

Helsby Parish Council's Draft Responses to Issues and Options consultation for Cheshire West and Chester Council's new Local Plan – July 2025

Q. No.	Question	Draft Response
IN6	Do you have any comments on what role Neighbourhood Plans should play in terms of meeting Cheshire West's development needs and other suggested policy approaches for the new Local Plan? This could include things like meeting housing needs, local connection tests, or design etc.	Neighbourhood plans should play a pivotal role in the new Local Plan. Considerable effort was taken to create the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan and whilst it is some time since the plan was made, we believe that many of the HNP policies remain relevant. Given that government funding has now been withdrawn for the creation and renewal of NP's, it seems unlikely that the parish council will refresh the plan any time soon. Nevertheless, it remains in place until 2030, and we believe that the planning authority should take even greater consideration of the HNP following the adoption of the new plan. Even if some policies are now 'out of date' in the HNP, this should not affect the weight given to others.
SS7	Do you think the new Local Plan should contain place-based policies for smaller settlements such as: Cuddington and Sandiway; Farndon; Helsby; Kelsall; Malpas; Tarporley; Tattenhall; and Tarvin?	We are inclined to support a place-based policy for Helsby but only on the condition that this is developed in conjunction with Helsby Parish Council as we have a much wider understanding of local needs and any issues affecting the area.
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	We would support Option B as the most appropriate strategy as this would appear to offer the most balanced approach to future development across the borough (i.e. development is spread more evenly across the key settlements).
SS14	Do you feel that Option A is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?	Option A is not necessarily inappropriate for Helsby, but we prefer the more balanced approach of Option B.

SS16	Do you feel that Option B is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?	Option B is our preferred option as we feel this offers the most balanced strategy.
SS18	Do you feel that Option C is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?	Option C proposes to concentrate development in areas that are currently well-served by existing rail and bus networks. At first glance, Helsby appears to be well-served, as it benefits from a railway station and a regular bus service. However, in practice, evening bus services are limited, and parking space at Helsby Station is already nearing full capacity. While a significant number of new homes have been constructed in Helsby over the past decade, this growth has not been matched by corresponding investment in public transport infrastructure. The frequency and coverage of services are largely determined by commercial operators, whose priorities are driven by profitability rather than by the specific needs of the local community. It is also challenging to safeguard land around Helsby station as options to expand the station and/or create additional parking capacity are limited.
SS42	Do you have any further comments about any of the potential growth areas identified around Frodsham?	We have concerns that development in the FRO03 area would have an impact on the settlement gap between Frodsham and Helsby. These are two distinct settlements, and we wish to preserve their individual characters and conserve this gap as an important habitat and wildlife corridor.
SS44	Which of the identified potential growth areas around Helsby do you consider to be the most suitable?	We believe that option HEL03 offers the most sustainable location for new housing. This area has already seen considerable development within the last decade and is well placed along the A56 corridor with close access to the M56 motorway. It should be noted, however, that the remainder of the development land available in the Mere's Edge area is located within the parish of Dunham on the Hill and Hapsford. It is important therefore that the settlement boundary in the Local Plan extends beyond the Helsby ward area to cover the full HEL03 area.

SS45	Do you have any further comments about any of the potential growth areas identified around Helsby?	<p>While HEL02 is located near Horn’s Mill Primary School and the proposed Helsby-Mouldsworth walking and cycling corridor, we have significant concerns regarding its suitability for large-scale housing development. Compared to the other two options, HEL02 offers notably poorer road and pedestrian access. The site’s topography presents a steeper gradient, which is likely to result in a greater visual impact on the surrounding landscape. Additionally, the risk of surface water runoff is expected to be higher in this location, potentially increasing the likelihood of drainage and flooding issues. There is currently no footpath provision along parts of The Rock, and Robin Hood Lane is narrow, with substantial on-street parking that already restricts vehicular movement. Furthermore, the impact of construction traffic on this constrained road network is likely to be significantly greater than at alternative sites. Given these factors, we believe that HEL02 may only be suitable for a modest level of development and not for the 250 homes as proposed in Table B8.</p> <p>HEL01 is located in a good location alongside the A56 corridor and Helsby High School. Whilst we would support a limited number of new homes in this area, we would also have concerns that the development of all 452 new homes in Table B8 could impact on the settlement gap between Frodsham and Helsby, especially if the FRO03 area was developed alongside. This area is also well located for the local cemetery. We have identified a need for future burial space and would ask that this key infrastructure provision is considered in any developer contribution negotiations in due course.</p>
SS46	Are there any constraints, including infrastructure provision, that should be considered for Helsby when developing the new Local Plan?	<p>CW&C’s existing Local Plan (Part One) policy STRAT 8 sets out the level of new development required in the rural area to serve local needs in the most accessible and sustainable locations. As a key service centre, Helsby was allocated a total number of net dwelling</p>

		<p>completions of 300 by 2030. According to CW&C’s 2024 Annual Monitoring Report, 326 new homes were constructed between 2010 and 2024 (109% of target). At least another 350 homes are currently either under construction or have been granted planning permission (225% of target)¹ and several other large-scale applications are awaiting a decision by the planning authority (including a 75-bed care home and another Mere’s Edge housing development for 120 new dwellings)². We are also aware of another Mere’s Edge planning proposal for an additional 160 homes that will be submitted by developers shortly.</p> <p>We would urge the local planning authority to carefully consider these figures for the new Local Plan, especially in relation to the proposed numbers set out in Table B8 (of between 250 and 1,046 additional new homes – all within the green belt). The figures shown above set out that Helsby has already far exceeded its housing allocation to 2030.</p> <p>The council was supportive of the Mere’s Edge Masterplan developed from 2002 which looked to develop this area of Helsby in a holistic and co-ordinated manner. However, in reality, most of these new housing developments were considered by the planning authority on an individual case by case basis, with insufficient</p>
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¹ 14/04044/OUT (Land At Helsby Sports and Social Club, Chester Road, Helsby) application for 118 dwellings known as ‘Elysium’ approved, 114 homes currently under construction; 20/0324/FUL (Land At Cable Drive, Helsby) application for 241 dwellings and apartments known as ‘Pavilion Park’ approved, 215 currently under construction.

² 22/04673/FUL (Land West of Chester Road) application for the construction of a 75-bed care home, awaiting decision; 24/03823/OUT (Land At Mere's Edge, Mere's Edge Helsby) outline application for up to 120 dwellings, awaiting decision; 24/01935/OUT (Land Off Callender Way, Helsby) outline application for the development of up to 7 dwellings, awaiting decision.

		<p>consideration given to the levels of supporting infrastructure required as a whole (e.g. primary school places, NHS dentist and doctor provision). This piecemeal and disjointed approach of bringing forward new large-scale housing development by more than one housing developer has also created difficulties for linking up the accessibility of each site, thereby encouraging greater car use, rather than more sustainable forms of travel. This approach risks poor decisions being taken for the shorter-term rather than a more considered long-term approach to land use planning and it impacts poorly on the existing community. The new Local Plan needs to fully acknowledge the importance of enhancing infrastructure to support new house building and planning all large-scale housing developments in a holistic manner.</p> <p>We acknowledge that the HEL03 growth area proposal and several existing and forthcoming planning applications are in the neighbouring parish of Dunham on the Hill and Hapsford, but any development in this area will undoubtedly have an impact on the use of local services within Helsby. In recent years, we are aware that both primary schools and the high school in Helsby have been oversubscribed. Disappointingly, the parish council has raised this problem with the local education authority, but our concerns have been disregarded. Planning permission should not be granted for any additional major housing sites until the provision of adequate school places has been addressed.</p> <p>We are also aware that it is currently difficult to make medical appointments at the health centres in both Helsby and Frodsham. In addition, there is a shortage of NHS dentists in the area and residents have complained of the difficulties they have experienced</p>
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		<p>in getting dental treatment. Extra housing will only exacerbate these issues and planning permission for any new large sites should not be granted until the provision of adequate local medical provision has been addressed.</p> <p>In a resident survey carried out by the parish council in 2022, respondents thought that too many new houses were being built in Helsby and many of these respondents felt that such new homes would put a strain on existing local services such as health and education. The parish council urges the planning authority to carefully consider the numbers of new homes allocated within Helsby without a sufficient contribution to local supporting infrastructure. The existing Mere's Edge area has become 'Helsby South' already, putting excessive pressure on local schools, public transport, medical facilities and utilities such as gas, electricity and sewage, not to mention the continuing inconvenience of noise, traffic disruption and high dust levels as a result of further new house building in this area.</p>
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?	We would like all transport assessments and travel plans to be submitted and scrutinised in advance of granting any planning permissions. The policy should also ensure that there is permeability between adjacent new housing estates, particularly in relation to walking and cycling routes. If different developers are involved, options should be presented for any subsequent provision.
TA3	Are there any schemes listed above in TA 2 'Key local transport infrastructure priorities' that should be retained, modified, or deleted?	Helsby Railway Station and the Helsby/Mouldsworth rail corridor should be retained in this list.
ID1	Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards infrastructure and developer contributions,	We feel that the public arts element in this policy could be reviewed. Public arts monies are more suited to urban areas and smaller, more rural settlements are likely to find difficulties in finding appropriate

	as set out above in ID 1 'Infrastructure and developer contributions'? If not, please suggest how it could be amended.	projects. The policy should include priority for on-site provision of open space (see OS4).
ID4	In the event of viability being an issue how could the new Local Plan prioritise the provision of infrastructure across the borough and/ or on a settlement-by-settlement basis?	This should be done in conjunction with the local town or parish council.
HO4	Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards delivering affordable housing, as set out in HO2 'Delivering affordable housing' above? If not, please suggest how it could be amended?	We believe that affordable housing should be distributed equally across the borough. Two 100% affordable housing developments with 238 dwellings have been completed or are currently under construction in Helsby (see footnote ³ for details). A number of affordable properties were also provided in previous Mere's Edge housing developments (e.g. The Windings and Copperbrook) and more are planned in current and proposed planning applications. This level does not seem proportionate to local needs, and Helsby is perhaps catering for the demand for affordable housing from other areas in the borough. We feel each local community should have a balanced proportion of both new affordable and market homes (i.e. not 100% affordable in one community and 100% market homes in another). When considering affordable housing applications, we suggest that the level of affordable housing already in the community should also be considered by the planning authority.
HO9	Are there any local/borough specific issues e.g. intensification of garden development, infill or backland development, change of use of garages to residential, that justify additional/continuation of policy?	We support the policies within the existing Local Plan in this context. In recent years, a significant number of new housing proposals have come forward within large residential gardens—often in front garden areas. While not strictly classified as 'backland development', such proposals can have similar impacts. We are concerned that, collectively, they may contribute to local surface water drainage

³ 17/02372/FUL Erection of 23 affordable dwellings (Land Opposite Youds Croft, Proffits Lane, Helsby) fully completed, 20/0324/FUL (Land At Cable Drive, Helsby) application for 241 dwellings and apartments known as 'Pavilion Park' approved, 215 currently under construction.

		issues. We would ask the planning authority to consider any 'front garden' applications in the same manner as that of backland development.
HO15	Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards rural exception sites, as set out in HO 5 'Rural exception sites' above? If not, please suggest how it could be amended?	This policy should only apply to smaller settlements within the borough and not to key service centres like Helsby.
OS4	Should the policy approach be more flexible in the order provision of open space in new developments? If yes, do you have any suggestions how this could be achieved?	No. Open space should be brought forward on site first and provision must be meaningful and proportionate. Where relevant, the provision of the space should be supported by a long-term maintenance plan to ensure continued safety, quality and usability. However, we do advocate for greater flexibility in the allocation of developer contributions in general. For example, allowing funds to be directed towards wider 'recreation' purposes, rather than being restricted to narrowly defined uses such as 'youth play provision in [specific local park]', would enable a broader range of appropriate and responsive projects to be supported. It is also important that town and parish councils are engaged at an early stage in the negotiation process. Their involvement is essential to help ensure that local priorities are properly considered and that monies are not directed outside of the communities affected.
LA2	Should the key settlement gaps currently defined in Local Plan (Part Two) policy GBC 3 be reviewed? Could they be expanded, and/or should new key settlement gaps be identified in the Green Belt, or other areas to help protect the character of settlements?	Yes, key settlement gaps need to be reviewed, and new ones added within Green Belt areas to ensure the concept of "grey belt" development does not impact the character of individual settlements. The area between Frodsham and Helsby should be identified as a key settlement gap.
LA4	Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards landscape, as set out in LA 2 'Areas of	Yes

	Special County Value' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?	
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