lane, approximately 450 metres from the site, which includes a convenience store and a range of day-to-day services.
- 2.7. Sandbach town centre is located approximately 1km to the south-west and provides a comprehensive range of services and facilities. These include supermarkets, independent

retailers, cafés, restaurants, and the town's established market. The town centre also accommodates a range of community and public services, including healthcare facilities, a library and Sandbach Town Hall.

Proposed Use

- 2.8. The site is being promoted for residential development. It is anticipated that the site could accommodate around 550 new homes. The final quantum of development, together with the phasing and form of development, will be established through a future masterplanning exercise, which will provide the basis for a comprehensive vision for the creation of a new neighbourhood.
- 2.9. Access arrangements for any future development will be determined through subsequent design and technical work. Initial access options include a primary access from Bradwall Road, with secondary and/or emergency access potentially provided from Cookesmere Lane.

March 2026 Call for Sites Submission

- 2.10. The site was submitted to Cheshire East Council's Call for Sites exercise in March 2026 and was assigned site reference number **347**.
- 2.11. In addition to providing details of the proposed development, the submission considered the site's suitability, availability and achievability to assist the Council's assessment through the emerging Local Plan evidence base. The submission concluded that there are no significant technical, environmental or landownership constraints that would prevent the site from coming forward as a residential-led development.

3. HOUSING

- 3.1. The Scoping Consultation notes that the new standard methodology for calculating local housing need has increased the requirement for Cheshire East to 2,530 homes per year. This represents a significant uplift from the current Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) requirement of 1,800 homes per year.
- 3.2. Rowland Homes considers that the new Local Plan should plan positively to meet housing needs over the new Plan period, in accordance with the general thrust of national planning policy, which is to significantly boost the supply of homes. As a minimum, this means planning for housing growth of 2,530 homes per year over the Plan period.
- 3.3. Where existing allocations in the CELPS or the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD) have failed to come forward as planned, the Council must review whether such sites remain suitable to be carried forward. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that considerations including the length of time a site has been allocated, its planning history, and whether changes in circumstances since allocation have reduced the likelihood of development coming forward as originally envisaged should all be assessed when determining whether there is a realistic prospect of an allocated site being developed for its intended use.
- 3.4. Several significant strategic allocations in the CELPS have failed to deliver as anticipated since the Plan was adopted in 2017. The evidence base for the new Local Plan must consider the reasons why these sites have not come forward as expected, to ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated and that only sites which are genuinely developable, such as Rowland Homes' land interest at Bradwall Road, are allocated.
- 3.5. Furthermore, planning positively for housing growth also means that the Plan period should commence from the current year (2026), and should not be pushed forward during the preparation or examination process. Moving the Plan base date forward as a means of avoiding the identification of additional land to meet current housing needs would not represent a positively prepared approach in the context of Policy PM15 of the NPPF.
- 3.6. Policy HO1 of the NPPF states that development plans should also take into account an assessment of the size, type and tenure of housing or other accommodation needed for different groups. Rowland Homes considers that the most effective way to ensure that the needs of different groups are met is to plan positively and ambitiously for housing growth. Allocating a significant quantum of land for housing, in locations where development is genuinely deliverable, like Rowland Homes land interest at Bradwell Road, Sandbach, will

help to ensure that a plan-led approach is maintained throughout the Plan period. When housing delivery fails to keep pace with identified need, it is the needs of all groups within the community that are adversely affected. The evidence base underpinning the new Local Plan must quantify both the economic and social benefits of housing delivery, as well as the adverse consequences of failing to put in place an ambitious strategy that is capable of meeting the needs of all groups within the community into the 2040s.

- 3.7. The Scoping Consultation states that a Housing Needs Assessment will be prepared to identify needs relating to affordable housing, housing for older people, specialist accommodation, self-build and custom housebuilding, and the mix of dwelling sizes and tenures across the borough. Rowland Homes will provide further comments on this evidence base as the new Local Plan progresses. However, planning policies must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate needs that may not have been anticipated at the time the Plan was prepared. Any policies introduced through the new Local Plan to address identified needs should therefore retain an appropriate degree of flexibility and recognise that the requirements of different groups are likely to evolve throughout the Plan period. Failure to maintain such flexibility could create barriers to development coming forward and constrain sustainable growth.
- 3.8. For example, it may not be appropriate for the Local Plan to prescribe a fixed housing mix based solely on the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment prepared to support the Plan, as changing market conditions and demographic trends may influence demand for different dwelling sizes and types over time. If the new Local Plan does propose a prescribed housing mix through planning policy, sufficient flexibility must be incorporated to ensure that schemes can respond to changing market conditions, consumer demand and local circumstances. This would reflect the approach in the new NPPF, where Policy HO8 is clear that a flexible approach should be taken to the application of any development plan requirements relating to the number of bedrooms provided in market homes development proposals that meet or exceed up-to-date development plan requirements for the proportion and mix of affordable housing tenures.

4. SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

- 4.1. The CELPS establishes a four-tier settlement hierarchy, with Sandbach identified as one of nine second-tier Key Service Centres. When the Determining the Settlement Hierarchy evidence base document was prepared in 2010 to inform the settlement hierarchy policy within the CELPS, it identified that Sandbach contained approximately 7,500 households, representing around 5% of all households across the borough at that time. The document also highlighted that Sandbach was one of the five most significant destinations for commuters from other settlements within the borough, reflecting the scale of its employment and education provision.
- 4.2. The Cheshire East Authority Monitoring Report (2024/25) states that, as of 1 April 2025, there had been 3,276 housing completions in Sandbach since the start of the CELPS plan period in 2010. This represents a substantial increase in the settlement's housing stock and 526 (or 19.1%) more than originally planned for the settlement over the Plan period to 2030 (2,750 dwellings).
- 4.3. The evidence base prepared to support the new settlement hierarchy should have regard to the growth that Sandbach has experienced since the start of the CELPS period in 2010. The settlement now performs an increasingly significant role in terms of both housing and employment provision as a result of the approximately 45% increase in households it now accommodates compared to 2010. Whilst Sandbach already benefited from a strong range of services, facilities and employment opportunities, recent growth has reinforced and expanded that role. New residents have brought additional spending power to the area, while also supporting direct and indirect employment within the local economy.
- 4.4. The settlement has become an increasingly established and desirable housing market for commuters as working patterns have evolved and a greater proportion of the workforce has adopted hybrid and home-working arrangements. Sandbach Railway Station is well connected, with direct services to Manchester, Stockport, Crewe, Alderley Edge and Holmes Chapel, making Sandbach a logical location for significant housing growth given its accessibility to employment opportunities across the wider region.
- 4.5. Rowland Homes considers that there is a strong case for Sandbach to be re-classified within the settlement hierarchy when it is reviewed to inform the new Local Plan. Planned development growth for the settlement should reflect its increased role within the borough and the social and economic benefits that further sustainable growth could deliver.

- 4.6. The Scoping Consultation outlines a range of factors that may influence the distribution of development. These include a number of reasonable considerations, such as housing demand and availability, house prices and affordability ratios, levels of affordable housing need, requirements for specialist housing, employment opportunities, commuting patterns, infrastructure capacity and constraints, and the availability of services and facilities.
- 4.7. However, Rowland Homes is concerned that one of the factors identified in the Scoping Consultation as influencing the spatial distribution of growth is the availability of brownfield and urban land for redevelopment. The Council should not place undue weight on opportunities for regeneration when determining the distribution of growth. Brownfield sites are often more constrained, can be more costly to remediate, and frequently take longer to come forward for development. Consequently, directing a disproportionate level of growth towards locations with greater brownfield opportunities may undermine the overall delivery of housing through the new Local Plan.
- 4.8. Furthermore, the Council should not seek to redirect growth away from settlements such as Sandbach solely because land on their edges is subject to a Countryside designation. Such designations represent policy constraints rather than technical or physical constraints to development. Land adjoining significant and sustainable settlements is, by its nature, often well placed to accommodate growth. The release of suitable sites, including Rowland Homes' land interests at Bradwall Road, from countryside designation for development will be necessary to achieve the scale of growth required over the future Plan period.

5. SITE SELECTION

- 5.1. The Scoping Consultation states that sites submitted through the 2024 and 2026 Call for Sites exercises will be assessed to determine their suitability, availability and deliverability. To support this process, and to identify and evaluate potential development sites, the consultation notes that the Council is preparing a land availability assessment methodology based on national guidance. The consultation also states that initial site assessments and further details of the methodology are expected to be published as part of the next stage of consultation.
- 5.2. The Scoping Consultation explains that the Council's methodology will include its approach to filtering sites that are clearly unsuitable for development, the assumptions it will apply when estimating development capacity and delivery timescales, and the scoring framework that will be used. The output of this work will be a list of sites that will be considered further as potential draft allocations.
- 5.3. Guidance on identifying and assessing sites has been published by the Government to assist with the preparation of plans under the new plan-making system. This provides a clear framework for assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of sites. The Call for Sites submission relating to Bradwall Road, Sandbach (Site Reference **347**) has had regard to the guidance relating to suitability, availability and achievability. On this basis, Rowland Homes expects its land interests to perform well through the initial site assessment process referenced in the Scoping Consultation and, consequently, to be considered further as a draft allocation.
- 5.4. The Scoping Consultation refers to a commitment to prioritising the use of previously developed (brownfield) land wherever possible in order to support the regeneration of urban areas. However, this objective must be considered in the context of deliverability and achievability. The Government's guidance on assessing submitted sites is clear that an understanding of whether a site is capable of being developed at a particular point in time, including whether development is likely to be viable, forms an important part of the assessment process. By their nature, brownfield sites can be subject to significant remediation requirements and other constraints, which can adversely affect both viability and achievability.
- 5.5. In relation to viability, the guidance on assessing achievability notes that local planning authorities may utilise developer forums and panels to develop a better understanding of market conditions. Rowland Homes would welcome the opportunity to participate in any

such process to ensure that the Council has access to the information necessary to make robust and informed assessments of site achievability.

6. PLAN INTERFACE AND EVIDENCE

Cheshire and Warrington Spatial Development Strategy

- 6.1. The Scoping Consultation notes that Cheshire East is now part of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority area and will be required to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) for Cheshire and Warrington. It is understood that the SDS will set out a high-level strategy for long-term growth and the major infrastructure required across the sub-region.
- 6.2. Policy PM1 of the NPPF states that SDSs should establish a strategy for a sustainable pattern of growth for at least 25 years, including the apportionment of objectively assessed needs. They should also identify broad locations for strategic development, including major urban extensions and key locations for new homes and jobs.
- 6.3. The new Local Plan for Cheshire East is expected to be adopted in Q1 2029. The Devolution White Paper is clear that local planning authorities should not delay the preparation of Local Plans whilst awaiting the adoption of an SDS. Instead, Local Plans should continue to be prepared and progressed alongside the SDS process. In the case of Cheshire East, the new Local Plan is likely to come forward in advance of the SDS and, as such, may need to address matters that would otherwise fall to the SDS in future plan-making exercises. However, the new Local Plan will ultimately need to be in general conformity with the emerging SDS. Rowland Homes therefore reserves the right to comment further on the interaction between the new Local Plan for Cheshire East and the SDS as the relationship between the two documents becomes clearer during the later stages of plan preparation.

National Decision-Making Policies

- 6.4. The NPPF published in August 2026 introduced National Decision-Making Policies (NDMPs). These form material considerations in decision-making. The NPPF states that NDMPs should be read as a whole, although some policies indicate the degree of weight that should be afforded to specific considerations, including circumstances where substantial weight should be given to particular benefits and the limited circumstances in which planning permission would be expected to be refused.
- 6.5. Policy PM6 of the NPPF states that Local Plans must not duplicate, substantively restate or be inconsistent with the content of NDMPs. Rowland Homes therefore considers that the new Local Plan for Cheshire East should be more streamlined and straightforward to interpret, avoiding the repetition of policies or requirements already addressed through

NDMPs. The revised plan-making system provides a distinct role and purpose for each tier of the development plan to address specific issues positively and effectively. The new Local Plan for Cheshire East should therefore reflect its role within the wider development plan, as established through relevant legislation and national policy.

Neighbourhood Plan

- 6.6. Policy S6 of the NPPF states that conflicts with a neighbourhood plan are likely to outweigh the benefits of approving residential development proposals, only where: (i) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and (ii) the neighbourhood plan contains allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.
- 6.7. The Sandbach Neighbourhood Plan was made on 21 March 2022 and will be more than five years old by the time the new Local Plan is adopted. Should a new Neighbourhood Plan be prepared for Sandbach before the adoption of the new Local Plan, and should it seek to include policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement, then that requirement should be informed by a proportionate share of Cheshire East's objectively assessed housing need, reflecting Sandbach's role and importance within the settlement hierarchy. To meet such a requirement, the Neighbourhood Plan would need to identify a substantial amount of land for development. Without prejudice to any future neighbourhood planning decisions in Sandbach, Rowland Homes considers it unlikely that any Neighbourhood Plan brought forward in advance of the new Local Plan would be capable of containing sufficient policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.

Design

- 6.8. The Scoping Consultation states that a key issue for the new Local Plan will be moving from broad design policies towards a more locally distinctive, measurable, deliverable and outcomes-focused approach. This will involve embedding design coding, recognising local character, integrating design with wider objectives such as climate resilience, health and wellbeing, sustainable transport and innovation, and ensuring the delivery of sufficient high-quality homes.
- 6.9. In relation to design coding, the Scoping Consultation states that the Council will need to consider whether to prepare a borough-wide design code as a supplementary plan or establish a strategic design framework within the Local Plan, supported by more detailed area-specific or site-specific design codes prepared separately. The consultation notes

that the latter approach could provide a strategic borough-wide framework whilst also allowing flexibility to respond to local circumstances.

- 6.10. Rowland Homes considers that any proposed approach to design coding should be clearly articulated at the next stage of consultation so that its implications for viability can be properly assessed. Policy DP1 of the NPPF states that development plans should set out clear expectations by identifying where design guides, design codes and masterplans are necessary to deliver design and placemaking outcomes. A lack of clarity for developers at plan-making stage can have consequential impacts on housing delivery and may result in protracted discussions during the determination of planning applications.
- 6.11. Any design approach taken forward must strike an appropriate balance between achieving well-designed places and ensuring that sufficient housing can be delivered. Design policies and guidance should remain flexible enough to respond to future changes in design trends and national policy, particularly given the length of time for which design codes may remain in force.

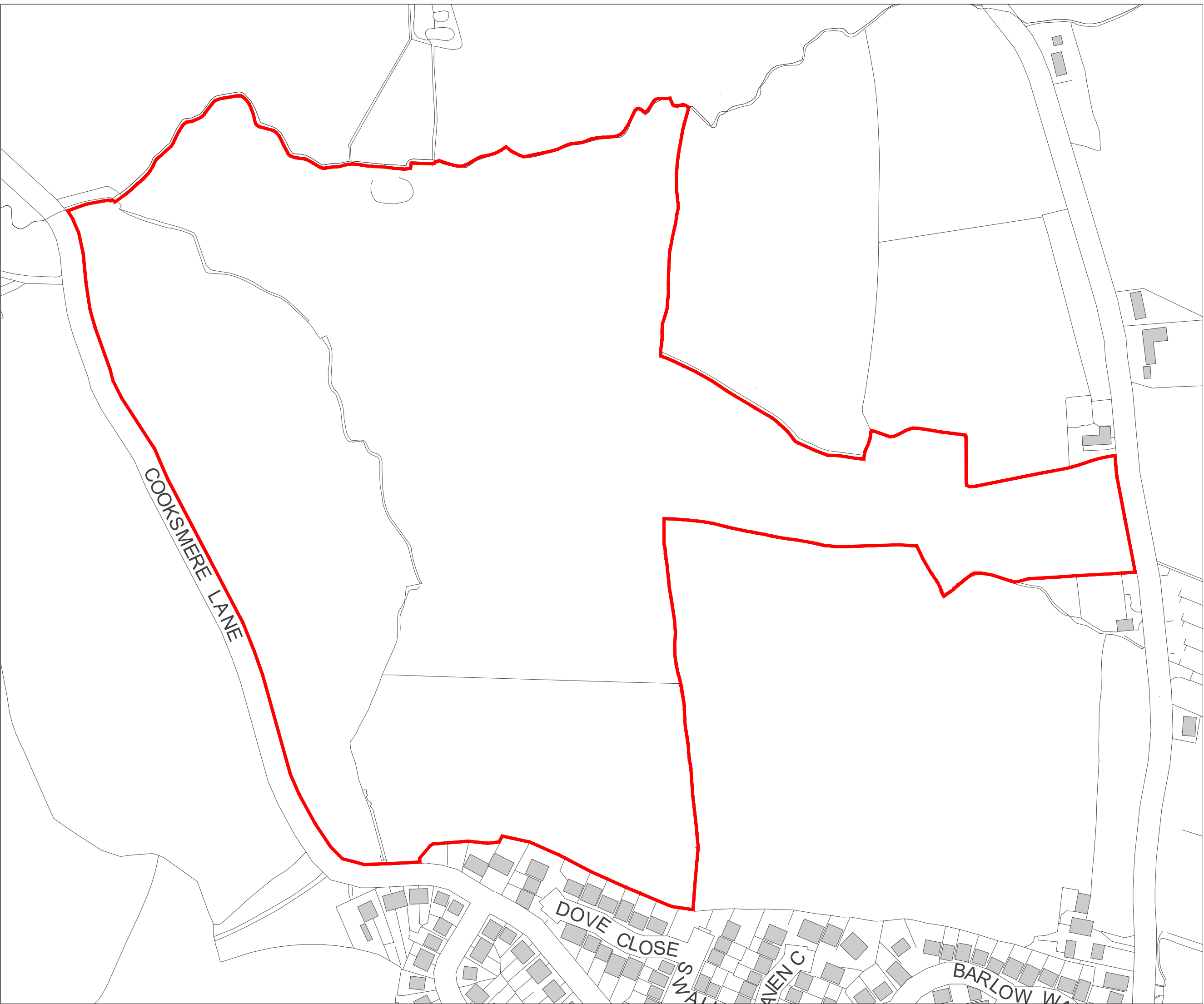
Viability and Infrastructure Delivery

- 6.12. Recent changes to national planning policy place increased emphasis on front-loading viability work at the plan-making stage in order to reduce the need for viability assessments at the planning application stage. The new Local Plan should therefore be underpinned by a comprehensive Viability Assessment. Any proposed policy requirements, including housing standards and other development obligations, should be incorporated into the assessment prior to consultation to ensure that stakeholders, including Rowland Homes, have an opportunity to provide informed comments on the costs associated with delivering such requirements.
- 6.13. The Viability Assessment should be closely aligned with an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which identifies any funding gap associated with the infrastructure required to support the growth strategy and planned housing delivery in Sandbach, together with a clear strategy for addressing that funding gap. The IDP should be published alongside the wider evidence base at the next stage of consultation to ensure that it can be appropriately scrutinised, tested and refined before the new Local Plan progresses to Gateway 2.

7. SUMMARY

- 7.1. These representations have been prepared by Marrons on behalf of Rowland Homes in the context of its land interests at Bradwall Road, Sandbach. They respond to the Cheshire East Local Plan Scoping Consultation and set out Rowland Homes' views on a range of issues that will be important to the preparation of the new Local Plan.
- 7.2. Rowland Homes welcomes the preparation of a new Local Plan for Cheshire East. The new Plan provides an important opportunity for the Council to establish an ambitious and deliverable strategy capable of meeting the borough's identified housing needs in full. In doing so, the Council should ensure that the Plan is positively prepared, reflects the increased housing requirement arising from the standard method, and avoids reliance on sites that have consistently failed to come forward under previous plan-making exercises.
- 7.3. The representations establish that Sandbach has experienced significant growth over the course of the current CELPS period and now performs an increasingly important role within the borough in terms of housing provision, employment opportunities, services, facilities and connectivity. Given its sustainable characteristics and strategic accessibility, Sandbach is well placed to accommodate an even greater proportion of development as part of the emerging spatial strategy.
- 7.4. Rowland Homes' land interests at Bradwall Road represent a sustainable, suitable and deliverable opportunity for future growth. The site is located adjacent to the existing built-up area of Sandbach, is accessible to a wide range of services, facilities and public transport options, and has the potential to deliver around 550 new homes. The site has been promoted through the Council's Call for Sites process. This submission demonstrated there are no technical, environmental or landownership constraints that would prevent development from coming forward.
- 7.5. Rowland Homes looks forward to continuing to engage with the Council as the new Local Plan progresses. It will comment further as the evidence base, site assessment process, and emerging strategy progress. Rowland Homes considers that the allocation of suitable and deliverable sites, such as Bradwall Road, Sandbach, are essential to ensuring that the new Local Plan is capable of meeting the borough's housing needs over the Plan period.

APPENDIX A – Site Location Plan



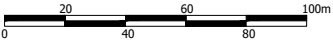
Revision Note: -

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Notes:



Site Boundary



Status: PLANNING

Client Name & Project Number: 2546505.1

Rowland Homes Ltd

Project title: Bradwall Road,
Sandbach

Drawing title: Site Location Plan

Scale: 1:2,500@A3	Drawing no.: 01	Revision: -
Drawn by: SM	Checked by: DK	Date: 25.03.26



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