Ministry of Defence

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Your reference:
Cheshire East Council -Local Plan Scoping Consultation

E-mail: DIO-Safeguarding-Statutory@mod.gov.uk

Our reference:
DIO 10039204

Cheshire East Council (Strategic Planning Team)
Delamere House
Delamere Street
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CW1 2LL

1st September 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for consulting the Ministry of Defence (MOD) on the scoping stage of preparing a new Local Plan.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) Safeguarding Team represents the MOD as a statutory consultee in the UK planning system to ensure designated zones around key operational defence sites such as aerodromes, explosives storage sites, air weapon ranges, and technical sites are not adversely affected by development outside the MOD estate.

The area the Cheshire East Council Local Plan scoping consultation would apply to contains or is washed over by statutory safeguarding zones designed to assure the operation and capability of defence sites or assets.

Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Safeguarded Aerodromes, Technical Sites and Military Explosives Storage Areas) Direction 2002 (Circular 01/2003), the MOD must be consulted on certain forms of development within these statutory safeguarding zones in order to be able to complete assessment(s) of the effect of development on the operation or capability of defence sites or assets or any effect on operational or training activity.

Copies of plans that provide the extent of those safeguarding zones, in both GIS shapefile and .pdf format, are issued to Planning Authorities by the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG). The most recent MOD assurance review was conducted in 2023 which confirmed that, at that time, Planning Authorities were in possession of relevant safeguarding data. Any subsequent updates to those plans have been issued by MHCLG. Should your Planning Authority require replacement data, a request can be made through the above email address.

It should be noted that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in August 2026, contains a number of policies relevant to plan making and defence which include:

• 'Policy P1: Planning for clean and safe places' requires that development plans identify whether certain forms of development should be restricted where they may fall within 'safeguarding areas around aerodromes, technical sites or military explosives storage areas'.

• 'Policy P4: Impact of development on existing activities' sets out the agent of change principle, identifying that development proposals should not result in unreasonable restrictions being placed

on the current and permitted operation of existing businesses and activities and identifies defence sites as one of those existing businesses and activities.

• ‘Policy P6: Land and operations for defence and public safety’ highlights the substantial weight that ‘should be attached to the importance of sites, activities, facilities and infrastructure required to maintain and enhance defence capability’ and directs that this be considered where development is proposed which could affect operational activity and capability. In addition, decision makers are guided to consider the importance of these sites when considering proposals for ‘modernisation, intensification, redevelopment or expansion for operational and related purposes’ of defence sites, facilities, and infrastructure.

Planning policy issued by a Planning Authority provides an opportunity to better inform developers of the statutory requirement that MOD is consulted on development that triggers the criteria set out on Safeguarding Plans and to make clear that development should be designed to ensure that it would have no detrimental impact on the operation or capability of a defence site or assets and that it would not restrict or compromise operational or training activity. As such, at this Scoping stage, the MOD would request that any new local plan make clear that planning permission will be granted only where development would have no detrimental impact on the operation or capability of a defence site or assets and that it would not restrict or compromise operational or training activity.

The MOD notes the policy intention for the new local plan to include minerals and waste policy provision for Cheshire and the need to support renewable and low-carbon energy generation, including on-site technologies such as solar panels, heat pumps and wind energy.

Whilst the MOD has no comment on the long-term vision and strategic priorities to shape the development of the borough, nor the matters the local plan addresses, including how broad policy mineral or waste workings or renewable energy generation could be provisioned, the MOD’s primary concern with respect to minerals and waste development is the potential for a given site to degrade aviation safety by increasing the risk of birdstrike. The working or subsequent restoration of either mineral or waste sites have the capacity to form environments that might attract those large and/or flocking bird species that form a hazard to aviation safety.

Additionally, whilst the MOD has, in principle, no objection to any renewable energy development, some infrastructure enabling renewable energy production, for example wind turbine generators can, by virtue of their physical dimensions and properties, impact upon military aviation activities, cause obstruction to protected critical airspace surrounding military aerodromes, or impede the operation of safeguarded defence technical installations. Solar PV development on a large scale can compromise the operation of communications and other technical assets by introducing substantial areas of metal that degrade signals and, depending on the location of development, may produce glint and glare to the detriment of aviation safety.

The DIO Safeguarding team would welcome further engagement on the emerging Cheshire East Council’s Local Plan review and will provide representations as and when consulted.

I trust this clearly explains our position on this update. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to consider these points further.

Yours sincerely

DIO Assistant Safeguarding Manager