

## Why I am writing

I live in the area and I am concerned that the New Local Plan process does not yet explain clearly how overlapping site submissions will be dealt with, how the combined pressure on local services will be assessed, or when residents will be able to see and comment on the evidence. I would like the Council to make the changes listed later in this response before it starts choosing preferred sites around Leighton and Church Minshull.

I understand that this is an early consultation and that the Council is not yet asking for comments on individual sites. The Council says the site-submissions map is for information only, that being shown on it gives a site no planning status, and that the boundaries and suggested uses may change. My comments are therefore about the way sites will be assessed, the evidence that should be published and the need to look at the overall effect on the area. I will want to comment again if any of these sites are put forward for allocation.<sup>[2][9]</sup>

The consultation closes at 5pm on Tuesday 1 September 2026. The current timetable shows a consultation on plan content and evidence in July and August 2027, a proposed-plan consultation in May and June 2028, and adoption in March 2029.<sup>[1][4]</sup>

## My main concerns

1. **The map is not clear enough. It shows land that has been put forward, but it does not show the original boundaries, who has put each site forward, how parcels have been split or joined, what infrastructure they rely on, or even an obvious version date.**
2. **The boundaries and references do not match neatly. The main Middlewich Road parcel shown on the map is larger than the site area given for planning application 26/2711/OUT. Some of the same site references also appear against both development land and land described for biodiversity net gain or renewable energy. This needs explaining before the figures are used in the Local Plan.**
3. **The whole area needs to be assessed together. Leighton already has major housing growth, road and hospital-access commitments, the approved replacement hospital and a live application for up to 2,100 homes. Looking at each site on its own would miss the combined pressure on roads, emergency access, schools, GP services, water, drainage, utilities and green space.**
4. **Important studies are still being prepared. The current map should not quietly become a shortlist before the Council has published the method and evidence it will use to compare the options.**
5. **Land must not be counted twice. If an area is being relied on for biodiversity net gain or renewable energy, it should not also be counted as developable land unless the Council can show exactly how both uses would work and who will deliver and maintain them.**
6. **Residents need a proper chance to comment. The site assessments, evidence and downloadable mapping should be available from the start of the next consultation, not added later after people have already formed their responses.**

## Problems with the map and supporting information

### The map is a list of submitted land, not an assessment

The seven layers in the map link are categories such as housing, employment, mixed use, open land, leisure, health and transport. They are not seven separate sites. A proposal covering more than one use may only appear under its main category, so the layer totals cannot safely be used as totals for housing, employment or mitigation land.<sup>[7]</sup>

The Council says it may split or combine overlapping submissions to make the online map easier to use. I can understand why it has done that, but residents cannot then work back from the displayed parcel to see the original submission. Without a clear record of what was changed, it is impossible to tell which original boundary belongs to which submission, whether land has been included more than once, or how a future assessment area relates to what was first submitted.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

I am not saying the map proves that the same land is controlled by different people or has definitely been put forward for conflicting uses. The point is that the information available to residents is not clear enough to check. The Council should publish the missing detail rather than leaving people to guess.

### Differences in boundaries, areas and references

7. Land west of Middlewich Road is shown as 126.45 hectares for housing and other uses, using the combined references HE 112, CFS26 ES14a and CFS26 ES14b.<sup>[7]</sup>
8. **The attached opposition report gives the site area for application 26/2711/OUT as about 113 hectares. The parcel on the Local Plan map is therefore 13.45 hectares, or about 11.9%, larger. That does not necessarily mean either boundary is wrong, but it does mean they are not the same site and should not be treated as though they are.**<sup>[7]</sup>
9. **The 126.45-hectare parcel, the 13.79-hectare housing parcel off Eardswick Lane and the 56.95-hectare open-land parcel east of Eardswick Lane add up to 197.19 hectares on the Council's display map. That figure is not an application area and it is not evidence of how much land could actually be developed.**<sup>[7]</sup>
10. Leighton North is shown separately as a 95.02-hectare mixed-use parcel for housing, employment and other uses.<sup>[7]</sup>
11. **References HE 87, HE 129 and HE 266 appear in both the Leighton North mixed-use parcel and the 56.95-hectare parcel described for biodiversity net gain and renewable energy. The second parcel also includes HE 129b. The map does not show the original boundaries or explain why the references appear in both places.**<sup>[7]</sup>

The Council should publish a map that shows the original submissions, the parcels it has created for assessment, any later proposed allocation boundary and the red line of any relevant planning application. Housing numbers, availability and delivery claims should only be attached to the final assessment area, with the assumptions and evidence shown alongside it.

## Much of the evidence is still being prepared

The scoping document says decisions about where growth goes will take account of housing and employment need, infrastructure, environmental constraints and regeneration. It also lists a large amount of work that is still to come. This includes the land-availability assessment, highways modelling, the Infrastructure Issues and Context Report, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, updated housing evidence, heritage and habitats work, a climate and renewable-energy study, a Level 2 flood-risk assessment, the Strategic Green Gap review, the Sustainability Appraisal, the spatial-distribution study, the settlement-hierarchy review, the design code and viability evidence.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

It is normal for some work to be unfinished at this early stage. My concern is that the call-for-sites map could start to shape the preferred options before the Council has explained how it will remove duplication, check whether land is really available, compare alternatives and take account of infrastructure limits. The Council should be clear about that sequence at every stage.

## What is already happening around Leighton

### Existing housing growth and infrastructure commitments

Adopted Site LPS 4, Leighton West, allows for around 850 homes, a local centre, a primary school, employment, green infrastructure, land linked to hospital expansion and highway works around the A530, Flowers Lane, Smithy Lane and emergency access. Site LPS 5 allows for around 500 homes and requires it to be linked with LPS 4, with hospital-access improvements, education and health contributions and phased road improvements.<sup>[9][10]</sup>

These policies show that development here has always depended on coordinated planning and major infrastructure. They do not show that there is spare capacity for another very large development. The live proposal for 2,100 homes is about 156% of the combined 1,350 homes in LPS 4 and LPS 5. I am not suggesting that this calculation decides the capacity of the area. It simply shows why the Council must assess all of the growth together.<sup>[13]</sup>

### The replacement Leighton Hospital

Planning approval for the new six-storey Leighton Hospital, cancer care centre and 1,000-space multi-storey car park was announced on 9 June 2026. Main construction is expected to begin in summer 2028 and the hospital is expected to open in 2032/33. Construction traffic, staff journeys, road works, emergency access and the traffic from the completed hospital all need to be included in the Local Plan evidence.<sup>[11]</sup>

Road schemes such as the North West Crewe Package were intended to support existing allocations and improve access to the hospital. They should not automatically be treated as spare capacity for further development. The Council should explain what level of growth each road scheme was designed for, what capacity remains, what extra work would be needed, who would pay for it and when it would have to be delivered.

### Planning application 26/2711/OUT

The live outline application should not decide the Local Plan, but it cannot be ignored either. The Council should test the area both with and without that proposal, as well as the realistic combinations of other submitted sites. Residents need to see which assumptions have been used

rather than finding out later that the strategy depended on a particular outcome for the application.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Proposed Eardswick solar farm

I have also become aware that Sonaura is preparing a planning application for a 7MW private-wire solar farm on land north of the Bentley Motors factory, near Bradfield Green. The developer says the electricity would be supplied directly to Bentley and its current timetable shows a planning application in 2027.<sup>[15]</sup> Residents have been told that a consultation event will be held at Legends on 8 September 2026.

This is particularly concerning because the proposed site appears to involve the same Eardswick Lane area that is already shown on the New Local Plan submissions map, including land described for biodiversity net gain and renewable energy. I understand that land does not have to be allocated in a Local Plan before somebody can submit a planning application. Even so, the Council needs to explain how the solar proposal relates to the mapped site submissions, whether the same land is being relied on for more than one purpose, and how all of this will be dealt with in the combined assessment of the area.

I support renewable energy and the aim of supplying clean electricity to Bentley, but the choice of site must be properly justified. There are nearly 30 acres of previously developed former landfill land next to Bentley which appear to be an obvious alternative to using greenfield land. The Council and the developer should explain whether this option has been assessed and, if it has been rejected, why. It could avoid the loss of greenfield land, provide a shorter and simpler cable connection to the factory without a potential crossing of Middlewich Road, and may offer a long-term income opportunity for the public sector if the ownership and commercial arrangements allow it. Any engineering, environmental or financial reasons against using the brownfield site should be published rather than simply assumed.

## Points raised by the attached planning report

The attached opposition report is about planning application 26/2711/OUT, while this response is about the Local Plan process. Even so, it highlights the sort of differences the Council's site-assessment process needs to pick up before it gives a site a housing number or assumes that it can be delivered.<sup>[13]</sup>

12. The application is for up to 2,100 homes, but the Flood Risk Assessment is described as assessing 1,837 plots.<sup>[13]</sup>
13. The reported build period is 13 to 17 years, but the transport assessment years are 2029 and 2032, well before the development is likely to be complete.<sup>[13]</sup>
14. The drainage documents are reported to use different climate-change allowances of 40% and 45%.<sup>[13]</sup>
15. The primary school is described as an opportunity in one document, while the transport model is reported to assume that a primary school will be provided on the site.<sup>[13]</sup>
16. Water, drainage and utility connection points, downstream capacity, the discharge rate and the outfall are reported as unresolved, even though delivery is presented as achievable.<sup>[13]</sup>

17. **The ecology evidence reports an 8.52% on-site habitat gain and a remaining off-site shortfall of 3.95 units. It also identifies Important Hedgerows, a Local Wildlife Site buffer and dark-corridor constraints.**<sup>[13]</sup>

18. The report identifies harm to listed buildings, loss of significance at Red Hall Farm and areas where the archaeological importance is still unknown because more investigation is needed.<sup>[13]</sup>

The Council should make sure that every assessment uses the same site boundary, area, land uses, housing number, density, phasing, assessment years, infrastructure assumptions and mitigation land. A headline housing figure should not be used in the Local Plan if the transport, drainage or environmental evidence has assessed a different version of the proposal.

## Housing need and delivery

The scoping material gives a new local housing-need figure of 2,530 homes a year, 41% above the current plan requirement of 1,800. I recognise that the Council needs a positive plan for new homes. However, a higher target does not make every large submitted site suitable. It makes it even more important to compare alternatives, infrastructure costs, delivery times, likely build rates and environmental limits.<sup>[5]</sup>

The Council's housing-supply page gives a 3.3-year supply using a base date of 31 March 2025. The same evidence section also includes a newer completions-and-supply dataset dated 31 March 2026. I am not claiming that the newer data automatically produces a different five-year figure, but the Council should state which requirement, buffer, shortfall and base date it is using, and explain how the newer figures affect the Local Plan.<sup>[12]</sup>

## What I am asking the Council to do

19. Put a clear notice on every map and download saying that these are unassessed site submissions, not allocations, that inclusion gives a site no planning status, and that boundaries, uses and housing numbers may change.
20. Add a visible update date, version history, withdrawal status, full layer list and downloadable GIS files.
21. **Publish the original submitted boundaries, the Council's displayed parcels and the final areas used for assessment. Explain every decision to split or combine land.**
22. Use one set of non-overlapping assessment areas so that land, housing numbers and mitigation are not counted twice.
23. Publish enough information to show that a site is genuinely available, including who has promoted it, ownership or control where this can lawfully be published, access constraints, third-party land, option periods and other delivery dependencies.
24. For every assessment area, publish the gross and developable area, proposed uses, density, housing number, phasing, lead-in time, likely build rate, infrastructure needed and the strength of the supporting evidence.

25. **Carry out one combined assessment for the wider Leighton area. It should include LPS 4, LPS 5, the approved replacement hospital, other committed development, application 26/2711/OUT and the realistic combinations of submitted sites. It should cover roads, emergency access, schools, GP and hospital services, water, drainage, utilities, landscape, heritage, ecology and green infrastructure.**
26. **Test the years when construction will overlap, when the hospital opens and when the developments would be fully built. Publish the assumptions, required works, costs, funding and delivery triggers.**
27. Do not count the same land for development and for biodiversity net gain or renewable-energy mitigation unless control, additionality, registration, delivery and long-term management have been demonstrated.
28. **Compare realistic alternatives before choosing preferred sites. This should include brownfield and regeneration options, combinations of smaller sites and other possible major extensions, with the Sustainability Appraisal explaining the comparison.**
29. State clearly which housing requirement and five-year-supply calculation are being used, including the base date, and explain how the March 2026 dataset affects the strategy and housing trajectory.
30. **Let residents comment on the individual site assessments at the plan-content and evidence stage, and again if sites are proposed for allocation. Give people enough time and make all of the evidence and mapping available from the start.**
31. Include the proposed Eardswick private-wire solar farm in the combined assessment for Leighton and publish a clear plan showing how its boundary relates to the Eardswick Lane land on the New Local Plan map.
32. Assess the nearby former landfill brownfield land as an alternative location for the solar farm before supporting the use of greenfield land. Publish the comparison, including cable routing, the possible need to cross Middlewich Road, environmental constraints, cost and any potential long-term public income.

## Questions I would like the Council to answer

33. What is the date and version of the site-submissions map and dataset?
34. Why do references HE 87, HE 129 and HE 266 appear in both the Leighton North mixed-use parcel and the land east of Eardswick Lane described for biodiversity net gain and renewable energy?
35. What were the original boundaries, who promoted each parcel, and what evidence shows that the land is available and under the necessary control?
36. What final, non-overlapping areas will be used for housing numbers, the Sustainability Appraisal and infrastructure testing?

37. Which existing allocations, approvals, commitments and live applications will be included in the combined assessment for Leighton, and which future combinations will be tested?
38. How will construction of the replacement hospital and its expected opening in 2032/33 be included in the traffic, emergency-access and infrastructure work?
39. How will the Council stop the same land being used both for development and for off-site biodiversity net gain or renewable-energy mitigation?
40. When will residents be able to comment on individual site assessments with the full evidence and downloadable maps available?
41. How does the proposed Eardswick solar-farm boundary relate to the mixed-use, biodiversity net gain and renewable-energy parcels already shown on the New Local Plan map?
42. Has the nearly 30 acres of former landfill brownfield land next to Bentley been considered for the solar farm? If not, why not? If it has, what technical, environmental, ownership or financial reasons led to it being rejected?

## Conclusion

I am not objecting to the Council preparing a new Local Plan. I am asking for a process that residents can understand and check. Around Leighton and Church Minshull, the current map parcels and repeated references are not clear enough to support decisions about housing numbers, site availability or mitigation without the extra information and combined assessment set out above.

Please record this response against site selection, spatial strategy, infrastructure, transport, housing, the natural environment, climate change, heritage, health and consultation. I would also like the Council to answer the questions above and make the requested changes before preferred sites are chosen. I will want to comment again when the individual assessments and any proposed allocations are published.

[Redacted]

## Sources

Sources checked on 25 to 27 August 2026. The areas below are figures shown on the Council's display map. They are not planning-application boundaries or confirmed developable areas.

43. [Cheshire East Council, 'Local Plan scoping consultation launches', 21 July 2026](#)
44. [Cheshire East Council, Housing and employment site submissions](#)
45. [Cheshire East Council, Call for sites FAQs](#)
46. [Cheshire East Council, New Local Plan timetable](#)
47. [Cheshire East Council, Scope of the New Local Plan](#)
48. [Cheshire East Council, Context for the New Local Plan](#)
49. [Cheshire East / Opus4, live map configuration and official mapped feature attributes](#)
50. [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 17 August 2026](#)
51. [Cheshire East Council, Site LPS 4 Leighton West](#)
52. [Cheshire East Council, Site LPS 5 Leighton](#)
53. [Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Planning approved for new hospital in Crewe, 9 June 2026](#)
54. [Cheshire East Council, Housing completions and supply, including the 31 March 2026 dataset](#)
55. Attached Formal Opposition Report: planning application 26/2711/OUT, 18 August 2026
56. [Cheshire East Borough Council statutory public notice for application 26/2711/OUT](#)
57. [Sonauro, Eardswick Private Wire Solar project website](#)