

Tytherington
Macclesfield
Cheshire

6th August 2026

To whom it may concern,

Response to the Cheshire East Local Plan Scoping Consultation

I welcome the opportunity to comment on Cheshire East Council's Scoping Consultation for its new Local Plan, which will shape the future of the borough for the next fifteen years and beyond.

I am responding both as a resident of Cheshire East, and also as one of the organisers of Supporters of the Adlington Greenbelt, a community group representing almost six-thousand residents concerned about the future planning, mass development and protection of Cheshire East's countryside.

I wish to make it clear that I am not opposed to new housing or sustainable growth. I recognise that Cheshire East has a statutory responsibility to prepare a new Local Plan and to plan growth positively with future housing, employment and infrastructure needs. However, I believe the new plan must be proportionate, genuinely evidence-led, environmentally responsible, ensuring that any future housing and population growth is supported by appropriate services and infrastructure *before* any productive agricultural land or Green Belt land is considered.

I would ask the Council to give particular consideration to the following during preparation of the new plan:

1. Brownfield First

Before any productive agricultural land or Green Belt is considered for allocation, Cheshire East Council should clearly demonstrate that all suitable previously developed (Brownfield) land has been fully assessed and prioritised for redevelopment.

Cheshire East has 172 brownfield sites covering over 350 acres at the latest count, which should form the starting point for future growth and align with the Government's national planning policy.

I understand that not all of these sites may be suited to residential housing developments, however, there are plenty of disused mills and sites which are no longer industrial areas and, on the face of it, perfectly suited for converting into apartments to help satisfy affordable housing demands.

We may no longer have the industries that once filled some of these buildings, but they were built during our industrial heyday and are an important part of any town's character, heritage and identity. Adelphi Mill and Clarence Mill in Bollington are examples of how historic buildings can be successfully converted to breathe a new lease of life as businesses or housing. Other examples include the mills and sites around New Islington in Manchester which have been successfully transformed into thriving mixed-use communities while retaining their historic character and charm.

Cheshire East Council has an opportunity and a responsibility to prioritise, protect and regenerate these historic brownfield sites, and to preserve the look and feel of Cheshire's towns for future generations, rather than allowing these important assets to continue to deteriorate while development pressure is directed towards Green Belt and productive agricultural land.

National and local policy require a “Brownfield first” approach, and for good reason, it protects precisely the landscapes that are now under threat. Choosing Green Belt simply because it is cheaper and more profitable is not a justification.

Our Green Belt land is a precious commodity which Cheshire East Council is entrusted to safeguard for our children, our grandchildren and generations beyond. Once this countryside is gone, it cannot be recreated!

2. Infrastructure Before Development

Any further housing growth should only take place where there is clear evidence that the existing infrastructure can support the planned growth. This should include roads and traffic capacity, public transport, healthcare, education, water supply, wastewater capacity, utilities and digital infrastructure.

This sounds like a fundamental part of any planning framework, however, many of our vital services are already operating close to, or beyond capacity, yet Cheshire East Council appears to be adding to the problem by overloading our systems by approving more and more housing planning applications without plans or funding for any infrastructure upgrades.

3. Housing Land Supply

The Council's inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply until 2028, has created a significant weakness in the current planning framework, which is currently being exploited by developers and speculators.

Developers are responding to the Council's current position and their inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply by speculatively buying as much as possible around Cheshire East and applying for planning permission on previously safeguarded land, including Green Belt land, factoring in the assumption that planning applications may get refused.

Where planning permission is refused, developers are winning on appeal precisely because the council is unable to demonstrate their five-year housing land supply!

This results in a financial hit for Cheshire East in legal costs and fines for appealing the case and, in some cases, the loss of section 106 contributions which are agreed between the council and a property developer, to fund infrastructure mitigating the impact of the housing.

The planning permission floodgates are effectively wide open for developers to take full advantage and the situation will continue to worsen, if the Local Plan process is not accompanied by an *urgent recalculation* of the five-year housing land supply or the publication of an interim report demonstrating that Cheshire has sufficient land allocated to meet the housing supply demands for the next five years.

4. Protect Productive Agricultural Land and Support an Environment Improvement Plan

Productive farmland is a finite national resource which contributes to the UK's food security, biodiversity, flood management and climate resilience.

Parts of it have remained virtually unchanged for hundreds of years. They contain ancient woodland, veteran trees and centuries-old hedgerows that support some of the UK's rarest species. These are living systems that have developed over generations. You cannot replace 200-year-old oak trees with newly planted saplings and call it “habitat creation” or “biodiversity net gain”. These practices disguise the fact that the net ecological value would be overwhelmingly negative.

There is also a huge contradiction between the developments being proposed and the Government's own "Environmental Improvement Plan".

The EIP promises to:

- rewild and restore nature
- improve water quality
- give people better access to nature
- help communities breathe clean air
- and support farmers to produce food sustainably while protecting soil, water and wildlife

The 15-year Local Plan and mass development proposal would do the exact opposite.

It would threaten our Green Belt land, destroy ancient woodland and wildlife habitats, and wipe out multiple working farms and highly productive agricultural land. You cannot "rewild England" while bulldozing some of Cheshire's largest remaining areas of unbroken countryside. It is simply incompatible!

Developments should avoid the unnecessary loss of high-quality agricultural land wherever reasonable alternatives exist.

5. Sustainable and Proportionate Growth

Future housing allocations should reflect the size, character and infrastructure capacity of existing settlements and support proportional growth based on demand throughout Cheshire East.

The 15-year development plan should be proportionate, needs-led and evidence-based rather than simply responding to speculative land submissions.

6. Transparency and Community Engagement

The preparation of this Local Plan presents an opportunity to engage with residents and rebuild public confidence in the planning process, yet Cheshire East Council has failed to publicise or promote the plan's existence widely, allowing only a six-week consultation during the main summer holiday period to gather any feedback from residents!

The Council's new Community Voices initiative encourages residents to "talk together". Given the significance of a Local Plan blueprint and that it will shape Cheshire East for the next fifteen years, I am concerned that the consultation period is limited to only six weeks and coincides with the main summer holiday period when many residents, councillors and officers may be away.

I would respectfully ask that the Council considers extending its 1st September deadline with a wider public awareness campaign to gather feedback from residents, parish councils and community groups before strategic allocations are made.

7. Evidence-Based Decision Making

This Local Plan represents one of the most important decisions Cheshire East Council will make for a generation. The choices made now will not only shape how Cheshire East develops, but also where people live, the character of our towns and villages, where people work, the resilience of our infrastructure, how people travel, the future of our farms and agricultural land, and how our natural habitats, wildlife and countryside are protected.

Given the irreversible nature of these decisions, I respectfully ask that the Council clearly explains the reasons behind every proposed site allocation and makes the supporting evidence easy for residents to access and understand.

It is equally important that the Council actively engages with Cheshire East residents, community groups and parish councils throughout the process, listening to local views and responding to what communities want and need.

Residents must be able to understand not only what has been proposed, but why each location has been chosen over reasonable alternatives, and how these choices serve both current and future generations of Cheshire East residents.

Greater openness at every stage, and transparent publication of the evidence behind each decision, is essential in rebuilding public confidence and trust in Cheshire East Council and the planning process.

This Local Plan will shape Cheshire East for decades. It presents an opportunity to deliver homes and growth the borough needs while protecting the landscapes, heritage and natural environment that make Cheshire East such a desirable place to live. I hope the Council will use this opportunity to produce a Local Plan that is genuinely evidence-led, environmentally responsible and sustainable, shaped through meaningful engagement with the communities it serves.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Hadfield
Tytherington Resident, Macclesfield

