Keep Greenside Green

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Local Plan Scoping Consultation Submission

Keep Greenside Green is a group of residents of the Greenside Estate and the surrounding area, formed by Councillor Judy Snowball. We held a well attended public meeting on 16th August at Jasmin Pavillion, below is a summary of what residents stated should be in the next local plan.

1 - Brownfield First

Before considering further Green Belt release, the council should publish a proper assessment of brownfield sites, vacant buildings, stalled permissions, town-centre regeneration opportunities and underused public land. This should include a realistic assessment of what intervention would be needed to make difficult sites deliverable.

The council should also reconsider its existing density expectations. "Build up, not out" as the government had repeatedly said. Policy HOU 14 generally expects at least 30 homes per net hectare. In light of the revised minimum housing need of 2,530 homes a year, or 37,950 over 15 years, the new plan should test increasing this to at least 40 homes per hectare in Macclesfield and other suitable locations.

Increasing density from 30 to 40 homes per hectare provides a third more homes on the same land and reduces the land needed for a fixed number of homes by 25%. Applied purely as an illustration to the 37,950-home requirement, this reduces the land requirement from around 1,265 hectares to 949 hectares, a difference of more than 300 hectares. Existing permissions, windfalls and brownfield sites would reduce both figures, but the proportional saving remains the same. The council should **publish different density scenarios** and show how much greenfield land each would require.

Where greenfield or Green Belt land is considered, the council must also look at **gross** density: how many homes are delivered for every hectare of countryside lost. CFS26 590 is a clear example. Its submission identifies a total site of 19.228 hectares, but only 13.6 hectares as developable, with approximately 400 homes. This equates to 29.4 homes per net developable hectare but only 20.8 homes per hectare across the submitted site. This is poor return for the loss of green belt land that has been farmed for centuries, has significant biodiversity benefits and is providing an important role in stopping the sprawl of Macclesfield.

The promoter proposes large areas of open space, landscaped edges, biodiversity enhancements, buffers around the overhead power lines and drainage measures such as SuDS. These may all be necessary, but they also reduce the site's housing yield. The council should not allow a heavily constrained site to appear efficient simply by calculating density on the smaller area left.

Both gross and net density should be published for every potential allocation. Housing-only Green Belt sites should be expected to deliver at least 30 homes per ***gross*** hectare. If that cannot be

achieved without compromising environmental protection, drainage, infrastructure or landscape buffers, the site should be rejected in favour of a less constrained alternative.

We also want Cheshire East to undertake a feasibility study into building council housing directly and this was mentioned multiple times in our residents meeting. This should audit land the council owns or controls and examine whether higher-density council and social housing could be delivered through direct development or partnerships with housing providers.

The Government's new Council Housebuilding Support Fund specifically funds feasibility studies, site identification and housing-pipeline development. Applications open in September 2026, with councils able to seek up to £300,000 in each of three years. This can support bids to the £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes Programme, which prioritises council housing and Social Rent.

Cheshire East owns large amounts of land across the region. Suitable parts of that land should be included in the feasibility work, alongside other council-owned land in Macclesfield. A further 95.7 hectares at South West Macclesfield has already been safeguarded to meet longer-term development needs. If Macclesfield's boundary must expand, these established options should be fully assessed before additional Green Belt sites with significant constraints.

Green Belt should not be released until these alternatives have been properly tested and the results published.

2 - Protect Gaps Between Settlements

The submissions around Macclesfield must be assessed together. Taken collectively, those around Greenside could create a substantial new development front along Whirley Road, Sandy Lane, Birtles Road and towards the A537.

The council's previous Green Belt work found that parcels MF11, MF08 and MF09 made a significant contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of Macclesfield. If a new assessment reaches a different conclusion, the council should explain clearly what evidence has changed.

The revised grey-belt approach does not mean that all Green Belt is equally available for development. Purpose A: checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, is particularly relevant here. Annex E of the revised NPPF specifically identifies an extended "finger" of development into the Green Belt as an indicator that land may make a strong contribution to preventing sprawl.

The council should not divide large Green Belt parcels into convenient smaller areas that disguise their wider function or allow promoters to nibble away at long-established boundaries. Birtles Road and Whirley Road have contained the outward spread of Macclesfield towards Prestbury and Henbury and helped protect the Alderley Edge wooded landscape for many years.

Any new settlement boundary must be clear, permanent and capable of resisting further expansion over the full plan period. None of the Greenside submissions provide an obvious defensible long-term boundary.

3 - Infrastructure Before Growth

Infrastructure must be assessed cumulatively across all the Greenside proposals, not calculated separately for each submission.

Whirley Primary School is already full. Ofsted records 212 pupils against a capacity of 210. Cheshire East's 2026 admissions figures show 31 children allocated against a Published Admission Number of

30, with the final allocation only 0.406 miles from the school. We also know of families living on the Greenside estate, close to the school, who have failed to obtain a place.

The school occupies a tightly constrained site and there is no obvious land available for conventional expansion. The council cannot assume that developer contributions would solve this. If sites around Greenside progress to the next stage, the council should publish the school's current and forecast capacity and a feasibility study showing whether physical expansion is possible. If development at this scale requires a new primary school, its location, funding and delivery programme must be established before housing is allocated, with places available before homes are occupied.

Traffic must also be modelled cumulatively. The submissions would place further pressure on Whirley Road, Birtles Road, Sandy Lane, Church Lane, Broken Cross and the A537. Several local approaches are narrow or single track, have poor or missing pavements and contain chokepoints where widening would be extremely difficult because of existing homes.

Previous council highways evidence treated Whirley Road as unsuitable for development access, including excluding vehicular access from the LPS18 Weaver Green development. Any departure from that position needs clear evidence, particularly as these roads are in a similar or worse condition than when the previous Local Plan was prepared.

The same principle applies to drainage, sewerage, healthcare, public transport, electricity and safe walking and cycling routes. Promises of future contributions are not enough. The council must show that improvements are physically possible, fully funded and delivered before the additional demand arises.

4 - Transparent and Evidence-Based Decisions

The council should publish one area-wide map and assessment covering every relevant submission around Macclesfield. It should show the combined housing assumption, likely access arrangements and cumulative effects on roads, schools, drainage, Green Belt, landscape and wildlife.

For every site, the council should publish both gross and net density, showing separately the land required for ecological and landscape buffers, drainage, overhead-line easements, access, open space and other mitigation. Where a promoter reduces the developable area, the council should explain how that calculation has been independently checked.

Assessment criteria, evidence sources, assumptions and scoring should be published in full. Claims made by promoters should not be treated as facts without supporting evidence.

The evidence base should compare the Greenside sites with genuine alternatives, including brownfield regeneration, higher-density development, direct council housebuilding, council-owned land and the safeguarded land south-west of Macclesfield. It should also show how different density assumptions affect the amount of Green Belt that might be required.

Local evidence must be taken seriously. Residents have direct experience of school-place refusals, school-run congestion, unsafe walking routes, unreliable bus services and surface-water flooding. These are existing problems, not theoretical objections to future housing.

5 -Protect Nature and Landscape

The land around Greenside forms a connected landscape rather than a series of isolated fields. It includes mature hedgerows, trees, ponds and open fields linking to the Sandy Lane quarry Local Wildlife Site. Several of the submitted sites also fall within the adopted ENV1 Ecological Network as either core or restoration areas.

The NBN Atlas contains records from within or close to the Greenside sites for Section 41 priority species including lapwing, brown hare and great crested newt, alongside other protected wildlife such as barn owls. Where existing records show a realistic risk to protected or priority species, appropriate surveys should inform site selection. They should not be left to later stages and should be a key aspect of decision making in the early drafting of the local plan.

Assessment must consider the cumulative fragmentation of habitats and the effects of lighting, traffic, noise, domestic pets and increased recreational pressure. Biodiversity net gain should not be treated as permission to destroy established habitat and attempt to recreate it elsewhere. Avoiding harm must come first.

The submitted sites around Greenside are also active agricultural land used for arable farming or grazing. The area is historically known as "Longmoss" due to its peat content. The loss of productive land, its contribution to food security and the role of peat in responding to climate change should receive proper weight in a plan covering the next 15 years. As many residents have said, "once its gone, its gone".

Residents also have photographic evidence of regular surface-water flooding in parts of the area. Drainage, soil and peat conditions, water quality and flood risk must be considered across site boundaries, particularly where large areas of absorbent open land could be replaced by roads, roofs and hard surfaces.

6 - Build Communities, Not Just Houses

Housing numbers alone do not create a community. The plan should start with the homes Cheshire East actually needs, particularly council and social-rented homes, accessible housing, affordable family homes and suitable homes for older or smaller households. It should not rely mainly on large private estates of "market housing" that we've seen across the county during the previous local plan period.

More than 1,000 homes around Greenside could not sensibly be treated as several unrelated developments. Growth anywhere near this scale would require a comprehensive masterplan covering education, healthcare, community space, local services, public transport, recreation, green infrastructure and safe walking and cycling routes.

These facilities must serve existing residents as well as new households and must be delivered at the right time. The fact that children living close to Whirley Primary already miss out on places shows that current provision is not keeping pace. The Local Plan should not add further demand on the assumption that these problems can be solved later.

Next Steps

As the local plan develops, the Greenside Residents is highly motivated to remain involved in the local plan process. We understand the next formal point to comment on the plan is due next year, but we ask that we could be kept up to date with any developments that involve the area, and that any evidence the community provides after the closing of scoping consultation on September the 1st is still considered. A number of the residents were unaware of the consultation or were on holiday during August, so may not be able to send their comments and evidence before the official closing date.

Gareth Wilson
On behalf of the Keep Greenside Green Residents Group
https://keepgreensidegreen.co.uk/