DRAFT
UTKINTON AND COTEBROOK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
2020 - 2030

CONTENTS

List of Figures

List of Tables

FOREWORD

The Localism Act (2011) introduced Neighbourhood Planning into the hierarchy of spatial planning in England, giving communities the right to shape their future development at a local level.

In 2016, Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish Council took the decision to create a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish. A Neighbourhood Plan cannot stop development, but it will give the community a say in the nature, number, size and location of any development. Importantly, it has legal status and **must** be taken into account when the Local Authority is making decisions on planning applications. Following consultation with Cheshire West and Chester Council, Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish was designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area on 22nd November 2016 and modified on 17th October 2019 to reflect amendments to the Parish Boundary following the Local Boundary Review.

This document reflects the community-wide comments, observations and concerns about the future of the Parish, bringing them together into a 'living document' that mirrors the community's overwhelming desire to make Utkinton and Cotebrook an even better place to live and work, both now and particularly for future generations.

This Draft Plan has been produced by a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, including Parish Councillors and community volunteers and other organisations such as Cheshire Community Action and Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Various departments of Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council have advised on stages of its development and completion of projects.

Once adopted by a referendum, which is the final part of the process, the Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan policies take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict. It will set out where development should take place, the type and quality of development and endeavour to ensure that it meets local objectives and needs. It will also help to improve quality of life and enjoyment of the environment.

Acknowledgements:

The Chair of the Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Tony Dahill, would like to acknowledge a number of individuals and organisations for their contributions and support in developing this plan:

The Steering Group:	Carol Spencer (nee Weaver)
	Graham Spencer
	Marian Atkinson
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	Anna Harvey
The Parish Council:	Cllr. Ian Priestner
	Cllr. Francis Tunney (Chair)
Organisations :	Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish Council

The Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan Area
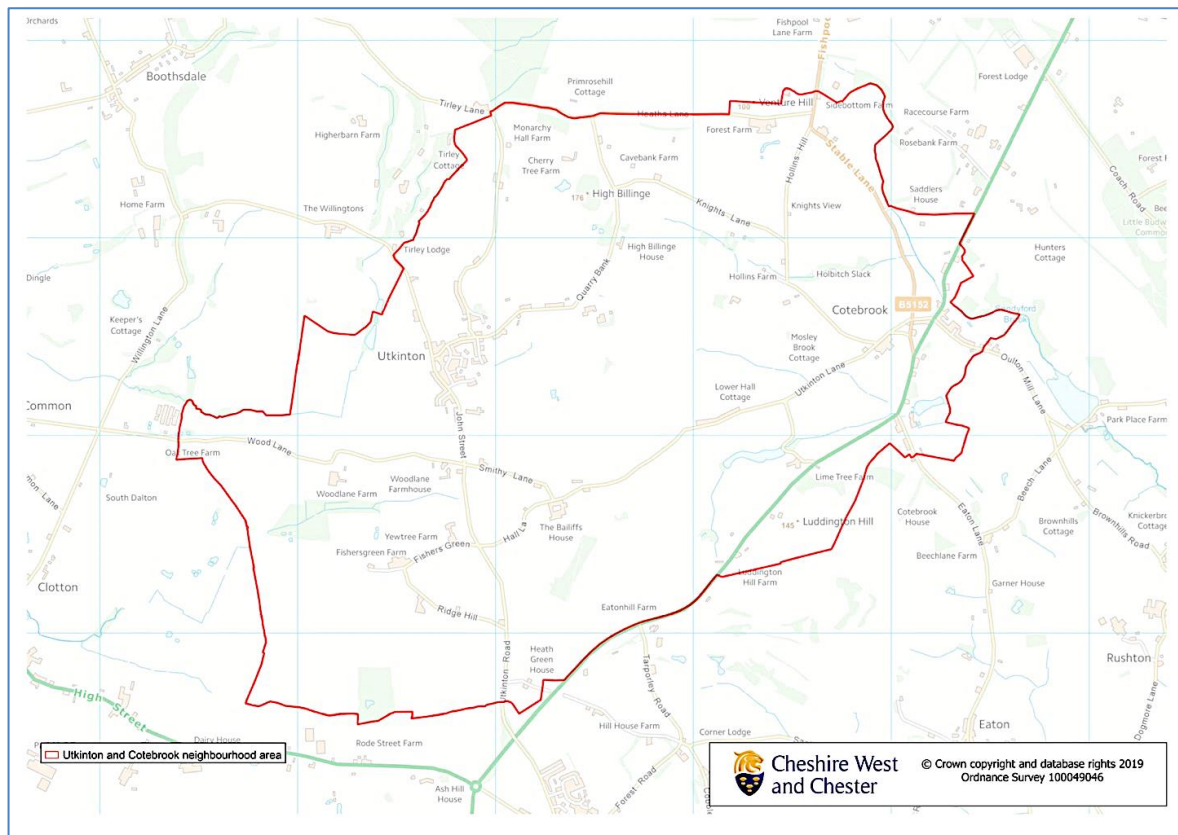
Figure 1 - Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan Area and Parish Boundary; as amended 17th October 2019

The following map (figure 2) shows that the settlement boundary for Cotebrook Village Settlement Boundary (VSB) has now been removed, the Village is now classed as being in 'open countryside', having no boundaries that are adjacent to the Local Service Centre of Utkinton.
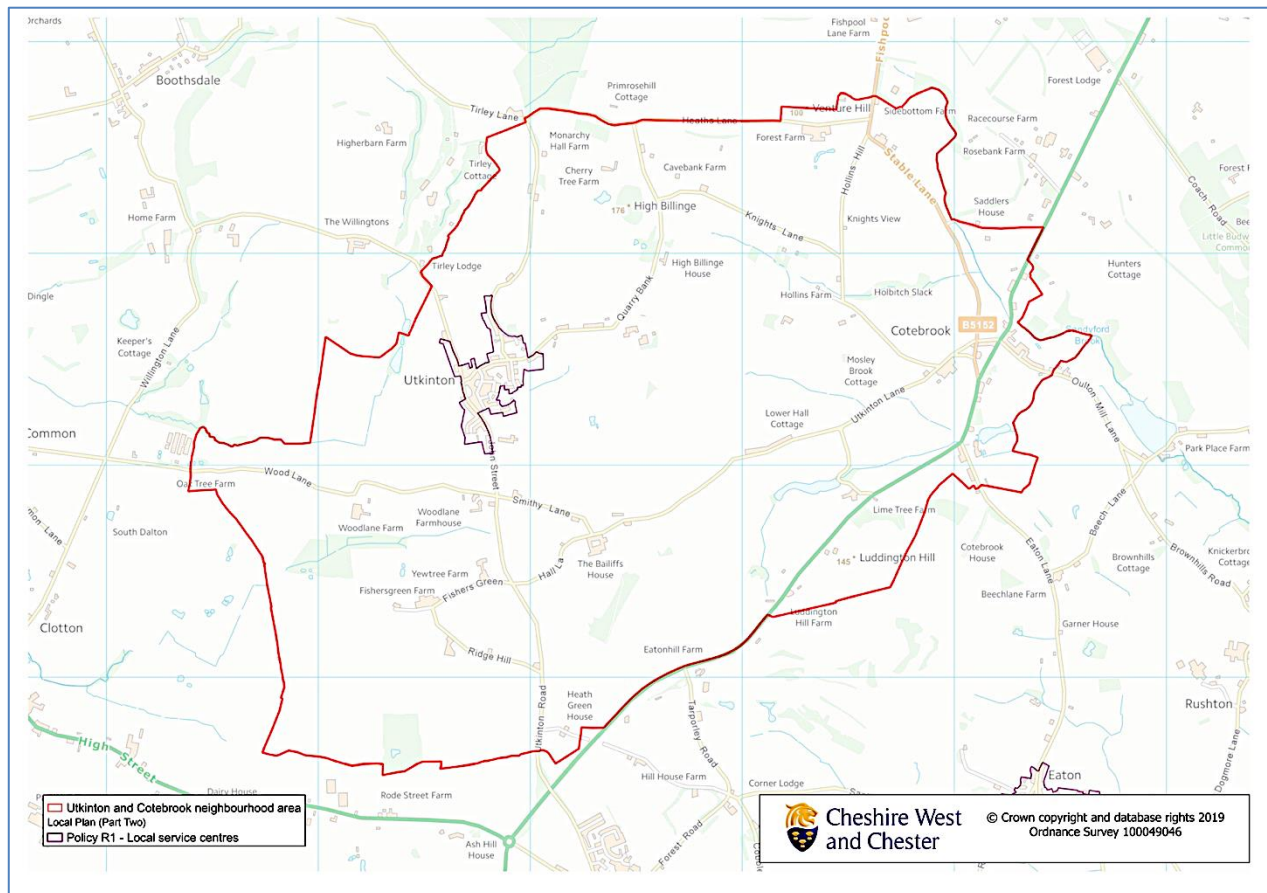
Figure 2 - Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan Area showing Utkinton VSB

This map (Figure 3) is taken from the Inset Maps for Local Service Centres, published alongside the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two).

The Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies was adopted in July 2019. It replaced the retained policies from the predecessor plans.
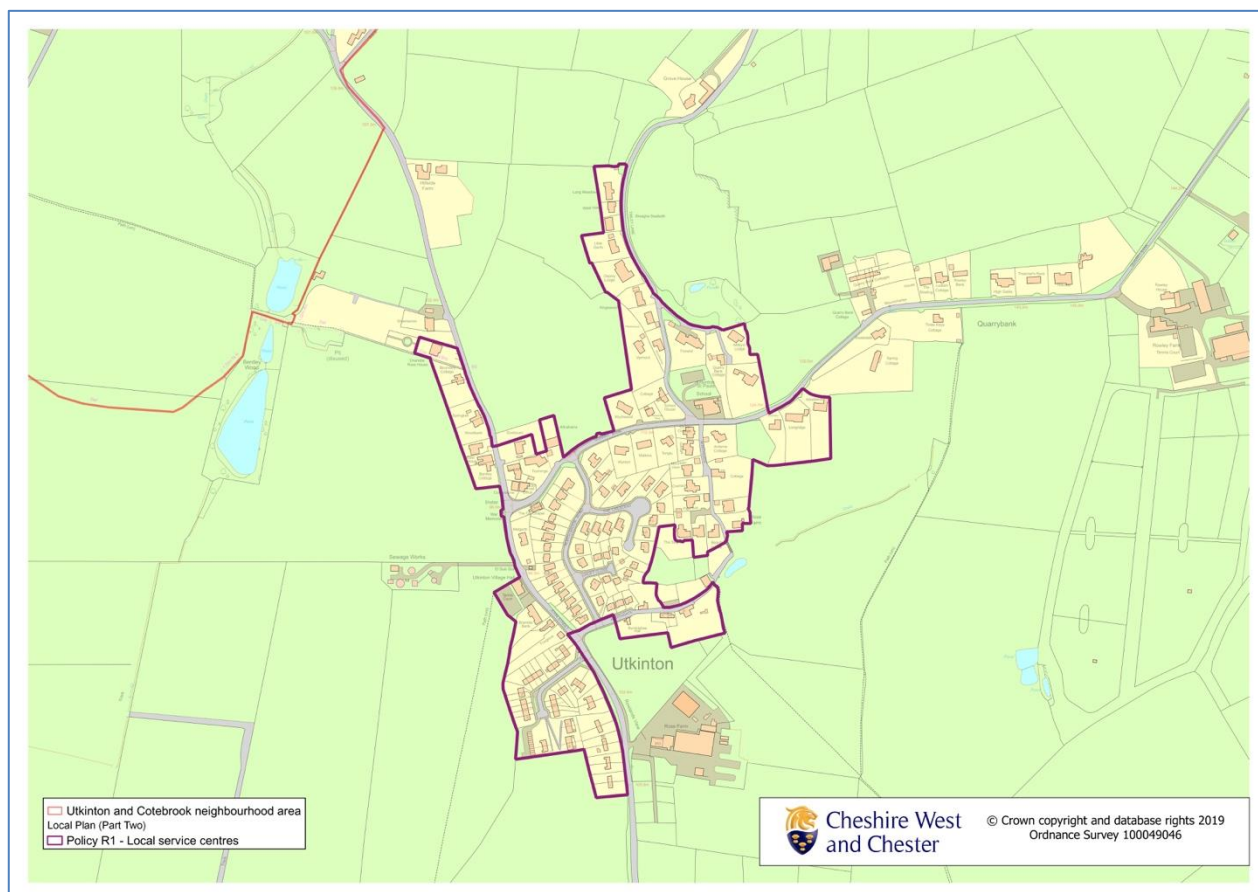
Figure 3: Utkinton Village Settlement Boundary Map - Cheshire West and Chester

INTRODUCTION

"It is nice because it is in the countryside and the air is fresh"
Pupil aged 6 yrs

Rather than people simply being told what to do, the Government believes that local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live. The Localism Act (2011) introduced a new right for communities to draw up a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The Neighbourhood Planning process enables communities to come together through their local Parish Council to better shape their locality and to inform local authorities where new houses, businesses and shops would be of most benefit. It can help to influence the type, style and quality of any development and ensure that the change brings with it local benefit. Neighbourhood Plans can be very simple or can involve considerable detail.

Provided that a Neighbourhood Plan has regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and is in general conformity with strategic policies for the wider area set by the Local Authority, local residents will be able to vote on it in a referendum. If a majority vote "yes", the Local Authority must 'adopt' the 'Made Plan' and it will form part of the Statutory Development Plan for that area. The NDP has the same legal status as the Local Plan once it has been approved at referendum. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan intends to make the Parish an even better place to live, visit and work in, now and for future generations. It is hoped that the Plan will be adopted formally in 2020 and will run to 2030 but it will be reviewed after 5 years.

LOCATION AND HISTORY

"Everyone is friendly and you get to know them well"
Pupil aged 9

The Parish of Utkinton and Cotebrook is situated in West Cheshire, nine miles from the City of Chester and lies between the two 'Key Service Centres' of Kelsall and Tarporley.

The landscape of the Parish is characterised by the Cheshire Plain, a gently rolling pastoral landscape separating the Tarporley Sandstone Ridge from the Clwydian range of hills in North Wales. It lies on the watershed separating the Rivers Dee and Mersey.

History, tradition and stability play an important part in the life of the Parish and both Cotebrook and Utkinton can claim a long history with the latter being cited in an entry in King William's Domesday Book of 1086. It has been variously named Utkgnton, Hutkynton, Hudekintona and Utkyngton but its current name goes back many hundreds of years. Some historians also believe that John Street formed part of the border between territory held by the Danes and that of the English King Alfred.

Cotebrook has also been in existence for a number of centuries, becoming part of the Civil Parish of Utkinton Parish in 1866. The 'Fox & Barrel' has been a public house since at least 1770 and possibly dates from 100 years earlier as a property. Meanwhile the 'Alvanley Arms' is even older, proudly boasting of its origin as a 16th century coaching inn. However, the village name formerly only came into being in 1866. The name was derived from the area where sheep were 'coted' prior to being washed in the small stream. Some older records show the spelling as Cote-Brook. Previously it was known as Utkinton-cum-Rushton, reflecting its location and importance between those two places. The old Rectory for the church was designed by John Douglas, known as Cheshire's 'favourite architect' due to the numerous fine buildings he designed in the county.

The longevity of the two villages gives the Parish its distinctive feel with many historic buildings. Chief among them is Utkinton Hall, former home of the Done family. This imposing edifice is still large today but when it was built, in Elizabethan times, it was four times its current size. Other 17th century buildings include Yew Tree cottage in Eaton Lane, The Bailiff's House Hall Lane and Fishers Green Farmhouse together with its former Stables. The Water Mill on Mill Lane and Fox Bank Cottages are historic buildings with interesting architectural features.

The Parish is at the very heart of Cheshire West, roughly equidistant from the main conurbations of Chester, Nantwich and Northwich. Utkinton is to the west of the Parish and Cotebrook to the east and over two thirds of the residents live in the former. Unclassified country lanes that offer walking, cycling and riding with extensive views of the surrounding farmland and attractive countryside generally services the area. This is especially true when viewed from the top of the Sandstone Ridge that bisects the Parish.

As with all long-established settlements, there have been various developments over time, but a visitor returning to the Parish after thirty years absence would see very little change, apart perhaps from the increased volume and speed of the traffic through the villages.

The Parish is dominated by quiet, narrow country lanes, which still serve as arteries for the busy farming community. The major route through the Parish is the A49, which runs north to south through the village of Cotebrook and connects with the A51. It is an old coach road, which is now used for traffic travelling between Tarporley and Northwich, although it serves a wider area and is a busy road. The Parish is bisected by the B5152, which connects the busy towns of

Frodsham and Whitchurch, increasing traffic flow through quiet rural lanes. Most traffic in Utkinton is local and connects the villages of Tarporley, Willington, Kelsall and Tarvin via John Street. The area is overwhelmingly tranquil, which is reflected by the designation of 20mph speed limits in the centre of Utkinton.

Within the Parish, there are no physical boundaries such as railway lines or rivers although there are a number of streams and natural landscape features including the Tarporley Sandstone Ridge, which contribute to the area being an Area of Special County Value (Delamere/Utkinton ASCV).

Land use in the Parish is predominantly for grazing and arable farming outside the village of Utkinton and largely residential within the Village Settlement Boundary of Utkinton and the village of Cotebrook. There are two small pockets of retail outlets, one in Utkinton and one in Cotebrook. The largest is Rose Farm Shop in Utkinton which includes a Post Office, and which has subsidiary retail outlets of a Cafe, Flower shop, Gift shop and hand car wash plus a few commercial enterprises.

Figure 4 - Quarry Bank and the pond below High Billinge - Andrew Loughran

CONSULTATION AT THE HEART OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

"I like it at Utkinon (sic) *is because we are a nice little school and we all care for each other"*
Pupil aged 10yrs

The Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan expresses the choices reflected in questionnaires, meetings and discussions across the Parish based on community wide consultation over a period of three years and consolidated by the responses to the 'Visions and Objectives' questionnaire.

"What Utkinton and Cotebrook will be like in the next 10 years?";
- A sustainable, thriving and prosperous community that support a high quality of life for all its residents.
- A distinctive and flourishing settlement that exhibits charm, vitality and dynamism.
- Adaptable to climate change and with reduced carbon dependence
- An area with a high-quality natural environment and protected wildlife interests.
- Change that will be for the long-term benefit of the whole community."

However, the foundation for this began somewhat earlier, with the writing of the 'Parish Plan' (see Appendix A) in 2013. Whilst not a statutory document it allowed the community to begin to look at how it would develop in the future and indicated that any future strategy should:
- Enhance local distinctiveness that contributes to a sense of place and community
- Retain and enhance hedges, ponds, woodlands, streams, geological features and promote and extend wildlife corridors
- Emphasise that large areas of new housing are out of character with the gradual historic growth that characterises the Parish
- Ensure that the design of buildings should be appropriate to the setting of adjacent buildings
- Ensure that views and vistas remain an integral part of the Parish character
- Ensure that new buildings do not dominate existing historic or listed buildings (see Appendix B)
- Ensure that any new development takes into consideration infrastructure constraints such as the road network and parking

In early 2017, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group began its first round of consultation with a leaflet and questionnaire, asking six basic questions;

- **What do you like about living in the Parish?**
- **Could any of these points be improved?**
- **Is there anything the Parish lacks, or that you dislike?**
- **How would you like to see the Parish evolve over the next 10 - 15 years?**
- **Inevitably, there will be development in the future. What benefits would you like it to bring to the community?**
- **What problems could development cause you?**

These questionnaires were delivered to every household seeking their responses, concerns and hopes for the Parish. Members of the steering group attended Tarporley High School and St. Paul's CofE Primary School and consulted with groups of young students who live within the Parish.

The residents' questionnaire was amended slightly for the business and farming communities, the Church and Utkinton St. Paul's CofE primary school.

A variety of issues were raised, including; housing provision, retaining local facilities, local infrastructure and environmental considerations

With the past work of the Parish Plan and the responses received from questionnaires, public meetings and consultations during the Neighbourhood Plan process, it was possible to identify the main issues that needed to be addressed and that would create a vision for the future.

More detail was required to formulate a strategy that would create that vision. A 'Visions and Objectives' document was drawn up from previous consultations, giving parishioners the opportunity to decide on priorities and more detail.

In October 2018 a copy of this document (see Appendix C) was delivered to every household and as many businesses and groups as were known in the Parish. Respondents were given a six-week period for consultation. At the end of this process 162 (approx. 52%) responses from households containing individuals with ages, ranging from 8 years to 83 years had been completed and the forms returned. The majority of responses indicated clear support for the proposals and from this, the policies and strategies in this Draft Neighbourhood Plan were written.

In addition, information about the Neighbourhood Plan and its progress has been published on the Community website, in 'The Courier', a biannual newsletter published by the Parish Council and in social media, on notice boards and local gathering places.

Figure 5 - The Parish Church 'St John and the Holy Cross' in Cotebrook - John Lord

STRATEGY

"It is quite peaceful"
Pupil aged 11.

As a result of the responses to the 'Visions and Objectives' questionnaire it was possible to identify the issues (see Appendix D) which needed to be addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan. These would form the policies within the Draft Neighbourhood Plan designed to address those concerns.

- **Providing homes that would meet the needs of local people**
- **Protecting the built environment**
- **Provision of increased and better facilities for local people, communications and infrastructure**
- **Supporting the small but developing local economy**
- **Increased and better facilities for local people**
- **Provision of improved public transport**
- **Supporting local distinctiveness within new development**
- **Protecting the unique landscape of the locality and the area**
- **Protect and conserve nature and wildlife in the Parish**

Whilst there is inevitably some overlap within these categories, this reflected concerns over development in and of the Parish that residents have had for many years. Whilst much work has gone into preserving and improving the beauty, peace and natural development of the Parish, historically, these efforts have been on an *ad hoc* basis.

As a response to this, the Parish Council produced "***A Parish Plan for the Villages of Utkinton and Cotebrook"*** (2013). However, this was not able to address adequately the issues of development, diversity and opportunity that are the bedrock of any community regardless of its size. The growth that was envisaged by the pressure of development, economic opportunities and community wellbeing needed to be organic, appropriate and acceptable to residents, visitors and contributors to the rural nature of the Parish and neighbouring area. The opportunity to do this came with the introduction of Neighbourhood Planning in The Localism Act but it has to be recognised that it would be impossible for a Neighbourhood Plan to cover every aspect of change and development of 21st century life in a rural community.

Since 1984**,** there has been no major development in the Parish and as a result, the area has retained its rural, peaceful and agricultural character without detriment to residents, visitors or users of the amenities of the Parish. Whilst residents accept that there will be some development, it is important that the scale be supported by the community, who have stated a desire for 'small scale' development. This is commensurate with the results identified over the years by Housing Needs Surveys, the first in 2006 and the most recent being completed in 2018 by Cheshire Community Action (CCA) on behalf of the Parish Council and Steering Group specifically to inform and assist in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

In setting the wider and more detailed policies in relation to development, landscape and environment, attention has been paid to the ***Landscape Management Strategy*** and ***Built***

Development Guidelines particularly aspects of LCT 2: Sandstone Ridge; LCA 2c and 3a: Eddisbury, from the Cheshire West and Chester Council *Landscape Strategy Part 2,* as well as the responses of the Parishioners.
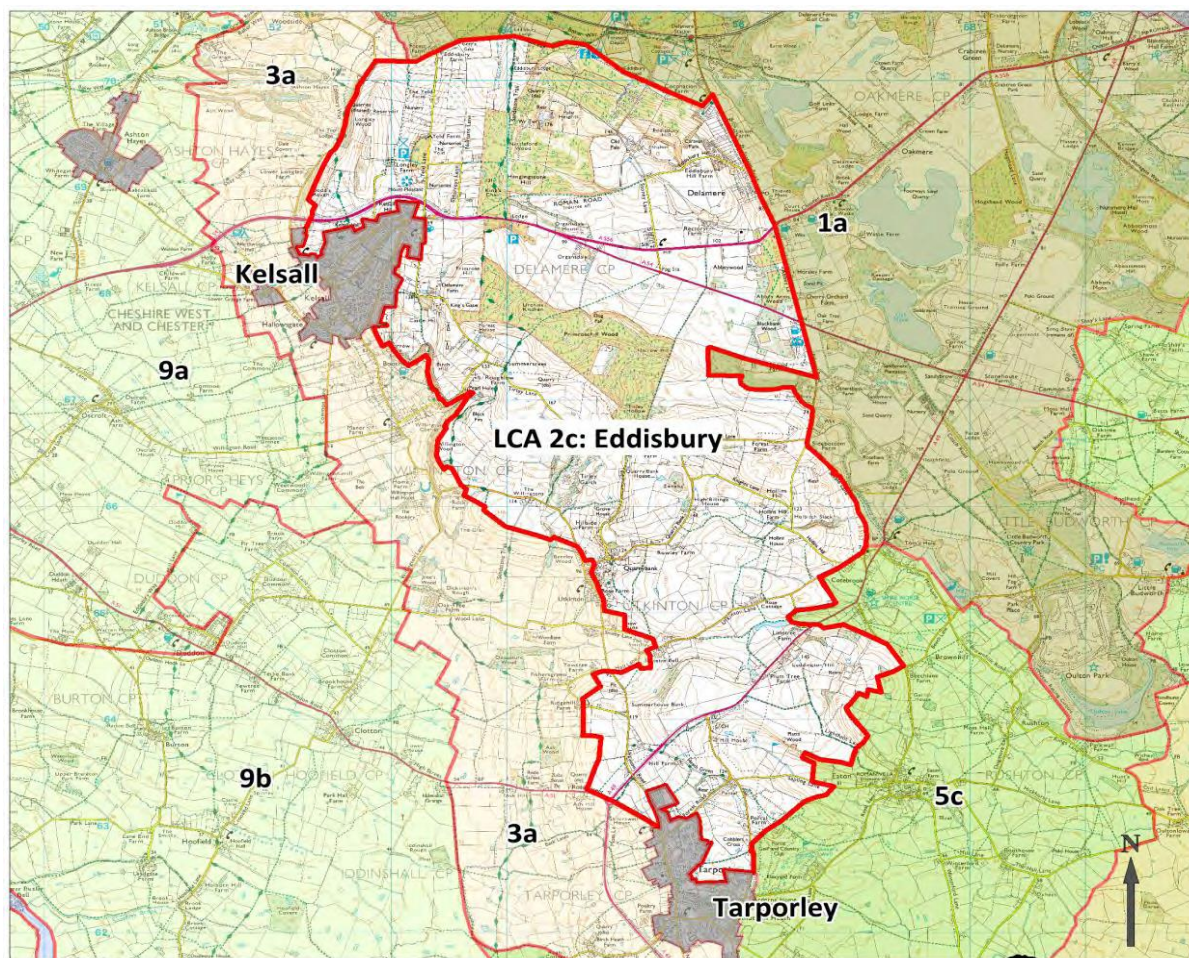
Figure 6 - Extract from Landscape Strategy showing relevant area

The *Landscape Management Strategy* and *Built Development Guidelines* referred to indicate that efforts must be made to:

> *Maintain low density, scattered settlement patterns. Ensuring that conversion of farm buildings is sensitive to the vernacular style of farmsteads.*

> *Ensure new build development is of high-quality design and responds to local materials and styles and throughout pays particular attention to the features which accompany the conversion such as driveways and gardens, ensuring that these features do not 'suburbanise' the landscape.*

> *Maintain panoramic views and ensure new build does not block these views that connect the village with its landscape setting and ensure the ridgeline is particularly sensitive to large scale, or tall, built development.*

Landscape Strategy Part 2, March 2016 Built Development Guidelines p70

This is not an exhaustive list of content in the Guidelines.

The 'Visions and Objectives' document circulated for consideration throughout the Parish addressed the fact that the Parish is situated in two Areas of Special County Value (Delamere/Utkinton and Willington ASCVs). The recently completed report on ASCV (2017) has

updated the requirements related to and necessary to preserve, protect and enhance the Area of Special County Value.

Therefore, proposals for new housing must ensure that the scale and type of housing will comply with any restrictions relevant to that designation. Applications must be based on the availability of suitable land and should ensure that proportionate growth is based on identified need.
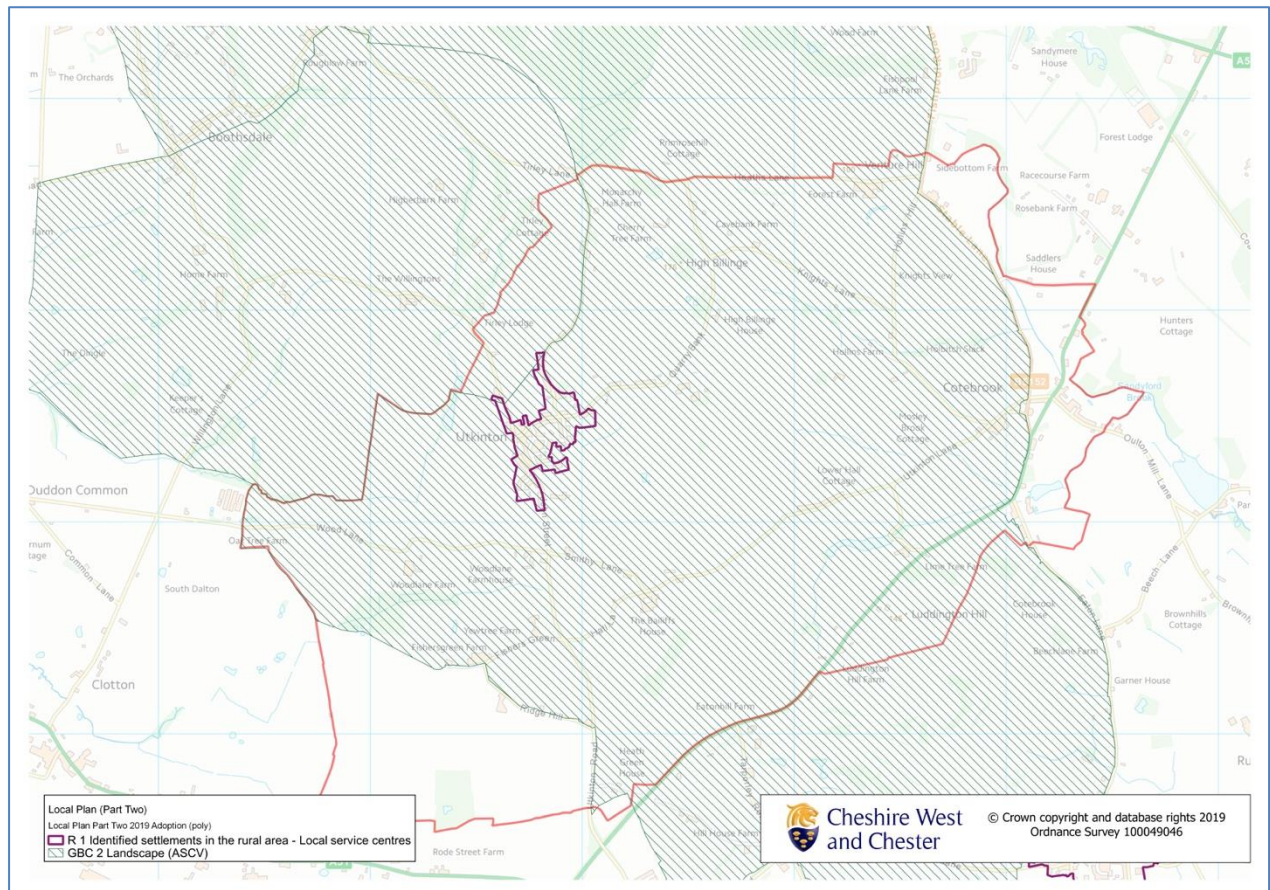
Figure 7 - Showing juxtaposition of Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan Area, Utkinton Settlement Boundary and the ASCVs

The many responses indicated that policies should be formulated to ensure that proposals for new housing should adopt a design and layout that complements the housing stock in the particular area of the Parish in which it is to be built. It is, therefore, important that any new build should complement the existing housing stock creating choice and enabling existing residents to remain within the Parish. Only the most appropriate and suitable materials should be used to maintain the principle of ecological construction and sustainability, ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations.

Homes to meet the needs of local people

The issues Parishioners identified were:

- No desire for major developments in the Parish.
- Small-scale housing development only
- Need for sustainable housing development.
- Better mix of housing (size, tenure and price) wanted
- Satisfy the need for affordable homes.

It is acknowledged that there are a variety of styles throughout the Parish. In part due to the imperative for new homes and volume driven applications. Comments suggested that some modern development is poorly designed and incongruous in a rural setting where features such as whitewashed cottages, thatched roofs, sandstone buildings and walls occur regularly throughout the Parish.

Developers should only consider brownfield or infill sites before applying for other locations and in order to protect the natural environment no new development should adversely affect key distinctive views into or out of the Parish.

Utkinton has recently (2019) been designated as a Local Service Centre (R1 of the Local Plan Part 2) which restricts development both inside and outside the Village Development Boundary. Further, Developers must prove that any project supports the principal objectives of creating Economic, Social and Environmental benefits to the community.

POLICY 1; Housing Location

Small scale new housing development will be supported in principle where it accords with the settlement strategy in the Local Plan. Housing development should be of a scale that is appropriate to the existing character of Utkinton, Cotebrook and the countryside that makes up the Parish.

Within the Utkinton settlement boundary, the following will be supported:

(i)   infill development of one or two dwellings within a small gap in a built-up frontage, which would also apply to development in gardens

(ii)   redevelopment of land, i.e. brownfield sites

(iii)   change of use of suitable buildings and sub-division of existing dwellings

Rural exception sites immediately adjacent to the Utkinton settlement boundary will be supported, where there is evidence of need demonstrated through an independent assessment of housing needs. This should be limited to those with a strong local connection to the Parish.

Within Cotebrook and the countryside, housing proposals for the following will be supported:
- Conversion/re-use of redundant rural buildings that are structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial reconstruction.
- Replacement dwellings, where they are not materially larger than the existing dwelling.
- Reuse or redevelopment of brownfield land in Cotebrook.

All developments should be in-keeping with the rural character of the area.

Explanation:

The approach to housing in the Parish, reflects the CWAC Local Plan which designates Utkinton as a Local Service Centre in the rural area. This allows for infill development together with redevelopment of brownfield land. Small scale proportionate developments of Social Housing on Rural Exception Sites could be supported

The purpose behind the Neighbourhood Planning legislation was to give people the opportunity to influence the nature and future of their community. This document promotes, supports and reflects those principles in the content of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Local Plan has to conform to the NPPF, but the NP only has to have 'general conformity' to the Local Plan.

After much consultation and discussion, residents have concluded that 'some development within the village of Cotebrook' would be appropriate. Indeed, residents and Parish Councillors are worried that Cotebrook will not thrive or indeed have a future without some new residents. If small, specific regeneration areas were to be taken advantage of in the few places where it is possible, it would secure a future for the village and conform to the social and environmental elements of the NPPF.

Those sites, historically considered as 'brownfield' by the majority of residents and Parish Councillors in Cotebrook would have social, economic and environmental benefits. If the Neighbourhood Plan digresses from the Local Plan, it is for the benefit of the residents of Cotebrook whose opinion this document reflects. The Local Plan cannot not suit or benefit all areas. People matter most.

The conversion of rural buildings to housing would only be allowed if the existing buildings are redundant, and the original purpose of the building was not for use ancillary to or incidental to a dwelling house (e.g. a garage). New housing must not result in the loss of buildings that contribute to the rural character of the area, must not result in an unacceptable loss of employment land or buildings, and must not cause an increase in the impact on the character of the countryside than the existing buildings.

Housing development should have good access to regular, timetabled public transport (as proposed in the 'Public Transport' section of this document and within 'Policy 6'), be within reasonable walking distance of a variety of local services and facilities along a safe route. The

development should result in an enhancement of the site and the rural setting, and the design and layout should reflect the rural character of the area and must not urbanise the countryside.

POLICY 2; Built Environment (Housing Style)

All new development should conform to the density and building scale of the immediate area.

In order to meet the housing needs of Utkinton and Cotebrook and to redress the imbalance of current housing stock, new developments should favour smaller dwellings, of three bedrooms or less. A majority of new homes on any development should be limited to one-third detached properties, the rest being bungalows, terraced or semi-detached properties, to accommodate varied needs

Consideration for Live/Work accommodation must be given in any housing application to provide appropriate homes for the future and diversity in the provision of housing within the Parish

Original features of interest must be retained or enhanced, whilst additions should complement or match the character and features of the existing building, particularly in relation to materials and the design of windows and doors.

Applications for new development and for extensions and alterations should include adequate off-road parking. Wherever possible this should be set back from the highway to minimise visual impact.

POLICY 3; Built Environment (Housing Design)

All materials, pitches of roofs, dormers, gable ends, porches and chimneys should blend with the setting and character of existing neighbouring buildings

Materials for all driveways should be permeable and should reflect the context of the rural environment.

Any future development must protect the 'dark skies' with sympathetic lighting. Developers should give details of lighting and lux levels in their Design and Access Statements

Adequate garden space must be provided in new developments with sufficient separation between properties maintained.

Development should not erode the important, predominantly undeveloped gaps between the settlements of Utkinton and Cotebrook

Explanation:

In the 2018 Housing Needs Report, the 2015 MYE (mid-year estimates) put the proportion of elderly (65+) at c.26.6%, which, in statistical terms, reflected the rest of society. It is important that in any community that all needs, desires and tastes should be catered for and that appropriate housing meeting the needs of the community should be provided.

The Housing Policy for the Parish is informed by several Housing Need Surveys (HNS) (Appendix E) which have been conducted over the last twelve years, 2006, 2012/3, 2016 and 2018. The latest of these was run by Cheshire Community Action (CCA). Based on a template approved by Cheshire West and Chester Council this was a definitive and widely accepted Housing Needs Survey that followed national good practice guidance.

The CCA household survey was posted to all households in Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish in January 2018. Residents had six (6) weeks to respond and could return the survey by Freepost. Of the 327 surveys distributed a total of 143 were returned giving an overall **response rate of 44%,** the greatest number of responses CCA have received for such a survey.

CCA carried out data entry and analysed the responses and a Housing Needs Report, funded by Cheshire West and Chester Council was produced (Housing Needs Survey and Report July 2018; Cheshire Community Action). This report is suitable for guiding and informing:

- Rural housing developments, including those by community led housing groups, registered providers (housing associations) and private developers
- Parish and Town Councils
- Communities

The following points summarise the key findings of the Housing Needs Survey (2018):

1. **19 out of 143 (13%) of respondents** said that their current accommodation was unsuitable**.** 9 of these respondents preferred to move out of Utkinton and Cotebrook or stated 'care within the home' would meet their needs. Therefore, the latter were 'filtered out' of the housing need figures.

2. **2x families with children were in need of 3 bed[room] houses** within the next 3 years, preferring discount market homes for sale.

3. **1x single older person (over 75) wished to downsize** from a 5+ bed house within the next 3 years and was capable of open market purchase by releasing capital from current home sale.

4. **3x older couples (over 65) looking to downsize or move to ground level access** property (1 within a year, and 2 within 4-5 years). 2 of the couples would prefer open market purchase and 1 said they would prefer a discount market home for sale.

5. **2x adult couples (18-29) wishing to move into starter homes and to stay close to college,** 1 within the next year and another within 4-5 years. Both would prefer market purchase, but one couple would consider discounted market home for sale.

6. **2x single adults wishing to move within the next 3 years** - 1 starter home to move out of parental home preferring open market purchase and the other wishes to upsize into a private rental home.

LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE

"I like it because it is not crowded"
Pupil aged 10

The Parish has limited facilities when compared to modern conurbations. They are barely adequate but are supported by residents of both villages, some of whom work hard to maintain those we have and those we aspire to make available.

The village of Utkinton has a small tennis court and multi-sport area, but apart from a play area dedicated to the primary school, there are no other outdoor play or recreational areas.

Cotebrook has no play or recreational facilities. The 'play area' that had been built was dismantled some time ago, because of lack of use and the equipment falling into a state of disrepair. However, the need for recreational /play facilities was acknowledged in the Cheshire West and & Chester document **'Local Play Improvement Framework 2016 to 2030'** which stated that the parish *'has no play or recreational facilities'*.

The Steering Group would also reference 'Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Study 2016 – 2030; Open Space Area Profile: Rural Part 2 of 2 (Final Version March 2017) that highlights the lack of public open spaces across Tarporley Ward.

The village halls in both Utkinton and Cotebrook, St. John's Church in Cotebrook and the Primary School in Utkinton are well supported, providing varied events, classes and functions sufficient to encourage and enable social engagement for all ages and interests.

Cotebrook Village Hall has recently been extensively refurbished due to very successful local efforts to raise money.

Improvement and renovation are constantly undertaken in Utkinton Village Hall by willing volunteers and grant aid payments donated by WREN (since changed to FCC Communities Foundation in April 2019). There is an ongoing programme of improvement to the facilities, to which the public have access, throughout the Parish.

It is apparent, that any development in the Parish will have an impact on the facilities and leisure pursuits of residents so developers must explain what that impact will be and how it can be ameliorated, or facilities improved and provided by the developer. A larger extended community should not mean residents, by virtue of increased demand, losing access to amenities resulting in a reduced quality of life, and indeed, possible health problems. It follows that community buildings, schools and the Church should be supported.

The respondents have identified several community and recreational facilities which they wish to protect and improve (see Policy 4):

There is a lack of off-road parking particularly at the Primary School in Utkinton and traffic congestion is experienced there on a daily basis. This is reflected at the Village Hall where parking off road is very limited; the Management Committee is seeking to address this latter situation.

Although limited off road parking is provided, similar congestion occurs at the Cotebrook pre-school location where there is no roadside parking due to the nature of the B5152 (Stable Lane.)

Better facilities for local people

The issues Parishioners identified were:

- Maintain and, wherever possible, extend community and social facilities.
- Encourage clubs, societies and other recreational facilities
- Provide better facilities for young people
- Support elderly residents in the community

The sites listed below are valued by the Community for their amenity and/or recreational value. They should not be harmed or lost through development except in cases of replacement, improvement or addition. All efforts will be made to maintain and ensure support for continued

The following policy has been created to ensure that the Parish retains these important facilities.

POLICY 4: Community/Building Assets

Schemes to provide adequate parking for community buildings will be supported

The creation of new play and recreational facilities for all ages will be explored and supported where appropriate, these include but are not limited to;

a) The Parish Council will explore with Cheshire West and Chester the acquisition/transfer and use of the land at the rear of Woodlands Close, Cotebrook for the purpose of providing a community orchard and public picnic space.

Further the Parish Council and relevant management committees would seek to improve the facilities at:

b) Utkinton Village Hall and multisport area (Owned by the Arderne Trust and held on lease by the WI and the Village Hall Committee).

c) Cotebrook Village Hall (Owned by The Trustees).

d) Utkinton St. Paul's C of E Primary School (Leased from CWaC Education)

e) Playing field opposite the above School (rented from CWaC who lease this from Chester Diocese)

f) St. John and the Holy Cross Church (Church of England – Chester Diocese)

Explanation:

These policies are aligned to the strategic policies of the Local plan (Part One) SOC6 Health and Well Being that seek to meet the health and well-being needs of residents.

Strategic policies support opportunities for the borough's recreation and leisure offer, meeting the requirements of different groups in the community (SOC5). They also seek to protect, manage and enhance existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities (SOC6).

Three of the sites identified in Policy 4 on Community/Building assets are sites owned by Village Hall Trustees and, or CWaC and are not defined as 'open space' in the Local Plan 2; Utkinton Village Hall multi-sport area; Utkinton school playing field and Cotebrook Village Hall amenity space.

Through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions, the Parish Council will seek to make improvements to the play/recreational facilities for use by all residents.

The Parish Council will explore with Cheshire West and Chester the acquisition and use of land to the rear of Woodlands Close, Cotebrook, for the purposes of providing a community orchard and public picnic space.

Further information is provided in chapter 'Open Spaces' related to the sections of the Plan and relevant Policies on Local Green Spaces and on Open Spaces

Supporting the Local Economy

There is a growing number of children within the Parish, some of whom will undoubtedly wish to remain and work in the area after leaving school. The area is dominated by agriculture, whilst services and other business interests are growing. There are a number of businesses in the Parish, many of whom employ residents and local people where possible. In the main, they are part of the visible service sector, retail outlets and construction.

An increasing number of residents in the Parish are engaged in remote working or run businesses from home and that trend will increase. Business opportunities for those people must not be jeopardised by poor or intermittent communication via the internet or mobile phones which can be problematic in too many areas of the Parish. Regardless of assurances and claims made by the organisations responsible, anecdotal evidence suggests the services in some areas of the Parish are poor. Examples of this is the upper reaches of Tirley Lane, Heaths Lane, Knights Lane and Quarry Bank that are currently serviced from Kelsall and rarely achieve above 2 mbps.

Parishioners identified the following issues in the 'Visions and Objectives' questionnaire which are covered in Policies 5 (Local Economy) and 6 (Communication) or lack of it can severely affect the viability of the local economy. There is also a need to ensure that new development is an appropriate scale and type to fit within the strategic policies for the LSC or countryside.

- Improve local employment opportunities
- Provide more jobs for young people
- Support for those working from home
- Poor mobile phone / broadband coverage

The Parish Council recognise that, as part of 'Supporting Local Economy', it has a responsibility toward local business and ventures which meet the above criteria. An integral part of its role within this Neighbourhood Plan is to examine positively all opportunities to increase employment within the Parish particularly those highlighted above.

POLICY 5: Local Economy

a) Applications for development or change of use of buildings relating to agricultural, retail, tourism or leisure use must have the need specified by the applicant.

b) All new development should respect the character of its surroundings by way of its scale and design, not harm the surrounding landscape and safeguard residential amenity and road safety.

c) All applications to create new business premises must include adequate off-road parking facilities. Wherever possible this should be set back from the highway frontage to minimise visual impact.

Communication

Broadband service to the Parish is increasingly important.

A report on Broadband coverage, suggests that;

> '… 81.8% lines in the constituency are capable of receiving superfast speeds (over 30 Mbps) as of May 2017. This has increased from 74.0% since 2016. Full fibre, which offers very high speeds, is available to 2.5% of premises in the area. Speeds above 30 Mbps are currently being received by 37.6% of connections in the area, which is lower than 82% of constituencies in the UK.'
>
> "Broadband Connectivity and Speeds in Eddisbury" (House of Commons Library)

There are scant statistics available for broadband coverage within the Parish and therefore we may have a lower upload/download speed than other parts of the Constituency. Some extremities of the two villages, Cotebrook and Utkinton, are serviced by exchanges that are at the limit of the distance for 'Broadband', e.g., the residents of Tirley Lane from Grove House to Heaths Lane and Knights Lane are served from Kelsall. The distance is some 3.3km and deemed technically difficult to service.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that coverage is insufficient and still too slow to sustain the growing number of people who work from home. Broadband provision, though improved in localised areas, is still far behind the levels needed or expected and there is strong support for an enhanced service for a Parish, that whilst rural is hardly remote. It will increase business opportunities, personal communications and local information flow to the outlying residents.

It is noted that the infrastructure to support extensions of the 'Fibre to the home' (FTTH) network has been put in place during early 2020 and the Parish Council will do all it can to ensure that these extensions enable its residents to enjoy increased Broadband Speeds and this should further enhance 'remote working' and local business across the Parish as an whole.

POLICY 6: Broadband

a)   New developments must make provision for high-speed Broadband.

b)   The development of advanced high-quality communications infrastructure, including high-speed broadband, will be supported, subject to:

- development being kept to a minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network

- any development being sympathetic to its surroundings and camouflaged where appropriate.

Figure 8 - The Alvanley Arms (Jeff Buck) Dating from mid 17th Century

Figure 9 - The Fox and Barrel, Cotebrook (Stephen McKay) Dating from mid 17th Century

TRANSPORT

"I would change the road speed limit so cars drive a bit slower and more careful and a proper pavement so it is safe to walk along and maybe a shop to get little things from".
Pupil Aged 10yrs

Roads, other than the A49, are predominantly country lanes and unsuitable for the density of modern traffic flows. Together with cars and commercial vehicles, there are many different users of the roads; pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and slow-moving agricultural vehicles. In many areas within the Parish, there are no pavements, lighting or road markings and there is an exponential increase in the number of leisure cyclists on roads that are not suitable for such use due to the poor condition and reduced maintenance of many of them.

Due to its landscape, development history, and physical constraints, the road network in Utkinton and Cotebrook does not interconnect well to encourage alternative travel methods. As a result, driving tends to be more prevalent than would be expected for these small settlements. The unhappy result is that quiet country lanes, once arteries for small farms, are being used by traffic travelling within, between and to the larger villages and 'A' roads, are now busier and increasingly dangerous.

Mapping indicates that the Parish as a whole comprises approximately 15 miles (24km) of roads of all classification and types and of these, only the stretch of 'A' road, the A49 between its northern boundary at Cotebrook and the southern one on Luddington Hill/Tarporley Road, a total of 0.8 miles, has a 40 mph limit.

The proportions of road classification are:

Table 1 - Current Speed Limits within Utkinton and Cotebrook

Speed Limit (mph)	Road Classification (distances in miles)					Tot Distance - miles	% of distance
	A	B	C	N	U		
20					0.64	0.64	4.20%
30					1.36	1.36	9.00%
40	0.8					0.8	5.20%
50	0.1					0.1	0.60%
60	1.2	0.9	0.9	1.7	7.49	12.19	80.00%
Grand Total	**2.1**	**0.9**	**0.9**	**1.7**	**9.49**	**15.09**	
Percentage by class	**13.9%**	**5.9%**	**5.9%**	**11.3%**	**62.9%**		
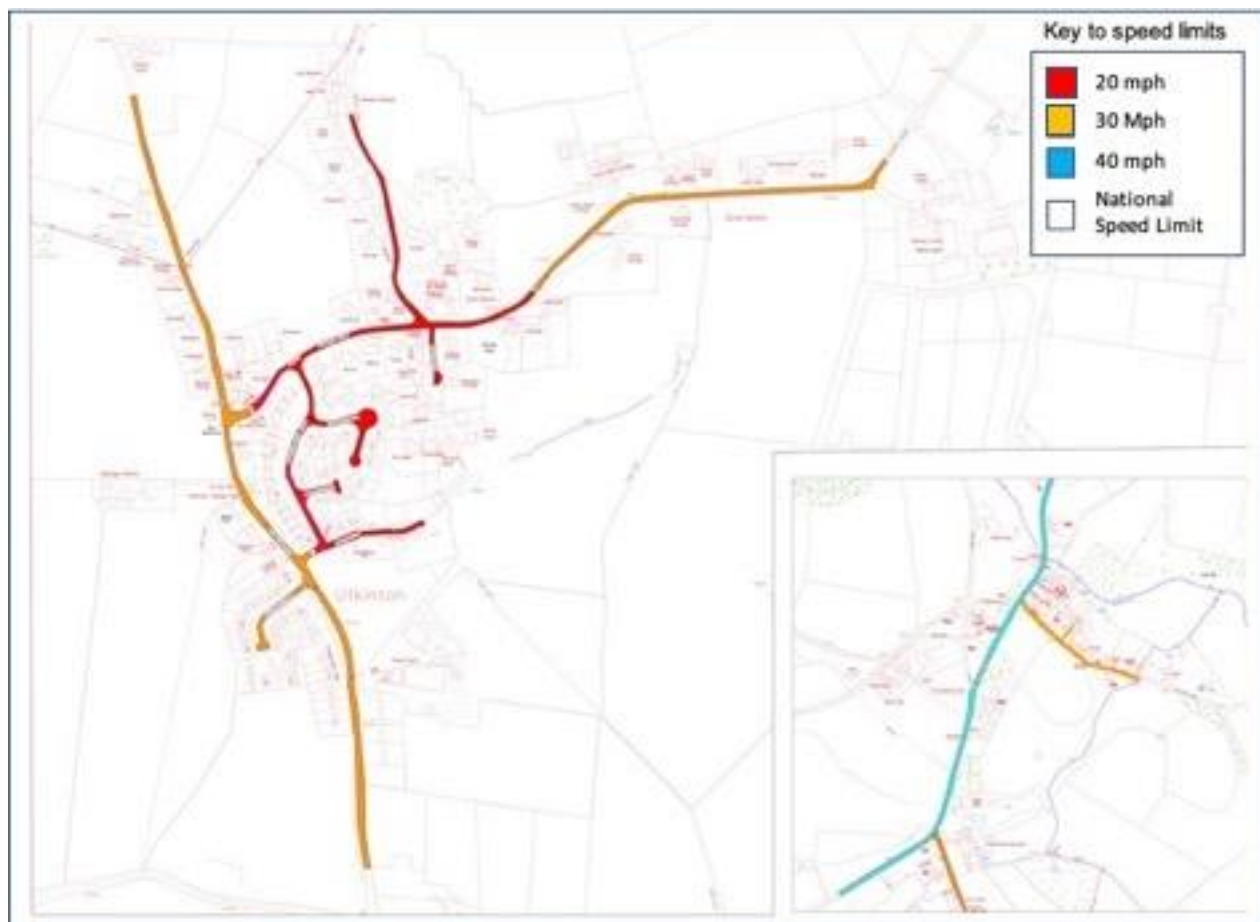
Figure 10 - Current speed limits within Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish (January 2020)

The A49, which is a main arterial route through Cheshire, remains a major issue for Cotebrook residents trying to move around the village. The increased traffic flow, size and speed of vehicles, despite the partial 40 mph speed limit, is further exacerbated by the lack of a pavement along a third of its length through the village.

Transport and Highways Infrastructure

The issues Parishioners identified were:

- Need for more footways / pavements
- Traffic issues, i.e. speeding and density of traffic
- Availability of public transport

Roads and topography, with the added constraint of adjacent grazing and agricultural land, mean there is very limited land available for any development which is appropriate, well located and benefits from good road access and amenities. Residents have expressed strong preferences that such sites are used to benefit the community, for example for facilities, rather than for housing development. This accords with national and local policy guidance that location and design of development should be considered in order to minimise car journeys, encourage pedestrian and cycle movements, and increase inclusiveness and quality of life.

Safe and convenient access by walkers, horse riders and cyclists to our countryside is considered a top priority by national and local government. Indeed, part of the National Cycle Network

(NCW71) runs through Utkinton, along Utkinton Lane, up the A49 to Basfords Lane and thence to Northwich. Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish residents and visitors consider it no less a priority. Improvements to our existing network of footpaths and pavements are a necessity and the need for a pavement alongside the entire length of the A49, within the Parish boundary, has been highlighted for many years. There is also support for a footpath or cycleway to be created between Tarporley and Utkinton, which would improve pedestrian access both ways, reduce car use and improve road safety.

The lack of these footpaths isolates many residents of both villages. Younger, older and less-able residents, who do not have access to any means of transport, mention the problems of a lack of a footpath regularly and vehemently and cannot understand why one cannot be provided. Whilst the provision of such a footpath is problematical in terms of cost and land ownership, residents have insisted that efforts must continue.

There is no complete footpath between Utkinton and Cotebrook.

A paved footpath from the centre of Cotebrook to Tarporley is discontiguous for a distance of 0.3 miles between Oulton Mill Lane to the Alvanley Arms.

POLICY 7; Footpaths, cycleways and highways

Development proposals affecting the public rights of way (PROW) and the cycle network, as shown on Figure 11 will be supported where:

a) they promote access, usage and maintenance of the PROW and cycle network

b) the route is protected, enhanced and where possible improves safety for users

c) Signage and gateways are in-keeping with the rural environment

d) it would not lead to the loss or degradation of existing routes.

The construction of new tracks, paths or links to existing routes is encouraged where;

e) It is appropriate and sensitive to the character of the locality and surrounding area

f) It provides easy, accessible traffic free routes for non-motorised users (including pedestrians, disabled people, people with prams, cyclists or equestrians)

All new developments should provide safe access and take account of the needs of non-motorised users. Measures to improve community safety should be taken, including the separation of separation of pedestrians/cyclists from vehicular traffic or improved signage.

The following long-term sustainable transport projects are priorities for the Parish and will be supported:

1. A footpath/pavement between Utkinton/Tarporley
2. A footpath/pavement between Utkinton/Cotebrook
3. A footpath between the A49 and Woodlands Close in Cotebrook
4. The completion of the missing section of the footpath/pavement between the junctions of Oulton Mill Lane and Eaton Road that link Cotebrook and Tarporley

Financial contributions to deliver local transport projects will be sought where appropriate, through Section 106 contributions or the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Key to Figure 11:
- Extent of Neighbourhood Plan area
- PROW
- National Cycleway
- Bridleway
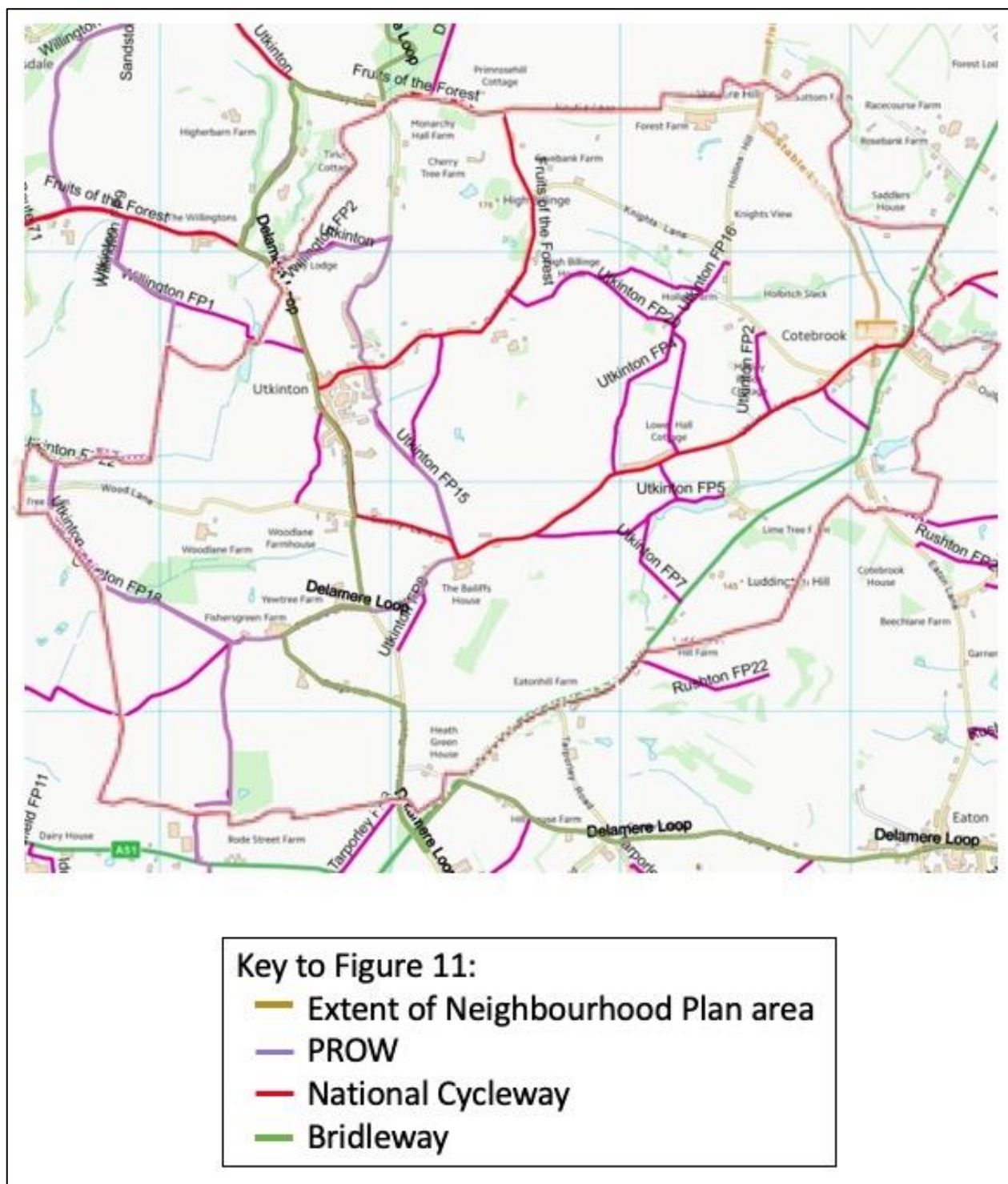
Figure 11 - Existing Footpaths, PROW and National Cycleways through the Parish

Explanation:

Through its policies the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to improve safety on the rural lanes and roads across the parish and recognises that this is a concern for non-motorised users (riders, pedestrians, walkers and cyclists). Hazards, such as the increase in vehicle number can arise from new developments such as residential, agricultural buildings or commercial use.

Improved access to the countryside and public rights of way network can provide health, environmental and economic benefits to the community as well as improved safety for a range of users. It is a local priority to deliver the long-term transport projects identified in the policy.

These will be supported, promoted and pursued by the Parish Council with the support of the local ward councillor and relevant landowners. Indeed, consultation has already begun with the respective landowners in relation to the footpath/pavement between Utkinton/Tarporley.

The Neighbourhood Plan and the Parish Council acknowledge the importance of the strategic recreational routeways that run through the Parish (the Sandstone Trail and the Delamere Loop). Both of these are well used by locals as well as visitors and provide key viewpoints and links to the rural landscape character. The network as covered in Figure 11 (above) shows, in detail, how the PROW, National Cycle ways and Bridle paths together with historic footpaths can add to the connectivity of the communities within the Neighbourhood Plan.
Many of these footpaths, cycleways and highways are intrinsic to the 'enjoyment' of the Parish. They are, to an extent, linked in the section on 'Vistas and Viewpoints' that shows how they are accessed visibly from many of the rural lanes that abound throughout the Parish. This section also recognises the importance of the Sandstone Trail (which fringes the NP Area to the North and West) and the Delamere Loop that passes directly through the village of Utkinton – both of these bring substantial numbers of visitors to the Parish.

Public Transport

Some residents, particularly young people and the elderly, can feel trapped in the villages with movement very restricted by the lack of public transport. Timetabled bus services were withdrawn from the Parish between 2013 and 2014 and since then, Utkinton and Cotebrook have been serviced via Community Transport.

CWaC changed the structure of these services in spring 2018 and the following are currently available:

- 'Community Car Service' (previously 'Tarporley Shuttle'): Monday, Wednesday, Friday (09:30 – 14:30)
- 'Community Bus Service': Utkinton – Cheshire Oaks: Tuesday, Thursday (09:30 – 14:30)
- 'Rural Rider' (run by Cheshire Community Development Trust)
    - o Northwich: Wednesday   09:30 – 12:30
    - o Winsford: Wednesday   13:30 – 15:30
- In addition, a local retail shop (Rose Farm) provides a subsidised service from Tarporley to Utkinton on Thursday that requires travellers to book and costs £2.00. The shop is seeking to expand this service across the Ward and to other villages to increase footfall.

The first three services, above, require booking 24-hours prior to travel, both the 'Community Bus Service' and 'Rural Rider' allow concessionary fares for residents who are 'members' but this is simply not sufficient to fulfil present and future demand.

The need for regular bus services across the Parish to connect to other nearby service centres such as Chester are seen as vital to improving the quality of life for residents, particularly the younger and older members. The surveys conducted as part of the Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan provided an insight into what residents might require and the degree of isolation and lack of sustainability of the Parish in terms of transport infrastructure.

The initial NDP Survey in 2017 asked residents a number of questions relating to aspects of life in the Parish. In terms of Public Transport, there were 103 respondents who were critical of the lack of public transport. CWaC Transport Commissioning Team commissioned a survey across the Ward for which there were 22 responses that showed:

- Many respondents said that they were not aware of these schemes and they need to be promoted more
- That it (they) is a valuable service for people who do not drive and helps to reduce isolation, and some said that the service(s) provided a lifeline in rural communities
- The service needs to be increased (both in terms of the number of days and the times that it runs) as the times on offer are not suitable for the whole community e.g. younger people travelling to school, commuters, those wanting to travel to the hospital for visiting times etc.
- Some commented on the lack of reliable, commercially operated public transport in their local area and wanted more to be done to improve this
- A small number commented on the community car scheme specifically; saying they wanted this service to be increased and that they didn't want to service to be cut.

This survey is being supplemented by a detailed, Ward-wide survey sponsored by the current Ward Councillor and will be a full household survey of all c.2,300 households and also available online. This will determine the scope and scale of the need for the future. The results from this will be available from mid-Spring 2020 and will be used to inform decisions about the future of any local transport service.

For the purposes of clarity and to demonstrate the 'remote' nature of the two villages in the Parish:

Utkinton lies:

- 1.7 miles from the nearest bus route (Service 84, Burton Square, Tarporley)
- 1.9 miles from Tarporley Health Centre
- 2.2 miles from Dentists
- 4.2 miles from the nearest Railway Station (Delamere – to Chester and Manchester)

Cotebrook lies:

- 2.4 miles from the nearest bus route (Service 84, Burton Square, Tarporley)
- 2.6 miles from Tarporley Health Centre
- 3.0 miles from Dentists
- 3.2 miles from the nearest Railway Station (Delamere)

Some of the above are accessible by existing Community Transport (CT) but due to their timings (i.e. between 09:30 and 14:30) they are not accessible to the vast majority of residents seeking to get to work, educational facilities and health appointments, or for leisure purposes outside the Parish. This increases the usage of private cars and taxis and precludes all but those who are members of the Community Transport schemes from 'normal' activities outside the two communities. By definition, it will increase the propensity of younger families against settling in the Parish.
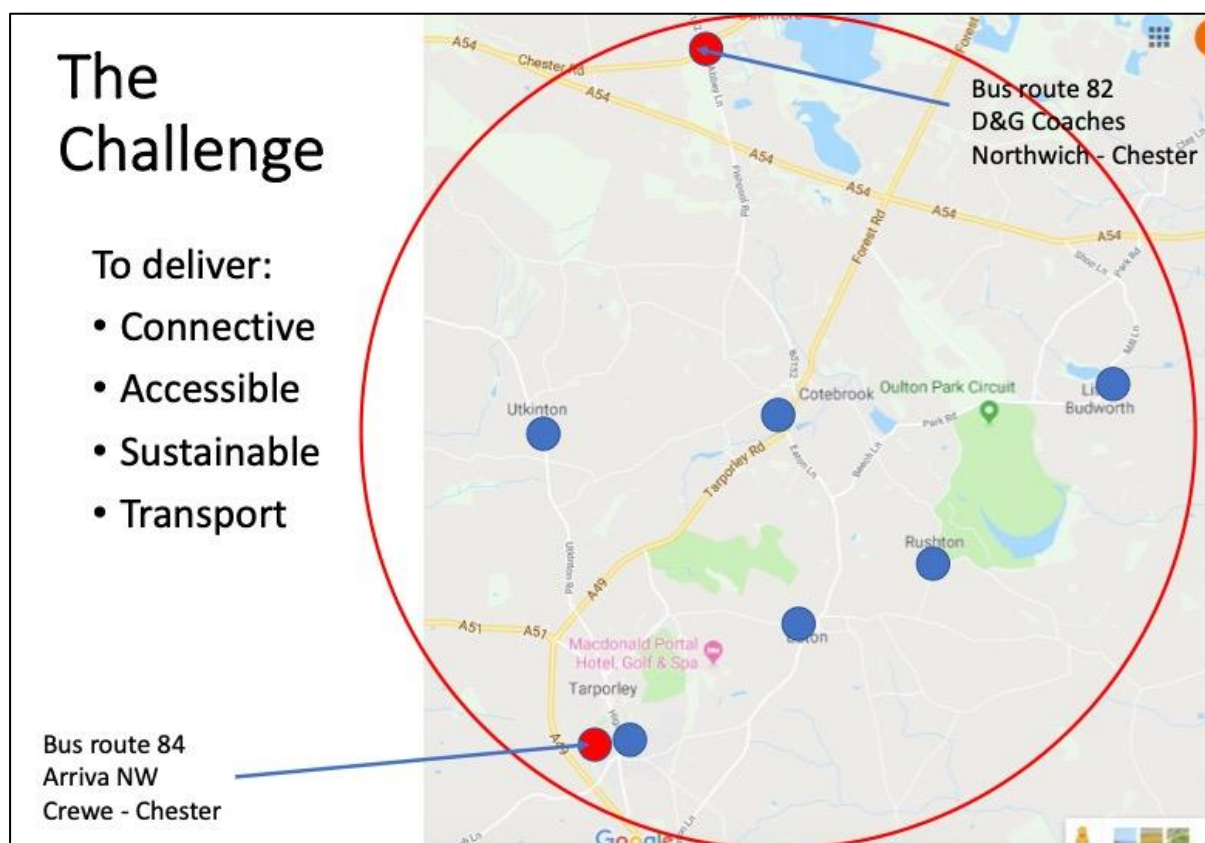
Figure 12 - Diagram showing the challenges for connecting the four parishes and key bus services

The perceived issues relating to these Community Transport services is that they are only available in the periods between the use of vehicular resources being utilised for early morning and afternoon school runs. Their timing is based on the availability of vehicles and drivers rather than the needs of the residents who might use them. CWaC use of the term 'Community Transport' in our context is for over 80s or disabled residents. A charge is payable and concessionary bus passes are not, generally, accepted.

Recently Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish Council has combined with other Parishes in the Tarporley Ward (Little Budworth, Eaton/Rushton, Tarporley and Tiverton) to discuss a proposed service providing a connection for residents to the existing '84' Service (provided currently by Arriva Bus) This has not yet been endorsed by CWaC and it is recognised that there is no existing budget for such a proposal. should sufficient demand be identified then the Parish, together with the other Parishes in the Ward would seek to find methods of funding such a service. The '84' and '82' services run between Chester and Crewe and Northwich and Chester and the shuttle service is to be based on three circular routes to take in the villages between 07:00 and 19:00 Monday – Friday. The feasibility and viability of such a service is being tested but the case for the residents of the Parish will be the primary rationale. The diagram below shows the possible coverage of each 'circular' service taking in Tiverton residents for whom the recent (April 2018) withdrawal of funding for the '83' service by Cheshire East has created problems.

Figure 13 - Three possible routes to connect all parishes and all main transport modes

In a recent CWaC Consultation of Local Service Centres (LSC), Utkinton was designated as an LSC whereas Cotebrook was not. This decision could have a longer-term impact on the provision of services with a consequent targeting for development – without the necessary transport infrastructure to support it.

POLICY 8; Transport

a) All developments that generate significant amount of vehicle movements must be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment to be produced by an independent consultant.

b) Developers will be required to identify the realistic level of traffic which development proposals are likely to generate, and to consider the impact of additional traffic on other road users and pedestrian safety. This assessment should include steps to mitigate the harmful effects together with a timetable to deliver the mitigation.

c) Other than the A49, roads in Cotebrook require some investigation vis-à-vis safety and use by HGV Traffic.

d) The installation of appropriate village gateways and suitable signage on the main access routes to Utkinton and Cotebrook will be supported.

Whilst the policy at (c) may seem excessive and unnecessary, the argument of residents is that through traffic creates problems due to speed and the arbitrary boundaries for the imposed speed limit does not really take into account the fact that vehicles travel throughout the parish roads to get to their destinations without consideration for varying speed limits This is exacerbated by an increase in traffic at drop off and pick up times at St. Paul's Primary school and Cotebrook pre-school. The safety of children and other road users does not begin or end at some boundary designated by theoretical application.

> *'Fatal and serious crashes are much more likely on urban and rural roads compared with motorways. In 2017, there were 9,134 fatal and serious injury crashes on rural roads. This is approximately 30% of the total fatal and serious injury crashes in that year.'*
>
> ***Direct Line and BRAKE report on Safe Driving - Speed 2018***

As previously stated, the lanes are much used by cyclists, walkers, horse riders and residents. Where there are no pavements as such in many of the lanes, danger to these people and animals is increased dramatically.

Utkinton may not have a main road, but it suffers from similar problems to other rural villages. The route from Tarporley through the village and out to Willington and the Key Service Centre of Kelsall has a 60-mph limit for much of its length, only dropping to 30 mph after the Wood Lane crossroads to the Parish Boundary. Local observation suggests that cars travel at speeds well above those that could be considered safe or legal. There are similar problems in Cotebrook, where HGV's and the density of traffic exacerbate the situation. Whilst there are speed signs, there is little to indicate vehicles are entering a rural village.

Given the danger created, anything that may reduce it must be considered.

Village Gateways are one form of speed reducing measure because they not only give the impression of a road narrowing, but the siting of gates close to the edge of a road provides a visual deterrent to excess speeds. Gates also have the added benefit of enhancing the environment, particularly in rural locations, while also highlighting further the presence of a settlement, which aids local identity and community cohesiveness.

They can take many forms and where available space is limited, there are many examples of smaller angled gates, which have the same effect. These gateways always display the village name to introduce drivers to the village.

These measures have a relatively low cost and help to create a 'sense of place' when drivers enter the village. They do not cause disruption to buses, emergency vehicles or problems for cyclists or pedestrians. They are measures, which have been shown to improve road safety, and even the modest gateway treatments reduced all accidents by 19% whilst more elaborate gateways reduced accidents by 45% (Somerset County Council 2017).

Figure 14 - Tirley Lane from John Street/Willington Road - Bronwyn Kelly

LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS, WILDLIFE LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACES

"No driving over 40"
Pupil Aged 9 yrs.

There is a deep and genuine concern that development will affect the distinctive landscape around the Parish and the flora and fauna within and upon it. The residents of Utkinton and Cotebrook are proud that their respective villages are set in a beautiful and varied landscape, with hills, valleys and views of distant ranges from the Clwydian range to the Pennines.

Every survey and consultation undertaken by the Parish Council, NP Steering group and others relating to the landscape has confirmed that the spectacular views, from the high points of the Parish to the plains below, are cherished. Many appreciate the distinctive sandstone on which much of the Parish is founded, and the way it has characterised the village in outcrop, quarry, buildings and walls. Residents and visitors value the open space in, around and between the two villages, which provide an opportunity for recreation and help the villages to retain their rural character.

Any development in these areas would damage the fundamental healthy and beneficial nature of those spaces. These are supported by the 'Local Landscape Designations: Areas Of Special County Value In Cheshire West And Chester 2017 within which reference is made to the importance of the landscape value of this area in LS 2016 and the Final Report ASCV (2017). The chapter on the Willington ASCV encompasses the northern part of the settlement of Utkinton whereas the majority of the Parish sits within the Delamere / Utkinton ASCV;
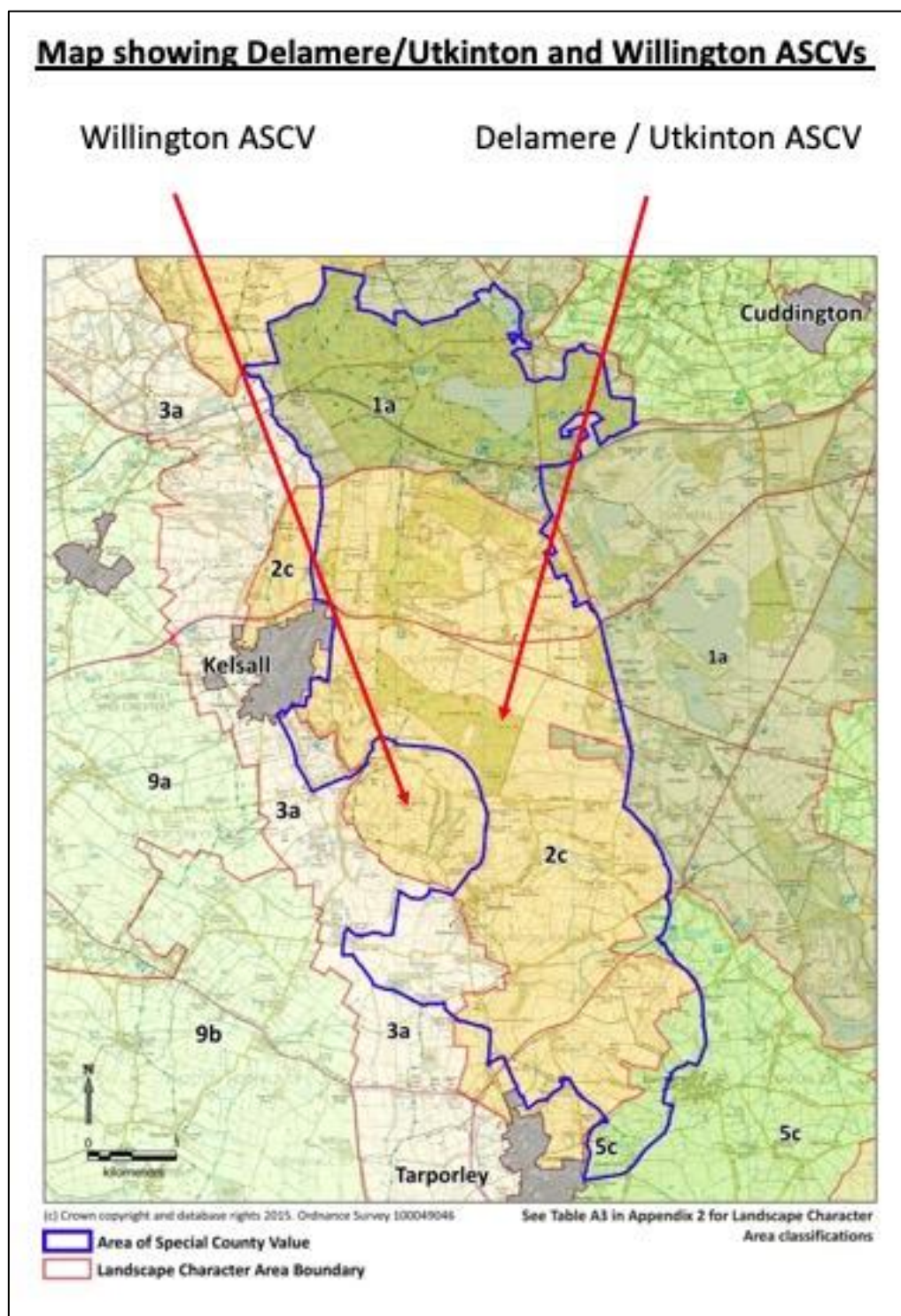
Figure 15 Combined map showing Willington, Delamere/Utkinton ASCV (Source CWaC - Local Landscape Designations 2017)

The following extracts from the ASCV report for CWaC Local Plan 2 are included as they encapsulate what makes the Parish and the Neighbourhood Area special;

Special Landscape Qualities - Delamere / Utkinton ASCV

- *Across the ASCV as a whole, the enclosed, organic mosaic of meres, mosses, swamp, fen, extensive mixed woodland and heathland of Delamere contrasts with the neighbouring*

landscape of elevated sandstone ridge, grasslands, block plantation and its open panoramic views in all directions.

- *Away from the main A54 and A556, tranquil rural character is underpinned by the absence of significant settlement across the ASCV.*

- *A dynamic landscape is evident within Delamere with many locations showing different stages of peatland/mossland development and ecosystem succession.*

- *Medium and small scale open water bodies known as meres add visual and ecological richness to the landscape.*

- *The skyline of Delamere Forest is defined by trees, most often the dark lines of large conifer plantations overlying former heath, much of which is managed for recreation and habitat importance.*

- *South of Delamere, steep sandstone slopes and dry gorges support small but dense broadleaved woodlands whilst sandy soils support permanent grassland on less steep ground.*

- *Rounded outcrops of Triassic sandstone form a prominent, undulating ridge reaching to over 170m elevation at Pale Heights, with belts of Scots pines forming distinctive skyline elements.*

- *Sandstone walls are occasionally characteristic features within the Sandstone Ridge landscape.*

- *A deeply historic landscape whose water bodies and mosslands maintain a record of environment and climate change in excess of 10,000 years. Visible influences include Late Bronze Age promontory fort at Kelsborough, Eddisbury Hillfort (late Bronze Age and Anglo-Saxon Burh) and Roman Roads. However, the most visible historic features are experienced at the landscape scale; the Old Pale deer park and the regular geometric fieldscape and large blocks of forestry established with the enclosure of Royal Forest of Mara in the nineteenth century.*

- *Characteristic sunken lanes provide access over the ridge, responding to landform, whilst roads through Delamere are frequently unbounded, with woodland and open peatlands close to the carriageway edge.*

- *The 'Sandstone Trail' runs along part of the ridge with other Public Rights of Way and permissive paths forming a dense network of access, particularly in Delamere.*

- *Spectacular panoramic views from the ridge across Delamere Forest and beyond to the northeast, over the open plains to the south-east, to the Peckforton Hills to the south, and to north Wales to the west.*

Special Landscape Qualities - Willington ASCV

- *Distinctive linear Willington Wood at the transition between the steeply undulating, prominent wooded escarpment of the sandstone ridge, the sandstone fringe and the low-lying farmland of the Cheshire plain.*

- *The sandstone fringe is important to the setting of the prominent, rolling wooded sandstone ridge that rises steeply to around 167m AOD at Tirley Lane.*

- *South and west facing slopes include small brooks and wooded streams in the valleys, providing rich texture and character, and features of natural heritage interest.*

- *The Helsby to Tarporley Sandstone Fringe in this area is a relatively well-treed landscape with a high proportion of mature hedgerow trees, in contrast to the more open Cheshire Plain West.*

- *Tirley Garth is a listed building and an important country house with a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden designed by Thomas Hayton Mawson (a leading exponent of garden design in the C20), the last remaining complete C20 Arts & Crafts garden in Cheshire.*

- *The Sandstone Trail long distance footpath rises up to the wooded ridge from the lowland plain west of Utkinton; together with other rights of way including the Delamere Loop / John Street bridleway they provide valuable recreational and amenity opportunities.*

- *Tirley Garth and Willington Hall are listed buildings of special architectural and historic interest where their landscape setting is important.*

- *A landscape of strong contrasts where topography and vegetation provide small scale enclosure but elsewhere there are extensive elevated views, in particular from the sandstone ridge and terraced formal gardens and parkland at Tirley Garth, across the plain to Beeston and the Peckforton hills and the distant ridges of the Clwydian hill range in Wales.*

- *The distinctive prominent landform and simple wooded skyline of the sandstone ridge is visible from extensive areas of the borough and beyond.*

- *Willington and Utkinton lie immediately adjacent to the ASCV (to the north and south respectively), the area being important to the rural setting of the villages that straddle the boundary where the sandstone ridge meets the fringe.*

- *A very low-density settlement pattern of scattered farms within the ridge and fringe landscape, linked by a small number of narrow, winding country lanes.*

- *A strongly rural character with an absence of modern built elements and intrusive transport corridors provides a tranquil landscape.*

Encouraging and supporting local distinctiveness

The issues Parishioners identified were:

- Retain the "village feel" and the sense of place.
- Maintain views and vistas across open countryside.
- Retain natural and distinctive features.

POLICY 9; Landscape Distinctiveness

Development:

a) Applications for development must should include an assessment (where appropriate) of their impact on adjacent woodlands, hedgerows, ponds, streams, ditches and ecological features.

b) Applications for development on sites or land must demonstrate, within their 'Design and Access Statements', how they will minimise any negative visual impact on the existing landscape. Landscaping should harmonise with the rural village character; materials and planting should be sympathetically chosen.

c) Where a development threatens protected and mature trees with a significant community value an 'Independent Arboricultural Assessment' must be submitted.

Landscaping:

d) Distinctive local features forming part of the attraction for tourists and locals, must be retained. These include Cheshire railings and sandstone walls, which often form buttresses on undulating ground, together with any remaining iron fingerposts.

e) The use of boundary features within any development should respect local tradition, materials and mix of species. Existing sandstone walls, including those which are part of hedgerows, must be retained and kept in good order.

f) A consistent approach utilising local materials will be supported and high solid timber fencing should be avoided. Where this is not possible, boundaries should be sympathetic to their surroundings - planting to mitigate the impact. New hedgerows of native species are encouraged as boundary treatments around and within new developments.

g) The use of native species in hedgerows, trees and other soft landscaping should be encouraged and applications to fell significant trees or hedgerows must be supported by appropriate and convincing evidence.

h) Development adjoining open countryside should provide a sympathetic transition and where appropriate, landscaping should integrate with wildlife corridors. Provision of features beneficial to wildlife will be supported and retained in order to protect, enhance and connect areas of high/medium value, lying outside the wildlife corridor.

i) New development should take the following into account:
   o The design and layout of new developments should respect local character. The location and setting of tree planting should be designed to conserve and enhance local character and native tree species should be used.
   o Existing mature trees should be retained and protected on development sites. In the case of a tree that is deemed diseased or unsafe by a tree specialist, a suitable replacement native tree must be planted.

Such conditions (Policy 9) will contribute to a sense of place within the community and help integrate additions to local architecture and colour. These recommendations are designed to help applicants and developers deliver our objectives.

Figure 16 - View towards Willington and the Welsh Hills - Kathryn Dahill

Figure 17 -Cheshire Railings on Stable Lane (B5152) looking towards High Billinge – Tony Dahill

Landscape

"Almost everyone is lovely and there's lots of fields and dog walking places"
Pupil 11yrs

In 2011, the government published their Biodiversity 2020 *'strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem services'* which built on the recommendations of the earlier Natural Environment white paper. The mission of the Biodiversity 2020 strategy is to *'halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.'*

Future development of Utkinton and Cotebrook should respect and improve the natural environment. The most intact landscapes, in terms of biodiversity, landform and historical/cultural associations should be valued highly when planning decisions are made. Protection and enhancement of Utkinton and Cotebrook's natural assets is of crucial importance for nature conservation and ecosystem services but it is also important for the health, wellbeing and enjoyment of future generations.

Protecting landscape and nature conservation interests

The issues Parishioners identified were:

- Protect local wildlife sites and habitats.
- Extending green space and new nature conservation areas wherever possible.

Following adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan, Cheshire Wildlife Trust advises that the following recommendations should be implemented. It will help to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment. It will improve natural diversity if we maintain and try to improve using natural resources. For a full explanation of the activities required, please see the full report. *'Protecting and Enhancing Utkinton and Cotebrook's Natural Environment' (April 2018)* which can be found on the Parish website at:

https://utkintonandcotebrook.com/neighbourhood-plan/neighbourhood-plan-surveys/

POLICY 10; Wildlife

In order to sustain and encourage the flora and fauna that are integral components of the Parish's landscape and wildlife diversity;

a) Existing hedgerows should be monitored by the Parish Council and must be maintained and retained. This applies specifically those on the side of roads within the Parish. Any hedgerows damaged or removed as a result of development or maintenance should be replanted with native hedgerow species to sustain wildlife habitation.

b) Create links between existing 'wildlife corridor network' as prescribed by Cheshire Wildlife Trust and supported by the Parish Council and local volunteers.

c) Improve the quality of the 'wildlife corridor network' and assess against Local Wildlife site selection criteria.

d) Existing watercourses and wetland features such as ponds should be retained to enhance local diversity.

e) Ensure measures to protect wildlife species and habitat mapping as prescribed by CWT are supported by the Parish Council and local volunteers.

f) Hedgerows, trees and watercourses which make a significant contribution to the amenity, biodiversity and landscape character of the surrounding area should be preserved and development that would adversely affect them will not normally be permitted.

g) Only in the most exceptional circumstances, where the benefits of development are considered to outweigh the benefit of preserving trees, hedgerows and watercourses, will development be permitted subject to appropriate mitigation. The retention of trees, hedgerows and watercourses in situ will always be preferable.

h) New developments will be required to include suitable planting of trees and hedgerows, this must be in compliance with the most up-to-date local planning authority guidelines on contemporary wildlife features.
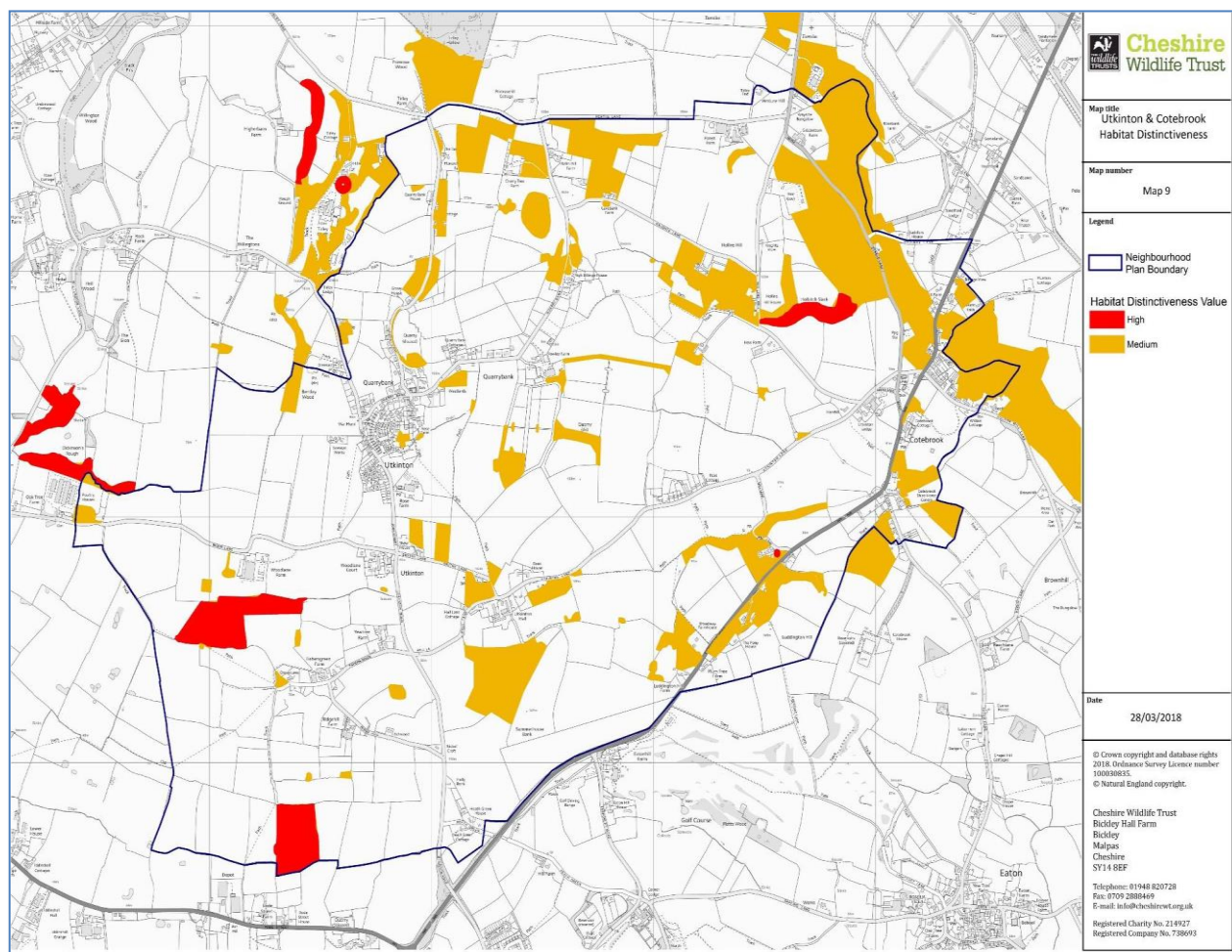
Habitat Distinctiveness

Figure 18 - Protecting and Enhancing Utkinton and Cotebrook's Natural Environment (c. CWT 2018)

Cheshire Wildlife Trust – Habitat criteria - Local Wildlife Site Selection Criteria for the Cheshire region (November 2012).

H1 –H3 Woodland - UK BAP priority habitat
H1 Lowland mixed deciduous woodland - UK BAP priority habitat (contains European Annex 1 habitats)
H2 Wet woodland - UK BAP priority habitat (contains European Annex 1 habitats)
H3 Upland oakwood - UK BAP priority habitat Areas of locally native semi-natural lowland mixed deciduous woodland and/or wet woodland greater than 0.25ha should be selected as LWS.
All areas of woodland listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory should be selected. Plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) should be selected where there is survival of significant elements of the original woodland ecosystem26. All areas of woodland on peat should be selected. Any site supporting species/species assemblages which qualify under the species selection criteria S1 - 13 should be selected.

Should we refer to the various elements deemed as 'Priority' within this map (Orange and Red) these are, from CWT perspective High and Medium priority for 'distinctiveness. They apply to many 'corridors within the Parish.

Open Spaces

"I don't like the busy roads"
Pupil 9 yrs

Figure 19 - The Mill Pool at Luddington Hill, Utkinton - Dave Dunford

Open local green spaces are a key factor in residents' health and welfare, safety and pleasure and these spaces are needed to retain the beauty and attraction of the ASCV and the key landscape features.

Sandstone walls and hedges with trees enclose many fields, lanes and dwellings. Indeed, some dwellings and many of the walls that bound the lanes throughout the Parish have been constructed of sandstone. It is a ubiquitous building material throughout Cheshire much admired, appreciated and desired by those that live here and by many visitors to the area.

One resident recently posted this tract in the biannual Parish Newsletter ('The Courier') and it is included here as a reflection of residents' vision of the area in which they live;

An appreciation of the Views from Utkinton (November 2019)

'The views from Tirley Lane and Quarry Bank are regarded as some of the Best in Cheshire due to the height of these roads above sea level (averaging 500 ft).

Starting from St Paul's Primary School at the Quarry Bank/Tirley Lane Junction surrounded by a precision cut sandstone wall. From the junction of Quarry Bank with Tirley Lane, walking North, with the School on the right.

Up the rise, to where Tirley Lane narrows, past a fine sandstone wall on the left. At the top, to the right, is Quarry Wood, an open wild green space, full of wildlife. Past here again, on the right, one passes a good example of a sandstone wall surrounding an old village well, now dried out. In the Spring many daffodils can be seen.

Here you pass a house named 'Breagha Sealladh', difficult to pronounce, let alone spell, it is Gaelic, the language spoken on the Western Isles of Scotland, simply, translated means 'Beautiful View'.

Progressing up Tirley Lane one passes Grove House, the road side barns were once a goat farm, prospects open up to the west across farm fields with views over towards The City of Chester, the Duke of Westminster's estate and its Tower , the Queensferry Bridge over the river Dee, the BAE Airbus complex. The height here is 450 feet above sea level.

Tirley Garth can be seen, and on Saints days the appropriate flags flutter in the wind and, in the autumn, the trees at Tirley Garth are a mass of rich colours. Across the Cheshire plain smoke rises skyward from autumn fires. Autumn brings the mists and if you are about early on an autumn morning you may see much of the Cheshire plain shrouded in a white mist, a few tall trees rising above it.

In winter the indication of a cold day is the snow covering on the tops of the Clwydians and, on a fine day, the views extend over towards Moel Famau, 1,804 feet above sea level. Great atmosphere on a stormy day as the sun light shines out from the gathering clouds, as if a search light to a stage. Just wonderful. In summer one looks out over fields of waving corn as the wind shakes it. At the close of the day the sun sets can be spectacular.

From here as autumn dusk moves in, the wild Canadian geese may fly by in their V formation, 'ker-honk, ker-honking' as they go. Buzzard's can also be spotted high in the sky, circling calling to their young, 'peeiou-peeiou;, as they teach then the art of hunting. These birds can be seen from above as they fly along the valley below.

On a deep blue summer sky day, look skyward and see the vapour trails from aircraft criss-crossing as they fly overhead at 35,000 feet. Where have they come from, where are they bound? One time, many years past, the Red Arrows flew over and from this point on Tirley lane to Moel Famau, it would take them just 14 seconds at speed.

On some days can be observed the British Airbus plane (aka 'The Beluga') coming into land at Hawarden Airport after its flight from Toulouse in France.

After a fall of heavy snow Tirley Lane can be a magical place with all the hedges covered in snow and the tree branches hanging full of newly fallen snow, the road white over. All very still and silent. Then along comes a car slushing slowly down the road and the magic is gone, the pleasure of the scene lost, like a snowflake on the river for a moment white then melts for ever.

This is the highest point on Tirley Lane at 500 feet. To the right is a fine example of a restored sandstone cottage, Stone Cottage, with its fine stone carvings at the roof corners. Also, along the lane is the last remaining thatched cottage in the village, there are two more in the Parish, both in Cotebrook.

To the left side of the lane can be seen a fine example of a restored Victorian farm wall with its iron railing top.

By Monarchy Hall Farm are some fine Scots Pine trees and, just past to the left is a field which when planted out with rapeseed glows a deep and wonderful yellow, set against green surroundings.

At the end of Tirley Lane there is a junction with Heath's Lane. At this point Primrose Wood is on the left. At the corner on the left is a section of Cheshire Railing, but now sadly overgrown with hedging. Opposite is Tirley Farm with a fine sandstone wall and an old standing platform for milk churns, from the time when milk was collected at the farm gate. Walk along beside the wood and, in the spring, one may catch the sound of a woodpecker, drumming, deep in the forest. In the autumn the trees are full of rich yellows, golden, red, bronze and brown colours. If caught by the sun they sparkle. On past the wood the landscapes open out, by the field where people sledge on snow covered days.

The view here is towards Winter Hill, Bolton; 1,482 feet high. The Lovell Telescope at Jodrell Bank, Goostrey and industrial Northwich and Lostock can also be seen from Heaths Lane.

At the road sign for the village of Utkinton, turn right and walk up the hill onto Quarry Bank As one nears the top, look back and you will see Eddisbury Hill Fort in the distance. Eddisbury, once an iron age hill fort this was used by the Romans and Aethelflaed Lady of the Mercians. Further on one can gain aspects towards Macclesfield and the Southern Pennines. You may see Shuttling's Hill, 1,645 feet high, away in the distance. Continue to walk along past the High Billinge green to your left and its pond. On the right is High Billinge, topped by tall trees. This is an ancient site and the second highest point in Cheshire at 600 feet. The highest being Mow Cop, south of Congleton and in this area are many examples of some very fine trees.

By Rowley Farm the road takes a sharp bend and here once more the prospects open out towards The Peckforton Hills, Beeston and Peckforton Castles, Higher Burwardsley. Hart Hill and

Raw Head. On a clear day you may chance to see people walking on the grass area atop of Beeston Castle.

On the left-hand side of the bend is Rowley Cottage dating from 1845

Just by the driveway into Rowley Farm is a gate to a field, pause here and, on a very clear day, with the light in the right direction, not too much sun, just still and clear, pause and you may well be rewarded to see The Long Mynd and High Bowdler at Church Stretton, 40+ miles away. This is a rare and special view and the weather and atmosphere needs to be just right to make it happen. It is a view towards Shropshire, the home of A E Houseman. 'Those blue remembered hills, the land of lost content. We see it shining plain.'

Continue to walk along Quarry Bank, you are now at its top 480 feet. There is a fine row of long-standing and protected oak trees and through these fine views towards Hart Hill and Beeston Castle. Again, the farm fields in the summer offer fine views of crops growing and being rustled by the wind as it sweeps across.

At times when the grass is cut, that wonderful scent of recently cut grass is in the air, at harvest time there are views of bales set across the fields awaiting to be gathered in, before the winter storms begin. Then a newly ploughed field with its brown straight furrows. Cattle gently grazing and enjoying their day, as are the horses at Rowley Farm.

The road now takes a bend to the left. Just past where the new homes were built. To the right here is an old village well, set back into the hedge, with the fresh spring water still running.

The road now descends down toward the centre of the village and the Memorial Shrine. This was put in place to remember those villagers who fell in the First and later in the Second World War. It is modelled on French Village Shrines that were seen by solders as they passed on their way through France to The Western Front Line in the 1914 to 1918 War and was refurbished in 2018 to commemorate its centenary.

As the Primary School comes into view there is a narrow view out towards Moel Famau, right in front of you, just a narrow view but nonetheless spectacular as one looks down on it.

One can continue down to the Shrine, where there are benches on which to rest.

What a wonderful walk, what wonderful views, what an attractive place we are fortunate to live in.'

Text by Graham Stewart, Photos c. Bronwyn Kelly

Views and vistas are not only attractive and precious to residents of both Villages but are enjoyed by visitors to the area. Indeed, the area attracts many walkers, holidaymakers and people having business in the surrounding villages and towns. This benefits retail outlets and local Bed & Breakfast establishments, particularly those run by members of the farming community. Such business increases diversity, boosts income and benefits retail businesses in the Parish. Therefore, these views must be retained, protected and not blighted by development.

It is recognised that the original areas for development review within the Local Plan (2& 2) SHLAA and HEELA represent some of the green spaces within the Parish, others have been identified over a number of years and are shown here for completeness. In reality there are very few such spaces across the Parish.

The table below provides information about how the identified Local Green Spaces meet the criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework. The local green space is also recognised as an important feature in the Spatial Character Assessment and two are identified in Table 2 below and in Figures 18 to 21 below.

Open Space	Size	Proximity to the Community	Demonstration of Special Value to the Local Community	Ownership
Cotebrook - Area to the rear of Woodlands Close (Known locally as the village green)	0.13 ha	Located centrally	The area is one of the few safe, quiet and secluded places in the village It has access, is free from traffic. This 'parcel' is being proposed as a Community Orchard and recreational space. It is a, relatively, small parcel of land that has, previously, had rustic seating around its perimeter. It has, in the past, been used for both play and picnics.	Rented from Cheshire west and Chester by UCPC
Cotebrook – Former school – derelict but foundations. Sits on corner of Utkinton Lane and A49	0.25 ha	Close to Church, Village Hall and small retail outlets	This site was previously the village school and, as such, was an important part of the community It is a small plot of land that is close to the traditional centre of the village. Residents have expressed their wishes to see it put to good use for the benefit of the community. This could provide for a small number of 'affordable/discounted dwellings', not currently registered as 'brownfield' and deemed as too small for CWaC Brownfield Register. It has been the subject of withdrawn planning application and further enquiry to CWaC.	Private ownership
TAR/ 0009 Land at John	0.3ha	Located near the centre of Utkinton and close to the	Out with the Village settlement Boundary but situated in the heart of the village, the field is central to	Arderne Estates

Street, opposite Quarry Bank, Utkinton		war memorial. Open fields are to the west and the site is an Area of Special County Value due to its high-quality landscape	the views and provide aspects into and out of the village. The site is within a conservation area and represents a focal point in the village. It holds a particular significance for residents and visitors who enjoy the peace and tranquillity the location offers.	
TAR/ 0010 Land around the war memorial	0.75 ha (scaled)	Open fields are to the west and the site of the War Memorial has benches where walkers, visitors and residents can enjoy the views and.	This area surrounds – with TAR/0009 – the War memorial where ceremonies are held annually. Its seating allows residents and visitors to examine, remember and respect those who fell in Two World Wars and subsequent conflicts.	Arderne Estates Two small 'nibs' of land are shown (a bus stop and the War Memorial) both owned by the Parish Council – both fall within the VSB.
TAR/ 0019 Northgate Field (known locally as the 'donkey field') Adjacent to Rose Farm shop	0.85 ha	Located centrally within the village	Situated in the heart of the village, the field is central to the views within and out with the village. The area is adjacent to a cafe and other facilities which are a meeting place for the residents and visitors who come to the area for leisure and retail purposes. It is appreciated by residents and visitors from other Parishes and the wider area, as a place to meet with families and friends. Large trees at the boundary edge of this field bring a sense of greenery and nature onto the main carriageway and the open space.	Private ownership. (See note below *related to recent Planning Appeal.)
TAR/ 0065 The land between John Street, Tirley Lane and Quarry Bank		Open fields are to the west and the site is an Area of Special County Value due to its high-quality landscape	Out with the Village settlement Boundary situated to the North of the village and surrounded on three sides by dwellings. The field provides important views into and out of the village.	Private ownership

Table 2 - Proposed Open Spaces in Parish

* Planning Appeal Decision APP/A0665/W/18/3196169

12. The indicative layout shows twelve detached and semi-detached dwellings sited around a cul-de-sac with vehicular access off Northgate. The layout was amended during the course of the application in response to concerns raised regarding the impact of the proposal on protected trees along the John Street frontage. Nevertheless the development of the site for

twelve dwellings would result in a significant change to and an urbanising effect on the rural character and appearance of the site and would erode the existing semi-rural character and relative tranquillity of this particular part of the ASCV. Whilst the site is located near to existing residential development of varying character and to the complex at Rose Farm, its rural character, elevated topography and position at the edge of the village means that it is highly prominent and sensitive to change. ***As previously stated, the site contributes positively to the semi-rural character of the area.***

Figure 20 - Land to rear of Woodlands Close, rented from CWaC

Figure 21 - Former school – derelict but with foundations. Sits on corner of Utkinton Lane and A49, Cotebrook

Figure 22 – TAR/0009 Land off John Street, Utkinton

Figure 23 - TAR/0010 Land behind War Memorial on John Street opposite Quarry Bank

Figure 24 – TAR/0019 Land off John Street and Northgate (Known locally as 'The Donkey Field')

Figure 25 – TAR/0065 Land off Quarry Bank

Figure 26 - Utkinton and Cotebrook War Memorial - Tony Dahill

The land designated TAR 0009 and 0010 is situated around and adjacent to The War Memorial at the centre of Utkinton Village, known locally as 'The Shrine'. Annual ceremonies, attracting many residents and visitors have been held to acknowledge and honour the memory of those members of the Parish who lost their lives during the two World Wars.

Additionally, many walkers and cyclists rest there, enjoying the solitude, tranquillity and views from the benches situated at the Shrine. It is a well-known meeting point for villagers and visitors, knowing they can enjoy the view over open fields to the west over an Area of Special County Value and high-quality landscape. The views are to the Clwydian hills and the vast open spaces between, consisting of farmland, rural villages and the route of the Sandstone trail, which affords walkers a view into the hillside and village of Utkinton.

Any development would have a detrimental impact on both the local landscape. the character and setting of a conservation area and the many people who enjoy that particularly therapeutic environment.

The 'donkey field' as it is known locally, sitting between Northgate, John Street and Rose Farm Shop in Utkinton, has been the subject of several planning applications. Each one has been objected to by the Parish Council and active groups within the Community. Regular visitors to the village and farm shop also signed a petition objecting to any development of the field, as it is a source of pleasure to all. It also allows excellent, extensive views of the surrounding area.

As part of its objection, Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Group commissioned Peter Black, a chartered town planner to produce a Landscape Character Assessment which was based on a desk study, fieldwork and discussions with local people. It was submitted to Cheshire West and Chester as part of the Parish Council's objection to the development.

Chester West and Chester Planning Department objected to the last application based on their assessment of the landscape value of the site. The developers appealed to the planning Inspectorate at Bristol and the appeal was rejected by the Inspector in a report which provides a definitive opinion on landscape and planning issues on the site. (Appeal Decision **PP/A0665/W/18/3196169**)

"The above field It is also located close to a locally listed building and a grade II listed building along Lower Northgate and it contributes to the setting of these buildings within the village of Utkinton."

During the Application and Appeal process the Council's Landscape Officer, referred to the importance of the site for the landscape setting of Utkinton and its proximity to and location within, the Sandstone Ridge and PROW network. The CWaC Landscape Officer also recognised that this parcel of land is important for the special landscape qualities of the ASCV.

During the consultation process, the lack of outdoor facilities in both Cotebrook and Utkinton was highlighted.

At the rear of Woodlands Close, where once there was a play area, there is now an open space since the removal of the play equipment. Having been occupied under a rental/lease arrangement and maintained by the Parish Council, ownership of the land has since reverted to United Utilities as it was little used by Parishioners as it is continually waterlogged.

It is noted that the NPPF, revised February 2019, suggests some criteria for the review of open green spaces; this plan is consistent with and relates to:

> *100. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:*
>
> > *a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
> >
> > *b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
> >
> > *c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*
>
> *101. Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.*

The six areas identified above (Table 2) each hold a degree of significance (historic as well as contemporary) to many of the residents of both communities covered within this Neighbourhood Plan. Some are, it is noted, primarily used for agriculture, others relate to community use, some are purely pastoral in nature, but all contribute in some way to the rurality and openness of the green spaces within the Parish. None, apart from the land proposed as a 'community' orchard is currently enjoyed as recreational space – indeed, the Parish has no specifically designated recreational open space and is actively seeking opportunity to address this.

Community Orchard

Similarly, several residents of Cotebrook and Utkinton suggested that a community orchard and small picnic area situated in the Cheshire West and Chester owned plot immediately behind Woodland Close would be a way of bringing people together. It could be used for therapeutic and educational purposes by all ages in the Parish. It would need to be managed, but there appears to be sufficient volunteers to organise and support such a project, overseen by the Parish Council.

Produce would not be sold for profit. Residents themselves would organise, tend and distribute the produce, creating a resource that anybody in the Parish could benefit from. It would contribute to two of the key aspects of sustainability as highlighted in the NPPF; 'Social and Environmental' benefits.

Figure 19 - Plan of land leased from CWaC and United Utilities (since reverted) by Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish Council

The blue and white shaded area (site of the proposed Community Orchard) is in the heart of Cotebrook Village. It has excellent access, with a nearby car park and cafe. It is sheltered, safe and is well known to people in the Parish. One of the benefits is it is within the most built up area of Cotebrook Village, it has two bench seats (not shown) which means it is convenient for most people, particularly the elderly and those not wishing to take part in any project. Anyone can enjoy the simple pleasure of sitting in an orchard, enjoying the wildlife it would attract and the opportunity for social engagement such a site would create.

The area highlighted in red reverted to United Utilities in late 2019.

POLICY 11: Local Green Spaces

a) To protect the character and identity of Utkinton and Cotebrook and preserve its green spaces, the Neighbourhood Plan designates the above areas as Local Green Space due to their special character, significance and community value. Development on designated Local Green Space will not be permitted, other than in very special and exceptional circumstances.

b) Development must respect important views into and out of the Parish due to their special character (see 'Vistas and Views'), significance and community value.

c) Planning applications will be required to demonstrate how they have reflected the local character of these views and vistas through design, retained and framed (where relevant) views of the wider countryside and local landmarks.

d) Any development must be assessed in the following areas for its potential damage to the views and vistas mentioned below.

e) Proposals must demonstrate how any potential impacts on the character of the Parish have been considered and mitigated.

f) The impact on local service businesses and tourist-based businesses must be assessed when considering the damage that may be done.

Views and Vistas.

Figure 20 Below shows an overview of those vistas and views that are deemed by the residents of the two villages of Cotebrook and Utkinton. They are, in the main, vistas with a wide horizon, but some show areas of the Parish that have particular significance to the two communities.

Each of the views chosen to illustrate this section of the plan, demonstrate the essential rurality of the Neighbourhood which include landscapes and architectural features. Also, within the document and appendices as a whole are pictures of other features such as public houses, historic buildings and the history of the Parish.
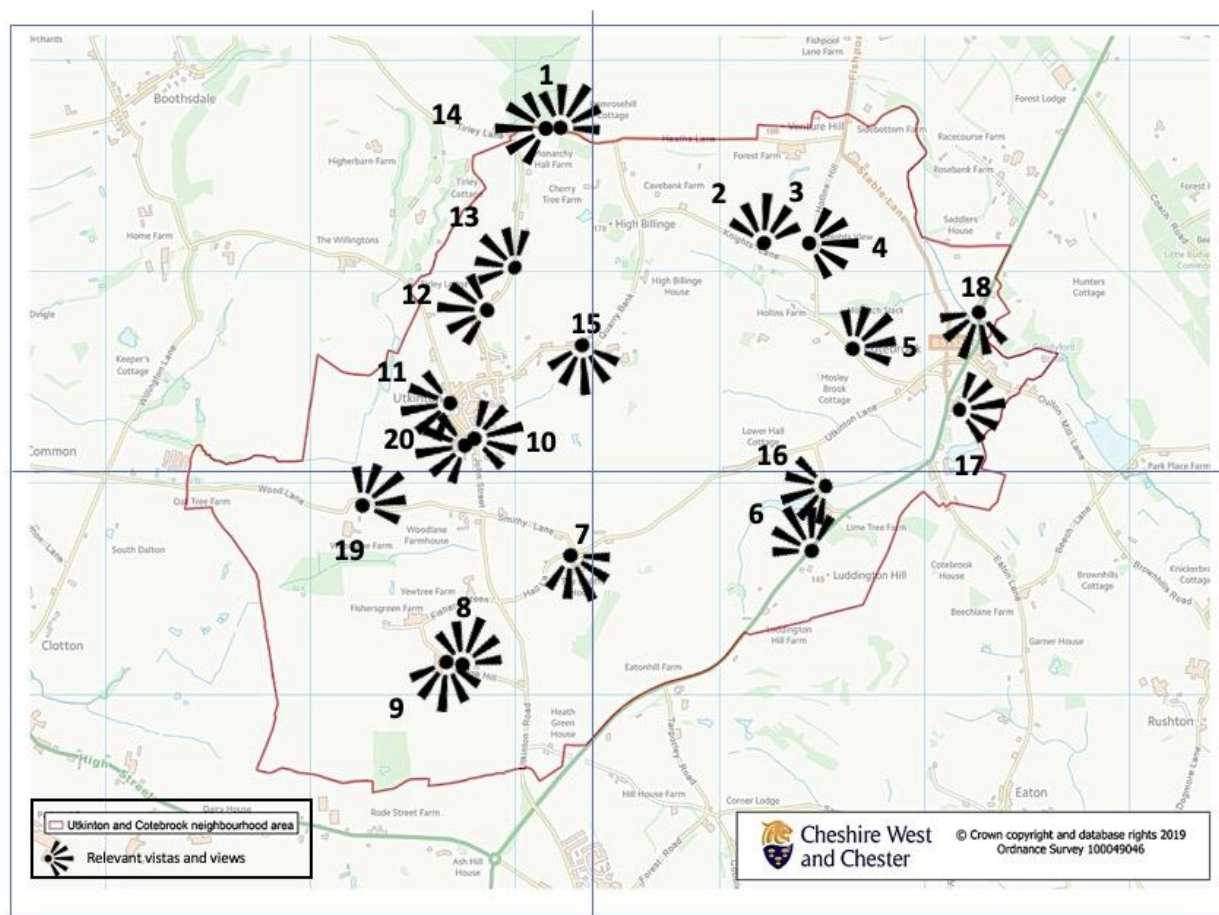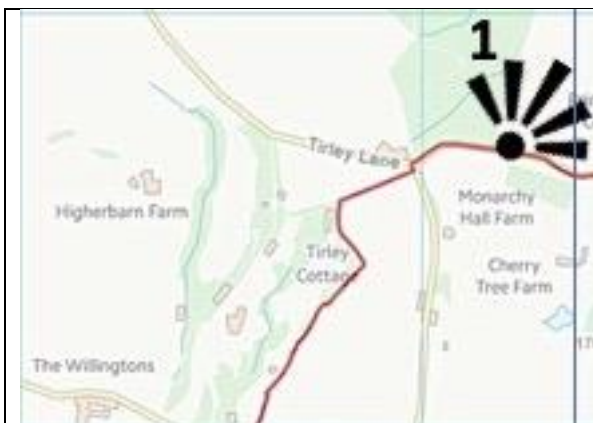

Figure 20 - Showing direction of views and vistas from both villages

The following table shows photographs taken by residents of the area surrounding the villages across the seasons. They represent a selection of seasonal and landscape pictures of the Parish and the villages in which we live, and which are deemed important by the community as a whole.

1.   View from Heaths Lane – North East

Looking towards 'Winter Hill' the view is one that many people value. Sometimes used as a toboggan slope in mid-winter.

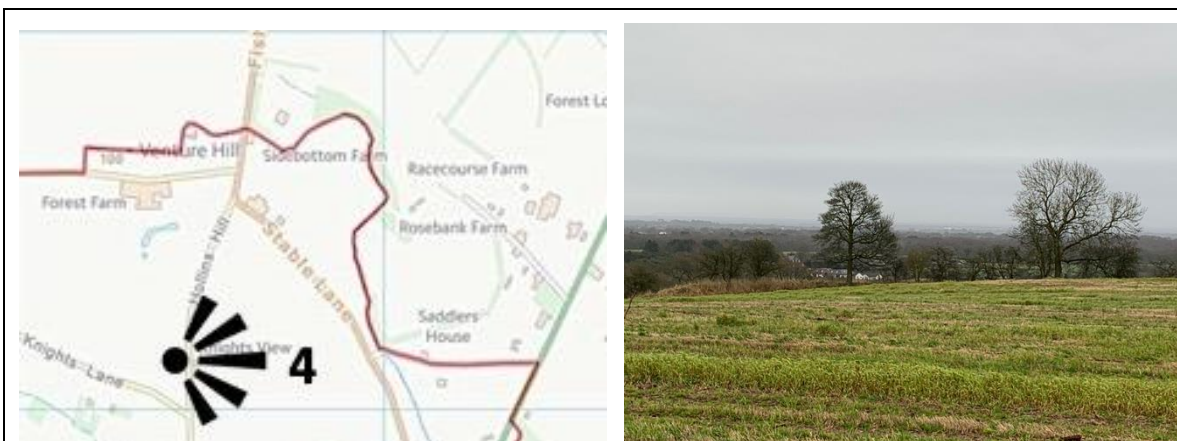**2.   Taken from Knights Lane looking North west**

View over Heaths Lane and Forest Farm towards the upper reaches of Delamere forest.

3.   View from Knights Lane north over Forest Farm toward Northwich et al.

Shows the richly undulating landscape on the easterly slopes of the Sandstone Ridge and into the ASCV

4. Eastwards from Hollins Hill (close to Knights View) over Winsford toward the Pennines (obscured by mist)

A view often described as breath-taking by walkers along Hollins Hill it takes in much of the eastern Cheshire plains often with Jodrell Bank and its associated telescopes in the sunlight.

5. From Hollins Hill looking North East over Blakemere and Northwich towards Manchester

On fine days and, particularly at sunset, the Pennine range is visible

6. The view from Luddington Hill (A49) north west toward 'High Billinge'

High Billinge and the old mill pool are two attractions for visitors and residents alike, this view is bisected by Utkinton Lane

7. Taken from the junction of Hall Lane and Smithy Lane South East to Utkinton Hall

The Hall has a medieval core but most of it dates from the early 17th century and was the traditional 'seat' of the Done family, who managed Delamere Forest on behalf of the King. Much remodelled in the 17th century it is seen as a real attraction to visitors – even though it is a working farm. It features on a painting by local artiste, Rae York, that she donated to Utkinton Village Hall, where it hangs today.

8. View from Ridge Hill (the second highest point in the Parish looking NNE towards and over Tirley Lane

Ridge Hill is mainly grazing land and it adds to the pastoral perspective of Utkinton, it sits midway between the centre of the village and Beeston Castle.

9. A view in the opposite direction from Ridge Hill overlooking Beeston Castle and the Peckforton range

10. Looking North towards listed and historic buildings dating back to the 16th and 17th Centuries.
This is part Lower Northgate represents part of the historic centre of 'Quarry Bank' which was amalgamated into Utkinton Civil Parish in 1836.

11. **Vista showing the landscape West toward the Clwydian range over the Utkinton War Memorial (c. 1918**)
This spot is favoured as a stopping off point for cyclists, walkers and other visitors and provides a tranquil element of the village environment.

12. A typical sunset over the Clwydian range viewed from Tirley Lane toward the west.
Tirley Lane is favoured by walkers, cyclists and dog walkers as a route to 'Primrose Wood', the original part of Delamere Forest within Utkinton and Willington.

13. Looking North West over towards the Dee Estuary and the 'Willingtons'
This picture shows the rich arable farming land on the west side of the Sandstone Ridge. It is valued by residents and visitors alike as a beautiful place,

14. Looking West from the same spot as Vista 1
Heaths Lane meets Tirley lane and on the north side is Primrose Wood

15. Looking south from the top of Quarry Bank towards Beeston and Peckforton Hills.
A spectacular view throughout the day from which the whole of the Cheshire Plain and the Peckforton range can be seen

16. Utkinton Pool looking directly west from Mill Lane.

Though owned by an angling association this location offers two spectacular views to enhance the impression of the Neighbourhood for all who visit it. It is a regular stopping off site for visitors

  a)   The view west along its length
  b)   The view east down the defunct mill race gorge toward the Alvanley Arms

17. A view from a private garden of 'Cotebrook Cottage' that can be enjoyed from the junction of Stable Lane (B5152) and the A49.

Cotebrook Cottage – off Oulton Mill Lane hidden by trees and fronted by the A49 is a fine Arts and Crafts house with far reaching views over rolling South Cheshire countryside.

18. A view of St John and the Holy Cross from the southern approach to Cotebrook on the A49

Offers an impressive vista of the Parish Church taken from the 'Fox and Barrel' over Utkinton Lane showing Luddington Hill in the background.

19. The Approach to Utkinton along Wood Lane from the West, looking North East
This aspect shows how the hilly centre of the Parish (the southern tip of the Sandstone Ridge within the ASCV) becomes a focal point for a distance – in the centre is the tip of 'High Billinge' reputed to be one of the two highest points in Cheshire West. This vista can also be enjoyed from the both the A51 and A54 at Tarvin.

20. Typical pastoral landscape can be visualised from both Big Field Lane and John Street
This far reaching panorama takes in the whole of the horizon from Wrexham in the South West, along the Clwydians to the Dee Estuary in he North West,

Other vistas suggested by residents would include:
1) From Quarry Bank junction with Heaths Lane
   a) Views looking east towards the Pennines
   b) Views of the Pennines.
2) From the A49 in Cotebrook looking east.
3) From Luddington Hill views moving down into Cotebrook.
4) From Ridge Hill.
   a) Views south west to Beeston, Peckforton, and Bolesworth Castle.
   b) Views looking to the west and north west views to the Wirral and Liverpool.
5) From the Cafe and Rose farm shop complex.

a) Views north-west to the Clwydian Mountains and north east across the village.

6) Views from Rowley Farm south and south west
   a) Looking towards the Sandstone Ridge, Peckforton and Bickerton Hills, Carden Cliff and the Wrekin.

7) Views from Quarry Bank
   a) Views of the Clwydian Mountains.

8) From Tirley Lane
   a) Views looking south, west and north west. Views of the Cheshire Plain, Clwydian Mountains,
   b) Wirral and towards Shropshire and the Wrekin

9) The mill pool off Mill Lane – a regular stopping off site for visitors

10) Cotebrook Cottage – off Oulton Mill Lane hidden by trees and fronted by the A49 (A fine Arts and Crafts house with far reaching views over rolling South Cheshire countryside.)

Each of us, resident and developer, has a responsibility to protect the environment and by imposing conditions on land in the more rural areas of the Parish, the more developed areas will improve. Therefore, all applications for development on sites or land must demonstrate within their 'Design and Access Statements' how to minimise any negative visual or landscape impact and comply with, and add value to, the listed objectives.

We must protect and wherever possible, restore, create and manage other wildlife sites as indicated in the Cheshire Wildlife Trust Report. Whilst the responsibility for the process of the work must be addressed by the Parish Council, partners, volunteers, developers must contribute to the work. That contribution must be fair and reasonably related to the development and meet the relevant tests. Therefore, as well as profiting from development, they must pay for the environmental damage that such development causes. Such benevolence, engagement and concern will enhance the environment in the Parish. It will also make any projects more acceptable to the community.

Whilst some development maybe inevitable, no proposal should impinge on sites of amenity and open space value for residents, visitors and as importantly future generations. It is assumed that all development proposals will adhere to national government landscape and nature conservation policies. Where possible green space and nature conservation areas should be extended and tended where and when necessary. It is hoped that the above proposals and policies will benefit everybody who has an interest in the well-being of everybody who enters the Parish area.

PLAN DELIVERY & IMPLEMENTATION

The Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan will be delivered and implemented over the period (2020 – 2030) and by different stakeholders and partners. It is not a rigid 'blue-print' and provides instead a 'direction for change' through its vision, objectives and strategy. Flexibility will also be needed as new challenges and opportunities arise over the plan period. In this respect, the review period after five years will be crucial.

There will be three strands of activity, which will direct delivery, and each is important in shaping Utkinton and Cotebrook in the years ahead. These comprise:

- Securing the right private sector investment in the Parish through new development will be crucial. The statutory planning process will direct, and control, private developer and investor interest in the Parish in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan and the wider Local Authority(Local Plan 2) and National Planning Policy Framework

- Investment in, and management of, public services, assets and other measures to support local services and vitality and viability for the villages. In the context of the prevailing economic climate and public funding, there is a recognition that public investment in the villages will be challenging to secure.

- The voluntary and community (third) sector will have a strong role to play particularly in terms of local community infrastructure, events and village life. This sector may play a stronger role in the future

In terms of the key areas of action, the following summarises Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish Council's approach to delivery and implementation;

- **Housing Growth**: The Parish Council will work with the Local Authority to deliver small scale, incremental growth over the Plan period. The Parish Council will work with landowners and stakeholders to ensure brownfield and infill sites are brought forward first in suitable locations across the Parish

- **Local Character:** The Parish Council will work with landowners and stakeholders to ensure that the features that characterise the Parish are protected, retained and maintained.

- **Local Facilities**: The Parish Council will work with local organisations and the Borough Council to retain facilities and improve services for local people.

- **Local Economy**: The Parish Council will work with the Borough Council and with business to improve job opportunities in the Parish. The creation of small business units within the Parish will be encouraged in line with the CWaC Strategy within Local Plan 2 and in conformity to 'Strat 9' of Local Plan 2.

- **Transport:** The Parish Council will work with the Local Authority highways Department and the local school and interested parties to find ways to improve road safety and provide footways and to address speed and parking issues. It will work with landowners and stakeholder to ensure that cycle ways, bridle paths and public footpaths are retained, maintained and where possible created.

- **Communication**: The Parish Council will work with providers to ensure that modern communication infrastructure is provided in the Parish.

- **Landscape and Environment**: The Parish Council will work with Cheshire Wildlife Trust to ensure that wildlife and the countryside surrounding Utkinton and Cotebrook is protected. This will also include any identified 'protected local green spaces' where appropriate.
- **Green spaces**; The Parish Council will work to ensure that local green spaces are retained for the benefit of the community.

The Utkinton and Cotebrook Neighbourhood Plan is a 'living' document and as such will be reviewed every five years.

Next Steps and Summary

The following sets out the next steps for the Neighbourhood Plan:

Final Document – Spring 2020

Independent Examination – Spring 2020

Referendum –Summer 2020

Adoption –Summer 2020

Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish community spirit and feel was palpable in the conversations, public meetings and consultation responses. Residents and visitors treasured its rural atmosphere, its calm, the therapeutic nature of the environment and the views and vistas across the surrounding countryside. Retaining the feel and size of the villages should be an important consideration when providing any new development.

The quotes of the schoolchildren may appear whimsical, but they are simple honest expressions of their concerns. They are remarks that direct us to act and represent the generation that is relying upon us to make the right decisions. We must not let them down.