

Gawsworth Parish Council

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CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL PLAN 2029-2024 SCOPING CONSULTATION RESPONSE

The development of a new Local Plan, with the substantially larger housing requirement than the current plan, will have a long lasting impact on communities across the borough. Gawsworth Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to be engaged throughout this process and represent this rural community as the plan develops.

This response to the Scoping Consultation sets out a number of areas and policy directions Gawsworth Parish Council would like to see taken forward in the development of the plan.

The format of this document is to follow the numbered paragraphs of the consultation where possible and reference to the relevant paragraphs is included. For the avoidance of doubt, reference to a particular paragraph does not limit the input to that paragraph where it is relevant to wider/other sections.

Vision and Objectives

Paras 5.1-5.4

The vision for a new local plan should be one of a sustainable borough which has retained its rural character with distinct communities.

Specific objectives to be considered to drive the plan should be for the local plan to:

- Minimise the release of additional green belt, with a substantial amount of the required development taking place on brownfield sites
- Deliver improvement to active travel networks and other forms of sustainable transport, including bus and rail connectivity
- Protect sensitive habitats and promote nature restoration
- Deliver environmentally sustainable development which minimises ongoing carbon emissions

Identifying and assessing sites

Paras 5.5-5.5.12

Parish and town councils should be involved in the detailed site selection process such that they can direct where development in their communities takes place (if it is required) and provide requirements for local investment/facilities that such development should provide.

Where any site considered for allocation is owned by Cheshire East Council, there should be a robust process to ensure that there is no actual nor apparent conflict of interest. Council owned farms should not be promoted for development.

Green Belt and Strategic Green Gap

Paras 5.15-5.19

All possible alternatives to the release of additional Green Belt land should be pursued, particularly the identification and promotion of development on brownfield sites.

The Parish Council is concerned by the impact on the Green Belt of the new Grey Belt definition. There should be adequate consultation on the identification of Grey Belt to provide opportunity for local input into the register before it is finalised.

The Parish Council considers that one of the most important functions of the Green Belt is preventing the merging of settlements. This is most notably a concern with regard to Macclesfield's southerly expansion towards Gawsworth. The Local Plan should minimise the merging of settlements.

Affordable Housing

Paras 5.33-5.35

The existing allocation of LPS15 and the safeguarded land of LPS19 are on the edge of Macclesfield, but within the parish of Gawsworth. The Local Plan should contain a policy confirming that on such (on the edge of towns but within neighbouring parishes) priority is given equally to those with a connection to the parish as with a connection to the town.

Natural Environment

Paras 5.96-5.103

The protection and enhancement of the natural environment should be a core principle of the plan.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust should be commissioned to assess the biodiversity/ecological value of land to ensure that environmentally sensitive sites are not allocated for development.

There should be a policy which ensures the protection of Peat Land, prohibiting development which risks its degradation.

There should be a policy promoting nature restoration of sites, including Danes Moss North.

Active Travel

Para 5.112

The Local Plan should enhance active travel routes between towns, connecting them in with the villages and rural communities along the way. The development of active travel routes between Congleton and Macclesfield would simultaneously benefit Gawsworth and promote the sustainability of our parish.

Climate Change Adaptation

Paras 5.114-5.117

The new local plan should ensure that new development is designed to adapt to a changing environment, and to mitigate the impact of development on the climate. Policy should require that all new housing and employment development includes solar panels, heat pumps and similar measures to reduce energy consumption.



Green Destinations

Paras 5.118-5.124

The Local Plan should map “green destinations” (or a similar name) being communities and areas within the borough which are important for access to the countryside, conservation, walking and cycling for leisure and children’s play. Such areas contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents, and emphasise the borough’s rural character.

Policy should then resist development which damages these areas, and support development which promotes their sustainability and retention, such as active travel and transport links.

Gawsworth Village would be one example, important not only to its residents, but frequently visited by residents of surrounding towns as a hub for enjoying the countryside and a more rural part of the borough.

Engagement Strategy

Generally

The council should ensure that future consultations are not run over Christmas and summer holiday periods. This creates a barrier to participation and will lead to critique of the plan and process.

Cheshire East Council should work closely with town and parish councils to ensure that all communities are represented throughout the process. This should include regular briefings and access to information (e.g. to answer questions raised in communities). Town and parish councils should be encouraged to promote awareness of the local plan in their communities, and provided with the resource to do so.

Outside the formal consultation stages, there should be consultation with town and parish councils on documents created to support the plan e.g. green belt assessment, site assessments etc. This will ensure councils are consistently engaged, can provide local intelligence and develop their understanding throughout the process.

Neighbourhood Plans

The Gawsworth Neighbourhood Plan was made in 2021 and Gawsworth Parish Council recognises that it will need to be reviewed following the adoption of a new Local Plan to ensure it remains relevant.

Neighbourhood Plans should be considered during the drafting of a new Local Plan, with any likely effects or provisions which appear discordant with a plan being brought to the attention of the relevant Parish or Town Council.

