



Response to Consultation on Cheshire East Council's Local Plan Scoping Consultation

On behalf of Barratt Manchester Ltd.
August 2026

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	2
2	SCOPING CONSULTATION RESPONSE	3
3	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	13

Prepared By: Adam Heapy (Graduate Planner)

Reviewed By: Paul Nellist (Director)

Asteer Planning LLP, 3rd Floor, Calico, 53-55 Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3HQ

Version Final (v3)

Date: August 2026

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Scoping Consultation is the first formal stage of engagement in the preparation of a new Local Plan for Cheshire East, and seeks views on the scope and future content of the emerging Plan.
- 1.2 The opportunity to comment is welcomed. These representations have been prepared by Asteer Planning LLP ("Asteer") on behalf of Barratt Manchester Ltd. ("Barratt"), and are intended to inform Cheshire East Council's ("CEC") emerging spatial strategy and its approach to land allocations.
- 1.3 Barratt's comments address Chapter 5, "The Scope of the New Local Plan", and in particular:
 - The Local Plan Period;
 - Vision and Objectives;
 - Planning for Growth;
 - Housing;
 - Climate and Sustainability; and
 - The Evidence Base.
- 1.4 Barratt acknowledges that the Scoping Consultation is not site-specific and does not invite Call for Sites submissions. These representations are nonetheless submitted in the context of Barratt's interest in the South Macclesfield Development Area ("SMDA"), allocated under Policy CS 8 of the adopted Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy. Barratt has responded to the previous Call for Sites consultations in 2024 and earlier in 2026, and requests that those submissions are taken into account as the spatial strategy and the approach to land allocations are progressed.
- 1.5 Barratt would welcome continued engagement with CEC as responses to the Scoping Consultation are considered and preparation of the new Local Plan advances.

2 SCOPING CONSULTATION RESPONSE

- 2.1 Barratt supports the preparation of a new Local Plan for Cheshire East, which is essential if the Borough's future needs are to be planned for effectively. These representations seek to ensure that the Plan pursues a balanced spatial strategy: one that enables growth in the Borough's most accessible and sustainable settlements, including its principal towns and those settlements in the north of the Borough with strong functional links to key regional employers; and provides the homes required to meet Cheshire East's needs over the forthcoming Plan period.
- 2.2 This Section comments on the scope of the new Local Plan, having regard to:
- The National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF"), published 17 August 2026; and,
 - Planning Practice Guidance ("PPG") on Plan-Making, last updated 27 November 2025.

Local Plan Period

- 2.3 CEC proposes that the new Local Plan should cover the period up until 31 March 2045 – a period of sixteen years from the anticipated adoption date of March 2029. The PPG on plan-making and with Policy PM2(1)(b) of the NPPF (2026), both set fifteen years as the minimum (rather than the maximum) period a Local Plan should cover.
- 2.4 In Barratt's view, the forthcoming Plan period should extend to at least 2050. This would provide a more appropriate and resilient framework for planning the Borough's longer-term growth, while allowing a reasonable degree of contingency for any slippage in the plan-making, examination or adoption process.
- 2.5 Given the inherently long-term nature of strategic planning and the substantial lead-in times associated with delivering housing, infrastructure and other strategic development, a longer Plan period would enable CEC to adopt a more proactive and genuinely long-term approach to meeting the Borough's future development needs, and would afford greater certainty for the identification and delivery of strategic sites and the infrastructure required to support them.
- 2.6 A longer Plan period would also assist in maintaining a robust pipeline of deliverable sites. This is particularly important given that larger strategic sites can take several years to progress through the planning, infrastructure and delivery stages, and that delivery rates may fluctuate over that period. Extending provision for growth to 2050 would reduce the risk of the Council failing to demonstrate an adequate supply of land for housing and employment uses throughout the Plan period, and would provide greater certainty to landowners, developers, infrastructure providers and the local community.

Creating a Vision and Objectives

- 2.7 The vision for the new Local Plan should provide a clear, positive and ambitious framework for how CEC will develop over the Plan period and beyond. Policy PM2(1)(a)(iv) of the NPPF (2026) expressly requires the vision to have particular regard to meeting the area's identified development needs in a sustainable manner. It further requires the vision to articulate how the area should change over the Plan period; to set aspirational aims and objectives underpinned by a realistic appreciation of what the Plan can genuinely shape and deliver; and to reflect longer-term expectations beyond the Plan period where appropriate (including in respect of large-scale development proposals).
- 2.8 Against this background, the vision for the CEC Local Plan should place clear emphasis on positively planning for, and meeting, the Borough's identified housing, employment and infrastructure needs. This should provide a proactive framework for identifying where and how sustainable growth will be delivered, in the context of the "broad locations for growth and regeneration" that have "the potential for significant new homes, jobs and other development", which will be identified through the Cheshire and Warrington Spatial Development Strategy ("SDS") – as required by Policy PM1(b) of the NPPF (2026).
- 2.9 This is particularly important given that the emerging Local Plan for CEC is being prepared alongside the Cheshire and Warrington SDS. The Local Plan should therefore be prepared proactively, in a manner that both responds to and helps shape the emerging SDS, by identifying opportunities within Cheshire East that can make a positive contribution towards meeting the area's wider development needs.
- 2.10 Overall, Barratt considers that the vision and objectives should be ambitious, proactive and delivery-focused, recognising the scale of growth that CEC will need to accommodate and the opportunities that this presents.

Planning for Growth

Identifying and Assessing Sites

- 2.11 The site identification and selection process should be informed by a clear, transparent and robust set of criteria, applied consistently and objectively to all sites and potential growth locations. The methodology should retain sufficient flexibility to recognise the differing characteristics and opportunities presented by individual sites and settlements.

2.12 The assessment criteria should include the following:

- **Accessibility and connectivity:** the site's accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling; its proximity to existing and planned transport infrastructure; and the potential to improve sustainable transport connections as part of development;
- **Access to services and facilities:** proximity to schools, shops, healthcare, community facilities, employment opportunities and other services, together with the potential for development to improve access to, or support the viability of, existing facilities;
- **Relationship with existing settlements:** the physical and functional relationship of the site with the settlement, opportunities for integration with the existing built form, and whether development would represent a logical extension to the settlement;
- **Potential to create sustainable patterns of development:** whether the site can support an appropriate mix of uses and densities, and a sustainable distribution of homes, employment, services, open space and community facilities;
- **Green Belt and Grey Belt considerations:** the contribution made to the purposes of the Green Belt and, where applicable, whether the land constitutes Grey Belt;
- **Contribution to employment and economic growth:** the site's relationship to key employment locations, existing commuting patterns and labour markets, and its potential to support better alignment between housing and employment;
- **Deliverability:** land availability, ownership, viability, likely delivery rates, site capacity, infrastructure requirements and any other factors that could affect the site's ability to contribute to housing delivery over the plan period;
- **Physical and environmental constraints:** flood risk, drainage, ground conditions, ecology, contamination, air quality, noise and other physical constraints, together with the scope for mitigation;
- **Landscape and visual considerations:** the site's landscape character, sensitivity and capacity to accommodate change, recognising that landscape impacts should be considered alongside the potential for good design and appropriate mitigation;
- **Green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement opportunities:** the potential to provide new or enhanced open space, play facilities, green corridors, walking and cycling routes, tree planting and other multifunctional green infrastructure;
- **Community benefits and place-making:** the ability of development to deliver significant benefits for existing and future residents, support existing services and facilities, provide new community infrastructure, and create well-designed, sustainable and inclusive places; and,
- **Potential for comprehensive and strategic development:** whether a site can form part of a wider strategic growth location, and whether development at an appropriate scale could deliver infrastructure, services, affordable housing, open space and other benefits that may not be achievable through smaller sites.

- 2.13 Given CEC's over-riding need for housing, previous allocations that have not been fully built out, such as the SMDA site, should be retained and treated as the first priority. As noted above, Barratt has submitted various representations to previous Call for Sites consultations in respect of the SMDA site; in 2024 and earlier in 2026; and respectfully requests that these are taken into account as the site assessment process is undertaken.

Green Belt

- 2.14 Barratt supports CEC's proposal to undertake a borough-wide Green Belt assessment, to identify Grey Belt land and inform future decisions regarding the potential release of Green Belt land. Given the scale of housing need that the new Local Plan is required to address, it is important that the Council undertakes a comprehensive and objective assessment of Green Belt land, to ensure that all reasonable opportunities for sustainable development are identified.
- 2.15 CEC's intention to refer to, and apply, national Green Belt policy within the emerging Local Plan is also supported. The assessment should be undertaken in accordance with Policies GB1-GB8 and Annex E of the NPPF (2026); and should clearly identify land falling within the definition of Grey Belt, so that such land is properly considered through the wider site selection process. The findings of a future Green Belt assessment should be considered alongside the emerging housing and employment requirements, and the full range of reasonable spatial strategy options.

Strategic Green Gap

- 2.16 Barratt notes that the Strategic Green Gap is a legacy designation. It carries forward saved Policy NE.4 ("Green Gaps") of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan (2005), was brought into Policy PG 5 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy on the basis of the New Green Belt and Strategic Open Gap Study, and was given detailed boundaries through Policy PG 12 of the Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document. The principle of the designation has not itself been reconsidered since 2005, and the evidence supporting its extent is now some thirteen years old, pre-dating the substantial increase in the Borough's assessed housing need.
- 2.17 The new Local Plan provides the first opportunity to revisit that position, and Barratt considers that CEC should do so. The function the designation performs – preventing the coalescence of settlements and protecting their separate identity – is already secured elsewhere in the Development Pla. Where land lies within the Green Belt, the Green Belt purpose of preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another achieves precisely this; and elsewhere, settlement boundaries, open countryside policy, landscape

policy and design policy each contribute to the same objective. CEC should accordingly be able to demonstrate what a separate Strategic Green Gap designation adds that is not already achieved by other policies; and where it adds nothing, it should not be retained.

- 2.18 If the Council concludes that a gap designation remains justified in particular locations, Barratt recommends that the future approach has regard to the contribution that land actually makes to the purposes of designated Green Gaps. Sites that are not considered to make a meaningful contribution to maintaining the separation and distinct identity of settlements, or that make only a limited contribution, should not be treated as presenting the same level of constraint as land making a substantive contribution. The site selection process should therefore assess the actual function and contribution of the land, rather than applying a blanket approach based solely on its designation.
- 2.19 As such, it is recommended that any future Strategic Green Gap approach clearly identifies the contribution made by individual parcels of land, retaining sufficient flexibility to distinguish those areas that are fundamental to maintaining settlement separation from those that are not. Where sites do not make a meaningful contribution to the Green Gap, they should be removed from this designation as part of the emerging Local Plan. Nor should the designation be extended to new areas of the Borough, or applied to land within the Green Belt, without clear and current evidence that it is necessary and that existing policy would not adequately protect settlement separation.

Settlement Hierarchy

- 2.20 Barratt supports CEC's intention to gather evidence to inform a review of the settlement hierarchy within the new Local Plan. The settlement hierarchy should be based on the current and future role and function of settlements, having regard to:
- the range, scale and accessibility of services and facilities;
 - proximity to employment opportunities;
 - public transport connectivity;
 - relationship with surrounding settlements, housing and employment markets; and,
 - the potential for settlements to accommodate sustainable growth.
- 2.21 The settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy should recognise that principal settlements (such as Macclesfield) are generally best placed to accommodate significant levels of sustainable growth, owing to their scale, range of services and facilities, employment opportunities, infrastructure and public transport connections. Directing an appropriate proportion of growth towards principal settlements can help support and enhance existing

services and infrastructure, improve connectivity and reduce the need to travel, while also strengthening their role as sustainable centres. The previous allocation of the SMDA site clearly demonstrates that the site is also in a sustainable location, and the allocation should be retained as part of an appropriate spatial strategy.

- 2.22 The evidence base should identify the capacity and potential of principal settlements to accommodate growth (including, where appropriate, opportunities for larger-scale development and the infrastructure required to support it); this should be a key consideration in determining the future spatial distribution of development.
- 2.23 In addition to growth in principal settlements, Barratt emphasises that where a settlement has the capacity to accommodate sustainable growth, and where development can support its services, facilities, infrastructure and connectivity, this should be recognised within the settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy. Consideration should also be given to elevating the status of settlements capable of accommodating larger-scale growth and infrastructure.
- 2.24 The assessment should also have regard to the functional relationships between settlements (including commuting patterns, travel-to-work areas, transport connections, and shared services and facilities). This is particularly important when assessing settlements that may have a strong functional relationship with larger employment and service centres, despite having a smaller population or occupying a lower position within the existing settlement hierarchy.
- 2.25 Barratt therefore supports CEC's preparation of an evidence-led settlement hierarchy that recognises future potential and provides a framework for directing growth towards settlements where development can be accommodated sustainably and can contribute positively to their long-term vitality and resilience.

Spatial Distribution

- 2.26 Barratt supports the recognition that the Local Plan will need to consider a range of locations and development forms in determining the most appropriate distribution of growth across the Borough. The spatial strategy should provide for a balanced and sustainable distribution of development across the Borough, based on a robust assessment of housing and employment needs, infrastructure capacity, settlement function, accessibility, commuting patterns, and the potential for development to support the long-term sustainability of existing settlements.

- 2.27 The spatial strategy should continue to direct a significant proportion of future growth towards the Borough's principal settlements, including Macclesfield. These settlements are generally the most sustainable locations for accommodating growth, given their scale, range of services and facilities, employment opportunities, transport connections and existing infrastructure. Existing allocations such as SMDA should be retained in the new local plan.
- 2.28 Particular regard should, in Barratt's view, be given to the north of the Borough, given this area's strong functional and economic relationships with Greater Manchester and the northern Cheshire employment arc. The spatial strategy should therefore recognise these existing travel-to-work patterns when considering where future housing growth should be located.
- 2.29 Access to rail services should be an important consideration in the distribution of growth. Policy S5 of the NPPF (2026) places increased emphasis on directing development towards locations that are well-connected by public transport, and railway stations in particular. This is particularly relevant to locations in the north of the Borough, which benefit from established rail connections to Manchester – a significant employment location for the Borough. The Council should consider the potential for growth in such locations to support the wider objectives of reducing car dependency, increasing sustainable travel, improving access to employment, and making more effective use of existing transport infrastructure.
- 2.30 The spatial strategy should consider the potential for development to strengthen existing settlements and support long-term vitality and sustainability, by increasing the population drawing on local services and facilities; and, where appropriate, providing the critical mass necessary to support new or enhanced infrastructure and community facilities.
- 2.31 This is considered particularly important when assessing potential strategic urban extensions. Larger-scale development can provide opportunities to deliver infrastructure and place-making benefits that may not be achievable through dispersed smaller sites, including new schools and community facilities, affordable housing, sustainable transport improvements, accessible green space, biodiversity enhancements and improvements to existing infrastructure.
- 2.32 Overall, Barratt considers that the spatial strategy should seek to locate development where people can access jobs, services and facilities sustainably, while supporting the long-term vitality of existing settlements and making effective use of existing and planned infrastructure.

Housing

Housing Need

- 2.33 The most up-to-date Local Housing Need figure for CEC is 2,424 dwellings per annum ("dpa"): significantly higher than the adopted figure of 1,800 dpa; and more than double the previous Local Housing Need figure of 977 dpa. The emerging Local Plan will therefore need to accommodate a substantially increased housing requirement, while ensuring that sufficient deliverable sites are allocated to maintain a robust housing land supply and delivery throughout the Plan period.
- 2.34 The importance of identifying a robust supply of housing is reinforced by the Council's Housing Monitoring Update, which confirms that CEC cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, with only a 3.3-year supply available. This underlines the need for the emerging Local Plan to provide a resilient and flexible portfolio of allocations, capable of maintaining a demonstrable five-year housing land supply on adoption and throughout the lifetime of the Plan. Doing so will provide greater certainty for communities, developers and infrastructure providers, while reducing reliance on – and the effects of – the unplanned nature of speculative planning applications arising from an insufficient supply of housing land.
- 2.35 Overall, Barratt supports CEC undertaking an up-to-date Housing Needs Assessment to identify the key housing issues that the Local Plan will need to address, and planning positively to meet housing needs through a balanced portfolio of allocations, including both strategic urban extensions and smaller, sustainable sites, so that housing delivery remains resilient and responsive throughout the Plan period.

Affordable Housing

- 2.36 Addressing affordable housing need represents one of the Borough's most significant challenges. As part of the evidence base for the current Local Plan, the Issues Paper identified a median house price affordability ratio in the Borough of 8.14, having risen from 5.8 between 2018 and 2023. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment ("SHMA") Update (2013) identified an annual net shortfall of 1,401 affordable homes, representing a significant proportion of the Borough's overall housing need.
- 2.37 A shortfall in housing delivery will result in further constraints on supply and rising house prices, restricting the ability of first-time buyers to enter the market and exacerbating existing demographic disparities. This inability to accommodate an expanding working-age population, in turn, weakens support for the local economy, contributes to the decline of local services and facilities, and limits the pool of available staff for local employers.

- 2.38 As affordable housing is delivered principally through market-led residential development, the Local Plan will need to allocate a sufficient number of viable housing sites capable of delivering affordable homes alongside market housing.

Housing Mix and Standards

- 2.39 Barratt supports the opportunity identified by CEC to review and update the housing mix policies within the emerging Local Plan. A flexible approach should be adopted, enabling development to respond to local needs rather than applying a "one-size-fits-all" approach across the Borough. Such a flexible policy approach to housing mix would enable sites to be brought forward that:
- reflect local circumstances in different parts of the Borough;
 - respond to market demand as sites are brought forward for development; and
 - allow for changes in population, preference or demographics to be taken into account throughout the Plan period.
- 2.40 As part of this, Barratt recommends that the new Local Plan should supersede and update the Cheshire East Borough Residential Design Guide SPD, adopted in 2017.

Climate Change Adaptation

- 2.41 Barratt shares CEC's ambition to ensure that new development is resilient to the impacts of climate change, and incorporates measures such as passive design, natural ventilation, sustainable drainage, climate-resilient landscaping, water efficiency and renewable/low-carbon technologies. The new Local Plan should, however, recognise that the ability to deliver such measures is intrinsically linked to viability and deliverability. Requirements should therefore be proportionate, clearly evidenced through a whole-plan viability assessment, and sufficiently flexible to respond to site-specific circumstances.
- 2.42 Barratt is committed to building energy-efficient homes, using thermally efficient insulation and argon-filled double glazing as standard, and has showcased its latest technology and construction methods for building zero-carbon homes through the Zed House in Manchester. It has committed that all of its homes will be zero-carbon by 2030.
- 2.43 The Local Plan should therefore create the conditions necessary to enable the delivery of high-quality, energy-efficient and climate-resilient homes at scale. Allocating viable and deliverable sites is fundamental to achieving the Local Plan's environmental objectives: without a sufficient supply of sites capable of coming forward, the ability to deliver innovative low-carbon homes at scale will be further constrained.

Evidence Base

2.44 Barratt supports the Council's intention to develop a comprehensive, up-to-date evidence base to underpin the new Local Plan. In addition to the documents already identified, it is suggested that CEC should also identify the following key evidence base documents:

- **Green Belt Assessment:** an up-to-date assessment should be undertaken to inform the strategic review of Green Belt land, ensuring that site selection is based on current evidence and the latest NPPF (2026);
- **Open Space Assessment:** a comprehensive and current assessment of open space provision, quality, accessibility and deficiencies should inform decisions on the protection of existing open space and the provision required through new development; and,
- **Landscape Character Assessment/Appraisal:** an updated assessment should reflect current landscape character, sensitivity and capacity to accommodate development, and should be applied consistently in site assessment and in the spatial strategy.

3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 3.1 In summary, Barratt considers that the new Local Plan provides a generational opportunity to plan for the future of Cheshire East and should adopt a pro-growth approach to deliver homes to address the significant housing needs of the Borough, alleviate affordability issues and support economic growth during the next 20 years.
- 3.2 It is critical that CEC pursue a balanced approach to allocating a range of sites, including strategic urban extensions and smaller sustainable sites, in order to address the full range of housing needs and underpin a robust housing supply. This should include an apportionment of growth to the northern settlements of the Borough, where the need for housing and the affordability crisis is acute, and where new residents will support the economic growth of the Borough's northern employment arc. There should also be a particular focus on locations with access to rail stations, in line with the policies presented in the NPPF (2026), and particularly where they have the capacity for significant growth.
- 3.3 Barratt would welcome engagement with the Council on these representations or on any of their sites specifically. Should the Council wish to pursue such, Asteer are prepared to make the necessary arrangements.