

# **Poynton with Worth Town Council**

## **New local plan for Cheshire East – Issues Paper**

### **Introduction**

Cheshire East’s current Local Plan was supposed to cover the period 2010 to 2030. However, CEC have decided to begin the process of developing a new Local Plan, which will presumably take effect before 2030. Local plans take several years to prepare due to the public engagement and examination required.

[https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire\\_east\\_local\\_plan/new-local-plan.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/new-local-plan.aspx)

The first stage is the Issues Paper, which can be found online at:

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/issues-paper/new-local-plan-issues-paper.pdf>

This seeks comments in the form of answers to various questions. The background can be seen in the Issues Paper – some draft responses are below. The consultation closes on 5pm on 1st July 2024, so will require approval under SO51. Not all questions have been answered; some are general or not relevant to Poynton.

### **1. Introduction - A new local plan**

#### **Potential plan period**

*Question 1a. What date do you think the new local plan period should run to, giving reasons why you think it would be appropriate?*

Poynton Town Council believes that, in view of the extensive public engagement and examination required and the costs this imposes on Council Taxpayers, the new Local Plan should run for at least twenty years.

#### **Creating a vision and objectives**

*Question 1b. How can the local plan's vision complement and add land use specific details to the vision and aims of the current Cheshire East Corporate Plan?*

Poynton Town Council notes that Cheshire East currently claims its policies should be ‘Open, Fair and Green.’ Recent experience suggests that its actions are neither open nor fair nor green examples being the attempts to close Poynton Leisure Centre and Household Waste Sites with wholly inadequate consultation, and the focussing of investment in leisure facilities in the southern parts of the borough. Cheshire East’s current policy strategy which as previously stated, focuses facilities in the south of the borough to the detriment of the more rural north, results in residents having to travel further by private car thus increasing carbon emissions and going against your own policies.

It is our view that the Open, Fair and Green strap line should be removed, and the local plan should not have a vision measured against this.

It is difficult to see how a new Local Plan which will probably lead to significant loss of green land and unsustainable development can possibly be described as “green.”

## **2. Responding to the climate emergency**

*Question 2a Have we identified the correct issues for the local plan to address in terms of reducing our emissions and contribution to climate change? Are there any other issues that the local plan should consider?*

Whilst Poynton Town Council fully supports a reduction in carbon emissions, it is apparent that Cheshire East's own policies, social engineering and lack of understanding of the carbon emissions their own buildings are in direct contradiction of your proposals.

A more joined up holistic approach to energy usage would be useful. A review of Cheshire East's current policies which affect the north of the borough needs to be undertaken as these increase the reliance on private cars and emissions. District heating networks and reviewing potential in the borough for carbon capture projects or ground source heat pumps should be undertaken.

A review of the buildings Cheshire East have responsibility for should also be undertaken and measures put in place to reduce the carbon emissions from your own infrastructure. Many public buildings, such as schools and leisure centres, are over fifty years old and have very poor energy usage scores.

A review of Cheshire East's highway maintenance should be undertaken. Currently, the Council is undertaking poor quality repairs which result in repeated visits. Not only are there costs associated with Highways vehicles visiting the same place several times, but also having to use energy to manufacture the tarmac several times and the delays which results in cars waiting in traffic at roadworks and resultant localised emissions.

Building regulations cover many of the issues such as carbon emissions on new build developments and use of air/ground source heat pumps and time (and money) should not be spent re-writing what is already legislation.

Retrofitting under PAS 2035 is to be encouraged and we would support a policy which reflects this in the private sector specifically. One of the barriers to retrofitting in the private sector is adequate funding (social housing providers are able to access government funding). We would welcome a policy which assists the private sector, as many people do not have funds available to carry out the necessary works which have a long financial payback period.

Cheshire East is a predominantly rural county. Whilst it is admirable to want people to use public transport, current policies often result in this being a pipe dream. It should be accepted that private cars are necessary in most of Cheshire East and ensure roads are maintained to a high standard with minimal delays which will reduce carbon emissions as stated previously.

Poynton Town Council believes that the new Local Plan is likely to lead to an increase in emissions, so contributing to climate change. The new Local Plan will include large developments built on green field sites on the edge of towns and villages. Such sites are often some distance from shops, schools and public facilities and lack public transport services. The only realistic way to access such estates is by the private car. Many residents will work in other towns and cities, leading to increased commuting.

It would be interesting if Cheshire East were to commission an independent review of the impact of the current (2010-2030) Local Plan on emissions. All three of the “strategic sites” in Poynton are some distance from shops and most public facilities and have increased traffic on local roads.

A partial solution may be to require developers to build small shopping parades on larger housing estates, a policy once common in the 1960s but now largely abandoned, to reduce travel for shopping. Local schools should also be built, at the developer’s expense, on new estates.

Other current policies of Cheshire East, such as closing the Poynton and Bollington Household Waste and Recycling Centres and requiring residents to drive to the remaining HWRC south of Macclesfield will have the effect of significantly increasing road traffic and hence emissions. The closure of recycling centres in the north of the borough and introduction of the green bin tax will reduce recycling rates, so go against your aspirations.

It should also be noted that your current policies are in direct contravention of this document. The removal of trees at Poynton Pool and construction of new build housing on Danes Moss at Macclesfield (a site of special scientific interest) with peat deposits being prime examples.

### **Adapting to the effects of climate change**

*Question 2b Have we identified the correct issues for the local plan to address in terms of adapting to the effects of climate change? Are there any other issues that the local plan should consider?*

Poynton suffered severe flooding in 2016 and 2019. Much of the western and southern sections of the village are low-lying and there is a serious risk of Poynton Brook and various tributary streams overflowing and flooding nearby houses. Building on green field sites will significantly increase this risk, both by reducing the land available to absorb rainfall and increasing run-off. There is a limit as to how far these risks can be mitigated; the solution may be not to develop such land at all.

The flood risk maps should be reviewed – areas of Poynton which were under several feet of water in both 2016 and 2019 are still shown as being at low risk of flooding.

A further problem is storage and reflection of heat from buildings and paved and tarred roads and paths. This will increase as temperatures rise and can lead to “heat islands” in Summer. Providing undeveloped areas of grass and trees can mitigate this to some extent.

SUDs are a requisite in many developments currently. The current local plan has resulted in the loss of green field and green belt land. This plan should ensure that contractors who submit schemes on brownfield land are prioritised over those who build in greenfield or greenbelt land. The policy should actively discourage building on greenbelt or greenfield land. Not only does this land store carbon, but it is also able to store rainwater run off more effectively than SUDs and assist with flood mitigation.

The use of living walls, blue roofs and green roofs should be incorporated into the plan.

## **Other climate emergency matters**

*Question 2c; Are there any other matters related to the climate emergency that the new local plan should consider?*

Cheshire East should recognise the basic incompatibility of a Local Plan that aims to build over 1,000 house a year for up to twenty years (plus employment and commercial sites) with the reduced intensity and conservation necessary to address the “climate emergency”.

## **3. Healthy and safe communities**

*Question 3a Given the importance of open space for everyone, are there any specific approaches that the local plan should consider?*

Poynton Town Council believes that planning consent for developments of more than ten houses should be conditional on the provision of public open space.

While some rules of this type exist in the current Local Plan, one weakness is ensuring the future care and maintenance of such facilities, especially when they include children’s play equipment or ponds and watercourses.

A further issue is the gradual loss of private open space, as larger gardens are redeveloped for housing. Even though private gardens are usually inaccessible to the public, they provide some space between houses and reduce overlooking. Large gardens often contain taller trees and provide a valuable refuge for insects and wildlife. They also allow for absorption of rainfall and provide shaded and cooler areas in Summer.

Cheshire East have caused much concern in Poynton with their plans to cut down numerous trees by Poynton Pool (owned by the Council) to facilitate allegedly necessary safety improvements. Such works in public spaces should be done in ways that protect the environment and encourage a diverse biome.

## **Pollution and contamination**

*Question 3b: How can the local plan minimise the effects from all types of pollution and contamination around the borough?*

There should be an increased awareness of the risks from historic pollution. For example, during the consultation on the 2010-30 Local Plan, the Town Council and many local residents made Cheshire East aware that one of the “strategic sites” included areas once used as a former gas works and a brick works, both usages with a reputation for causing enduring soil pollution. These concerns were not taken seriously but later confirmed by detailed testing of soil samples, leading to a significant part of the site having to remain undeveloped and be fenced off in perpetuity.

Poynton Town Council would propose that, before a site is accepted for development in the Local Plan, a historic review is undertaken and if this shows any evidence of uses that could result in hazardous pollution, soil tests are undertaken at this initial stage in the planning process.

A review of your current policies and decisions should be undertaken. The introduction of a green bin tax, closure of the recycling centres, car parking charges and threatened closure of leisure facilities (predominantly affecting the north of the borough) will all

result in increased car travel and thus increased emissions. The Town Council would welcome a thorough review of Cheshire East's policies against these localised emissions.

Whilst we would agree that light pollution can have an adverse effect on wildlife, your document is just a statement.

*Question 3c How can the local plan help to improve air quality across Cheshire East?*

As noted in our response to Question 2a, Poynton Town Council believes that the new Local Plan is likely to lead to an increase in emissions, damaging air quality across Cheshire East. The new Local Plan will include large developments built on green field sites on the edge of towns and villages. Such sites are often some distance from shops, schools and public facilities and lack public transport services. The only realistic way to access such estates is by the private car. Many residents will work in other towns and cities, leading to increased commuting.

Cheshire East should ensure that each town has a wide range of services provided locally, so people do not have to travel far. These should include a Library, Leisure Centre and Household Waste and Recycling Centres. The current policy of closing sites and forcing people to travel to Macclesfield would result in increased road transport and hence poorer air quality. Alternatively, people will dump recyclable waste in their black bins so it will end up in landfill, so causing more pollution and inefficient reuse of green matter.

Improved public transport, by both bus and rail, would also reduce the need for people to travel by car.

A review of Cheshire East's current policies and decisions should be undertaken. The introduction of a green bin tax, closure of the recycling centres, car parking charges and threatened closure of leisure facilities (predominantly affecting the north of the borough) will all result in increased travel and thus increased emissions. The Town Council would welcome a thorough review of your policies against these localised emissions.

## **Safety**

*Question 3d: How can the local plan help to create communities and areas where everyone feels safe?*

Poynton Town Council would urge that the Local Plan encourages developers to "design out crime." This could include:

- Ensuring that public and private spaces are clearly defined to deter unauthorised access into clearly 'private' areas.
- Public and private spaces should be separated by low walls, changes in surfacing materials or other symbolic entrance features.
- There must be adequate natural surveillance of both people and property.
- Communal parking areas should be avoided – each house or flat should have its own spaces, clearly visible to the occupants from their windows.
- Door entry systems are essential in blocks of flats to restrict unauthorised entry and the misuse of communal areas such as stairwells.

- Footpaths should be convenient, attractive, safe to use with high quality lighting and usually adjacent to vehicular routes. They should avoid providing easy access points for burglars or places where anti-social behaviour can flourish.
- Bicycle shelters and similar structures should be designed to ensure full visibility.
- All public areas should be accessible to the Police.
- The advice of the Crime Prevention Officer should be obtained on all large developments.
- Provision of CCTV cameras should be encouraged wherever possible.
- There should be clear and enforceable arrangements for future care and maintenance of public areas, paths, trees and bushes and cycle shelters.

The above measures, if properly implemented, should avoid the need for “fortress” like structures or gated developments.

### **Health and wellbeing inequalities**

*Question 3e How can the local plan help to reduce health inequalities across the borough?*

Poynton Town Council believes that large new housing estates can put severe strain on local health services. This cannot be wholly mitigated simply by demanding a cash payment. As previously noted, such developments are often located a significant distance from public services, including doctors, dentists and clinics. This will deter people from seeking treatment, especially those who are unable to drive.

Larger developments should include new local facilities for doctors, dentists and other health professionals, so people can seek treatment and advice without the need to travel to a town centre.

Public transport may also be an issue – for example, it is impossible to travel directly from Poynton to Macclesfield Hospital by bus.

The document mentions Crewe several times. The Town Council do not believe Cheshire East understands fully the different types of health inequalities and are merely focusing on finances rather than age or lifestyle. Poynton has one of the oldest demographics in the borough, yet increasingly this group are ignored and facilities removed in favour of “deprived” areas such as Crewe. A thorough review of the true meaning of health inequality should be undertaken using up to date statistics, and we do not believe that this Local Plan is the vehicle for this.

Further this form of social engineering is being seen regularly in the decisions this council are making which favour the south of the borough to the detriment of the north.

*Question 3f Are there any other matters related to healthy and safe communities that the new local plan should consider?*

There is anecdotal evidence that some people may find the fact that a large housing development is “all new” to be disorientating, which may lead to mental illness. This may be reduced by retaining some existing buildings, such as farmhouses and also as many trees as possible.

One of the developments in Poynton allowed under the 2020-30 Local Plan involved the destruction of stone farm buildings. These could have been restored but developers

often prefer to clear all existing buildings to cram more houses on the site. The new Local Plan could include policies to discourage this practice.

Encouraging safer walking routes and good quality cycling routes (separate to the main traffic) should be encouraged to assist with healthy living

#### **4. Design**

*Question 4a 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?*

Cheshire East covers a wide area with a range of traditional building types and materials. The eastern part of the borough has many stone buildings, while elsewhere brick has been used for many years. The Cheshire East Design Code should respect these differences.

The Local Plan should set out the broad principles of good design, which can be developed in more detailed separate documents.

The design code should also recognise the aspiration to reduce emissions and include policies for encouraging living walls, use of sustainable materials, green or blue roofs etc even where this may be different to the more traditional style of buildings in local areas.

The design guide should also look at how listed buildings and other heritage assets can be sympathetically updated to reduce emissions and encourage new uses.

The Design code should separate industrial/commercial/educational uses from housing.

*Question 4b Are there any other matters related to design that the new local plan should consider?*

The design of housing estates currently being built in Cheshire East is often poor. Outside Conservation Areas, developers often use the same designs of houses on their sites across England. There is little respect for traditional housing designs.

The design of employment sites is even worse – invariably just steel boxes, with no hint of the traditional designs of Cheshire mills and industrial buildings throughout the Industrial Revolution. Encouraging developers to clad buildings with brick and to use pitched roofs would greatly improve design of business parks and industrial estates.

#### **5. Our natural environment**

*Question 5a What approaches or measures should be incorporated in the new local plan to protect and improve biodiversity?*

Poynton Town Council believes it is highly unlikely that high-density housing estates or employment sites will ever be capable of improving biodiversity.

To try to mitigate the damage caused, developments should provide undeveloped areas of grass and trees. New parks and wildlife areas should be provided on the edge of towns and villages.

“Off-site delivery” is not an answer to developments that will damage biodiversity. Such provision may be many miles away; when Cheshire East proposed cutting down trees at Poynton Pool, they wanted to provide replacement woodland in Stockport MBC’s area. This is in direct contravention of biodiversity net gain (BNG) legislation.

The local plan should ensure that BNG is enshrined in any development (brownfield sites can have as much if not more wildlife living in them as greenfield). This should be located in the immediate area rather than sites in other counties or dozens of miles away. Nature doesn’t take the bus!

*Question 5b How can the new local plan help to make sure that developments take proper account of, and respect, the landscapes of Cheshire East?*

As noted above (Question 4b), the current planning policies allow developers to build housing and employment sites which are virtually identical across England. The best way to protect the landscape is not to permit large scale developments.

*Question 5c Are there any other matters related to our natural environment that the new local plan should consider?*

There is a fundamental incompatibility between a Local Plan which will propose intensive urbanisation of green field sites and the protection and preservation of the natural environment.

The current local plan has resulted in the loss of green field and green belt land. This plan should ensure that contractors who submit schemes on brownfield land are prioritised over those who build in greenfield or greenbelt land. The policy should actively discourage building on greenbelt or greenfield land. Not only does this land store carbon, but it is also able to store rainwater run off more effectively than SUDs and assist with flood mitigation.

The use of living walls, blue roofs and green roofs should be incorporated into the plan.

## **6. Homes for everyone**

*Question 6a Should the standard method calculation of 1,014 new homes per annum be used when preparing the new local plan? If not, what are the circumstances that would warrant a different approach?*

More information on how this figure of 1,104 new houses a year was calculated would be helpful. What assumptions were made? Some figures Cheshire East used in calculating a housing target for Poynton in 2010 were based on submissions by builders and estate agents, who obviously would wish to maximise house building.

New development on green field sites should be minimised. A better approach might be to start with the amount of previously developed (brownfield) land available and to calculate a figure based on that.

*Question 6b How could the local plan influence the mix of housing sizes within new developments?*

There is obviously a need for all sizes of houses and flats, including two-, three-, four- and five-bedroom accommodation. The new Local Plan could require a mix of housing on new estates, although excessive prescription should be avoided.

A review of the houses constructed during the current local plan should be undertaken and crucially the type of house. Developing the neighbourhood plan for Poynton we also identified a need for smaller houses which could be extended as a family grew. Unfortunately, developers ignored this, and the schemes are predominantly very expensive 4+ bedroom detached with 3 storey blocks of flats making up the “affordable” housing section of the development.

A review of the types and size of housing in a locale should be undertaken *without developer input*.

Policies should be put in place to ensure local residents (such as children who grew up in Cheshire East) should be given priority over persons coming into the area.

*Question 6c How can the local plan address the needs of an ageing population?*

One solution would be to require new housing developments to include some housing suitable for older people.

There has been a recent trend to convert single-storey bungalows into two floor houses. This is gradually reducing the stock of such accommodation, which can cause problems for people who find it difficult to climb stairs. Possibly the Local Plan could include a policy to discourage such conversions.

In addition, Poynton’s Neighbourhood plan identified that older residents wanted to downsize from large family homes into smaller homes with cottage gardens (traditional “old peoples’ homes” were the least required style of development in the responses) as older people wished to maintain their sense of independence. This would also allow for the larger homes to be bought by new families reducing the need to build larger more land hungry properties.

*Question 6d What types of specialist or older people’s housing are needed in Cheshire East and why?*

This is a difficult question, as “older people” have a wide range of needs and abilities. Many can live without difficulty in ordinary housing. However, others will benefit from single-storey accommodation (bungalows) with facilities such as level access and wider doors (for wheelchairs). More spacious bathrooms may also be helpful. Two storey houses should always have a WC on the ground floor.

Poynton’s Neighbourhood plan identified that older residents wanted to downsize from large family homes into smaller homes with cottage gardens (traditional old peoples’ homes were the least required style of development in the responses) as older people wished to maintain their sense of independence. This would also allow for the larger homes to be bought by new families reducing the need to build larger more land hungry properties.

Incorporating a requirement (using building regulations Part M4(2) “to allow the adaptation of the dwelling to meet the changing needs of occupants over time”) should be incorporated into the plan. This will allow older people (or people with complex needs) to remain in a home for many years.

The Local Plan could require larger developments to include a proportion of such specialist accommodation.

*Question 6e How could the local plan support the delivery of small and medium sized housing sites in Cheshire East?*

There has been significant development of small sites in Poynton in recent years. There are potential problems with such a strategy, including loss of private open space and over-intensification. Attempts by developers to build blocks of flats in areas of low-rise housing have generally been rejected by Cheshire East as unneighbourly.

The Local Plan should require development on smaller sites to be sympathetic to existing housing in the neighbourhood.

*Question 6f How could the new local plan support the delivery of self and custom build housing including small sites?*

Policies on self and custom build should not relax the normal rules regarding the Green Belt, appearance or neighbourliness. Smaller sites are often surrounded by existing houses and current residents’ concerns should be respected.

There should be clear safeguards to prevent serial “self-builds” by individuals who promptly sell up and start another house. The weaknesses of Cheshire East’s Planning Enforcement Service do not encourage confidence that such rules could be adequately enforced.

*Question 6g How could the new local plan support the development of community-led housing including small sites and exceptions sites?*

Cheshire East could consider selling land in its ownership at a reduced cost for community-led housing. Policies on community-led housing should not relax the normal rules regarding the Green Belt, appearance or neighbourliness. Smaller sites are often surrounded by existing houses and current residents’ concerns should be respected.

*Question 6h How could the local plan address the need for affordable housing? Should the same approach be used across Cheshire East?*

The existing Local Plan policy that sites of 15 homes or more in Poynton (and other towns) should include 30 per cent affordable homes has successfully increased the supply of such housing. A similar policy should be retained in the new Local Plan.

The minimum size of site subject to affordable housing rules could be reduced from 15 to 10 – this would align with the rules of the First Homes scheme (see Question 6i).

There may be a case for varying the targets in different areas of Cheshire East depending on local housing demand and the waiting lists of social housing providers.

*Question 6i How could the new local plan address the need for First Homes including exceptions sites? Should additional eligibility criteria for First Homes be introduced and should the same approach be used across Cheshire East?*

The existing First Homes rules generally appear reasonable. (At least 25% of all affordable housing on sites of 10 or more homes. Purchasers should be a first-time buyer, with a combined annual household income not over £80,000 and a mortgage or home purchase plan to fund at least 50% of the discounted purchase price. The minimum discount should be 30% off the market price of an equivalent home).

However, in areas of higher house prices, such as Poynton, the maximum combined income required to qualify for the First Homes scheme could be increased above £80,000. This should be drafted in a way that will allow the figure to be updated to reflect inflation over the life of the Local Plan.

Policies should be put in place to ensure local residents (such as children who grew up in Cheshire East) should be given priority over persons coming into the area.

*Question 6j How could the new local plan encourage the provision of new homes through rural exceptions developments?*

The Local Plan should include policies to safeguard against misuse of rural exceptions policies to build large houses that will be unaffordable to most members of the local community.

### **Housing standards**

*Question 6k Should the local plan include wheelchair and accessibility standards and what proportion of new homes and specialist housing should comply with those standards?*

Accommodation for older and disabled people should be fully accessible (see answer to Question 6d). The Local Plan should require this if it is not part of the national Building Regulations.

Incorporating a requirement (using building regulations Part M4(2) “to allow the adaptation of the dwelling to meet the changing needs of occupants over time”) should be incorporated into the plan. This will allow older people (or people with complex needs) to remain in a home for many years.

If possible, all housing should take these standards into practice to allow persons of differing needs to be able to be part of the community rather than in specialist housing

*Question 6l Should the next local plan require all new homes to meet the nationally described space standard and, if not, why?*

This question is difficult to answer in the absence of examples. However, the Local Plan should certainly not fall below the national space standards.

*Question 6m; How could the council meet future needs for pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and plots for Travelling Showpeople?*

When reviewing this policy, consideration should be taken (particularly for traveller sites) that any sites provided should be provided with facilities to recycle waste. These sites should be subject to charges on the traveller community to cover the cost of

hosting them and to encourage them to leave it as they found it for their fellow travellers.

## **7. Town centres and retail**

*Question 7a. Have we identified the correct town centres issues for the new local plan to address? Are there any other issues that the new local plan should consider?*

Cheshire East are currently in the process of inflicting serious damage on the economy of Poynton and many other smaller towns across the borough by imposing charges on previously free car parks. This will drive shoppers to large out of town shopping centres such as Handforth Dean and Barracks Mill retail park, where free parking exists. The proposal to charge for parking on Sundays and during the evening only exacerbates the damage this will cause.

A policy of gradually reintroducing free parking would support the prosperity of Cheshire East's town centres.

*Question 7b. Have we identified the correct retailing issues for the local plan to address? Are there any other issues that the local plan should consider?*

The existing Local Plan has allowed a concentration of fast-food takeaways along a relatively small section of London Road South. This area has some issues with parking and anti-social behaviour – possibly the Local Plan could allow such concerns to be considered when such applications are considered.

A more general issue is that smaller, linear, town centres - such as Poynton's - are often adjacent to residential areas. Uses that could lead to late night noise or disturbance may affect residents and cause greater problems than in a large town centre with only a small resident population.

It is good to see that Cheshire East have recognised that their current policies and encouragement of out of town retail parks have had a detrimental effect on town centres and are seeking to address this under the new plan.

## **8. Jobs, skills and economy**

### **Employment land and premises**

*Question 8a How can the local plan support new and existing businesses?*

One issue that the Local Plan could address is connectivity. Many of the “main” roads in Cheshire East are of poor quality – for example, the A523 (London Road) between Poynton and Macclesfield has many bends, poor junctions and is subject to congestion and delays. Plans to improve the road appear to have been abandoned.

New employment sites are often on the edges of towns and are poorly served (if at all) by public transport.

Unfortunately, the document (and supporting document) does not go into depth to be able to offer further opinion at this stage

*Question 8c; What approaches can the local plan take to support the green economy?*

Given the lack of understanding of Cheshire East's own infrastructure and impact the Council's recent decisions have had on residents and businesses, we would encourage a thorough review of these policies and your own operations and buildings.

*Question 8d How should the local plan address the future need for logistics?*

As noted in our response to Question 8a, Cheshire East has a problem with poor quality roads. A programme to improve road quality would help ensure a prosperous logistics sector.

Bypasses and relief roads will gradually become congested if they are used to access excessively large new housing developments.

Encouraging the use of rail transport to dedicated hubs where road transport could take the goods the last 30 or so miles should be encouraged. Cheshire East has the M6 motorway running through it which is frequently clogged up with lorries. Removal of large lorries off the roads and onto rail should be encouraged as this will reduce carbon emissions, congestion and the impact on the poorly maintained roads.

## **Tourism**

*Question 8g. How can the local plan support tourism and the visitor economy?*

Cheshire East's policy of imposing car park charges in the smaller towns will discourage visitors and cause economic damage.

Improved signposting of visitor attractions would be helpful – although the Cheshire East Highways Department imposes charges for the brown tourist signs. A government website states that "... you will need to cover the cost of any agreed tourist signs. A single sign may cost £8,000 to £20,000 to design and install ... depending on the size of the sign." Cheshire East should reduce such costs, especially for smaller sites run by volunteers, such as the Anson Engine Museum in Poynton.

The use of libraries and community centres to encourage and direct visitors should be utilised. A joined-up plan to advertise the industrial heritage, green spaces, country parks and canals etc which Cheshire East has should be encouraged alongside supporting local communities to make the most of their assets

## **9. Transport and infrastructure**

Note: Active travel refers to modes of travel that involve a level of activity and is considered the least carbon intensive way to travel. The term refers mostly to walking and cycling but can also mean other forms of wheeled activity such as trips made by wheelchair, mobility scooters, adapted cycles, e-cycles, scooters and cycle share schemes.

*Question 9a How can we support active travel through policies in the new local plan?*

The Local Plan should ensure that new housing and employment sites are designed to encourage active travel. There should be footways (pavements) to all houses – the practice of building estates without footways discourages walking.

The provision of new housing and employment sites on the edge of towns, some way from schools, shops, medical services and other public facilities discourages active

travel. Provision of footpaths and cycleways (which should be at least 2 metres wide) will help support active travel.

### **Public transport**

*Question 9b How can public transport be supported through policies in the new local plan?*

Poynton Town Council notes that public transport from Poynton has declined over recent years. There is now a bus service between Macclesfield, Poynton and Stockport only every two hours. Rail services to Manchester and Macclesfield, especially during the main commuting periods, are inadequate.

We welcome Cheshire East's plans to reinstate an hourly bus service between Poynton and Stockport (from April 2025), but an improved service south to Bollington and Macclesfield would be welcome. There are also no later evening or Sunday bus services from Poynton, which only encourages travel by car.

A requirement for large developments to be supported by a bus service could be considered for the new Local Plan.

A review of public transport provision and connectivity such as linking bus services to train stations or through to the 192 park and ride facility at Hazel Grove should be encouraged.

### **Car parking**

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

Poynton Town Council have noted an increased trend for developers to describe rooms in proposed houses as "studies," "playrooms" or "box rooms." It is possible that this is an attempt to evade existing rules linking car parking provision to the number of bedrooms by redesignating such rooms, supposedly for other uses. It is of course impossible to prevent future occupants using these "studies" as bedrooms.

The new Local Plan should state that all upstairs rooms that are not bathrooms should be counted when calculating the car parking spaces required for a new development. The car parking requirements should normally be one space per bedroom – setting a maximum of three parking spaces for houses in Key Service Centres is inadequate.

Currently councils allow the garage to be classed as a car parking space. Unless the plan seeks to set the space for a garage to be no smaller than a medium sized SUV (with space to get in and out) then garages should not count towards the car parking space requirements on developments.

Unlike older estates (where the distance between the front of houses is twice current new build estates), new build estates with their smaller front space and lack of pavements frequently have one car on the drive and two others on the road which makes for untidy planning and difficulty for disabled and parents with push chairs to pass by safely.

## **Developer contributions**

*Question 9d 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?*

This is an area of serious concern. Poynton Town Council are aware of cases where developers have liquidated their companies to avoid paying the contributions due. The response of Cheshire East to such incidents has been inadequate, with its staff unable or unwilling to take effective action to secure payment.

This is more a matter of bad management and incompetence than policy, but there are actions that Cheshire East could take to deal with such incidents.

- Where a developer is a limited company, the directors should be required, as a condition of approval, to provide a guarantee that they will be personally liable for any unpaid developer contributions. The Council should not hesitate to begin legal action for debt enforcement against directors in such circumstances. (It is a standard feature of commercial leases for landlords to require personal guarantees by directors of tenant companies for unpaid rent or dilapidation costs).
- It may also be appropriate to report directors who use company liquidations to the Department of Trade to seek prosecution for wrongful trading and to request their disbarment from acting as a company director.
- Alternatively, before work commences, applicants must deposit an insurance backed bond with the Council to cover all developer contributions.

More generally, Cheshire East's staff do not appear to be competent at administering such schemes. The Town Council has on several occasions had to draw their attention to developments that have progressed to a point that payments are required. Better coordination with colleagues in the Building Control and Council Tax departments may be helpful.

## **Infrastructure**

*Question 9e Are there any particular requirements for new or improved infrastructure that you consider are needed to support further development in the borough and should be provided for as part of the new local plan process?*

Poynton Town Council is aware of long-standing infrastructure problems, especially in Higher Poynton, where electricity cuts are common. Residents in this area have also complained of sewage overflowing or backing into their houses. Cheshire East have repeatedly allowed new building in this area despite these problems.

More generally, increased use by existing houses and new developments of electricity and water is placing strains on infrastructure that is often sixty or more years old. New building will only make this worse.

It is not clear whether the existing electricity grid can cope with the increased use to recharge electric vehicles.

Developers should be required to fund physical infrastructure improvements not only on site, but also "downstream" – such as new sewage works or electricity mains.

As towns expand, new environmental infrastructure such as parks and open spaces will be required adjacent to new developments. This will avoid overuse of existing sites and avoid the need for people to travel too far for recreation and leisure.

Where a development site is separated from the rest of a town or village by a physical barrier, such as a railway, canal or major road, the developer should be responsible for providing suitable bridges to allow direct access to town centres and public facilities. Underpasses may become a focus for anti-social behaviour and should be avoided where possible.

## **10. Historic environment**

*Question 10a 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 continue to allow for the “local listing” of heritage assets of local significance which fall outside the main listing system.

Consideration of retaining heritage assets and the ability to future proof them by sympathetic retrofit should be explored

*Question 10b Do you agree with the proposed approach to provide appropriate protection to the Jodrell Bank Observatory World Heritage Site?*

The main Jodrell Bank radio telescope is the only world-famous structure in Cheshire East and its preservation should be fully supported.

## **11 Towns and villages**

*Question 11a Do you agree with the proposed approach to reviewing and updating the settlement hierarchy? Are there any other factors that we should consider?*

The status of Poynton as a “Key Service Centre” should be reviewed, in light of Cheshire East’s current policy of removing or reducing most of its services. This includes closure of the Poynton Household Waste and Recycling Centre, failing to invest in Poynton Leisure Centre and reduced public transport services.

These decisions by Cheshire East will have the effect of reducing the “vitality and viability” of Poynton.

We would suggest that Poynton is re-classified as a Local Service Centre

*Question 11b Have we identified the right matters to take into account when considering the distribution of development across the borough? What else should be considered?*

When considering “housing need,” the Council should not rely on submissions by interested parties such as builders and estate agents, as happened in 2010.

The new local plan should focus on redevelopment, repurpose and use of brownfield over any greenfield or further release of greenbelt land. Cheshire East Council should actually listen to residents concerns and requirements.

*Question 11c 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 new Local Plan should have a strict policy of “brownfield first.” It should also allow for the continued supply of “windfall sites.” The statement that, since the start of the current local plan in 2010, around 39% of new homes and 48% of employment floorspace has been developed on brownfield sites, is arguably too low.

Since January 2020, planning permission has been granted in Poynton (as defined in the Local Plan) for 44 new houses or flats (net of demolitions), with planning applications outstanding for a further 9 houses (net). In Higher Poynton, since January 2020, 12 new houses (net) have been approved.

This is on top of the 650 new houses under the existing Local Plan.

*Question 11d Have we broadly identified the right matters to take into account when considering which sites to include in the local plan? What else should be considered?*

The various factors listed as being used previously to identify sites - viability, landscape, settlement character and urban form, strategic green gaps, neighbouring uses, highways, heritage assets, flooding, drainage, ecology, Tree Preservation Orders, air quality, mineral resources, accessibility to important services and facilities, public transport, brownfield land, agricultural land quality, contamination, loss of employment facilities, the distance to employment sites and Green Belt issues – seem reasonable but it is not clear what weight is placed on each factor.

Some information may be out of date – during the floods in Poynton in 2016 and 2019, land that the Environment Agency identifies as having a low flood risk was under water - in some cases several feet deep. Claims such land will flood once every thousand years are clearly nonsense. The flood risk should reflect the real experiences of recent years.

*Question 11e How can the local plan support existing and/or proposed community facilities?*

Many new developments have no community facilities at all. The Local Plan should ensure developers support such facilities. Cheshire East could also help with grants to help build or maintain public halls, and to urge the Government to reduce the burden of business rates on such facilities.

The Local Plan could also include policies to discourage the conversion of pubs and other community facilities into housing.

## **12. Rural matters**

*Question 12a What policies should be included in the new local plan to support the role of agriculture in Cheshire East?*

Diversification of agriculture should be encouraged, but with care to ensure that this is not misused to convert farms surreptitiously into residential or industrial sites.

The provision of new houses for agricultural workers should be managed with care, there are concerns planning conditions requiring houses to be occupied by farm workers may not be properly enforced.

*Question 12b What policies should be included in the new local plan to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land? How can the plan also recognise and promote the benefits of other agricultural land?*

Too often, the Local Plan appears to be an exercise in rezoning agricultural land for residential or commercial purposes. The Plan should recognise agriculture as an important part of Cheshire East's economy which should be protected.

No policies should be adopted that would encourage landowners to let agricultural land deteriorate in the hope this will let them redevelop it for housing or other uses.

The value of open landscapes should be recognised.

### **The countryside**

*Question 12c What types of development should the new local plan allow for in countryside areas? What types of uses are appropriate in a rural area?*

Development in countryside areas should be compatible with its current uses, predominately agriculture, forestry and associated businesses. Low intensity tourism may also be appropriate.

### **Green Belt land**

*Question 12e Are there any "exceptional circumstances" that would justify making further alterations to the Green Belt boundaries in the next local plan?*

Poynton Town Council does not believe there are any "exceptional circumstances" that would justify making alterations to the Green Belt boundaries in the next Local Plan. We would strongly oppose any such changes to the Green Belt in and around Poynton.

The Green Belt around Poynton is particularly vulnerable as the parish borders Greater Manchester to the north and west. The Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area and Peak Fringe lie to the east, while the Green Belt to the south is vital to stop urban sprawl into Adlington. Much of the land west of Poynton and in northern Adlington is also at high risk of flooding.

*Question 12g Are there any other rural matters that the new local plan should consider?*

The "limited infilling in villages" exception has caused serious damage, especially in Higher Poynton, where what were previously widely spaced houses have become urbanised as a continuous strip of ribbon development. This practice should be abolished or severely restricted.

## **13. Minerals**

*Question 13b Do you have any comments on the policies the council should develop to meet national requirements around the safeguarding of mineral resources and the need to provide for a steady and adequate mineral supply?*

Poynton Town Council agrees with Cheshire East that it is not necessary to make specific provision for coal mining in the plan. The last coal mine in Poynton closed in 1935 and there is no justification for reviving the industry locally.

With regard to the extraction of sand, Poynton Town Council believes that this should continue in the existing locations in Cheshire East. We would not support proposals to quarry sand from Green Belt land in Adlington, a short distance south of Poynton. This would lead to severe environmental damage, noise, dust and increased traffic.

## **14. Waste**

### **Safeguarding of waste management facilities**

*Question 14a. Should the council safeguard all waste sites or just those considered to be of strategic importance?*

Poynton Town Council strongly supports the retention of all seven household waste recycling centres, including the Anson Road site in Poynton. All seven sites are of strategic importance.

Current proposals to close the sites in Poynton and Bollington should be abandoned. The nearest remaining site in southern Macclesfield is several miles away. Forcing residents of Poynton, Disley and Bollington to travel there will cause serious inconvenience for local residents and businesses, encourage fly-tipping, increase traffic congestion and air pollution and reduce recycling.

*Question 14b. Should the council have a dual safeguarding approach of identifying a minimum buffer around waste management facilities and infrastructure, as well as a wider buffer where this is considered appropriate?*

Such a policy should not be misused to support the closure of waste sites that are within 250 metres of existing housing or other developments.

## **15. Other issues and next steps**

*Question 15 Are there any other issues that the new local plan should address, that are not covered within any of the topic areas set out in this issues paper?*

Preparing the new Local Plan will clearly be a lengthy and expensive process. It is not clear why Cheshire East, who claim to be short of money and are closing numerous public services and imposing extra charges (car park fees and the Green Bin tax) are undertaking it several years before the existing Local Plan expires or indeed before the revised planning laws from central government are ratified in legislation.

The Cheshire East Planning Department is also overstretched, with a large backlog of undecided planning applications and planning enforcement is weak.

One theory is that Cheshire East aim to end their financial problems by allowing large numbers of new houses to increase their income from Council Tax. We hope this is not true – if so, it would be an abuse of the planning system.