

Gawsworth Parish Council

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CEC LOCAL PLAN ISSUES CONSULTATION JUNE 2024

Q2c Are there any other matters related to the climate emergency that the new local plan should consider?

There are a number of strategic development sites in the 2017 Local Plan where there is now further knowledge as to their ecological and environmental importance, for example the peatland sites south of Macclesfield. These should be returned to Green Belt to protect them from development.

The local plan should increase protections for peatland moss areas, protecting it from development and adverse effects from nearby developments.

Q3a *Given the importance of open space for everyone, are there any specific approaches that the local plan should consider?*

Policy should set a cascade approach to the management of new public open space on development whereby it is first offered for transfer to the borough council, then to the parish council and finally vested in a management company. New open space is for the benefit of all in a community and the costs of its maintenance should not be concentrated solely on residents of a new development.

A site for a country park in the east of the borough should be considered i.e. the ex-quarries on Gawsworth Common.

Q3e *How can the local plan help to reduce health inequalities across the borough?*

The local plan can only reduce health inequality if it outlines programmes that are based on sound scientific analysis of the root causes. It appears that too much reliance is being given to the 'Tartan Rug' data to guide health policy and the council is concerned that this will inaccurately steer interventions and lead to flawed conclusions.

For example, singling out Gawsworth as an exemplar of good health and contrasting it with Crewe would imply causality rather than an association between the characteristics of Gawsworth and the high life expectancy. No attempt is made to explain the important fundamental difference between association and causality. No attempt is made to explain what factors contribute to the apparent difference in life expectancy. The approach taken is

scientifically invalid and misleading. For example, the Gawsworth population is notably older than the average for Cheshire East. This could be because house prices are relatively high and people tend to move to the Parish in later life when they are better off. Those that move to Gawsworth will tend to have experienced better health and financial success while those who have chronic health conditions that have affected their earning potential (and life expectancy) are less likely to move to Gawsworth. It is necessary to understand why there are differences in life expectancy if interventions are to be targeted appropriately. Highlighting the stark difference between highest and lowest life expectancy areas does not do this and appears to be political.

Gawsworth Parish Council demands that this reference to Gawsworth is removed.

Q3f *Are there any other matters related to healthy and safe communities that the new local plan should consider?*

The local plan should consider how the council can work with local councils, communities and health providers to ensure comprehensive access to medical services and preventive health initiatives in all communities. The council should also look to improve the effectiveness of its communications of health measures to reach more residents.

Q4a *What approach should be taken in preparing the Cheshire East Design Code? For example, should it be a strategic level code or be broken down into smaller areas and/or development types? How should residents, site promoters and stakeholders be involved in the process? Should the design code be prepared as part of the new local plan or as a separate development plan document?*

There is no “Cheshire East” design, design characteristics are more associated with specific communities and localities; the council therefore believes the approach to design should be locality specific. This could either be delivered through Neighbourhood Plans, or by the creation, in partnership with town and parish councils, of village/town specific design codes.

Early engagement with parish councils is important, our experience is this to date is that a great deal of work has already taken place before engagement and as such there is more resistance to change. The local plan should require developers to engage with parish councils very early in the design process, both in the spatial/master planning stage and the detailed design stage.

Q5b *How can the new local plan help to make sure that developments take proper account of, and respect, the landscapes of Cheshire East?*

Plans should be developed to provide detailed guidance for how landscapes should be managed to ensure their continued preservation. This guidance should, where appropriate, be supplemented by policies within neighbourhood plans.

As part of developing a new local plan, the council should commission Cheshire Community Action to work with parish and town councils to undertake housing needs assessments. This should aim to enable parish and town councils to undertake periodic updates to assessments

and ensure their ownership of the process.

Q6b How could the local plan influence the mix of housing sizes within new developments?

Cheshire East Council should undertake a localised assessment of the housing types most needed in settlements. Policy should require that development proposals, in particular for any strategic sites, deliver a mix of housing in accordance with the settlement's housing type need. For strategic allocations, policies should explicitly state what types are required for the site.

Q6c How can the local plan address the needs of an ageing population?

The local plan should require strategic development sites to provide alms houses and other community living schemes designed for the elderly. The local plan should also recognise that as people age, they are likely to wish to remain in the communities they have lived, near to family and healthcare services and therefore accommodation should be planned on a local basis, arising from housing need assessments.

The local plan should make provision for a network of care homes across the borough.

Q6e How could the local plan support the delivery of small and medium sized housing sites in Cheshire East?

When considering applications for the redevelopment of redundant farm buildings and farm sites, policy should explicitly not force the demolition of otherwise habitable/restorable farm buildings. Policy on reuse of farm buildings/sites should prioritise the development of multiple homes rather than single large dwellings.

Q6g How could the new local plan support the development of community-led housing including small sites and exceptions sites?

The Gawsforth community continues to be frustrated at how Engine of the North (for Cheshire East Council) proposed a scheme in this community as it was not community led and the council failed to listen to the voice of the parish council and local community. Policy must ensure the involvement and support of the parish council for a borough council led project.

Q6h How could the local plan address the need for affordable housing? Should the same approach be used across Cheshire East?

Whilst the needs of rural communities are likely to be met by development in towns, policy should not consider the whole of the borough as "local" when it comes to the allocation of affordable housing – moving people from one side of the borough to the other to provide housing needs should cease. Reliable housing needs assessments (developed by parish and town councils) should be routinely updated as per the above.

The local plan should require equal priority for residents of surrounding parishes to the affordable housing on strategic development sites around towns.

Q6j *How could the local plan address the need for affordable housing? Should the same approach be used across Cheshire East?*

A collaborative approach, working with parish and town councils, is required. This should commence with local councils undertaking housing needs surveys and, with their community, agreeing how the needs should be addressed locally.

Q7c *Are there any other matters related to town centres and retail that the new local plan should consider?*

The local plan should look to deliver active travel routes from surrounding villages to town centres. For example, there is presently no safe active travel route from Gawsworth to Macclesfield.

Q8a **How can the local plan support new and existing businesses?**

The local plan should ensure business facilities are located in appropriate locations, in accordance with neighbourhood plans. For example, office units within disused farm buildings can be in keeping with local surroundings but industrial/warehousing co-located with residential development is inappropriate.

The location of any industrial units must consider the suitability of the local road network specifically in relation to the existing safety of roads. For example, roads such as the A536 which has been recognised as being dangerous, would not be suitable for increased industrial traffic.

Q8g **How can the local plan support tourism and the visitor economy?**

The council should identify and list visitor destinations across the borough and, working with parish and town councils or through neighbourhood plans, create plans for the provision of necessary and desirable facilities.

Rural locations should be supported in producing a comprehensive network of leisure walks and cycle routes. Infrastructure which supports this should be supported.

Q9a **How can we support active travel through policies in the new local plan?**

Working with local councils and walking/cycling interest groups, the local plan should establish a network of safe active travel routes which should be promoted through policy and delivered using planning contributions (both s106 and community infrastructure levy). A local example is the lack of connectivity between Gawsworth village and Macclesfield, which although it is a short distance, the path is felt to be too dangerous due to its proximity to fast

traffic and poor maintenance. The active travel plan should also connect smaller settlements with one another and community facilities.

Q9b How can public transport be supported through policies in the new local plan?

The plan should require infrastructure to be provided, for example, bus laybys on strategic development sites even if there is not currently a bus route serving the area. Development should always be planned to accommodate public transport routes in the future by designing out roads which a bus would not be able to navigate i.e. dead ends, lack of turning circles etc.

The council should prioritise public transport connections from rural areas to neighbouring towns with bus routes programmed to align with the rail network for onward travel. Public transport links to Manchester Airport should be established.

Q9c Are the current parking standards suitable and is there anything further in planning policy that the council should do in relation to parking

Multi-car households are increasingly common and the current parking standards are not reflective of this. More stringent policies should be established to ensure on-road parking is deterred. In areas with existing on-road problems, policy should require off-road parking to be created as part of any development proposals.

Q9d Is there any more the council should be doing regarding the seeking and use of developer contributions that is achievable within the strict planning regulations framework that governs this matter?

The council should consult with parish and town councils to identify needs for local infrastructure to ensure it is aware of needs when negotiating s106 agreements. The CIL charging regime should be amended to ensure all areas generate some degree of CIL – there should be no nil charging areas. CIL should be charged on business development.

Q10a If general policies relating to the protection of heritage assets are included within National Development Management Policies in the future, are there other heritage matters that would still need to be included within the policies of the new local plan?

The local plan should identify heritage at risk where policies will support development that reduces this risk and supports reuse. Policy should direct neighbourhood plans to identify locally valued heritage assets. The council should make greater use of its existing powers to compel landowners who are failing to maintain buildings to do so.

Using conservation area appraisals and management plans, the plan should incorporate policies which explicitly set out requirements for specific conservation areas.

Q10b Do you agree with the proposed approach to provide appropriate protection to the Jodrell Bank Observatory World Heritage Site?

Yes, this should be. However, the serious and fundamental concerns about conflict of interest and scientific integrity which were inherent in the draft SPD must be properly addressed.

Q11a Do you agree with the proposed approach to reviewing and updating the settlement hierarchy? Are there any other factors that we should consider?

Yes, an approach which focuses development on areas which have sufficient infrastructure to support growth in the community is supported. The proposed approach, which involves separating infill villages from rural areas, appears sound. The centre of Gawsorth village should be an 'infill village' (as per the existing boundary) and the area outside this should be a 'rural area'. Policy should explicitly set out that development proposals on the edge of infill villages will be considered unsustainable development within a rural area and only permitted as exception sites or where it constitutes brownfield development.

Q11b Have we identified the right matters to take into account when considering the distribution of development across the borough? What else should be considered?

Transport links should be a factor and impact on the highway network should be considered, for example development which increases traffic on dangerous roads such as the A536 between Macclesfield and Congleton should be resisted.

Q11c How can the local plan best support and encourage the re-use of previously developed and urban land whilst making sure that sufficient development comes forward to meet needs?

The local plan should identify disused brownfield sites which could be promoted for development and explicitly supported through local plan policy. A local example is the former petrol station on the A536.

Q11e How can the local plan support existing and/or proposed community facilities?

Working with local councils and community providers, an audit of existing community facilities should be undertaken. This should identify capacity issues, facilities at risk and facility needs in each locality. It should also document what services are provided by such facilities to identify service gaps. This should be utilised to secure s106 contributions where appropriate.

Q11f Are there any specific issues in your town, village or local area that the new local plan should help to address? Please tell us what the issue is, which town or village it affects and how you think the new local plan could help to address the issue.

The local plan should increase protections for peatland moss areas, protecting it from development and adverse effects from nearby developments.

Q12a What policies should be included in the new local plan to support the role of agriculture in Cheshire East?

As national policy expands permitted development, the council's policy should promote increased consultation on applications submitted for the same. This should include the same notifications being issued to town and parish councils (individual email notifications) to ensure local councils have such applications explicitly drawn to their attention to feed in any relevant local matters.

Where a farm has become redundant and planning permission granted for a change of use or redevelopment, subsequent applications to establish a farm on land for which a farm has previously been deemed unnecessary should be resisted.

Q12c What types of development should the new local plan allow for in countryside areas? What types of uses are appropriate in a rural area?

The council's existing policy on this should continue. Where change of use is given for an acceptable use, conditions should remove further permitted development rights which would otherwise allow further change of use which would not have been permitted under the original application.

Q12d Are there are other local plan policies that could help to support the sustainability of rural communities?

A policy should ensure the delivery of high speed broadband across the entire borough and especially in rural areas which are currently digitally disadvantaged.

Q12e Are there any "exceptional circumstances" that would justify making further alterations to the Green Belt boundaries in the next local plan?

The 2017 Local Plan undertook a robust process to review Green Belt, including allocating significant tracts of land as "safeguarded" for future development. There is no justification for further land to be released from Green Belt and consideration should be given to returning safeguarded land to the Green Belt where it is not needed for development in this plan period.

There are a number of strategic development sites in the 2017 Local Plan where there is now further knowledge as to their ecological and environmental importance, for example the peatland sites south of Macclesfield. These should be returned to Green Belt to protect them from development.

Q12f What approach should be taken to the strategic green gaps in the new local plan? Are there any other gaps that would warrant additional protection in the plan?

Consideration should be given to upgrading existing strategic green gaps to Green Belt where it would prevent urban sprawl and the merging of settlements, for example it would not be incongruous for Crewe to have its own Green Belt to protect surrounding settlements.

Q12g Are there any other rural matters that the new local plan should consider?

A site for a country park in the east of the county should be considered i.e. the ex-quarries on Gawsworth Common.