Cheshire West & Chester Council

Local Plan

Local Plan 2026

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

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Cheshire West and Chester

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

1 Introduction

This is the scoping report for the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) Local Plan. SA provides an assessment of the potential sustainability impacts arising from the proposed policies and allocations contained within the Local Plan.

The SA will be undertaken as an integrated impact assessment and therefore covers the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA). It does not include Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), as this will be undertaken separately by specialist consultants.

The new Local Plan will replace the current Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies. It will establish a strategy for growth and change over the plan period. It will allocate sites to deliver the strategy and meet identified needs. The Local Plan will also set out the planning policies that will be used to deliver sustainable development in the borough.

This scoping report brings together the results of the initial stages of the SA process. It sets out baseline information on a wide range of topics, highlighting trends, issues and objectives for the area. A key output of the scoping report is the sustainability framework, which will be used to appraise the sustainability of the Local Plan Update.

Preparation of the scoping report has been undertaken to meet the requirements set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026) and the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The government have identified that Environmental Outcomes Reports will replace Environmental Impact Assessment and SA / SEA in the future, but the timescales for this are not yet clear and the SA / SEA process will be used until Environmental Outcomes Reports are introduced.

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for plan-making and decision-making in England. The Framework introduces a new structure that separates policies for plan-making from policies for development management and is intended to provide a clearer, more rules-based planning system. The new NPPF was published on 17 August 2026, just before this SA scoping report was finalised. This report does incorporate information from the new NPPF, but the implications will be considered in more detail at later stages of preparation of the SA report.

The baseline information and sustainability framework is set out in a series of chapters dealing with a wide range of sustainability topics as follows:

- Climate change, energy and air quality
- Waste
- Land and resources
- Water
- Landscape, townscape and cultural heritage
- Biodiversity

- Population and housing
- Health, wellbeing and equality
- Economy and employment
- Infrastructure

For each topic, a summary is provided of the policy context. Baseline information is set out in relation to the past and current situation, recent changes and anticipated changes without the Plan. Any evidence gaps are noted and the Local Plan's potential influence on the topic is identified. Key sustainability issues, SA objectives, sub-objectives/criteria and indicators are identified. A list of all the sustainability objectives, which together make up the appraisal framework, is included in the SA framework chapter.

1.1 Local Plan

The Local Plan is the main planning document prepared by a local planning authority and it sets out how land will be used and developed over a specified period. The CW&C Local Plan will be prepared under the new plan-making system that was introduced in March 2026. This includes the amendments made by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

CW&C initially worked under the current planning system, which included a Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation, which was undertaken from 4 July to 29 August 2025. This included asking for comments on the SA of the Issues and Options. After reviewing progress, the Council decided to move to the new plan-making system as a more robust and reliable approach. Work will now continue under the new process.

1.2 Borough Plan 2024 – 2028

The Borough Plan outlines the vision and priorities for CW&C. The vision is "a stronger future where we all play our part in thriving, caring and sustainable communities".

The Borough Plan includes the following "missions":

- Starting well – the best start for our children and young people, with improve opportunity, a healthier start, greater resilience in families and the best possible support and care when it is needed.
- Tackling hardship and poverty – most people feel more financially secure as the causes and impact of hardship and poverty are addressed by working alongside residents.
- Resilient people living their best lives – local people are enabled to flourish, be healthy, happy and independent for longer in supportive communities.
- Opportunities in a fair local economy – local people and businesses contribute to and benefit from a strong and fair local economy.
- Neighbourhood pride – residents live in well maintained, connected and safe places with good and affordable homes.
- Greener communities – individuals, public services and businesses take action to move to tackle the climate emergency, achieve net zero, protect the natural environment and adapt to the impact of climate change.

The Borough Plan is an important part of the policy context in which the SA of the Local Plan is being carried out.

2 Sustainability Appraisal process

2.1 Overview of the SA process

Planning authorities must ensure that their Local Plans are centred around the concept of sustainable development and balance economic, social and environmental needs. SA is a tool to help to assess the contribution that planning policies and allocations make to sustainable development and to use this information to inform decision making.

SA is a process that identifies and reports on the likely effects of a plan. SEA focuses on environmental objectives, whereas SA also includes social and economic objectives. Government have proposed that there will be a future change to Environmental Outcomes Reports, which would just focus on environmental issues, but this has not yet been implemented, and the SA / SEA process should still be followed at this time. If the Environmental Outcomes report approach is brought in at a later stage in preparation of the Local Plan, this SA scoping report will be updated accordingly if required. This should not cause any difficulties, as all relevant environmental issues have been considered in this SA scoping report.

The SA process and documents must meet the requirements of two principal pieces of legislation:

- The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and
- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which transpose the EU SEA Directive 2001/42/EC into UK law.

2.2 SEA

A SEA screening process for the Local Plan was undertaken prior to the production of the scoping report. This involved preparation of a SEA screening opinion by the Council to establish whether the Local Plan is likely to have potentially significant environmental effects. The screening opinion concluded that the Local Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and will therefore require SEA. The Council consulted the statutory environmental bodies on the SEA screening for a five-week period. The statutory bodies who responded all either agreed with the decision or had no comments. A SEA screening determination was then prepared, and this is included at Appendix A. The Council is of the view that the Local Plan is likely to have potentially significant environmental effects and as such, the SA of the Local Plan will incorporate the requirements of an environmental assessment, in line with the SEA Directive.

2.3 SA Methodology

The following sections contain a brief summary of the key SA stages the Council will complete during preparation and use of the Local Plan. The methodology used follows national guidance on the appraisal of Local Plans.

There are several stages in the SA process:

- Stage A – Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope

- Stage B – Developing and refining plan options
- Stage C – Appraising the effects of the plan
- Stage D – Consulting on the Local Plan and SA report
- Stage E – Monitoring and implementation of the plan

2.4 Stage A – Scoping

This is the current stage and includes five key elements:

- Stage A1 – the identification of key national, regional and local plans, policies and programmes which will impact on the emerging Local Plan (see chapters 3 to 12).
- Stage A2 – the collection of baseline information to provide a picture of past, present and likely future conditions within the area (see chapters 3 to 12). Where possible, data trends have been identified. For the purposes of assessment, it has been assumed that these trends will continue as identified, without the implementation of the new policies. Key sources of information include census data, population forecasts, commissioned studies, internal monitoring work and previous stakeholder consultation. This stage enables indicators to be developed assess and monitor the effects and performance of the Local Plan.
- Stage A3 – identification of sustainability issues and problems affecting the area, which can be addressed through the development of strategies and policies within the Local Plan (see chapters 3 to 12).
- Stage A4 – development of a SA framework to assess the impacts of the emerging Local Plan objectives, policies and proposals (see chapter 13).
- Stage A5 – consultation on the appropriateness and robustness of the scope of the SA and proposed appraisal framework.

2.5 Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects

Stage B will be undertaken alongside the development of the Local Plan. The emerging Local Plan objectives will be tested against the sustainability objectives identified in the Scoping Report.

The likely effects of policy options and any reasonable alternatives will then be predicted and evaluated in terms of their significance. This assessment will be based on the SA objectives identified in this document, where appropriate. Where any potential adverse impacts are identified, mitigation measures will be proposed accordingly and there may also be opportunities to maximise any beneficial effects.

Similarly, proposed allocations and any reasonable alternatives, will also be assessed. To adequately assess sites, detailed information about the proposed sites will be required.

Monitoring mechanisms for evaluating the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan will also be put in place.

2.6 Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal report

The SA report will set out how sustainability issues have been considered in preparation of the Local Plan. It will show how proposals have been assessed against the

sustainability objectives, identify mitigation measures for any significant adverse effects and identify opportunities to maximise positive effects. It will also identify monitoring mechanisms.

The SA report will incorporate HIA and EqIA. HRA will be undertaken separately, but the findings will be incorporated into the SA report where relevant.

2.7 Stage D: Consulting on the draft Local Plan and SA report

Consultation will be undertaken on the draft Local Plan and accompanying SA report with statutory consultees and other relevant stakeholders. The results of the consultation will inform development of the Local Plan.

2.8 Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan

Following adoption, the Local Plan will be monitored to test its effects against those predicted in the SA report, and to identify any need to respond to any unforeseen adverse effects. This will be done through the Annual Monitoring Report where possible.

The Local Plan will include a range of policies and allocations. The policies will need to be assessed in a slightly different way to the allocations. As such, the SA framework may differ slightly for policies and allocations.

3 Climate change, energy and air quality

3.1 Policy context

International

The UK is party to key international climate agreements, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2015). These treaties establish obligations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting adaptation.

National

The Climate Change Act 2008 sets a requirement for the UK Government to ensure that greenhouse gasses are reduced to net zero by 2050. This target was introduced through an amendment to the act in 2019.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires development plan documents to include policies designed to secure that development contributes to climate change and adaptation.

The National Design Guide (2021) sets a requirement for well-designed places and buildings to follow the energy hierarchy of:

- reducing the need for energy through passive measures including form, orientation and fabric;
- using energy efficient mechanical and electrical systems, including heat pumps, heat recovery and LED lights; and
- maximising renewable energy especially through decentralised sources, including on-site generation and community-led initiatives.

Paragraph 15 of the NPPF identifies that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In paragraph 17 it identifies that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives – an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective.

Policy CC1: Planning for climate change (1) of the NPPF identifies that "Development plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating climate change and supporting the transition to net zero, in accordance with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008. They should also take a proactive approach to adapting to climate change, taking into account the implications of extreme weather and long-term climate trends including overheating, wildfires, drought, flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes". It also states in CC1(1)(a) that plans should propose development patterns through their spatial strategy and allocations which can help to contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and avoid increased vulnerability and improve resilience to the effects of climate change. CC1 (1) also identifies that development plans should address any specific risks from climate change, set local water efficiency standards where these are justified and identify

opportunities for green infrastructure provision and nature-based solutions which can safeguard and improve carbon storage.

NPPF Policy PM13(1)(b)(iii) relates to setting standards for energy efficiency. This identifies that any standards that go beyond the current or proposed Building Regulations should have a clear and robustly costed rationale which shows that there will not be an adverse impact on the viability and deliverability of development.

In terms of the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, NPPF Policy W1 identifies that plans should make provision for development which is required for new or enhanced renewable and low carbon energy development. Policy W2 identifies that the development plan should support the transition to clean power by planning positively for the increased supply and use of renewable and low carbon energy and electricity network infrastructure.

There is a specific section of the PPG which relates to climate change. This advises how to identify suitable mitigation and adaptation measures to address the impacts of climate change.

Regional

There are no specific plans or policies at a regional level that would have a significant impact on climate change, energy or air quality.

Local

CW&C unanimously declared, on 21 May 2019, that the borough is in a climate emergency. The Council agreed that:

- climate change presents a threat to our way of life;
- the Council recognises the need to act in-line with worldwide agreements on climate change and the best available evidence, which states that, to limit emissions to 1.5°C, there is a requirement to reach net zero by 2045; and
- the Council must play its part by evidencing leadership on this issue.

In order to respond to the identified climate emergency, the Tyndall Centre report (2019) recommends that CW&C should aim to reach zero or near zero carbon no later than 2040. Most of the drivers for reductions in carbon emissions are outside the control of the local authority, for example the pace at which electricity is decarbonised and vehicle taxation policies. However, local authorities can influence carbon emissions through the ways in which they provide their services and how they plan and develop housing and infrastructure.

Within the Borough Plan 2024-2028, one of the six missions is that “individuals, public services and businesses take action to move to tackle the climate emergency, achieve net zero, protect the natural environment and adapt to the impact of climate change”.

3.2 Baseline information

The Met Office have identified that the UK has already warmed by 1°C since around the 1950’s. There have been: increased temperatures in coastal seas around the UK; less

frost and snow; longer and more frequent warm and hot spells; shorter and less frequent cold spells; and many high temperature records have been broken.

The Office for National Statistics have identified that since the 1980's, the UK climate has been warming at a rate of approximately 0.25 degrees Celsius per decade, and 2022, 2023 and 2024 have all been in the UK's top five warmest on record. The Climate Change Committee progress in adapting to climate change 2025 report to Parliament identified that the period between October 2022 and March 2024 was the wettest 18 months on record for England.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero have published greenhouse gas emissions figures for 2024. This identifies that for per capita emissions of CO_2 CW&C has the 50th highest figure our of all local authorities. The figure for CW&C is 8.2 tonnes, compared to the figure for England as a whole of 4.7 tonnes.

71.6% of domestic properties in CW&C had an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C or above in 2025 compared to 63.7% for England. This is an increase of 10.5 percentage points since 2024 for CW&C, compared to 3 percentage points for England over the same period. Since 2012, the percentage of domestic properties with this energy performance standard has increased by 35.6 percentages points in CW&C, compared to a 24.8 percentage point increase over the same period for England as a whole (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – Live tables on Energy Performance of Buildings Certificates).

The CW&C Landscape Sensitivity Study (2016) identifies areas where the sensitivity of the landscape to wind development and solar development is likely to be greatest and areas where impacts may be more moderate.

The Cheshire West and Chester Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Study (2012) provides a technical assessment of the baseline energy demand and potential renewable energy resources for the borough.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has published data relating to renewable energy by local authority for 2024.

Energy type	**Installed Capacity in CW&C as at end of 2024 (MW)**	**Generation in CW&C 2024 (MWh)**	**Number of installations as at end of 2024**
Photovoltaics	60.8	44,935	10,250
Onshore wind	50.4	86,766	5
Hydro	0.0	0	0
Anaerobic digestion	6.2	14,171	6
Offshore wind	0.0	0	0
Wave / tidal	0.0	0	0
Sewage gas	1.5	0	2
Landfill gas	7.2	29,563	3
Municipal solid waste	0.0	0	0
Animal biomass	0.0	0	0

Energy type	Installed Capacity in CW&C as at end of 2024 (MW)	Generation in CW&C 2024 (MWh)	Number of installations as at end of 2024
Plant biomass	21.8	0	2
Cofiring	0.0	0	0
Total	147.8	175,435	10,268

Table 3.1 – CW&C renewable energy (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero)

The authority is required to assess and where necessary monitor the concentrations of key atmospheric pollutants, primarily those that represent a threat to human health, but also those through to adversely affect vegetation. Where objectives are unlikely to be met, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared, and an Air Quality Action Plan implemented to improve air quality.

There are currently two AQMAs within CW&C, covering a relatively small proportion of the borough. They are located in Chester city centre and Thornton le Moors. In Chester, the source of the problem is nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) from road traffic. In Thornton le Moors it is sulphur dioxide (SO_2) from industrial sources. AQMAs in Ellesmere Port and Frodsham were revoked in 2024.

The CW&C 'State of the Borough Dashboard' identifies that in 2024, 691 vehicle miles were travelled on average per 100,000 members of the population, compared to a figure of 490 vehicle miles for England. The percentage of adults that walk for travel in CW&C is below the percentage for England, as 35.2% versus 37.5% for England (Department for Transport - road traffic estimates). There is relatively high private car use due to the rural nature of parts of the borough and the distances travelled to work, both within and outside the borough (for example to Liverpool and Manchester).

3.3 Recent changes and anticipated trends

The CW&C 'State of the Borough Dashboard' identifies that there has been nearly a 49% reduction in CO_2 emissions per capita from 2013 to 2023 in CW&C. This is compared to a 43% reduction in England. The key driver for this is a reduction in industrial CO_2 emissions (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emission statistics).

The Climate Change Committee report 'Progress in adapting to climate change: 2025 report to Parliament' (2025) identifies that:

- The UK's preparations for climate change are inadequate. Adaptation progress is either too slow, has stalled, or is heading in the wrong direction.
- The Government has yet to change the UK's inadequate approach to tackling climate risks
- The Government must act without further delay to improve the national approach to climate resilience

In future, energy requirements will change in terms of type as well as amount, for example increased numbers of electric vehicles will increase requirements for electricity. The UK has committed to preparing for 100 percent electric vehicle sales by

2030. The sale of new cars powered solely by internal combustion engines will be phased out in the UK from 2030 and from 2035 all new cars and vans will be zero emission.

The peaks and troughs in energy demand are also likely to change and energy storage will be increasingly important as more renewable energy capacity is developed.

Provision of solar farms is becoming increasingly popular within CW&C. The Council has added solar panels to many of the buildings within its ownership, including schools and leisure facilities. The uptake of domestic scale solar is also increasing.

The carbon dioxide and hydrogen pipelines forming part of the HyNet project pass through the borough. HyNet will capture carbon dioxide emitted by heavy industry and will provide locally-produced low carbon hydrogen to provide power for industry, transport and to heat homes and businesses. Parts of the HyNet project are now underway. Once finalised, this could significantly increase the use of hydrogen and reduce carbon dioxide emissions in CW&C.

3.4 Evidence gaps and proposed work

There are no significant evidence gaps relating to climate change, energy or air quality.

There is no proposed work relating to climate change at the current time.

3.5 Local Plan scope and influence

The main ways in which the Local Plan could influence climate change, energy and air quality are:

- Controlling the location of future development. Depending on the locations chosen, this could maximise opportunities for sustainable transport, walking and cycling and minimise dependence on cars and reduce congestion, which would result in lower levels of air pollution than alternative options. However, development of new homes and businesses is likely to result in additional air pollution.
- Influencing levels of sustainable transport and reducing reliance on private vehicles through location of development and provision of safe and attractive walking and cycling routes that are well connected to services and facilities.
- Supporting compact, mixed-use development patterns that encourage walking and cycling would reduce potential air pollution.
- Facilitating more renewable and low carbon energy development.
- Requiring green infrastructure, tree planting and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) which can help manage flooding and reduce urban heat island effects. Supporting green infrastructure and tree planting can also help filter pollutants.
- Identifying areas at risk from flooding and steering development away from more vulnerable locations.
- Encouraging low-carbon construction and energy-efficient building design.
- Encouraging resource efficiency.

3.6 Key sustainability issues and opportunities

The key sustainability issues relating to climate change, energy and air quality at a strategic planning level are:

- High levels of carbon emissions per capita in the borough due predominantly to industry.
- High levels of nitrogen dioxide in one AQMA and high levels of sulphur dioxide in one AQMA. New development could contribute to or be affected by poor air quality. Poor air quality can have a significant impact on people's health, such as increasing incidences of respiratory illness.
- Difficulties improving accessibility to services and facilities and reducing car use in the rural area.
- Additional renewable energy developments could impact negatively on the landscape, particularly if undertaken in greater numbers and at a larger scale.
- Energy performance of buildings and difficulties with retrofitting.

The key sustainability opportunities relating to climate change, energy and air quality are:

- Due to the scale of the borough and the relatively compact nature of the main centres, there are opportunities for developments to be built in accessible locations that help to reduce the need for car travel.
- Potential to make significant reductions in carbon emissions by decarbonising industry in Ellesmere Port and making the most of opportunities resulting from the HyNet project. The businesses in the Ellesmere Port are already have expertise in the energy sector and have been working on ways to decarbonise these energy-intensive industries.
- Potential opportunities for additional capacity from future renewable energy schemes in the borough.
- The Planning and Energy Act 2008 identifies that Local Planning Authorities may include policies in their Local Plans that impose reasonable requirements for: a proportion of the energy used in development in their area to be from renewable sources or to be low carbon. It also enables the setting of efficiency standards that exceed the energy requirements of building regulations. This could potentially be included in a future plan, but the consultation version of the NPPF proposes limiting local authorities' ability to set local quantitative standards beyond national requirements, including energy efficiency standards.
- There are opportunities to reduce the carbon impact of new buildings, both in terms of embodied carbon (the carbon emitted during the production of the materials that are used to construct the building) and carbon emitted from the operation of the building (heating, cooling, lighting, technology and appliances).
- The Local Plan and / or design code could require design of new buildings to maximise solar gain and prevent overheating.
- There are opportunities for urban greening and tree planting as carbon sinks and to increase shading and reduce heat island issues. This links to the work of the Mersey Forest and Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Green roofs and walls could

also be supported and can help to reduce air temperatures, improve air quality and to slow and contain run-off from heavy rainfall.

3.7 SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Minimise carbon emissions and climate change	Will it ensure that new development is in accessible locations?	Percentage of new residential developments of over 10 units within 800 metres of a city centre, town centre or local retail centre
		Percentage of employment development within 800 metres of a city centre, town centre or local retail centre
	Will it reduce the need to travel?	Percentage of new residential developments of over 10 units within 800 metres of a city centre, town centre or local retail centre
	Will it enable a shift to more sustainable modes of transport?	Number of tonnes of NOx emitted annually from road transport
		Mode of transport used by residents to travel to work in CW&C (% of employed residents)
	Will it encourage the use of lower carbon technologies and working practices?	Total CO2 emissions
		CO2 emissions per capita arising from domestic industry and commerce
	Will it protect or enhance peat resources?	Number of new developments granted on areas with potential peat resources
Reduce air pollution	Will it improve local air quality or minimise air pollution?	Number and extent of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)
		Number of tonnes of NOx emitted annually from road transport
		Number of tonnes of PM10 emitted annually from road transport
Reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and	Will it reduce energy consumption?	Housing energy efficiency (average SAP rating of private sector dwellings)

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
increase the production of energy from renewable resources		Number of households in fuel poverty
	Will it promote energy efficiency?	No identified indicator
	Will it result in an increase in the installed renewable energy capacity?	Installed capacity from renewable energy sources

4 Waste

4.1 Policy context

International

The Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) was incorporated into UK law primarily through the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011.

The principles of self-sufficiency and proximity (commonly referred to as the 'proximity principle') are set out in Article 16 of the Waste Framework Directive. Local planning authorities are required, under regulation 18 of the 2011 Regulations, to have regard to these requirements when exercising their planning functions relating to waste management.

National

The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 require the preparation of waste management plans. They also set out the waste hierarchy:

- Prevention – avoiding waste being created in the first place.
- Preparing for re-use – checking, cleaning, repairing or refurbishing products so that they can be used again without further processing.
- Recycling – processing waste materials into products, materials or substances for the original or other purposes.
- Other recovery – recovering value from waste where recycling is not possible, for example through energy from waste facilities or anaerobic digestion.
- Disposal – the least preferred option.

National policy for waste planning is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2026) and the National Planning Policy for Waste (2014). The National Planning Policy for Waste should be read alongside the Waste Management Plan for England (2021).

The Waste Management Plan for England sets out the government's ambition to work towards a more sustainable and efficient approach to resource use and management.

The NPPF does not include specific policies relating to waste and states that the National Planning Policy for Waste should also be considered where relevant. It does, however, highlight that achieving sustainable development has an environmental objective, which includes minimising waste. It also refers to a minerals and waste plan being a required part of the development plan and states that minerals and waste plans should set out specific proposals to enable the delivery of sustainable waste management and a circular economy.

The National Planning Policy for Waste requires waste planning authorities to prepare Local Plans that identify sufficient opportunities to meet the identifies needs of their area for the management of waste streams. It sets out the need to drive waste management up the waste hierarchy and to identify suitable sites or areas for waste management facilities. Appendix B of the National Planning Policy for Waste sets out

specific locational criteria to be taken into consideration when testing the suitability of sites and areas. The locational criteria are:

- Water quality and resources and flood risk management
- Land instability
- Landscape and visual impacts
- Nature conservation
- Conserving the historic environment
- Traffic and access
- Air emissions, including dust
- Odours
- Vermin and birds
- Noise, light and vibration
- Litter
- Potential land use conflict

The new NPPF does not include any revisions to the National Planning Policy for Waste. The NPPF consultation documents stated that the government intend to consult on revisions to the National Planning Policy for Waste in the future.

The PPG for waste identifies what comes within the scope of waste development. This includes:

- metal recycling sites
- energy from waste incineration and other waste incineration
- landfill and land raising sites (such as soils to re-profile golf courses)
- landfill gas generation plant
- pyrolysis/gasification
- material recovery/recycling facilities
- combined mechanical, biological and/or thermal treatment
- in-vessel composting
- open windrow composting
- anaerobic digestion
- household civic amenity sites
- transfer stations
- waste water management
- dredging tips
- storage of waste
- recycling facilities for construction, demolition and excavation waste [1]

The PPG for waste also states that there is no expectation that each local planning authority should deal solely with its own waste to meet the requirements of the self-sufficiency and proximity principles [2]

[1] PPG for Waste paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 28-002-20141016
[2] PPG for Waste Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 28-007-20141016

Regional

CW&C is a member of the North West Waste Network and has regular meetings to discuss waste management issues.

Local

CW&C is a unitary authority and is therefore also the waste planning authority.

A Waste Needs Assessment (WNA) for CW&C was prepared by BPP Consulting and was published in 2023. This concluded the existing consented capacity within CW&C is sufficient to meet the predicted management requirements for waste during the Plan period, apart from the requirement for non-inert landfill. Non-inert landfill is a landfill site that accepts waste that is not classified as inert, meaning that the waste can undergo physical, chemical or biological changes over time. The was a forecast shortfall in non-inert landfill provision from 2037, but this was expected to be more than offset by the substantial surplus in 'other recovery' capacity offered by the two Energy from Waste (EfW) plants under construction at that time. 'Other recovery' covers operations that involve something other than recycling and/or composting/anaerobic digestion. This includes EfW facilities, where waste is burnt to produce power and/or heat, provided they meet a minimum performance standard.

An update to the WNA was prepared by BPP in 2026 and the key findings are set out in the baseline information section below.

4.2 Baseline information

The WNA update found that a total of around 1.13 million tonnes of waste arose within CW&C in 2024. This is similar to the figure of around 1.12 million tonnes of waste found to arise within CW&C in 2021. Figure 4.1 shows the quantities of waste arising in CW&C by waste stream in 2024.

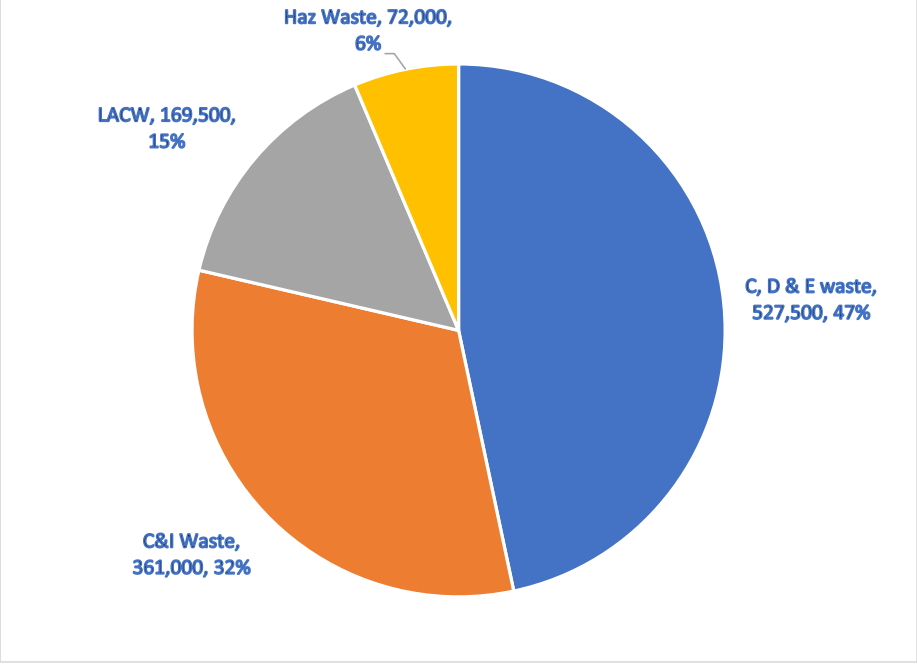


Figure 4.1 - Quantities of waste arising in CW&C by waste stream in 2024

The current position in CW&C is that less than 1.5% of LACW goes to landfill. CW&C also has one of the highest recycling rates in the country, with over 59% of all waste successfully recycled (compared to 42% for England) (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – local authority collected waste management annual results).

The WNA identifies the current waste capacity within CW&C, as set out in table 4.1 below.

Waste management type	Approximate capacity (tonnes)	Intermediate or final fate
Recycling	1,142,858	Intermediate
Metal recycling	18,625	Intermediate
Organic waste treatment	299,958	Intermediate
Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)	32,686	Intermediate
Recycled aggregate facilities	488,336	Intermediate
Waste transfer (reception and bulking of waste for subsequent management at other facilities)	24,153	Intermediate
Inert waste landfill	0	Final fate
Non-inert waste landfill	0	Final fate
Recovery to land	0	Final fate
Other recovery (residual waste / refuse derived fuel)	1,100,000	Final fate

Table 4.1 – Waste capacity (WNA Update 2026)

The table above includes all operational waste sites and sites with planning permission that are under construction. Sites with planning permission that are not yet under construction have not been included as there is a risk that they may not come forward and therefore may not contribute to the supply.

Protos (formerly known as Ince Park) was safeguarded in the Local Plan (Part Two) as a multi-modal resource recovery park and energy from waste facility for use in connection with the recycling, recovery and reprocessing of waste materials. Several plots at Protos have already been developed for waste or waste-related uses. The sites under construction include Protos Energy Recovery Facility (Plot 8) in Ellesmere Port and Lostock Sustainable Energy Plant near Northwich. These are both EfW plants.

There are several other plots / sites at Protos and Lostock Works that have planning permission for waste or waste-related uses, but they are not yet under construction.

The WNA update concluded that there appears to be sufficient existing consented capacity to meet the projected management requirements for: recycling/composting; 'other recovery' of residual non-hazardous Local Authority Collected Waste (LACW – also known as household waste); Commercial and Industrial waste (C&I – from business and industry) waste: and for inert waste (waste predominantly from Construction, Demolition and Excavation (CDE) that does not undergo changes over time) via recovery throughout the Plan period.

There was a site (Kinderton Lodge, near Middlewich) that had planning consent for a landfill site. The planning permission was implemented (started), but has now expired and the landfill cannot be constructed under the current permission. The WNA update identified that the consent holder's decision not to open Kinderton Lodge Landfill is predicted to lead to a cumulative deficit in non-hazardous waste landfill capacity of around 342,500 tonnes by the end of the Plan period. However, given that 'other recovery' capacity is more than sufficient to meet the identified 'other recovery' need, it can be expected to cater for the projected deficit in non-hazardous waste landfill capacity. In addition, the WNA Update identified that landfills with sufficient remaining void space to potentially manage the predicted shortfall in non-inert waste landfill capacity are located in Lancashire and Greater Manchester.

The WNA update also noted that as there is a policy expectation for waste to be driven up the waste hierarchy and a need to intensify recycling to reach the national target of halving residual waste production per head by 2042, proposals for capacity to move waste to higher tiers of the waste hierarchy (e.g. recycling) should not be constrained by the findings of the WNA Update.

4.3 Recent changes and anticipated trends

The WNA Update 2026 forecasts waste management requirements in CW&C for each waste stream for 2030, 2035, 2040 and 2045, from a baseline in 2024. It then establishes the gap between capacity and requirements and produces a capacity gap. This is set out in table 4.2 below.

Capacity Type	**Waste Management Capacity Gap** (Tonnes at Plan Milestones)			
	2030	**2035**	**2040**	**2045**
Recycling & Composting (Table 13)	**+1,018,773**	**+999,910**	**+999,984**	**+999,803**
Other Recovery (Table 14)	**+965,235**	**+973,954**	**+973,724**	**+973,495**
Non-inert Landfill (Table 15)	-17,970	-14,375	-14,406	-14,436
Aggregate recycling (Table 16)	**+22,063**	**+19,727**	**+17,379**	**+15,019**

Table 4.2 – CW&C combined capacity assessment and annual capacity gap analysis

The predictions in the WNA Update 2026 take account of recent and proposed changes to recycling and producer responsibilities. Simpler recycling was introduced by government in 2024 and aims to enable consistent, more streamlined collections from households, businesses and non-domestic premises (such as schools and hospitals). This includes default requirements for separate collection of:

- residual (non-recyclable) waste
- food waste (mixed with garden waste if appropriate)
- paper and card
- all other dry recyclables (plastic, metal and glass)

CW&C have had these collections in place for several years, but other authorities are only just introducing food waste collection etc. This will change future requirements for waste management and could increase demand for anaerobic digestion for example. Based on figures from 2024/25, CW&C was the 18th highest performing local authority in England in terms of total household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting.

Extended Producer Responsibility reforms were introduced in 2024 through the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2024. In January 2025 a key phase came into force, making producers liable for disposal costs. This will impact on waste generation and recycling requirements.

Another key change is the Deposit Return Scheme, which is set to launch in October 2027. This aims to reduce litter and increase recycling rates by incentivising consumers to return empty beverage containers. The scheme will apply to single-use drinks containers made from plastic and metal. This will result in changes to levels of recycling.

A circular economy taskforce was established in 2024 to help prepare England's first Circular Economy Strategy. This has been delayed and is now expected to be consulted on by government during 2026.

The recent and proposed changes in government policy will result in substantial changes in waste arisings, recycling performance and residual waste treatment requirements.

4.4 Evidence gaps and proposed work

As the WNA Update was published in June 2026, there are no major evidence gaps at this point. Monitoring of waste-related planning applications will be undertaken on an annual basis.

4.5 Local Plan scope and influence

The Local Plan can influence the location and provision of waste facilities by allocating sites and / or criteria-based policies relating to new waste developments. The Local Plan can also safeguard existing waste facilities and can prevent new development in areas adjacent to existing or proposed waste limiting future operation of facilities. This is known as the 'agent of change' principle.[3] Movement of waste is normally based on market decisions (cost and distance) and as such, the Local Plan has relatively little influence over this, beyond the location of new sites. Any future changes to the waste hierarchy and the priority given to different types of waste management, recycling and disposal often relates to government policy and taxation and is therefore difficult to control through planning policies.

Policies on sustainable construction can support re-use and recycling of materials and other policies can help to promote recycling and re-use, but most of the factors that impact on recycling rates and use of recycled materials are outside the planning process and therefore cannot be influenced by the Local Plan.

[3] Paragraph 200 of the NPPF 2025

4.6 Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- The nature of waste is constantly changing in response to government policy, requirements and taxation. Recycling levels have generally been increasing and this is likely to continue to change as a result of simpler recycling, extended producer responsibilities and improvements in the circular economy. Waste management provision will need to keep up with these changes.
- Use of landfill is reducing as more waste is being recycled and residual waste is increasingly sent for treatment or used for energy generation. Landfill is therefore becoming more of a sub-regional resource.
- National waste policy and guidance has not been updated and is becoming increasingly out of date.

4.7 SA framework

Sustainability objective	**Appraisal criteria / sub-objective**	**Baseline indicator**
Minimise waste generation and manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy	Will it help to reduce the amount of waste generated?	Local Authority Collected Waste
		Total amount of Commercial and Industrial Waste
		Kilogrammes of household waste collected per head
	Will it encourage increased re-use, recovery, recycling, or composting?	% of local authority collected waste recycled and composted
		% of local authority collected waste sent for energy recovery
		% of commercial and industrial waste recycled
	Will it reduce the amount of waste sent for incineration or landfill?	% of local authority collected waste landfilled
		Amount of commercial and industrial waste produced in the borough sent for energy recovery / landfill / treatment
	Will it result in new or enhanced waste management facilities?	Capacity of new waste management facilities

5 Land and resources

It is important that resources are protected and safeguarded through Local Plan policies. Some of the main components of land and resources for the purpose of this scoping report are mineral resources, geological and geomorphological resources and agricultural land. Regard should also be given to the ways in which vacant, derelict and contaminated land can be managed and redeveloped.

5.1 Policy context

International

There are no specific international policies or legislation that have a significant impact on land and resources.

National

Section 97 of Part II of Schedule 5 and Schedule 9 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 establishes a range of orders for mineral planning authorities to control minerals development.

The Managed Aggregates Supply System (MASS) seeks to ensure a steady and adequate supply of aggregates in England, taking into account the geographical imbalances in occurrence and need of suitable aggregates resources. It involves national, sub-national and local partners working together from minerals planning authorities at the local level, Aggregate Working Parties at the sub-national level and a National Aggregate Coordinating Group who monitor the overall provision of aggregate in England. CW&C is a member of the Northwest Aggregate Working Party (AWP). The AWP are consulted annually on the draft Local Aggregate Assessments (LAAs) and ratify the final versions.

The Mineral Products Association have estimated that each home requires 200 tonnes of aggregates. Aggregates are also required for many other uses such as concrete production, road construction, rail infrastructure and flood defences.

Developers and local planning authorities (LPAs) should refer to government policies and legislation when considering development proposals that affect agricultural land and soils. They aim to protect and manage all soils, especially, the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals. Natural England uses these policies to advise on development proposals as a statutory consultee in the planning process.

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018) sets out the government's 25-year plan to improve the health of the environment by using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently

Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) is a non-statutory designation intended to help protect areas of geological importance. These can be designated for scientific significance, aesthetics, historical importance or educational purposes. CW&C has a number of sites of importance, some crossing administrative boundaries. RIGS in Cheshire are identified by a Cheshire RIGS Group. RIGS complement the series of statutorily designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, but

do not receive any statutory protection other than through the policies contained in Development Plan Documents.

CW&C also has some contaminated land and the Environmental Protection Team identify, investigate and manage such land within the borough. Land can be contaminated by substances such as heavy metals, such as arsenic, cadmium and lead, oils and tars, chemical substances and preparations, like solvents, gases, asbestos and radioactive substances. Contaminated land may previously have been used as a factory, mine, refinery or landfill for example. A dataset of polygons with an attribute table that summarises the location and status of land recorded within the public register kept under the Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 by the government (Contaminated Land Part IIA public register- data.gov.uk).

Chapter 11 of the NPPF relates to facilitating the sustainable use of minerals and states that "since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long-term conservation". Policy M1 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies should provide for a sufficient and timely supply of minerals of national and local importance. It also states that the development plan should use the Local Aggregate Assessment, the advice of the Aggregate Working Parties and National Aggregate Co-ordinating Group and any published national or sub-national guidelines on future supply to identify the provision needed in the plan area. It also identifies that the development plan should allocate sites or identify preferred areas to maintain this provision, including landbanks of at least seven years for sand and gravel and calculate and maintain separate landbanks for aggregate minerals of a specific type or quality. The development plan should also ensure that large landbanks bound up in very few sites do not stifle competition.

Policy M1(4) identifies that in relation to oil and gas, the development plan should distinguish between, and plan for, the three phases of development (exploration, appraisal and production) within licences areas. Policy M1(6) refers to the need for development plan policies to take account of the contribution that substitute or secondary and recycled minerals and minerals waste can make to supply.

Policy M2 of the NPPF relates to safeguarding mineral resources and infrastructure and this identifies that the development plan should:

- define Mineral Safeguarding Areas;
- where necessary to prevent the sterilisation of mineral resources, require the prior extraction of minerals on sites allocated for non-mineral development, where practical and environmentally feasible; and
- identify existing, planned and potential sites which need to be safeguarded as they provide minerals related infrastructure.

The PPG on minerals provides additional details relating to minerals safeguarding, planning for mineral extraction and restoration and aftercare of minerals sites.

5.2 Baseline information

Soils in the borough are predominantly slow permeable loams and clays, although the Sandstone Ridge (running down the eastern part of the borough) is characterised by

freely draining loamy and sandy soils. The marshland and coastal flats near the areas of Frodsham, Helsby, Parkgate and Neston are naturally wet loamy and clayey soils.

CW&C has a legacy of industrial, manufacturing and waste disposal activities that have the potential to result in land contamination. The Council regulates contaminated land under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and has prepared a Contaminated Land Strategy (2026-2031) in line with this. As of 2026, six sites within the borough have been formally determined as contaminated land and are recorded on the Council's public register. The majority of land contamination issues are addressed through the development management process rather than formal determination. A major investigation of the former Commonside landfill site at Alvanley was ongoing during 2026 to assess whether the site meets the statutory definition of contaminated land. Overall, the extent of formally determined contaminated land within the borough remains limited, although the presence of former industrial land, landfill sites and potentially contaminated brownfield land continues to represent an important planning and sustainability consideration.

The form and landscape of Cheshire West, a low, flat plain with a series of small prominent sandstone ridges, is reflective of its geology. The Cheshire Plain extends from the broad Mersey Valley, in the north, to the Shropshire Hills in the south. To the west the plain is bounded by the hills of the Welsh borders, and to the north-east by the foothills of the Pennines. Apart from a small outcrop of Carboniferous rocks in the north-east corner of the County, the solid geology of Cheshire West comprises Triassic mudstones and sandstones that were deposited on a wide desert plain. These rocks are throughout Cheshire overlain by Quaternary glacial deposits, largely consisting of till (or boulder clay), with local deposits of silt, peat, sand and gravels.

Rising up from the Plain are a number of small sandstone ridges and scarps formed from the Lower Triassic Sherwood Sandstone, such as the northern end of an outcrop which runs through central Cheshire between Malpas and Tarporley (this is the Peckforton Hills).

The borough contains a significant agricultural land resource associated with the Cheshire Plain. Much of the borough is characterised by productive lowland agricultural soils, including areas of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (Grades 1,2 and 3a) which are recognised as finite national resource. These soils support food production, biodiversity, carbon storage, water regulation and wider ecosystem services. The principal pressures on soil resources arise from development-related land take, soil sealing, agricultural intensification, erosion, compaction and historic land contamination associated with former industrial and waste management activities. The protection and enhancement of soil quality and the efficient use of previously developed land remain important sustainability issues for the borough.

The Council maintains a Brownfield Land Register which identifies sites considered suitable (subject to Local Plan policies and guidance), and available for housing-led development. The current brownfield land register, published in 2025, identifies 118 sites without planning permission, with an estimated capacity of around 4,385 units Brownfield Land Register | Cheshire West Planning Policy. The efficient reuse of previously developed land represents a key sustainability opportunity, supporting urban

regeneration, reducing pressure on greenfield land and helping to minimise the loss of agricultural soils and other natural resources. Nevertheless, some brownfield sites may require remediation due to contamination or other environmental constraints.

The key mineral resources present in the borough are sand and gravel, salt and coalbed methane. There are currently two active sand and gravel sites within the borough – Crown Farm quarry in Delamere (also known as Cheshire Sands) and Forest Hill Quarry in Sandiway. There is also one industrial silica sand site (Rudheath Lodge), which is partly within CW&C and partly within Cheshire East. This site produces both industrial silica sand and aggregate sand.

CW&C has no crushed rock reserves and no dimension stone is currently extracted in the borough, but sandstone was extracted in the area in the past.

An extension to Crown Farm quarry (planning application 23/00320/FUL) was granted in April 2025. This is for a lateral and deepening extension of the approved excavation area for the winning and working of an additional 5.58 million tonnes of sand along with the remaining approved reserves and provision of ancillary electrical substations. This is for mineral extraction to 22 February 2042 and restoration to be completed within a further 12 months of the cessation of mineral extraction.

Salt is present in extensive areas underlying the borough in both its solid form as rock salt and in solution as brine. Rock salt is currently mined underground at the Winsford Rock Salt Mine, which currently has a capacity of around 2.25 million tonnes per year. The voids created by the extraction are also of strategic importance being used for document storage (archiving services) and contributing to hazardous waste storage capacity.

Salt is also extracted in solution at the Holford Brinefields. The brine is extracted at numerous wells which supply works in Northwich for use in industrial processes. Some of the cavities created at Holford Brinefields also contribute to the nationally significant gas storage.

Coal underlies parts of the borough, but no extraction currently takes place. In addition, hydrocarbons are found in sandstone and limestone reservoirs beneath the borough in the form of coal bed methane and shale gas. Several exploratory borehole sites were permitted and two have permission for the production phase of coalbed methane extraction. These permissions do not allow for the exploration, appraisal and/or production of shale gas.

According to the Mineral Products Association Profile of the UK Mineral Products Industry (2025) 31% of aggregates in Great Britain are from recycled and secondary sources.

There are currently 24 RIGS within CW&C, covering 174 hectares.

5.3 Recent changes and anticipated trends

The CW&C LAA 2025 covers sales and reserves data from January 2024-December 2024. This identifies that sales of sand and gravel aggregate from within the borough started relatively low in 2015 at 0.60 million tonnes per annum and increased to a high

point during 2018 and 2019 of 0.80 million tonnes per annum. Sales have generally decreased since 2019, possibly due to the Covid pandemic and associated impacts on the economy and housebuilding. The sales reached a low of 0.54 million tonnes per annum in 2023 and increased to 0.69 tonnes per annum in 2024. The aggregate reserves in CW&C were 8 million tonnes in 2015. They decreased to a low of 2.94 million tonnes in 2023 and rose to 3.06 million tonnes in 2024, due to a recalculation of reserves at Crown Farm quarry. As mentioned above, since then there has been an extension approved to Crown Farm quarry, for the winning and working of an additional 5.58 million tonnes of sand. This will add significantly to the reserves.

5.4 Evidence gaps and proposed work

The annual Local Aggregate Assessments for CW&C provide up-to-date data for main quarry operators. However, there is a gap in evidence for secondary and recycled aggregates within CW&C as the minerals surveys tend to have very low response rates from secondary and recycled aggregate operators.

The evidence and consultation work undertaken for the Local Plan (Part One and Part Two) in relation to minerals may need to be updated. This includes:

- Consultation on mineral safeguarding undertaken for the Local Plan (Part One) in 2012.
- This included Mineral Safeguarding Areas, buffer zones and mineral infrastructure sites. Further work may be required to review the Mineral Safeguarding Areas, buffer zones and check for new minerals infrastructure.

CW&C currently imports all crushed rock and liaison with relevant local authorities who provide crushed rock to CW&C will be required to check if this can continue.

5.5 Local Plan scope and influence

The Local Plan can allocate new sites for minerals development and can also identify preferred areas (where minerals development will be supported) and areas of search (where knowledge of mineral resources is less certain, but proposals for minerals development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the permitted reserves, allocated sites and preferred areas cannot meet the required level of provision). It is difficult to identify new sites as minerals can only be worked where they are found and many of the mineral resource areas have already been sterilised or are significantly constrained.

Natural England has identified that areas of peat deposits should not be built on due to potential impacts on carbon emissions. The Local Plan could control development in peat areas. Some collaborative work would need to be done with Natural England on the exact locations of peat deposits, depths, type of peat etc. Whilst not a major land type in Cheshire West and Chester, peatland is a major store of carbon. Restoration of peatlands is a priority for government and part of its Nature for Climate programme that is delivering over 600m over the next four years. The Natural Capital report will provide up to date information on the extent and location of peatland across the borough.

Local Plan policies can protect RIGS and other important geological or geomorphological sites.

The spatial strategy for new development set out in the Local Plan Update will impact on levels of development on vacant and contaminated land, depending upon the areas chosen for the majority of development (i.e. whether this is the urban areas or more rural areas). It will also impact on levels of development on agricultural land.

Planning policies can influence whether agricultural land is used for housing or agricultural diversification for example. Planning cannot have a major influence on how land is farmed and whether this is done more intensively or more organically and supports biodiversity. This will be influenced by government policy, taxation and grants and the market for agricultural products.

5.6 Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- CW&C imports all of its crushed rock requirements as there are no workable reserves within CW&C. However, some key suppliers of minerals such as the Peak District and Lake District are likely to be increasingly restricted in future due to their National Park status.
- There may be additional pressure on provision of sand and gravel from CW&C in the future as several quarries in the Greater Manchester and Merseyside area have recently closed and many of these authorities do not now have a 7-year supply of aggregates.
- It may be possible for some additional aggregate provision to come from additional marine extraction.
- Changes to government policy and taxation relating to re-use of buildings rather than demolition and on recycling of construction, demolition and excavation waste may influence levels of recycled aggregates. This will impact on the levels of primary aggregates required to be extracted to meet the 7-year supply.
- The Mineral Products Association identify in the Annual Mineral Planning Survey Report 2023 that the rolling 10-year average replenishment rate for sand and gravel reserves was 61% (and was 63% in 2021), indicating that sales continue to exceed the tonnages of new reserves. As of the end of 2020, the rolling 10-year average for sand & gravel replenishment is 63%, indicating that sales continue to outstrip the tonnage of new reserves permitted.
- Changes to levels of housebuilding, employment development and major infrastructure schemes will impact on demand for minerals.
- Existing important sites of geological and geomorphological interest should be protected and enhanced.
- Development of vacant and derelict land should be prioritised.
- Remediation of contaminated land should be promoted and encouraged.

5.7 SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Protect, conserve or improve natural resources	Will it achieve remediation and re-use of contaminated land?	Percentage of planning applications approved on contaminated land with a contamination assessment.
	Will it protect the extent and quality of soils?	Number of planning applications permitted on Best and Most Versatile agricultural land
		Percentage of new and converted dwellings built on previously developed land
		Percentage of employment floorspace completed on previously developed land.
	Will it focus development on previously developed land?	Percentage of new and converted dwellings built on previously developed land
		Percentage of employment development completed on previously developed land
Protect, enhance and manage geodiversity	Will it protect or increase the number and areas of RIGS?	Number and area of RIGS
Provide a steady and adequate supply of minerals	Will it safeguard mineral resources?	Percentage of permitted planning applications for non-mineral development in sand and gravel Mineral Safeguarding Areas that include a mineral resource assessment and are not exempt from MSA requirements
	Will it enable delivery of a steady and adequate supply of minerals?	Supply of permitted reserves of sand and gravel
		Sand and gravel sales per annum
		Sand and gravel landbank

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
	Will it promote the use of secondary/recycled aggregates?	Percentage of total aggregate sand and gravel produced that is from secondary and recycled sources

6 Water

6.1 Policy context

International

The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) requires protection and enhancement of the ecological and chemical status of rivers, lakes, groundwater and estuaries and prevention of deterioration.

The Floods Directive (2007/60/EC) establishes a framework for assessing and managing flood risk.

The UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 seeks to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

National

The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) has been retained in domestic legislation through the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 provides the framework for local flood risk management and sustainable drainage.

The Water Resources Act 1991 provides for the protection and management of controlled waters and water resources and the Land Drainage Act 1991 establishes powers and responsibilities relating to drainage and ordinary watercourses.

The Environment Act 2021 establishes targets and mechanisms for improving water quality and environmental outcomes.

Updated River Basin Management Plans (2022) for the North West and Dee River Basin Districts establish environmental objectives and programmes of measures for the period 2021-2027. National policy seeks to improve water body status, reduce pollution incidents, increase resilience to drought and flooding, and support adaptation to climate change.

The Water Industry Act 1991 relates to water supply and sewerage infrastructure provision.

The National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (2025) are non-statutory technical standards produced by government. They aim to ensure that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with the SuDS manual.

The NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to:

- Contribute to and enhance the natural environment, including protecting and improving water quality and ecological networks.
- Prevent new and existing development from contributing to unacceptable levels of water pollution and support the recovery of water bodies.
- Apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development, directing development to areas at the lowest risk of flooding where possible.
- Ensure development is safe for its lifetime, taking account of the effects of climate change and avoiding increases in flood risk elsewhere.
- Incorporate SuDS and multifunctional blue-green infrastructure, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate.
- Ensure that development is supported by adequate water supply, wastewater and drainage infrastructure or that suitable improvements can be delivered in step with development.
- Support climate change adaptation measures that improve resilience to drought, flooding and extreme weather events.
- Protect and enhance natural capital assets, including rivers, wetlands, floodplains and groundwater resources.
- Support water-efficient development and the sustainable management of water resources.

The Flood Risk and Coastal Change PPG includes:

- Guidance on application of the Sequential and Exception Tests.
- Guidance on site-specific Flood Risk Assessments and sustainable drainage.
- Guidance on climate change allowances and water quality considerations.

<u>Regional</u>

- Environment Agency River Basin Management Plans for the North West and Dee River Basin Districts.
- Regional Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management strategies.
- Catchment-based partnership initiatives covering the Dee, Weaver, Gowy and Mersey catchments.

<u>Local</u>

- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2026).
- Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2016).
- Water Cycle Study (2010).
- United Utilities and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water Water Resource Management Plans and Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans.

6.2 Baseline information

Water quality and supply

Water quality remains a significant issue across the borough. Cheshire West and Chester falls within the North West River Basin District, including the Weaver and Gowy catchments, and the Dee River Basin District. Many monitored water bodies are currently classified below Good Ecological Status or Good Ecological Potential, reflecting ongoing pressures from wastewater discharges, agricultural runoff and other sources of diffuse pollution. The Environment Agency's Catchment Data Explorer provides the principal source of information on ecological status and progress towards Water Framework Directive objectives.

Current Water Resource Management Plans set out how future water demand is intended to be managed through a combination of existing resources, demand management measures and planned investment. Ongoing liaison with water companies will be required to confirm the availability of long-term water supply and wastewater treatment capacity to support planned growth.

Climate change is expected to increase pressure on water resources through hotter, drier summers, whilst more intense rainfall events may place additional pressure on drainage and wastewater systems.

Recent national policy and regulatory initiatives place increasing emphasis on the relationship between planned growth, wastewater treatment capacity, nutrient pollution and the achievement of environmental objectives. Ensuring that sufficient wastewater infrastructure is delivered alongside development is becoming an increasingly important consideration in plan-making and decision-taking.

Water resources may also face increasing pressure as a result of population growth and economic development. National policy increasingly recognises the need to improve water efficiency and support sustainable long-term management of water resources.

National policy and case law have increased focus on nutrient pollution and the potential effects of development on internationally protected habitats.

Flood risk

The borough is affected by a range of flood risk sources, including:

- Fluvial flooding from rivers and watercourses.
- Tidal flooding associated principally with the Dee Estuary.
- Surface water flooding.
- Groundwater flooding.
- Sewer flooding.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (2026) identifies significant areas of the borough as being affected by flood risk and provides the evidence base for application of the sequential approach to site allocation and development management.

The Authority monitors planning permissions granted contrary to Environment Agency advice on flood risk and water quality grounds through the Authority Monitoring Report. This has remained low, with 0 permissions recorded during 2024/25.

Additional growth has the potential to increase surface water runoff and place pressure on existing drainage infrastructure if not appropriately managed.

6.3 Recent changes and anticipated trends

- Publication of the updated National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026), including strengthened emphasis on climate resilience, infrastructure delivery and nature-based solutions.
- Increased national focus on wastewater treatment capacity, drainage infrastructure and the cumulative impacts of development on water environments.
- Expansion of requirements and expectations relating to sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- Updated flood mapping, climate change allowances and flood-risk guidance.
- Continued emphasis on improving ecological and chemical waterbody status through River Basin Management Planning.
- Increased focus on integrated catchment management, natural flood management and blue-green infrastructure.
- Increased frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall events.
- Greater risk of surface water flooding and pressure on drainage systems.
- Increased demand on water supply and wastewater infrastructure arising from planned growth.
- Stronger regulatory expectations relating to water efficiency, water quality and environmental outcomes.
- Increased use of blue-green infrastructure, nature-based solutions and multifunctional SuDS.
- Continued pressure to improve the ecological status of water bodies under Water Framework Directive objectives.
- Increased scrutiny of wastewater treatment and sewer network capacity to support planned development.
- Greater integration of water management, biodiversity recovery, green infrastructure and climate adaptation objectives.

6.4 Evidence gaps and proposed work

Identified from the SFRA:

- Level 1 SFRA update as required: Understanding of local flood risk (Level 1 SFRA update as required) - When there are changes to: the predicted impacts of climate change on flood risk; national flood modelling; detailed flood

modelling - such as from the Environment Agency or Lead Local Flood Authority; the Local Plan, spatial development strategy or relevant local development documents; local flood management schemes; flood risk management plans; local flood risk management strategies; national planning policy or guidance; or after a significant flood event.

- Level 2 SFRA: Further, more detailed assessment of flood risk to high and medium risk sites both now and in the future as notified by the Level 1 SFRA.
- Working with Natural Processes (WwNP): Further assessment of WwNP options in upper catchments to gauge possible areas for Natural Flood Management. Promote creation of floodplain and riparian woodland, floodplain reconnection and runoff attenuation features where the research indicates that it would be beneficial to the borough.
- Water Cycle Study: Update to ensure sufficient provision of infrastructure for water supply and wastewater for new development. Particularly relevant to intensification of urban development or the development of large strategic sites.
- Partnership working: continue to collaborate with water companies on sewer and surface water projects to ensure their assets can remain operational and resilient at all times across the catchment and that capacity for new development is appropriate. Continue to work with the Environment Agency on fluvial and tidal flood risk management projects. Potential opportunities for joint schemes to tackle flooding from all sources should be identified.

Other:

- Understanding of wastewater treatment works capacity and planned improvement programmes required to support growth.
- Assessment of potential nutrient and water quality impacts arising from strategic development allocations.
- Continued engagement with the Environment Agency and water companies regarding water quality, wastewater treatment and drainage infrastructure requirements.
- Assessment of opportunities for water neutrality, water efficiency and nature-based water management measures where appropriate.

6.5 Local Plan scope and influence

The Local Plan can:

- Direct development away from areas of highest flood risk through the sequential approach.
- Require Sequential and Exception Tests where necessary.
- Promote and support water efficiency measures in new development.
- Require sustainable drainage systems and multifunctional green infrastructure.
- Protect and enhance rivers, streams, watercourses, wetlands and groundwater resources.

- Safeguard and improve water quality through spatial strategy and development management policies.
- Support investment in water supply, wastewater and drainage infrastructure.
- Promote blue-green infrastructure and natural flood management approaches.
- Support adaptation to the impacts of climate change on flood risk and water resources.
- Ensure that development is aligned with available water supply, drainage and wastewater infrastructure capacity.
- Promote integrated blue-green infrastructure networks that deliver flood management, biodiversity and climate adaptation benefits.

The Local Plan has a moderate to high influence over flood risk management, sustainable drainage implementation, water quality and water efficiency outcomes. However, its influence over strategic water resource provision and major wastewater infrastructure investment is more limited and relies upon engagement with water companies and regulatory bodies.

6.6 Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- Many water bodies remain below Good Ecological Status or Potential.
- Existing fluvial, tidal, surface water and groundwater flood risks affect parts of the borough.
- Development and wastewater discharges can place pressure on water quality.
- Climate change is likely to increase both flood risk and water resource pressures.
- Capacity constraints may arise within drainage and wastewater infrastructure.
- Increased areas of hard surfacing can lead to greater surface water runoff.
- Agricultural pollution continues to affect some catchments.
- Uncertainty regarding the capacity of wastewater and drainage infrastructure to accommodate future growth.
- Achieving improvements in ecological waterbody status whilst accommodating significant development needs.
- Long-term pressures on water resources arising from climate change and population growth.
- Direct growth towards areas of lowest flood risk.
- Deliver high-quality sustainable drainage systems and blue-green infrastructure.
- Improve the ecological condition of rivers, streams and other water bodies.
- Increase water efficiency and reduce water consumption in new development.

- Reduce surface water runoff and improve climate resilience.
- Support natural flood management and nature-based solutions.
- Deliver multiple benefits through integrated water-sensitive design, including biodiversity, recreation and climate adaptation benefits.
- Integrate water management and climate adaptation objectives into site allocation and development design.
- Support infrastructure investment that improves water quality and environmental performance.
- Achieve multiple benefits through nature-based solutions that enhance flood resilience, biodiversity and public access to green space.

6.7 SA Framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Protect and improve water quality, promote sustainable water use and support climate-resilient water management	Will it protect or enhance water quality?	Number of planning applications granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on water quality grounds
	Will it improve water efficiency?	No indicator identified.
Manage and reduce the risk of flooding	Will it reduce the risk of flooding from all sources?	Number of planning applications granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on flood risk grounds
	Will it direct development towards areas of least flood risk?	Number of planning applications granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on flood risk grounds
	Will it promote or increase the number of relevant development proposals that incorporate SuDS?	Percentage of relevant development incorporating SuDS

7 Landscape, townscape and cultural heritage

7.1 Policy context – landscape and townscape

International

The Council of Europe Landscape Convention 'Promotes the protection, management and planning of the landscapes and organises international co-operation on landscape issues.' (Council of Europe Landscape Convention / Official website- Council of Europe Landscape Convention.

National

The NPPF Chapter 19: 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment' requires planning policies and decisions to:

- Protect and enhance the natural environment and valued landscapes.
- Recognise and respond to the character, needs and opportunities of each area.
- Conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes.
- Support nature conservation, habitat enhancement, restoration and creation that contribute to environmental improvement.
- Ensure development contributes positively to local character, distinctiveness and visual quality through good design.

The NPPF Chapter 12: 'Achieving Well-Designed Places' requires development to:

- Function well and add to the overall quality of an area.
- Be visually attractive.
- Be sympathetic to local character, landscape setting and built form.
- Create places with a strong sense of identity and distinctiveness.

The PPG provides detailed guidance supporting the NPPF. Relevant topics include:

- Design
- Historic Environment
- Natural Environment
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Effective use of land

It guides how landscape, visual, townscape and heritage considerations should be assessed and weighted in planning decisions.

Regional

Cheshire and Warrington Sub-Regional Strategy includes the following key priorities:

- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- Conserving the area's distinct landscape character.

- Supporting sustainable growth while safeguarding heritage assets.
- Strengthening cultural heritage as an economic and tourism asset.
- Promoting place-making and high-quality design.

The draft Cheshire AONB Designation Project - Natural Beauty Assessment identifies areas that are likely to meet Natural England's natural beauty criteria and could potentially form a provisional Candidate Area for a potential designation.

Local

- Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment
- A Landscape Strategy for Cheshire West and Chester Borough 2016 (the Landscape Strategy)

7.2 Policy context – heritage

International

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) promotes the identification, protection and conservation of cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.

The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta Convention, 1992) provides a framework for the protection, conservation and management of archaeological heritage.

The Council of Europe Framework on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, 2005) promotes recognition of the social value of cultural heritage and has influenced heritage practice, community heritage approaches and place-based planning internationally, although the United Kingdom is not a Party to the Convention.

The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention, 1985) provides a framework for the conservation and protection of architectural heritage across Europe.

National

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides statutory protection for listed buildings and conservation areas.
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 provides protection for scheduled monuments and nationally important archaeological remains.
- National Heritage Acts provide the statutory basis for Historic England and its functions relating to the protection, conservation and promotion of England's historic environment.
- Historic England Corporate Plan and Heritage at Risk Programme provide a framework for heritage protection, enhancement and monitoring.
- Historic England guidance and the National Heritage Acts provide the principal national framework supporting protection, conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

- Historic England Good Practice Advice Notes: GPA 2: Managing Significance, GPA 3: Setting of Heritage Assets, GPA 4: Enabling Development, GPA 7: Local Heritage Listing.

The NPPF includes the following requirements:

- Sustain, conserve and where appropriate enhance or better reveal the significance of heritage assets and their settings.
- Recognise the contribution of designated and non-designated heritage assets to local character, distinctiveness, placemaking and sustainable development.
- Secure viable uses consistent with the conservation of heritage assets.
- Take account of opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to local character and sense of place.
- Ensure harm to heritage significance is clearly justified and balanced against public benefits.
- Promote well-designed places that respond positively to local history and character.
- Ensure plans and decisions are informed by proportionate assessment of significance, archaeological interest and heritage impacts.
- Use robust evidence relating to heritage assets, conservation areas, archaeology and historic character.
- Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.
- Local planning authorities should maintain or have access to an up-to-date Historic Environment Record and use it to inform plan-making and decision-making.

The NPPF Chapter 16: 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' states that:

- Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource.
- They should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- Local plans should contain positive strategies for conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.
- Development affecting heritage assets must assess significance and impacts on that significance.

Planning Practice Guidance on the Historic Environment includes:

- Guidance on assessing significance, setting and heritage impact.
- Guidance relating to heritage significance, public benefits, substantial harm, archaeology, settings and decision making for designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- Guidance on archaeological assessment and investigation.
- Guidance relating to conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled monuments and non-designated heritage assets.

Regional

- Heritage at Risk initiatives operating across Cheshire and the North West.
- Cross-boundary management of historic landscapes, canal networks and archaeological resources.

Local

- Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.
- Cheshire West and Chester Heritage Strategy (consultation 2025/26).
- Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER).
- Cheshire Local Heritage List.
- Chester Characterisation Study (2012).
- Cheshire West and Chester Design Code (consultation draft 2025).

7.3 Baseline information – landscape and townscape

There are 20 different landscape character areas across Cheshire, with a diverse range from coastal to sandstone ridges located in Cheshire West and Chester. There are also 12 historic landscape character groups, further broken down into 34 character types, which can be used to assess capacity to accommodate change. It is important that the character of the landscape is understood when considering how it might change, so that any change will be for the better. A number of parishes within the borough have completed Village Design Statements. These documents detail the local character and features that make these areas distinct, setting out guidelines for new development. The landscape character types throughout Cheshire West and Chester can be seen below (Figure 7.1).

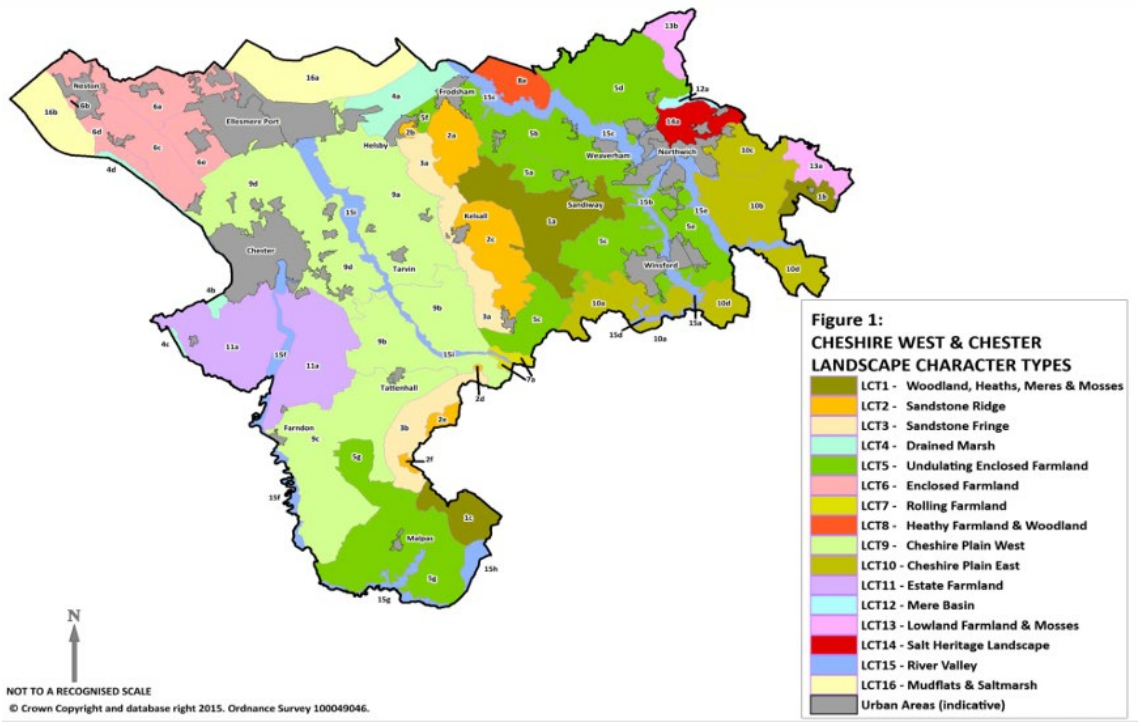


Figure 7.1 – CW&C Landscape types

The following ASCVs have also been identified for their combined significance of features of historic, landscape, archaeological and nature conservation value:

- Beeston/Peckforton/Bolesworth
- Dee Coastal Area
- Delamere/Utkinton
- Grosvenor Estate/Dee Valley
- Helsby and Frodsham Hills
- Weaver Valley
- Willington
- Wych Brook Valley

7.4 Baseline information – heritage

Cheshire West and Chester possesses a rich and diverse historic environment which contributes significantly to local identity, character, sense of place and economic vitality. The borough contains internationally, nationally and locally important heritage assets, reflecting its Roman origins, medieval development, industrial heritage and historic rural landscapes.

The historic city of Chester contains one of the best-preserved historic townscapes in England and is recognised for its exceptional concentration of heritage assets, including the city walls, Rows, cathedral and extensive archaeological remains.

The borough contains a wide range of designated and non-designated heritage assets, including listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, historic landscapes, canals, archaeological sites and locally important heritage assets.

Development, infrastructure projects, environmental change and inappropriate alterations have the potential to affect the significance, setting and condition of heritage assets. Continued investment and positive management are therefore required to conserve heritage assets and secure their long-term beneficial use.

The borough contains the following heritage resources[4]:

Type	**Number**
Scheduled Monuments	**118**
at Risk	*10*
Listed Buildings (records)	**2,523**
Grade I	*86*

[4] Data sourced from the National Heritage List for England, Historic England Heritage at Risk Register and Cheshire Historic Environment Record (November 2025). Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register identifies heritage assets requiring priority conservation action, with the Council and partners working to secure improvements where possible.

Type	Number
*Grade II**	*175*
Grade II	*2,262*
at Risk	*9*
Locally Listed Buildings	**1,313**
Conservation Areas	**96**
Registered Parks and Gardens	**7**
at Risk	*0*
Registered Battlefields	**1**
at Risk	*0*
World Heritage Sites	**0**
Areas of Archaeological Potential	**12**
Area of Archaeological Importance	**1**

Table 7.1 – Heritage resources (National Heritage List for England)

The borough contains archaeological evidence spanning prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods. Significant archaeological resources are concentrated in Chester, along historic transport corridors and within rural landscapes.

The borough includes historic landscapes, including parklands, canals, agricultural landscapes and settlement patterns, many of which contribute strongly to local distinctiveness and often extend across administrative boundaries. Their significance can be affected by cumulative change, development pressures and climate change.

7.5 Recent changes and anticipated trends – landscape and townscape

- Continued regeneration within Chester and key town centres.
- Increasing focus on placemaking and design quality.
- Greater recognition of green infrastructure and landscape-led approaches to development.
- Progression of work considering potential National Landscape designation areas.
- Continued pressure for housing and employment development in and around existing settlements.
- Increasing demand for high-quality public realm and accessible green spaces.
- Greater emphasis on climate adaptation within landscape design.
- Continued growth in heritage tourism and cultural investment.
- Increased use of landscape-led masterplanning and design coding.

7.6 Recent changes and anticipated trends – heritage

- Continued expansion of the Cheshire Local Heritage List.
- Growing recognition of heritage as a driver of placemaking, regeneration and economic growth.
- Increased use of conservation area appraisals, character studies and heritage evidence in plan making and development decisions.

- Continued investment in heritage-led regeneration projects, particularly within town and city centres.
- Greater emphasis on reducing the number of heritage assets at risk.
- Ongoing development and regeneration pressures in urban centres and strategic growth locations.
- Increased recognition of the role of heritage in supporting tourism, cultural identity and town centre vitality.
- Growing emphasis on the reuse and retrofit of historic buildings to support climate change objectives.
- Increased consideration of climate-related impacts on historic buildings, archaeological remains and historic landscapes.
- Greater integration of heritage considerations into placemaking and design-led approaches to development.
- Continued growth in the identification and recognition of locally significant heritage assets.

7.7 Evidence gaps and proposed work – landscape and townscape

Evidence gaps:

- Updated landscape sensitivity assessments for growth locations.
- Updated landscape strategy
- Detailed townscape analysis in key regeneration areas.
- Further evidence relating to potential National Landscape designation areas.

Proposed work:

- Update landscape and visual evidence where required.
- Assess cumulative landscape and townscape impacts of proposed growth areas.
- Review impacts on strategic views and settlement separation / key settlement gaps.

7.8 Evidence gaps and proposed work – heritage

Evidence gaps:

- Up-to-date condition assessments for heritage assets across the borough.
- Assessment of the implications of strategic site allocations on the settings of designated heritage assets, including cumulative impacts.
- Current understanding of the condition and significance of non-designated heritage assets.
- Assessment of climate change risks and adaptation requirements for heritage assets.
- Updated evidence relating to archaeological potential in strategic growth locations.
- Monitoring information regarding heritage assets at risk and vacant historic buildings.

- Assessment of cumulative impacts on historic townscapes, landscapes and settings.
- Review of conservation area boundaries, appraisals and management plans where evidence indicates they may no longer reflect current heritage significance.

Proposed work:

- Review and update Historic Environment Record evidence where necessary.
- Continue preparation and review of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.
- Continue development and maintenance of the Cheshire Local Heritage List.
- Liaise with Historic England regarding Heritage at Risk priorities and data.
- Assess impacts of proposed growth options on heritage significance, setting and historic character.
- Review evidence relating to archaeological potential and requirements for investigation.
- Consider implications of climate change adaptation and retrofit measures for historic assets.

7.9 Local Plan scope and influence – landscape and townscape

The Local Plan can strongly influence landscape, townscape and heritage outcomes through site allocations, spatial strategy, design policies and development management policies. It can direct development away from sensitive locations, protect valued landscapes and heritage assets, require high-quality design and secure landscape enhancements associated with new development. The Local Plan can also support heritage-led regeneration, public realm improvements and green infrastructure provision.

7.10 Local Plan scope and influence – heritage

The Local Plan can:

- Protect designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- Support identification and protection of locally listed heritage assets and areas of archaeological potential through site allocations and development management policies.
- Conserve and enhance the significance and settings of heritage assets.
- Protect archaeological remains and areas of archaeological potential.
- Promote high-quality design that responds positively to local character and distinctiveness.
- Support conservation-led regeneration and the beneficial reuse of historic buildings.
- Protect historic landscapes, parks, gardens and canal corridors.
- Require proportionate heritage impact assessments where appropriate.
- Reduce the number of heritage assets at risk through positive planning policies.

- Enhance townscape quality, local identity and sense of place.
- Support sustainable adaptation and retrofit of historic buildings where this conserves heritage significance.
- Climate change adaptation, resilience and energy-efficiency improvements should be delivered in ways that conserve heritage significance and avoid harm to the special interest of historic buildings, archaeological remains and historic landscapes.

The Local Plan has a high level of influence over the protection, management and enhancement of the historic environment through the spatial strategy, site allocations, design requirements and development management policies. It can play a significant role in ensuring growth supports the conservation and enhancement of the borough's historic environment and cultural heritage.

7.11 Key sustainability issues and opportunities – landscape and townscape

- Development pressure on valued landscapes and countryside.
- Loss of local distinctiveness through poorly designed development.
- Urban expansion affecting settlement identity and important views.
- Cumulative landscape and townscape impacts from incremental development.
- Promote landscape-led development and placemaking.
- Deliver high-quality design reflecting local character.
- Enhance public spaces, green infrastructure and townscape quality.
- Protect and strengthen local distinctiveness.
- Enhance enjoyment and appreciation of cultural heritage and landscapes.

7.12 Key sustainability issues and opportunities – heritage

- Development pressure affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings.
- Neglect, vacancy and deterioration of some historic buildings and structures.
- Heritage assets at risk requiring conservation action.
- Loss of local distinctiveness and historic character through inappropriate development and design.
- Climate change impacts on historic buildings, archaeological remains, conservation areas and historic landscapes.
- Increased flood risk affecting heritage assets and historic townscapes.
- Overheating and deterioration risks affecting historic buildings.
- Pressures arising from adaptation and energy-efficiency retrofitting of historic buildings.
- Balancing the need for growth with heritage conservation objectives.
- Pressure to retrofit historic buildings to improve energy efficiency whilst conserving heritage significance.
- Promote heritage-led regeneration within Chester, town centres and local centres.
- Bring vacant and underused heritage assets back into beneficial use.

- Protect and enhance Chester's nationally significant historic townscape and archaeological resource.
- Use heritage assets to strengthen local identity, sense of place and tourism.
- Encourage sensitive adaptation, retrofit and reuse of historic buildings.
- Improve public access to, understanding of and engagement with heritage assets.
- Integrate heritage considerations within high-quality placemaking and design.
- Enhance historic landscapes and cultural routes, including canals and historic corridors.

7.13 SA framework – landscape and townscape

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness	Will it protect or enhance landscapes or townscapes?	Percentage of conservation areas with an up-to-date appraisal and management plan
	Will it increase the quantity or quality of open space?	Total amount of open space per 1,000 resident population (ha)
	Will it provide high quality design?	No indicator identified.

7.14 SA framework – heritage

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Conserve and enhance the historic environment, cultural heritage, archaeological resources and historic character of places	Will it conserve or enhance designated heritage assets and their settings?	Number of historic assets on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register by asset type; number of conservation areas
		Number of assets removed from England's Heritage at Risk Register
	Will it conserve or enhance non-designated heritage assets and local character?	Number of assets included on the Cheshire Local Heritage List. Number of Conservation Area Appraisals as a proportion of Conservation Areas
	Will it protect archaeological resources and areas of archaeological potential?	Number of archaeological sites recorded in the Historic Environment Record

8 Biodiversity

8.1 Policy context

International

The international plans and programmes that relate to biodiversity include the following: Convention on Biological Diversity (came into force December 1993); Bern Convention on Conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats (1979, came into force June 1982); EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC and 2009/147/EC); Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1971, as amended); EU Directive on the Conservation of Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora(92/43/EEC as amended by 97/62/EC); EU Biodiversity Strategy (2011); UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015); and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022).

National

The Environment Act (2021) includes a mandatory approach to biodiversity net gain (BNG). All developments are required to commit to providing net gains for biodiversity in perpetuity; at a minimum, net gain should be provided for 30 years or for the lifetime of the development, whichever is longer. Such net gains should be 10% as a minimum.

The Act also established:

- Biodiversity Gain Plans.
- Habitat creation and enhancement requirements.
- Off-site biodiversity gain mechanisms.
- Statutory biodiversity credits.
- Long-term habitat management requirements (minimum 30 years).

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018) sets a goal to hand on to the next generation an environment that is of better quality than that which we have today. The approach is underpinned by a commitment to increasing natural capital, the stock of natural environment assets. Trees and woodland feature prominently in the Plan.

Within the NPPF, Chapter 19: 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment' requires planning policies and decisions to:

- Protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment.
- Contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and restoring habitats and ecological networks.
- Support nature conservation, habitat restoration, enhancement and creation.
- Promote nature recovery and secure measurable improvements for biodiversity.
- Protect sites of biodiversity value and important ecological assets, commensurate with their status and significance.

The NPPF also requires local planning authorities to:

- Take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing habitat networks and green infrastructure.
- Plan for biodiversity enhancement at landscape and catchment scales.
- Distinguish between international, national and locally designated sites according to their importance.

The NPPF provides strong protection for:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs).
- Ramsar Sites.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
- Irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland and ancient/veteran trees.

The PPG provides detailed advice on biodiversity and Biodiversity Net Gain implementation. It explains:

- Biodiversity metric requirements.
- Biodiversity Gain Plans.
- Habitat assessment methodologies.
- Management and monitoring requirements.
- Application and decision-making processes.

Regional

The Mersey Forest Plan includes a commitment to increase woodland cover and to help to offset our carbon emissions which receives significant funding from Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) includes a local habitat map, which demonstrates the strategic nature recovery network and identifies the best opportunity areas for nature recovery.

Local

The CW&C Ecological Network (2016) identifies strategic priorities across the borough where habitat should be maintained, restored or created to ensure resilient ecological network. This work is now complemented by the LNRS.

8.2 Baseline information

Cheshire West and Chester has 28 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), 443 Local Wildlife Sites, 39 Areas of Nature Conservation Value, 6 Local Nature Reserves, approximately 6,159 hectares of woodland and 31 Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan habitats. In addition, the Environment Act 2021 has introduced a strengthened statutory biodiversity duty and mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, placing increased emphasis on habitat creation, restoration and ecological network enhancement.

The condition of the borough's SSSI network should continue to be monitored using the latest Natural England condition assessment data. Whilst a substantial proportion of

the SSSI resource remains favourable or unfavourable recovering condition, a number of sites continue to experience unfavourable condition as a result of issues such as hydrological change, recreational pressure, invasive species, air pollution and inappropriate management. The most recent Natural England data should be used to inform future monitoring and reporting.

All environmental designations from part of the borough's ecological network, which is made up of Core Areas, Corridors and Stepping Stones, Meres and Mosses catchments, woodland networks, river corridors and areas of sustainable land use. These components provide connectivity between habitats and help improve ecological resilience to climate change.

The LNRS identifies priorities and opportunities for nature recovery, habitat creation and ecological connectivity across the sub-region.

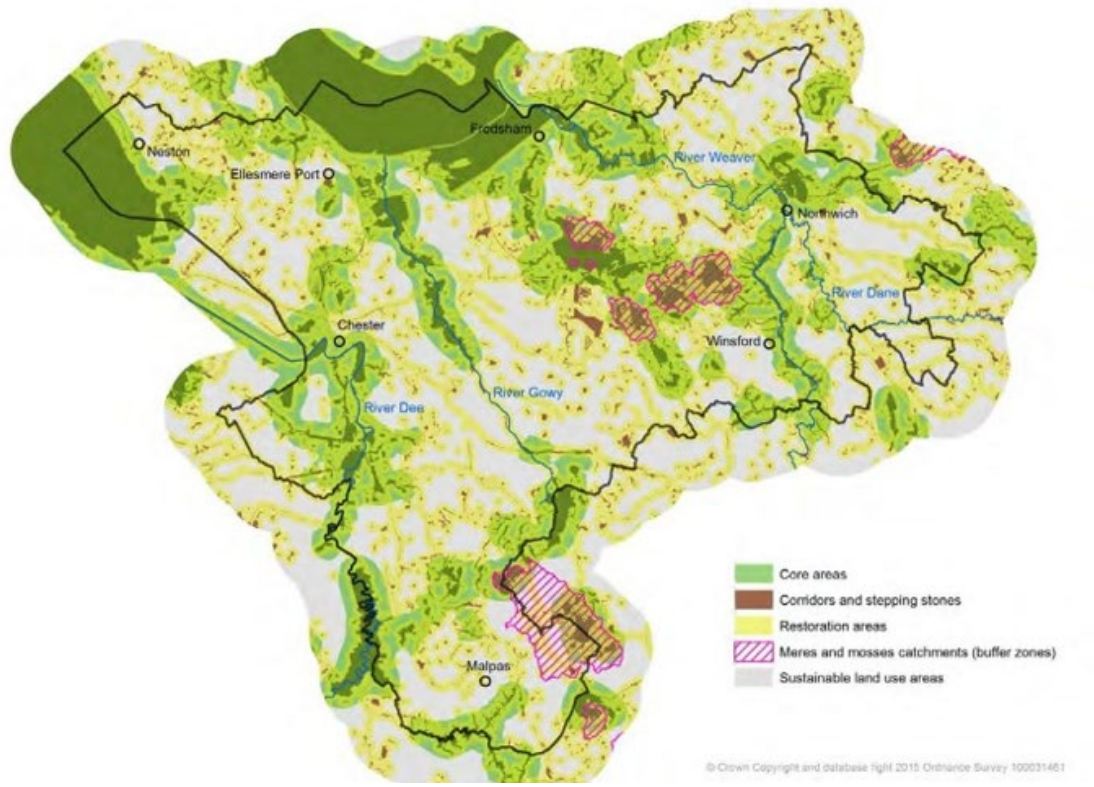


Figure 8.1 – CW&C Ecological network

Cheshire West and Chester also contains several internationally important sites within the National Site Network, which is formally referred to as Natura 2000 sites), including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites. These include:

- Mersey Estuary Ramsar and SPA (Special Protection Area)
- The Dee Estuary Ramsar SPA and SAC (Special Area of Conservation)
- Midland Meres and Mosses – Phase 1 Ramsar
- Midland Meres and Mosses – Phase 2 Ramsar
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC

- Oak Mere SAC
- West Midlands Mosses SAC

The following sites fall within a 15km buffer of the borough boundary:

- Rostherne Mere (Ramsar)
- Mersey Narrow and North Wirral Foreshore (Ramsar, SPA)
- Brown Moss (SAC)
- Fenn's, Whixhall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses (SAC)
- Manchester Mosses (SAC)
- Rixton Clay Pits (SAC)
- Liverpool Bay (SPA)

Areas of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV):

- 39 Areas of Nature Conservation Value
- 4 Strategic Wildlife Areas

Local Nature Reserves (Statutory):

- 6 sites – Rivacre Valley, Whitby Park, Stanney Wood, Marshall's Arm, Helsby Quarry, Burton Mill Wood.

Non-statutory Nature Reserves:

- 15 Sites managed by Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- 3 Sites managed by the National Trust
- 15 Sites managed by the Woodland Trust
- 3 Sites managed by the RSPB (not all lies within the borough)

Trees and woodland:

- Woodland cover 2015: 6159ha (Tree and Woodland Strategy)
- Mersey Forest have delivered 220 hectares of new woodland across Cheshire and Merseyside through the national Trees for Climate Programme since 2020.

Habitats and Species:

- 31 Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan habitats
- 63 Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan species

These habits and species remain an important focus for conservation, restoration and enhancement, and will help inform Biodiversity Net Gain delivery and the Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Nutrient impacts remain an important planning consideration for internationally designated water-dependent habitats within and around the borough. Any further development proposals within affected catchments will need to demonstrate that they will not adversely affect the integrity of protected sites through increased nutrient loading, taking account of the latest Natural England advice and relevant catchment strategies.

The area's waterways are also an important part of the green infrastructure within Cheshire West and Chester. A Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study was undertaken by the Mersey Dee Alliance exploring the green infrastructure objectives for the River Dee area, and how this could enable sub-regional growth. The River Dee is designated as a site of European importance (SAC) and the estuary a SPA and Ramsar site. There are also a number of other nature conservation designations linked to the area's waterways (SSSI's, SBI's etc) and they form important features in the landscape. Rivers are home to nationally rare flora and fauna and also locally important species and habitats. Therefore, maintaining and improving water quality is important. Water quality is also influenced by a number of factors outside the control of the planning system (e.g. agriculture).

8.3 Recent changes and anticipated trends

Recent changes:

- Introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Publication of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Increased woodland creation initiatives through the Mersey Forest.
- Greater emphasis on natural capital and ecosystem services.
- Increased habitat creation associated with development proposals.

Anticipated trends:

- Continued implementation of BNG across development proposals.
- Increased habitat restoration and ecological network enhancement.
- Greater emphasis on nature-based solutions to climate change.
- Additional woodland creation and urban greening projects.
- Increased monitoring and management requirements for biodiversity enhancements.

8.4 Evidence gaps and proposed work

Evidence gaps:

- Updated habitat condition assessments.
- Long-term monitoring data for BNG delivery.
- Tree canopy cover baseline and monitoring.
- Climate resilience assessment for priority habitats and species.

Proposed work:

- Review Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities.
- Update habitat and ecological network evidence.
- Continue monitoring designated site condition.
- Establish biodiversity net gain monitoring framework.
- Review opportunities for strategic habitat creation and woodland expansion.

8.5 Local Plan scope and influence

The Local Plan can significantly influence biodiversity outcomes through its spatial strategy, site allocations and development management policies. It can protect designated sites, secure biodiversity net gain, safeguard ecological networks, support habitat restoration and require integration of nature-based solutions within new development.

8.6 Key sustainability issues and opportunities

Issues:

- Habitat loss and fragmentation.
- Development pressures affecting designated sites and priority habitats.
- Climate change impacts on species and habitats.
- Poor ecological connectivity in some locations.
- Invasive species and declining biodiversity.
- Recreational pressures on sensitive ecological sites.
- There is a possibility that existing habitats and species present in the borough could come under pressure from future housing, employment, infrastructure and recreation growth. Potential impacts include habitat loss, fragmentation, increased recreational pressure, noise and light disturbance, water quality impacts and atmospheric pollution. Climate change is likely to exacerbate these pressures through changes in species distribution, ecological function and habitat condition. However, mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy provide opportunity to mitigate and reverse biodiversity decline through habitat creation, restoration and enhancement.

Opportunities:

- Deliver Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Restore and expand ecological networks.
- Increase urban and rural tree cover.
- Support Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities.
- Deliver nature-based solutions that provide multiple environmental benefits.
- Improve resilience of habitats and species to climate change.
- Sustainable growth can provide opportunities to better understand, protect and integrate biodiversity habitats and ecological networks into development proposals. New development delivered through the Local Plan Update should contribute towards biodiversity enhancement through Biodiversity Net Gain, habitat creation, green and blue infrastructure, tree planting, ecological connectivity and the strengthening of the borough's ecological network. Such measures can establish, restore and maintain functional habitat connections while increasing resilience to climate change and delivering wider environmental and health benefits.

8.7 SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Protect, enhance and manage biodiversity and geodiversity	Will it protect and promote effective management of the borough's sites of ecological and nature conservation importance?	The percentage area of land designated as sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) within the local authority area in favourable condition
		Number and total area of new statutory and non-statutory nature conservation sites
	Will it provide opportunities for the enhancement, creation or connection of habitats and to foster species conservation, diversity and resilience to climate change?	Number and total area of internationally and nationally designated nature conservation sites.
	Will it maintain, enhance and increase (rural and urban) tree cover and woodlands?	Scale of tree cover in rural and urban areas.

9 Population and housing

9.1 Policy context

International

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include the following goals that are relevant to population and housing:

- Goal 1 – No Poverty.
- Goal 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing.
- Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities.
- Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities.
- Goal 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

These objectives support the provision of sufficient, affordable and inclusive housing, sustainable communities and equal access to opportunities.

National

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Plans to contribute towards sustainable development and provide an appropriate framework for housing delivery.

The Housing Act 2004 provides the legislative framework for housing standards and addressing housing need.

Reforms to the planning system were introduced by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 and this establishes a revised framework for plan-making and housing delivery.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2026) (NPPF) places significant emphasis on addressing the national housing shortage and supporting the delivery of sustainable development. It requires local plans to provide for identified housing needs and maintain an adequate supply of developable land to support housing growth.

For housing, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to:

- Meet identified housing needs as far as possible through plan-making.
- Ensure sufficient land is allocated to support housing delivery over the plan period.
- Deliver a wide choice of high-quality homes, including affordable housing and specialist accommodation.
- Support sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities.
- Promote higher-density development in sustainable locations where appropriate.
- Support residential and mixed-use development in locations with good public transport accessibility, including areas within reasonable walking distance of well-connected railway stations.

- Address the housing needs of specific groups, including families, older people, disabled people, students, Gypsy and Travellers, service families and those wishing to build their own homes.
- Ensure new development achieves high standards of design, accessibility and sustainability.

The NPPF also introduces stronger national support for development in sustainable locations and places increased importance on maintaining up-to-date local plans to provide certainty for communities and developers.

The national PPG provides detailed advice relating to:

- Housing and economic needs assessments (Feb 2025): Guides Councils in how to assess their housing needs, an unconstrained assessment of the minimum number of homes needed in an area and sets out the standard method for assessing local housing need.
- Housing and economic land availability assessment (Nov 2025): Sets out the method for assessing housing and economic land availability, identifying a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses over the plan period.
- Housing supply and delivery (Dec 2024): Guidance on 5-year housing land supply (specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of housing) and Housing Delivery Test (measures whether planned requirements have been met over the last 3 years).
- Housing needs of different groups (May 2021): Plan-making authorities should assess the need for housing of different groups and reflect this in planning policies. Authorities must also consider the implications of their duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Housing for older and disabled people (June 2019): Guidance on understanding the needs and providing housing choices for older and disabled people.
- Self-build and custom housebuilding (Feb 2021): Guidance on the duty of Plan-making authorities to prepare a publish self-build register and land duties; granting planning permission for plots; and plan-making.
- Planning policy for traveller sites (Dec 2024): Guidance on achieving the Government's aims in respect of traveller sites including meeting identified needs, promoting the provision of private sites, and reducing the number of unauthorised developments.
- First Homes (Dec 2021): First Homes are the government's preferred discounted market tenure and should account for at least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered by developers through planning obligations. The First Homes criteria are the minimum requirements a housing unit must meet to qualify as a First Home.

Regional

The Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority has started initial work on the Cheshire and Warrington Strategic Economic Framework. This emerging work will relate to housing growth, infrastructure and regeneration.

Local

The Borough Plan 2024-2028 includes the following missions that are relevant to population and housing:

- Neighbourhood Pride
- Tackling Hardship and Poverty
- Starting Well
- Resilient People Living Their Best Lives

Cheshire West and Chester Housing Needs Assessment (2026) (HNA) provides the principal evidence base for establishing housing requirements, affordable housing needs, housing mix and specialist housing requirements.

Chester One City Plan sets out a new vision for how the public, private and community sector can work together to make Chester a fairer, stronger, and greener city by 2045.

9.2 Baseline information

The 2021 Census indicates that the population structure of Cheshire West and Chester increased by 8.4% from around 329,600 in 2011 to 357,200 in 2021. This increase is above the overall increase for England (6%), and higher than the population increase for the North West (5.2%). Cheshire West and Chester had the fourth largest increase in population in the North West region. However, in 2021 the borough ranked 22nd for total population out of the 309 local authority areas in England and has remained in that position since the last census in 2011.

The population change by age group in Cheshire West and Chester is dominated by an increase of 24.2% in people aged 65 and over. However there has also been an increase of 6.4% in children aged under 15 years (see Figure 9.1 below).

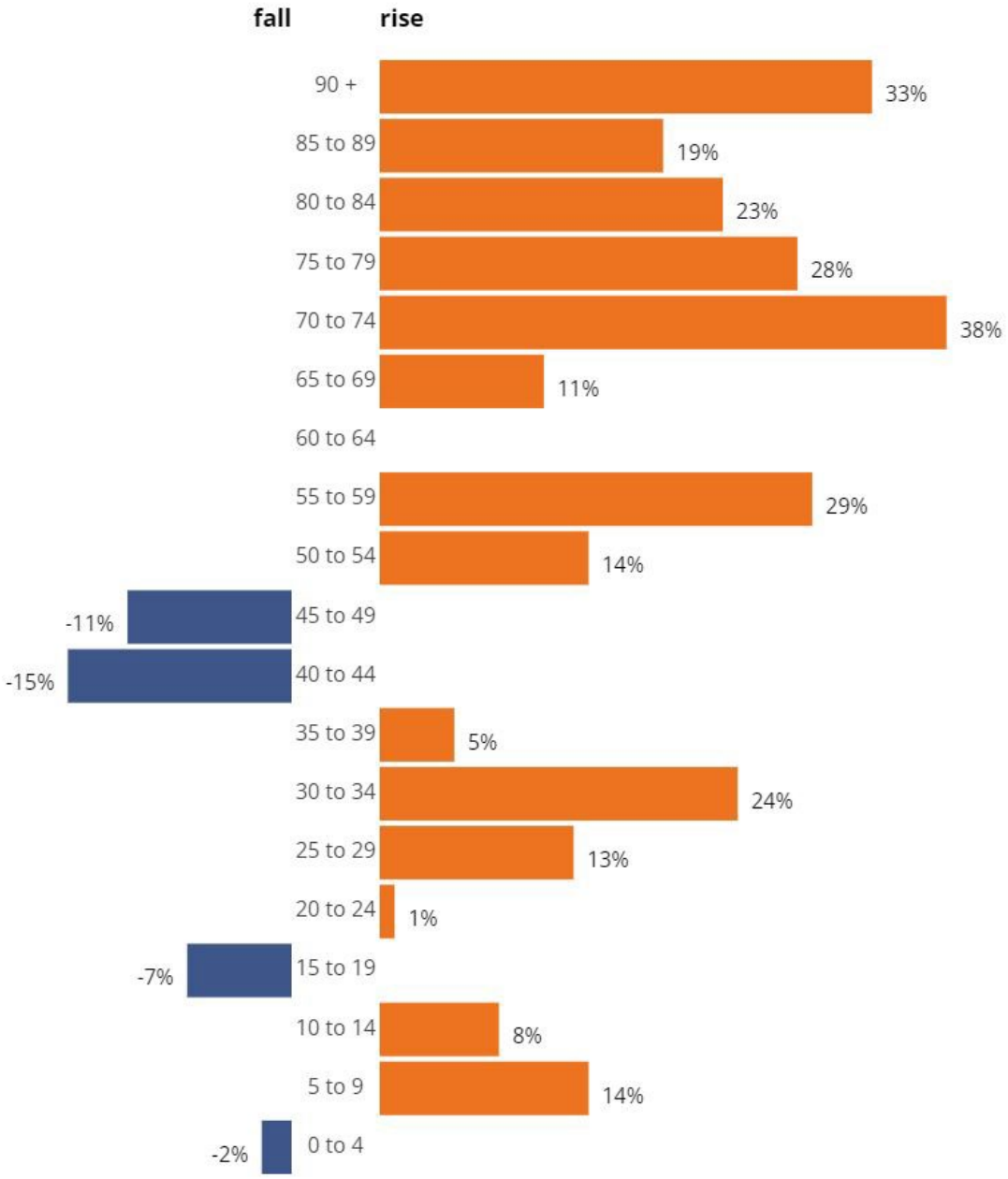


Figure 9.1 Cheshire West and Chester population change 2011 - 2021

There are 167,820 dwellings in the borough that equates to 155,154 households (Source: MHCLG table 100 Dwelling Stock, ONS table TS041 Number of households). Around 66% of all households are one or two person households, a further 16% are three people households, and 17% are four or more people households (Source: Census 2021).

At April 2026 the median house price in Cheshire West and Chester was £265,000, reflecting a 2.2% increase from the previous year. The national median house price is £270,080. The affordability ratio (median house prices to work based earnings) for the borough is 6.20, and the five-year median average (2020 to 2025) is 7.30. The ratio for England is 7.6. The higher the affordability ratio, the less affordable it is to purchase a

home. (Source: ONS House price statistics, ratio of house prices to work based earnings).

In September 2022, there were 1,462 long-term empty dwellings (1,038 empty for six months to two years, and 424 empty for over two years). More recent Council data indicates that there are more than 2,000 long-term empty properties within Cheshire West and Chester. Direct comparison with earlier years should be treated with caution due to changes in reporting and Council Tax premium rules. Nevertheless, the total remains below the 2015-2016 baseline of 2,246 long-term empty homes, indicating that a substantial number of properties have been brought back into use over the period.

Housing need

A housing requirement, or Local Housing Need figure (LHN) is calculated using the Government's standard method for assessing local housing need, as set out in PPG: Housing and economic development needs assessments (Feb 2025). This uses the Governments' live tables on dwelling stock (Table 125), and affordability data (median workplace-based affordability ratios) published by the Office for National Statistics at a local authority level. The calculation is set out below.

Local housing need (LHN)- Standard method calculation

Step1: Setting the baseline (0.8% of existing housing stock for the area)
Source: GOV.uk Open Data Live Table 125 Dwelling stock (including vacants)

Dwelling stock (2025) = 167,820
0.8% of dwelling stock = 1,343

Step 2: An adjustment to take account of affordability
Source: ONS Table 5c ratio of house price to workplace-based earnings

5-year average median workplace-based affordability ratio = 7.30
Adjustment factor: 1.437

Step 3: Calculating the LHN figure

Baseline dwelling stock X Adjustment factor = 1,343 X 1.437
Annual requirement = 1,930 dwellings
10-year requirement = 19,300 dwellings
15-year requirement = 28,950

The Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) 2026 identifies Cheshire West and Chester as a largely self-contained housing market area, although there are important relationships with Flintshire, Cheshire East and the Wirral.

The HNA identifies continued need for:

- Market housing
- Affordable housing.
- Family housing.
- Smaller homes suitable for first-time buyers.
- Accommodation for older people.
- Accessible and adaptable housing.
- Specialist accommodation for those with care and support needs.

Affordability remains a significant issue. Median house prices are above the regional average, and home ownership is becoming increasingly difficult for younger households. The HNA also identifies a need for a greater supply of smaller and more affordable homes.

The HNA notes that around 70% of housing stock comprises homes with three or more bedrooms and that there is a relatively limited supply of smaller dwellings and flats. Significant levels of under-occupation exist within the existing housing stock.

9.3 Duty to Cooperate / Strategic Matters

Housing market and migration relationships extend beyond administrative boundaries. Key partners include neighbouring Council (Cheshire East, Warrington, Flintshire, and Wirral), Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority, Homes England, and Registered Providers.

Strategic matters include housing market relationships; affordable housing provision; economic growth and labour markets; infrastructure provision; and specialist housing needs.

9.4 Recent changes and anticipated trends

Recent changes:

- Continuation of population growth to exceed regional averages (Source: ONS How life has changed in Cheshire West and Chester: Census 2021)
- Housing delivery has remained relatively strong but has slowed compared with previous peaks. (Source: Housing Land Monitor reports)
- Affordability pressures continue despite some recent improvements.
- Increased emphasis is being placed on high-quality design, accessible housing and affordable homes.
- Growing focus on brownfield regeneration and town-centre living.
- Revised NPPF (2026) introduced a clearer rules-based planning system, stronger support for housing delivery, a greater focus on sustainable locations and higher-density development, and enhanced policy support for housing growth around well-connected public transport hubs.

Anticipated trends:

- An increasingly ageing population requiring specialist and accessible housing.
- Continued demand for both market and affordable housing because of population and demographic changes, as well as arising from economic growth and investment opportunities within the borough.
- Increased demand for smaller homes, including accommodation suitable for younger households and downsizers.
- Greater pressure to maximise use of previously developed land.
- Increasing requirements for high-quality, sustainable and energy-efficient homes.
- Increased pressure to deliver housing in sustainable and accessible locations, particularly in urban areas, regeneration locations and areas with good public transport connectivity.

9.5 Evidence gaps and proposed work

The following work will be required to assist in the preparation of a new Local Plan:

- Gypsy and Traveller needs assessment – this assessment is currently being undertaken, and it will set out the borough requirement for additional plots and pitches to meet the identified need.
- Site identification study – this study will inform the identification of site allocations to meet the needs for housing and employment land in the new Local Plan. It will build on the work completed as part of the Land Availability Assessment, providing detailed site assessments and provisional site capacity information to inform the selection of draft land allocations.
- Housing delivery – an on-going review of annual housing delivery and the five-year land supply position will monitor the progress of housing delivery against the Local Plan requirements. This will include monitoring the mix and type of housing delivered to test the effectiveness of policy and ensure that the wide range of needs are being met across the borough.

9.6 Local Plan scope and influence

The new Local Plan will provide a policy framework for sustainable housing growth in the borough. It can consider and the land use requirements for different types of new housing across the borough. Policies will influence the range of future housing to be provided including, but not limited to, affordable housing, accessible and adaptable homes, specialist accommodation for older people and student accommodation.

The Local Plan will establish the borough's housing requirement and allocate sufficient land for new housing to meet the future identified needs over the new plan period, including identify broad locations for new strategic development where relevant. It can contain policies and land allocations to support the delivery of new housing across the borough, promoting high quality design, sustainable development and the regeneration of brownfield land within key areas.

9.7 Key sustainability issues and opportunities

Issues:

- Affordability remains a significant challenge in many parts of the borough.
- Shortage of smaller market and affordable homes to meet the needs of for first time buyers, single person households, downsizing and older persons
- Ageing population increasing demand for specialist and accessible accommodation.
- Housing delivery has slowed from previous peak levels, and the level of extant planning permissions is declining
- Ability to plan and deliver the appropriate infrastructure and services needed to support housing growth across the borough.
- Balancing increased expectations for housing delivery with environmental, infrastructure and place-making objectives.
- Shortage of suitable and available previously developed land in and on the edge of sustainable locations

Opportunities:

- Deliver sufficient housing to meet identified needs, improving housing choice and tenure mix, including the provision of housing that supports independent living for older people.
- Reduce inequalities through increased affordable housing provision and improved access to suitable and affordable housing.
- Support regeneration of previously developed land and urban areas to deliver high quality, healthy and sustainable neighbourhoods.
- Support economic growth by ensuring an adequate supply of homes for the workforce.
- Direct growth towards sustainable locations with strong public transport accessibility, helping to reduce reliance on private car travel

9.8 SA framework

Sustainability objective	**Appraisal criteria / sub-objective**	**Baseline indicator**
Provide high-quality, well-designed housing to meet identified needs	Will it help to meet identified housing needs?	Net additional dwellings approved and completed Net additional G&T plots/pitches approved and completed Net additional student dwellings/units approved and completed Housing Delivery Test results Delivery against housing requirement

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
		5-year housing land supply position
	Will it help to provide an appropriate mix of housing types, sizes and tenures?	Number and percentage of affordable dwellings completed Market and affordable housing completions by tenure, size and type Number of specialist housing units approved and completed Proportion of accessible and adaptable homes approved as part of developments
	Will it provide well-designed housing?	No indicator identified

10 Health, wellbeing and equality

10.1 Policy context

International

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations (UN) international policy framework consistently supports the principle that planning should create healthy, inclusive and sustainable places by addressing the social determinants of health, promoting wellbeing, reducing inequalities, improving access to services and green infrastructure, and ensuring that urban development contributes to better health outcomes for all communities.

National

The NPPF places a strong emphasis on creating healthy, inclusive and safe communities. The NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to support places that:

- Promote good health and prevent ill health.
- Reduce health inequalities.
- Take opportunities to improve walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport (therefore encouraging active lifestyles).
- Take opportunities to secure improved public access to greenspace, including for outdoor sport or recreation, allotments and community food production.
- Support access to growing or purchasing healthier food options.

The NPPF also expects planning authorities to:

- Promote the creation of healthy and inclusive places, informed by identified local health needs and opportunities to reduce inequalities.
- Retain and enhance appropriate community facilities and allocate land specifically for community facilities where it is appropriate to do so.
- Identify wider opportunities to promote good health, prevent ill-health, reduce health inequalities and support social interaction, including through policies for strengthening town centres and locating development where it will support walking, wheeling and cycling.

Chapter 14 of the NPPF refers to the objective of promoting high quality, healthy, inclusive and sustainable places. The NPPF promotes accelerated delivery of housing, including higher density development in town centres and locations that have a high level of connectivity, including public transport hubs - providing opportunities for healthier, walkable neighbourhoods.

The Healthy and Safe Communities PPG provides advice on how the planning system should support health, wellbeing and inclusive communities. The PPG recognises that the built and natural environment are major determinants of health and wellbeing. The guidance highlights that planning can contribute both to:

1. promoting good health, and
2. preventing ill-health.

Local plans should:

- Use evidence on health needs and inequalities.
- Engage public health professionals throughout plan preparation.
- Promote healthy place-making principles.
- Ensure new development contributes to healthier lifestyles and healthier communities.
- Deliver equitable access to services, open space and community infrastructure.
- Consider the needs of older people, disabled people, children and other groups with protected characteristics.

The PPG emphasises that planning should support the delivery of:

- GP surgeries
- Hospitals and healthcare facilities
- Social care infrastructure
- Community facilities and services needed by growing populations.

Health infrastructure should be considered early in the plan-making process to ensure development is supported by adequate services.

Regional

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership's "All Together Fairer" Plan (2024-2029) identifies reducing health inequalities as its primary objective. The strategy recognises that health outcomes are strongly influenced by the social, economic and environmental conditions in which people live. It promotes a place-based approach focused on improving population health, supporting healthy lifestyles, creating inclusive communities, enhancing access to services and addressing the wider determinants of health, including housing, employment, education, transport and the quality of the built and natural environment.

Local

The current Cheshire West and Chester Health and Wellbeing Strategy, known as the Place Plan 2019-2026 (refreshed in 2024), provides the shared vision for the Council, NHS, public health, voluntary sector and other partners to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities across the borough.

The strategy seeks to reduce health inequalities and improve healthy life expectancy by addressing the wider determinants of health, creating healthy places, encouraging healthy lifestyles and delivering integrated health and care services.

The strategy aims to:

- Improve population health and wellbeing.
- Reduce health inequalities between communities.
- Increase healthy life expectancy.
- Support people to live healthy, independent and fulfilling lives.

A major focus is reducing the health gap experienced by residents living in more deprived communities.
For planning policy, the strategy supports:

- Healthy place-making
- Access to green infrastructure and open space
- Active travel (walking and cycling)
- High-quality and affordable housing
- Access to community facilities and healthcare services
- Creation of inclusive, age-friendly and sustainable communities
- Reduction of health inequalities through the built environment.

In October 2020, Cheshire West and Chester Council formally declared a Poverty Emergency. Following the declaration, the Council developed the Fairer Future Strategy 2022-2032, a ten-year programme to reduce poverty and financial hardship across the borough. The headline ambition is to: Halve the number of children living in absolute poverty by 2032. The Poverty Emergency commits Cheshire West and Chester Council to tackling poverty as an equality, health and social justice issue, with a long-term objective of reducing deprivation, narrowing inequalities and creating a fairer future for all residents.

10.2 Baseline information

The Covid-19 pandemic had a big impact upon health, and the long-term impacts are still yet to be known. Waiting lists for hospital treatment nationally are still high at 5.7 million in January 2026, however this is an improvement from the record high figures of 7.2 million in 2023. This demonstrates that the health care systems are slowly recovering from the pandemic.

Deprivation of a social, economic or environmental nature can lead to social exclusion and social problems. These include increases in crime rates and decreases in the quality of the housing stock, living conditions, health and educational attainment. Some indicators measure the effects of deprivation and can act as secondary indicators themselves. The measure of the percentage of the population who smoke, binge drink or are obese can, to some degree, identify the scale of deprivation.

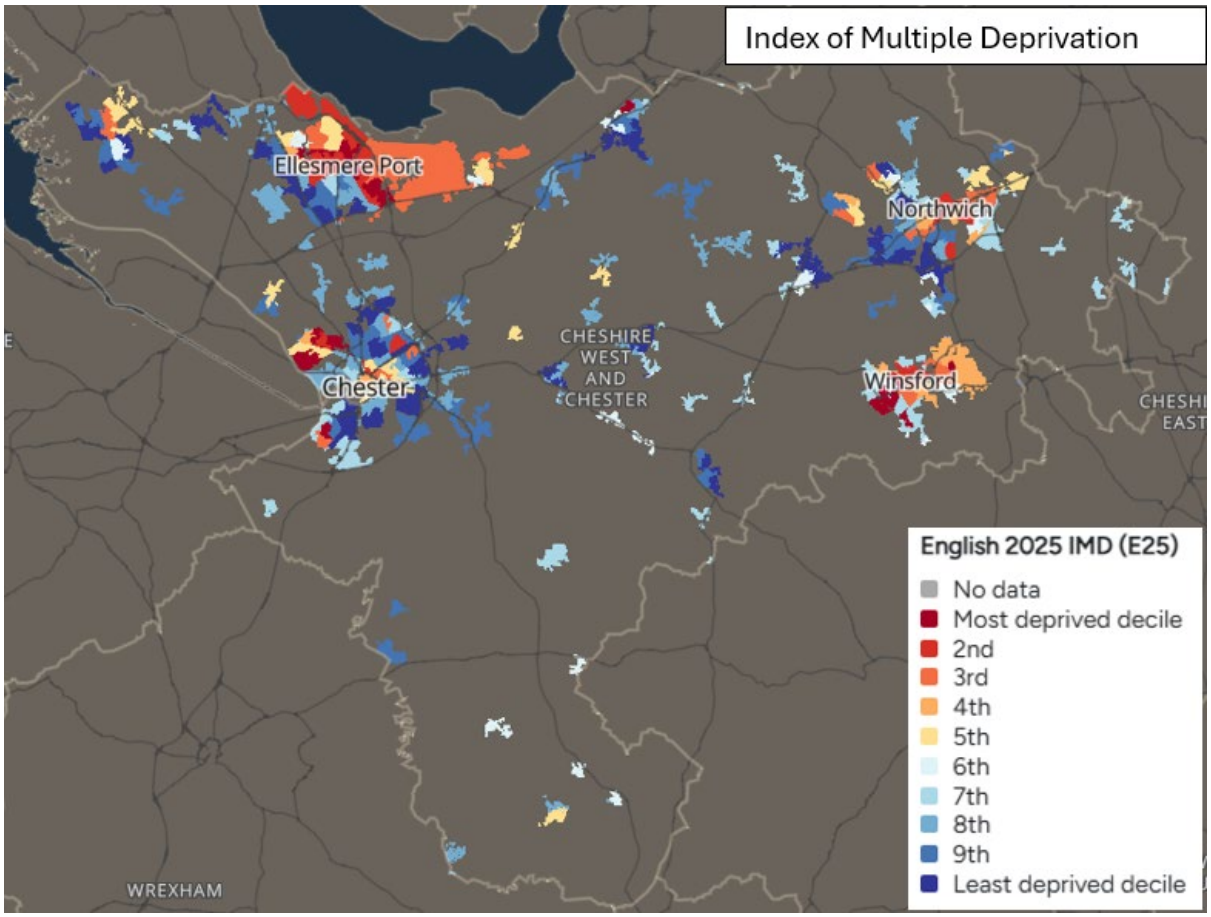


Figure 10.1 - Index of Multiple Deprivation

Cheshire West and Chester is a comparatively affluent area. However, whilst overall the borough scores comparatively well on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, Cheshire West and Chester does have some of the worst areas of deprivation in the country, measured at Lower layer Super Output Area (LSOA) level. There are 29,512 residents living in 19 neighbourhoods (LSOAs) that rank in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England. Two of these neighbourhoods rank in the 1% most deprived areas in England. These neighbourhoods are in Lache and Westminster Wards. High levels of deprivation are predominately concentrated in the four urban areas (Chester, Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich).

According to 2023 data 10.1% (16,219) of households were living in fuel poverty compared with 11.4% in England. The Cheshire West and Chester Fuel Poverty Strategy (2023) includes actions to improve energy efficiency in the home, increase renewable and low carbon technologies in domestic properties and encouraging behaviour change to reduce energy consumption.

The new Local Plan will be subject to a Heritage Impact Assessment, which will be used to feedback into subsequent stages of the Sustainability Appraisal.

Safe and healthy neighbourhoods are fundamental to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community. Crime is not a particular problem in CW&C when compared with England and has remained relatively stable over the past few years with an increase in the crime rate nationally.

Figure 10.2 – Recorded Crime Rate

In the Our Place Survey (Autumn 2021) 92 per cent of respondents felt safe during the day and 60 per cent after dark. These are borough wide figures and further analysis into the spatial area should be undertaken to understand if this is truly representative. Well-designed places can reduce the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime, helping to create safer, more attractive environments. Consideration of crime reduction measures at all stages of the planning process has a demonstrable positive impact on levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Such proactive measures can have a significant impact on public spending on community safety issues and should therefore form a key consideration in the design and layout of new development. The recognised standard for incorporating these principles into the planning process is 'Secured by Design'.

Health and wellbeing can also be improved by access to various forms of green infrastructure, either for recreation or physical exercise. The Open Space Study (2017) provides an assessment of need of all accessible open space in the borough in terms of quality, quantity and access. The study then sets local open space standards based on this assessment, and these are included within the Local Plan (Part Two). The study highlights deficiencies in provision in at least two open space typologies within each area profile, with deficiencies in youth play space in all areas. In addition, the Playing Pitch Strategy was updated in February 2025 and provides up to date information on the existing and future needs for all outdoor sports facilities in terms of quality, quantity and location.

Measurement of social value within the built environment is rapidly evolving, with no common methodology to provide a consistent definition or approach. Within the Delivery Social Value: Measurement by the Green Building Council they suggest that "social value is a term for economic, environmental and social benefits that are experienced by people. To understand their worth, these benefits are often measured and sometimes assigned a financial figure".

10.3 Recent changes and anticipated trends

Recent changes to the NPPF may result in changes to health, wellbeing and equality.

10.4 Evidence gaps and proposed work

The Open Space study is being updated and will assess if any wards are deficient or surplus to different open space typologies. Open space standards will also be updated for the new Local Plan that will require development to provide open space.

The Council is producing a borough wide Design Code that will set out the design expectations for new development. This enables the built environment to embed health opportunities during the design stage.

10.5 Local Plan scope and influence

The new Local Plan can support the proactive approach to health and wellbeing through the promotion of active travel, protection for open spaces as well as designing new developments with health as a priority. Not only does this benefit health, but climate, inequality and air quality. Ensuring a high-quality design and access to open spaces in all areas of the borough, regardless of socio-economic status ensures opportunities to improve health for all.

10.6 Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- Under supply of open space when compared to the recommended standard.
- Need to ensure that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable and liveable communities.
- Policies can support the pro-active approach to health, enabling people to live healthier lifestyles.
- Design of new developments can consider public security and promote active travel, active frontages and opportunities for overlooking to increase the feeling of safety. New development can be designed to be accessible for all and to effectively incorporate open spaces.
- Boosting the night-time economy in town centres can lead to busier centres that feel safer.
- Ageing population.
- Need for town centres to cater of all ages as well as care in the community.
- Housing and site layouts can impact someone living with dementia, mental health issues or disabilities.
- Lack of accessibility to services and jobs, especially in the rural area can lead to social isolation.
- There is inequality across the borough with low social mobility, especially for the young.
- There are pockets of deprivation, mainly in urban areas. Inefficient homes can lead to additional costs.

10.7 SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Improve health, safety and wellbeing	Will it promote active lifestyles?	Percentage of physically active adults
		Obesity percentages of children in the borough
	Will it increase the quantity or quality of open space?	Total amount of open space per 1,000 persons
	Will it reduce opportunities for crime?	Domestic burglaries per 1000 households
		Violent crime per year per 1000 population in the LA area
	Will it affect the fear of crime and feelings of safety?	Fear of crime (Community Survey)
	Will it improve road safety?	Total number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions
		Total number of children (aged under 16) killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions
	Will it help to protect existing health or community facilities and services?	Number of applications approved involving loss of a health or community facility (e.g demolition or conversion to an alternative use)
Reduce noise pollution	Will it reduce noise pollution?	No indicator identified

11 Economy and employment

11.1 Policy context

National

Chapter 7 of the NPPF supports building a strong, effective economy. The objective of this chapter is to enable businesses to invest, expand and adapt in a way that reflects the opportunities, challenges and characteristics of different areas, and supports long-term economic growth both locally and nationally.

Plan making policy E1 'Providing the conditions for long term economic growth' says the Local Plan should encourage sustainable economic growth, set out a clear economic vision and strategy, which takes a positive, proactive and realistic approach to encouraging sustainable economic growth in both urban and rural areas. It should have regard to the Industrial Strategy and any relevant strategic and local strategies for economic development and regeneration. It should also address barriers to investment, allocate sites to meet identified needs over the plan period, paying particular regard to the needs of a modern economy (including sites and premises which are flexible and adaptable) and the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for:

- clusters, networks and sites for knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure to support the growth of these industries (including laboratories, campus facilities, data centres and associated generating capacity, and electricity network infrastructure to provide grid connections);
- freight and logistics operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially where this is needed to support the supply chain (including 'last mile' deliveries), transport innovation and decarbonisation; and
- the expansion or modernisation of other businesses of local, regional or national importance to support economic growth and resilience (such as leisure and tourism, agriculture and other rural and land-based businesses which may be of particular importance in certain areas).

The Government's 'The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution' was published in 2020. It set out how the UK would recover from the impacts of the Covid pandemic, specifically leading on green technologies to transform the economy, deliver jobs and growth whilst taking account of climate change. This has subsequently been updated by the Government's Net Zero Strategy and the consultation Invest 2035. The Net Zero Strategy sets out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet the net zero target by 2050. Invest 2035 identified 8 growth-driving sectors identified: advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries, creative industries, defence, digital and technologies, financial services, life sciences and professional and business services.

The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy (November 2025) supports the 8 growth driving sectors above, targeting places and clusters across the UK that support those sectors,

to increase national productivity, strengthen economic security and resilience, and support environmental goals and the net zero transition. The Industrial Strategy Zones Action Plan (June 2025) aims to drive growth in the highest potential industrial clusters across our growth-driving sectors and the country. CW&C is not identified as a Industrial Strategy Zone but is located close to the industrial strategy zones of Liverpool City Region Innovation Zone (Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy Industries, Life Sciences), Wrexham and Flintshire Investment Zone (Advanced Manufacturing).

Regional and local

The Cheshire West and Chester Combined Authority has been established and will work with Council leaders, businesses and partners across the region, responsible for key areas including (i) transport and connectivity, (ii) skills and employment and (iii) investment and economic growth. A Spatial Development Strategy for Cheshire and Warrington will be developed in the future to coordinate growth, infrastructure, housing and employment across the region. Key investment opportunities are identified in Origin Ellesmere Port and the Cheshire Science Corridor.

The Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board has approved a Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (2026-2045). The vision is to be the healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive and fast-growing place in the UK by 2045. Ambitions for the sub region include unlocking growth from industrial decarbonisation, supporting other significant sectors such as manufacturing, business and finance, logistics and distribution, digital technology and rural economy.

The Cheshire West and Chester Inclusive Economy Strategy seeks to build: a more productive economy, a more resilient economy and a more inclusive economy.

Cheshire West and Chester Regeneration plans include the Origin Ellesmere Port Investment Prospectus, the Chester One City Plan and The Mid Cheshire Plan (2025).

The CW&C Climate Emergency Response Plan 2025-2030 is developed to influence action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout the borough, and to shape how the area adapts to the impacts of climate change that affect our communities. The relevance to the Economy Topic is to provide low carbon energy, reduce the need to travel, provide a resilient outdoor recreation and visitor resource, agricultural land and food production (rural economy).

11.2 Baseline information

The Council maintains a suite of economic data through the ‘State of the Borough Dashboard’ including business and economy, culture and tourism and skills and employment data: Business and economy | Cheshire West and Chester Council. The Council’s Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) provide Local Plan monitoring data on new developments in the borough since 2010, together with contextual economic indicators. The text below summarises the key baseline information relevant to the preparation of the new Local Plan.

General employment data

The Cheshire West and Chester Unemployment rate for January 2025-December 2025 was 3.20%. This is below the national average of 4.50% during that period.

In December 2025 the number of the borough residents in employment was 81.2% and remains higher than both the national and regional levels of employment. The borough also has a skilled workforce with data showing that 52.9% of the population are qualified to degree level and above (RQF 4+). CW&C levels remain higher than regional and national averages with the percentage of people with no qualifications also being below regional and national levels.

Whilst earnings rose in 2025, the gap between residents and workplace earnings grew. Cheshire West and Chester's average weekly wage for residents was £798.40 per week. Workforce earning within Cheshire West and Chester increased to £729.70 per week. There remains a gap in earnings of £68.70 per week between resident's average weekly wage and the average workplace wage for those who work in the borough.

The number of businesses in CW&C in 2024 was 13,590. Since 2019 there has been a decrease in the number of businesses in the borough. Business number fell from 14,270 in 2019 to 13,590 in 2024. CW&C saw 1,450 new businesses register in 2024 and 1,315 businesses ceasing trading during the same period

The Council's Annual Monitoring Report's provide information employment land provision, take up and losses over the current local plan period and the development of key employment sites identified in Local Plan (Part One). Employment uses include offices, research and development, light industrial, general industrial and warehousing/distribution. It may also include specialist employment uses (for example, linked to energy or waste developments).

The Council's Economic Needs Assessment (2025) has reviewed past trends in the take up and delivery of employment land / floorspace and makes recommendations for the new Local Plan.

The cumulative amount of employment land developed (ha) over the adopted Local Plan period 2010-2030, at 1 April 2026 is 268.55ha. This is on target to meet the Plan requirement of 365ha over this period. The take up of employment land has varied by type and location as shown in Figure 11.1 and Figure 11.2 below.

The AMR considers future employment land supply. Adopted local plan allocations will be reviewed to ensure there is a reasonable prospect of development. Additional sites will be assessed, and it may be necessary to review and/or replace some allocations to meet future needs. Figure 11.3 below shows the potential employment trajectory 2026-2046 based on monitoring data at 1 April 2026.

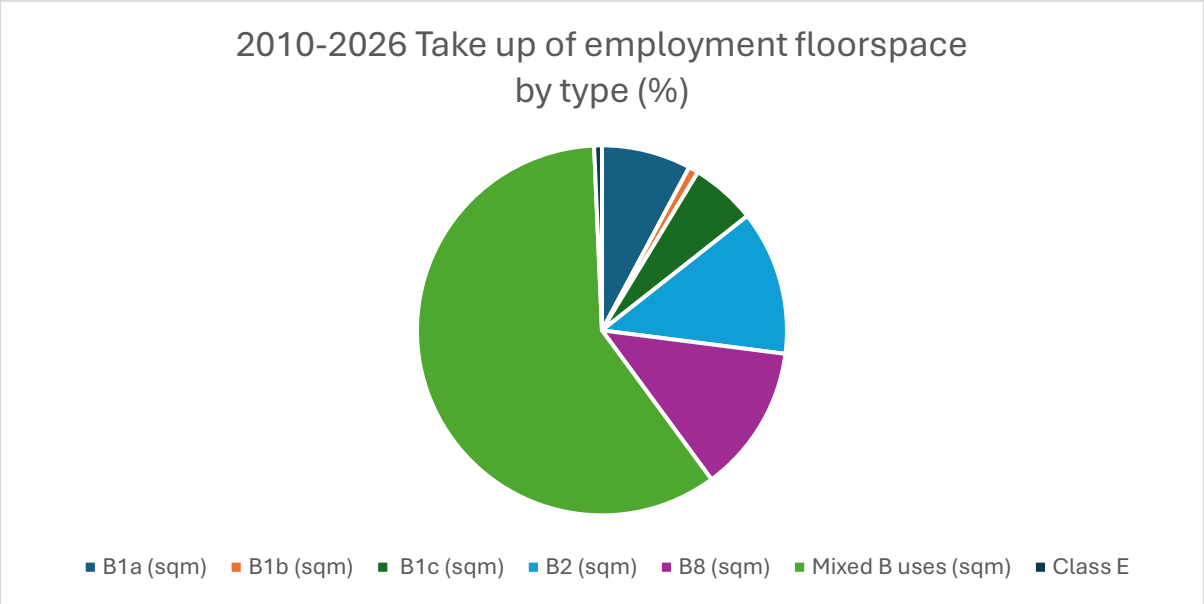


Figure 11.1 - Employment land take up by employment type (Sqm, 2010-2026)

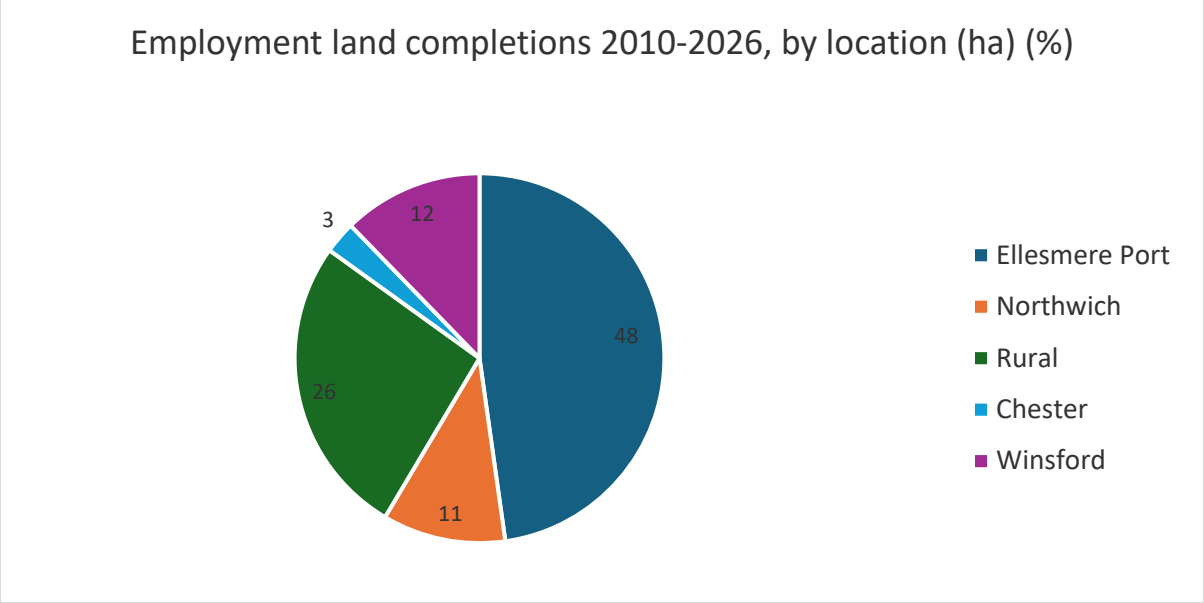


Figure 11.2 - Employment land take up by location (Ha, 2010-2026)

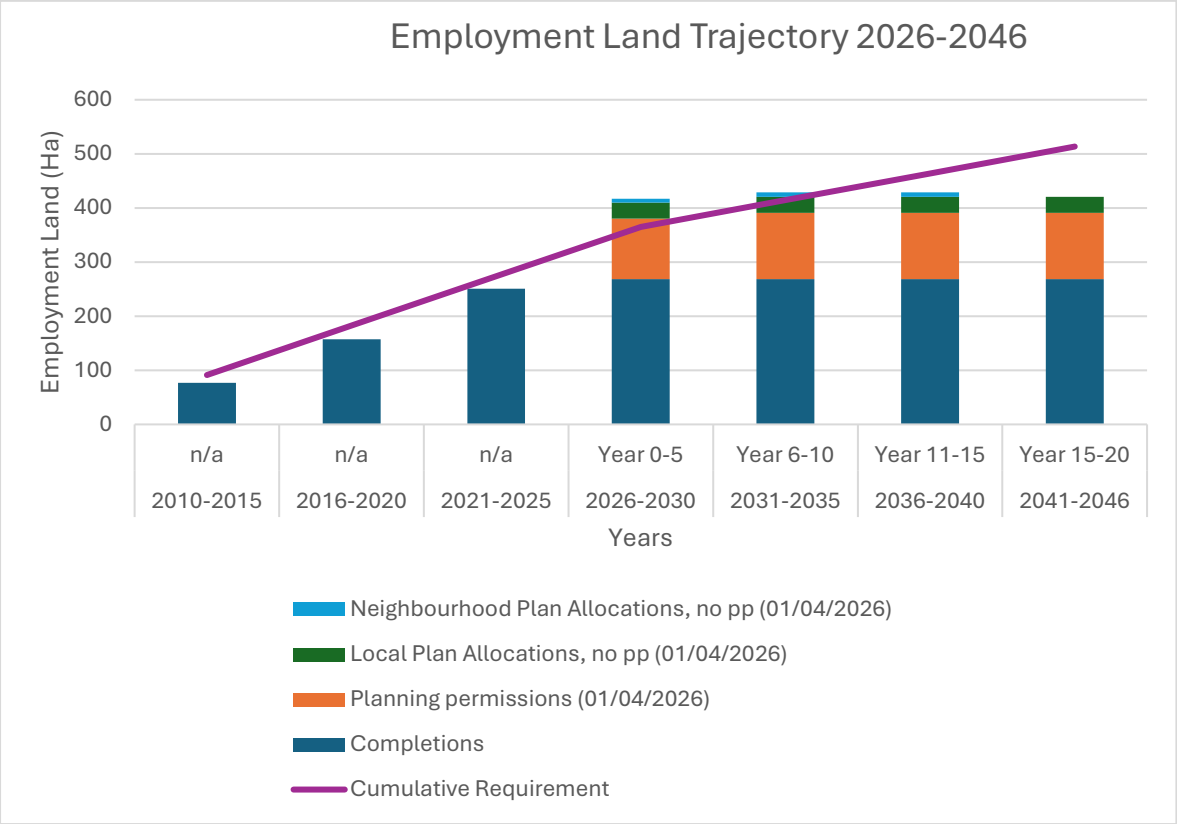


Figure 11.3 - Employment Land Trajectory 2026-2046

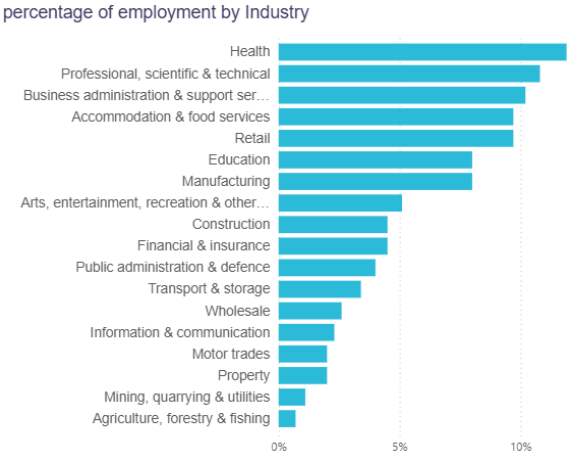
Employment distribution by sector

The Councils Economic Needs Assessment (2025) provides a sectoral economic profile for the borough based on ONS data (Table 4.1 Employment Jobs by Sector). The largest sectors of employment in the Borough are:

- Retail – reflecting the Chester city centre function and out of town retail destinations.
- Health – reflecting the presence of two hospitals.
- Professional, Scientific and Technical.
- Accommodation and food – with the City of Chester as a tourism destination along with attractions such as Chester Zoo.

There are concentrations of particular industrial groups in the borough, where CW&C has a higher proportion of industries when compared to the North West of England and England figures. These include mining and quarrying; financial services and insurance; and accommodation and food. There are other sector strengths in a range of manufacturing industries including petrol refinement, glass products, communication equipment and chemicals.

The NOMIS Business Register and Employment Survey API provide information on sectors of the boroughs economy. This is shown in the graph below. The sectors with the highest number of employees in CW&C at 2024 are health (21,000); professional, scientific and technical (19,000); business administration and support services (18,000); accommodation and food services (17,000) and retail (17,000).



Number of employees by sector

Industry	Number of Employees
Health	21,000
Professional, scientific & technical	19,000
Business administration & support services	18,000
Accommodation & food services	17,000
Retail	17,000
Education	14,000
Manufacturing	14,000
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	9,000
Construction	8,000
Financial & insurance	8,000
Public administration & defence	7,000
Transport & storage	6,000
Wholesale	4,500
Information & communication	4,000
Motor trades	3,500
Property	3,500
Mining, quarrying & utilities	2,000
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	1,250

Figure 11.4 – Employment by sector

Retail and town centres

Vacancy rates can provide an indication of the overall health of the borough's town centres. Within the six town centres, only Chester has decreased its vacancy rate in 2026 compared with 2025. The other five (Northwich, Winsford, Ellesmere Port, Frodsham and Neston) have marginally increased their vacancy. Winsford currently has the highest vacancy rate overall (27.6%) and Frodsham has the lowest (8.7%). The peak in Northwich from 2017-2020 can be linked to the completion of the new Baron's Quay development and the regeneration of the Weaver Square area.

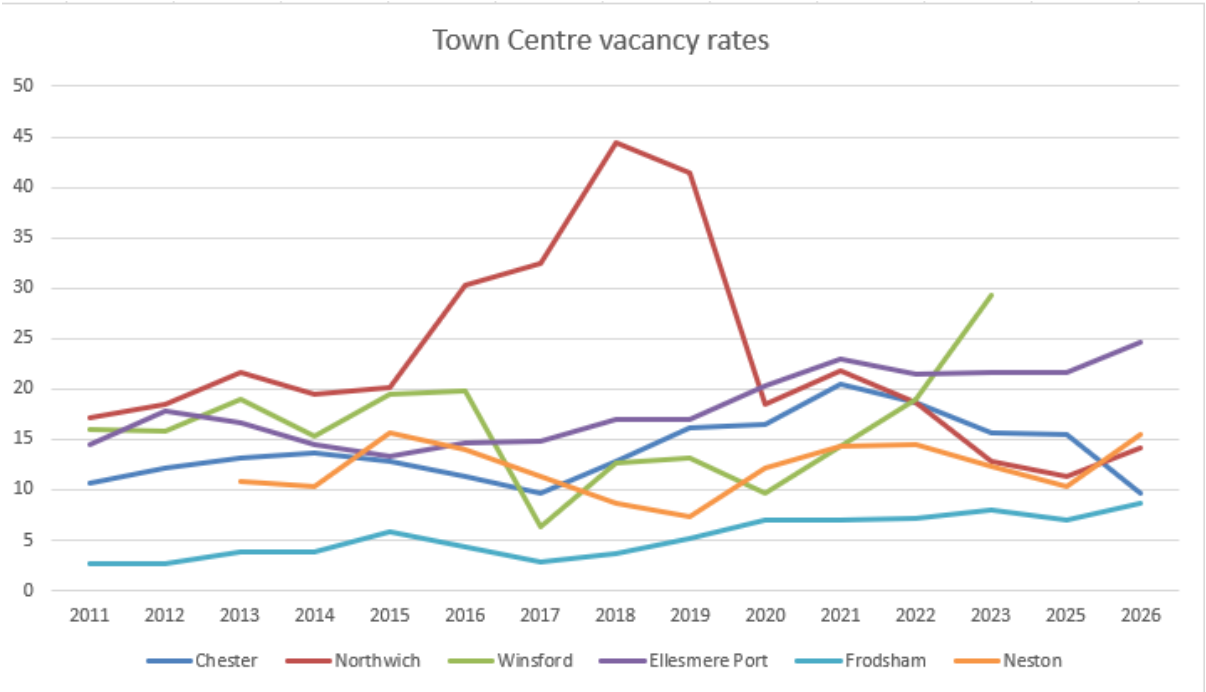
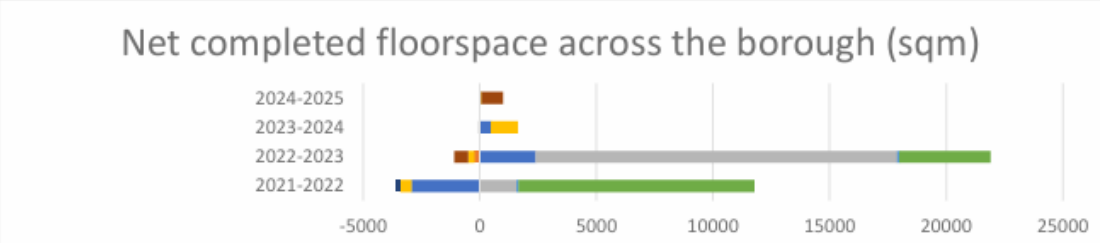


Figure 11.5 – Town Centre vacancy rates

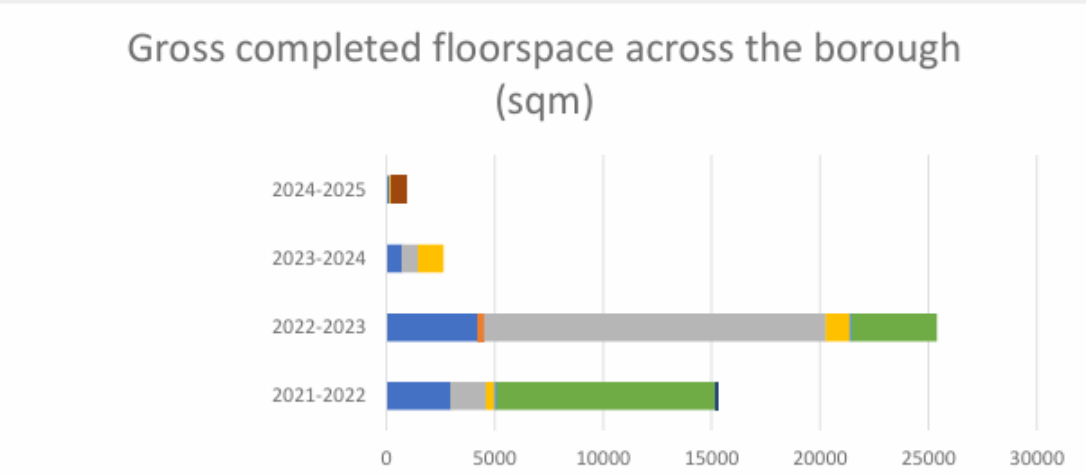
The Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) contains details of the amount of new floorspace developed within town centres for main town centre uses, in line with the

aims of Local Plan policy over the plan period. It also monitors the overall development of floorspace for main town centre use across the borough. The two graphs below show the trend of net completed floorspace across the borough and gross completed floorspace across the borough.



	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
E.a - Shop or retail uses	-2933	2402	480	58
E.c - Financial, professional and other services	0	-225	0	0
E.b - Restaurants and cafes	1571	15503	-44	10
Sui - Drinking establishments	-475	-282	1152	19
Sui - Hot food takeaways	90	94	0	0
E.g - Offices, research & development and any industrial process	10118	3898		0
E.d - indoor sport, recreation or fitness centres	-176	0	0	0
Sui - other	0	-582	0	907

Figure 11.6 – Net completed floorspace across the borough (sqm)



	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
E.a - Shop or retail uses	2971	4261	715	157
E.c - Financial, professional and other services	0	273	0	0
E.b - Restaurants and cafes	1619	15726	761	10
Sui - Drinking establishments	417	1124	1152	99
Sui - Hot food takeaways	90	94	0	0
E.g - Offices, research & development and any industrial process	10118	3898		0
E.d - indoor sport, recreation or fitness centres	124	0	0	0
Sui - other	0	0	0	733

Figure 11.7 – Gross completed floorspace across the borough (sqm)

Visitor Economy

Tourism and culture are an important part of the borough's economy. In 2024 there were 30.6 million visitors to the borough. This was an increase from 29.2 million visitors in 2023, the majority of these are day visitors (28.8 million). Figures state that total employment supported by visitors (FTE) is 22,441 in 2024. The borough has some large visitor attractions such as Chester Zoo, it provides heritage-based tourism including Beeston Castle and historic settlements. The borough also provides for major sporting events such as Chester Races and Oulton Park racecourse. Staying visitors were 1.7 million in 2024. There has been a slight increase year on year since 2020 for staying visitors in the borough with trends looking like they will eventually return to former levels pre-pandemic.

Travel to work areas

The 2021 Census results provide data on labour market and travel to work data. The Census 2021 took place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change; the national lockdown, associated guidance and furlough measures which will have affected the travel to work topic. ONS advises care should be taken when using this for planning and policy purposes. In Cheshire West and Chester 31.5% of people worked mainly from home. The distances travelled 20-30km

and 30-40km, were slightly higher than the national percentages (with other distances comparable to national rates). Further analysis of the travel to work data would be useful for smaller geographical areas within the borough.

Travel to work areas have been considered in the Economic Needs Assessment (2025) to inform assessment of the Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA). In total the 2021 Census states that there are 169,090 residents in employment in Cheshire West and Chester. Of these, 132,381 work in Cheshire West and Chester (including those working from home). This is the equivalent of a residents-based self-containment rate of 78.3%. This exceeds the 75% threshold used by ONS to define Travel to Work areas. This, alongside other indicators, suggests that the Cheshire West and Chester FEMA is self-contained. However, it is important to consider the sub-areas of the borough and differences between the east and west. Northwich and Winsford have less reliance on Chester in terms of commuting.

11.3 Recent changes and anticipated trends

The CW&C Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) 2025 reviews the impact of recent trends and future employment land needs. It considers future employment needs borough wide and by employment type/sector, location and size.

Demand for office or light industry falling within (planning use class E) has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, with a shift towards homeworking. Given changes to the office market, it is likely that some vacant buildings will be under pressure for re-use or redevelopment to alternative uses. Employers/developers may explore other ways that vacant employment buildings can be used more effectively, particularly poorer quality premises where commercial viability is a concern.

Demand for industrial, warehousing, distribution (planning use classes B2, B8) continues and the EDNA suggests this will be the majority of future employment requirements. The borough has some major employers in manufacturing and other specialist industries; industrial decarbonisation from some of these larger industries is likely to be important. There are emerging proposals linked to hydrogen (HyNet) particularly in the Ellesmere Port and Northwich areas. The EDNA indicates that Ellesmere Port followed by Northwich and Winsford are the priority areas for employment land provision, with office demand focussed around Chester. Site size is important, with sites of over 5ha being most capable of attracting new inward investment. The need for expansion land for specific employers is expected to continue.

The Council's employment land monitoring/AMR data includes data on employment land completions by type and location. The previous graph shows the trends for the cumulative take up of employment floorspace (B2, B8 and former B1 use classes) as at April 2026. Most land developed has been flexible for mixed employment uses, with high levels of floorspace also developed for B2 and B8 uses. Office development in the borough has been at lower levels. It is anticipated that the trend for employment land for B2/B8 uses is likely to continue.

In September 2020, the Government amended the Use Classes Order to introduce a new Class E. This provides greater flexibility for different uses falling within Class E, to change without the need for planning permission (for example, an office to a shop). The

intention was to support city/town centres and high streets to reflect changing requirements. However, the legislation is not limited to specific areas and applies equally to purpose built Business Parks for offices and out of town retail areas, unless these are controlled through measures such as legal agreement or conditions or through the introduction of Article 4 Directions. The likely trend is that a wider range of uses are likely to appear on High Streets and flagship office Business Parks, or smaller scale changes to offices/retail in rural areas may occur.

The Retail Study (March 2025) concluded there is no quantitative need for additional convenience (food) or comparison (non-food) retail floorspace up to 2040, even under a higher population growth scenario.

The study suggests Cheshire West and Chester already has more retail floorspace than is likely to be needed, meaning some units may become vacant or require alternative uses over time. Therefore, the focus should be on reusing and repurposing existing premises.

Chester is still the dominate centre where higher order retail and leisure investment should be directed. The town centres will need to diversify in order to maintain vitality. The study highlights the importance of:

- Restaurants, cafés and bars.
- Cultural attractions
- Leisure uses
- Housing
- Community services
- Health and education facilities.

The future success of centres will depend on creating experiences that encourage people to visit rather than shop exclusively online.

The study recommends:

- To maintain a town centre first approach
- Reoccupation or redevelopment of vacant premises
- Avoid allocating land for major new retail expansion
- Support greater diversity in town centres
- Protect centres from harmful out of centre development
- Monitor vacancy rates and town centre health
- Review retail and leisure capacity periodically

11.4 Evidence gaps and proposed work

The Government's national PPG provides guidance on Housing and Economic Needs Assessments and Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments to provide evidence for plan making.

The Cheshire West and Chester Economic Development Needs Assessment was completed in 2025 and provides recommendations for the new Local Plan. Further updates to this may be required in due course.

The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment will now be taken forward as part of the site selection process for the Local Plan, in line with updated national guidance. The Local Plan should identify strategic sites for local and inward investment and further site-specific work may be required alongside an Infrastructure Delivery Plan and other supporting evidence.

11.5 Local Plan scope and influence

The new Local Plan will provide a policy framework for sustainable economic growth in the borough. It can consider future economic growth requirements, the land use requirements for new investment, to allow for business growth or expansion, by employment type and location in the borough.

The Local Plan can allocate employment land to meet the future identified needs over the new plan period and identify broad locations for new economic development. It can contain policies and land allocations to support the boroughs town and local centres, and promote economic regeneration within key areas. It could also safeguard key employment locations for continued employment use.

11.6 Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- Planning for green jobs, logistics needs or other potential economic growth sectors.
- Supporting economies in urban and rural areas, including the visitor economy.
- Providing a sufficient portfolio of employment land and premises to meet forecast economic needs, by type and location.
- Provision of services and facilities to support the visitor economy.
- Provision of infrastructure to underpin the economy and enable economic growth.
- Regeneration of brownfield and underutilised land and buildings to support local economic growth.
- Re-invention of our high streets, providing a greater mix of uses to reduce vacancy rates.
- Support for local retail and services to meet day to day needs closer to people's homes.

11.7 SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Support a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economy and provide opportunities for	Will it help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt?	Employment land completions, by type and location (STRAT 2 (F))

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
economic growth and investment	Will it support sustainable economic growth?	Cumulative employment land completions by type and location (AMR) (STRAT 2E)) Employment land supply and distribution, by type and location (STRAT2(F)) Employment land loss, by type and location Employment by broad industrial sector Enterprise births and deaths (ECON 1 (Ci)) Number of businesses (ECON 1 (c)) Number of visitors to the borough (STEAM data on visitor economy) Number of day and overnight visitors to the borough (ECON 3 (Ai)) Number of borough residents in employment (ECON 1) Unemployment rate (ECON 1 (B) Number of businesses (ECON 1 (C)) (The same indicators for all appraisal criteria / sub-objectives)
	Will it provide a balanced portfolio of employment land for the area by type and location?	
	Will it maintain/safeguard high quality employment land and premises?	
	Will it contribute to meeting the employment needs of the rural/urban area?	
	Will it promote tourism and the visitor economy?	
	Will it improve accessibility to jobs?	
	Will it take account of the different locational requirements of different sectors?	
	Will it deliver regeneration?	No indicator identified

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Promote regeneration, particularly of deprived areas and reduce inequalities	Will it improve economic conditions, particularly in deprived areas?	Number of LSOA in 20% most deprived in the borough
	Will it improve equality across the borough?	Number of households in fuel poverty
		Local Authority ranking in the social mobility index

12 Infrastructure

12.1 Policy context

Infrastructure comprises the physical, social, environmental and digital assets required to support communities, economic activity and sustainable development. This includes transport networks, utilities, energy, water supply, telecommunications, education, healthcare, green infrastructure, community facilities, sports and leisure facilities and cultural infrastructure.

Infrastructure has strong links with many Sustainability Appraisal themes. The provision, capacity and accessibility of infrastructure can influence economic growth, housing delivery, health and wellbeing, climate change adaptation, air quality, biodiversity and social inclusion. Ensuring that infrastructure is planned and delivered alongside development is therefore an important component of sustainable development.

The planning system plays an important role in identifying infrastructure requirements, coordinating investment, safeguarding land where necessary and securing developer contributions towards infrastructure required to support growth.

National

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises infrastructure as a fundamental component of sustainable development. It requires Local Plans to identify, coordinate and deliver the infrastructure required to support planned growth, including transport, digital communications, education, healthcare, utilities, flood management, community facilities, green infrastructure, energy infrastructure and water infrastructure. The NPPF also places significant emphasis on ensuring that infrastructure delivery is aligned with housing and economic growth, and that development contributes appropriately towards infrastructure required to make development acceptable.

Relevant sections of the NPPF include:

- Chapter 2: Plan-making policies (PM1-PM17): requires Local Plans to be prepared positively, supported by proportionate evidence and informed by engagement with infrastructure providers and delivery bodies.
- Chapter 4: Achieving Sustainable Development (S1-S6): identifies the coordinated provision of infrastructure as a key component of sustainable development and supporting sustainable growth.
- Chapter 6: Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes (HO1-HO13): recognises the relationship between infrastructure provision, housing delivery and the creation of sustainable communities.
- Chapter 9: Supporting High Quality Communications (CO1-CO2): supports the delivery of digital communications infrastructure and improved telecommunications connectivity.

- Chapter 10: Securing Clean Energy and Water (W1-W4): supports the delivery of energy, water, utility and resilience infrastructure necessary to support development and achieve climate objectives.
- Chapter 15: Promoting Sustainable Transport (TR1-TR8): seeks investment in sustainable transport infrastructure and improvements to accessibility, connectivity and active travel.
- Chapter 16: Promoting Healthy Communities (HC1-HC8): supports provision of healthcare, education, recreation, open space and community infrastructure required to meet the needs of existing and future communities.
- Chapter 18: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment (NE1-NE9): supports green infrastructure, biodiversity enhancement and environmental infrastructure.
- National Decision-Making Policies (DM1-DM10): establish the framework for planning conditions, planning obligations and other measures necessary to secure infrastructure and mitigate the impacts of development.

Particularly relevant policy areas include the plan-making requirements for infrastructure provision, the sustainable development policies, national decision-making policies relating to planning obligations and viability, the sustainable transport policies, and policies supporting public service infrastructure, utilities, digital communications and healthy communities.

The following national Planning Practice Guidance sections are particularly relevant to infrastructure:

- Plan Making: Provides guidance on preparing evidence-based Local Plans and engaging infrastructure providers throughout the plan-making process.
- Viability: Sets out how infrastructure costs should be considered during plan preparation and development management, supporting the principle that policy requirements should be tested through plan wide viability assessments.
- Use of Planning Obligations: Provides guidance on the use of Section 106 agreements, including the application of the statutory tests contained in Regulation 122.
- Community Infrastructure Levy: Provides guidance on setting, charging, spending and reporting CIL and on preparing infrastructure funding evidence.
- Housing and Economic Needs Assessment: Highlights the need to consider infrastructure capacity and infrastructure investment when planning for growth.
- Flood Risk and Coastal Change: Provides guidance on infrastructure required to mitigate flood risk and support climate resilience.
- Healthy and Safe Communities: Supports planning for healthcare, sport, recreation, education and community infrastructure.
- Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements: Provides guidance on transport infrastructure requirements and mitigation associated with development.

- Digital Connectivity: Supports delivery of high quality digital communications infrastructure and next-generation broadband networks.

Regional

Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy supports investment in strategic infrastructure, including transport, energy, digital infrastructure and skills provision to enable economic growth and productivity.

Liverpool City Region, Warrington and Cheshire Transport Plans: Identify strategic transport infrastructure requirements and cross-boundary connectivity improvements affecting Cheshire West and Chester.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects within and around Cheshire West and Chester, including HyNet North West, strategic electricity infrastructure and transport schemes, all have implications for future growth and infrastructure planning.

Local

Cheshire West and Chester Council Plan identifies priorities relating to climate change, economic growth, healthy communities and sustainable neighbourhoods, all of which rely on appropriate infrastructure provision.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is the principal evidence base document relating to infrastructure. It identifies the infrastructure required to support planned growth and sets out delivery mechanisms, costs, funding sources and phasing.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule provides a mechanism for securing funding towards infrastructure required to support development.

The Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) sets out the collection, allocation and expenditure of developer contributions and helps monitor infrastructure delivery.

Transport priorities are identified in the Local Transport Plan. This also sets out infrastructure investment required to support economic growth, sustainable travel and accessibility.

The education, health, utilities and Green Infrastructure strategies prepared by the Local Authority and other businesses and infrastructure providers supporting evidence on future infrastructure requirements arising from population growth and planned development.

12.2 Baseline information

Car ownership in the borough is above the national average. 2021 Census data found that 83% of households own at least one car. There is a very high dependency on the car for commuting and 50.8% of residents travel to work by car. Only 1.7% of trips are made by bus and 7.4% by foot. The increasing rise in working from home has led to 31.5% of residents mainly working from home.

Commuter trips by public transport rail are low with 0.8% of residents commuting by rail. The distance that people commute is also of significance. 11.8% of residents commute 20km or more to get to work.

37,364 people commute into the borough for work (with Wirral and Flintshire the most popular source) and 36,704 people commute out of the borough for work with Cheshire East being the most popular destination.

The Council is responsible for 2283km of roads and 203km of cycle routes. A further 70km of Motorway and Trunk Road including parts of the M6, M56, M53, A55 and A550 is managed by National Highways.

Despite the low levels of public transport use, Cheshire West and Chester has a number of important strategic public transport linkages. It is serviced by a number of major rail lines and parts of the area benefit from relatively well used bus networks. There are 21 rail stations within Cheshire West and Chester, with a wide offer in terms of destinations beyond the borough. The West Coast Main Line runs through the centre of the area. There are stations at Acton Bridge, Hartford and Winsford, but these are not served by Inter-City services to London or Scotland, for which a connection is needed at Crewe or Warrington Bank Quay.

The borough is served by around 50 routes, largely focused on Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford– although the network is denser in the west than the east. The rural areas are served by considerably fewer and less frequent services, with many villages not served by any frequent bus services. There are no direct services between Winsford and Chester, or between Ellesmere Port and either Northwich or Winsford, and only an hourly service between Chester and Northwich.

Department for Transport (2023) walking and cycling statistics show that Cheshire West has some of the highest levels of regular walking and cycling in the North-West. 7.4% of residents walk or cycle to work compared to 50.8% of residents who use a car and 1.7% who use a bus. There is an extensive network of public rights of way and cycle routes. This includes a 1280km Public Rights of Way including 2443km of footways and 88km of bridleway. The National Cycle Network in the Borough is some 131km in length, while Regional Routes cover a further 217km. Additional circular and traffic free routes extend the cycle network by a further 155km.

There are four navigable waterways within Cheshire West and Chester, the Manchester Ship Canal, the Shropshire Union Canal, the Weaver Navigation and the Trent and Mersey Canal.

There are currently over 190 educational establishments in the borough including one University (Chester), one sixth form college, 129 primary schools and 20 secondary schools. The majority of the schools are in local authority-maintained schools but there are a number of private schools, free schools and academies. New housing would generate a need for pupil places in most areas of the borough.

The main museums in the borough include: Grosvenor Chester; Stretton Watermill; Lion Salt Works; Northwich and Weaver Hall Museum and Workhouse (Northwich); Cheshire Military Museum (Chester) and the National Waterways Museum (Ellesmere Port). Theatres include Storyhouse Chester, Theatre Porto, Ellesmere Port and the Harlequin Theatre Northwich.

The SP Energy Networks application provides an indication of the potential opportunities to connect Distributed Generation to the HV, 33kV and 132kV network in the SP Manweb plc licence area. Category: Red– At least one factor is close to its operational limit and so installation of most levels of Distributed Generation and a local connection is highly unlikely. It may also require extensive reinforcement works or given the lack of a local connection, require an extensive amount of sole user assets to facilitate such a connection. The situation for Cheshire West is shown online at: https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/sp_manweb_heat_maps.aspx.

In CW&C as of July 2026, 86% of premises now have full fibre broadband availability compared to 78% of the UK. 98% of the borough's premises have access to superfast broadband (the same as the UK) and 87% have access to Ultrafast broadband (compared to 86% UK average). 1% of premises in CW&C are unable to receive at least 10Mbit/s broadband, which is the same for the UK.

12.3 Recent changes and anticipated trends

Cheshire West and Chester's population continues to grow, and the proportion of older residents is increasing. This is likely to generate additional demand for healthcare facilities, education provision, transport services, utilities, community facilities and green infrastructure. The table below shows the demographic changes over time (Office of National Statistics).

Census Year	Population	Aged 65+	% Aged 65+
2011	329,600	61,100	18.5%
2021	357,200	75,900	21.2%

Table 12.2 – Demographic changes over time (Office of National Statistics)

Approximately one quarter of the borough's population lives in rural areas. Access to employment, education, healthcare and other services remains a challenge in some locations, resulting in continued reliance on private vehicles and increasing importance of digital connectivity.

Planned housing and employment growth will place additional pressures on infrastructure networks. The timing and delivery of transport, education, healthcare, utilities, green infrastructure, digital infrastructure and community facilities will become increasingly important to ensuring sustainable growth.

National policy continues to promote a vision led approach that emphasises walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. However, private car travel remains the dominant travel mode across much of the borough, particularly within rural areas.

Demand for electricity and water infrastructure is expected to increase significantly as a result of population growth, electric vehicle charging, renewable energy generation, low-carbon technologies and industrial decarbonisation.

Digital connectivity continues to improve across the borough. Coverage of gigabit-capable broadband and advanced mobile communications networks is expected to

continue increasing as investment in digital infrastructure progresses and new development is required to provide gigabit-ready connections.

Climate change adaptation and resilience are becoming increasingly important considerations for infrastructure providers. Additional investment is likely to be required in flood management, sustainable drainage systems, green infrastructure and resilient utility networks.

12.4 Evidence gaps and proposed work

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) will continue to provide the principal evidence base for infrastructure planning within the borough. The IDP will need to be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in growth forecasts, infrastructure requirements, delivery mechanisms, funding sources and infrastructure costs.

Ongoing engagement with transport authorities, education providers, healthcare bodies, utility operators, telecommunications companies and other infrastructure providers will be required throughout the preparation of the Local Plan.

The Council's Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) provides an updated evidence base for transport infrastructure and accessibility requirements. Further work may be required to assess the cumulative impacts of development on the transport network and identify any mitigation measures.

Future growth options will need to be tested against infrastructure capacity, including transport, electricity, water supply, wastewater treatment, digital communications and flood management infrastructure.

Additional work may be required to understand the implications of increasing electrification, energy demand and industrial decarbonisation on the capacity of local electricity infrastructure.

Education and healthcare forecasts will need to be regularly reviewed to ensure future requirements are accurately reflected in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Whole Plan Viability Assessment work will be required to ensure infrastructure requirements remain deliverable and do not compromise the overall viability of planned growth.

There are no significant evidence gaps relating to broadband or mobile communications infrastructure, as information is routinely published by Ofcom and network providers.

12.5 Local Plan scope and influence

The Local Plan can influence the location, scale and timing of development to ensure that growth is supported by appropriate infrastructure. Through strategic policies, site allocations and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Council can identify infrastructure requirements, coordinate infrastructure delivery and safeguard land for strategic infrastructure where necessary.

The Local Plan can require development to provide infrastructure directly or contribute towards infrastructure that is necessary to mitigate its impacts. This may include transport infrastructure, education provision, healthcare facilities, utilities, green infrastructure, community facilities, digital infrastructure and climate resilience measures. The Local Plan can also help ensure that development is directed towards sustainable and accessible locations and that infrastructure is delivered at an appropriate stage in the development process.

The Council has an important role in planning for education infrastructure, including early years, primary, secondary, post-16 and special educational needs provision. Growth forecasts and infrastructure planning can be used to identify where additional school capacity may be required. The Local Plan can also support provision of healthcare facilities, community facilities, green infrastructure, open space, sports facilities and other infrastructure required to support existing and future communities.

Digital connectivity is increasingly recognised as essential infrastructure. The Local Plan can support provision of digital communications infrastructure where appropriate, although delivery is influenced by national legislation, permitted development rights and investment decisions made by telecommunications providers.

12.6 Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- Delivering infrastructure alongside housing and employment growth to ensure development is supported by adequate facilities, services and utilities.
- Coordinating infrastructure provision through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to support sustainable growth across the borough.
- Ensuring sufficient education, healthcare, community and recreational infrastructure is available to meet the needs of existing and future residents.
- Addressing infrastructure capacity constraints, including transport, energy, water supply, wastewater treatment and digital communications networks.
- Improving access to infrastructure and services for rural communities and reducing inequalities in accessibility across the borough.
- Supporting investment in digital infrastructure, including gigabit-capable broadband and mobile communications networks, to support residents, businesses and service providers.
- Providing resilient infrastructure capable of adapting to climate change, including flood management, sustainable drainage systems and green infrastructure.
- Supporting low-carbon infrastructure, renewable energy networks and the transition to electric vehicles and other emerging technologies.
- Securing timely and proportionate developer contributions to help fund the infrastructure required to support planned growth.
- Ensuring infrastructure requirements remain deliverable and do not adversely affect the viability of development needed to meet housing and economic growth objectives.

12.7 SA framework

Sustainability Objective	Appraisal Criteria / Sub-objective	Baseline Indicator
Improve sustainable transport options	Will it increase the percentage of journeys made by walking, wheeling or sustainable modes of transport?	Percentage of new residential developments of over 10 units within 800 metres of a city centre, town centre or local retail centre
	Will it reduce congestion and travel times?	Percentage of new residential developments of over 10 units within 800 metres of a city centre, town centre or local retail centre
	Will it provide infrastructure that maximises accessibility by sustainable modes of transport?	Percentage of major applications providing connections to new / existing services by sustainable modes of transport
Protect and enhance the vitality and viability of city, town and local centres	Will it safeguard shops and services in existing centres?	Vacancy rates within town centres
		Total loss of town centre floorspace in local retail centres
	Will it safeguard or improve the retail, leisure or service provision?	Amount of floorspace developed for town centre uses
		Percentage of approved planning applications for town centre uses in and out of centre
		Amount of completed floorspace in centre for town centre uses
Ensure the timely provision of infrastructure to support sustainable growth	Will it support the provision of education infrastructure to meet needs arising from development?	Forecast primary, secondary and SEND school place surplus/deficit
	Will it support the provision of healthcare infrastructure?	GP and healthcare capacity indicators
	Will it support the provision of community, cultural, sport or leisure facilities?	Total amount of open space per 1,000 persons
	Will it support the provision of digital infrastructure?	Percentage of premises with full fibre broadband availability

13 SA methodology and framework

This scoping report aims to set out a framework to assess the sustainability effects of the new Local Plan as it is being prepared. The framework is central to the SA process and is made up of a series of sustainability objectives covering environmental, social and economic issues.

The complete set of sustainability objectives and sub-criteria that form the sustainability framework are listed in the table below. The objectives will provide a benchmark 'intention' against which the sustainability effects of the Plan can be tested. Each objective includes one or more sub-objectives, which will be used to help to understand the extent to which the objective is being met for each policy or allocation. Each sub-objective has an indicator to provide a way of measuring the progress towards achievement of the objective. The indicators are set out in the thematic chapters. The indicators may need to be amended in future as additional work is undertaken on baselining and monitoring for the Local Plan.

Topic	Objective	Sub objective
Climate change, energy and air quality	Minimise carbon emissions and climate change	Will it ensure that new development is in accessible locations?
		Will it reduce the need to travel?
		Will it enable a shift to more sustainable modes of transport?
		Will it encourage the use of lower carbon technologies and working practices?
		Will it protect or enhance peat resources?
	Reduce air pollution	Will it improve local air quality or minimise air pollution?
	Reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and increase the production of energy from renewable resources	Will it reduce energy consumption?
		Will it promote energy efficiency?
		Will it result in an increase in the installed renewable energy capacity?
Waste	Minimise wate generation and manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy	Will it help to reduce the amount of waste generated?
		Will it encourage increased re -use, recovery, recycling or composting?
		Will it reduce the amount of waste sent for incineration or landfill?
		Will it result in new or enhanced waste management facilities?
Land and resources	Protect, conserve or improve natural resources	Will it achieve remediation and re-use of contaminated land?

Topic	Objective	Sub objective
		Will it protect the extent and quality of soils?
		Will it focus development on PDL?
	Protect, enhance and manage geodiversity	Will it protect or increase the number and areas of RIGS?
	Provide a steady and adequate supply of minerals	Will it safeguard mineral resources?
		Will it enable delivery of a steady and adequate supply of minerals?
		Will it promote the use of secondary/recycled aggregates?
Water	Protect and improve water quality, promote sustainable water use and support climate-resilient water management	Will it protect or enhance water quality?
		Will it improve water efficiency?
	Manage and reduce the risk of flooding	Will it reduce the risk of flooding from all sources?
		Will it direct development towards areas of least flood risk?
		Will it promote or increase the number of relevant development proposals that incorporate SuDs?
Landscape, townscape and cultural heritage	Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness	Will it protect or enhance landscapes or townscapes?
		Will it increase the quantity or quality of open space?
		Will it provide high quality design?
	Conserve and enhance the historic environment, cultural heritage, archaeological resources and historic character of places	Will it conserve or enhance designated heritage assets and their settings?
		Will it conserve or enhance non-designated heritage assets and local character?
		Will it protect archaeological resources and areas of archaeological potential?
Biodiversity	Protect, enhance and manage biodiversity and geodiversity	Will it protect and promote effective management of the borough's sites of ecological and nature conservation importance?

Topic	Objective	Sub objective
		Will it provide opportunities for the enhancement, creation or connection of habitats and to foster species conservation, diversity and resilience to climate change?
		Will it maintain, enhance and increase (rural and urban) tree cover and woodlands?
Population and housing	Provide high-quality, well-designed housing to meet identified needs	Will it help to meet identified housing needs?
		Will it help to provide an appropriate mix of housing types, sizes and tenures?
		Will it provide well designed housing?
Health, wellbeing and equality	Improve health, safety and wellbeing	Will it promote active lifestyles?
		Will it increase the quantity or quality of open space?
		Will it reduce opportunities for crime?
		Will it affect the fear of crime and feelings of safety?
		Will it improve road safety?
		Will it help to protect existing health or community facilities and services?
		Will it provide new or improved health or community facilities or services?
	Reduce noise pollution	Will it reduce noise pollution?
Economy and employment	Support a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economy and provide opportunities for economic growth and investment	Will it help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt?
		Will it support sustainable economic growth?
		Will it provide a balanced portfolio of employment land for the area by type and location?
		Will it maintain/safeguard high quality employment land and premises?
		Will it contribute to meeting the employment needs of the rural/urban area?

Topic	Objective	Sub objective
		Will it promote tourism and the visitor economy?
		Will it improve accessibility to jobs?
		Will it take account of the different locational requirements of different sectors?
	Promote regeneration, particularly of deprived areas and reduce inequalities	Will it deliver regeneration?
		Will it improve economic conditions, particularly in deprived areas?
		Will it improve equality across the borough?
Infrastructure	Improve sustainable transport options	Will it increase the percentage of journeys made by walking, wheeling or sustainable modes of transport?
		Will it reduce congestion and travel times?
		Will it provide infrastructure that maximises accessibility by sustainable modes of transport?
	Protect and enhance the vitality and viability of city, town and local centres	Will it safeguard shops and services in existing centres?
		Will it safeguard or improve retail, leisure or service provision?
	Ensure the timely provision of infrastructure to support sustainable growth	Will it support the provision of education infrastructure to meet needs arising from development?
		Will it support the provision of healthcare infrastructure?
		Will it support the provision of community, cultural, sport or leisure facilities?
		Will it support the provision of digital infrastructure?

As soon as objectives are set out in the new Local Plan, they will be checked against the sustainability objectives to draw attention to any potential conflicts.

13.1 Methodology

The detailed SA of the new Local Plan will involve screening of the policies and allocations against each of the sustainability topics. The screening will consider whether the impact on the SA objective would be significant and if not, it will be screened out. This allows the appraisal to focus on the significant issues and reduce the amount of 'uncertain' or 'no impact' scores.

The policies and allocations will then be scored to identify whether the impacts on each objective are likely to be very positive, positive, neutral, negative or very negative. The scoring will identify whether the impacts are: short, medium or long term; permanent or temporary; secondary or indirect; synergistic or cumulative; and the likely areas to be significantly affected.

The appraisal process will also involve identification of any potential mitigation measures. This includes measures that would reduce negative impacts or would increase positive impacts.

The Local Plan policies will then be amended in light of the SA findings and the SA will be taken into account in decision-making on options for the wording of policies and potential reasonable alternatives to the policies. It will also be taken into account when deciding which allocations to take forward. The appraisal process will then be undertaken again, to assess the sustainability effects of the updated policies and allocations.

13.2 Monitoring

The success and effectiveness of the SA process will be monitored by the collection of baseline data relating to the identified indictors. This is likely to be done through the preparation of the Annual Monitoring Report, but a cost-effective and reasonable monitoring scheme will be developed and reported on in the SA report.

14 Consultation and next steps

A key part of the SA process is consultation. The draft scoping report will be subject to consultation with the statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) for a 5-week period. Comments received will be reviewed and the scope of the assessment revised accordingly.

The next stage of the SA process will be preparation of an interim SA report. This will document the assessment of the new Local Plan and will involve appraising any reasonable alternatives to the spatial strategy, policies and allocations. All reasonable alternatives will undergo a high-level sustainability appraisal using the objectives identified within this scoping report.

Consultation will be undertaken on the interim SA report and the findings will be integrated into the Local Plan and SA report, as part of an iterative process. Once the spatial strategy, policies and allocations have been revised, they SA process will be re-visited to assess the sustainability effects of the update policies and allocations. There will be consultation with members of the public and statutory consultees at each stage.

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Local Plan

Appendix A

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

Cheshire West and Chester

Appendix A: Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination for the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan

August 2026

A.1 Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), this document is the screening determination on the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) Local Plan.

Under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the responsible authority (i.e. the local planning authority) must carry out an environmental assessment for any plan or programme that is prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, which sets the framework for future development consent of certain projects. It is likely that Development Plan Documents (DPDs), such as the Local Plan will require SEA as they will contain planning policies that influence the above list of topics, and which will be used to determine planning applications.

The first stage in the SEA process is for the Council to determine whether or not a plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. This process should use a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the regulations). The results of this process must be summarised in an SEA screening opinion, which is then sent to the statutory bodies for comment. Once comments have been taken into account a screening determination is prepared setting out whether SEA is required and reasons for the decision and this must be made publicly available.

In accordance with Regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the Council consulted the statutory environmental bodies on the SEA Screening Opinion.

Consultation was undertaken between 6 July – 10 August 2026 with:

- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural Resources Wales
- Cadw

The responses have been considered by the Council and taken into account in reaching the final screening determination. A summary of the consultation responses is provided in Appendix 1 and the responses are set out in Appendix 2.

In summary, all of the statutory consultees who responded agreed with the Council's conclusion that the Local Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore requires Strategic Environmental Assessment.

CW&C are currently getting ready to prepare a new Local Plan. The 'getting ready' stage includes preparing a timetable, establishing project management, consulting and engaging on the plan, developing the anticipated content of the plan and starting work on the SEA. Notice of intention to commence the Local Plan was published on 12 June 2026 and a timetable has also been published.

Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs) will eventually replace SEA and Sustainability Appraisal for Local Plans, however the EOR regulations have not yet been implemented for plan-making.

The new Local Plan will cover the whole of the borough. It will set a spatial strategy for development, identifying where new development should be located in order to meet housing and employment needs. It will identify sites to meet the housing targets set by government. The new Local Plan will set out a series of topic-based policies and will allocate sites for development. The new Local Plan will also incorporate the Minerals and Waste Plan for CW&C.

Preparation of the Local Plan will involve stakeholders and the community in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The Council considers that the preparation of the Local Plan falls within the scope of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 on the basis that:

- The Local Plan is a plan which is subject to preparation and adoption by an authority at a local level and is required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions, as defined in Regulation 2;
- The Local Plan is prepared for town and country planning or land use and will set the framework for the future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or II of European Council Directive 2011/92/EU (Regulation 5); and
- The Local Plan will apply to a wider area than a small area at local level and is not a minor modification to an existing plan or programme.

A determination under Regulation 9 is, therefore, required as to whether the Local Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects.

A.2 Characteristics of the Local Plan

The screening process set out in Regulation 9 and Schedule 1 of the regulations includes two sets of characteristics for determining the likely significance of the effects on the environment. These relate firstly to the characteristics of the Local Plan and secondly to the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected. There

are a number of criteria relating to each of these characteristics, the answers to which are set out below.

Table A.1 - Assessment of the significant environmental effects of the Local Plan Update

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant environmental effect likely (yes/no)?	Assessment and justification
1 The characteristics of the plans and programmes, having regard in particular to:		
(a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	Yes	The Local Plan will set a new policy framework. This will set the strategic context for planning projects and activities in CW&C in terms of the location of new development and the nature, size and operating conditions of such developments.
(b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	Yes	The Local Plan sets the overarching vision for the other documents that make up the Council's development plan. It will set out a spatial strategy and housing figures for specific locations. It will also identify allocations for development and will set strategic policies. Neighbourhood Plans will need to take account of the housing figures set for their area.
(c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Yes	Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires that the Local Plan must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	Yes	The Local Plan will seek to address environmental problems that are relevant to planning.
(e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of assimilated law on the environment (for example, plans and	Yes	The Local Plan will impact on the implementation of assimilated law on the environment, for example in relation to protected species and habitats, waste management and water protection.

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant environmental effect likely (yes/no)?	Assessment and justification
programmes linked to waste management or water protection).		
2 Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to:		
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects.	Yes	The Local Plan will set a long-term vision, objectives and strategy for the spatial framework for new development within CW&C. Individual policies will have a different probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects, but generally the policies as a whole will have medium to high probability and medium to long-term duration effects. The effects are likely to be frequent within CW&C and some effects will be reversible, but others will be more difficult or potentially impossible to reverse
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	Yes	There are likely to be cumulative affects arising from and between the different policies within the Local Plan. There could also be cumulative effects with other development plan documents and Neighbourhood Plans.
(c) The transboundary nature of the effects.	No	There are no transboundary effects arising from the Local Plan.
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents).	No	There are unlikely to be risks to human health or the environment arising from the Local Plan.
(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	Yes	The Local Plan will apply to new development in the CW&C geographical area. This has an area of nearly 1,000 square kilometres and a population of 371,652 people (according to the mid 2024 population estimates based on the 2021 Census).
(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to;	Yes	The Local Plan covers the whole of CW&C, which is valued in terms of its built, natural and archaeological heritage. There may be the potential for the value and vulnerability

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant environmental effect likely (yes/no)?	Assessment and justification
(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values or (iii) intensive land use		of the area to be affected as a result of the Local Plan.
(g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	Yes	The Local Plan will apply to all landscape types in CW&C, including those which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

A.3 Conclusion

In accordance with Regulation 9 (2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and having taken into account the consultation responses received from the statutory environmental bodies, Cheshire West and Chester Council has determined that the preparation of the Local Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects.

Strategic Environmental Assessment is therefore required. The Council notes that the statutory consultees agreed with this conclusion.

The requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment will be incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal process undertaken alongside preparation of the Local Plan.

Date of determination: 20 August 2026

Appendix 1

Consultee	Summary of Response
Natural England	Agreed with the conclusion of the Screening Opinion that SEA is required as it will have potential to significantly impact the environment.
Environment Agency	Notes the conclusion of the SEA Screening Opinion that SEA is required. States they do not advise of whether a plan falls within the requirements of the SEA regulations or on SEA Screening Determinations.
Historic England	Agreed with the Conclusion of the SEA Screening Opinion that SEA will be required.
Natural Resources Wales	Agree with the conclusion of the SEA Screening Opinion that SEA will be required and welcome the intention to integrate SEA requirements within the SA process. Note that the Local Plan has the potential to influence environmental receptors that extend across the border, including shared catchments and designated sites. The SEA should therefore give appropriate consideration to any potential cross-border environmental effects.
Cadw	No response received.

Appendix 2

Natural England Response:

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England agrees with the conclusion of the SEA Screening Opinion and that the emerging Cheshire West and Chester

Local Plan requires an SEA as it will have the potential to significantly impact the environment due to its expected scope.

Environment Agency Response:

We note the Council's conclusion that the emerging Local Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and will therefore require Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). We do not advise on whether a plan falls within the requirements of the SEA Regulations or on SEA screening determinations.

As a statutory consultation body, we would expect to be consulted on the scope of the SEA to help ensure that relevant environmental issues within our remit are appropriately considered. We can also provide baseline information and environmental data to inform the assessment.

Historic England Response:

Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non-departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

Historic England has produced a document, which you might find helpful in providing guidance on the effective assessment of the historic environment in Strategic Environmental Assessments. This can be found at https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice note-8/.

In terms of our area of interest, we would concur with your assessment that the Local Plan will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Natural Resources Wales Response:

Natural Resources Wales notes the Council's screening determination that the proposed Local Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore requires SEA. Based on the information provided, we agree with the Council's screening determination and welcome the intention to integrate SEA requirements within the Sustainability Appraisal process.

NRW notes that the Local Plan has the potential to influence environmental receptors that extend across the Wales-England border, including shared catchments and designated sites. The SEA should therefore give appropriate consideration to any potential cross-border environmental effects, including those affecting shared river catchments, designated sites and other environmental receptors that may be influenced by the scale and location of future development proposed through the Plan.

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in audio, Braille, large print or other formats. If you would like information in another format or language, including British Sign Language, please email us at:

equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منّا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

Pokud byste požadovali informace v jiném jazyce nebo formátu, kontaktujte nás

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

Türkçe bilgi almak istiyorsanız, bize başvurabilirsiniz.

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