

## **Poynton with Worth Town Council**

### **Response to the Cheshire East Local Plan Scoping Consultation**

**August 2026**

Please find below Poynton Town Council's comments on the key issues regarding the new Cheshire East Local Plan and related issues.

The Town Council considers that the scope of the Local Plan (LP) must contain policies that will address the issues below:

**General Principles:** The new Local Plan must:

- Deliver only sustainable and infrastructure-led development.
- Protect the Green Belt and the character and environment of existing communities.
- Ensure that any development is supported by appropriate infrastructure and services.
- Recognise constraints such as flood risk and former coal mine workings.
- Take account of large developments planned by Stockport Council close to their border with Poynton and Adlington

#### **Housing, Employment and Green Belt**

Poynton Town Council notes that the Government has increased the housing targets for Cheshire East.

However, the Town Council believes there should be a clear brownfield-first approach, with previously developed land, vacant buildings and other regeneration sites identified and prioritised before the release of Green Belt land is considered.

We note that the Cheshire East Brownfield Land Register is incomplete – for example it does not include the Cheshire East owned site at the former Vernon Infants School.

There should not be over-reliance on large-scale development of open land in the Green Belt simply because such sites may appear easier and cheaper to deliver.

Assessment of housing sites must also consider the cumulative impact of previous and future development on existing settlements.

Large scale residential and commercial developments will increase pressures upon highways, schools, healthcare, public transport, utilities, drainage and other community infrastructure. This must all be considered and resolved before new developments are approved.

**Allocation of Sites** – the new Local Plan should wherever possible retain the existing Green Belt land around Poynton and the neighbouring parts of Adlington. Poynton borders Stockport MBC to the north and west, so much of the Green Belt land is vital for Purpose B of the Green Belt as stated in the NPPF: Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.

**Development Plans in Neighbouring Local Authorities:** The new Cheshire East Local Plan should take full account of planned developments just over the county boundary. Poynton borders Stockport MBC to the north and west. Development sites in the Stockport Local Plan directly bordering Poynton to the north, north-west and west include:

| SMBC Ref. | Site name                                          | No. houses |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------|------------|
| HOM 2.19  | Jacksons Lane West                                 | 170        |
| HOM 2.20  | Jacksons Lane East                                 | 270        |
| HOM 2.37  | Norbury Hall / Land off Chester Road (Hazel Grove) | 300        |
| HOM 2.26  | Dairyground Farm, Bramhall                         | 500        |
| HOM 2.38  | Chester Road (Woodford)                            | 550        |
| HOM 2.14  | Woodford Garden Village Extension                  | 545        |
|           | Total                                              | 2,335      |

Note that the above list excludes speculative development outside the SMBC Local Plan, including 450 houses at Upper Swineseye Farm in eastern Woodford, directly adjacent to the border with Poynton, which is the subject of a current planning application (SMBC ref. DC/098620).

**Impact of new SMBC Local Plan:** Stockport Council's planned development will reduce significantly the existing gaps between the built-up areas of Poynton and Hazel Grove, Bramhall and Woodford. Whilst Woodford until recently could be regarded as a village, the large-scale development since 2015 has effectively turned it into a town. The current population of Woodford is about 3,000 and planned developments will increase this to at least 5,000.

**Pressure on Poynton Schools:** Stockport Council has failed to provide sufficient primary school places in the new Woodford Garden Village estate (note this is before the building of the planned additional developments of 550 and 545 houses shown in the table above). As a result, some parents moving to Woodford have sent their children to schools in Poynton, increasing pressure on our local primary schools and Poynton High School. Other Stockport parents have used Poynton schools due to the high reputation of Poynton High School. This extra demand must be considered when calculating the number of school places required in Poynton.

**Infrastructure:** the Local Plan should:

- Only make land use and development proposals in Poynton which are suitably located and adequately supported by the existing and improved green, social, educational, health, utilities, transport, footpaths and other relevant infrastructure.
- In allocating land, ensure all necessary infrastructure improvements are provided in a timely way either directly by the developer as part of the development scheme and/or by securing sufficient financial contributions.
- In either case the infrastructure must be in place and functioning before any developments are completed and occupied.
- Ensure that, where land is required to deliver or safeguard the longer-term provision of that infrastructure, it is also allocated in the Local Plan.

**Multiple Developments:** The recent Call for Sites has confirmed that development may take place on multiple sites around Poynton and Adlington. These sites must not be assessed separately, the total impact of all development sites on infrastructure must be considered. Developers must not be able to evade their responsibility by claiming that they only have a "small" site when it is effectively part of a larger one.

**Education and other Public Infrastructure:** The possible scale of new developments means that the current practice, of asking developers for section 106 payments and extending existing schools, will not be adequate. The failures of Cheshire East in managing s106 payments are well known. It should be recognised from the start that new schools will be required, and developers must allocate the land required and pay for construction. The same point applies to new medical facilities, parks, recreation areas and other public facilities.

**Enforcement:** There have been incidents in Cheshire East of developers evading their legal duties to provide infrastructure by putting their company into liquidation when all houses have been sold but before infrastructure has been completed. They can then start a new company and repeat this process.

This can be dealt with by (a) requiring all company directors to give a personal guarantee of company debts, and (b) requiring an upfront bond drawn on a clearing bank to cover the full cost of all infrastructure requirements. This will also require an effective Planning Enforcement Department and a willingness to pursue delinquent developers which has not previously been evident.

A further issue has been Cheshire East's failure to properly monitor, and control, new developments approved under the 2017 Local Plan. The Town Council was astonished to learn that Cheshire East do not regularly visit new housing estates to ensure that they are built in full accordance with the approved plans. Instead, they wait for complaints from residents and otherwise do no inspections or visits. This is a wholly inadequate practice – Cheshire East staff should visit new estates at least every three months to verify full compliance with all planning conditions and take enforcement action where necessary. This weakness is well known in the “development community.”

**Design:** The Local Plan should ensure that the design of future developments meets the high standards required by national policy and reinforces the distinct character and identity of the town.

Houses should be in brick with pitched and tiled roofs. Note that there is no tradition in Poynton of houses more than two floors high and this should be respected where possible.

**Environment, Biodiversity and Heritage:** The new Local Plan should provide strong protection for the Green Belt, open countryside, biodiversity, wildlife corridors, woods, trees, hedgerows, lakes and ponds, waterways and landscapes.

Development should achieve measurable environmental improvements with high standards of sustainable biodiversity, drainage, energy efficiency, air quality and climate resilience.

**Local Green Space:** Developments should be separated by open land which will be designated as Local Green Space.

**Heritage Assets:** The Local Plan should identify and describe the value of local ('non-designated') heritage assets.

**Public Footpaths:** These must be protected and not blocked or diverted by new developments. Footpaths should also not be effectively replaced by new streets.

**Green Infrastructure:** The Local Plan should define a green infrastructure network for Poynton on the Policies Map with the aim of protecting it from harmful development proposals and encouraging development to realise opportunities for its enhancement for local nature recovery and other multi-functional benefits. The Local Plan should recognise the many physical and mental health benefits to residents from green and open land.

**Green Gaps:** Should large developments be proposed which could effectively merge distinct areas of the village, Local Gaps should be defined on the Policies Map with the objective of preventing the visual coalescence of those settlements. Examples may include preventing any coalescence of Hockley with Higher Poynton or Middlewood and retaining a clear and separate identity for the Woodford Road and Mill Hill Hollow areas.

**Flooding:** Poynton (and the neighbouring areas of Adlington) suffered severe floods in 2016 and 2019. Section 19 reports were issued by Cheshire East for both incidents. Many houses and business premises across Poynton were flooded, including part of the Poynton Industrial Estate (in Adlington).

The Cheshire East Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (2024) includes Poynton as one of fourteen priority areas where flood risk is significant. The SFRA confirms that Poynton is at risk from numerous types of flooding:

- **Fluvial Flooding** from rivers and associated watercourses (Poynton Brook).
- **Surface water risk** – Poynton is identified as at high risk of surface water flooding.
- **Groundwater flood risk** – Poynton and surrounding area form one of the two areas of highest groundwater flood risk in the whole of Cheshire East.
- **Flood risk from sewers** – the SFRA names Poynton as an area where sewer flooding has occurred. Some sewers, for example on Coppice Road, are too narrow for existing levels of discharge and could not accommodate any new developments.
- **Reservoir flood risk** – from the Cheshire East owned ornamental reservoir at Poynton Pool. Cheshire East accept this is a significant risk and are planning significant work to improve the safety of Poynton Pool. However, it is not possible to eliminate this risk.

Poynton is the **only** area in Cheshire East to feature in every category of flood risk in the SFRA. Sites must not be allocated for development if:

- The site is in Flood Zones 2 or 3 or at risk from any type of flooding; or
- Building on the site could reduce absorption of rainwater or displace flooding downstream where it could inundate existing properties.

**Flood Management:** We note that the SFRA identifies land “South of Poynton” as having “significant potential” for Natural flood management (NFM) or Working with Natural Processes (WwNP). Examples of WwNP in the SFRA include flood plain reconnection (allowing open land to flood in wet weather), Runoff Attenuation Features (temporary storage of flood water) and tree planning.

Poynton Town Council would in principle support such schemes, although the exact location and nature of the possible works remain unclear. Such land must be protected from development in the Local Plan.

**Former Coal Mining Heritage:** This raises two issues. The presence in the eastern part of Poynton village and Higher Poynton of numerous old mine shafts and area of shallow coal mine workings is a serious constraint on development, which should be recognised in the

Local Plan. The area includes many relics of the coal mining past, including dirt rucks and former colliery railways. While some of the latter are now public footpaths, most of this heritage is unprotected and could be destroyed by inappropriate development. This heritage should be protected in the Local Plan.

**Public Transport:** Most potential development sites in Poynton are at least half a mile from the nearest shops. The existing bus network does not cover all of the town and is under regular threat of withdrawal by Cheshire East. Most journeys from any new developments would be by private car, with increased traffic congestion and air pollution.

**Poynton Bypass:** The whole point of building the A523 Poynton Relief Road (Roy Chadwick way) was as a bypass for Poynton (see the SEMMMS Final Report of 2001). If new accesses are built off it, it will cease to be a bypass and become an ordinary, congested urban road. At the Public Enquiry into the construction of the Poynton Relief Road, a landowner argued for a roundabout to be built to access land off the Bypass. The Inspector refused this request. The Local Plan should state specifically that no additional junctions may be built off the Poynton Bypass.

**Utilities** - Public utilities are under strain in the semi-rural area of Higher Poynton. Local residents experience frequent electricity cuts, while residents of Coppice Road have complained of sewage backing up into their houses, as the existing sewer is too narrow.

Both the electricity and sewer infrastructure in Higher Poynton are old and struggle to cope with increased development and the conversion of former commercial or agricultural buildings into housing. The Local Plan should require that, before any development takes place in this area, electrical and sewer infrastructure are fully updated (at the expense of the developer).

## Conclusions

1. Poynton Town Council notes that Cheshire East need to ensure additional housing and commercial and economic growth. However, growth must be planned, recognise constraints and not just accepted.
2. The new Local Plan should protect the Green Belt, prioritise brownfield and regeneration land, ensure infrastructure of all types is delivered as part of development schemes and fully enforce planning conditions and developer contributions.
3. A development constraint specific to Poynton is the identification of numerous types of flood risk in the Cheshire East Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). No other town or village in Cheshire East is named in every category of flood risk.
4. A further constraint is the presence of numerous large development sites in adjacent areas of Stockport MBC, which risks the effective merging of Poynton with the Stockport towns of Hazel Grove, Bramhall and Woodford as well as increased strain on Poynton's schools.
5. Town and Parish Councils and local communities should be fully involved in decisions on development and the infrastructure required to support it. No proposal should ever be a "*fait accompli*."