

Report on the Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan 2026 - 2042

An Examination undertaken for Cheshire West and Chester Council with the support of the Christleton and Littleton Parish Councils on the April 2026 submission version of the Plan.

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/the CaLNP) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – the Christleton and Littleton Parish Councils;
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated, as shown on the map on page 3 of the Plan;
- The Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect: 2026 - 2042; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan 2026 – 2042

- 1.1 The two adjacent villages of Christleton and Littleton lie in fairly level agricultural land just to the east of Chester and are traversed by the A41 and A51, main roads leading into Chester city. The A55 slip road and the A41 ring road around Chester pass through the western area of the Plan and, in effect, form the division between the built-up area of Chester and the green spaces and built-up areas of the villages. In 2021 the population of the Plan area was 3031¹.
- 1.2 The preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan began in 2023 when it was agreed that the Parishes of Christleton and Littleton would work together to produce a joint plan for the area. The Plan was submitted to Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaCC) in April 2026 and represents about three years concentrated work by the Parish Councils and teams of volunteers.

¹ Christleton and Littleton Housing Needs Report; page 9.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.3 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan by Cheshire West and Chester Council, with the agreement of the Christleton and Littleton Parish Councils (CaLPC) which comprise the Qualifying Body (QB).
- 1.4 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector, with over fifty years' experience and with extensive experience of examining neighbourhood plans. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.5 As the independent examiner I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
 - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.6 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
 - Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land and does not go beyond the scope of what may be included in a draft plan²;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
 - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;

² See s.38B(A1) and s.38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.

- it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development';
 - so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, it is designed to secure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change³; and
 - so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, it takes account of any local nature recovery strategy, under section 104 of the Environment Act 2021, that relates to all or part of the neighbourhood area.⁴
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.
 - Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)('the 2012 Regulations').

1.7 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

1.8 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the neighbourhood development plan were not to be made⁵;

³ This additional requirement was commenced on 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force section 98 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.

⁴ See footnote above.

⁵ This Basic Condition applies from 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force section 99 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. This replaces the former Basic Condition which required a

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- be compatible with, and not breach, assimilated obligations⁶; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.9 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('the 2017 Regulations').⁷

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

2.1 The Development Plan for this part of Cheshire West and Chester Council, is the Local Plan (CWaCLP) (Part One) Strategic Policies, adopted in January 2015, and the CWaCLP (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies, adopted on 18 July 2019. A new Local Plan is in the early stage of preparation, with a scoping consultation currently in progress and is therefore not available for examination of this neighbourhood plan.⁸

2.2 This Plan has been prepared in the context of the version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2024. A revised NPPF was published during the examination on 17 August 2026. However, the revised version does not apply for the purposes of this examination.⁹ Unless otherwise stated, all references in the report are to the December 2024 NPPF and the accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

Submitted Documents

2.3 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including:

- the draft Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan 2026 -2042, April 2026;

neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

⁶ See: The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023, which replaced the previous reference to 'EU' obligations.

⁷ This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

⁸ A Scoping Consultation, running from 7 September to 28 September 2026, is seeking views on what the new Local Plan should contain:

<https://planningpolicy.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/new-local-plan>

⁹ See the transitional arrangements provided by Annex A, Paragraph 6 of the August 2026 NPPF: [National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK](#)

- the map on page 3 of the Plan which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
- the Consultation Statement, April 2026;
- the Basic Conditions Statement, April 2026;
- the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Marine Plan Screening Determination prepared by CWaCC, April 2026;
- all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation, including that made by the QB dated 12 June 2026;
- the joint response dated 6 August 2026 from the QB and CWaCC to my letter of 30 June 2026;
- the further response received from Bridgemere UK Limited on 6 July 2026; and
- the letter from Knights, on behalf of Brampton Strategic Land and R and C Handley, received on 20 August 2026 to which I responded on 24 August 2026.¹⁰

Site Visit

- 2.4 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 9 July 2026 to familiarise myself with it, and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.5 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. Despite receiving a request for a hearing, I considered a hearing session to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum.

Modifications

- 2.6 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix to this report.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by the Christleton and Littleton Parish Councils,

¹⁰ View at: <https://planningpolicy.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/christleton-and-littleton-neighbourhood-plan>

which are jointly the Qualifying Body for an area that was designated by Cheshire West and Chester Council in February 2024.

- 3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the Christleton and Littleton Parishes and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

- 3.3 The Plan specifies clearly the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2026 to 2042.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.4 Details of the preparation of and the consultation on the Plan are contained in the Consultation Statement (CS) prepared in April 2026. Work commenced in 2023 and the Plan area was formally approved by CWaCC in February 2024. A village consultation was posted to every household in the area with over 90 responses received. A wide range of consultation opportunities were taken including monthly meetings of the Parish Councils, open meetings and the Plan website.
- 3.5 The Regulation 14 consultation took place between 10 November 2025 and 22 December 2025. An information notice about the consultation was posted on noticeboards, websites and social media, the Parish Councils websites and Facebook. Residents were mailed a copy of the Plan, copies of the Plan were distributed in key locations around the villages and at the library in Chester. A full list of statutory consultees is at Appendix 1 of the CS. 73 online responses were received to the consultation from households in the Plan area. A further 10 submitted paper entries. The CS analyses the points raised.
- 3.6 Consultation under Regulation 16 took place between 30 April 2026 and 15 June 2026. 168 responses were received, including one from CWaCC. I confirm that the legal requirements have been met by the consultation process. In addition, there has been regard to the advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.7 Subject to recommended modifications to Policies HN1, CF3 and PROW2¹¹, the Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act and does not exceed the appropriate scope of a neighbourhood plan.¹²

¹¹ See below, paragraphs 4.6 and PM1; 4.33 and PM18; and 4.36 and PM20.

¹² See s.38B(A1) and s.38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

- 3.8 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.¹³

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 3.9 There is a local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) (under section 104 of the Environment Act 2021) in place that relates to the Neighbourhood Plan Area and which is The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cheshire and Warrington and which covers West and East Cheshire, the Dark and South West Peaks of the Peak District National Park and Warrington Borough. The Basic Conditions Statement (BCS) notes that the Plan has been prepared in close consultation with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust and local conservation bodies and has had regard to the proposals contained within the LNRS. In my assessment, I consider that none of the Plan's policies are in direct conflict with the strategy.

Climate Change

- 3.10 I am satisfied that overall, the Plan policies do not conflict with the aims of securing development which contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

Human Rights

- 3.11 The BCS notes that the Parish Councils have been mindful of the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human rights in the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan and consider that it complies with Human Rights Act. The Neighbourhood Plan has been the subject of extensive consultation with local people who could be affected by its policies and their views have been taken into account in finalising the Plan. The Parish Councils are satisfied that the Plan does not breach Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998), and from my independent assessment I see no reason to disagree.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

Assimilated Obligations

- 4.1 CWaCC provided screening opinions in November 2025 that determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), in accordance with regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessments of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is not required, following consultation with relevant statutory bodies. The same screening decision confirmed

¹³ The meaning of 'excluded development' is set out in s.61K of the 1990 Act.

that in relation to the habitats provisions of EU Directive 92/43/EEC (and the associated Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the 2017 Regulations) either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Having read the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion and the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Opinion, I support these conclusions. The Plan was also considered for its effects on the North West Marine Plan and Welsh National Marine Plan where the conclusions were that it was anticipated that the Neighbourhood Plan would have a positive relationship with those Marine Plans.

Main Issues

- 4.2 Having considered whether the Plan complies with various procedural and legal requirements, it is now necessary to deal with whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions, particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance and the contribution it makes to the achievement of sustainable development. I test the Plan against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of all the Plan's policies.
- 4.3 As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A neighbourhood plan policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.¹⁴
- 4.4 Accordingly, having regard to the Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan, the consultation responses, other evidence and the site visit, I consider that the main issues in this examination are whether the draft Plan's policies: (i) have regard to national policy and guidance; (ii) do not result in the development plan for the area proposing less housing development than would have been the case if the plan were not to be made; and (iii) would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Vision and Objectives

- 4.5 The vision for the CaLNP is based on issues raised by the community during the initial stages of the consultation process. The vision is succinctly described in the second paragraph on page 9 of the Plan. A series of twelve objectives have then been developed and which are listed on page 10 to help to achieve the vision. The objectives provide the context for the land use based policies.

¹⁴ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

Policy HN1 Housing Need

- 4.6 The policy identifies an affordable housing need for those with a local connection to Christleton and Littleton for 12 houses plus 3 applicants on the housing register. Whereas this may be an accurate factual statement, it is not a land use policy. Therefore, I shall recommend the policy is modified to: *"Proposals for residential development which seek to accommodate the local housing needs identified in the Housing Needs Survey Report will be supported."* **(PM1)** CWaCC commented that the actual housing need from the Housing Register is 77, but that is apparent from the table on page 11 and needs no further emphasis. The policy as recommended to be modified would have regard to national guidance¹⁵ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy HN2 Housing Density

Policy HN3 Brownfield or Greenfield Development

Policy HN4 Rural Exception Sites

- 4.7 Policy HN2 seeks a maximum of 16 houses on sites of less than one hectare and seeks an average density of 16 dwellings per hectare (dph) to complement the existing density of housing in the villages of 6 – 26 dph. The size limit of one hectare and the use of 16dph appears arbitrary. Policy HN4(1)¹⁶, which states that sites of several houses to meet local needs, etc... should be approved, is unacceptably ambiguous for development management purposes. Having read the answer to my query about the basis of using 16 dph and also considering that a factor quoted in Policy HN3 is that housing should have regard to the prevailing character of the area, I have concluded that Policies HN2, HN3 and HN4 should be combined and shall recommend as follows: *"Proposals for residential development to meet local needs will be supported where they reflect the prevailing character and density of the adjoining settlement having regard to the efficient use of land and the requirements of the Design Code."* **(PM2)** The policy as recommended to be modified would have regard to national guidance¹⁷ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy HN4 (2)¹⁸ Infill and Backland Housing

- 4.8 The policy aims to refuse backland development and only allow infill development for "occasional" spaces of one or two houses in the village. However, in my experience, infill development is frequently defined as "filling a gap in an otherwise built-up frontage", with no reference to the number of dwellings. In addition, backland development is not always unacceptable, it depends on the site circumstances and whether, for example, significant harm to privacy of neighbours or from noise and disturbance can be avoided. Therefore, I recommend that Policy HN4(2)

¹⁵ NPPF: paragraphs 61 – 63.

¹⁶ There are two Policies HN4 in the Plan.

¹⁷ NPPF: paragraphs 61 – 63.

¹⁸ See footnote 16.

is modified to: *"Proposals for residential development as infill and in backland will be supported provided there is no significant harm to the amenities of neighbours and the character of the immediate area and that an acceptable means of access can be achieved."* **(PM3)** The policy as recommended to be modified would have regard to national guidance¹⁹ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy HN5 Repurposing of Empty Buildings

- 4.9 The policy seeks to prioritise the conversion of empty buildings to facilitate occupation. After I sought clarification, the QB suggested the following revision to the policy, with which I agree, and which will have regard to national guidance²⁰ and meet the Basic Conditions: *"Proposals for the conversion, adaptation, or subdivision of existing buildings (including redundant rural buildings and substantial residential properties) into residential accommodation will be supported, provided that: (i) the proposed use and any associated physical alterations respect and preserve the architectural character, scale, and historic interest of the original building and its rural or landscape setting; (ii) the scheme does not require significant rebuilding, disproportionate extensions, or intrusive domestic curtilages (such as overly formal gardens or boundary walls) that detract from the area's character; and (iii) the design, materials, and layout are in strict accordance with the General Housing Design Code."* **(PM4)**

Policy HDC1 General Housing Design Code

- 4.10 Policy HDC1 requires new housing development to comply with the Christleton and Littleton Design Code. I queried the length of the policy and the QB and CWaCC agreed a variation, which I shall recommend, and which would have regard to national guidance²¹ and meet the Basic Conditions, as follows: *"Proposals for residential development will be supported when they comply with the design requirements and guidance set out in the Christleton and Littleton Design Code (see Plan Appendix²²) and the National Design Guide. Any planning application that seeks a departure from the Design Code must be accompanied by a robust, evidence-backed justification demonstrating why compliance is either not feasible or how an alternative design solution better delivers the objectives of the Code."* **(PM5)** Notwithstanding this, I recognise there is some useful explanatory narrative in the deleted policy that might be utilised as an introduction to the new Plan Appendix.²³ I queried the distinction between "should" and "must" within the policies but, having considered the combined response of the QB and CWaCC (6 August 2026), accept that they remain as drafted in the Plan.

¹⁹ NPPF: paragraphs 61 – 63.

²⁰ NPPF: paragraph 125.

²¹ NPPF; Section 12: Achieving well designed places.

²² PM5 below recommends a new Plan Appendix.

²³ See paragraph 4.44 with regard to minor non-material modifications.

Policies HDC2 – HDC31 The General Housing Design Code Details

- 4.11 Each of these policies relates to details which are within the Design Code and should be removed to a new Plan Appendix referred to above in Policy HDC1. In response to comments from CWaCC and the Canals and Rivers Trust, the QB and CWaCC (6 August 2026) have agreed a set of amendments to Policies HDC2, HDC3, HDC4, HDC5, HDC7, HDC8, HDC10, HDC14, HDC24, HDC26, HDC27, HDC28 and HDC29. The amended policies are shown in Appendix 1 to the joint response from the QB and CWaCC (6 August 2026) and which I shall recommend as modifications to the Plan. **(PM6)**
- 4.12 Possible amendments to Policies HDC12(1)²⁴ Garage Location and Size and HDC16 Minimum Space Standards were not agreed. A key objection to Policy HDC12(1) by CWaCC is the use of absolute garage dimensions in the policy and the QB's suggested alternative, preferring to define the size by reference to the Council's Supplementary Parking Standards. I consider that the CWaCC version of Policy HDC12(1) is preferable because the Council is more aware of the variation in garage sizes being required on a wider than Neighbourhood Plan scale and the Council has experience of dealing with garage size requirements in development management. Therefore, I shall recommend that as a modification to Policy HDC12(1). **(PM7)**
- 4.13 Policy HDC16 seeks compliance or alignment with New Design Guidance published in January 2026 and a requirement to align with the minimum sizes published by the Mayor of London in 2023. I have considered the further comments by the QB in support of the policy and the possible amendments to the policy which are suggested. However, I agree with the reasons of CWaCC described in their Regulation 16 representation that Policy HDC16 should be deleted. **(PM8)**
- 4.14 All the policies as recommended to be modified and Policies HDC6, HDC9, HDC11, HDC13, HDC15, HDC17, HDC18, HDC19, HDC20, HDC21, HDC22, HDC23, HDC25, HDC29 and HDC30 have regard to national guidance²⁵ and meet the Basic Condition.

Policy SUC1 The Multifunctional Role of the Canal

- 4.15 Policy SUC1 aims to maintain the multifunctional role of the Shropshire Union Canal which runs through the Plan area, most notably through Christleton. Following criticism of the policy by the Canals and Rivers Trust, the QB and CWaCC have agreed to amendments to the first section, which I canvassed, and which I shall recommend as a modification:
- "Proposals for development adjacent to the canal should recognise the multifunctional nature of the Shropshire Union Canal and will be supported where there will be no harm to the safety or stability of the canal or its*

²⁴ There are two Policies HDC12.

²⁵ NPPF: Section 12: Achieving well designed places.

infrastructure. Where appropriate, development will be encouraged to provide

- *access to the canal for local residents and tourists to the area for recreational opportunities and physical activity”.*

The policy would then have regard to national guidance²⁶ and meet the Basic Conditions. **(PM9)**

Policy SUC2 Development Along the Canal in Christleton

Policy SUC3 Heritage Along the Canal in Christleton

4.16 Policy SUC2 and Policy SUC3 each have regard to national guidance²⁷ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy SUC4 Biodiversity Buffer

4.17 Policy SUC4 requires development alongside the Shropshire Union Canal to be laid out with gardens facing the canal and a 20 metre biodiversity buffer. The QB and CWaCC have agreed an amendment to Policy SUC4 taking into account the representations from the Canals and Rivers Trust, but disagree on whether rear facing gardens onto the canal are included as a necessity. I consider that the imposition of such a requirement would be overly prescriptive and would limit the scope for innovation in design. Therefore, notwithstanding the additional submissions from the QB, I shall recommend the following modified policy which would enable a biodiversity buffer of an appropriate width, depending on the circumstances of the site:

"Development proposals adjacent to the Shropshire Union Canal should be laid out with an appropriate buffer to the canal corridor, informed by site-specific considerations, so as to protect wildlife and, where appropriate, enhance biodiversity, landscape character and the setting of the canal. Proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they:

- i. provide a suitable buffer to safeguard the canal corridor and its ecological value;*
- ii. incorporate landscaping and planting appropriate to the local context;*
- iii. contribute to at least 10% biodiversity net gain and ecological connectivity; and*
- iv. respond positively to the canal in terms of layout and design, having regard to safety, amenity and operational considerations.*

The width and form of the buffer should be determined through a site-specific assessment, taking into account the characteristics of the canal corridor, development context and relevant technical and ecological considerations. The above supports promotion of appropriate development principles whilst allowing for flexibility and a context-led approach."

²⁶ NPPF: paragraph 96.

²⁷ NPPF: paragraphs 187 & 203.

The policy would then have regard to national guidance²⁸ and meet the Basic Conditions. **(PM10)**

Policy SUC5 Water Quality and Contamination

Policy SUC6 Green Infrastructure

Policy SUC7 New Moorings

4.18 Policy SUC5, Policy SUC6 and Policy SUC7 each have regard to national guidance²⁹ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy HWB1 Health and Well-Being

4.19 The policy supports measures to promote health and well-being across the Plan area but, as commented on by CWaCC, is generally a copy of Policy SOC 5 Health and Well-Being in the CWaCLP (Part One).³⁰ Therefore, I shall recommend the deletion of the policy. **(PM11)**

Policies GG1-5 Green Gaps

4.20 Policies GG1, GG2, GG3, GG4 and GG5 each define an area of Green Gap where development must not take place unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated or where development supports the role and function of the Green Gap. The extensive nature of the Green Gaps and their location mostly between the built-up area of Chester and the two villages led me to question whether they were unacceptably restrictive and aimed at achieving what would be in effect Green Belt “by the back door”. In fact, as pointed out by the QB in answer to my questions, the land already is Green Belt.

4.21 The QB have now suggested that the Green Gaps should be reduced in number and extent so that GG3 and GG5 would be deleted and the area of GG2 would be significantly reduced. However, I still maintain that the definition of the Green Gaps around Chester is a strategic function which has a wider than neighbourhood plan interest. I accept that other neighbourhood plans may have included a Green Gap policy, or similar. Indeed, I have examined such Plans and recommended them for referendum. But none included Green Gaps which could so severely hinder the local planning authority in seeking to allocate land for housing around a city such as Chester in a review of its Local Plan.

4.22 I note the strong feelings of local residents in keeping the Green Gaps, especially GG2. However, the land in the Green Gaps in the Plan area is still defined as Green Belt where development is strictly controlled. Therefore, for the above reasons, I shall recommend the deletion of Policies GG1 – GG5. **(PM12)**

²⁸ NPPF: paragraphs 187 & 192.

²⁹ NPPF: paragraph 98 & 187.

³⁰ NPPF: paragraph 16 f).

Policies LGS1–LGS11 Local Green Spaces

4.23 Local Green Spaces (LGS) are separately defined in Policies LGS1, LGS2, LGS3, LGS4, LGS5, LGS6, LGS7, LGS8, LGS9, LGS10 and LGS11. LGS designation should only be used where the green space is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.³¹

LGS should also be capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period.³²

4.24 The policy includes a list of the criteria set out in the NPPF used to define LGS and should be removed to the reasoned justification. I saw the LGS on my site visit and agree that they meet the criteria for designation except for two areas: LGS1 and LGS2. I agree that LGS1 and LGS2 are in reasonably close proximity to the community they serve and both are local in character and not extensive tracts of land. Yet neither appears to have any demonstrably special qualities.

4.25 The only claimed justification that LGS2 is demonstrably special to the local community is that it forms a setting to the canal, has been used for bikers meets and unspecified special events. I consider that none of those circumstances make them inherently very special to the local community. I note that the owner/s were not, or could not be, contacted in the LGS consultation. I see it merely as an open field within the Christleton built up area, but no more than that. Therefore, I shall recommend that it should be deleted from the list of LGS.

4.26 LGS1 has planning history which I have noted but, on my site visit, the land appeared to be an open field which serves mostly as an outlook for the recently built houses along Hardwick Close and which is insufficient, in my assessment, to be demonstrably special to the local community. I realise the site is bounded on one side by the Shropshire Union Canal which has biodiversity interest, but this is not threatened. The site is not especially tranquil being so close to the A55 and it is not currently a playing field, merely a fenced off area of land overlooked by recent housing development. Accordingly, I shall recommend that it should be deleted from the list of LGS. With the two deleted LGS, the policies would have regard to national guidance³³ and would meet the Basic Conditions.
(PM13)

³¹ NPPF: paragraph 107.

³² NPPF: paragraph 106.

³³ NPPF: paragraphs 106 - 108.

Policies IOS 1–3 Incidental Open Spaces

- 4.27 Policies IOS 1–3 define three Incidental Open Spaces at the Village Green, the wide green verges on Village Road and Quarry Lane, and The Daffodil Field next to the Methodist Hall which are protected from development. Following a request for clarification from CWaCC, the QB agreed a definition to be included in the Plan: *"Incidental Open Space (IOS): An area of open land that is not formally designated as public open space, recreational space, or Local Green Space, but which makes an important contribution to the character, setting and appearance of the village. Incidental Open Spaces provide visual relief within the built-up area, contribute to the green and rural character of the settlement, and help to maintain the setting of nearby residential properties and heritage assets."* **(PM14)** The IOS Policies have regard to national guidance³⁴ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policies C1–4 Conservation Corridors and Wildlife Reserve

- 4.28 Policies C1–C4 seek to protect the Shropshire Union Canal, Old Women's Lane, Fir Tree Lane and Hockenhull Platts Nature Reserve from development and any access to housing development. Rather than a blanket ban on housing development, a more specifically worded policy would achieve the same aim and include development other than housing. Therefore, I recommend that the policy is revised to: *"Any development or access to development which would cause significant harm to the characteristics specific to the particular conservation corridor or wildlife reserve will not be supported."* **(PM15)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance³⁵ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy HE1 – Christleton Conservation Area

- 4.29 Policy HE1 is a policy for new development in the Christleton Conservation Area. CWaCC suggested that the policy should align with national and Local Plan policies. The QB agreed to a revision of Policy HE1 drafted by CWaCC with which I agree and which is set out in full in the Appendix to this report. **(PM16)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance³⁶ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy HE2 Re-Use of Historic Buildings

- 4.30 Policy HE2 supports the re-use of historic buildings and has regard to national guidance³⁷ and meets the Basic Conditions.

³⁴ NPPF: paragraph 104.

³⁵ NPPF: paragraph 187.

³⁶ NPPF: paragraph 203.

³⁷ NPPF: paragraph 203.

Policy HE3 The Battle of Rowton Heath

- 4.31 Policy HE3 aims to prevent “damage” from housing development to the site of the Battle of Rowton Heath. The policy describes the centre of the Battle and its setting and I considered whether the site could be delineated on a map which would then facilitate effective development management. However, the various maps of the Battle in the Heritage information submitted by the QB shows that the area covered is quite diffuse, as might be realistically expected. I was also informed by CWaCC that the site of the Battle of Rowton Heath is a designated heritage asset. The QB information implies that the Map of the Battle as shown by the English Heritage designation may not be up to date and I am reluctant to recommend a new map delineating the extent of the heritage asset. Therefore, I shall recommend a revised Policy HE3 as follows: *“New development which is proposed which would affect the site or setting of the Battle of Rowton Heath will be considered against Policy ENV5 of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One), Policy DM49 of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) and appropriate national guidance.”* **(PM17)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance³⁸ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy CF1 Existing Community Facilities

Policy CF2 New or Improved Community Facilities

- 4.32 Policies CF1 and CF2 aim to safeguard existing community facilities and provide for new facilities. Each policy has regard to national guidance³⁹ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy CF3 Community Facilities and Services Required

- 4.33 Policy CF3 is more of a “wish list” of community facilities which are sought, rather than a land use policy and should be included within the reasoned justification and not stated as a policy. Therefore, I shall recommend that it should be deleted. **(PM18)**

Policy CF4 Community Facilities Not Permitted

- 4.34 Policy CF4 would prevent development of supermarkets with noisy 24 hour deliveries; fast food takeaway outlets; retail or service activities which would bring significantly more cars into the village; and activities requiring new access points on the A41 or A51. However, such a restrictive ban presupposes unacceptable harm without considering any circumstances of the site and whether planning conditions could overcome any such harm. The policy could also prevent development which would otherwise be judged sustainable. Therefore, I shall recommend the deletion of the policy. **(PM19)**

³⁸ NPPF: paragraph 213.

³⁹ NPPF: paragraphs 96 & 98.

Policy LE1 Supporting Homeworking

Policy LE2 Supporting Small Scale Business Development

Policy C1 Broadband

- 4.35 Each of Policy LE1, Policy LE2 and Policy C1 has regard to national guidance to build a strong competitive economy⁴⁰ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy PROW1

Policy PROW2

- 4.36 Policy PROW1 seeks to maintain the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network around the village. However, maintaining PROW is dealt with by other legislation and a policy in the Plan is unnecessary. The conversion of the PROW from Huntington to Christleton into a shared user path and the reinstatement of the footpath between the Shropshire Union Canal to the A41 as stated in Policy PROW2 are Parish Council Actions and should be transferred from the policy section to Section 7 of the Plan. Accordingly, I shall recommend the deletion of Policies PROW1 and PROW2. **(PM20)**

Policy PROW3

- 4.37 Policy PROW3 considers rights of way in new development and has regard to national guidance⁴¹ and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy CWT1 Wildlife and Biodiversity

- 4.38 Policy CWT1 seeks to safeguard land of High Distinctiveness Habitat and also safeguard a 15 metre buffer zone adjacent to Wildlife Corridors. The policy has regard to national guidance⁴² and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy CWT2 Wildlife Corridors

- 4.39 Policy CWT2 supports development in Wildlife Corridors provided they safeguard and enhance the elements for which the Corridor has been identified and defined. The policy states that enhancement may be facilitated by opportunities arising through the planning process. CWaCC comment that the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) regime does not involve the Council securing levies for BNG. The other examples quoted in the policy are obvious and I shall recommend that they should be removed from the policy. **(PM21)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance⁴³ and meet the Basic Conditions.

⁴⁰ NPPF: paragraph 95.

⁴¹ NPPF: paragraphs 109 & 111.

⁴² NPPF: paragraphs 187 & 192.

⁴³ NPPF: paragraphs 187 & 192.

Policy LV1 Landscape Quality, Countryside and Open Views

- 4.40 Policy LV1 seeks to protect significant local views, vistas and significant local skylines. An accompanying map shows the views, numbered for ease of reference. I agree with the comments of CWaCC that the map currently displayed in the Plan is not sufficiently clear for effective development management and I shall recommend its substitution by the clearer map which was subsequently submitted in the combined response to my questions (6 August 2026). Although CWaCC sought additional information to clarify why a particular view is important, I consider that it is evident on site why the characteristics of the view make it significant. Nevertheless, the additional table submitted in the 6 August 2026 response assists in clarifying the views.
- 4.41 However, I am concerned that the generally level or gently sloping countryside in the Plan area makes the safeguarding of skylines too restrictive and unrealistic. Similarly, the requirement to enhance the local views is too prescriptive. Therefore, I shall recommend a modification to the policy which would remove skylines from protection and would qualify the requirement to enhance views. **(PM22)** The recommended modified policy is shown in the Appendix to this report. The policy would then have regard to national guidance⁴⁴ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy INF1 Sewerage and Drainage

- 4.42 Policy INF1 considers sewerage and drainage issues. There is a probable typographical error in the first bullet point which refers to “insufficient” capacity in the local sewerage system, rather than “sufficient” for which I shall recommend a correction.⁴⁵ Furthermore, there appears to be a focus on a specific planning application in the policy and the subsequent reasoned justification which is a matter of development management and not policy. Therefore, I shall recommend a further modification to the contents of the first bullet point. **(PM23)** The policy would then have regard to national guidance⁴⁶ and meet the Basic Conditions.

Parish Council Actions

- 4.43 Section 7 contains list of actions to be carried out by the Parish Council. The subjects include air quality, flooding, highways and traffic, and cycling. These are items which the community is seeking but cannot be delivered through planning policies, which are not considered as part of the examination and which will not form part of the statutory Development Plan. Nevertheless, they represent aspirations or actions

⁴⁴ NPPF: paragraph 187.

⁴⁵ Modifications for the purpose of correcting errors is provided for in Paragraph 13(1)(e) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act.

⁴⁶ NPPF: paragraphs 181 & 182.

which would benefit the community and demonstrate one of the valuable associated attributes of the neighbourhood planning process.⁴⁷

Other Matters

- 4.44 All policy areas have been considered in the foregoing discussion. With the modifications that I have recommended, the Plan would meet the Basic Conditions and would not lead to less housing being provided than would otherwise be the case. Other minor changes (that do not affect the Basic Conditions), such as consequential amendments, corrections and descriptive up-dates, could be made prior to the referendum at the Councils' discretion.⁴⁸

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard for all the responses made following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies and text to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The Plan as modified has no policy or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Overview

- 5.4 The Christleton and Littleton Parish Councils, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and other voluntary contributors are to be commended for producing a very comprehensive Plan. The Plan benefitted greatly from the Regulation 16 comments from CWaCC and from the constructive and

⁴⁷ PPG Reference ID: 41-004-20190509.

⁴⁸ PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.

cooperative attitude by CWaCC and the QB to answering my questions.
Subject to the recommended modifications, the Neighbourhood Plan will
make a positive contribution to the Development Plan for the area.

Andrew Mead

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Policy HN1	Delete the policy and substitute: <i>"Proposals for residential development which seek to accommodate the local housing needs identified in the Housing Needs Survey Report will be supported."</i>
PM2	Policies HN2, HN3 and HN4(1)	Delete the policies and substitute: <i>"Proposals for residential development to meet local needs will be supported where they reflect the prevailing character and density of the adjoining settlement having regard to the efficient use of land and the requirements of the Design Code."</i>
PM3	Policy HN4(2)	Delete the policy and substitute: <i>"Proposals for residential development as infill and in backland will be supported provided there is no significant harm to the amenities of neighbours and the character of the immediate area and that an acceptable means of access can be achieved."</i>
PM4	Policy HN5	Delete the policy and substitute: <i>"Proposals for the conversion, adaptation, or subdivision of existing buildings (including redundant rural buildings and substantial residential properties) into residential accommodation will be supported, provided that: (i) the proposed use and any associated physical alterations respect and preserve the architectural character, scale, and historic interest of the original building and its rural or landscape setting; (ii) the scheme does</i>

		<i>not require significant rebuilding, disproportionate extensions, or intrusive domestic curtilages (such as overly formal gardens or boundary walls) that detract from the area's character; and (iii) the design, materials, and layout are in strict accordance with the General Housing Design Code."</i>
PM5	Policy HDC1	Delete the policy and substitute: <i>"Proposals for residential development will be supported when they comply with the design requirements and guidance set out in the Christleton and Littleton Design Code (see Plan Appendix) and the National Design Guide. Any planning application that seeks a departure from the Design Code must be accompanied by a robust, evidence-backed justification demonstrating why compliance is either not feasible or how an alternative design solution better delivers the objectives of the Code."</i>
PM6	Policies HDC2, HDC3, HDC4, HDC5, HDC7, HDC8, HDC10, HDC14, HDC24, HDC26, HDC27, HDC28 and HDC29.	Amend the policies as shown in Appendix 1 ⁴⁹ attached to the joint response from the QB and CWaCC dated 6 August 2026. Include Policies HDC2 – HDC31, including those as recommended to be modified, as a separate new Plan Appendix.

⁴⁹ This refers to the table in Appendix 1 on Pages 25 – 39 attached to the combined response to the examiner's questions, dated 6 August 2026. View at: https://planningpolicy.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/sites/planningpolicy-cheshirewestandchester/files/2026-08/Combined%20response%20to%20Examiner%27s%20initial%20questions%20inc%20appendices%20-%20FINAL%20-%2006.08.26_Redacted_0.pdf

PM7	Policy HDC12(1)	Delete the policy and substitute: <i>"Where garages are proposed, they should normally be located alongside the principal elevation of the dwelling, unless site specific circumstances demonstrate that an alternative arrangement would better integrate with the street scene. Garages should be of sufficient size to accommodate modern vehicles together with associated storage requirements and should have regard to the Council's adopted Parking Standards SPD (or successor document). Development proposals should provide convenient and secure storage for bicycles, waste and recycling bins and electric vehicle charging infrastructure."</i>
PM8	Policy HDC16	Delete the policy.
PM9	Policy SUC1	Revise the first paragraph of the policy to: <i>"Proposals for development adjacent to the canal should recognise the multifunctional nature of the Shropshire Union Canal and will be supported where there will be no harm to the safety or stability of the canal or its infrastructure. Where appropriate, development will be encouraged to provide</i> <i>- access to the canal for local residents and tourists to the area for recreational opportunities and physical activity"</i>
PM10	Policy SUC4	Delete the policy and substitute: <i>"Development proposals adjacent to the Shropshire Union Canal should be laid out with an appropriate buffer to the canal corridor, informed by site-specific considerations, so as to protect wildlife and, where appropriate, enhance biodiversity, landscape character and the setting of the canal."</i>

		Proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they: i. provide a suitable buffer to safeguard the canal corridor and its ecological value; ii. incorporate landscaping and planting appropriate to the local context; iii. contribute to biodiversity net gain and ecological connectivity; and iv. respond positively to the canal in terms of layout and design, having regard to safety, amenity and operational considerations. The width and form of the buffer should be determined through a site-specific assessment, taking into account the characteristics of the canal corridor, development context and relevant technical and ecological considerations. The above supports promotion of appropriate development principles whilst allowing for flexibility and a context-led approach."
PM11	Policy HWB1	Delete the policy.
PM12	Policies GG1, GG2, GG3, GG4, and GG5	Delete the policies.
PM13	Policies LGS1 and LGS2	Delete the policies.
PM14	Section 8: Glossary Include the definition of Incidental Open Space (IOS)	"Incidental Open Space (IOS): An area of open land that is not formally designated as public open space, recreational space, or Local Green Space, but which makes an important contribution to the character, setting and appearance of the village. Incidental Open Spaces provide visual relief within the built-up area,

		<i>contribute to the green and rural character of the settlement, and help to maintain the setting of nearby residential properties and heritage assets."</i>
PM15	Policies C1 – C4	Delete the policies and substitute: <i>"Any development or access to development which would cause significant harm to the characteristics specific to the particular conservation corridor or wildlife reserve will not be supported."</i>
PM16	Policy HE1	Delete the policy and substitute: <i>"All new development within, or affecting the setting of, the Conservation Area should conserve or enhance its special architectural and historic interest, character and appearance and have regard to the following design principles:</i> <i>• new development should respect its context in terms of scale, height and massing;</i> <i>• the green setting of the Conservation Area is a crucial aspect of its special character and development proposals should conserve and, where possible, enhance its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area. Development proposals affecting the setting of the Conservation Area should be supported by proportionate information to enable the impact on its significance to be assessed;</i> <i>• facades should normally conform to the established building line where this contributes positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;</i> <i>• materials should blend with or complement the brick, slate and stone used in the area;</i> <i>• roofs should normally be pitched where this reflects the prevailing</i>

		character of the Conservation Area; and development proposals should accord with the Housing Design Code outlined in this Plan."
PM17	Policy HE3	Delete the policy and substitute: "New development which is proposed which would affect the site or setting of the Battle of Rowton Heath will be considered against Policy ENV5 of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One), Policy DM49 of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) and appropriate national guidance."
PM18	Policy CF3	Delete the policy but transfer the list of facilities and services required to the reasoned justification.
PM19	Policy CF4	Delete the policy.
PM20	Policies PROW1 and PROW2	Delete the policies. Include the deleted text from PROW2 in Section 7 Parish Council Actions.
PM21	Policy CWT2	Delete: "(e.g. BNG or other ecological compensation via Section 106 Agreements or Planning Conditions)".
PM22	Policy LV1	Delete the policy and substitute: "Development will be supported which respects or, where appropriate, enhances significant features within local views and vistas shown on the accompanying Map and described in the accompanying Table. Development will not be supported where, cumulatively or individually, the impact on the views or vistas is significantly harmed." Substitute the Map of Local Views provided in the combined response to the examiner of 6 August 2026⁵⁰ for the Map in the Plan on page 71.

⁵⁰ See link at footnote 49 above.

		Include the Table of Views submitted in the combined response of 6 August 2026.
PM23	Policy INF1	Revise the first bullet point to: <i>"there is sufficient capacity in the local sewerage system"</i> .