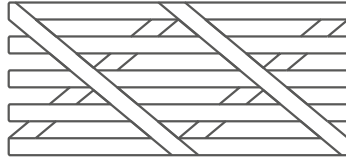


WHITEGATE & MARTON



Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2030

www.whitegatemarton.org.uk



-Whitegate & Marton-

Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2030

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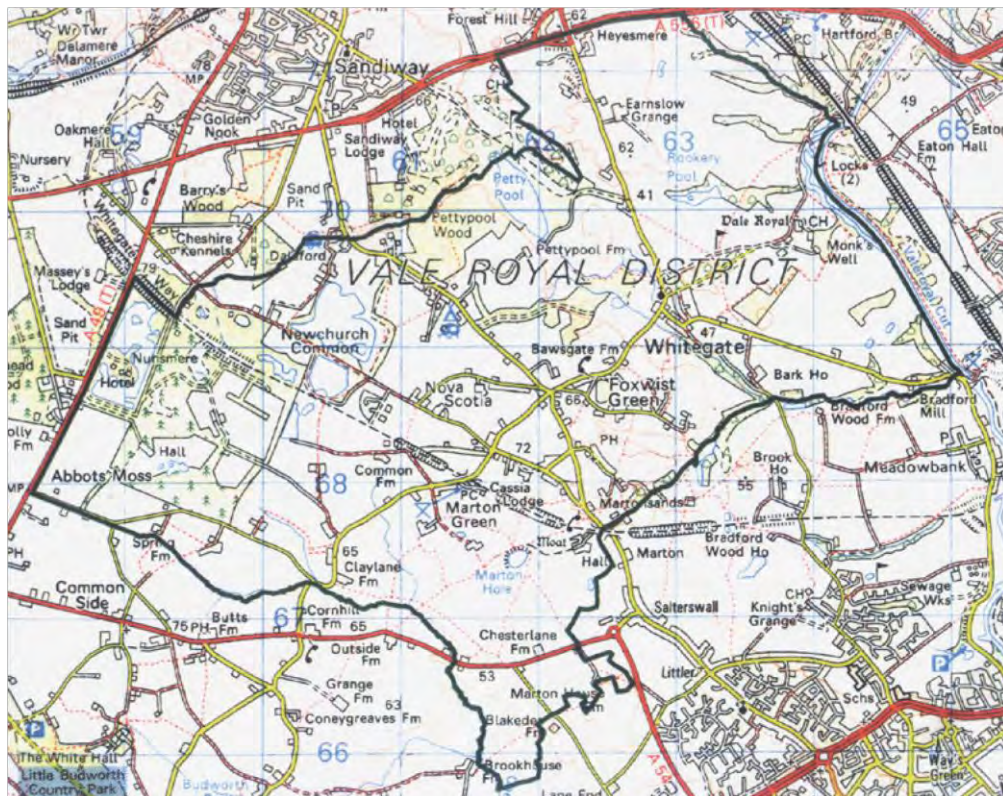
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FOREWORD

A group formed from the Whitegate & Marton parish community has prepared this Neighbourhood Plan. It is designed to be read in conjunction with the Cheshire West and Cheshire (CW&C) Local Plan that defines the policies and strategy for development in the area.

The Neighbourhood Plan is based on extensive consultation with local residents over a two year period together with evidence which has been collected from a number of national, regional and local sources. The evidence is recorded in a separate Evidence Base Summary.

Once adopted this Neighbourhood Plan will be a key policy document in planning strategy for the parish.

SECTION 1 – Introduction

The consultation process for the Whitegate & Marton Neighbourhood Plan was launched in 2012 with a goal to create a Plan that will help shape the future of the parish. The Plan is a document which will steer development decisions according to the wishes and aspirations of parish residents for the next 15 years to 2030.

Residents told us what was important to them with responses to questionnaires and public meetings. During the process all information produced was posted on the Whitegate & Marton parish website:

www.whitegatemarton.org.uk

We gained a good idea of views and the hopes that residents have for our community. Our challenge as a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was to interpret the information given to us and to define the Vision, Objectives, and Policies that now form the core of the Whitegate & Marton Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan also includes an Implementation Plan for non-policy issues to be addressed.

We have gathered much evidence and held discussions with CW&C officers and other professionals with experience of preparing such Plans. CW&C's Local Plan is especially important as our Plan has to be broadly in line with the Local Plan and National Policy Planning Framework to guide development decisions in the future.

SECTION 2 – About Whitegate & Marton

2.1 People and Lifestyle

There are 1,172 people living in Whitegate & Marton in 490 households. Most houses are owner occupied and generally large, 74% in band E or above.

The number of children (under 16) and single pensioner households are close to the national average, however the number of older people (over 65) is 7.8% higher than the national average. The vast majority of parishioners are in good health i.e. 84%.

The majority of parishioners commute to work by car. There are currently 34 working farms, mainly arable and cattle, and working from home is well above the national average. In addition to agriculture there are some employment opportunities in a school, a car maintenance garage, riding stables, residential park homes, a public house, and a hotel but together these offer limited prospects for new employment and most young residents must seek employment outside of the parish.

The civil parish of Whitegate & Marton was created when the two separate parishes were combined in 1998.

(* Sources: Census 2011 and ACRE report dated July 2013)

2.2 History & Background to existing development patterns

Whitegate & Marton emerged in the thirteenth century as satellite hamlets to the Cistercian Vale Royal Abbey, founded by Edward 1 in 1277. The King named the site Vallis Regalis (Vale Royal) and declared it to be “the fairest vale in all England”.

Vale Royal Abbey, the largest Cistercian abbey in England, was administered by 21 abbots from 1270-1535 and was demolished by Henry VIII at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538.

Thomas Holcroft was charged with “plucking down” the buildings and in their place he built Vale Royal Great House. In 1616 the Great House became the family seat of the Cholmondeley’s (Lords Delamere) and remained so for over 300 years during which time the estate grew to some 86 farms and 5,000 acres which is slightly larger than the parish today.

Thus for nearly 750 years the villagers were tenants, first of the feudal Vale Royal abbots, and then of the Cholmondeleys or Delameres. This distinctive history has shaped the topography of the area and accounts for the many listed buildings and for the extensive woodlands and waters to be found in the parish, all of which were once owned by extremely wealthy landowners.

In 1931 Thomas Cholmondeley, the fourth Baron Delamere, left to settle in Kenya and since then the house has served many short-lived functions. In 1995 planning permission was granted to develop the house and grounds for a golf course and clubhouse and to build the adjacent residential properties.

Much of the centre of Whitegate lies within a Conservation Area that was originally designated by Cheshire County Council in 1974 and whose boundary was revised in 1998. There are many fine, listed buildings within the Parish with origins dating back as far as 1540 (The Parish Church of Saint Mary). The Parish Church is one of several listed buildings located within the conservation area.

Development Patterns - Whitegate & Marton Parish is a very rural parish with several dispersed small clusters of housing and no towns or large villages.

Whitegate village centre is the largest of the clusters. Whitegate village developed along Grange Lane and the road parallel to it, Sutton Field, with a variety of house styles of mainly traditional design developed as a result of staff from an international company (ICI) moving into the area.

Marton comprises a number of small hamlets such as Nova Scotia, Marton Green, Marton Sands and Foxwist Green (a small hamlet with medieval origins close to Whitegate village).

There are two long rows of substantial detached houses that straddle Dalefords Lane at the northern end of the Parish. Also spread throughout the Parish are a number of large mansion houses, some of which have been converted to other uses. Nunsmere Hall is now a hotel and Dalefords Manor has been converted into flats and apartments.

There are also smaller clusters that have arisen in response to unique circumstances, for example various developments of farm buildings and farm worker cottages. Outside these clusters there are many farmhouse and single properties spread fairly evenly throughout the Parish.

Towards the edges of Whitegate & Marton, housing has grown in ribbon form along roads which lead from the village. Over the years the density of housing in these areas has increased by infilling between existing properties. Examples of ribbon development on the outskirts include the properties at Chester Lane Brook.

Developments in recent times comprise The Paddocks, Marton, consisting of fourteen modern bungalows on the site of former institutional buildings; a development of nine detached homes at Cassia Green on the site of former commercial premises and most notably, the development of fifty new homes adjacent to the recently constructed Vale Royal Abbey golf course alongside a new road, St Mary's Drive, linking the Great House with Whitegate Lane.

Within the Parish there are three Park Homes sites and together the number of properties represent a significant percentage of the total homes in Whitegate & Marton (15%).

The overall development pattern is one of rural spaciousness and small developments, many enjoying views across a very attractive landscape.

2.3 Architectural Heritage

Many building styles can be found in the area as the architecture has evolved over the centuries. However, because until 1930 much of the area was under the control of one landowner, they tend to be interesting structures that are well designed and constructed from high quality materials that have lasted well.

This gives the area its unique identity, with key design details linking the overall feel of the buildings and which provide useful references for the design of new houses, or the modification and extension of existing buildings.

The nature of the older structures in the area is one of low density, traditional rural designs, constructed using local materials. They range from timber framed thatched cottages built to house farm workers, to large mansions with slate roofs originally occupied by Lord Delamere and members of the Cholmondeley family. All these buildings are sparsely spread over a wide area including such fine examples as Bradford Mill, Marton House Farmhouse, Abbots Moss and Dalefords Manor.

Latter-day owners of Vale Royal House have continued to influence the development of the village long after Lord Delamere's departure. During ICI's days as proprietors, houses of various styles were built along Vale Royal Drive, Sutton Field, Abbey Close and some along Dalefords Lane, mostly occupied by ICI managers. Those on Vale Royal Drive, Sutton Field and Abbey Close are an obvious creation of the 1950s. Those on Dalefords Lane were built generally between the 1930s and 1950s with some later infill plots.

50 new houses leading up to Vale Royal Abbey Great House were built when the Vale Royal Golf Club building was re-developed with efforts made to reflect local character in the house designs.

Social housing was built at Beauty Bank and Sandy Lane to a standard pattern but many of these houses have since been developed.

A few modern bungalows, built to house farm workers, have appeared in the open countryside alongside old farms. These developments can look out of place when not reflecting the style of the original farm buildings with which they are associated. However barn conversions, of which there are a number in the parish, when done sympathetically can utilise and improve otherwise unused property.

2.3.1 Building Materials and Design Details

For many centuries before standardisation, local materials dictated local building methods, so that buildings tended to be similar in style and sat harmoniously within the countryside.

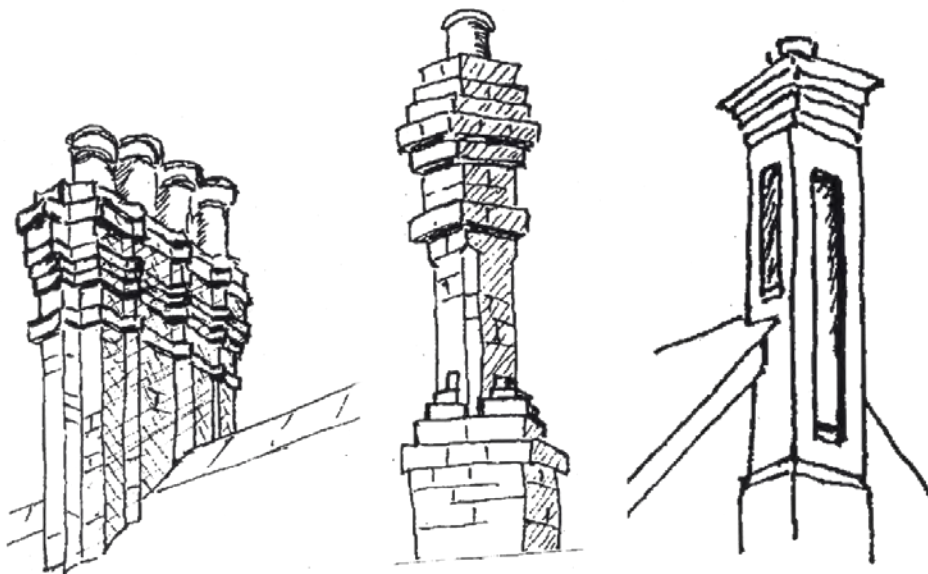
Many examples of these local materials can still be seen throughout the parish including smooth red sandstone, oak beams used for timber framing, reeds or straw for thatch and soft red Cheshire bricks. Materials introduced a little later include flat reddish brown/blue clay tiles or welsh slate for roofing, while brick with smooth rendering painted white has replaced most wattle and daub or cob walls.

The more sympathetic and interesting drives and paths are surfaced with loose pebbles, cobbles, setts, bricks, block paving or York stone paving. The cobbled pavement at the side of Whitegate Cottage is a particularly attractive feature and there are old cobbles beneath the tarmac at the entrance to Vale Royal Drive and Holly Bank Cottage on Cinder Hill which hark back to earlier times.

2.3.2 Roofs and Chimneys

Many of the older buildings in the parish have low rooflines with dormer windows either at eaves level or in the roof itself. The roof verges overhang the gables and have deep bargeboards or alternatively, have stone capped parapets reflecting the style of Vale Royal House.

Roofs with hips or valleys and variations in pitch and materials add variety to the roof-scape. Decoration has been added to the dormer fronts and gables in many cases in the form of timber framing, or hung tiles similar to those on Lodge Cottage. Chimneys are generally constructed from local brick and are large and decorative and many examples of fine chimney designs by John Douglas can be seen in the area, such as those at the Old Vicarage and on Vale Royal Great House.



2.3.3 Windows and Doors

Windows are generally modest in size with the first floor windows tending to have two casements and the ground floor three. They are side hung with no top lights, and lead or wooden glazing bars divide them into small panes. Larger window openings have been created by the introduction of bay windows with sloping tiled or slate roofs similar to that at the front of Whitegate House. Many windows have low arched brick lintels; stone or timber sills and the frames are painted white. These are principal features that give cohesion to the overall village scene.

Doors are of traditional design, panelled or boarded in painted softwood, or treated oak. Areas of glass are made up of small panes and brass or cast iron door furniture fitted. A simple open porch or canopy usually affords protection from the weather.

2.3.4 Boundaries and Planting

There are many interesting boundary features throughout the village. Fine examples of these are the sandstone walls of Vale Royal Great House, Lodge Cottage and the church, the stone capped brick wall with curved risers along the side of the bank above the Green, and the picket fence at the front of Whitegate House.

Many of the walls have been softened by planting in front of them either deliberately or by nature. More recent additions to this mix are the stone walls topped with railings at the entrance of St Mary's Drive and the Cheshire style black and white railings fronting the new development at Cassia Green.

These features and many of the hedgerows give an attractive diversity to the street scene and avoid the blandness of open plan, suburban style development.



2.4 The Landscape Setting

The scattered spread of individual buildings and hamlets within the Parish are interwoven with a rich and varied landscape of considerable beauty, from fairly flat farmland in the South to the more varied and interesting landscape that lies around Whitegate village. This landscape includes farmland, woods and coppices, lakes, streams, pools and mosses set in and around undulating hills and valleys. Close access to this varied and beautiful landscape is provided by a comprehensive network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle-ways that include the Whitegate Way which passes through the middle of the Parish.

To the East of the Parish the landscape has a parkland appearance reflecting the character of the former Vale Royal Abbey Estate, with farmland, golf course and tree lined watercourses all falling down to the attractive valley of the River Weaver. To the North and West of the Parish large tracts of woodland dominate the landscape with central and southern parts of the Parish characterised by fields and hedgerows around country lanes. West of Marton the fields are larger and the landscape more open whilst between Marton and Whitegate the field pattern is on a smaller more intimate scale.

Throughout this varied landscape there are many large areas of water, some historical fishing waters for the former Vale Royal Abbey (e.g. Rookery Pool, New Pool and Petty Pool), others of later origin, mainly comprising water filled former sand quarries (e.g. extensive lakes around New Church Common and Nunsmere Hall) or created by former brine substance (e.g. Marton Hole and Sixes Hole)




These water features set in woodland, farmland and parkland areas, combine to form a landscape of distinctive and delightful character, which reaches into all parts of the Parish, giving many dwellings a direct view over attractive countryside. The Weaver Valley and its immediate environs are designated as Areas of Special County Value (ASCV) for their high landscape value. Within the Parish there are significant areas of woodland and Lakeland, some of ancient origin, some of which are Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI) and some Sites of Biological Interest (SBI). Many of the lakes and ponds within the Parish are used for recreational fishing and are also home to numerous species of flora and fauna. The many areas of woodland and copse form wildlife corridors, giving cover and continuity for a wide variety of natural wildlife.

Perhaps the most significant change in the landscape has occurred as a result of extensive sand quarrying, particularly in the western part of the Parish where extraction sites have subsequently been water filled to create lakes. The various quarrying operations have however changed the topography of the local landscape over years of activity.

SECTION 3 – Vision and Objectives

With such a rich architectural heritage and wonderful rural setting the community wishes to ensure this legacy continues for future generations to enjoy and this Neighbourhood Plan is designed to define the community vision for Whitegate & Marton 2015 to 2030. It is a living document and will be reviewed every 5 years.



Whitegate & Marton in 2035 will be a place where people want to live, work and visit.

Our housing stock will have some diversity to satisfy the needs of first time buyers, growing families and those in retirement so that residents have the option to stay in the parish when circumstances change.

Accommodation within the parish will continue to be provided in existing small pockets separated by open countryside.

No major housing developments will have been built in the parish and what development there is will have satisfied a local need.

The design and materials of any new housing will preserve and enhance the distinctiveness of our historic rural parish.

The quality of life for residents will be improved by developing and supporting local facilities and an enhanced infrastructure for employment, education, recreation and leisure.

We will do this by achieving the following objectives:

Objective 1

To ensure that housing development permitted by STRAT 9 of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategy for Green Belt and Countryside reflects the needs of the local community for smaller homes.

Objective 2

To ensure that the design and use of materials for new building, and changes to existing stock of dwellings, is in keeping with the existing character of Whitegate & Marton.

Objective 3

To protect the character of listed buildings, scheduled monuments and the Conservation area.

Objective 4

To ensure that any development respects the landscape and views that make the village a special place to live and work.

Objective 5

To support economic activity in the parish through appropriate small-scale improvements or development of existing buildings, and through the protection of existing commercial activity.

Objective 6

To continue to provide good access to the countryside by supporting and encouraging maintenance and improvement to footpaths, cycle-ways and bridle ways.

Non- policy Objectives

Objective 7

To support the development of existing and new leisure and tourist spaces and facilities consistent with the rural character of Whitegate & Marton.

Objective 8

To establish, and implement, plans for traffic management, community activity and community well being.

Objective 9

To encourage community involvement in the process of planning and delivery of this Neighbourhood Plan.

SECTION 4 – Key Themes and Policies

4.1 HOUSING

4.1.1 Results of Consultations

Engagement with the community on the Neighbourhood Plan showed the following as key issues:

- residents valued highly the rural character, open spaces and easy access to the countryside surrounding Whitegate & Marton.
- members of the community strongly value the influence of the rich heritage of the parish on the visual impact of its properties and they wish to see this reflected in future development which should be required to adopt designs and materials that are sympathetic to that heritage.
- residents expressed concern that the recent emphasis on developments of large expensive houses and extension of existing dwellings has resulted in a housing stock in the Parish which includes relatively few properties which can meet the needs of first time buyers, young families with restricted income and residents who wish to downsize without moving out of the community.
- there is no desire to have new development of any kind located in open countryside that would detract from the rural character and the spectacular views over the traditional Cheshire landscape.
- spaces between existing pockets of development should be maintained.
- closely spaced housing should be avoided where this would harm the character of the surrounding area.

In addition to the recent consultations on the Neighbourhood Plan, previous consultation resulted in the Whitegate & Marton Village Design Statement (VDS) which was adopted by Vale Royal Borough Council in 2003 and has been used as Supplementary Planning Guidance for development since that date. The VDS provides guidance and visual examples on architectural styles and building materials about how new developments should be treated. It is considered important, given the views of the community, to bring the key policies from the VDS into the Neighbourhood Plan.

A full copy of the Village Design Statement can be found at the Parish Website

www.whitegatemarton.org.uk.



Whitegate and Marton *Village Design Statement*

Adopted by Vale Royal Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance



In particular the community wishes to see the following:

- protection of the distinct character of Whitegate & Marton's buildings, spaces and landscape setting and respect for historic Whitegate village and its Conservation Area, listed buildings and their setting;
- respect for the character, architectural styles and traditional materials of the existing buildings;
- whenever change is contemplated, whether to existing buildings or new construction, consideration should be given to the potential impact of the change on the landscape and on neighbours and these proposals should be of a scale and design which does not harm the character of the surrounding area.



Our Parish - Our Plan
www.whitegatemarton.org.uk

Our Future in Our Hands
WhitegateMartonNP@gmail.com

4.1.2 Local Plan Strategic Background

The Whitegate & Marton parish area is classed as countryside and subject to policy STRAT 9 of the Adopted (Part One) Local Plan. Due to the level of facilities in Whitegate & Marton and limited access to public transport CWAC Council does not consider Whitegate & Marton to be a Local Service Centre. This has been accepted by the Parish Council. The test for Local Service Centres includes provision of basic services to meet sustainability criteria (e.g. access to shops, pub, church, halls, schools, post office and public transport provision).

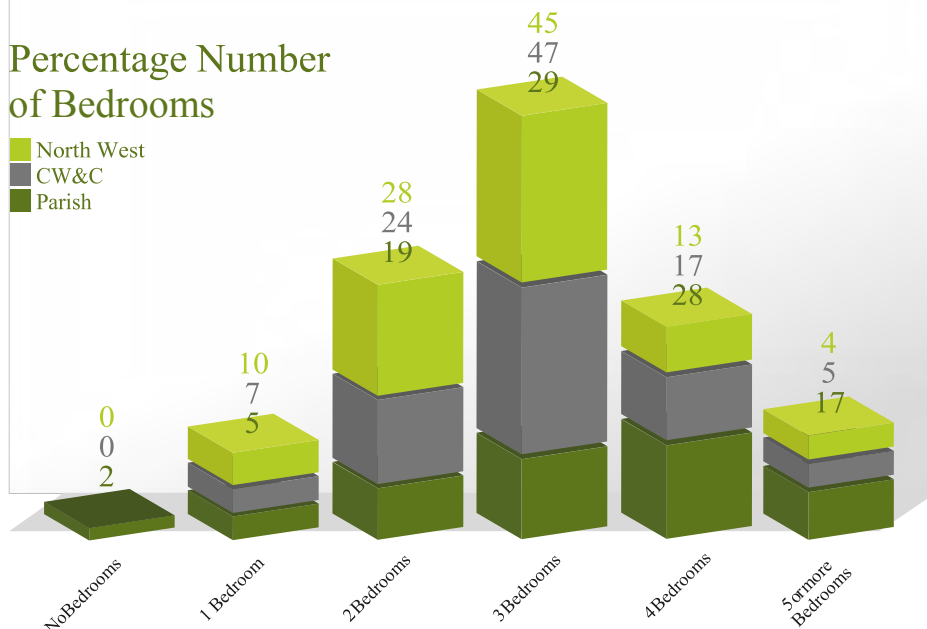
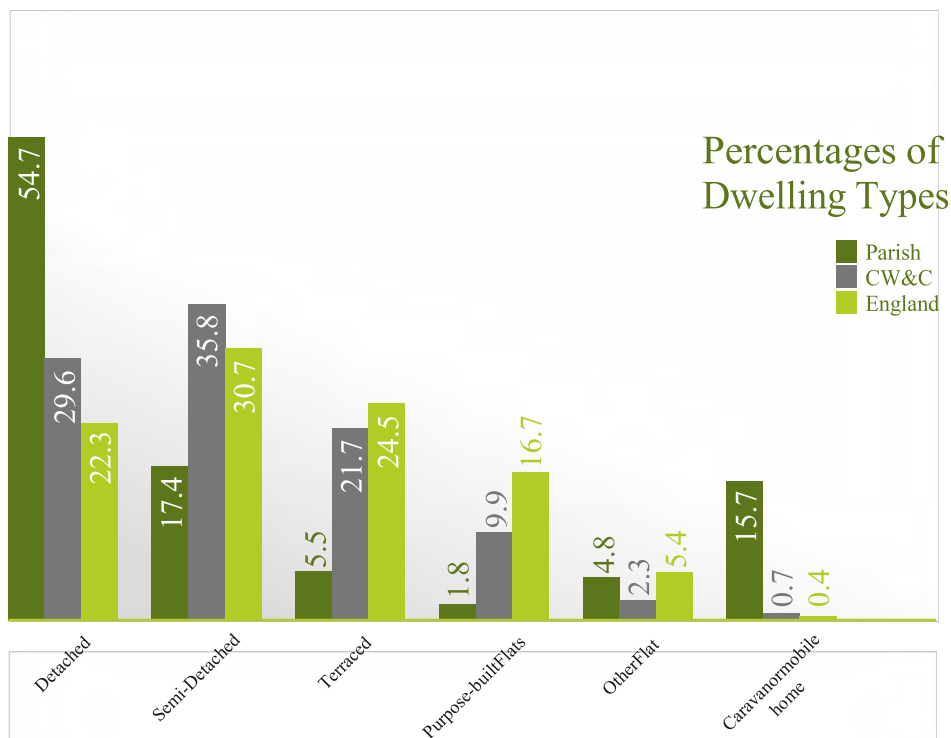
This strategy limits residential development in smaller rural areas such as Whitegate & Marton which are defined as 'open countryside'. In line with Policy STRAT 9 and the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) only the following types of development will be permitted:

- Development that has an operational need for a countryside location such as for agricultural or forestry operations.
- Replacement buildings.
- Small scale and low impact rural / farm diversification schemes appropriate to the site, location and setting of the area.
- The reuse of existing rural buildings, particularly for economic purposes, where buildings are of permanent construction and can be reused without major reconstruction.
- The expansion of existing buildings to facilitate the growth of established businesses proportionate to the nature and scale of the site and its setting.

The CW&C Local Plan provides the appropriate policy context to address the concerns of the community relating to avoiding development in the open countryside and maintaining the spaces between existing housing clusters. It is consistent with the wishes of the community to prevent any multiple property development projects within the parish.

4.1.3 Recognised need for smaller dwellings

One of the issues raised by the community is the difficulty people have in accessing smaller properties within the parish. This is evidenced by the 2011 Census which shows that 60% of the properties in the parish are detached properties compared to just 30% across Cheshire West and Chester. See chart overleaf.



In addition 46% of properties have at least four bedrooms (compared to just 22% in Cheshire West and Chester).

Since 2001 (notwithstanding changes in the number of mobile homes), there has been an increase of 51 properties in the parish, with 39 of these being detached dwellings.

All this shows clearly that Whitegate & Marton has mainly large properties and that this situation has been perpetuated with development over the last ten years.

House prices in the parish are very high particularly with the high proportion of large detached properties which, in 2014, had an average selling price of £639,000.

This affects in particular, three groups of people:

- Firstly there are first-time buyers who would like to stay living locally where they have grown up and have family connections. The difficulties of getting on the housing ladder generally mean that they are happy to purchase a small property, with either one or two bedrooms.
- The second group are young families with restricted income who typically need affordable accommodation with 2 or 3 bedrooms.
- The third group are older people looking to 'downsize' from their existing large, family homes. They would like to stay living locally and, given the equity in their existing homes, are able to afford market prices. Commonly the needs of this group are slightly different to that of the first-time buyers and young families in that they are looking for slightly larger and higher quality properties with up to three bedrooms.

The Cheshire West and Chester Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2013 recommends that development in particular should focus on provision of properties with two, three or four bedrooms across the housing market area.

Within Whitegate & Marton it is considered that the focus should be on properties that enable more people to be able afford to live in the parish for example with two or three bedrooms.

This Neighbourhood Plan therefore seeks to ensure that development which meets the criteria of the CW&C Local Plan Policy STRAT9 also addresses the particular issues of importance to the community of Whitegate & Marton, namely:

- It provides smaller dwellings to address the needs of local people; and
- It is a high quality design that can be demonstrated to be in keeping with the character of Whitegate & Marton as open countryside with a number of small hamlets (this is dealt with in the section entitled 'Maintaining a high quality rural environment').

4.2 Policies Related to Housing Development

POLICY 1: HOUSING STOCK APPROPRIATE TO THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Objective:

Housing development permitted by STRAT 9 (Local Plan Strategy for Green Belt and Countryside) should reflect the needs of the local community for smaller homes.

Policy 1:

Housing development which meets the requirements of Policy STRAT9 of the Local Plan, including replacement buildings and reuse of existing rural buildings for conversion should meet the needs of the local community for smaller properties. Dwellings should normally be between one and three bedrooms in size.

Redevelopment of existing residential properties will be expected to provide a similar number of bedrooms to the existing property. The significant enlargement of existing residential properties will not normally be permitted (e.g. over 30% of the floor space of the original dwelling). Larger extensions will only be permitted where spaces between properties can be maintained and the character of the area will not be harmed.

POLICY 2: DESIGN AND USE OF MATERIALS

Objective:

To ensure that the design and use of materials for new building, and changes to our existing stock of dwellings, is in keeping with the existing character of Whitegate & Marton.

Policy 2:

Proposals for new residential properties, replacement properties or extensions requiring planning permission must satisfy the following criteria:

- that they have sought to reflect the local vernacular architecture, the details for which can be found in the Village Design Statement and where appropriate, the Whitegate Conservation Area Appraisal Update.; and
- that they have sought to use building materials that reflect the style of other traditional properties in the surrounding area; and
- that traditional materials have been selected for boundaries, for example sandstone or Cheshire style railings and boundaries are softened by the use of appropriate planting such as hedgerows..



4.3 Maintaining the Heritage and Rural environment

4.3.1 Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments

Much of the centre of Whitegate lies within a Conservation Area that was originally designated in 1974 and then revised in 1998.

In total there are 33 listed buildings and 4 scheduled monuments in the parish. A full list of these buildings and structures can be found in the Village Design Statement.



Many of the listed buildings in the parish lie within the Conservation Area. The key buildings are the Church of St Mary, the School and Mews, Whitegate House and the timber framed thatched cottages. These buildings surround the Green and the grassy bank rising up to the churchyard wall. They are generally well spaced and have low rooflines providing an open, airy feeling to the important central area.

Other important buildings within the area are the Church lych-gate, Lodge Cottage at the entrance to Vale Royal Drive and the four houses at the start of Grange Lane built in 1840 for estate employees.

The residents of the parish consider it of significance that Whitegate has such areas of protection for its heritage. It is particularly important that development does not have an unacceptable impact on either the setting of any listed building or the conservation area generally.

4.3.2 Protection and enhancement of the Natural Environment

The character of the parish of Whitegate & Marton is very much influenced by its history as a great country estate. Few properties were built that did not have some connection with the estate. The original estate buildings tend to form hamlets where farm workers, domestic servants or craftsmen were housed close to their place of work.

Agricultural land extends into the heart of the village and most houses are adjacent to open countryside, which is easily accessible due to the historic network of public footpaths. This means that the population is in close contact with nature and rural activities, which adds greatly to the quality of life and should be respected in any new development.

The community survey, used to establish views on the future of the parish, was overwhelming in the desire of the community to retain Whitegate & Marton as a rural area. Highest on the priority list for people living in the area was the desire to retain open countryside with easy access to enjoy the wildlife and a quiet and rural environment.

Residents identified the following:

- the specific need for a public open space for children;
- the importance of maintaining a focus for nature conservation ensuring that areas of special environmental value as well as trees, open spaces and agricultural areas are protected and enhanced;
- ensuring that new development should not detract from the open rural character that exists throughout the parish or detract visually from the setting of the numerous woodlands, pools and waterways;
- respecting the traditional farm landscape with its pattern of trees and hedgerows which should be maintained;
- supporting the on-going management of trees (for example Old Vale Royal Drive) and woodlands (for example Churchwood) to preserve these features for public benefit.

4.3.3 Policies Related to Heritage and the Rural Environment

POLICY 3: LISTED BUILDINGS, SCHEDULED MONUMENTS AND THE CONSERVATION AREA

Objective:

To protect the character of listed buildings, scheduled monuments and the Conservation area

Policy 3:

Development which will have a significant detrimental impact on designated heritage assets (including listed buildings, scheduled monuments and the Conservation Area) and their settings will not be permitted.

POLICY 4: Landscape

Objective:

To ensure any development respects the landscape and views that make the parish a special place to live and work.

Policy 4:

Development proposals must ensure that the countryside is maintained and protected and new development should maintain and enhance the wildlife, hedgerows, woodlands and trees, pools and waterways and the open rural character of the parish in general. Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals that have a significant detrimental impact on the rural character of the parish.

4.4 Local Economy and Employment

4.4.1 New Employment Opportunities

The Neighbourhood Plan recognises the importance of small-scale employment as a way of maintaining the economic viability of life in the countryside. In addition to traditional rural service and craft businesses, in these days of information-based businesses the location of offices is not fundamental and the opportunity exists to run small enterprises either from home or from a small unit locally.

The Neighbourhood Plan looks to facilitate opportunities for such new and existing businesses to create growth and, where possible, employment. Office-based businesses will be encouraged where they are of a scale that is in keeping with the rural location. Many such enterprises will be as part of a home-working operation so could be facilitated through permitted development rights where the overall character of the dwelling will not change as a result of the business. Others would benefit from the availability of small business “incubator units” with some shared infrastructure and services. Some larger development of office or workshop (light industrial) space may be appropriate on a residential property but it must be ensured that the use is ancillary to the main residential use and does not impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Businesses that require a significant amount of land and floor space must be appropriate to a rural area. Examples include agricultural, equestrian, tourism, rural leisure, sporting and outdoor activities, and minor retail uses such as farm or community shops.

One of the key areas where there is potential for economic growth in Whitegate & Marton is in the tourism sector. Accordingly, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to encourage visitors to the area and the growth of local tourism generally. It considers that this can best be achieved by ensuring the conservation of Whitegate & Marton's rural environment and countryside attractions and by promoting the provision of leisure holiday accommodation and facilities together with services to support visitors. Again, such new development must be of a scale that is appropriate to the rural location.

4.4.2 Protecting Existing Employment Opportunities

Whilst promoting the growth of new employment uses, it is equally important that existing employment uses are protected where possible. To achieve this, it is necessary to restrict the demolition or conversion of existing commercial premises (A- and B-class uses) for non-commercial purposes. Only if it is clearly demonstrated that there is little prospect of the existing building or land being used for employment-generating purposes can this be permitted.

4.4.3 Policies Related to the Local Economy and Employment

POLICY 5: ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Objective:

To support economic activity in the parish through appropriate small-scale improvements or development of existing buildings and the protection of existing commercial activity.



Policy 5.1: – Generating Employment:

Proposals for employment-generating uses (including tourism) will be supported, provided it can be demonstrated that they are appropriate uses in the countryside. Development should also be in accordance with STRAT 9 and should not harm the character of the countryside, be of an appropriate scale and must not have unacceptable impacts in terms of traffic generation, noise and visual impact and provide sufficient parking and have a safe access.

The National Policy Planning Framework provides guidance in supporting a prosperous rural economy and we support economic growth in our rural area in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development in the following ways:

- by supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of local business and enterprise, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;
- by promoting the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- by supporting sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in local service centres; and
- by promoting the retention and development of local services and community facilities, such as a local shop, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Support will be given for proposals which are compliant with STRAT 9 which will allow for the provision of Business Incubation units which aid the creation of new enterprises within the parish. Support will be given for the creation of Community Assets such as a Community Shop or Café (Use Class A1) which can provide support for tourism and also provide work experience and or employment opportunities.

Policy 5.2: - Employment Activities within Residential Properties

Planning applications incorporating proposals for small scale employment generating uses from existing residential properties will be supported subject to meeting the following criteria:

- the proposals are for Class B1 uses; and
- the proposed use would be ancillary to the main residential use of the site; and
- the proposed use would not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of neighbours, particularly in respect of noise, visual intrusion, highways and parking ; and
- any required expansion of buildings to facilitate the growth of established businesses must be proportionate to the nature and scale of the site and its setting.

Policy 5.3: - Loss of Commercial Premises

There will be a strong presumption against the loss of commercial premises or land which provides employment or future potential employment opportunities.

Applications for a change of use to an activity that does not provide employment opportunities will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that:

- the commercial premises or land in question has not been in active use for at least twelve months; and
- the commercial premises or land in question has no potential for either reoccupation or redevelopment for employment generating uses and as demonstrated through the results both of a full valuation report and a marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least six months which results in no interest from a credible party.

4.5 Access to the Countryside

The community of Whitegate & Marton considers its local distinctiveness to be of great value and that its rural way of life with easy access to the countryside is of fundamental importance. In addition to its value to residents, the quiet rural environment is an unspoiled county asset highly valued by others both from within the county and from further afield. These visitors include nature lovers, ramblers, runners, cyclists, horse riders, dog walkers and scout groups including the annual Cheshire Hike.

The recently established Station House Community Cafe in the old Whitegate station building is an example of Community Engagement supported by CWAC Council. The Cafe and the adjacent car parking, toilet facilities and picnic area, comprise the essential hub for the tourist traffic. In turn, the viability of these assets depends entirely upon the tourist traffic. This hub also provides convenient disabled access to the countryside and the availability of adult tricycles for hire delivers a valuable form of exercise for those with reduced mobility. The protection of this area and its surroundings should be a foremost consideration in all planning decisions which may impact upon it.

4.5.1 Paths and Bridleways

A particular asset is the Whitegate Way, which, as the major footpath and bridleway, is the artery which supports the great majority of tourism and runs through some of the most beautiful and tranquil areas of the parish with wonderful views of the abundant wildlife. It is a major asset to Cheshire and is promoted by CWAC Council as a regional tourist attraction. The route also passes the Scouts' Forest Camp site, another very valuable asset for the county. In addition to the amenity the Whitegate Way provides in itself, it also provides repeated access to a network of other footpaths and bridleways throughout the parish. This valuable asset should be carefully protected in all planning decisions which may impact upon it.

More generally, improved access should be achieved through the provision of footpaths, cycle routes, bridle ways and roadways that are appropriate to a rural area. In particular, the community has identified routes for new footpaths/public rights of way along Dalefords Lane and Cinder Hill.

4.5.2 Policies Related to Access to the Countryside

POLICY 6: ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

Objective:

To continue to provide good access to the countryside by supporting and encouraging maintenance and improvement to footpaths, cycle-ways and bridle ways.



Policy 6:

Any proposals close to the Whitegate Way will be expected to demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on its role as a unique local leisure feature and connection with neighbouring parishes. If such impacts cannot be fully mitigated then planning permission shall be refused.

Whitegate & Marton Parish Council will work with Cheshire West and Chester and other interested parties to put in place these and any other improvements to rights of way. Proposals to develop or improve new and existing walking, cycling and horse-riding paths between key parish facilities will be supported.

In particular, proposals for new footpaths or public rights of way along the following routes will be strongly supported:

- Dalefords Lane
- Cinder Hill

SECTION 5 - Non-Policy Matters

These non-land use objectives have no planning policies but we intend to develop action plans and these are described below.

5.1 Tourism & Leisure

Objective:

To support the development of existing and new leisure and tourist spaces and facilities consistent with the rural character of Whitegate & Marton



Proposals which identify and develop further tourism and leisure facilities will be supported. Examples might include:

- a recognisable “Village Centre” identifying the Whitegate & Marton parish and providing local information to visitors
- a small public park near to Whitegate Village
- continued support for the development of the recently established Station House Café adjacent to the Whitegate Way

5.2 Community Safety and Wellbeing

Objective:

To establish, and implement plans for traffic management, community activities, community well-being and voluntary groups.



Objective:

In consultation with parishioners, many were concerned about the speed and volume of traffic in Whitegate Village centre and elsewhere in the parish, particularly through-traffic along Dalefords Lane, Chester Lane Brook and Whitegate Lane. Other concerns include car parking at the Recreation Room and the lack of parking near Whitegate School and St Mary’s Church.

5.2.2 Support for the Elderly and Infirm

We want to encourage voluntary groups and community support for health and wellbeing and establish a system to ensure the community supports elderly people living alone.



5.2.3 Community Spirit

We aim to enhance the feeling of community in Whitegate & Marton by developing and supporting village community activities.



5.3 Development and Review of this Neighbourhood Plan

We want to involve local people in an on-going basis in the process of plan-making, monitoring and delivery of development.

We will review this Neighbourhood Plan every 5 years to ensure that it is focused on the needs of the community.

Objective:

To encourage community involvement in the process of planning and delivery of this Neighbourhood Plan.

5.3.1 Delivery of objectives relating to non policy issues.

The tables below define our approach to the delivery of some non-policy issues that were raised as a result of the public consultations:

No	Issue	Possible Actions
1	Develop pedestrian connections	1. Develop footpaths along Dalefords Lane and Cinder Hill
2	Protect Local Green Spaces	2. Seek to extend the current lease for Tesco Field to ensure on -going use of the facility
3	Identify and develop a green space near the centre of the village	3. Explore the proposal to establish a village focal point outside the old post office as an attractive area with public benches, flower pots and a village sign, and seek community approval and funding for the project. 4. Complete Parish Council project to establish Community Green Space /Drop-off area at Whitegate School 5. Continue Parish Council project to re -use Whitegate Station as a Community asset .
4	Road Safety	6. Continue Parish Council focus on road safety areas and work with CWAC Highways to reduce vehicle speeds & volume. 7. See 3 above: Continue with the project to establish a drop off/pick up facility in the proposed Community Green Space /Drop-off area at Whitegate School 8. Set up a project to create improved parking at the Recreation Room
5	Community Involvement	9. Continue Parish Council policy of funding community projects 10. Continue Parish Council policy of supporting groups that assist the elderly (e.g. taxi transport, Snow Angels). 11. Review this Neighbourhood Plan after 5 years (approx. 2021)

SECTION 6 - NEXT STEPS & SUMMARY

The following are the next steps for the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Preparation of a final document
- Examination by an Independent Planning Inspector
- Referendum to obtain approval of the plan from a majority of local residents
- Adoption of the plan

The Neighbourhood Plan is based on consultation with local residents together with evidence which has been collected from a number of national, regional and local sources. The key themes quickly became apparent and this Neighbourhood Plan puts into place a planning framework that provides further local clarity and guidance to regional and national planning legislation. Once adopted this Neighbourhood Plan will be a key policy document in planning strategy for the parish.

The Whitegate & Marton Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

January 2017

Cover Photo courtesy of Patricia Kelsall.

Our Parish - Our Plan

www.whitegatemarton.org.uk



Our Future in Our Hands

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