

Cheshire West & Chester Local Plan

Representations on Issues & Options Draft

Land West of Sandy Lane and South of Station Road, Weaverham

Date of report: August 2025

PREPARED FOR



savills

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Document History

Issue	Date	Issued by	Comment
1.0	11/08/25	JA	CLIENT ISSUE DRAFT
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Savills (UK) Limited ('Savills') is instructed by Barratt Homes ('Barratt') to submit representations on the Issues and Options (Regulation 18) draft of the Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan ('New Local Plan').
- 1.2 The current Local Plan for Cheshire West and Chester ('CW&C') comprises 2 parts. Part 1 sets out the strategic policies, including the housing requirement, spatial strategy, and strategic designations. This was adopted in January 2015. Part 2 sets out land allocations and detailed development management policies. These are based on the strategic framework set by Part 1. Part 2 was adopted in July 2019.
- 1.3 The Council has resolved to begin the preparation of a New Local Plan which will, upon adoption, supersede both parts of the current Local Plan.
- 1.4 The Issues and Options draft represents the first publication on the New Local Plan and the first opportunities for interested parties to comment. It is supported by Background Papers on a number of settlements within the District as well as background data on settlements.
- 1.5 However, it should be noted that there was a Call for Sites undertaken in early 2024, as well as a consultation on the evidence base that same year.
- 1.6 At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development (Paragraph 11), which requires plans to meet the development needs of their area and sets out requirements for strategic policies.
- 1.7 These representations will focus on ensuring that the new Local Plan is drafted in accordance with the criterion set out in the NPPF and associated guidance within Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 1.8 The interests of Barratt are set out in detail at Section 2, however for clarity, it is seeking to promote land to the West of Sandy Lane and South of Station Road in Weaverham (identified as NOR11 by the Council in the Issues and Options paper) for inclusion in the new Plan as a residential allocation. A Location Plan is provided at **Appendix A**.
- 1.9 In support of these representations, a Vision Document and Framework Masterplan have been prepared to illustrate the development prospects and opportunities for the Site. The Vision Document and Framework Masterplan are included at **Appendix B** and **Appendix C** respectively.
- 1.10 It should be noted that these representations relate to Barratt's interest in land west of Sandy Lane and South of Station Road, Weaverham (the 'Site') only. Other general representations have been prepared by Pegasus and Lichfields on behalf of the Barratt Redrow group, and for completeness, these representations should be read alongside that submission.
- 1.11 This document is structured into the following sections:
 - Section 2 – Background to Barratt and The Site
 - Section 3 – The Opportunity
 - Section 4 – Current Planning Policy Assessment
 - Section 5 – Representations on the New Local Plan – Issues and Options
 - Section 6 – Summary and Conclusions

2. Background to Barratt and the Site

Barratt Homes

- 2.1 Barratt Homes ('Barratt') is one of the UK's leading housebuilders and is a constituent part of the wider Barratt Redrow Group, known for its long-standing reputation for quality and innovation in residential property development.
- 2.2 Barratt is recognised as the highest quality national housebuilder and is the only major UK housebuilder to have received the Home Builders Federation 5-star customer rating for 16 consecutive years.
- 2.3 In the North West, Barratt has an established track record of delivering exemplary housing developments. In Northwich specifically, Barratt has delivered Imperial Park, a high quality residential development that is now complete and fully occupied.
- 2.4 Barratt now aims to build on its success at Imperial Park by continuing to deliver high quality residential development in Northwich in order to meet local housing needs. These representations are a demonstration of Barratt's continued commitment to delivery.

The Site

- 2.5 The Site comprises a two parcels of land to the North and South of Station Road in Weaverham, Northwich. The total site area is approximately 17.6 hectares (43.7 acres) and the entire Site is being promoted by Barratt for residential development via an allocation in the New Local Plan.
- 2.6 The promotion land is indicated at Figure 1 below and in the Location Plan at **Appendix A**.

Figure 1 – Location Plan



- 2.7 The Site will be familiar to the Council, with the majority of the northern parcel having been promoted previously by Barratt through previous stages of the Local Plan preparation, including the Council's Call for Sites in March 2024.
- 2.8 Since then, additional land immediately adjacent to the original promotion site has become available to Barratt to enhance the opportunity for residential development in this location. The Site now includes three titles (CH596871, CH568709 and CH568754) and Barratt has secured long-term option agreements for the entire Site.
- 2.9 The addition of adjacent land to the Site enhances the overall offer and wider community benefits that can be delivered, including for market and affordable housing, open space and recreational facilities.
- 2.10 These representations are a continuation of the long-term promotion of the Site and this document has been prepared as a formal response to the latest Regulation 18 'Issues and Options' stage in the preparation of a New Local Plan.

Site Context

- 2.11 The Site extends to approximately 17.6 hectares (43.7 acres) and is predominantly in use as arable agricultural land. The land is predominantly open greenfield land with hedgerows and some trees at its boundaries.
- 2.12 The southern boundary of the northern parcel is formed by Station Road (B5153) and land to the rear of the Hanging Gate pub. Sandy Lane (B5144) forms the eastern boundary to the Site and the north of the Site is bound by an private access track and hedgerows with further agricultural land beyond. The western boundary of the Site is agricultural land and buildings / sheds separated by a hedgerow.
- 2.13 The southern parcel is bounded by Station Road to the north, with trees and a further field to the south. The parcel is adjacent to the east of another agricultural parcel, within the A49.
- 2.14 There are two transmission towers ('pylons') located within the boundaries of the northern parcel; one midway along the western boundary and another in the northeastern corner, with overhead powerlines connecting the two pylons.
- 2.15 In terms of access, the Site is currently has primary access from Sandy Lane (B5144) in the south - eastern corner. As part of the proposed development scheme, a secondary access point will be provided off Station Road. In addition to this, active travel routes will be promoted throughout the Site itself and between the Site, the village and Action Bridge rail station.
- 2.16 The Site is conveniently located to take advantage of existing local facilities and amenities. The Hanging Gate Pub lies close to the south-eastern edge of the northern part of the Site on the junction between High Street, Sandy Lane and Station Road.
- 2.17 High Street is located to the south-east of the Site and runs through the centre of Weaverham. Along its length are a number of retail units including a barbers and hair dressers, nail salon, wine bar, public house, restaurants, takeaways, supermarkets, pharmacy, bakery and a medical surgery, which are all within 1km of the Site and are within walking distance.
- 2.18 Northwich town centre, which is approximately 6km to the east of the Site and accessible by bus; provides a larger high street with wider retail and leisure facilities including a leisure centre, cinema complex and banks.
- 2.19 The nearest schools to the Site are Weaverham Forest Primary School (0.7km) and Weaverham Primary Academy (1.5km) both to the south-east.

- 2.20 Weaverham High School is located 1km from the Site and provides Secondary level education. The Russett School is also located 2km from the Site and provides for pupils from 2 – 19 years old.
- 2.21 The nearest bus stop to the Site is situated 150m to the south-east on High Street near the Hanging Gate Pub. The stop is serviced by the number 48 bus between Frodsham High Street and Northwich. The service splits with the 48 going north around Crowton and the 48A traveling to Cuddington in the south. Both routes link back up at Weaverham before traveling onwards to Northwich.
- 2.22 The Site is located approximately 1.2 km to the east of Acton Bridge rail station. Action Bridge is an important local public transport facility which provides hourly West Midlands services northbound to Liverpool and southbound to Birmingham.

3. The Opportunity

3.1 The Site has the potential to deliver around 350 market and affordable homes as well as significant areas of high quality open space and landscaping. The Site is demonstrably deliverable and development of the land will directly contribute to meeting the current and future needs for housing in an area that is attractive to the market.

Community Engagement

3.2 Barratt recognises the importance of comprehensive and early community engagement. Engaging with the community is key to making development work for everyone, existing and new residents.

3.3 In connection with the ongoing Local Plan consultation, Barratt has held meetings with Weaverham Trust, Weaverham Parish Council and two local headteachers. The following suggestions from the local community will be incorporated into the scheme.

- Skate park to cater for older children and teenagers for whom there is currently a lack of facilities
- Bungalows to provide new home opportunities for Weaverham's ageing population
- Starter homes to help local first-time buyers onto the housing ladder. In fact, the proposal is to build predominantly smaller two- and three-bedroom homes, with some four-bedroom family home options
- Outdoor space for both children and adults to enjoy, including benches to rest and socialise
- Main access from Sandy Lane to avoid conservation area
- Improved pedestrian connectivity into the village
- Inclusive play areas are proposed in line with guidance from Whizz Kids

Vision Document

3.4 A Vision Document has been prepared to illustrate the opportunities for development at the Site. The Vision document is provided at **Appendix B** and should be read in conjunction with the representations.

3.5 The proposed masterplan takes into consideration the Site's characteristics. This ensures that a well-designed and sustainable community that is aesthetically pleasing is delivered. The indicative masterplan includes the following:

- The provision of approximately 350 market and affordable homes
- Public open space to cover 35% of the Site (this is in excess of current policy)
- New and enhanced footpath and cycleway connections
- Provision of carefully planned formal and informal play areas that will benefit from regular maintenance and updates. Within easy access from homes along well-lit walking routes, children's play areas will be designed for different ages, abilities and playing styles, and will include sensory and quiet zones and wheelchair-friendly surfaces. There will also be outdoor gyms and trim trails for teenagers and adults to use.
- A landscape corridor through the site for leisure and recreation
- Protection of existing trees and hedgerows
- Provision of SuDS features to mitigate flooding for the whole village from Sandy Lane, subject to modelling
- Planting of additional trees and hedgerows

- 3.6 In terms of design, the masterplan intends to create a place that is well-designed and beautiful. It will build on the existing character of the area while establishing its own distinct and enduring character.
- 3.7 Consistent with both Weaverham's historic core and the village's later 20th century expansion adjacent to the proposed site, the new homes will be predominantly two-storey semi-detached and detached.

Framework Masterplan

- 3.8 A Masterplan has been created to illustrate the opportunity to deliver various community benefits at the Site. The Masterplan has been prepared in response to feedback from local community groups, and is included at **Appendix C**.
- 3.9 As part of the development, the following features can be delivered:
- Tree-lined streets, areas for people to sit and rest, connectivity to outdoor areas
 - A mix of bungalows, 2 and 3-bed starter homes and larger family homes to meet the diverse needs of the community
 - Inclusive, accessible and safe play areas for children
 - Multi-functional green spaces
 - Potential for pedestrian connectivity enhancements to High Street and Sandy Lane
 - Extensive outdoor spaces with a strong public realm for people of all ages to enjoy
 - An integrated Skate Park as requested by the community
 - Off street car parking in the southern parcel to address existing issues with on street parking along Station road.

Technical Considerations

Flood Risk

- 3.10 The latest Environment Agency (EA) Flood Map identifies that the Site lies within Flood Zone 1, indicating the lowest risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. In terms of surface water flooding, there are very minor areas of the north-eastern part of the Site that have a low risk of surface water flooding. This risk can be appropriately mitigated through a comprehensive seasonable drainage scheme.

Heritage

- 3.11 There are no heritage assets located within the Site. The Hanging Gate Public House situated near the south-eastern corner of the Site is locally listed. Locally, there are also a number of Grade II listed buildings within Weaverham, approximately 0.6km to the east. The Weaverham Conservation Area lies to the southeast of the Site and follows the route of the High Street. Part of the southern site boundary adjoins this area close to Sandy lane.
- 3.12 The Conservation Area and the nearby listed (and locally-listed) buildings will not be adversely affected by the proposals, rather a well-designed scheme offers the opportunity to enhance the Conservation Area and heritage assets.

Ecology

- 3.13 There are no designated ecological sites within the Site or its immediate surroundings. The Site consists of arable farmland with a number of mature trees and hedgerows within the Site boundaries which would be retained as part of the development.
- 3.14 The development of the Site would include biodiversity contributions on Site to deliver a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity in accordance with the statutory requirement.

Arboriculture

- 3.15 There are no trees or groups of trees within the Site that are subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) however a single individually protected tree is situated on the eastern boundary of the Site, as part of a cluster of five individual trees on the east and west sides of Sandy Lane adjacent to Ashdown Cottage. The development of the Site would have no impact on the significance of the five protected trees.

Public Rights Of Way

- 3.16 There are no existing adopted Footpaths or Rights of Way that traverse the Site.

Overhead Power Lines

- 3.17 As previously stated, the Site is crossed by overhead electricity cables with pylons located close to the southwestern and northeastern corners of the Site. These 440KV lines will be retained in situ and an offset from them incorporated into the design of the illustrative framework. Accordingly, they do not impact on the development of the Site for new homes.

Summary

- 3.18 There are no constraints to development at the Site that are insurmountable. The Site represents an excellent opportunity to deliver a wide range of important benefits for the community through sustainable development, not least through the provision of a range of homes to address the local housing requirement.

4. Current Planning Policy Context

Development Plan

Current Development Plan Policies

- 4.1 The Site is situated entirely within the Local Planning Authority boundary of CW&C Council. As such, the Site is subject to the policies set out within the 'Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies' (adopted 29th January 2015) and the 'Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies' (adopted 18th July 2019). The Local Plan covers the period up to 2030.
- 4.2 The entire Site is designated as both 'Green Belt' and 'Countryside' land under Policy STRAT9 and as a Sand and Gravel Mineral Safeguarding area under Policy ENV9.
- 4.3 The settlement boundary for Northwich, which is designated under Policy N1, is located immediately adjacent to the Site to the southeast. Within the adopted Local Plan, 'Northwich' is defined as the town of Northwich and adjacent settlements of Anderton, Barnton, Davenham, Hartford, Lostock Gralam, Lower Marston, Lower Wincham, Rudheath and Weaverham.
- 4.4 Northwich is appropriated a significant amount of residential growth as part of the adopted spatial strategy.

Material Considerations

The NPPF

- 4.5 The NPPF (December 2024) sets the national framework for how Local Plans should be made. Paragraph 15 of the NPPF states that plans should provide a positive vision for the future and a framework for meeting housing needs.
- 4.6 Paragraph 16 states that plans should be prepared positively, in a way that is '*aspirational but deliverable*'.

Requirement to Meet Local Housing Need in Full

- 4.7 The NPPF states at paragraph 61 that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed.
- 4.8 At the same paragraph, the NPPF requires local authorities to meet their local housing need in full.

The Standard Method

- 4.9 In order to determine the minimum number of homes needed, plans should be informed by a local housing needs assessment, which is to be conducted using the standard method. This is established at paragraph 62 of the NPPF.
- 4.10 In the case of CW&C, the most recent local housing need figure, calculated using the standard method, is 1,928 homes per year. This equates to a total of 28,920 homes over 15 years.

The Principle of Green Belt Release

- 4.11 When identifying land to meet the local requirement for homes, paragraph 147 of the NPPF sets out that local authorities should demonstrate that they have examined fully '*all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development*' before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries.

4.12 At paragraph 145, the NPPF is clear that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances exist and can be justified through the preparation or updating of plans.

4.13 Paragraph 146 confirms that one of the exceptional circumstances is where an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes, commercial or other development through other means.

Green Belt Release Hierarchy

4.14 Where it is necessary to release land from the Green Belt for development, the NPPF (at paragraph 148) sets a hierarchy for how Green Belt land should be assessed. The hierarchy is as follows:

- Previously developed land
- Grey belt (which is not previously developed)
- Other Green Belt locations

4.15 The same paragraph outlines that when reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should determine whether a site's location is appropriate.

Grey Belt Definition

4.16 The NPPF defines grey belt as:

'land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development'.

4.17 When applied to the Site, the above definition is consistent with the characteristics of the larger northern parcel.

4.18 The entire Site (North and South of Station Road) is promoted for development and can be delivered as a comprehensive development. Notwithstanding this, the larger parcel to the North of Station Road is considered to meet the definition of grey belt.

4.19 The smaller parcel to the South of Station Road represents a modest extension to the village that is also directly adjacent to the existing settlement boundary.

4.20 Since the significant majority of the land is evidently not previously developed and meets the definition of grey belt, in accordance with the NPPF (paragraph 148) it should be assessed under the second tier of the hierarchy for Green Belt release.

4.21 It follows that the Site should be given priority to be considered for release from the Green Belt ahead of other locations in the Green Belt that do not qualify as grey belt.

4.22 A comprehensive assessment of the Site in terms of its compatibility with the grey belt definition is provided below.

Meeting the Grey Belt Definition

4.23 There are two key tests outlined in the NPPF that should be applied when assessing whether a site meets the definition of grey belt. These are:

1. *Does the site 'strongly contribute' to purposes a, b and d of the Green Belt?*
2. *Do any of the 'Footnote 7' designations present a strong reason for restricting development?*

4.24 The two tests are discussed in turn below.

1) The Green Belt Purposes Test

- 4.25 In the first instance, the performance of the Site is assessed against purposes a, b and d of the Green Belt as stated at paragraph 143 of the NPPF.
- 4.26 The PPG is clear in relation to the 3 purposes (a, b and d) that they only relate to large built-up areas and / or towns. The guidance is explicit that the purposes do not apply to villages.
- 4.27 Accordingly, since Weaverham is by definition, a village, the purposes do not apply and therefore it is impossible for the Site to make a strong contribution to them.
- 4.28 Notwithstanding the above, in the interest of completeness an assessment is provided at Table 1 below of how the Site performs against purposes a, b and d of the Green Belt.

Table 1 – Assessment of the Site against Relevant Green Belt Purposes

Green Belt Purpose	Purpose Wording	Site Performance	Commentary
A	To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	Limited	The presence of the Weaverham bypass (A49) is a strong defensible boundary beyond the western edge of the Site that is a natural barrier to unrestricted sprawl. Beyond the northern edge of the Site, the land is bounded by Sandy Lane, where it adjoins the A49, which creates another defensible boundary which would prevent unrestricted sprawl. The land does not function to check the unrestricted sprawl of the built up area and as such, it can be expressly demonstrated that the Site does not strongly contribute to purpose (a) of the Green Belt.
B	To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.	None	The Site is not located between two towns. Development of the Site would demonstrably not contribute to the merging of two neighbouring towns and as such it is clear that the Site does not strongly contribute to purpose (b) of the Green Belt.
D	To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.	None	The Site is not located within a historic town. It is acknowledged that the centre of Weaverham is protected under a Conservation Area, however the development of the Site for housing would not adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area, or the character of a historic town.

- 4.29 As demonstrated in Table 1 above, the Site does not make a strong contribution to any of the relevant purposes of the Green Belt.

2) The 'Footnote 7' Test

- 4.30 Once it is established that the Site meets the grey belt definition in terms of the Green Belt purposes (a, b and d), the next stage in assessing whether a site could qualify as grey belt is whether any of the 'Footnote 7' exclusions apply and would result in a strong reason for restricting development.

4.31 Table 2 below lists all of the Footnote 7 designations and confirms that none of these apply to the Site.

Table 2 – NPPF Footnote 7 Designations

Footnote 7 Designation	Commentary
Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Ramsar Sites	There are no Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation or Ramsar Sites located within the Site or adjacent to it.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	The Site is not located in proximity to a SSSI.
Local Green Space	The Site is not designated as a Local Green Space.
National Landscape	The Site is not located within or nearby to a National Landscape.
National Park (or within Broads Authority)	The Site is not located within or nearby to a National Park and is not within the Broads Authority.
Heritage Coast	The Site is not located near to a designated Heritage Coast, or any coastline.
Irreplaceable Habitats	There are no known irreplaceable habitats at the Site.
Designated Heritage Asset (and assets of archaeological interest)	There are no designated Heritage Assets at the Site.
Area at risk of flooding or coastal change	The Site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1, which indicates the lowest risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. Furthermore, there is no real world flood risk from surface water.

The ‘Golden Rules’

4.32 Where land is released from the Green Belt for housing, the NPPF requires (at paragraph 156) that specific contributions (known as ‘Golden Rules’) should apply. The golden rules relate to higher contributions for affordable housing, improvements to infrastructure and provision of green spaces than would be required for land that is not in the Green Belt.

4.33 Development of the Site would constitute the release of land from the Green Belt and therefore the golden rules would apply.

4.34 All of the golden rules could be met in the development of the Site, including significant contributions to green spaces, infrastructure and affordable housing (subject to viability, in accordance with the NPPF).

4.35 There is sufficient land available at the Site to make efficient use of the space for housing whilst making a significant contribution to public open space, which is incorporated into the masterplan framework.

Summary

4.36 Our strong view is that the Council is required to release land from the Green Belt in order to ensure a sufficient supply of deliverable housing land is available to meet its housing need in full within the plan period.

- 4.37 The Site is a logical and natural extension to Weaverham and, since the land qualifies as grey belt, and is in a sustainable location, it should be given priority by the Council in terms of its release from the Green Belt. This is in accordance with the hierarchy as established in the NPPF.
- 4.38 Development of the Site would meet all of the required Golden Rules, including a significant proportion of affordable housing and the provision of open green space.

5. Representations on the CW&C Local Plan Issues & Options

5.1 This section of the Representations will set out Barratt's position in relation to the questions posed in the Issues and Options document. Where appropriate, reference will be made to the supporting evidence published by the Council.

5.2 It should be noted that answers are only provided to questions that are pertinent to Barratt, its expertise and interests. Other questions included in the Issues and Options document that are not considered to be relevant are omitted from the representation, but are included in the general representation submitted by Pegasus on behalf of Barratt Redrow.

Introduction

Question IN 1 - Do you agree that this is the right evidence that we need to inform the new Local Plan? Is there further evidence that you think will be required?

5.3 The New Local Plan must be based on up to date and robust evidence. The Issues and Options consultation document sets out the following list of additional evidence that is needed to support the new Plan:

- Retail and Town Centres Study (in preparation)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (in preparation)
- Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) (in preparation)
- Housing Needs Assessment (to be prepared)
- Green Belt Study (to be prepared)
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan (to be prepared)
- Strategic Viability Assessment (to be prepared)
- Transport Assessment (to be prepared)
- Land Availability Assessment (in preparation).

5.4 It is considered that the above list of additional evidence is sufficient to inform the policies of the new Local Plan. Savills is supportive of the production of a Housing Needs Assessment, Land Availability Assessment and Green Belt Study which will inform the policies that relate to housing delivery in the new Local Plan.

5.5 It is not considered that there is additional evidence that is required that is not already in preparation or due to be prepared that would be necessary to support the new Local Plan.

Question IN 3 – Do you have any comments or views on the proposed plan period for the new Local Plan?

5.6 National policy requires that new Local Plans should set policies for 15 years following adoption, as a minimum. It is considered that the New Local Plan period for CW&C should cover a minimum of 20 years, due to the scale of strategic development that is required to meet the current and future needs of the borough and to reflect the ambitious housing delivery targets set by Government.

5.7 A plan period of 20 years would ensure that the Local Plan is able to set the strategic policies to meet the current and future needs of the borough. As such it is proposed that the Local Plan period should be 2025 – 2045.

Vision

Question VI 3 – Do you agree with the approach of establishing concise visions for the key places identified in the new Local Plan? Or do you have an alternative suggestion?

- 5.7.1 CW&C is a large and diverse borough with distinct towns and settlements that each have specific development needs. As such, the Council's approach is supported which will establish concise visions for the key settlements, in addition to an overarching vision for the whole District.
- 5.8 Local visions for each of the larger settlements (Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Winsford, Frodsham, Neston and Parkgate) will help to ensure that the specific development objectives of each settlement can be met through the Local Plan policies, which will in turn inform development proposals.

Spatial Strategy

Question SS 1 - Is there any reason for the Council not to plan for delivering a minimum of 1,914 new homes each year?

- 5.9 The Issues and Options draft sets out that the Council's policy approach is to deliver a minimum of 1,914 new homes each year over the plan period, which would equate to 28,710 new homes.
- 5.10 Savills notes that the most recent local housing need figure for CW&C is actually 1,928 dpa, which brings the overall 15 year total to 28,920 homes.
- 5.11 In response to question SS1, the new Local Plan should support the delivery of 1,928 homes per year as a minimum. The requirement for the new Local Plan to meet the standard method figure is clearly established in the NPPF and is the necessary approach that must be taken to ensure that the plan is consistent with national policy.
- 5.12 Emphasis is placed on the fact that the national policy requirement is for Local Plans to adopt the standard method figure **as a minimum**. Savills recommends that the Council should take an ambitious approach and aim to exceed the minimum housing delivery indicated by the standard method, in order to support sustainable growth.
- 5.13 National policy provides that in some cases, authorities will be able to justify a lower housing requirement than the standard method on the basis of local constraints on land and delivery (for example designations such as National Parks etc). Such circumstances do not exist in CW&C that would justify a reduced housing requirement. For example, there are no statutory National Parks in the borough.
- 5.14 The Research Paper prepared by Lichfield's on behalf of Barratt Redrow that is submitted in response to this Issues and Options consultation presents the various benefits of the Council delivering at least the current standard methodology housing figure of 1,928 dwellings per annum given the early stage in the plan preparation and how housing development can assist in addressing the Council's main topics for reviewing their Plan. That document, as well as the associated infographic, should be read in conjunction with these representations.

Question SS 2 - Do you think the Council should consider a stepped housing requirement that plans for a lower level of housing delivery earlier in the plan period?

- 5.15 The NPPF is clear that authorities are required to set strategic policies to meet their housing need in full across the plan period. To support the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes, it is important that 'a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed'.

- 5.16 Paragraph 70(b) of the NPPF states that to ensure land is allocated for housing in a way that boosts the supply of homes, plans should allocate ‘a range of sites by size, type and location to meet the housing requirements of different groups in the community’.
- 5.17 A stepped housing requirement with reduced delivery in the early parts of the Plan period would, in effect, allow the Council to defer its full housing delivery to later phases of the Plan period. In areas where there are existing acute housing shortages, such as Northwich and Weaverham, this would prolong existing issues surrounding affordability and access to housing.
- 5.18 A stepped requirement would also ignore the opportunities for development sites that are immediately deliverable at the initial phases of the Plan period. Reduced targets in the early stages of the Plan period would risk slowing momentum, which conflicts with national housing objectives of boosting housing growth. As such, it is considered that the housing requirement should be clear and consistent throughout the Plan period, which would encourage market confidence and have a positive impact on overall housing delivery.
- 5.19 Finally, the adoption of a stepped requirement would mean that the New Local Plan would have a more limited contribution to the Government’s stated aim of delivering 1.5 million homes during the current Parliament.
- 5.20 For these reasons, the New Local Plan should not utilise a stepped requirement.
- Question SS 4 - Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards the spatial strategy principles, as set out in SS 3 'Spatial strategy principles' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?
- 5.21 The Issues and Options consultation document sets out that the spatial strategy will follow the principle of directing new development and allocating land towards previously developed ('brownfield') sites within settlements first. It is acknowledged that previously developed sites within settlements are often sustainable locations to support new development, therefore development should be directed to these locations in the first instance.
- 5.22 However, it should be noted that not all brownfield land can be considered deliverable or reasonable alternatives to undeveloped sites. A detailed consideration of the deliverability and availability of each brownfield opportunity will be required to inform the urban capacity of the District.
- 5.23 The spatial strategy principles state that where there are not enough opportunities for redevelopment within urban areas and towns, the approach will be to direct development to the edge of existing settlements in locations with the best access to public transport, services and infrastructure, as the next best sustainable option. The document also states that depending on the settlement, this may require the release of land that is currently designated as Green Belt.
- 5.24 The principles of the spatial strategy as set out in the consultation document are broadly supported. It is a fundamental purpose of the Local Plan to ensure that the development needs of the District are met and that development is directed to the most appropriate and sustainable locations.
- 5.25 While a brownfield-first approach is supported and is consistent with national policy, the scale of development that is required in CW&C (i.e. at least 1,928 new homes per year), and the relative lack of appropriate previously developed sites, means it will be essential for development to be directed to other sites in sustainable locations on the edge of existing settlements. This will necessitate the release of land from the Green Belt.
- 5.26 It follows that the Council will need to provide evidence to demonstrate that exceptional circumstances exist to amend Green Belt boundaries. The NPPF states that such exceptional circumstances can include where an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes through reasonable non-Green Belt alternatives.

Question SS 5 - Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards the settlement hierarchy, as set out in SS 4 'Settlement hierarchy' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

5.27 The Issues and Options document proposes that the New Local Plan will set out a settlement hierarchy based on the status and role of each settlement. The proposed settlement hierarchy is as follows:

- City – Chester
- Main Towns – Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Winsford
- Market Towns – Neston and Parkgate, Frodsham

5.28 Savills agrees with the suggested settlement hierarchy as set out above. Chester is the only City within the borough and therefore performs a principle function and should be placed at the top of the settlement hierarchy.

5.29 The second tier of the proposed settlement hierarchy includes Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford as 'Main Towns'. The inclusion of Northwich specifically as a main town is endorsed, since it is an established settlement in the borough with clear opportunities to deliver growth and housing development.

5.30 Northwich should continue to include satellite settlements, such as Weaverham, for the purpose of planning policy.

5.31 Northwich is a desirable location for development and is able to accommodate further growth through the New Local Plan. This warrants its status as a main town in the settlement hierarchy and the proportion of housing distributed to Northwich, and its satellite settlements, should reflect its position in the settlement hierarchy.

5.32 The consultation document sets out that the New Local Plan will include individual place-based policies for each settlement which will set out the vision, core features, key issues and clear strategy for what development will take place in each settlement. The place-based policy is supported in principle as this will add clarity in terms of the expectations of the Council for each settlement area.

Question SS9 - Have circumstances changed since the adoption of the Local Plan (Part One), that would now justify Green Belt release?

5.33 The Local Plan (Part One) was adopted in January 2015, which is more than 10 years ago. Since that time, the national policy framework in relation to Green Belt has changed substantially. The most recent version of the NPPF requires Local Authorities to make plans to meet their local housing need (standard method figure) in full. This requirement stems from the Government's commitment to significantly bolster the delivery of homes and speed up planning in order to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next parliament.

5.34 In order to deliver sufficient homes in CW&C to meet its housing requirement and ensure a sustainable pattern of development, some parts of the Green Belt will need to be released for development. This is because the Council will not be able to deliver its housing requirement solely on previously developed sites or other sustainable sites that are available and deliverable, without releasing some Green Belt sites to alleviate the acute need for housing. Particularly if it is focussing on the most sustainable settlements towards the top of the settlement hierarchy.

5.35 Currently, approximately 42% of the borough is designated as Green Belt, which is substantially higher than the national average of 12.6%. This also tends to be focussed around the most sustainable settlements such as Chester, Ellesmere Port, and Northwich.

- 5.36 While, in accordance with the proposed spatial strategy principles, development should firstly be directed to previously developed land and existing settlements, the release of Green Belt land will be necessary to accommodate sufficient growth in the borough.

Question SS11 - Please select the option which is the most appropriate spatial strategy for Cheshire West and Chester:

a. Option A - Retain the Green Belt

b. Option B - Follow current Local Plan level and distribution of development

c. Option C - Sustainable transport corridors

d. None of these

- 5.37 The most appropriate spatial strategies for CW&C are Options B and C above. Is it considered that Option A would restrict realistic opportunities to deliver sustainable development in appropriate locations in the District. Retaining the current Green Belt boundaries would exclude sustainable locations, such as the Site, from making a contribution to meeting the housing needs of the District and ensuring a sustainable pattern of development.

- 5.38 In order to deliver at least 1,928 new homes per year, the Council will need to assess land that is currently within the Green Belt for its potential to deliver sustainable residential development.

- 5.39 While Savills recognises the prioritisation of previously developed land for housing development, there is not a sufficient supply of available previously developed land in urban areas that is capable of accommodating the housing requirement.

Question SS14 - Do you feel that Option A is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?

- 5.40 Option A is not considered to be an appropriate spatial strategy for the New Local Plan. The reason being is that the Council is required to meet its local housing requirement in full (being 1,928 homes per annum) as a minimum and in order to fulfil its role in setting strategic policies to meet this requirement, the New Local Plan will be required to allocate sufficient land for housing development.

- 5.41 It is considered that Option A would restrict opportunities for sustainable residential development on the edge of existing settlements that are currently within the Green Belt. It is problematic as it would serve to restrict the growth of some of the most sustainable settlements and result in a pattern of development that is less sustainable.

- 5.42 Retaining the current Green Belt boundary would in turn exacerbate existing issues in relation to the provision of affordable housing in the District. It is considered that in order for the Council to address its housing requirement (including the need for affordable homes) land in sustainable locations within the Green Belt should be assessed for development.

- 5.43 There is not a sufficient supply of reasonable previously developed land that is suitable and available for housing in CW&C and as such, Green Belt sites must be assessed for their contribution to housing delivery, in accordance with the NPPF.

Question SS16 - Do you feel that Option B is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?

- 5.44 Option B follows the existing Local Plan strategy and settlement hierarchy which is set out in Policy STRAT 2 of the Local Plan (Part One). That policy locates most new development in or on the edge of 'main urban areas' and an appropriate proportion of new development on smaller settlements which have adequate services, facilities and transport connections.

- 5.45 The Issues and Options consultation document makes clear that a key difference between the adopted Local Plan (Part One) and the New Local Plan is that the current supply of previously developed land that can accommodate new development is much more limited, meaning larger areas of Green Belt and/or sites designated as Countryside are likely to be needed. The explanatory

text on Option B explains that, while a proportion of development can be accommodated within existing settlements, *'much of the new development under this option would need to be located within the Green Belt and/or Countryside'*.

- 5.46 The approach set out under Option B is an appropriate spatial strategy that is entirely consistent with the NPPF and seeks to bring the adopted Local Plan policy up to date in respect of the spatial strategy. Option B would ensure that new development is directed to the most sustainable and logical locations in the District, which follows the established strategy in the adopted Local Plan (Part One).

Question SS18 - Do you feel that Option C is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?

- 5.47 Option C seeks to direct residential development to settlements that are served by the rail network and main bus route corridors. This strategy maximises opportunities for sustainable travel choices and could support further improvements to existing public transport services through development.

- 5.48 This Option would require land to be released from the Green Belt in locations that are well-connected by existing transport corridors.

- 5.49 Option C is a logical approach to the spatial strategy that aims to take advantage of existing settlements that are on the railway network or bus routes, as such the Option is considered to be appropriate for the New Local Plan.

- 5.50 Barratt recognises the importance of directing development to locations that are served by existing sustainable transport options and incorporating sustainable transport options in to new developments. This has a variety of benefits for environmental impacts, such as greenhouse gas emissions as well as public health (reducing pollution) and has a positive general impact on quality of life by promoting active travel.

- 5.51 However, the extent of development should still be guided by the level of day to day services that are available in the settlements.

- 5.52 The Site to the North and South of Station Road, Weaverham is located in a highly sustainable location in close proximity (walking distance) to existing bus routes as well as Acton Bridge railway station. Further commentary on the merits of the Site in terms of accessibility to public transport options is provided below.

- 5.53 The Site falls within potential growth area 'NOR11', which is the growth area around Weaverham that is closest to any rail station.

Question SS21 - What information should we take into account when assessing sites for allocation in the new Local Plan?

- 5.54 At Paragraph 72, the NPPF makes clear that planning policies should identify *'a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability'*. To ensure the New Local Plan is consistent with the NPPF, it is critical that the Council takes into consideration the availability, suitability and economic viability of proposed housing allocation sites.

- 5.55 In terms of availability, the Council should consider the ownership of proposed sites and whether sites can feasibly come forward within the Plan period. In the case of the Site at Weaverham, the land is clearly available, since it is under the control of Barratt. As such, there are no land assembly or ownership constraints that could pose a delay to development of the land. It is in Barratt's interest to secure planning permission and implement the development as soon as possible, should the Site benefit from a residential allocation in the New Local Plan.

- 5.56 In terms of suitability, it is important for the Council to consider the sustainability of proposed allocation sites, in accordance with its policy approach at Policy TA 1. This includes assessing existing provision of public transport services and proximity to settlements and local centres.

Locations that are detached from existing settlements or poorly connected to public transport are not sustainable, and therefore are unlikely to be suitable for residential development within the new Plan period.

- 5.57 The Site at Weaverham is in a sustainable location nearby to existing community facilities and public transport. The Site is appropriate for housing since it is directly adjacent to the existing settlement edge of Northwich, as identified under Policy N1 of the Local Plan (Part Two).
- 5.58 When assessing sites for potential allocations, it will be important for the Council to ensure that allocated sites can realistically be delivered within the Plan period. As such, factors affecting deliverability of potential housing sites will be a key consideration, so technical constraints, such as ecology, flood risk and topography should all be taken into account when the Council assesses sites for potential allocations.

Question SS 29 – Which of the identified growth areas around Northwich do you consider to be the most suitable?

- 5.59 The Issues and Options consultation document identifies several potential ‘growth areas’ around Northwich at Map 5.6 (page 45). The significant majority of growth areas in Northwich are identified as being potential locations for housing development specifically, which is reflective of the Council’s ambitions to boost housing delivery around Northwich and the clear market demand in the settlement area.
- 5.60 Of the three Spatial Strategy Options (A, B and C) the majority of proposed growth areas fall within options B and C, which would necessitate the release of some land from the Green Belt. On this basis, it is considered that the potential growth area ‘NOR11’ presents the most suitable and logical location to deliver housing in Weaverham. The NOR11 area includes the Site at Weaverham which is an available and deliverable location for residential development that can be delivered in the early stages of the New Local Plan period.
- 5.61 NOR11 includes land to the west of Weaverham, within Warrington Road (A49). The presence of the A49 to the west of Weaverham presents a natural and defensible barrier which would restrict any further sprawling development beyond this point. The proposed growth area to the west of Northwich is a sustainable location on the edge of the existing settlement of Weaverham. The area is served by the 48 and 48A bus routes which provide direct and frequent services between Northwich town centre and Frodsham, including linkages to Overton, Kingsley, Norley and Weaverham.
- 5.62 The NOR11 growth area is also served by Acton Bridge railway station (approximately 1.2km away from the Site). Acton Bridge provides hourly West Midlands services northbound to Liverpool and southbound to Birmingham.
- 5.63 The Council’s proposed growth area NOR11 presents a suitable and logical expansion to Northwich that is in a sustainable location served by existing public transport and can directly address the acute need for housing in Northwich.

Question SS 30 – Do you have any further comments about any of the potential growth areas identified around Northwich?

- 5.64 NOR11 is one of the smaller potential growth areas identified around Northwich. For this reason, it is a favourable growth area when compared to some of the other larger growth areas (such as NOR01 and NOR10) given that it requires less infrastructure to enable commencement. The relative size of the NOR11 growth area means it can realistically contribute to housing delivery at the early stages of the New Plan period. As a smaller growth area in comparison to some of the other growth areas identified around Northwich, NOR11 will be a more natural and logical extension to the village and will therefore have less of an impact on the character of the village.

- 5.65 As discussed previously, we consider that the Site meets the definition of grey belt and therefore it should be given priority in terms of land that is released from the Green Belt, when assessed against other growth areas in Northwich. A comprehensive assessment of the Site in terms of its compatibility with the grey belt definition is provided at Section 4 above, which demonstrates that the Site meets the necessary requirements of grey belt.
- 5.66 In addition to the above, the Site is in a highly sustainable location, being within walking distance of Acton Bridge railway station and local schools, shops and other amenities in Weaverham, making it an excellent opportunity for sustainable residential development.
- 5.67 Paragraph 148 of the NPPF states that the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should determine whether a site's location is appropriate, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework. Paragraph 110 relates to ensuring that development is focussed on locations which are, or can be made sustainable though limiting the need to travel and offering a choice of transport modes.
- 5.68 Paragraph 115 states that in assessing sites that may be allocated for development, it should be ensured that; sustainable transport modes are prioritised, safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users, streets reflect the National Design Guide and that any significant impacts from the development on the transport network can be mitigated through a vision-led approach.
- 5.69 The Site is in a highly sustainable location immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary of Weaverham. The Site benefits from convenient existing local bus routes, with stops located in close proximity. Namely the 48 and 48A services provide frequent local services between Frodsham and Northwich and Crowton and Cuddington (as outlined in Section 3 above).
- 5.70 The Site is within reasonable walking distance from the local community services of Weaverham. The Site also benefits from proximity to Acton Bridge railway station, proving local connections as well as services to Liverpool and Birmingham.
- 5.71 An updated Land Availability Assessment (LAA) is being prepared by CW&C to identify potential development sites and broad locations for development that could become allocated within the New Local Plan. The latest Stage One Report of the LAA identifies at Table 4.12 that Northwich has a total estimated capacity for 3,586 units, which has been identified on an initial assessment against key designations and constraints and applying energy density assumptions.
- 5.72 The estimated capacity total for Northwich (3,586 units) is the highest out of all of the urban areas. Northwich is followed by Winsford, Ellesmere Port and Chester respectively in terms of total estimated capacity for housing delivery.
- 5.73 The initial stage of the LAA therefore indicates that Northwich is the preeminent location for housing delivery in the District.
- 5.74 It is also noted that the Framework Masterplan (at **Appendix C**) demonstrates that the Site can deliver a variety of community benefits, including a skate park, which is an important recreational space for younger people. The development scheme would also include a proportion of bungalows for older persons housing, as well as 2 and 3-bedroom houses for starter homes. These elements have been incorporated into the Framework Masterplan and Vision Document as a direct response to feedback by local stakeholders following a community engagement programme.
- 5.75 In summary, the Site is in a highly sustainable location and meets the definition of grey belt. It follows that the Site should be given priority for assessment in terms of its release from the Green Belt, in accordance with the NPPF.

Question SS 31 – Are there any constraints, including infrastructure provision that should be considered for Northwich when developing the New Local Plan?

- 5.76 Northwich is considered to be an appropriate settlement to accommodate housing development as part of the New Local Plan. The Places Background Paper for Northwich (amended 2024) confirms that the town of Northwich and its adjoining settlements of Anderton, Barnton, Davenham, Hartford, Lostock Gralam, Lower Marston, Lower Wincham, Rudheath and Weaverham combine to form the third largest urban area in the District.
- 5.77 The initial outcomes of the Stage One LAA also conclude that Northwich has the most available land out of any of the urban areas in the District to accommodate housing. This should be reflected in the New Local Plan.

Northwich

Question NO 1 – Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards Northwich, as set out in NO 1 ‘Northwich’ above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

- 5.78 The Issues and Options document proposes that the policy approach to Northwich will reflect the objectives of the Northwich Town Centre Development Framework and Northwich Transport Strategy. The Council’s intention is to retain the overall policy content of the current Local Plan (Part One) Policy STRAT 5 and Local Plan (Part Two) Policy N1 relating to development in Northwich and safeguarding the character and individuality of the settlements that form the wider built-up area of Northwich.
- 5.79 The New Local Plan will set out the level and location of new development within Northwich and the settlements which make up the Northwich urban area, including Weaverham. The new Plan will identify key sites and land allocations to deliver strategic development needs for new housing.
- 5.80 The initial key allocations/policies identified in the Issues and Options consultation document are:
- Wincham Urban Village
 - Northwich Town Centre e.g. Weaver Square, Northwich Market, Barons Quarry
 - Winnington Works (TATA)
 - Gadbrook Park
- 5.81 The Issues and Options document states that other sites to be identified will depend on the selected Option for the Spatial Strategy (A, B or C).
- 5.82 The element of the NO 1 Policy that seeks to identify key sites and allocations for housing development in Northwich is supported. As stated above, Northwich will play a primary role in accommodating new housing development in the New Plan period and directing this development to a mix and variety of sites as part of the Northwich policy is essential to ensure delivery.

Question NO 2 – Do you have any comments on the suggested key allocations / sites?

- 5.83 It is recommended that the Site at Weaverham should be included in the New Local Plan as a residential allocation in Northwich since it is available for residential development (subject to relevant planning permission) and can deliver around 350 homes in a sustainable location. This could be either as part of a wider allocation covering all of NOR11, or as a standalone allocation.
- 5.84 Most of the proposed ‘key allocations’ listed under NO 1 as part of the Issues and Options document are large-scale strategic housing allocations (e.g. Winnington Works). It is important that the new Plan Policy for Northwich includes a variety of housing allocations of different scales to ensure that the projected housing sites are realistic and implementable within the Plan period.

Question NO 5 – Should the settlements that make up the wider Northwich urban area be retained?

- 5.85 The Local Plan (Part One) defines Northwich (under Policy STRAT 5) as ‘the town of Northwich and adjacent settlements of Anderton, Barnton, Davenham, Hartford, Lostock Gralam, Lower Wincham, Rudheath and Weaverham.’ The settlements surrounding Northwich town, including Weaverham, make a significant contribution to the character of Northwich as a whole.
- 5.86 In the context of housing delivery, the settlements surrounding Northwich town will play a key role in contributing to the homes that are needed in Northwich. As such, those settlements should be retained as part of Northwich in the relevant policy of the New Local Plan.

Transport and Accessibility

Question TA1 - Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards transport and accessibility, as set out above in TA 1 'Transport and accessibility'? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

- 5.87 The Issues and Options consultation draft sets out that the Council’s overall approach to transport is to minimise the need for travel, particularly by single-occupancy cars and vans, by locating development so it is accessible to local services and facilities by a range of transport modes. The draft document sets out a sustainable transport hierarchy, which is as follows:
- People walking or wheeling
 - People cycling or riding
 - People using public Transport
 - People driving ultra-low emission and shared vehicles
 - Delivery and logistics in internal combustion engine vehicles
 - People driving other private motor vehicles.
- 5.88 In terms of new development, the draft Local Plan document sets out that new development will be encouraged in more sustainable locations. This means that developments should maximise opportunities for people to be able to meet day-to-day needs within a reasonable (10 minute / 800 metres) walking distance of their homes, as well as being able to travel outside of their settlements by a range of sustainable transport choices.
- 5.89 In response to question TA 1, the Council’s suggested policy approach towards transport and accessibility is broadly supported. The element of the draft policy that encourages new development in sustainable locations that benefit from existing connections to sustainable transport modes is particularly supported, since these locations can make a significant contribution to sustainable development.

6. Summary and Conclusion

- 6.1 Savills is instructed by Barratt to make representations on the Issues and Options draft of the New Local Plan for Cheshire West and Chester.
- 6.2 Barratt has an interest in land to the North and South of Station Road in Weaverham, which it is promoting for allocation within the new Local Plan. These representations make reference to this land in order to illustrate wider points in relation to the production of the new Local Plan.
- 6.3 Barratt is supportive of the Council's decision to prepare a new Local Plan and welcomes the opportunity to engage with this, and future consultations.
- 6.4 In general the Council is encouraged to be ambitious. This is both in terms of addressing the current housing crisis and facilitating sustainable development.
- 6.5 In terms of housing specifically, much of this is dependent on ensuring the right requirement, apportioning this housing to the right general locations, and ensuring that the most sustainable sites are allocated for delivery. These representations have stated a suitable course for the new Local Plan to follow.
- 6.6 The Site represents an excellent opportunity to deliver housing and community uses, in a highly sustainable location in a sustainable settlement in the District. Furthermore, Barratt is a leading housebuilder that is looking to assist the Council in the delivery of market and affordable homes of high quality.

Appendix A Location Plan



Appendix B Vision Document



WEAVERHAM

with Barratt Homes

Sandy Lane, Weaverham
Vision Statement August 2025



BARRATT
— HOMES —

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Introduction from Managing Director

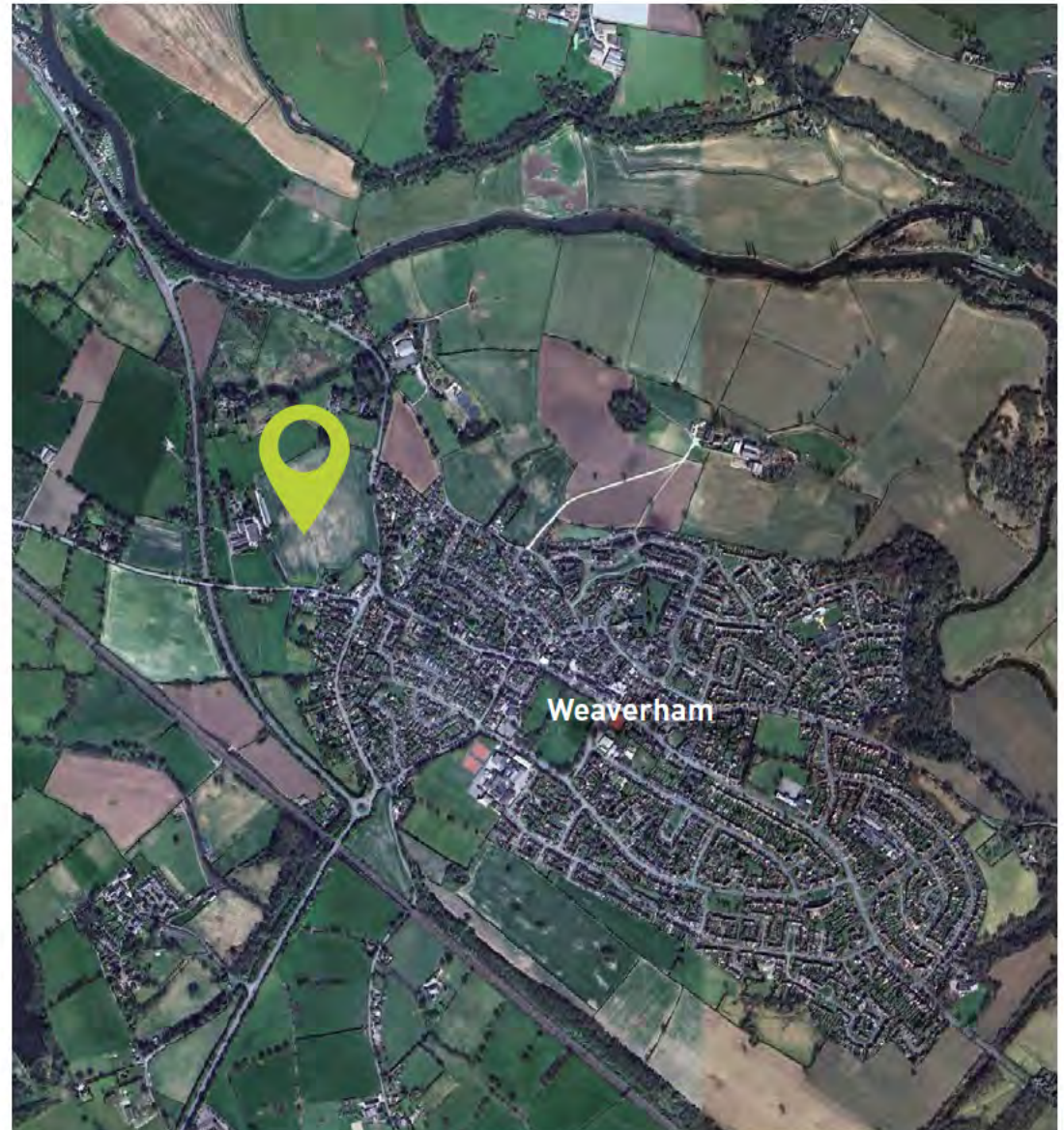
At Barratt, we understand that building homes is about much more than bricks and mortar. It's about building communities, meeting the housing needs of local people, and respecting and enhancing the surrounding environment.

Achieving this requires the ability and willingness to listen to local concerns, suggestions and desires. That's why we've engaged with the local community, including Weaverham Trust, Weaverham Parish Council and local headteachers.

They have helped us to understand local issues, particularly the need for housing opportunities for first-time buyers and for older residents looking for bungalows in the area, as well as the need for more local amenities for children and older teenagers. We've made provision for all of these and more in our proposal.

We're excited about our proposed scheme for Weaverham and the opportunity it presents for all concerned. We believe it will truly enhance the local area while being respectful of the existing community of Weaverham.

Rhys Nicholson,
Barratt Homes Managing Director



The site

This approximately 43.7-acre site lies to the north-west of Weaverham, approximately 4.5km west of Northwich. It is predominantly in use as arable agricultural land, with trees and hedgerows along its boundaries. Other than a slight south-north incline, the site is relatively flat.

The site is currently accessible at two points: from Sandy Lane (B5144) in the north-eastern corner and from Station Road (B5153) in the south-western corner. These two roads also form the site's southern and eastern boundaries, respectively. Agricultural land and mature meadow border the site's northern edge.

While Weaverham is classified as part of Northwich within existing planning policy, the settlement is physically and, in many respects, functionally separate.

Northwich 4.5km >



Community engagement

We recognise that engaging with the local community is key to making the development work for everyone, existing residents and new. Community engagement provides us with the opportunity to understand – and address – concerns, and to deliver a development that enhances local amenities for all.

After meeting with Weaverham Trust, Weaverham Parish Council and two local headteachers, the following suggestions from the local community will be incorporated into the scheme:





Community engagement

- A skate park to cater for older children and teenagers for whom there is currently a lack of facilities
- Bungalows to provide new home opportunities for Weaverham's ageing population
- Starter homes to help local first-time buyers onto the housing ladder. In fact, our proposal is to build predominantly smaller two- and three-bedroom homes, with some four-bedroom family home options
- Outdoor space for both children and adults to enjoy, including benches to rest and socialise
- Main access from Sandy Lane to avoid conservation area
- Improved pedestrian connectivity into the village
- Inclusive play areas
- Off road parking for residents along Station Road, to improve road safety

We are also exploring the possibility of providing space for community facilities and/or businesses, such as a café, youth centre and gym. We are keen to continue to engage with the community throughout the process to understand what we can deliver to best serve residents.



Accessibility

Detailed highways advice indicates that the main vehicle access should be taken from Sandy Lane, as far south and as close to the village as possible. This is in line with the community's preference.

Cheshire West and Chester Council do not have specific highways guidance, but in our experience, schemes of over 350 homes should have two points of access.

We understand through our engagement with community groups that Station Road should not be used as a primary access, and as such propose to use Station Road to be a secondary access point, while promoting active travel into the village and to Acton Bridge Station, which is a 14 minute walk from the site.

We understand that a zebra crossing close to the site would be of benefit to the community. This is shown on our plans. Improved, widened footpaths will further be provided on Station Road for access to Acton Bridge.

Construction traffic will be routed from the A49 to the northern edge of the village, avoiding travel through the village itself. This approach has been carefully considered to minimise disruption for local residents during the construction period.

Site constraints and opportunities

The site presents several opportunities to create an attractive development that will enhance the local area and provide much-needed homes. While there are also some constraints, we shall of course work within these, using them in such a way as to enhance the site and contribute to its uniqueness.

The opportunities:

- Creation of a new, public open space through the centre of the site, with the potential to link to a wider countryside network.
- Creation of new recreational opportunities that the wider community can enjoy.
- Formation of a landscape buffer between the development and the landscape beyond, providing ecological opportunities for habitat enhancement.
- Enhancement of existing habitat areas for flora and fauna and provision of new ones.
- Provision of new footpath routes through the site to link with the existing network.
- Provision of a high-quality development with a mix of house types and tenures to help meet local need, including affordable housing.
- Linking into the strategic road and public transport network to provide links to Northwich and beyond.



Site constraints and opportunities

The constraints:

- Proximity to the existing conservation area to the south-east along the high street.

Mitigation: Design will be sensitive, and sympathetic to the surrounding areas.

- Existing hedgerows and mature trees within the boundaries of the site.

Mitigation: These will be retained and enhanced where possible.

- Existing overhead power distribution cables and pylons running through the site.

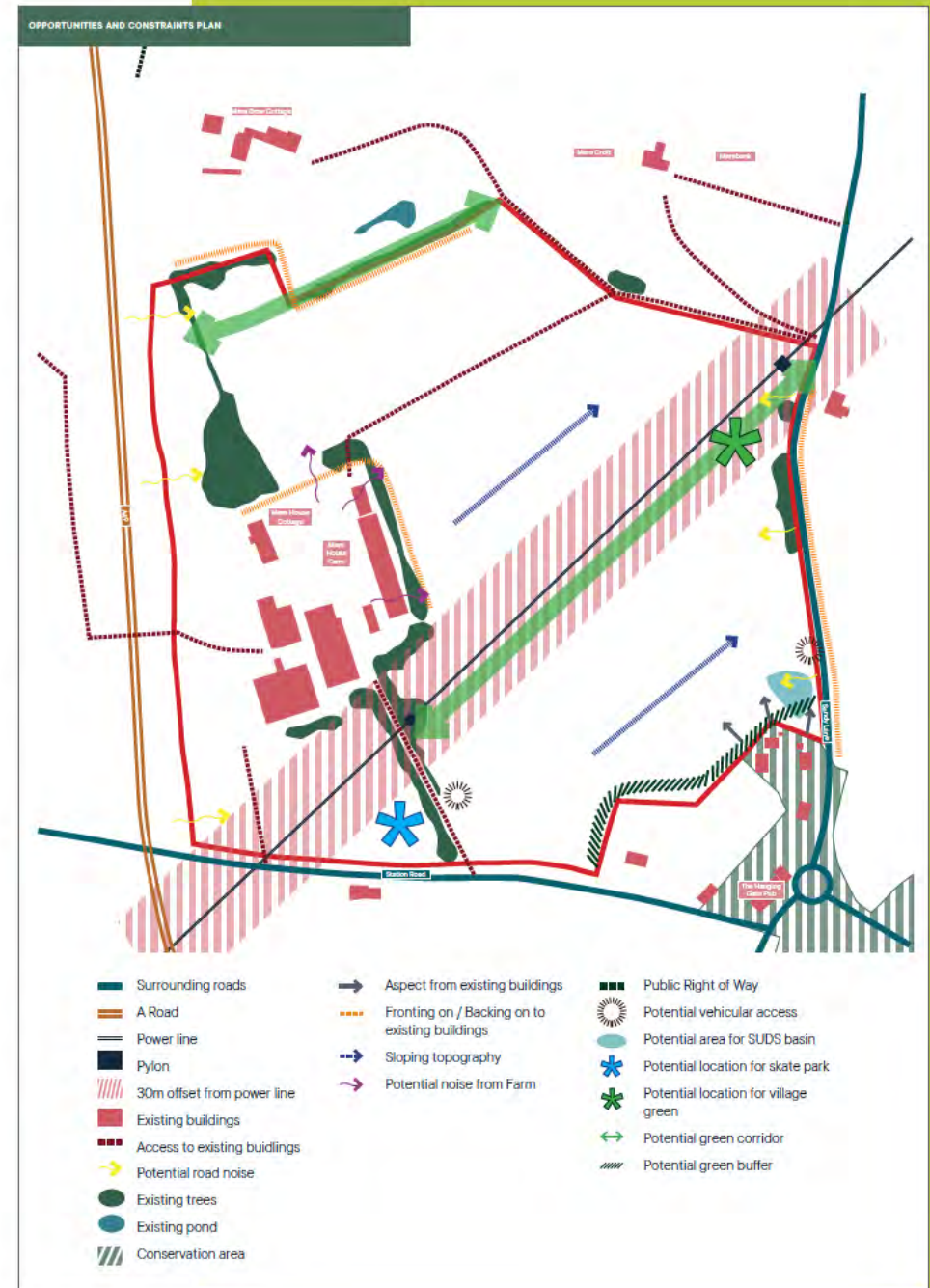
Mitigation: These will have a 30-metre stand off either side, to avoid disturbance to residents. Our vision is to use this as an opportunity for a high quality green route running through the middle of the development with accessible footpaths and a variety of plants, including wildflowers.

- Proximity to existing homes and buildings to the south, east and west of the site boundary.

Mitigation: Our urban designers have completed a detailed Character Study of the Weaverham, which as shown later in this document, will inform our street scenes and elevations to ensure the scheme is sensitive to the surrounding area.

- Potential visual impacts on the wider landscape.

Mitigation: The site would be a natural extension to the built form of the existing settlement and would not protrude significantly beyond existing homes at the northern and western points of Weaverham.



Design – Masterplan

Earlier this summer we met with key stakeholders because we want to understand how our scheme can best meet the needs of the community. We are really proud to share a scheme which is informed by local experts and industry professionals.

Our masterplan reflects our learnings. Overleaf, we have detailed the additional benefits the scheme provides. Here, however, we want to highlight that affordability is a key issue for local residents, and many people who grew up in Weaverham are unable to buy their first home here, resulting in them moving out of the village. In turn, clubs and schools are suffering with low numbers, and the population of Weaverham is beginning to show signs of an ageing population.

The Barratt product is very much aimed at first time buyers, and we are confident that building here would be a positive for the community. This is supported by feedback from stakeholders in the village who are seeking smaller two and three bed homes.

Based on our analysis, we propose development of the site as follows:



The provision of approximately 350 homes across the site



Public open space to cover 35% of the site (this is in excess of current policy)



New and enhanced footpath and cycleway connections



A landscape corridor through the site for leisure and recreation



Protection of existing trees and hedgerows



Provision of SuDS features to mitigate flooding for the whole village from Sandy Lane, subject to modelling

Continued...

Based on our analysis, we propose development of the site as follows:



Planting of additional trees and hedgerows



A new skate park and BMX dirt track, following feedback from local stakeholders



Bungalows to meet growing demand, as requested by local stakeholders



We understand that parking along Station Road can be disruptive, and would like to provide off road parking on the parcel which is south of Station Road



Provision of carefully planned formal and informal play areas that will benefit from regular maintenance and updates. Within easy access from homes along well-lit walking routes, children's play areas will be designed for different ages, abilities and playing styles, and will include sensory and quiet zones and wheelchair-friendly surfaces. There will also be outdoor gyms and trim trails for teenagers and adults to use.

DO NOT SCALE
 This map has been prepared on the basis of the information provided by the client and is not intended to be used for any other purpose.
 CONSULTATION PERIOD: 15th March 2024 - 15th April 2024
 CONSULTATION DATES: 15th March 2024 - 15th April 2024
 CONSULTATION TIMES: 10am - 4pm
 CONSULTATION VENUE: [Redacted]
 CONSULTATION CONTACT: [Redacted]

Main access is taken from Sandy Lane as suggested by the Council. The usual route to reach the site is from the A49 so the conservation area will generally be avoided.

Barratt are investigating how flooding along Sandy Lane could be drained onto the

Green space under the pylons create a natural green corridor that provides residents with easy access to outdoor space with opportunities for 'play along the way', seating / rest areas and dog walking routes. The space will also enhance biodiversity across the scheme.



Affordability is a real issue for first time buyers who have to move out of the village when they want to buy.

Barratt will include predominantly 2 and 3 bedroom starter homes for this demographic in our scheme. There will be affordable housing delivered on the scheme to meet the requirements of the community and we have strong relationships with these providers.

Wildflower meadows with informal footpaths and varied landscaping included to enhance biodiversity and create wildlife habitats.

Weaverham Trust and Parish Council have identified a need for bungalows within the area. These are included in the masterplan and located to the south of the site to be within walking distance to existing and proposed services. Off road parking will also be available for existing properties off Station Road.

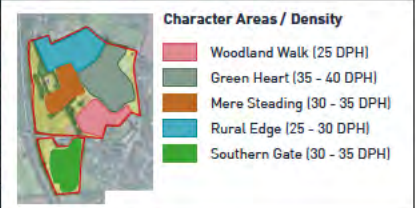
The local primary school have expressed a need for inclusive, accessible and safe play areas for children. The masterplan proposes multi-functional green spaces that will integrate a diverse range of play opportunities, including 'Play on the Way' and Natural Play areas.

The design for these spaces will use Barratt's July 2025 Play Guidance principles such as neurodivergent friendly design and fostering independence. Outward facing development cells will ensure POS and play spaces are well overlooked.

Extensive outdoor space with a strong public realm for people of all ages to enjoy, encouraging intergenerational interaction and socialising.

These areas are located close to the bungalows so they are accessible to the aging community, to help tackle loneliness and create a sense of community.

Skate Park integrated into the masterplan as requested by the community due to the lack of facilities appealing to young people within the area.



Illustrative Purposes Only

Design – A natural extension of the village

We intend to create a place that is both well-designed and beautiful. It will build on the existing character of the area while establishing its own distinct and enduring character.

Consistent with both Weaverham's historic core and the village's later 20th century expansion adjacent to the proposed site, our new homes will be predominantly two-storey semi-detached and detached.

Using the findings of a character study we carried out of the village to inform our proposal, the architectural style of the homes will be traditional with restrained detailing, including brickwork features, timber porches, and occasional dormers. Windows proportions will be varied and typically feature white-framed casements with grid patterns.

The homes will be built predominantly in red brick, with occasional render, and grey tiles on simple gabled and cross-gabled roofs.

The front boundaries will hedgerows, encouraging wildlife and preserving a sense of openness while subtly defining private space.

Ensuring the development is a natural extension of the village is about more than aesthetics; it's also about how the new and the existing link. By creating links from the new development to the existing footpath and cycle network, existing residents of Weaverham will be able to benefit from the new areas of open space, and sustainable modes of transport and healthy lifestyles for all will be supported.



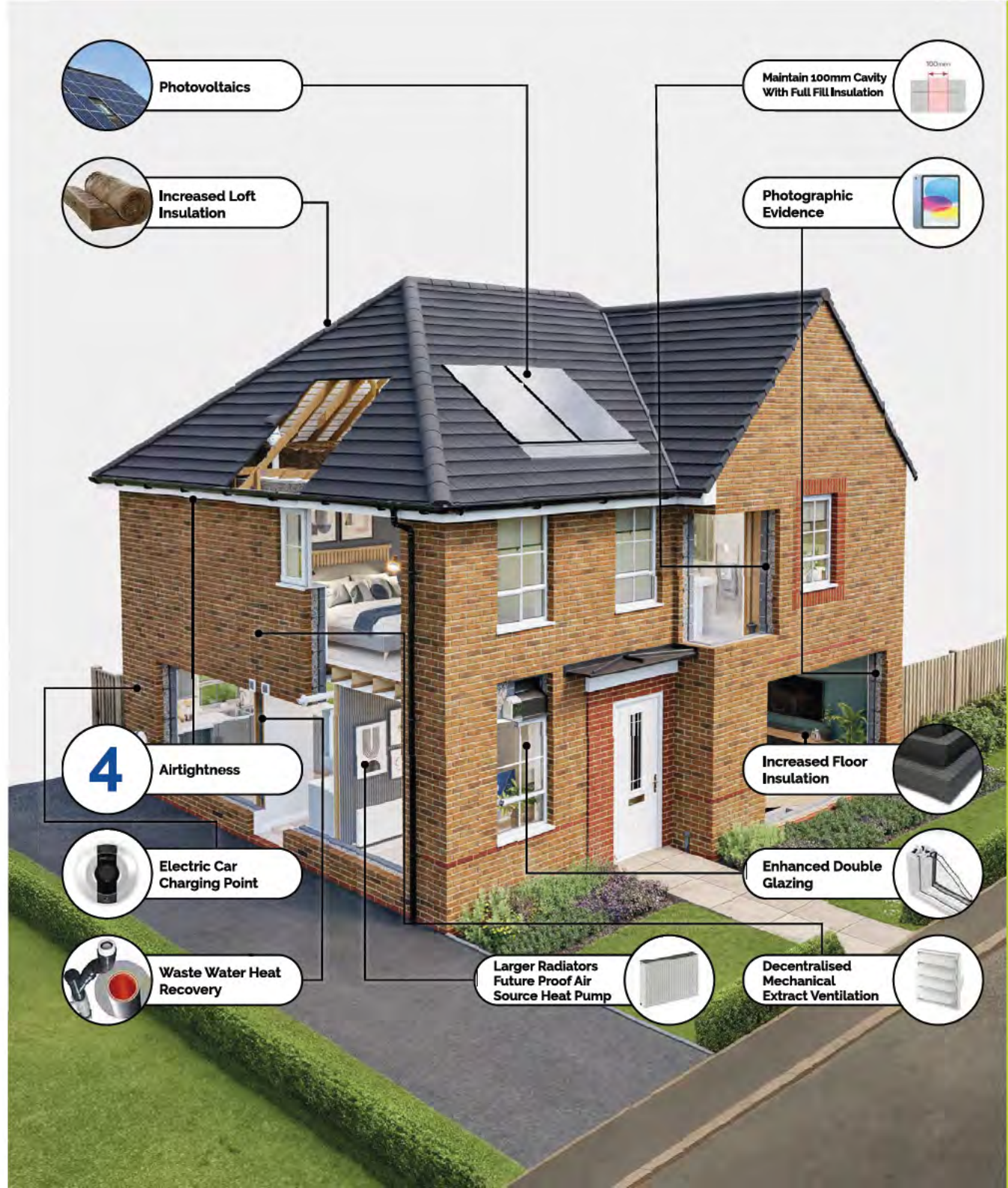
Addressing climate change and future proofing new homes

We're committed to minimising the impact of our operations and safeguarding the environment.

As with all of our developments, the proposed development at Weaverham will be resilient to climate change and will incorporate innovative features to reduce carbon emissions and support climate adaptation. This includes more efficient building, flood resilience and sustainable travel.

We also ensure the homes we build are energy efficient to help reduce running costs.

*Image for illustrative purposes only. The features shown indicate the potential features of a home and are not a definitive list.



The need for new homes

The Cheshire West and Chester area needs 1,928 new homes to be built each year if it is to meet local housing need. However, future supply of homes falls substantially short of this figure. To be able to meet demand, new sites need to be released for building, including carefully selected Green Belt.

With its proximity to Northwich, a strategic centre benefiting from excellent transport links and proximity to the M6 and the wider motorway network and airports, Weaverham is well placed to accommodate some of the area's housing growth needs.

There are understandable concerns about building on Green Belt, however, non-Green Belt land closer to Northwich contains large areas of flood plain around the River Weaver and its tributaries and is therefore unsuitable for development for residential use.

It is therefore with very careful consideration that we propose developing the site at Weaverham as it does not make a strong contribution to the five purposes of Green Belt as defined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which are:

1

Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

2

Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

3

Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

4

Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

5

Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

The site is not considered to make a strong contribution because development of the site would not have any significant impact on the separation distance between Weaverham and adjacent settlements, with no risk of towns merging.



Concluding comments

Our proposed development is about more than delivering new homes – it is about creating a thriving, inclusive place for everyone in Weaverham.

Alongside high-quality and affordable housing, the scheme brings forward over a third of the site as public open space, with play areas for all ages and abilities, a new skate park and BMX track, outdoor gyms, and green corridors that encourage recreation, biodiversity and wellbeing.

These spaces will provide safe, accessible and engaging environments for children, teenagers, adults and older residents alike, helping to foster community connections across generations.

By combining well-designed homes with meaningful community amenities, our vision is to enhance the fabric of Weaverham, ensuring that people can not only live here, but also play, meet, and grow together for years to come.







BARRATT
— HOMES —

Appendix C Framework Masterplan



Affordability is a real issue for first time buyers who have to move out of the village when they want to buy.

Barratt will include predominantly 2 and 3 bedroom starter homes for this demographic in our scheme. There will be between 30-45% affordable housing delivered on the scheme to meet the requirements of the community and we have strong relationships with these providers.

Green space under the pylons create a natural green corridor that provides residents with easy access to outdoor space with opportunities for 'play along the way', seating / rest areas and dog walking routes. The space will also enhance biodiversity across the scheme.



Barratt are investigating how flooding along Sandy Lane could be drained onto the site.

Main access is taken from Sandy Lane as suggested by the Council. The usual route to reach the site is from the A49 so the conservation area will generally be avoided.

Larger family homes

Trees lining key streets

Connectivity to outdoor area

Play Area

Areas for people to sit and rest

Existing Trees retained where possible

'Play along the Way'

Bungalows

Zebra Crossing

Widening footpath along Station Road

Weaverham Trust and Parish Council have identified a need for bungalows within the area. These are included in the masterplan and located to the south of the site to be within walking distance to existing and proposed services. Off road parking will also be available for existing properties off Station Road.

Potential for pedestrian enhancement - zebra crossing subject to agreement with Local Authority.

The local primary school have expressed a need for inclusive, accessible and safe play areas for children. The masterplan proposes multi-functional green spaces that will integrate a diverse range of play opportunities, including 'Play on the Way' and Natural Play areas. The design for these spaces will use Barratt's July 2025 Play Guidance principles such as neurodivergent friendly design and fostering independence. Outward facing development cells will ensure POS and play spaces are well overlooked.



Wildflower meadows with informal footpaths and varied landscaping included to enhance biodiversity and create wildlife habitats.



Extensive outdoor space with a strong public realm for people of all ages to enjoy, encouraging intergenerational interaction and socialising. These areas are located close to the bungalows so they are accessible to the aging community, to help tackle loneliness and create a sense of community.



Skate Park integrated into the masterplan as requested by the community due to the lack of facilities appealing to young people within the area.



- Character Areas / Density**
- Woodland Walk (25 DPH)
 - Green Heart (35 - 40 DPH)
 - Mere Steading (30 - 35 DPH)
 - Rural Edge (25 - 30 DPH)
 - Southern Gate (30 - 35 DPH)

Appendix D Lichfield Research Paper

Research Paper

Cheshire West and Chester's Objectively Assessed Housing Need

**Cheshire West and Chester Regulation 18 Local Plan
Consultation**

Barratt Homes, David Wilson Homes, Redrow Homes and Taylor
Wimpey

29 August 2025

LICHFIELDS

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1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.1 Lichfields has been instructed by a Consortium of housebuilders, Barratt Homes / David Wilson Homes, Redrow Homes and Taylor Wimpey [the Consortium], to prepare a Research Paper setting out the economic and social benefits to Cheshire West and Chester [CWaC or the Council] Borough of maintaining high levels of housing growth as the Council moves forward with the CWaC Local Plan [LP].
- 1.2 Lichfields has extensive experience and knowledge of CWaC, having helped to bring forward numerous housing developments in the Borough over recent years. As such, we are well placed, having the technical expertise and local experience, to prepare this Research Paper.
- 1.3 The CWaC LP is currently in the early stages of its preparation, with the Issues and Options (Regulation 18) Consultation open until the end of August 2025. The intention of this **Research Paper is to help inform the Council's early decision making on its** overall spatial strategy, particularly with regards to the scale of housing required in the Borough to meet its overarching economic and social objectives.

The Consortium

- 1.4 We would like to state at the outset the Consortium welcomes the Council's intention to commence preparation of a new LP. The Consortium has a clear and specific interest in the preparation of the LP in the context of continued growth and housing delivery in CWaC, and the multifaceted benefits this can bring to its local residents.
- 1.5 The Consortium includes a range of housebuilders operating in the North West housing market, namely Barratt / David Wilson Homes, Redrow Homes and Taylor Wimpey. Collectively, the Consortium has delivered a significant proportion of the homes delivered in CWaC since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2015.
- 1.6 Together, they have extensive experience in delivering homes in CWaC and have worked positively with the Council over recent years to achieve these mutual goals. They are keen to continue delivering high quality housing in sustainable locations over the coming years. The Consortium is therefore eager to see a LP which is positively prepared and aspirational.

Purpose of the Research

- 1.7 **The Consortium welcomes the Council's intention to** produce a new Local Plan in line with the requirements of the Local Plan Regulations (The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012). It is vital that CWaC Borough Council seizes the opportunity to prepare a new Local Plan at this time to ensure it can respond positively to the housing and affordability crisis, plan for a higher housing requirement generated by the new standard method and respond to recent and future projected changes in the economy. It will provide an opportunity to ensure the Council continues to plan for and deliver the minimum levels of housing growth across the Borough expected by Government, and if justified, going beyond that to further the economic prospects of the Borough and life chances of its residents.

Structure of the Research Paper

- 1.8 The Research Paper is structured as follows:
- Chapter 2: Provides a review of relevant planning policy, strategic drivers and the macroeconomic context.
 - Chapter 3: Undertakes a local contextual review and an objective assessment of the Council's housing requirement to understand the implications of the new standard method figure and why it should represent a minimum housing target;
 - Chapter 4: Provides an assessment of the wider economic, health and societal benefits of new housing to understand the implications of pursuing a reduced housing target;
 - Chapter 4: Summarises our key conclusions to the Research Paper.

2.0 **Setting the Context**

- 2.1 Significant changes have occurred politically and economically over the past 12 months. This has led to knock-on effects for national planning policy and guidance, including mandated housing need requirements for each local authority area, plans for a programme of new towns, as well as an intention to implement a new style of local plan making, national development management policies, the reintroduction of regional planning through spatial development strategies and devolved decision making for elected Mayors.
- 2.2 Given the intertwined nature of local plan making and national policy, and the ongoing changes to the planning system and challenges facing the Borough from a demographic and economic perspective, the Council needs to carefully consider the preparation of their new local plan, and in particular the role that housebuilding plays.

Standard Method 3

- 2.3 The new standard method for calculating local housing need is one of the central tenets of achieving the Government's objective to deliver 1.5 million homes in the current Parliament. The new method is much more ambitious than its predecessor (targeting 372,000 homes per year, up 21% from the previous target of 305,000). The new method aims to boost housing numbers by pinning targets to existing housing stock (rather than household projections, as per the former method) and then uplifting needs, and the target, based on affordability using a 5-year average.
- 2.4 At present, the SM3 results in a local housing need figure of 1,928 dpa for Cheshire West and Chester (considerably higher than the previous SM2 demographic-based figure of 489 dpa, and also much higher than the 2015 Local Plan figure of 1,100 dpa). The starting point for assessing local housing need in Cheshire West and Chester is therefore 1,928 dpa.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.5 The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] places a particular emphasis on sustainable development, including the provision of homes and employment land, through a process of:
- 1 Supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that there is a sufficient number and range of homes to meet the needs of present and future generations;
 - 2 Fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places that reflect current and future needs.
 - 3 Reviewing employment land allocations to ensure the supply meets identified needs;
 - 4 Proactively supporting sustainable economic development to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure; and,
 - 5 Encouraging the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), with a view to promoting regeneration.

- 2.6 It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner [§7].
- 2.7 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF retains the presumption in favour of sustainable development and refers to the expectation that plans should **“meet the development needs of their area”** and **“as a minimum provide for the objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:**
- i *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area⁷; or*
 - ii *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”*
- 2.8 **Ultimately, the Council’s Local Plan will need up-**to-date and comprehensive evidence to inform its judgements about the need for land in its area, particularly in respect of housing needs and a review of Green Belt boundaries.
- 2.9 NPPF now states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as **much use as possible of previously developed or ‘brownfield’ land** [paragraph 124].
- 2.10 The NPPF also reforms longstanding Green Belt Policy. Paragraph 146 sets out that housing, commercial and other development needs can expressly justify exceptional circumstances for Green Belt release, mandating that LPAs review and, if necessary, alter Green Belt boundaries when they cannot fully meet housing or commercial requirements unless there is evidence that doing so would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

Housing Need

- 2.11 Regarding housing need, **the NPPF has reinforced the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, making explicit reference to the overall aim of meeting an area’s identified housing need, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community [§61].** It states that to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need [LHN] assessment, conducted using the standard method [SM3] [§62]:
- “To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning practice guidance. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.”*
- 2.12 Local Housing Need LHN is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as:
- “The number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning practice guidance.”*

- 2.13 Within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing (including Social Rent); families with children; looked after children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes [§63].
- 2.14 There is an increasing emphasis on the need to plan specifically for social rented properties in the latest iteration of the NPPF Paragraph 64 states that where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required, including the minimum proportion of Social Rent homes. In the Annex 2 glossary, **Social Rent is now given increased prominence and is defined separately from 'other affordable housing for rent' when discussing affordable housing.**
- 2.15 The NPPF reconfirms that strategic policy-making authorities should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area, which shows the extent to which their identified housing need (and any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas) can be met over the plan period. It goes on to state that the housing requirement may be higher than the identified housing need if it reflects growth ambitions linked to economic development or infrastructure investment:
- “The requirement may be higher than the identified housing need if, for example, it includes provision for neighbouring areas, or reflects growth ambitions linked to economic development or infrastructure investment. Within this overall requirement, strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations.”* [§69]
- 2.16 This makes it increasingly important that assessments of housing needs include robust labour supply scenarios to ensure that future housing targets and employment land needs are in alignment.
- 2.17 The NPPF also includes a new paragraph extolling the virtues of mixed tenure sites:
- “Mixed tenure sites can provide a range of benefits, including creating diverse communities and supporting timely build out rates, and local planning authorities should support their development through their policies and decisions (although this should not preclude schemes that are mainly, or entirely, for Social Rent or other affordable housing tenures from being supported). Mixed tenure sites can include a mixture of ownership and rental tenures”* [§71].
- 2.18 The NPPF goes on to say that authorities should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability [§72].

Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.19 The PPG states that the NPPF expects strategic policy-making authorities to follow the standard method in assessing local housing need. This uses a formula that incorporates a

baseline of local housing stock which is then adjusted upwards to reflect local affordability pressures to identify the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for¹.

- 2.20 The new standard method [SM3] identifies a minimum annual housing need figure and ensures that plan-making is informed by an unconstrained assessment of the number of homes needed in an area. It does not produce a housing requirement figure. It is important to note that the housing requirement may be higher than the identified housing need, and authorities should consider the merits of planning for higher growth if, for example, this would seek to reflect economic growth aspirations².
- 2.21 The minimum annual local housing need [LHN] figure calculated using SM3³ firstly sets a baseline using 0.8% of the existing housing stock (including vacant units) for the local authority area (using the most recent data). Housing stock is used because it provides a stable and predictable baseline that ensures all areas, as a minimum, are contributing a share of the national total that is proportionate to the size of their current housing market.
- 2.22 The housing stock baseline figure is then adjusted based on the affordability of the area. The affordability data used is the ratio of house price to workplace-based earnings lower quartile median, published by ONS at a local authority level. The mean average affordability over the five most recent years, for which data is available, should be used.
- 2.23 The affordability adjustment is applied to ensure that SM3 responds to price signals and is consistent with the policy objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and set at a level to ensure that minimum annual housing need starts to address the affordability of homes⁴.
- 2.24 The calculation is as follows:
- $$\text{Adjustment Factor} = ((\text{five year average affordability ratio} - 5) / 5) \times 0.95 + 1$$
- 2.25 No adjustment is applied where the ratio is 5 or below. For each 1% the ratio is above 5, the housing stock baseline should be increased by 0.95%. An authority with a ratio of 10 will have a 95% increase on its annual housing stock baseline.
- 2.26 The PPG explains that the affordability adjustment is applied to take account of past under-delivery. As SM3 identifies the minimum uplift that will be required, it is not a requirement to specifically address under-delivery separately⁵.
- 2.27 Whilst the resultant LHN figure (which can be applied to the whole plan period) should be kept under review and revised where appropriate, it may be relied upon for plan making for a period of 2 years from the time that the plan is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.
- 2.28 Whilst stressing that the standard method should be used to assess housing needs, the PPG notes that there are some specific circumstances in which an alternative approach could be justified. This is particularly relevant when considering economic aspirations of individual local authority areas or indeed sub-regions such as Cheshire and Warrington which take a

¹ 2a-002-20241212

² 2a-040-20241212

³ 2a-004-20241212

⁴ 2a-006-20241212

⁵ 2a-011-20241212

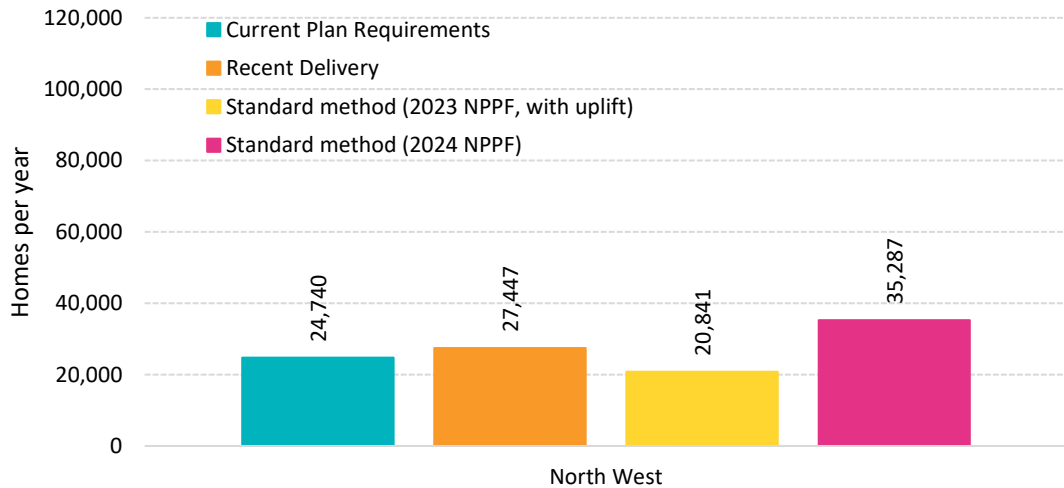
strategic approach to economic development via The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership [LEP].

Current Approach to Determining Housing Needs

- 2.29 For many years, UK governments have stressed the need to increase housing delivery to address the housing and affordability crisis, which is characterised by a shortage in new housing leading to ever-increasing housing costs. This imbalance between housing supply and demand has resulted in average house prices in England rising from £156,496 in July 2005 to £290,956 in July 2025 – a c.86% increase in 20 years which now represents around 8 times the average workplace-based salary. As a consequence, many homes are unaffordable for first time buyers and housing costs now consume a disproportionately large amount of a family's income, which in turn impacts on quality of life for many.
- 2.30 As a result of this crisis many people are living in overcrowded homes or homes unsuited to their specific needs, and younger people have little option but to live with their parents/guardians or extended family until they are much older as they are unable to save for a deposit to buy their own home whilst paying high rental costs. The average age of first time buyers has grown to approximately 33 years. A large number of people that are unable to meet their housing aspirations look to move out of particular market areas to where housing is more affordable which has many knock-on effects for local economic conditions and availability of community infrastructure.
- 2.31 The ability to meet housing aspirations is often out of reach of young people where owning a home is unachievable and renting is often insecure and expensive, particularly in places where the good jobs are most plentiful. This results in difficulties within the labour market where businesses find it more difficult to recruit and retain staff.
- 2.32 This results in unsustainable commuting patterns, with commuting distances increasing and challenges for some areas seeking economic growth but facing challenges accessing a labour force which can help realise these economic aspirations.
- 2.33 The Labour Government has ambitions to deliver 300,000 new homes a year in England, equating to 1.5 million homes in five years. These manifesto ambitions have led to changes in national planning and housing policy, as well as changes to the Standard Method for calculating housing needs.
- 2.34 The introduction of a standard method for assessing housing needs for planning purposes in 2018 was intended to shift time, resources and debate at local plan examination away from the 'numbers' question and towards the 'how' and 'where' of building new homes. This method - which equated to a figure of around 266,000 per annum when launched - was based on the 2014-based Household Projections plus an uplift for affordability, subject to a 'cap'.
- 2.35 In August 2020, the Government consulted on a proposed new Standard Method, which had a greater focus on affordability, the results of which were to boost the national figure to 337,000, with most of the increases in the areas where the gap between house prices and incomes was greatest. This unleashed a political and media storm that led to the proposal being dubbed 'the mutant algorithm', and the Government indicated that it would be reviewing its draft proposals. On 16th December 2020, the Government launched its solution: revert back to the method it introduced in 2018, but with a modification to top up the number in the 20 largest cities and urban areas by 35%, reflecting Government objectives to drive housing into existing urban areas and encourage brownfield development.

2.36 Fast forward to December 2024 and a new Labour Government, the scale of housing need has increased again via SM3 which now calculates a need for over 370,000 new homes per year. The national completion data for England shows just 153,900 homes were delivered in 2024, whilst starts had fallen to 77,780 – the lowest figure since 2009 in the aftermath of the financial crash. The scale of the challenge is clear to see nationally, and indeed in the North West where annual housing need is now in excess of 35,000 per annum, well in excess of the adopted local plan requirements or levels of recent delivery.

Figure 2.1 North West: Local Plan requirements, recent delivery and SM2/SM3 needs

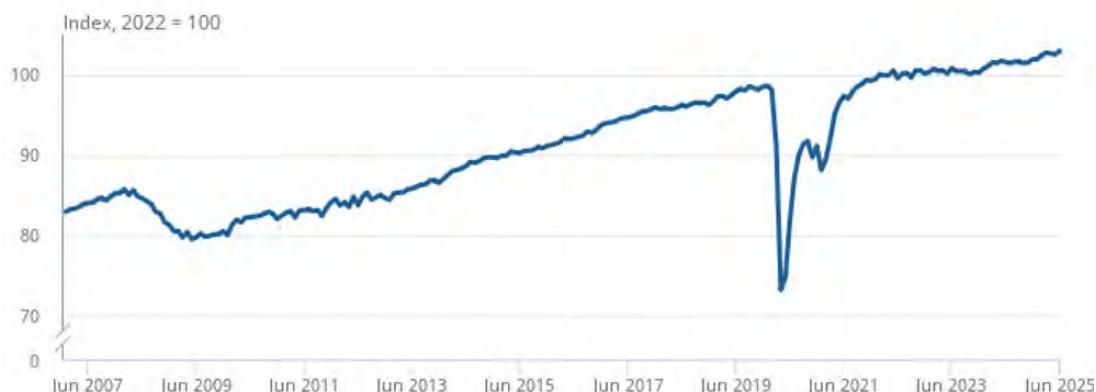


Source: Lichfields analysis

Current Macro-economic Outlook

- 2.37 Macro-economic trends are a critical influence on the future performance of Cheshire West and Chester's economy and the resulting need for new housing to support the growth of the labour market.
- 2.38 The outbreak of Covid-19 and resulting pandemic developed rapidly with far reaching impacts on the economy and businesses across the country. The series of lockdown measures led to unprecedented shutdowns of large parts of the economy simultaneously, with effects being transmitted rapidly across all sectors.

Figure 2.2 GDP Monthly Index, Jan 2007 – June 2025



Source: ONS

- 2.39 The latest official figures from the Office for National Statistics [ONS] show that UK monthly real Gross Domestic Product [GDP] grew by 0.4% in June 2025, following falls of 0.1% in both April and May 2025. Real GDP is estimated to have grown by 0.3% in the three months to June 2025 compared with the three months to March 2025.
- 2.40 All three main sectors grew in June 2025. Services output was the largest contributor to growth in monthly GDP, increasing by 0.3%, whilst production and construction output increased by 0.7% and 0.3% respectively.
- 2.41 This means that GDP is now 4.3% above its pre- Covid-19 peak (January 2020). However, whilst services and construction are 6.3% and 8.2% above their pre-pandemic levels respectively, production is 12.1% below.
- 2.42 **The Office for Budget Responsibility’s [OBR’s] latest Economic and Fiscal Outlook [EFO]** (March 2025) reports that the economic outlook has recently become more uncertain, with output stagnating in the second half of 2024 and business and consumer confidence trending lower, alongside rising energy prices and greater geopolitical risk. The OBR reports it now expects real GDP growth of 1.0% in 2025 – half the 2.0% growth predicted in its October 2024 forecast, before recovering to around 1.75% per year over the rest of the decade.

Figure 2.3 Real GDP growth and productivity trend level



Source: OBR (2025): Economic and Fiscal Outlook (March 2025) – Chart 1.1

2.43 These forecasts bake-in government policy’s effect on the housing market, with the OBR forecasting net additions to rise from a 12-year low in 2025/26 to reach 305,000 a year by the end of the decade, adding around 0.5% to the housing stock by 2029/30 and adding around 0.2% to economic output.

Wider Role of Housing in the Economy

2.44 Research has focused on the wider role that new housing can play in supporting economic growth, alongside the need to ensure greater value for money in public expenditure terms. The role of housing in the economy is complex, however; new housing delivery has the potential to generate a range of improved economic outcomes.

2.45 Housebuilding is a relatively labour-intensive activity and generates a high number of jobs per £1 of investment made. This drives up productivity, support existing jobs and make new job creation more likely. Strong local supply chains for materials also mean a far greater share of spending remains in the UK, rather than being channelled into imports as with many other sectors.

2.46 The economic contribution of new housing development has been acknowledged by Government announcements and policy documents, including the Planning White Paper: Planning for the Future⁶, ‘Fixing our broken housing market’ Housing White Paper⁷ and within the updated National Planning Policy Framework⁸. Housebuilding is therefore recognised in national policy as having a major role in stimulating economic growth and ensuring the long-term competitiveness of the UK economy.

2.47 Recent Lichfields research on behalf of the Home Builders Federation [HBF] assessed the economic footprint of the national housebuilding industry and quantified the economic contribution to the national economy⁹. This indicated that in 2023 c.240,000 new homes were built across the UK, generating the following economic impacts:

- £10.5 billion capital investment and expenditure on land and buildings for housing;
- £16.6 billion annual expenditure on supplies, with 90% retained in the UK;

⁶ MHCLG (August 2020): *White Paper: Planning for the Future*

⁷ MHCLG (2017): *Housing White Paper: ‘Fixing our broken housing market’*

⁸ UK Government (2024): *National Planning Policy Framework*

⁹ HBF (2024): *The Economic Footprint of House Building in England and Wales*

- Supporting nearly 834,000 direct and indirect construction jobs;
- 271,000 people directly employed in the sector – 33% of the construction industry;
- 6,000 apprentices, 900 graduates and 3,300 other trainees supported;
- £6.4bn in tax raised, and £1.5bn of new infrastructure and public facilities funded; and
- Generating £53.3 billion of economic output.

2.48 In its latest Economic Outlook (March 2025)¹⁰ the Office for Budget Responsibility [OBR] estimates that net additions to the housing stock will increase to 305,000 per year by the **end of the decade, with around 170,000 additions due to the Government's reforms to the NPPF**. The OBR goes on to predict that this will add 0.2% to the level of potential economic output by 2029/30 thanks to a boost in the productivity of residential construction and an increased flow of housing services, rising to 0.5% impact by 2034/35 when factoring in further agglomeration and labour mobility effects.

2.49 This indicates that the house building industry has an important role to play in stimulating economic growth and supporting significant levels of employment. The stark drop off in completions during 2024 will inherently mean greatly reduced economic contributions of the industry during that period.

Demographic Challenges

2.50 CWaC has the fourth largest resident population in the North West at 371,652 in 2019, having risen by 35,215 or 10.5% in the decade since 2014. In contrast, the populations of the North West and England & Wales have grown by 7.6% and 8.4% respectively over the same period¹¹.

2.51 **The Borough's working age population (16-64)** increased by 18,037 or 8.6% over this period, compared to an increase of 6.3% within the North West and 7.1% across England and Wales. Meanwhile, the number of retirement age residents (aged 65+) in the Borough has risen by 12,800 people or 19.0% since 2014, compared to 15.4% regionally and 13.9% nationally.

2.52 Population change in the past decade has seen the share of retirement-age residents increase from 20.1% in 2014 to 21.6% in 2024, whilst the share of working-age residents has fallen from 62.5% to 61.4%¹².

2.53 The latest 2022-based Sub-National Population Projections [SNPP] indicate that between 2025 and 2043 (the final year of the forecasts) the population of CWaC is projected to increase by 30,750 people or 8.6%; a level of growth much higher than projected across England at 6.3% and the North West's 5.4%. This is also the highest projected population growth of any of the neighbouring authorities, higher than Cheshire East's 6.4% and significantly above the projected growth in Halton (4.2%), Warrington (2.7%) and Wirral (2.7%) over the same time period, respectively.

2.54 Figure 2.4 shows the extent of overall projected population growth and growth by age cohort. It shows that:

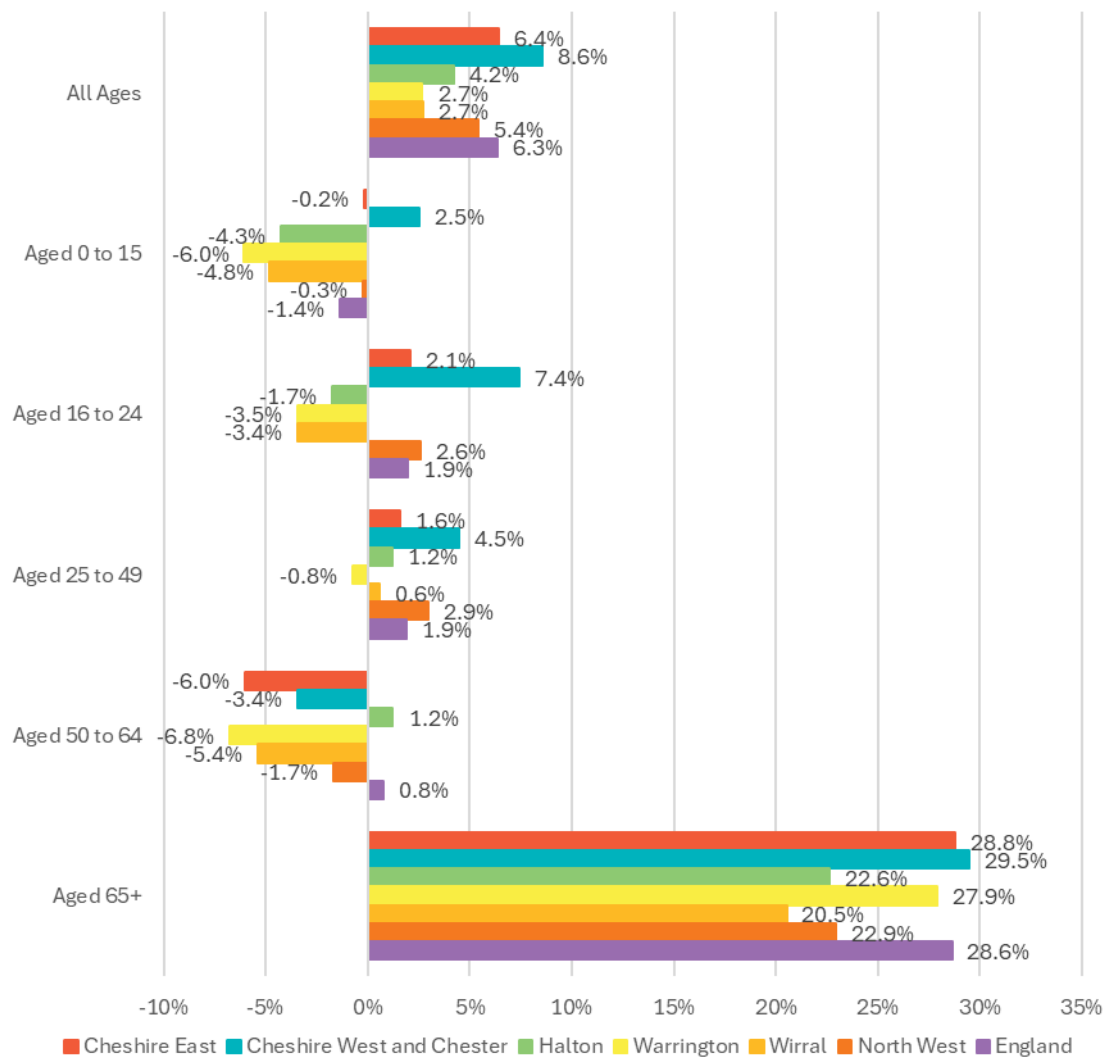
¹⁰ OBR Economic and Fiscal Outlook March 2025

¹¹ ONS (2025): Mid-Year Population Estimates 2024

¹² Ibid

- 1 CWaC is expected to experience a rise in 0-15 year olds of 2.5%, against an expected decline in this cohort regionally (-0.3%), nationally (-1.4%) and within the neighbouring authorities (-0.2% to -6.0%);
- 2 The Borough is similarly expected to see a greater increase in the population aged 16 to 24 and 25 to 49 than the comparator areas, with anticipated growth in these cohorts of 7.4% and 4.5% respectively;
- 3 The population aged 50 to 64 is expected to decline by 3.4%, with declines also projected in the neighbouring authorities and the North West despite a slight increase of 0.8% projected nationally;
- 4 The population aged 65+ is expected to grow by 29.5% or 24,554 people, the highest level of projected growth across the neighbouring authorities and higher than both the regional and national increases of 22.9% and 28.6% respectively; and
- 5 **This increase will see the share of the Borough's residents aged 65 and over increase from 23.2% in 2025 to 27.7% in 2043, whilst the working age population will decrease from 58.9% of the population to 55.5%.**

Figure 2.4 Population Projection by Age Band 2025 - 2043

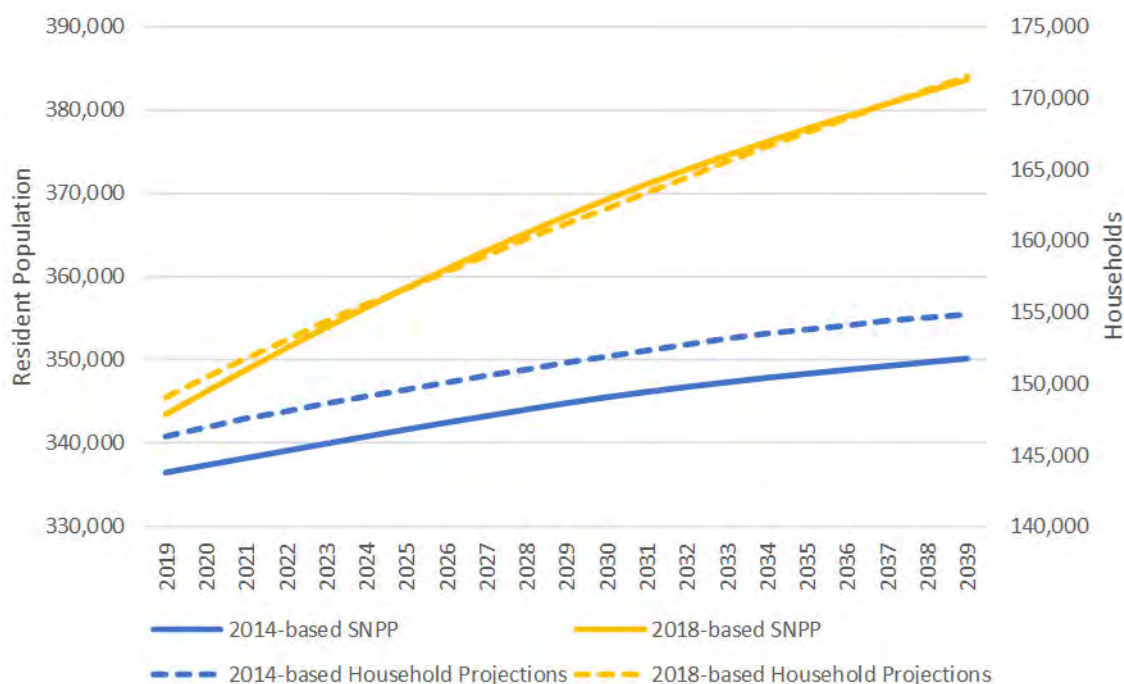


Source: ONS (2024): 2022-Based SNPP

2.55 Figure 2.5 demonstrates the issues faced by CWaC from the latest population projections. The former 2014-based SNPP (and the equivalent SNHP) underpinned the Government's SM2 calculations previous to the introduction of the new stock-based SM3 in December 2024. The Government chose not to revert to the more up to date 2018-based SNPP under the previous Standard Method because this would not be "consistent with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes."¹³ This may have been the case nationally, where the 2018-based projections are generally significantly lower than the 2014-based SNPP/SNHP, but it is certainly not the case in CWaC.

2.56 The net population growth for CWaC in the 2014-based SNPP is just 13,678 between 2019 and 2039 (the end of the forecasts), with the 2018-based projections almost three times higher with a net growth of 40,198 over the same period. This translates across into the household projections, with the net growth projected in the 2018-based SNHP, of 22,534, significantly higher than the previous 2014-based SNHP (+8,540) over the same time period. This is partly due to the very high levels of housing growth (and associated net in-migration) that have taken place in CWaC since 2014.

Figure 2.5 CWaC's Population Projection 2019 - 2039



Source: ONS (2020): 2018-Based SNPP and SNHP / 2014-based SNPP and SNHP

2.57 The key points to glean from this assessment for CWaC's emerging Local Plan are as follows:

- 1 Firstly, CWaC's population will grow at a faster rate than any of its neighbouring authorities as well as relative to the wider regional and national projected growth rates. This presents a significant economic opportunity for the Borough and a need to ensure that sufficient housing is provided so that this growth potential is not constrained;
- 2 The Borough is likely to see an increased number of families with children and will need to plan accordingly for larger housing.

¹³ PPG Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 2a-005-20190220

- 3 Whilst the ageing population is an issue to be faced by all areas, the scale of the issue within CWaC is particularly acute. This will increase the share of the Borough's population aged 65+ from 23.7% in 2025 to 27.7% by 2043.
- 4 There is set to be heightened demand for housing across all sizes and tenures, with the only age groups forecast to decline in overall numbers being 0-9 year olds (albeit only a marginal fall) and 50-64 year olds. This will necessitate the need to provide for a complex and varied housing market for those looking to move but remain within CWaC.

Labour Market

- 2.58 The Borough performs well across a range of labour market indicators, with high relative levels of economic activity¹⁴ and low unemployment, highlighting the strong resilience of the local economy and good job security. The local job market is diverse, with key international employers such as MBNA, Encirc, Vauxhall Motors and many others helping to support high levels of employment in highly-paid sectors such as finance, scientific, advanced manufacturing and professional roles.
- 2.59 The Borough is also a desirable place to live for workers in well-paid jobs in other areas, as evident in the difference between resident and workplace-based earnings. Resident-based median annual earnings within the Borough stood at £39,201, considerably higher than the North West and England and Wales earnings of £35,298 and £37,474 respectively¹⁵. This indicates that the Borough is a desirable location for living, with a high share of residents commuting to work in other areas such as Manchester, or in some cases over the border into North Wales where Airbus employs a significant workforce.
- 2.60 This presents an opportunity in the future as revised working patterns post-pandemic stabilise, with a shift away from daily commuting to a hybrid approach of home working and some days in the workplace. This change is driving requirements for larger properties with an extra bedroom capable of being converted into a home office. Overall, the labour market indicators highlight a need for a diverse housing offer that maintains recent strong levels of housebuilding to capitalise on the already strong economic foundations as the Borough navigates its demographic changes, hybrid working and economic recovery.

Housing Market

- 2.61 Cheshire West and Chester has not escaped the symptoms of the housing market crisis with rising house prices and worsening affordability ratios that make it increasingly likely that younger residents have to move out of the Borough to find suitable housing choices.
- 2.62 House prices have increased by around 86% in CWaC over the last 20 years, and although this rate of change is slightly lower than the increases experienced in England and across the North West, the median house price is now £245,000, well above the regional average of £206,000.

¹⁴ According to the ONS Annual population Survey (2025), in the year to March 2025 there were 206,400 economically active (in or seeking employment) residents between the age of 16-64 within Cheshire West and Chester, accounting for 83.0% of 16-64 year olds in the Borough. This is a greater share than across the North West (76.7%) and England and Wales (78.7%).

¹⁵ ONS (2021): Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2024)

Figure 2.6 Median Price Paid Comparison

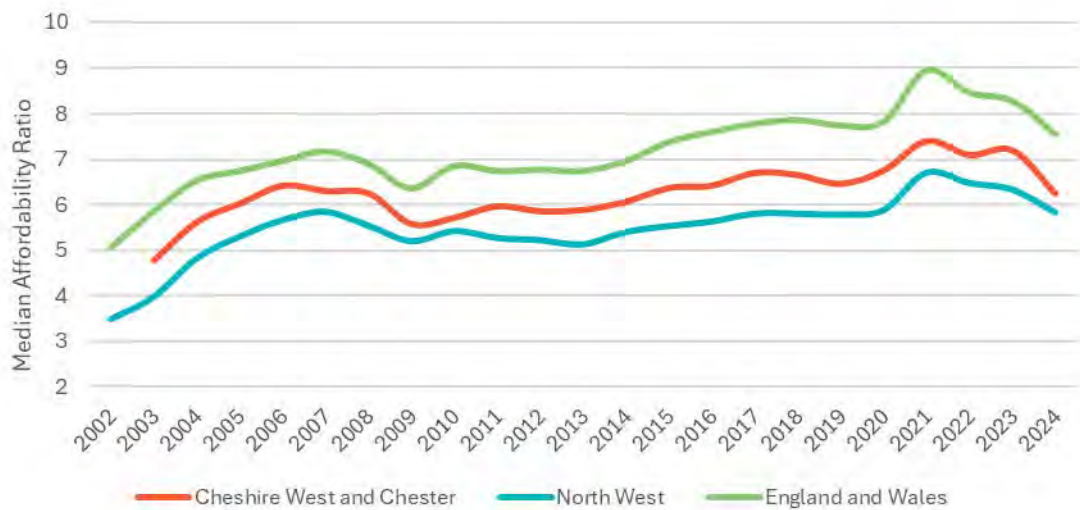


Source: ONS (2025): House price to residence-based earnings ratio

2.63

This house price increase has taken place alongside housing becoming increasingly unaffordable for many, as demonstrated by a medium workplace-based affordability ratio which has risen by 0.62 in CWaC over the past 20 years to reach 6.25 in 2024. This is higher than the 5.84 ratio across the North West as a whole.

Figure 2.7 Residence-Based Median Affordability Ratio



Source: ONS (2025): House price to residence-based earnings ratio

3.0 **Assessing Local Housing Need**

Starting Point – Standard Methodology

3.1 The new standard method for calculating local housing need is one of the central tenets of achieving the Government's objective to deliver 1.5 million homes in the current Parliament. The new method is much more ambitious than its predecessor (targeting 372,000 homes per year, up 21% from the previous target of 305,000). The new method aims to boost housing numbers by pinning targets to existing housing stock (rather than household projections, as per the former method) and then uplifting needs, and the target, based on affordability (using a 5-year average). It no longer includes a 35% uplift for urban areas **and also does away with the 'cap'**.

3.2 At present, the SM3 results in a local housing need figure of 1,928 dpa for Cheshire West and Chester (considerably higher than the previous SM2 demographic-based figure of 489 dpa, and also much higher than the 2015 Local Plan figure of 1,100 dpa). The SM3 housing need figure has been generated as follows:

- **Cheshire West and Chester's** housing stock was 166,601 in 2024. The baseline is calculated as 0.8% of stock, therefore the housing stock baseline figure is 1,333 per year.
- The affordability uplift equates to 44.65%, based on a 5-year average median workplace-based affordability ratio of 7.35 between 2020 and 2024, calculated as follows:
 - (i) Average Median local workplace-based affordability ratio¹⁶ (2020-2024) = 7.35
 - (ii) deduct 5 = 2.35
 - (iii) divide by 5 = 0.47
 - (iv) multiply by 0.95 = 0.4465 (or 44.65%).

3.3 Applying the 44.65% uplift to the stock baseline figure of 1,333 per annum equates to 1,928 dpa.

3.4 The starting point for assessing local housing need in Cheshire West and Chester is therefore 1,928 dpa.

Consideration of a different figure to the LHN generated by the Standard Method

3.5 The NPPF is clear that to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by an LHN assessment, conducted using the standard method in the PPG. **Although the previous NPPF text suggested that 'exceptional circumstances'** could justify an alternative approach which also reflected current and future demographic trends and market signals, this has now been removed from the NPPF.

3.6 Instead, alongside meeting any additional needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas over the plan period, the requirement **could be increased if it** "*reflects growth ambitions linked to economic development or infrastructure investment*" [paragraph 69].

3.7 Otherwise, an alternative approach may have to be used in the PPG only:

¹⁶ ONS (2025): Ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings by local authority district, England and Wales, 1997 to 2024

“Where strategic policy-making authorities do not align with local authority boundaries (either individually or in combination), or the data required for the model are not available such as in National Parks and the Broads Authority, or local authority areas where the samples are too small”¹⁷.

3.8 This is not the case for Cheshire West and Chester.

3.9 The PPG states that calculating housing need is a separate process from establishing a housing requirement figure, which factors in policy considerations and constraints¹⁸.

3.10 However, the latest version of the NPPF is quite clear that when planning for housing and employment land, the approach should be an integrated one:

“Planning policies should (inter alia):

c) seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment” [paragraph 86d]

3.11 This is re-iterated later in the document:

“To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should (inter alia):

e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.” [paragraph 98e]

3.12 The remainder of this paper addresses these elements to assess whether the 1,928 dpa **figure adequately supports the Council’s** growth ambitions linked to economic development and whether this could justify uplifting the LHN figure generated by the standard method, as well as exploring the potential demographic, socioeconomic and housing market implications of a reduced housing requirement.

Demographic-led Needs

Household Projections

3.13 As set out above, the 2018-based projections have resulted in considerable upward revisions compared to the 2014-based projections.

3.14 Between 2025 and 2039 (when the 2014-based projections end), the 2014-based projections suggested an increase of 5,254 households or 375 per year, compared with a projected increase of 14,839 households or 1,060 per year in the 2018-based projections. This is driven by a combination of significantly higher population growth, change in age-cohorts and changes in household formation.

¹⁷ PPG: 2a-014-20241212

¹⁸“When preparing strategic policies, it may be concluded that insufficient sites / broad locations have been identified to meet objectively assessed needs, including the identified local housing need. In the first instance, strategic policy-making authorities will need to revisit their assessment...If insufficient land remains, then it will be necessary to investigate how this shortfall can best be planned for. If there is clear evidence that strategic policies cannot meet the needs of the area, factoring in the constraints, it will be important to establish how needs might be met in adjoining areas through the process of preparing statements of common ground, and in accordance with the duty to cooperate. If following this, needs cannot be met then the plan-making authority will have to demonstrate the reasons why as part of the plan examination”. PPG ID: 3-025-20190722

3.15 Figure 3.1 highlights the impact that net housing completions have had on household growth projections in CWaC, and particularly the stark difference between the 2014 and 2018-based projections.

Figure 3.1 Household growth projections and net completions for CWaC Borough

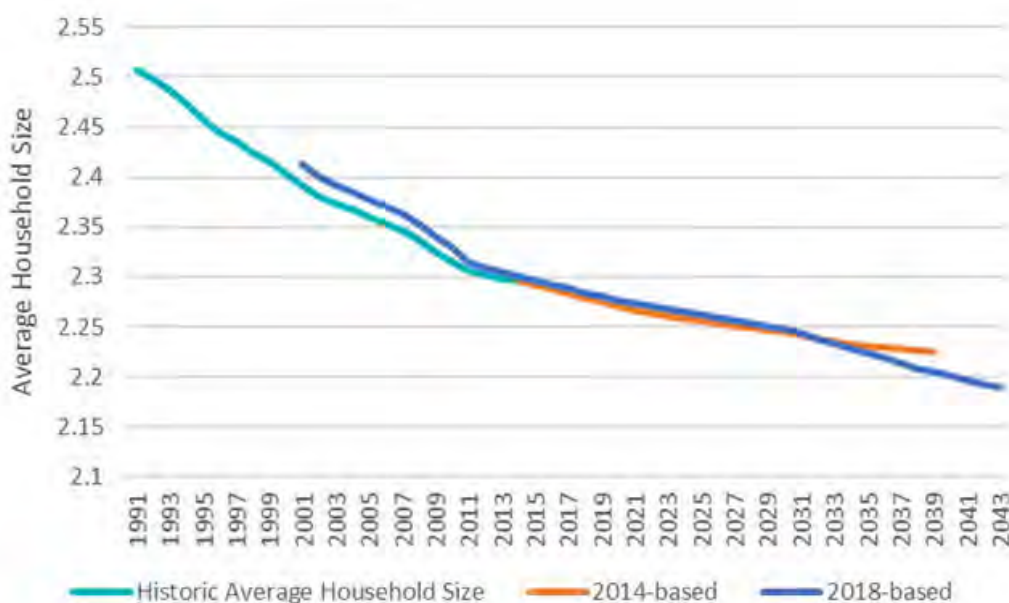


Source: CLG 2014/ONS 2018 Household Projections/MHCLG Table 122

Household Formation

3.16 Figure 3.1 shows how CWaC's average household size has declined historically, and how the most recent Government projections (2018-based) and the 2014-based household projections project this longstanding trend to continue. It highlights that there has been a steady decline in average household size, with the 2018-based projections showing a continuing decline in average household size.

Figure 3.2 Average household size comparison for CWaC Borough



Source: MHCLG/ONS Household Projections

3.17 Given there are historically strong levels of housebuilding in the Borough (particularly during 2017-2020) which increased the level of inward migration to CWaC, well above levels that were envisaged by the 2014-based SNPP, there is a very strong argument that without returning house building to these levels, and indeed going beyond those levels to the 1,928 dpa suggested by SM3, there is every likelihood that the Borough will continue to become increasingly unaffordable for its own residents to live in. In tandem, we will see a pronounced ageing of the overall population and concurrent reduction in the available labour force which could lead to increased levels of unsustainable in-commuting.

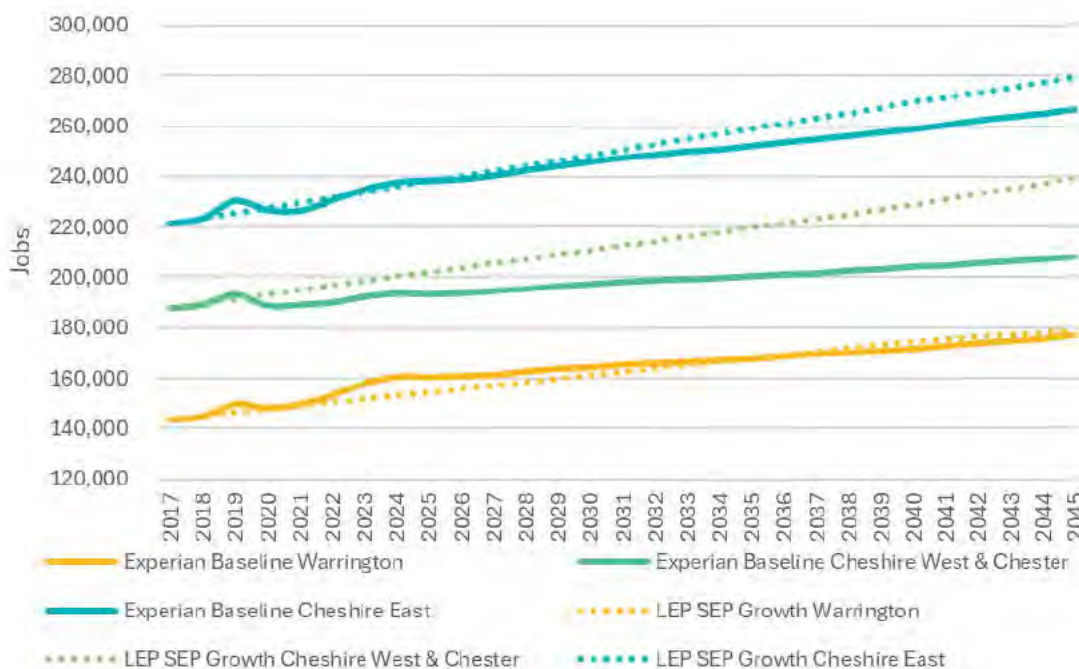
Economic Growth Strategies / Strategic Infrastructure Improvements

3.18 The NPPF at paragraph 86d states that planning policies should “*seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment*”. This retains the link between integrating economic growth and housing need. There is a clear risk that where the labour force supply is less than the projected job growth, this could result in unsustainable commuting patterns and reduce the resilience of local businesses, resulting in a barrier to investment.

3.19 Ensuring a sufficient supply of homes within easy access of employment opportunities represents a central facet of an efficiently functioning economy and can help to minimise housing market pressures and unsustainable levels of commuting (and by association, congestion and carbon emissions). If the objective of employment growth is to be realised, then it will generally need to be supported by an adequate supply of suitable housing. The challenge of meeting employment needs is clearly given great importance, and the NPPF highlights this by stating that “*significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity*” [para 85].

- 3.20 In this context, it is an important part of responding to both the NPPF and the PPG that CWaC's new local plan should consider the extent to which the SM3 figure of 1,928 dpa is consistent with the economic success of the Borough and the wider LEP area.
- 3.21 The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership [LEP] celebrates the fact that the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region is the best performing economy in the North of England and one of the most successful and fastest-growing economies in the country.
- 3.22 The LEP's Strategic Economic Plan [SEP] sets out the growth ambitions for the sub-region, including:
- 1 growing the economy to at least £50m of GVA per annum;
 - 2 boosting productivity per resident to 20% above the UK average; building economic resilience;
 - 3 building vibrant town centres; and
 - 4 creating a balanced housing market.
- 3.23 At the forefront of the LEP's aims is a clear ambition to significantly strengthen what is an already well functioning and successful economic sub-region. This will be supported by the potential opportunities arising from Northern Powerhouse Rail, or the HyNet North West hydrogen and carbon capture storage project, for example, which will help transform the North West region into the world's first low carbon industrial cluster and support 75,000 jobs across the country by 2035.
- 3.24 As set out in the SEP, housing is going to be a key component which underpins these economic growth aspirations. It is critical that the right numbers, type and quality of housing in the right locations and at affordable price points are provided in order to ensure **CWaC's future prosperity. Delivering a functioning and balanced housing market in CWaC** is vital to create the conditions to support economic growth in the sub-region.
- 3.25 The SEP includes an aspiration to deliver 120,000 net additional jobs across CWaC, Cheshire East and Warrington by 2040. Although there is no target specifically set for CWaC, there is an expected jobs growth for Warrington and if it is assumed the balance of jobs between **CWaC and Cheshire East remains as it is currently, CWaC's economy would** need to grow by c.40,766 jobs over the period 2024 to 2040 to align with this aspiration.
- 3.26 This economic scenario is considered alongside a more pessimistic Experian economic forecast which anticipates a growth of 10,500 jobs over the period 2024 to 2040. This is a policy-off economic forecast which is considered modest in the context of past trends in CWaC where jobs growth increased by 13,200 in the decade between 2014 and 2024.
- 3.27 Figure 3.3 plots the Experian baseline job growth forecast and the trajectory each member of the LEP needs to aim for in order to hit the LEP SEP target by 2040. It shows that Warrington has actually overshot the SEP growth trajectory since 2017, adding 16,900 jobs in this period, with 14,100 left to add by 2040 for its target to be reached. Cheshire East has also out performed the growth trajectory to 2024, adding 16,400 jobs to 2024 against a target of 14,680.
- 3.28 On the other hand, CWaC is lagging behind its neighbours, adding only 5,800 jobs between 2017 and 2024 against a target for this period of around 12,400, meaning that the Borough needs to add a further c.34,970 jobs before 2040 if its fair share contribution of meeting the LEP SEP target is to be achieved.

Figure 3.3 Experian baseline and LEP SEP job growth



Source: Experian (June 2025), LEP SEP (2017)

3.29 A significant number of new homes would therefore need to be delivered in CWaC in order to support the LEP’s economic ambition and provide enough workers to fill the new jobs created by projects such as the Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone – this has the potential to attract in the order of 20,000 jobs and 500 businesses to Cheshire and Warrington through a significantly enhanced profile; attractive business incentives and the ability to retain and reinvest new business rate revenue. In CWaC, this includes sites at Ellesmere Port, Thornton Science Park and Protos.

Previous levels of housing delivery

3.30 Whilst CWaC is certainly not immune from the national housing crisis, in recent years the Borough has performed well in terms of housing delivery. Since the adoption of its Local Plan in January 2015, the availability of a large volume of allocated housing sites in the pipeline has helped to boost housing development, with almost 17,000 homes constructed over the past 10 years against a target of 11,000. This highlights the strength of the local market and the demand for new homes in CWaC, and the ability for the market to deliver them via a plan-led approach to strategic planning.

Table 3.1 Net Additional Dwellings in CWaC 2014/5 – 2023/24

	Net Additional Dwellings	Local Plan Target	Difference
2014/15	1,481	1,100	+381
2015/16	1,679	1,100	+579
2016/17	1,930	1,100	+830
2017/18	2,456	1,100	+1,356

2018/19	2,064	1,100	+964
2019/20	1,759	1,100	+659
2020/21	1,245	1,100	+145
2021/22	1,519	1,100	+419
2022/23	1,355	1,100	+255
2023/24	1,370	1,100	+270
Total	16,857	11,000	+5,857

Source: MHCLG (2024): Live tables on housing supply: net additional dwellings Table 122

3.31 Similarly, the latest Housing Delivery Test results were published in December 2024 and are replicated in Table 2.2 below. It highlights that a greater number of homes have been delivered in CWaC compared to that identified by the requirements; by c. 1,418 homes over the identified requirement (based on the lower household projections rather than the Local Plan target given the age of the Plan). This results in a HDT measurement of 275% for 2023 in CWaC.

Table 3.2 CWaC Housing Delivery Test 2023 Results

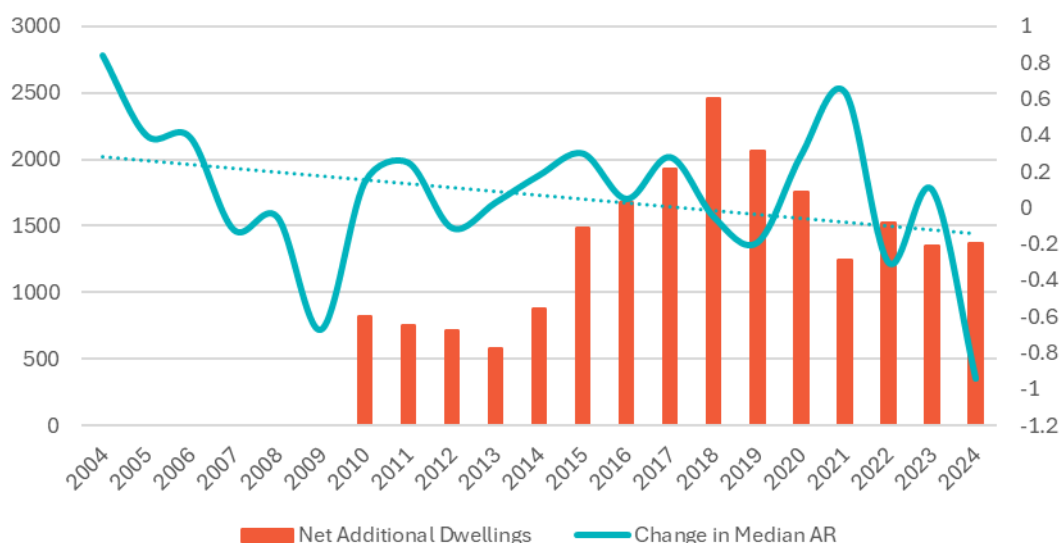
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of homes required	389	579	560
Number of homes delivered	1281	1530	1399
Housing Delivery Test Measurements	+892	+951	+839

Source: MHCLG (December 2024): Housing Delivery Test 2023 Measurement

3.32 Interestingly, there seems to be some **evidence that the high level of housing delivery in CWaC since 2015 is starting to slow down the growth in house prices and affordability ratios**. As can be seen in Figure 3.4, the annual change in the affordability ratio has been on a downward trend, with the biggest falls coming in the years following the peak of CWaC's recent delivery of 2,456 dpa in 2017/18. Indeed, in 2024 the affordability ratio had fallen back to 6.25, which is lower than even the years preceding the 2008 financial crisis.

3.33 Although the situation is clearly very complex, it is unlikely to be a complete coincidence that CWaC's affordability ratio fell by 0.12 since 2015, whilst neighbouring authorities' ratios have worsened considerably – Warrington's increased by 0.61 and Cheshire East's by 0.57 respectively.

Figure 3.4 Housing Delivery and Affordability



Source: MHCLG (2025) Table 122/ ONS (2025): House price to residence-based earnings ratio

Updated Assessment of Local Housing Need

3.34 In order to understand the level of future housing which would support the future growth aspirations of CWaC, Lichfields has carried out an independent assessment of the LHN for CWaC using the most recently available data, including the 2022-based SNPP, 2018-based SNHP and job growth projections from Experian (June 2025). Given 2022-based household projections are not yet available, all scenarios use assumptions around household headship rates and persons who do not live in households taken from the 2018-based SNHP which have been updated to reflect the 2021 Census.

3.35 Lichfields has modelled these scenarios and considered future housing need over the period **2024 to 2042, to align with the likely plan period of CWaC's emerging Local Plan. The scenarios modelled include:**

- Demographic-led:
 - A: 2022-based SNPP Demographic Baseline
 - B: Mid-Year Estimates [MYEs]– as above but utilising the most up-to-date MYE data for 2023
- Jobs-led:
 - C: Experian forecast from June 2025
 - D: LEP/SEP economic growth ambition
- Housing-led:
 - E: SM3 (1,928 dpa)
 - F: Adopted Local Plan target (1,100 dpa)
 - G: Past delivery since Local Plan adoption (1,686 dpa)

3.36 A summary of the scenarios is shown in Table 3.3. All of the scenarios modelled show an increase in population, ranging from 20,931 under the Local Plan target scenario, to 59,826 under the Economic Growth scenario.

Table 3.3 Summary of Modelling Scenarios

	A: SNPP	B: MYE	C: Experian Baseline	D: Econ Growth	E: SM3	F: Local Plan	G: Past Delivery
Population 2024	369,819	368,900	371,918	368,562	368,900	368,900	368,900
Population 2042	414,295	413,470	393,279	428,388	419,661	389,831	410,945
Difference	44,477	44,570	21,361	59,826	50,761	20,931	42,046
p.a	2,471	2,476	1,187	3,324	2,820	1,163	2,336
Households 2024	162,113	161,473	162,538	161,354	161,473	161,473	161,473
Households 2042	193,030	192,338	182,681	199,320	195,220	180,727	190,984
Difference	30,917	30,865	20,143	37,966	33,747	19,254	29,511
p.a	1,718	1,715	1,119	2,109	1,875	1,070	1,640
Homes 2024	166,708	166,050	167,146	165,928	166,050	166,050	166,050
Homes 2042	198,502	197,791	187,859	204,970	200,754	185,850	196,398
Difference	31,794	31,740	20,714	39,043	34,704	19,800	30,348
p.a	1,766	1,763	1,151	2,169	1,928	1,100	1,686
Workers 2024	175,093	174,278	176,100	174,074	174,278	174,278	174,278
Workers 2042	200,895	200,089	186,828	209,837	204,127	184,562	198,410
Difference	25,803	25,811	10,728	35,763	29,849	10,284	24,132
p.a	1,433	1,434	596	1,987	1,658	571	1,341
Jobs 2024	192,592	191,696	193,700	191,471	191,696	191,696	191,696
Jobs 2042	220,974	220,086	205,500	230,808	224,528	203,008	218,240
Difference	28,382	28,391	11,800	39,337	32,832	11,312	26,544
p.a	1,577	1,577	656	2,185	1,824	628	1,475

Source: Lichfields/Popgroup

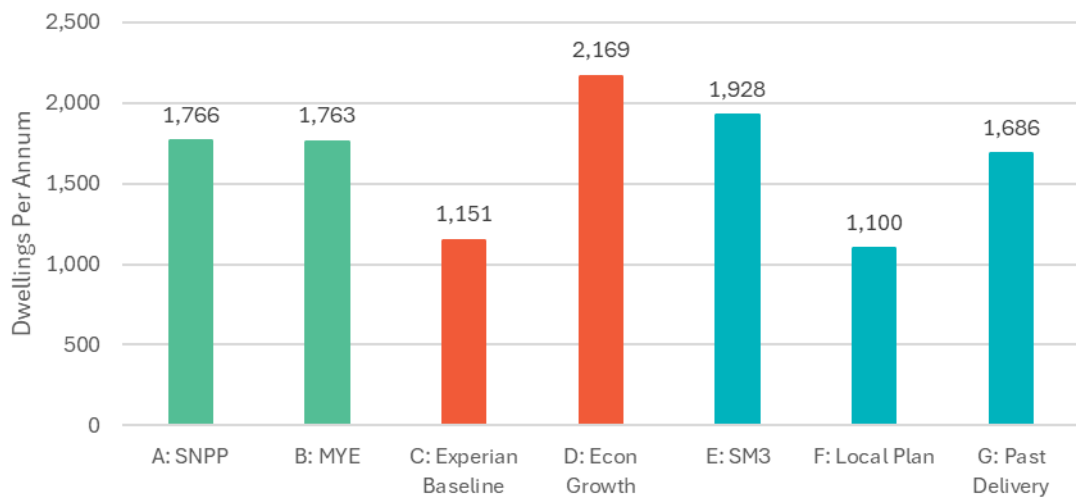
3.37 The Experian forecast (June 2025) indicates a jobs growth of c.11,800 jobs between 2024 and 2042 – generating a requirement for 1,151 dpa. It should be noted that the Experian economic forecast is considered pessimistic. This level of jobs growth is significantly lower than past trends in jobs growth and does not reflect the economic growth which took place over the 10 year period between 2014 and 2024 where CWaC experienced a jobs growth of 13,200 in the decade.

3.38 An assessment of the likely future scale of job growth has been made using Experian forecasts alongside the aspirations within the SEP. Planning for the LEP jobs growth ambitions would generate a requirement for 2,169 dpa – a scenario requiring a level of housing delivery higher than the SM3 figure. This scenario would result in a considerable growth in the labour force (35,763) which would support the projected economic jobs growth of 39,337 jobs over the plan period.

3.39 As shown in Figure 3.5, all scenarios modelled result in a housing requirement above the adopted CWaC 2015 Local Plan target of 1,100 dpa, even the pessimistic Experian Baseline scenario. The demographic-led scenarios produce housing requirements of between 1,763

and 1,766 dpa which is a level of delivery that would purely sustain the current and projected demographic shift towards on older population and a reduction in the available workforce – these scenarios are slightly higher, albeit closely reflecting, the past delivery rates which demonstrates how feasible they are to achieve. The highest requirement of 2,169 dpa results from the Economic Growth scenario, representing the level of delivery required to support the growth in the workforce necessitated by the growth ambitions set out within the SEP.

Figure 3.5 Summary of dpa figures resulting from modelling scenarios



Source: Lichfields/Popgroup

3.40

In light of our analysis, it is clear that for CWaC to achieve its economic potential, to deliver the homes it is expected to by Government, whilst at the same time addressing challenges of affordability and choice, the SM3 figure should be treated as a minimum. In fact, we would advocate targeting a higher housing annual number, linked to the economic potential of the Borough and the many direct and indirect benefits that could flow from this. The high levels of past delivery show what the market can achieve in partnership with CWaC and other stakeholders. The Consortium stand ready to work towards delivering the new housing the Borough needs now, and in future years, and supports an aspirational new local plan that seeks to deliver high levels of economic growth supported by high quality homes for its residents.

4.0 Impact of Reducing the Housing Requirement

Economic Benefits

- 4.1 Utilising Lichfields' eVALUATE economic benefits methodology, the potential economic benefits of four housing requirement scenarios are set out in Table 4.1. Achieving 1,928 dpa in line with the SM3 requirement would deliver significant economic benefits to the Borough, including supporting over 5,000 direct FTE construction jobs, over 5,700 FTE supply chain jobs, over £947 million in GVA, over £48 million in resident expenditure and £4.9 million in Council Tax revenue in each year of the plan period.

Table 4.1 Direct and Indirect Economic Benefits of CWaC's Housing Requirement Targets

	Adopted Requirement – 1,100 dpa	Past Delivery - 1,686 dpa	SM3 – 1,928 dpa	Economic Growth – 2,169 dpa
Market Housing	770	1,180	1,350	1,518
Affordable Housing (at 30%)	330	506	578	651
Total	1,100	1,686	1,928	2,169
Construction Benefits				
Construction Cost	£194.3m	£297.8m	£340.5m	£383.1m
Direct FTE p.a.	2,855	4,380	5,005	5,630
Direct GVA p.a.	£236.0m	£361.7m	£413.6m	£465.3m
Indirect FTE p.a.	3,285	5,035	5,760	6,475
Indirect GVA p.a.	£304.4m	£466.5m	£533.5m	£600.2m
Total FTE p.a.	6,140	9,413	10,765	12,110
Total GVA p.a.	£540.3m	£828.2m	£947.1m	£1.07bn
Operational Benefits				
First Occupation Expenditure	£6.1m	£9.3m	£10.6m	£11.9m
Jobs Supported	35	55	60	70
Ongoing Resident Expenditure p.a.	£27.5m	£42.2m	£48.2m	£54.2m
Net Additional Resident Expenditure p.a.	£12.6m	£19.3m	£22.0m	£24.8m
Ongoing Jobs Supported p.a.	130	200	230	260
Council Tax p.a.	£2.3m	£3.8m	£4.3m	£4.9m

Source: Lichfields Analysis

- 4.2 If the housing requirement were to be reduced from the SM3 target of 1,928 dpa to the average past delivery figure of 1,686 dpa, we might expect to see a reduction of 1,352 construction jobs per year; £118.9 million in direct/indirect construction GVA per year; £2.7 million of resident expenditure annually; and, a loss of £500,000 in annual council tax revenues.
- 4.3 Similarly, achieving the level of housing delivery required under the economic growth scenario would see an increase in these impacts over and above the SM3 figure in the region of 1,345 construction jobs per year; £122.9 million in direct/indirect construction GVA per

year; £2.8 million of resident expenditure annually; and, an increase of £600,000 in annual council tax revenues.

Health and Wellbeing Benefits of New Housing

- 4.4 This section of the reports seeks to set out the social and health benefits of new housing and how it can have a positive effect on general well-being.
- 4.5 **CWaC's Regulation 18 Local Plan Issues and Options consultation sets out a vision which** includes promoting wellbeing by enabling all to enjoy a safe and healthy lifestyle with a good quality of life. It goes on to recount the existing Local Plan objectives and whether these should be carried forward – these include promoting mixed and balanced communities through the provision of a range of housing to meet market affordable and specialist needs. Fuel poverty is a concern noted throughout the Borough, something that new energy efficient housing can help to alleviate through the Future Homes Standard.
- 4.6 It has long been accepted that there is a direct link between housing and health. The Healthy Urban Development Unit identify decent and adequate housing as being critically important to health and wellbeing and the NPPF highlights the importance of ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
- 4.7 It is estimated that in 2023, up to 3.8 million homes in England failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard and, whilst this figure has fallen over recent years, it still amounts to approximately 15% of homes in the country. The situation is particularly acute in the private rented sector, where 21-22% of homes do not meet the Standard. As such, poor quality housing is a challenge faced by a huge number of families in England, including within CWaC.
- 4.8 Poor housing also has significant economic impacts. Research by the Building Research Establishment in 2023 estimates that treating patients with housing related hazards caused by poor conditions costs the NHS over £1 billion a year (cold, damp, mold and falls for example). Yet, despite its far-reaching impacts, the issue of poor-quality housing and housing inequality does not receive the attention it deserves. Consortium members recognise the importance of providing new homes that will help address these costs through high quality, sustainable new homes, for example by providing compliant Building Regulations Part M design standards, including adaptable and accessible homes.
- 4.9 The provision of new housing generates many other benefits – creating sustainable, mixed and balanced communities, expanding the opportunity for home ownership and reducing reliance on the private rented sector and potential insecurity of tenure that results, reducing hidden homelessness, mitigating affordability risks, and creating churn in the market to free up smaller properties for first time buyers and larger properties for families to occupy as elderly transition to retirement villages and care.
- 4.10 Larger housing schemes can more ably deliver the social and physical infrastructure needed to mitigate adverse impacts resulting from population increases. They allow the creation of sustainable communities with homes built to high environmental standards, across a wide range of types, size and tenures, and they can create cohesive well-planned neighbourhoods with open space, recreational facilities set within attractive and sensitively designed environments, as well as community infrastructure such as GP surgeries, dental surgeries, shops, cafes, hairdressers and a variety of other related services.

Crisis of Supply

- 4.11 The Government's standard method puts the number of new homes needed in England at c.370,000 per year. In 2023/24, Government data shows the total housing stock in England increased by around 221,000 homes. The last time annual increases exceeded 250,000 was 1987. The challenge to deliver the required number of homes is therefore unprecedented in modern times.
- 4.12 The delivery of affordable housing has also fallen significantly short for a prolonged period. As of February 2025, over 1.3m households were on the waiting list for social housing in England, a figure that has increased 10% in the past 2 years (MHCLG, February 2025). There are 123,000 households in temporary accommodation (including 160,000 children) at an annual cost to the Government of approximately £2bn. The average annual affordable housing delivery in England over the past 10 years has been just over 54,000.
- 4.13 Housing need manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as increased levels of overcrowding, acute affordability issues, more young people living with their parents for longer periods, and increased levels of homelessness¹⁹. A lack of affordable housing may also negatively impact lower income families by reducing the amount they can spend addressing other health and wellbeing needs.
- 4.14 CWaC has performed well in recent years and has delivered high levels of housing which has started to reverse some of the worst extremes of affordability. Government data shows that over the 10 year period between 2013/14 and 2023/24, a total of 5,291 affordable dwellings have been completed, which represents 48% of the overall housing delivery target included in CWaC Local Plan Part One.
- 4.15 However, it must be ensured that this level of delivery can be maintained by planning for the right number of homes over the upcoming plan period, to help continue to address the issues associated with poor housing affordability. This is also particularly important in the context of recent demographic changes within the Borough and an increased need for homes for first time buyers, families and the ageing population.

Impact of Poor Housing Affordability

- 4.16 The effects of poor housing affordability are both direct (causing stress and anxiety, for example) and indirect – particularly through reducing the disposable income that people have available to spend on other things which may promote good health (such as quality food and exercise). Affordability problems can also contribute to overcrowding, as households seek to share the fixed costs of accommodation across more individuals.
- 4.17 Adequate and appropriate housing may be unaffordable because rents or mortgages are high or because of high running costs associated with maintenance, energy, water and drainage and local taxes; or both. These issues can arise in all tenures, but private tenants pay the highest proportion of their household incomes on housing costs.
- 4.18 The crisis in affordable housing delivery has also driven people into poor quality homes. In England, around 23% of homes in the private rented sector fail to meet statutory minimum standards, which include being in a reasonable state of repair, with modern facilities and services and a reasonable degree of thermal warmth²⁰. Research from the Resolution Foundation found that those in the rental sector are more likely to report issues such as

¹⁹ House of Commons Library - Tackling the under-supply of housing in England (January 2021)

²⁰ House of Commons Library (2022): Housing conditions in the private rented sector (England)

their home being in a poor state of repair, heating/plumbing/electrical issues, and damp than those who own their own home or have a mortgage²¹. They are also much more likely to be worried about their housing costs.

4.19 The broader negative impacts of high housing costs are significant. The provision of sub-market housing has the greatest impact on reducing poverty after housing costs²², and high rents lead to overcrowding, higher reliance on borrowing and constraints when purchasing essentials, such as food and clothing²³. Struggling to meet housing costs can also lead to rent or mortgage arrears, which can lead to eviction or repossession.

4.20 These issues are compounded by a limited supply of good quality affordable housing. Conversely, provision of affordable housing as part of a mix of tenures helps to create mixed and balanced communities. Investment in affordable housing has significant benefits which include:

- 1 Promoting inclusive growth by creating jobs, increasing GVA and providing large multiplier effects;
- 2 Increasing the supply of affordable housing helps to tackle inequalities by reducing child poverty and homelessness and by providing inclusive, sustainable housing options;
- 3 Homes transferred to affordable housing providers can support the delivery of affordable and good quality homes which can improve health and wellbeing, contribute to successful placemaking and strengthen community resilience, (including rural community resilience)²⁴.

Overcrowding and Homelessness

4.21 Overcrowding - defined as when the number of occupants of a home exceed the space they could reasonably be expected to inhabit - is another measure of housing condition and is often associated with affordability. As shown in Figure 4.1 overcrowding in England has become a more widespread problem in recent years, with large increases in overcrowding in private rented and particularly social rented tenures.

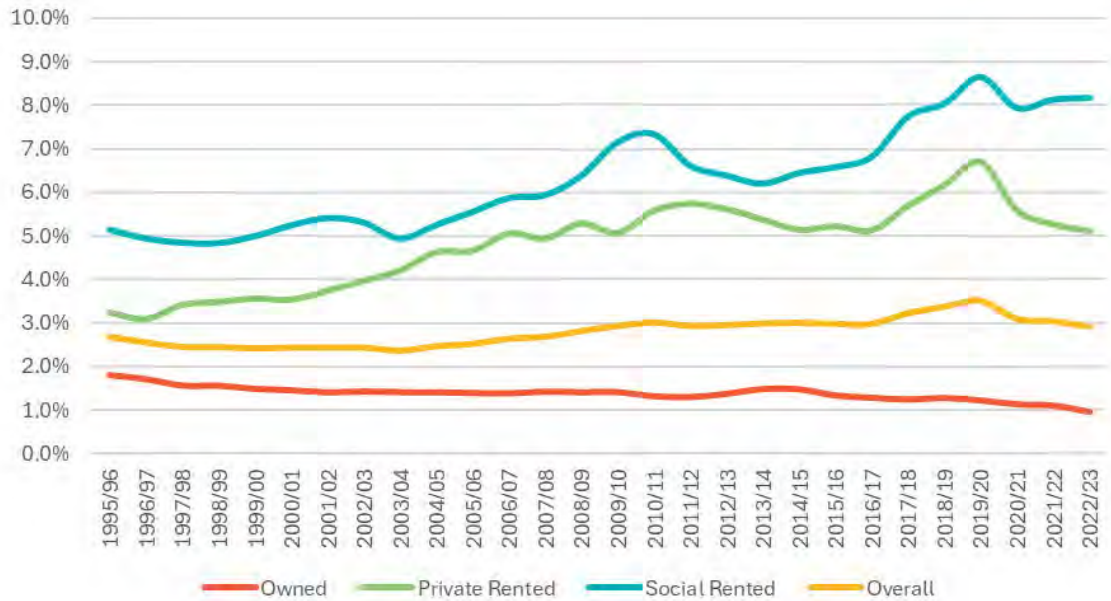
²¹ Resolution Foundation (2023), *Trying Times: How people living in poor quality housing have fared during the cost of living crisis*

²² Tunstall R, Bevan M, Bradshaw J, Croucher K, Duffy S, Hunter C, Jones A, Wallace A and Wilcox S (2013). *The links between housing and poverty: An evidence review*

²³ Pennington J, Ben-Galim D and Cooke G (2012) *No place to call home: The social impacts of housing undersupply on young people*

²⁴ *The Impact of Social Housing: Economic, Social, Health and Wellbeing* - UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) and Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) (August 2020)

Figure 4.1 Overcrowding in Rented Tenures in England



Source: MHCLG, English Housing Survey 2023

- 4.22 Overcrowding remains highest in the social rented sector (8.2% in 2022/23) but has increased strikingly in private renting (from 3.2% in 1995/96 to 5.1% in 2022/23). As private renting has expanded and housed more of the poorest households, so overcrowding has become a greater problem within the tenure.
- 4.23 As shown in Figure 4.2, overcrowding remains a clear issue in CWaC, with 2.7% of private rented accommodation and 4.7% of social rented housing households living in overcrowded conditions.

Figure 4.2 Statistics on Overcrowding in CWaC



Source: Census (2021): Tenure by occupancy rating (bedrooms)

- 4.24 Housing has a significant influence on mental health and wellbeing - children living in crowded homes are more likely be stressed, anxious and depressed, have poorer physical health, and attain less well at school. Distress is generally higher for overcrowded households, and data from the Covid-19 pandemic period seem to show this intensifying

during the more severe lockdown in April 2020, when 39% of people in overcrowded households were indicating psychological distress.

4.25 The factors relating to issues of homelessness within the population are highly complex, though it is recognised that a shortage of good quality affordable housing and the high costs associated with private renting can lead to issues of homelessness²⁵.

4.26 Homelessness is an issue which is present in CWaC, with 476 households assessed as being owed prevention or relief duty in the year to March 2025²⁶. The CWaC Housing Strategy 2025-2035 consultation states that all forms of homelessness have increased in CWaC over the last five years. It reports that the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased significantly since January 2019, peaking recently in January 2024. Of the 226 households in temporary accommodation, 178 (79%) were in hotel accommodation, generating significant costs for the Council. At the heart of the problem is an overall lack of affordable housing, and CWaC must seek to maintain its high levels of affordable housing delivery to help ensure that this level of homelessness can be reduced.

Provision of Affordable Housing

4.27 According to the CWaC Housing Strategy 2025-2035 consultation²⁷, as of 31 March 2024 there were 6,735 households registered on the housing waiting list. This number is broken down into bands, as follows:

- Band A (urgent housing need): 240 households
- Band B (high housing need): 1,589 households
- Housing Options Band (HOB; no statutory preference): 4,906 households

4.28 As previously set out in Table 4.1, achieving the SM3 target of 1,928 dpa would infer the delivery of 578 affordable dwellings each year (i.e. 30%, as per adopted Local Plan Policy SOC 1), which could potentially provide accommodation to just 8.1% of households on the housing waiting list. Under the current adopted Local Plan target of 1,100 dpa this would fall to 330 affordable homes per year, or alternatively, a much higher 651 affordable homes **per year if the level of housing delivery required to support the LEP's economic growth ambitions is realised.**

4.29 The 2013 CWaC Strategic Housing Market Assessment [SHMA] demonstrated a need for 714 affordable dwellings per annum. Data on additional affordable housing delivery shows that around 5,291 additional affordable homes have been delivered in the Borough between 2013/14 and 2023/24 at an average of 481 per annum²⁸, implying under delivery of around 2,563 units against the SHMA target. Clearly, the need for affordable housing is another reason why the SM3 target of 1,928 dpa should be viewed as a minimum.

²⁵ <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/housing/>

²⁶ MHCLG (2025): Live tables on homelessness

²⁷ <https://participatenow.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/housing-strategy-consultation-data-snapshots?>

²⁸ MHCLG (2025), Live tables on affordable housing supply Table 1008c

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The purpose **of this Research Paper is to help inform the Council's early decision making on** its overall spatial planning strategy for its new local plan, particularly with regards to the scale of housing required to meet its needs, as well as economic and social objectives.
- 5.2 Significant changes have occurred politically and economically over the past 12 months, with a newfound focus from the Government on boosting housing delivery and addressing the housing crisis, principally through changes to the planning system and the move to a new stock-based Standard Methodology for determining Local Housing Needs.
- 5.3 The Consortium, comprising Barratt / David Wilson Homes, Redrow Homes and Taylor Wimpey, is eager to see a new Local Plan that is positively prepared and aspirational. It is vital that CWaC seizes the opportunity to review its Local Plan at this time to ensure it can respond to the acute housing and affordability crisis, the recent and future projected changes in the economy, and as a minimum, plan for the levels of housing across the area expected by Government, or indeed going beyond that level where justifiable to further the economic prospects of the Borough and life chances of its residents.
- 5.4 The Borough faces a number of challenges, including a rapidly growing and aging population which will see the proportion of working-age residents shrink and a greater share of residents above retirement age if current demographic trends continue. CWaC's population will grow at a faster rate than any of its neighbouring authorities as well as relative to the wider regional and national projected growth rates. This presents a significant economic opportunity for the Borough and a need to ensure that sufficient housing is provided so that this growth potential is not constrained. Similarly, the Borough is likely to see an increased number of families with children and will need to plan accordingly for larger housing.
- 5.5 The Borough has not escaped the symptoms of the housing market crisis with rising house prices and worsening affordability ratios that make it increasingly likely that younger residents have to move out of the Borough to find suitable housing choices. However, housing delivery has been healthy since the adoption of the current Local Plan in 2015 (averaging 1,686 dpa). This consistent level of recent delivery demonstrates that the market is capable of achieving the housebuilding needs set by Government, and there is evidence that the recent high level of housing delivery is starting to slow down growth in house prices and affordability ratios in this Borough.
- 5.6 The standard method figure of 1,928 dpa should therefore be treated as a minimum, because:
1. The NPPF clearly states that local plans should meet the development needs of their area and as a minimum provide for the objectively assessed needs for housing. Numerous Inspectors at local plan examinations have supported this position.
 2. Housing needs can now expressly justify exceptional circumstances for Green Belt release, and it is mandatory for LPAs, if necessary, to alter Green Belt boundaries when they cannot fully meet housing requirements (unless there is evidence that doing so would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan).

3. Housing need modelling scenarios which maintain current demographic trends, including an aging population, suggest a housing requirement of at least 1,763 dpa, whilst a scenario which aligns economic growth and housing needs in line with LEP growth aspirations suggests a requirement of at least 2,169 dpa. These two scenarios straddle the SM3 figure of 1,928 dpa.
4. There are potentially significant economic benefits of pursuing at least the 1,928 dpa figure which will not be realised if a lower requirement is set, including:
 - a. Over £340m in capital investment p.a.;
 - b. Over 10,000 FTE direct and indirect construction jobs p.a.;
 - c. Almost £950 million in economic output p.a.;
 - d. £22m in resident expenditure p.a.; and
 - e. Council Tax revenue of £4.3m p.a.

The benefits associated with pursuing a more positive economic growth-led housing requirement would be even higher. This needs to be considered against a context of CWaC falling behind its neighbours when it comes to job growth over recent years.

5. CWaC's population is projected to grow at a faster rate than any of its neighbouring authorities as well as relative to the wider regional and national projected growth rates. This presents a need to ensure that sufficient housing is provided so that this growth potential is not constrained.
6. Despite high levels of housing delivery over recent years, there remains a crisis of supply nationally and regionally, and a very challenging affordability gap, both of which can be addressed, or at least slowed, by delivering more housing.
7. Despite high levels of affordable housing delivery, there remains an acute need for new affordable homes to address significant housing waiting list numbers and rising levels of homelessness. The cost of temporary accommodation is having an unsustainable impact on the public purse.
8. High levels of homebuilding will create churn in the market, providing opportunities for first time buyers, growing families or downsizers, and new forms of retirement and care for the ageing population.
9. High levels of new home provision will help to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes for residents – for example, by addressing overcrowding and the associated mental health toll this can generate, providing greater choice in housing tenures, type, size and location, delivered to modern high efficiency standards which in turn reduces the burden on NHS resources and addresses other related issues such as fuel poverty and cost of living.

5.7 The Consortium urges CWaC to adopt a minimum housing target for the new local plan period derived from the standard method figure of 1,928 dpa. The Consortium looks forward to working with CWaC during future stages of the local plan preparation to ensure that suitable sites can be allocated to meet this level of need.

Appendix 1

A1.1 Infographic: The annual economic benefits of pursuing a SM3-based housing need target in Cheshire West & Chester

Cheshire West and Chester



Barratt / David Wilson Homes, Redrow and Taylor Wimpey have significantly boosted housing choice and supply in Cheshire West and Chester over recent years. Their housing developments have supported the local economy through job creation and the supply chain, whilst also boosting the public purse through CIL and s106 contributions to improve local facilities and increase Council revenue. These economic benefits can be optimised by pursuing an objectively assessed housing target in the new local plan, based on the SM3 need figure.



over
1,928 New homes including
578 affordable homes



Construction benefits

£340.5m
Construction value
(total construction cost)

5,005 Jobs
Direct FTE
construction jobs
(p.a.)

5,760 Jobs
FTE supply chain
jobs p.a.
(indirect/induced "spin-off" jobs supported)

£947.0m GVA
Economic output
(additional GVA p.a.)



Operational and expenditure benefits

£10.6m
First occupation
expenditure
(spending to make a
house 'feel like a home')

£22m
Resident
expenditure
(within local shops and
services p.a.)

290 Supported jobs
(from increased expenditure
in local area)



Local Authority revenue benefits

Planning contributions
(s106 Contributions)

Education

Healthcare

CIL Contributions

Infrastructure

Open Space/ Sports

£4.3m
Council Tax revenues
(p.a.)



the 1990s, the number of people with a university degree has increased in all countries, but the increase has been most pronounced in the Netherlands.

There are several reasons for the increase in the number of people with a university degree. First, the number of people who go to university has increased. Second, the number of people who complete a university degree has increased. Third, the number of people who have a university degree but do not work in a university-related job has increased.

The increase in the number of people with a university degree has led to a change in the composition of the labour force. The number of people who work in university-related jobs has increased, while the number of people who work in non-university-related jobs has decreased. This has led to a change in the composition of the labour force, with a higher proportion of people working in university-related jobs.

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