

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Local Plan



New Local Plan Scoping consultation

September 2026



Visit: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/localplan



Cheshire West
and Chester

Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan

Scoping consultation

Have your say

Tell us what the new Local Plan should cover and how we should involve people as we prepare it.

Closing date

Please send us your comments by 5pm on 28 September 2026.

This consultation is not asking for sites. We plan to run a separate, targeted call for sites later in 2026.

1. Introduction

We are preparing a new Local Plan for Cheshire West and Chester. It will replace the policies in the current Local Plan and will also cover minerals and waste.

The Local Plan will guide decisions about how land is used and developed. For example, it will help decide where new homes and workplaces should go and how we protect the natural and historic environment.

What is this consultation about?

We want to know:

- what you think the new Local Plan should cover
- how you would like us to involve people in future consultations

We are inviting comments from residents, community groups, businesses, public bodies and other organisations as required by the [Local Planning Regulations](#).

We have also published a formal [notice of scoping consultation](#).

This is a short, early-stage consultation designed to help us identify the main issues and priorities for the new Local Plan. As more detailed proposals are developed, there will be further opportunities to comment.

How to comment

Use the “Comment on this section” buttons on the [consultation website](#). You will need to register or sign in before you can send your comments.

If you need help or want to comment in another way, email:
planningpolicy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Deadline

Please send all comments by 5pm on 28 September 2026.

After the consultation, we will publish a summary of the main issues raised and explain how we will consider them while preparing the plan.

Please note

We are not asking people to suggest sites through this consultation. We plan to run a separate, targeted call for sites later in 2026.

If you comment on the scoping consultation, we will keep you informed of all future stages of the Local Plan, unless you tell us otherwise. If you do not wish to comment at this stage but would like to stay up to date with the Local Plan in future, please [register online](#) and tick the "Local Plan" option under the Topics list in your account, or email us.

Your comments and personal information

Your comments and your name will be available for the public to see. We cannot treat comments as confidential. We will handle personal information in line with data protection law. Please read the Council's [Planning Policy Privacy Notice](#) before responding.

If we receive responses that are identical or substantially the same, including responses generated using templates or AI tools, we may group these together and report them as a single representation. The number of people who submitted the response will still be recorded and reported.

2. Preparing a new Local Plan

Councils must have an up-to-date planning framework to guide development. This is called a Local Plan. The current Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan has two parts:

- [Part One – Strategic Policies](#), adopted in January 2015, sets the overall vision, objectives, development strategy and main policies up to 2030.
- [Part Two – Land Allocations and Detailed Policies](#), adopted in July 2019, identifies sites and provides more detailed policies that support Part One.

What have we done so far?

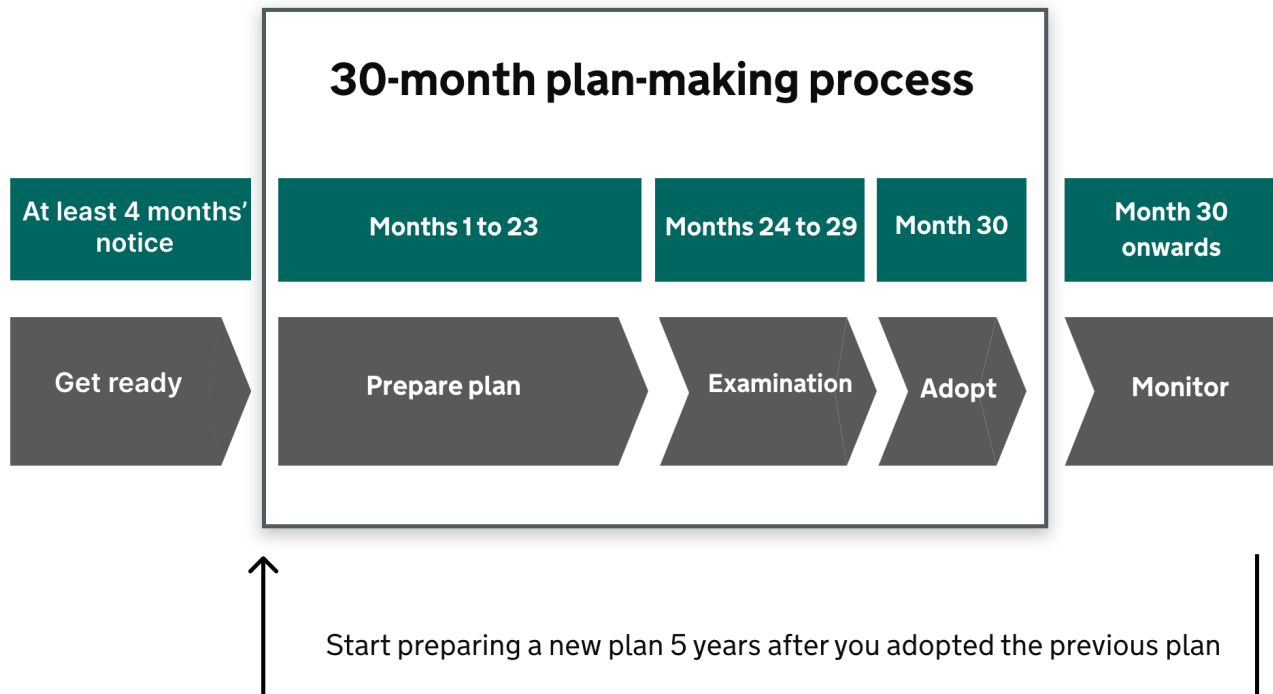
We began work on a new Local Plan last year. During summer 2025, we consulted on an Issues and Options paper. It asked where new homes and jobs could be located, which policies may need updating and what evidence we would need.

We received more than 16,500 comments from over 2,700 people and organisations. Many of those comments are still relevant. We have used them to help with work on land and site availability, and we will consider them when drafting policies for the new plan. Details of the [consultation and responses](#) are available on our website.

The way Local Plans are prepared has changed

In March 2026, the Government introduced a new process for preparing Local Plans. The process is intended to produce shorter plans within a 30-month timetable.

We started the first stage, called “Get ready”, when we published our [notice](#) and [timetable](#) on 12 June 2026. The timetable says that we plan to submit the Local Plan for examination by May 2028 and adopt it by December 2028.



The 30-month Local Plan process

Before the “Prepare plan” stage begins, we must carry out this scoping consultation. It asks what the plan should cover and how communities and organisations should be involved.

Later consultation stages

- **Proposed content and evidence:** a six-week consultation on the draft vision, aims and objectives, the proposed approach to policies and the evidence we intend to use.
- **Draft Local Plan:** an eight-week consultation on the full draft plan, its evidence, proposed site allocations, the policies map and how earlier comments have been addressed.

Full details of the dates are set out in the Council's [Local Plan timetable](#).

3. The wider planning context

National planning policy

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#), known as the NPPF, is the Government's main planning policy document for England. We must take it into account when preparing the Local Plan.

National decision-making policies

The Government published a new NPPF in August 2026. It introduced National Decision-Making Policies. These provide one set of national policies for deciding planning applications.

Our Local Plan will focus on issues that are specific to Cheshire West and Chester. It should not repeat national policy unnecessarily, although it may add local detail where this is justified.

Spatial Development Strategy

Cheshire West and Chester is part of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority. The Combined Authority will lead the preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy for the area. This is expected to deal with strategic matters such as where growth should happen, how housing is distributed, infrastructure and issues that cross council boundaries. The Local Plan will need to reflect this wider strategy.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Councils can no longer prepare new Supplementary Planning Documents, known as SPDs. Our [existing SPDs](#) provide extra guidance for policies in the current Local Plan. If we want to keep using relevant parts of them in future, we may need to include that content in the new Local Plan.

- House extensions and domestic outbuildings (January 2021)
- Houses in Multiple Occupation and Student Accommodation (April 2016)
- Oil and Gas Exploration, Production and Distribution (May 2017)
- Parking Standards (February 2022)
- Travel Planning Guidance (March 2016)

Supplementary Plans

Supplementary Plans can sit alongside the main Local Plan. They must be consulted on and independently examined. Once adopted, they become part of the development plan. They may be used for site-specific frameworks, design codes, masterplans or policies for a particular area.

Environmental assessment

For now, Strategic Environmental Assessment, known as SEA, remains the process for considering the likely environmental effects of the Local Plan and reasonable alternatives.

The Government intends to replace SEA with Environmental Outcomes Reports. Until that system starts, we will prepare a Sustainability Appraisal that meets SEA requirements and also considers social and economic effects. We will carry out a separate Habitats Regulations Assessment to consider possible effects on protected European habitat sites.

Neighbourhood plans

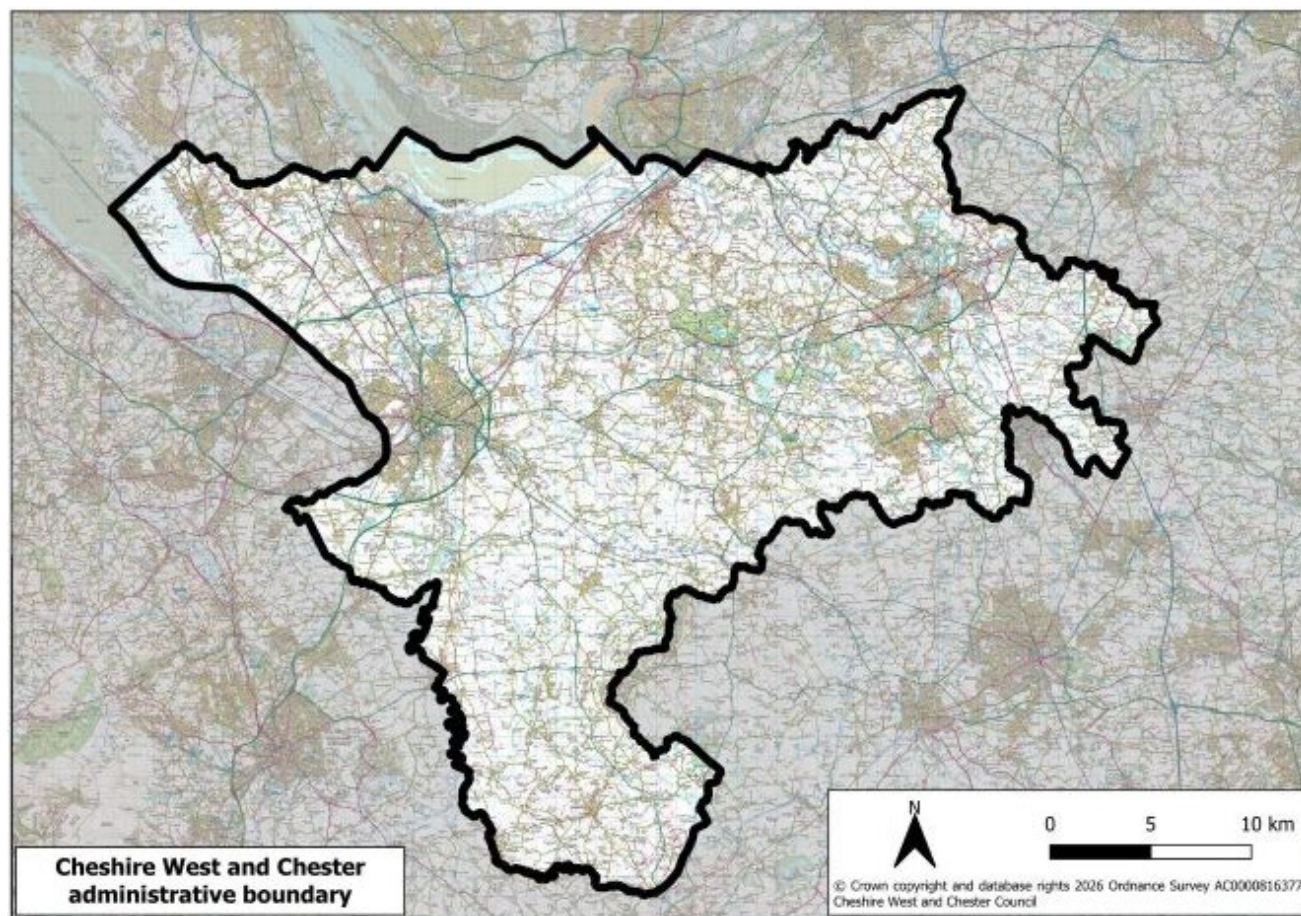
Neighbourhood plans will remain part of the development plan. They can deal with local matters such as site allocations, design, local character, green infrastructure and community priorities. They may plan for housing, but they cannot reduce the amount of housing that would otherwise be delivered in the area.

Paying for infrastructure

Infrastructure needed to support the Local Plan may be funded through developer contributions, private investment and public funding. As the Infrastructure Delivery Plan develops, we may review the Council's [Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule](#).

4. About Cheshire West and Chester

Cheshire West and Chester covers 941 square kilometres. It includes the historic city of Chester, larger towns, villages, small rural settlements and extensive countryside.



Cheshire West and Chester administrative boundary

The main settlements in the borough are Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford. Much of the borough lies within the North Cheshire Green Belt, which covers about 42% of our area. There are many smaller settlements across the rural area.

Population

about 373,951 people

Homes

about 167,820 homes

Working-age population

about 229,477 people

Jobs in the borough

about 161,000 people working locally

Homes and land

The Government's standard method currently indicates that the Local Plan should provide for 1,930 new homes each year. Over a 10-year plan period this would be 19,300 homes (or 28,950 homes over 15 years). The current Local Plan requirement is 1,100 homes a year.

This figure does not itself take account of local constraints such as protected environmental and heritage areas, the Green Belt, flood risk or the capacity of roads, schools and GP surgeries.

Current monitoring information shows undeveloped planning permissions for about 4,125 homes. Our [first-stage land availability](#) work identifies previously developed sites without planning permission that may have capacity for about 5,300 homes.

Following the publication of new government guidance, we will be following the new [site selection](#) process, as we develop the new local plan.

We plan to run a targeted call for sites later in 2026.

Housing, employment and retail evidence

- The [Housing Needs Assessment](#) considers the size, type and tenure of homes needed. It identifies housing affordability problems in parts of the borough, particularly for young people and people on lower incomes.
- The [Economic Needs Assessment](#) identifies a need to plan for about 149 hectares of employment land over 15 years. This is mainly for industrial, warehousing and distribution uses. It says at least 40% should be on large sites of 5 to 25 hectares or more.
- The [Retail Study](#) did not identify a need for additional retail floorspace.

We will also consider other relevant strategies, including the Borough Plan 2024-2028, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026-2031 and take account of the [Cheshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#).

All of the information that supports this scoping consultation can be found in the [baseline](#) and [evidence base](#) sections of our website.

5. What should the new Local Plan cover?

The NPPF identifies the main subjects that Local Plans are expected to deal with. These include the development strategy, housing, jobs, town centres, infrastructure, minerals and waste, design, transport, health, flood risk, the natural environment and the historic environment.

The Local Plan should not repeat national policy or try to set different requirements where national decision-making policies apply. However, it can include policies for local issues and priorities where there is clear evidence and justification.

Question 1. Scope of the new Local Plan

For each topic below, please tick Agree, Disagree or No view.

Overall strategy and housing

What the plan could cover	Agree	Disagree	No view
Settlement hierarchy - group settlements according to their role, services, facilities and infrastructure.	☐	☐	☐
Accessible and adaptable homes - state how many homes on developments of 10 or more should meet the higher Building Regulations standards for accessible and wheelchair-user homes.	☐	☐	☐
Water efficiency - require the tighter optional Building Regulations water-efficiency standard for new homes.	☐	☐	☐
Minimum space standards - apply the national minimum space standards to new homes.	☐	☐	☐
Energy efficiency - set energy-efficiency requirements above current or proposed Building Regulations.	☐	☐	☐
Housing density - set minimum housing densities in town centres and well-connected places, and consider suitable standards elsewhere.	☐	☐	☐
Affordable housing in designated rural areas - set affordable housing contributions from developments of fewer than 10 homes in designated rural areas.	☐	☐	☐
Homes for essential rural workers - set tests for homes needed by full-time rural workers who must live at or near their workplace.	☐	☐	☐
Rural exception sites - set local tests for affordable housing on rural land that would not normally be developed.	☐	☐	☐
Houses in Multiple Occupation - explain when changing a home into a House in Multiple Occupation would be supported, including in the Chester Article 4 areas.	☐	☐	☐

Jobs and town centres

What the plan could cover	Agree	Disagree	No view
Employment land - explain how proposals to change employment land to housing will be considered, including in the Article 4 areas at Gadbrook Park, Chester Business Park and Chester West Sealand Industrial Estate.	☐	☐	☐
Local labour and skills - seek employment, work placements, apprenticeships, training and skills opportunities for local people from strategic development sites.	☐	☐	☐
Jodrell Bank consultation zone - support development that would not harm the operation of the Jodrell Bank radio telescope.	☐	☐	☐
Retail impact assessments - set the size threshold above which shops outside town centres would need a retail impact assessment.	☐	☐	☐
Hot food takeaways and fast-food outlets - explain how proposals will be assessed, including their distance from schools and other places used by young people, and possible health, pollution or anti-social behaviour effects.	☐	☐	☐

Design, movement and the environment

What the plan could cover	Agree	Disagree	No view
Design - set a clear design vision and requirements that respond to local character and draw on local design codes or guidance.	☐	☐	☐
Transport impacts - set thresholds for deciding when traffic and movement from a development are significant.	☐	☐	☐
Parking standards - set local parking standards for homes and other development across the borough, and where needed for particular places or sites.	☐	☐	☐

What the plan could cover	Agree	Disagree	No view
Important landscapes and settlement gaps - review Areas of Special County Value and Key Settlement Gaps, and take account of the proposed Sandstone Ridge National Landscape.	☐	☐	☐
Local Nature Recovery Strategy - show how the plan will take account of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy.	☐	☐	☐
Peat - identify and protect peat from disturbance or loss caused by development.	☐	☐	☐
Recreation land and facilities - set local standards for recreation land, facilities, play areas, sport, informal recreation and allotments.	☐	☐	☐
Green infrastructure - set local standards for networks of green spaces and natural features.	☐	☐	☐
Tree cover - support an increase in tree canopy cover and help maintain it across all wards.	☐	☐	☐

Places

What the plan could cover	Agree	Disagree	No view
Chester - set a vision and strategy, protect the city's historic character and setting, identify development sites and transport needs where necessary, and address areas such as Chester Business Park, Chester Zoo and Dale Barracks.	☐	☐	☐
Ellesmere Port - set a vision and strategy, identify development sites and transport needs where necessary, and address major employment areas including Stanlow, Protos, Stellantis (part of the Origin employment cluster), Urenco and Capenhurst.	☐	☐	☐
Northwich - set a vision and strategy for the town and wider built-up area, address key settlement gaps, identify development sites and transport needs where necessary, and consider Weaver Square and Gadbrook Park.	☐	☐	☐

What the plan could cover	Agree	Disagree	No view
Winsford - set a vision and strategy, identify development sites and transport needs where necessary, and consider Winsford Industrial Estate.	☐	☐	☐
Frodsham - set a vision and strategy and identify development sites where necessary.	☐	☐	☐
Neston and Parkgate - set a vision and strategy, identify development sites where necessary and consider areas such as Leahurst Campus.	☐	☐	☐
Helsby - set a vision and strategy and identify development sites where necessary.	☐	☐	☐
Middlewich - work with Cheshire East Council to consider how future needs affecting Middlewich should be addressed.	☐	☐	☐
Other settlements - explain how growth will be managed and local character protected in other settlements.	☐	☐	☐

Question 2. Are there any other local policies that we should consider including in the Local Plan?

Please give up to five suggestions.

Suggested local policy 1

Suggested local policy 2

Suggested local policy 3

Suggested local policy 4

Suggested local policy 5

6. Consultation and engagement

We also want your views on how we should involve people as we prepare the Local Plan. The consultation seeks views on how groups, such as young people, who do not usually share their views can be helped to get involved. Your answers will help us write a consultation and engagement strategy for the later stages.

We keep a consultation database so that we can contact people and organisations about the Local Plan. It includes organisations we must consult, other interested groups, and people who have asked us to keep them informed.

Question 3. How should we share information and involve people?

For each method below, please tick Agree, Disagree or No view.

What the plan could cover	Agree	Disagree	No view
Council website - use the website as the main place for Local Plan information, supporting documents and consultations.	☐	☐	☐
Emails and letters - mainly use email for people registered on our database. Use post where someone cannot use email or where the law requires it.	☐	☐	☐
Online consultation - use the consultation portal and other digital tools. Depending on the stage, this could include online drop-ins, webinars or virtual exhibitions.	☐	☐	☐
Local media - use press releases and social media to publicise consultations.	☐	☐	☐
Access to documents - publish documents online and provide paper copies for inspection at The Portal in Ellesmere Port and Wyvern House in Winsford. People can also use Resident Assistance Points and public computers in borough libraries.	☐	☐	☐
Newsletters - when useful, email newsletters to people on the database to publicise a consultation, explain an issue or link to more information.	☐	☐	☐
Briefings and workshops - when useful, hold online or in-person sessions about a place, area or topic.	☐	☐	☐

Question 4. Are there any other consultation methods we should consider?

Please give up to five suggestions.

Other consultation method 1

Other consultation method 2

Other consultation method 3

Other consultation method 4

Other consultation method 5

Question 5. How can we help people who do not usually take part to share their views?

Please give up to five suggestions.

Suggestion 1

Suggestion 2

Suggestion 3

Suggestion 4

Suggestion 5

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 منا.

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 ਹੁਰਾਫ਼ਤ ਵਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਵਿਸੇ 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.

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔

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