Submission by email to: localplan@cheshireeast.gov.uk

REPRESENTATION TO THE CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL PLAN SCOPING CONSULTATION AND SITE SUBMISSION FOR LAND OFF HOLLIN LANE, STYAL

I am pleased to enclose representations to the Cheshire East Local Plan Scoping Consultation. This representation focuses on the general direction and scope of the emerging Local Plan.

This representation also promotes land off Hollin Lane in Styal, which is considered well placed to contribute to meeting development needs in the Borough and to support the objectives of the emerging Local Plan. This submission confirms that the land is available, suitable, achievable and deliverable for residential development. A site boundary plan is contained in Appendix 1.

RESPONSE TO SCOPING CONSULTATION

Section 2: New Local Plan

The Council's intention to prepare a new Local Plan under the government's new local-plan making system is welcomed, particularly in the context of the significantly altered national planning policy position and the government's ambition to deliver new homes to address the housing crisis, which includes a commitment to deliver 1.5 million new homes nationally during this Parliament.

Section 3: Context for the New Local Plan

Increase in Housing Requirements

The current local housing need figure for Cheshire East is 2,531 dwellings per annum (dpa) as established by the Standard Method[1]. This should be treated as a minimum starting point for the emerging Local Plan. This is significantly higher than the currently adopted housing requirement of 1,800 dpa set out in the CELPS (2027).

The emerging Local Plan will therefore need to plan for this materially higher level of housing growth and ensure that sufficient land is allocated to maintain delivery across the full plan period. In this regard, it is unlikely that brownfield opportunities alone will be sufficient to meet long-term development needs. The Plan therefore needs to proactively consider greenfield, grey belt and Green Belt release where necessary as part of a positively prepared strategy for growth. It will be important for the Council to undertake robust evidence-led assessments of greenfield, grey belt and Green Belt opportunities to meet development needs.

Maintaining a sufficient pipeline of deliverable and developable sites of varying scale and location will be important to support resilience and flexibility in housing delivery over the plan period. The emerging Local Plan must respond proactively to the materially changed national policy context by planning positively for sustainable growth in accordance with NPPF 2026 Policies HO1 and HO2. It should also promote a balanced spatial distribution of growth across the Borough by allocating a range of deliverable, suitable and developable sites.

[1] Dwelling stock estimates in England: 2025 - GOV.UK

Further call-for-sites consultations should be undertaken in the context of this changed position and the substantially increased housing requirement that Cheshire East will need to meet over the plan period using the Standard Method, which is a starting point for deciding how many new homes to plan for in a local plan.

Changes to Green Belt Policy
The Council rightly recognises Green Belt land should be reviewed to meet the needs of the Borough. In advance of this, the Council should also consider greenfield and grey belt land (NPPF 2026 Policy GB4).

Spatial Development Strategy
It is welcomed that the Council will continue to prepare their Local Plan in advance of the preparation of a 'Spatial Development Strategy' (SDS) for Cheshire and Warrington by the Combined Authority.

National Decision-Making Policies
The NPPF 2026 introduces national decision-making policies. These policies are material considerations that must be taken into account in decision-making from the date of publication of the NPPF 2026, 17 August 2026. The NPPF 2026 makes clear that development plan policies, or parts of those policies, that are materially inconsistent with national decision-making policies should be given very limited weight. It is therefore important that the policies within the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan are consistent with the NPPF 2026, without replicating national policy or applying standards over and above national requirements, such as the Future Homes Standard. The new Cheshire East Local Plan should focus on locally specific matters and avoid unnecessary duplication of national policy. The recognition of this in the Consultation Document is welcomed.

Section 5: Scope of the New Local Plan

Local Plan Period
The proposed Local Plan period of 15 years is welcomed. Whilst the NPPF 2026 has reduced the minimum Local Plan period from 15 to 10 years, the scale of the housing and other development needs across Cheshire East necessitates a comprehensive period to deliver the scale of development likely to be required across the Borough to meet its needs.

Planning for Growth

Identifying and assessing sites
Consultation on the methodology for identifying and assessing appropriate sites for allocation, the land availability assessment methodology, would be welcomed. This should take place as early as possible in the plan-making process to allow meaningful consultation on the methodology itself, ahead of the consultation on content and evidence, which could include proposed allocation sites.

Whilst the Council has undertaken previous call-for-site consultations, the context for which sites are considered suitable, available and deliverable has changed in the context of the changes to national policy, and the increasing need to deliver homes (as per the latest Standard Method figures). The Plan therefore needs to proactively consider greenfield, grey belt and Green Belt release to meet needs, which could necessitate the need for more sites than those already submitted during previous call-for-site consultations. The Council should therefore continue to accept and appraise sites during the earlier stages of the plan-making process.

The land off Hollin Lane, Styal, as submitted with this representation, should form part of the Council's consideration of appropriate sites.

Green Belt
As noted above, whilst it is welcomed that the Council recognise Green Belt land is likely to be required to meet the needs of the Borough, there is a requirement through the NPPF 2026 to first also consider greenfield and grey belt land (Policy GB4).

Settlement Hierarchy
Styal currently falls within the category of "Other Settlements and Rural Areas" under existing Local Plan Policy PG2 (Settlement Hierarchy). Within this tier of the hierarchy, development is generally expected to be proportionate to the size, function and character of the settlement and well related to the existing built-up area.

Notwithstanding its current hierarchy designation, Styal exhibits many characteristics typically associated with a sustainable settlement. The village benefits from a railway station on the Manchester to Crewe line, providing direct access to Manchester city centre, Manchester Airport and wider employment destinations. It is located immediately adjacent to Wilmslow, a Key Service Centre within the Cheshire East hierarchy, and has access to a broad range of services, employment opportunities, education facilities and community infrastructure. It also has strong links to the wider Greater Manchester economic area.

The NPPF 2026 places a strong emphasis on directing growth to sustainable locations that maximise the use of existing infrastructure, support sustainable patterns of development and reduce reliance on private car travel. National decision-making policies also encourage development in locations where it can make effective use of existing transport infrastructure and where residents can access jobs, services and facilities through sustainable travel choices.

In this context, a revised hierarchy could therefore recognise Styal as a settlement capable of accommodating a greater level of sustainable growth than is currently envisaged under the "Other Settlements and Rural Areas" category.

Spatial Distribution
It is agreed that a range of options for the distribution of development will be required in order to identify the most appropriate and sustainable strategy to accommodate the scale of development required across the Borough. The Consultation Document identifies this is likely to be informed by housing demand and availability, infrastructure capacity and constraints, environmental considerations and the market attractiveness of locations. The ultimate spatial strategy is likely to include a combination of options including development within existing settlements, edge of settlement growth, large-scale urban extensions and/or new settlements. This approach is welcomed. The spatial distribution of development across the Borough should be balanced and should avoid the over-concentration of growth or economic investment in one part of the Borough.

Housing
The preparation of a Housing Needs Assessment is welcomed to better understand what types of housing are needed, who requires them and the scale of provision.

Affordable Housing
It is essential that the affordable housing policy is underpinned by a robust plan-wide viability assessment, and that it is set at a level that does not undermine the deliverability of the Plan.

Housing mix
The need to consider housing mix to ensure homes meet the needs of the Borough is welcomed.

Housing diversification and providing for small and medium sized sites
Planning for small and medium-sized sites is welcomed as a means of helping to deliver the required housing targets. Small and medium-sized sites are often quicker to deliver and can help meet the needs of Cheshire East in a timely manner.

Housing standards
The policy aspirations for new residential development to be high quality, inclusive, sustainable and contribute to the creation of successful and resilient communities is supported. The Council should be mindful of the NPPF 2026 requirement that Local Plan policies should not apply standards over and above national standards.

Design
The central objective of creating well-designed sustainable places is supported. The Consultation Document considers options to implement design coding. The Council should consider not including highly prescriptive borough-wide design codes or policies noting the diversity of the Borough.

It is essential that any policies relating to design incorporate sufficient flexibility to account for site-specific characteristics and context and the range of development required to meet diverse needs across the Borough.

Local Plan Evidence Base
The proposed body of evidence to be prepared to inform the new Local Plan is noted and welcomed. In particular, the Land Availability and Site Allocations Assessments, Housing Needs Assessment, Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution of Development Report, and Local Plan Viability Assessment will be important. The evidence base documents should be made available before the next stage of consultation.

The Council should continue to accept sites that are available, suitable and deliverable for further consideration during the plan-making process, noting the scale of development required to meet the needs of the Borough.

I welcome the opportunity to submit land off Hollin Lane, Styal for your further consideration and welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Further details on the land off Hollin Lane, Styal are provided at Appendix 1.



Michael G Bathurst MRICS

HELICO
COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CONSULTING

APPENDIX 1

SITE SUBMISSION – LAND OFF HOLLIN LANE, STYAL – RESIDENTIAL USE

Site Location Plan



Site Location

The site is located on the northern edge of the village of Styal, bound by the A555 to the north, Styal Golf Course to the south and east, Hollin Lane to the west, and agricultural fields to the south. The site is bisected by the railway line connecting Styal Railway Station to Manchester Airport and Manchester City Centre.

The site extends to c. 12.86 ha and is currently in agricultural use and has a number of trees and hedgerows along field boundaries and along the railway line.

Styal Railway Station is approximately 850 metres south of the site at its closest point, with good pedestrian routes connecting the site to the station. The site is accessed directly from Hollin Lane and has direct links to the A555, which connects to Manchester Airport and the M56 motorway to the west, and to the M60 motorway to the east.

The amenities within Styal village are located approximately 850 metres to the south, where there are village shops, pubs, cafes and access to National Trust's Quarry Bank Mill.

Sustainability and Suitability

The site occupies a highly sustainable location within Styal and is well placed to contribute towards the delivery of sustainable development objectives set out within the NPPF 2026.

Existing Railway Station

A key sustainability attribute of the site is its proximity to Styal Railway Station, which is located on the Manchester to Crewe rail corridor. The station provides direct connections to Manchester City Centre, Manchester Airport, Wilmslow, Crewe and the wider regional rail network. This level of accessibility would enable residents to access employment, education, retail and leisure opportunities without reliance on private vehicles and aligns strongly with national policy objectives to promote sustainable transport choices.

Proximity to Manchester Airport

The site benefits from close proximity to Manchester Airport, one of the UK's most significant international transport hubs and a major economic driver for the North West. The Airport supports a substantial concentration of employment across aviation, logistics, advanced manufacturing, hospitality and business services sectors. The site's location enables convenient access to these employment opportunities whilst also benefiting from strategic national and international connectivity.

Adjacency to Wilmslow

Styal sits immediately adjacent to Wilmslow, identified within Cheshire East's adopted settlement hierarchy as a Key Service Centre. Wilmslow provides a comprehensive range of retail, commercial, healthcare, educational, leisure and community facilities. The close functional relationship between the two settlements means that residents of the site would be able to access a wide range of services within a short distance, reducing the need to travel longer distances to meet day-to-day needs.

Access to Employment Opportunities

The site is exceptionally well positioned in relation to major employment destinations. In addition to Manchester Airport, residents would benefit from easy access to employment opportunities within Wilmslow, Handforth, Alderley Park, Manchester City Centre and the wider South Manchester economic area. Rail, road and sustainable travel connections provide access to a diverse employment market across a range of sectors, supporting the economic growth objectives of both local and national planning policy.

Environmental and technical considerations

The site is largely absent of environmental and technical constraints that would prevent the delivery of site. Further surveys will be undertaken to demonstrate this as part of the plan-making process, including landscape and views, ecology and biodiversity, arboricultural constraints, access and highways, noise associated with the railway line and the A555, flood risk and drainage, and the relationship with existing settlement form. These matters are capable of being assessed through the evidence base and, where necessary, addressed through appropriate mitigation, layout design and development requirements.

Green Belt and grey belt

The site currently forms part of the wider Cheshire Green Belt. However, it is considered that the site is capable of being regarded as ‘grey belt’. In accordance with the NPPF 2026, the site does not strongly contribute to the purposes of:

- (a) checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- (b) preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another; and
- (d) preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

A more detailed Green Belt and grey belt appraisal can be submitted to support this position.

Ownership and Land Control

The Site is entirely within the control of S&R Hankinson and is not subject to any legal constraints that would present an obstacle to early delivery.

The Site is available for the delivery of development in the short-term, helping Cheshire East meet its housing needs in a key growth location in an area with proven strong demand, and can be delivered within a period of c.5 – 7 years.

Summary

This submission demonstrates that the land off Hollin Lane is available, suitable, achievable and therefore deliverable for residential development. The site exhibits a range of characteristics that are consistent with the NPPF 2026's objectives for locating development in sustainable and accessible locations. Its proximity to a railway station, Manchester Airport, a Key Service Centre, significant employment opportunities and a wide range of services and facilities demonstrates that it is well placed to accommodate growth. These attributes indicate that the site represents a sustainable location for development and should be considered favourably through the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan process.