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Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Issues and Options Representation

**On behalf of The North of England
Zoological Society - Chester Zoo**

22/08/25

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.0 OBJECTIVES	5
3.0 SPATIAL STRATEGY.....	11
4.0 POLICY-SPECIFIC - CHESTER.....	26
5.0 POLICY-SPECIFIC - GREEN BELT.....	28
6.0 POLICY-SPECIFIC – VISITOR ECONOMY	30
7.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION	32

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 All local planning authorities have a statutory planning framework, known as a Local Plan, to guide development and achieve sustainable development. In January 2025, the Cheshire West and Chester Council Cabinet decided to begin preparation of a new Local Plan under the current plan-making system.
- 1.2 The Issues and Options (Regulation 18) consultation document is the first formal stage in producing a new Local Plan.
- 1.3 The North of England Zoological Society (Chester Zoo) have instructed Cassidy + Ashton to make representation on the Issues and Options Consultation Document on their behalf.
- 1.4 The following document assesses the relevant sections of the Issues and Options consultation document and provides a response to the questions in consideration of land owned by Chester Zoo.
- 1.5 For clarification, these representations are to be read as separate representations in respect of the following:
 - i. Opportunity for Grey Belt development presented by some minor parcels of land in ownership of Chester Zoo.
 - ii. Opportunity for release of Green Belt to accommodate housing allocation on parcels of land in ownership of Chester Zoo in Upton, Chester.
 - iii. Continued policy support for ongoing and future opportunities across operational land in the ownership of Chester Zoo.
- 1.6 For clarification, these representations are to be read in conjunction with the separately submitted new site suggestions, submitted independently on behalf of Chester Zoo, namely the following:
 - a) Land off Caughall Road, Upton
 - b) Land off Demage Lane / A41, Upton

- 1.7 For clarification, these representations are presented against the following four key sections of the Issues & Options Consultation, as follows:
- a. Objectives – economic growth, housing provision, environmental protection and sustainable transport.
 - b. Spatial Options – Option A, B or C
 - c. Growth Areas
 - d. Policy Development

2.0 OBJECTIVES

2.1 **OB 1** sets out two alternatives for objectives for the new Local Plan have been identified as follows:

Option A – Take forward the current Local Plan objectives

This option takes forward the objectives from the current Local Plan. However, some may need to be amended if they are not considered realistically achievable.

As a result of changes to national planning policy, the following objectives could be more difficult to deliver and may have to be amended:

- **SO1** *Develop the role of Chester as a sub-regional city, promote regeneration and development in the towns of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford and enable appropriate levels of development in the key service centres to support sustainable rural communities*
- **SO3** *In rural areas, support farming, agriculture and diversification of the rural economy whilst ensuring development is of an appropriate scale and character.*
- **SO9** *Support sustainable development and urban regeneration by supporting the use of suitably located previously developed land and buildings and by locating the majority of development within and on the edge of the main urban areas and key service centres.*
- **SO10** *Protect the environmental quality and character of Cheshire West and Chester through maintaining the general extent and character of the North Cheshire Green Belt and Cheshire countryside.*

Question OB 4: Do you think that objectives SO1, SO3, SO9, SO10 need to be amended if they are to be taken forward into the new Local Plan? Do you have any suggestions for how they should be amended?

Response

- Chester Zoo are supportive of the retention of objective SO1, which enables Chester to continue to develop as a sub-regional city and therefore, be a suitable place for ongoing development. It is understood that the areas of rural development are dependent on the agreed spatial strategy however, are supportive of Chester remaining as a key area for development in accordance with the settlement hierarchy.
- Chester Zoo are supportive of the retention of objective SO9 which focuses development within and on the edge of main urban areas and key service centres. This is in accordance with all suggested spatial strategies which focus the largest areas of development on key service centres.
- Objective SO10 aims to protect the Green Belt. Whilst Chester Zoo are not necessarily against the suggested objective, there are two key points to consider:
 - ✓ New national policy regarding Grey Belt opportunities for development within the Green Belt. Given this, and in consideration against the Council's current housing position aligned with the new NPPF policy, it is submitted that the Council must support those sites that merit consideration as a Grey Belt opportunity, subject to infrastructure improvements in the locality, open space / recreation / BNG improvements, and affordable housing provision 15% above standard LPA policy (will be 45%). The Zoo land at Upton, Chester offers such opportunity.

- ✓ **Release of Green Belt to accommodate necessary allocation for development, e.g. housing, is not prohibited by national policy. Through reasoned strategic justification, boundaries can be amended through the Local Plan review process. If such an approach is pursued by the Council, the suggested parcels of land in Upton put forward by The Zoo provide such an opportunity, without compromising the sustainability principles of the Plan.**

Option B – Use the Sustainability Appraisal objectives

This option proposes using the objectives from the Sustainability Appraisal as the objectives for the Local Plan.

- 1. Protect air quality where it is of a high standard and to improve it elsewhere.*
- 2. Reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses, in particular CO2*
- 3. Reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from renewable resources. Will it reduce energy consumption?*
- 4. Achieve sustainable waste management by reducing the production of waste, increasing opportunities for recycling and reducing the amount of waste being sent for final disposal to landfill.*
- 5. Reduce the consumption of natural resources.*
- 6. Protect land and soil quality.*
- 7. Optimise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings.*
- 8. Manage contaminated land effectively*
- 9. Protect and enhance the number and area of RIGS.*
- 10. Minimise the risk of flooding from all sources.*
- 11. Protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources, minimise the risk of pollution and improve water efficiency. Will the Plan protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources?*
- 12. Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.*
- 13. Preserve and enhance historic assets, sites, features, areas and settings of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance.*

- 14. Protect and enhance the borough's biodiversity and wildlife habitats.*
- 15. Provide sufficient high quality, well designed, sustainable housing solutions to meet the range of identified needs for market and affordable housing (including housing options for older people, students, Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and self and custom house building)*
- 16. Promote regeneration, particularly of deprived areas.*
- 17. Create a safe environment to live in and reduce the fear of crime.*
- 18. Enable environments that promote health and wellbeing.*
- 19. Support a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economy and provide opportunities for economic growth and investment.*
- 20. Maintain and improve the vitality and viability of city, town and local centres*
- 21. Protect and enhance community facilities and services*
- 22. Make the best use of existing transport infrastructure and ensure everyone has access to high quality and affordable public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure*

Question OB 5: Do you feel that the option of using the Sustainability Appraisal objectives in the new Local Plan, as set out in Option B 'Use the Sustainability Appraisal objectives' above, is an appropriate approach?

Response

- **The Sustainability appraisal objectives are less place specific. It is not clear the impact of these on policy as a whole. Applying the Local Plan objectives (Option A – take forward the current Local Plan objectives) provides a more specific direction for local planning policy.**

3.0 SPATIAL STRATEGY

3.1 **SS 1 Housing needs** – *The suggested policy approach is that the Council plans to deliver a minimum of 1,914 new homes each year, over the plan period.*

Question SS1: Is there any reason for the Council not to plan for delivering a minimum of 1,914 new homes each year?

Question SS2: 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?

Response

- Chester Zoo do not see any reason for the Council not to deliver on their increased housing target over the plan period. An up-to-date housing needs assessment would be welcomed to ensure the target is accurate for the housing demand in Chester.
- Chester Zoo do not believe the Council should consider a stepped housing requirement, planning for a lower level of delivery earlier in the plan period. Reference is made by the Council to a quantum of undeveloped planning permissions and undeveloped Local Plan allocations, the basis for which they would justify a stepped approach presumably. The counter argument is to ask why permissions haven't been implemented and why allocations have not been progressed through Planning. Constraints are clearly precluding these development opportunities, the majority of which may be insurmountable and so the quantum may be deemed available but simply not deliverable.

- 3.2 **SS3 Spatial Strategy Principles** - *The spatial strategy will follow the principle of directing new development and allocating land, towards previously developed sites within settlements first, as they are the most sustainable locations with best access to services and facilities.*

Redeveloping urban sites comes with a range of choices, especially concerning density and the height of buildings. This approach will require a strong commitment to high quality design to ensure that there is adequate private and shared open space, there are services and access to facilities and issues regarding car parking and travel are resolved.

Urban extensions

Where there are not enough planning permissions and opportunities for redevelopment within urban areas and towns, the approach will be to develop on the edge of existing settlements in locations with the best access to public transport and existing services and infrastructure, as the next best sustainable option. Depending on the settlement this may require the release of Green Belt land.

Questions SS4: 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?

Response

- **Chester Zoo would be in favour of the spatial strategy of development within settlements, then followed by edge of settlement sites which are located sustainably. This ensures that future residential development still follows the hierarchical position as per the adopted Local Plan, with Chester top tier. Grey Belt opportunities can still be accommodated, together with small scale urban extensions on open countryside in other high tier settlements such as Ellesmere Port and Winsford, together with appropriate levels in the key service centres.**

3.3 **SS4 Settlement Hierarchy**

The new Local Plan will set out a settlement hierarchy, based on their status and role in providing local infrastructure and services for their relatively larger populations and the surrounding hinterland, for the following places:

- **Chester (city)**
- *Ellesmere Port (main town)*
- *Northwich (main town)*
- *Winsford (main town)*
- *Neston and Parkgate (market town)*
- *Frodsham (market town)*

An individual place-based policy for each settlement will set out the vision, core features, key issues and clear strategy for what development will take place in each settlement.

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?

Response

- Chester Zoo supports these spatial strategy principles. This ensures that future residential development still follows the hierarchical position, as per the adopted Local Plan, with the principal focus on Chester as a top tier settlement. Grey Belt opportunities can be accommodated, together with small scale urban extensions on open countryside or Green Belt release, together with appropriate levels in the key service centres.

3.4 SS5 Spatial Strategy Options

The three initial options for growth that we have identified are as follows:

- *Option A – Retain the Green Belt*
- *Option B – Follow current Local Plan level and distribution of development*
- *Option C – Sustainable transport corridors*

Each of the three alternatives is illustrative only – they indicate the possible pattern and scale of development which might be required and use a diagram base map to give a visual impression of where growth might take place but without identifying specific locations or sites for development.

All options are capable of accommodating at least 29,000 new homes and 149 hectares of employment land.

A place identified on the plan indicates a potential capacity across a range of different sites – and would not be necessarily delivered as a single site. It should not be assumed that places identified on the plan for ‘500-1,500 homes’, for example, are expected to accommodate as much as 1,500 (it could be significantly less).

Where an option indicates that the development of sites outside of a settlement might be necessary (possibly in the Green Belt and/or the countryside), some potential growth areas are identified in section 5.1 Potential growth areas below.

However, it must be noted that the examiner’s report(i) into the Local Plan (Part One) concluded that additional release of Green Belt land around Chester would have a significant adverse effect on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt including to the historic setting, and that the amended Green Belt boundary proposed was capable of enduring and would not need to be altered at the end of the plan period (2030).

It is recognised there may be other options/approaches that could be taken and this consultation provides the opportunity for suggesting amendments to the options proposed or suggesting new options.

3.5 Option A: Retain the Green Belt

3.6 *This approach therefore assumes that any new development areas are located outside the Green Belt.*

3.7 *For housing development it includes:*

- *Major development in and to the south of Northwich of just over 5,000 homes.*
- *Significant urban extensions to the south/west of Winsford of more than 11,000 homes.*
- *Growth around places that are not located in the Green Belt, such as Tarporley, Tattenhall, Malpas and Farndon.*
- *More limited development to the south/east of Tarvin, Kelsall and Cuddington and Sandiway on sites that are not in the Green Belt.*

3.8 Option B: Follow current Local Plan level and distribution of development

3.9 *This approach follows the existing Local Plan strategy and settlement hierarchy set out in Local Plan (Part One) Policy STRAT 2, which locates most new development in, or on the edge of the main urban areas, and an appropriate level of new development focused on the smaller settlements which have adequate services and facilities and access to public transport.*

3.10 *A key difference between the Local Plan (Part One) and the new Local Plan is that there is a much more limited supply of previously developed land to accommodate new development, and unlike the last plan, larger areas of Green Belt and/or countryside are likely to be needed.*

3.11 *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.*

3.12 *For housing development it includes:*

- *Large urban extensions around: Chester; Ellesmere Port; Northwich and Winsford.*
- *Total Green Belt release of sites to deliver 11,000 homes.*
- *Relatively limited development in Cuddington and Sandiway; Farndon; Frodsham; Helsby; Kelsall; Malpas; Neston and Parkgate; Tarporley; Tarvin; and Tattenhall of 3,000 homes in total.*
- *2,500 homes across the rest of the rural area, including both Green Belt and non-Green Belt land.*

Question SS 9: Have circumstances changed since the adoption of the Local Plan (Part One), that would now justify Green Belt release?

Question SS 10: Are there any other considerations that we should take account of in relation to future Green Belt policy?

Question SS 11: 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

Question SS 12: Do you have any alternative spatial strategy options that you would like to suggest?

Question SS 13: Aside from those settlements identified in the spatial strategy options, should new housing or other development be allowed in other settlements? If so, please specify what type of development? For example, infill etc?

Question SS 14 Do you feel that Option A is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?

Question SS 15 If you do not feel that Option A is an appropriate spatial strategy option, are there any changes that you could suggest?

Question SS 16: Do you feel that Option B is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?

Question SS 17: If you do not feel that Option B is an appropriate spatial strategy option, are there any changes that you could suggest?

Response

- A change in the national government objectives with significantly increased housing targets have changed the circumstances of development in CWAC since the adoption of the Local Plan (Part One). Brownfield land within settlement boundaries is a finite resource and availability is only reducing. Hence, extensions to existing settlements must be a supported option. This can include both open countryside land and Green Belt release, so long as the scale of such extensions is appropriate to the strategic growth of established settlements.
- Should Green Belt release be justified, which it is in particular locations, as it is the only option geographically for the expansion of some settlements, this is best served by small-scale releases across a series of appropriate locations. Most notably Chester, in the first tier of the settlement hierarchy, which is completely enveloped by Green Belt designation.
- Therefore, Chester Zoo are in favour of the retention of Green Belt land per se, whilst recognising that some small-scale release of Green Belt is likely to be required in strategic locations to support the new housing target. Large urban extensions are not necessary and are not supported.
- In order to meet the new housing targets and contribute to boosting the supply of homes, Chester Zoo would consider that areas of the Green Belt which met the Grey Belt definition should be the priority for release from Green Belt designation.
- What is required is an updated Green Belt Study, comparable to that undertaken for the last Local Plan review.

- This would allow for development of the small parcels of land which are surrounded by, or well related to, existing development and are not contributing to the purposes of the Green Belt.
- Additionally, Green Belt policies should reflect the change in national policy with the recognition of grey belt land and its development as an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. If the council were minded not to release any Green Belt where there is existing development on all sides, this land could be developed under a grey belt policy.
- Chester Zoo would consider that development on this basis, identifying areas which not contributing to the Green Belt and either releasing them or developing them under a grey belt approach would allow the council to reach their housing targets without large scale Green Belt release which would have an adverse impact on the key settlements and the surrounding area.
- In summary, none of the three presented Options can be supported, as presented. The suggested spatial strategy approach is a revised Option B, to include consideration of small-scale release of Green Belt (akin to Grey Belt definition) in appropriate locations. It is paramount to allow small scale extension of the Chester settlement boundary, including site-specific Green Belt release. This is opposed to any large-scale release of Green Belt, which will only go to compromising the value of the wider Green Belt and weaken its protection. The previous Green Belt Study and its conclusions is a good starting point.

3.13 **Option C** – Sustainable Transport Corridors

This option would see new homes focused in and around settlements on the railway network, and on main bus route corridors (based on those routes with a bus service frequency of at least one per hour). Focusing development in locations currently well-served by trains and buses would maximise opportunities for sustainable travel choices and could support future improvements to services, frequency and hours.

This approach could have a greater impact on the Green Belt if multiple developments took place along corridors potentially adding to the impression of urban sprawl and the merging of settlements.

For housing development, it includes:

- *A more distributed pattern of development.*
- *More modest urban extensions around: Chester; Ellesmere Port; Northwich; and Winsford*
- *Smaller settlements with a rail station, such as: Cuddington and Sandiway; Helsby; Frodsham; and Neston and Parkgate would take a bigger role in accommodating development.*
- *Total Green Belt release of sites to deliver more than 12,000 homes.*
- *Potential for further development in the rural area and in places along bus corridors including: Farndon; Malpas; Tarporley; Tarvin; and Tattenhall.*
- *Potential for an enhanced role around rural rail stations including: Acton Bridge; Capenhurst; Delamere; Elton; Hooton; Lostock Gralam; and Mouldsworth*

Question SS 18: Do you feel that Option C is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?

Question SS 19: If you do not feel that Option C is an appropriate spatial strategy option, are there any changes that you could suggest?

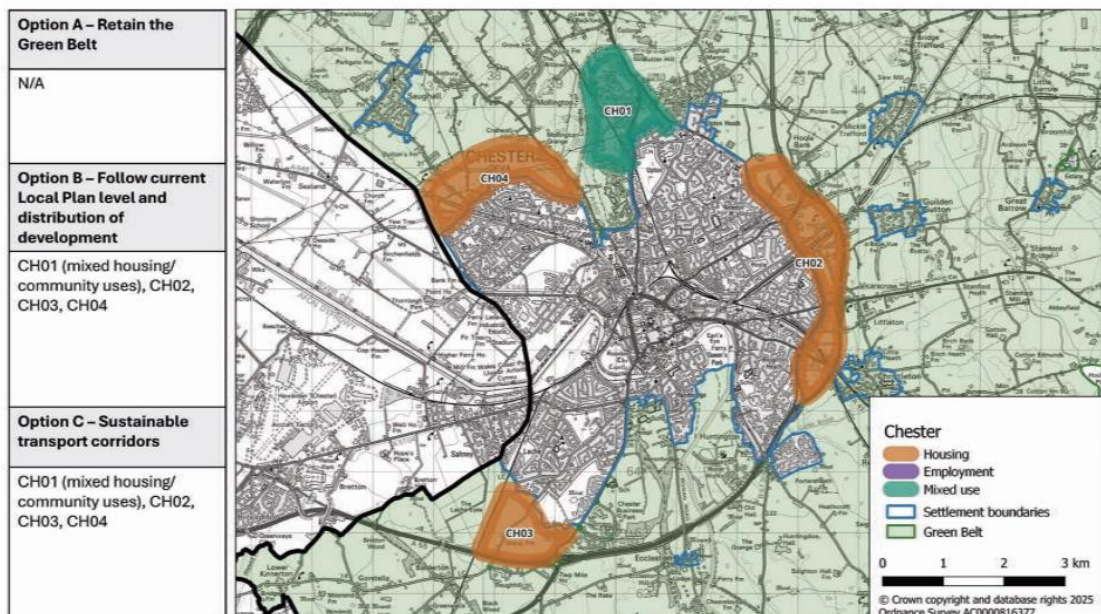
Response

- Chester Zoo would consider that Option C has some potential, particularly with reference to modest urban extensions around Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements. What needs to be clarified is that these extensions would be accommodated through limited Green Belt release in addition to areas of open countryside.
- Chester is clearly the priority transport hub in the Borough and should continue to be supported as such going forward.
- If this more distributed pattern of development was pursued, through modest urban extensions via both Green Belt release and countryside land, so balancing the geographical expansion of a number of settlements where there is a Grey Belt / Countryside geographic distinction, this would avoid the potential for urban sprawl and such an Option can be favoured.

POTENTIAL GROWTH AREAS

3.14 Under the SS5 Spatial Strategy Options, new areas and broad locations for development have been identified. The relevant areas are considered below:

Map 5.4 Chester growth options



Question SS 23 Which of the identified potential growth areas around Chester do you consider to be the most suitable?

Question SS 24 Do you have any further comments about any of the potential growth areas identified around Chester?

Question SS 25 Are there any constraints, including infrastructure provision, that should be considered for Chester when developing the new Local Plan?

Response

- It is considered that development of the proposed growth areas to the east and west of Chester (CH02 and 04) will result in an adverse impact on the land within the Green Belt, the setting of the city and its wider surroundings.
- CH01 is the most suitable growth area due to the extent of existing development within the area. This growth area includes area 8, a parcel of land identified in the previous Green Belt review which does not meet any of the purposes of the Green Belt.
- Area CH01 can still be progressed as a growth area, whilst pursuing spatial strategy Option B (in varied form with allowance for small scale release of Green Belt), as it is considered that land within growth area CH01 would be considered appropriate for development under existing national grey belt policy, as it does not contribute to purposes a), b) or d) of Green Belt land. Therefore, it is the most appropriate option for growth of Chester, whilst retaining the Green Belt as a whole.

4.0 POLICY-SPECIFIC - CHESTER

- 4.1 **Policy CH1** outlines the policy for development within Chester, focusing on the One City Plan and ensuring new development will protect the historic environment and special character of the city.
- 4.2 This policy includes the suggestion to “Retain and update content of Local Plan (Part Two) **policy GBC 1.A** - Chester Zoo - for zoological purposes.”
- 4.3 The supporting text within the Issues and Options document indicates that
- “Several large-scale major sites in the Green Belt are located close to the settlement boundary edge of Chester – Chester Zoo, Countess of Chester Health Park, Dale Barracks and Chester Business Park. **The chosen spatial strategy (see SS 5 'Spatial strategy options') will determine whether Green Belt boundaries will be amended, and the relevant existing policies may need to be amended to reflect this and/or national changes to Green Belt policy (including grey belt policy and guidance). It is proposed to retain the content of Local Plan (Part Two) policies GBC 1.A-D to provide a framework and guidance for future development of these areas subject to comments received including from site owners/operators.** Dale Barracks will be put forward as a potential allocation due to the Ministry of Defence wishing to cease military use of the site. Local Plan (Part Two) policies GBC 1.A-D will be amended to reflect the changes since the last plan and streamlined where necessary to avoid the repetition of policies and/or reflect changes to national policy”.

Question CH 1 Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards Chester, as set out in CH 1 'Chester' above? If not, please suggest how it could be amended

Response

- Whilst Chester Zoo consider that the most suitable spatial strategy is Option B (in varied form with allowance for small scale release of Green Belt), the suggestion to retain policy GBC1.A is welcomed to allow the Zoo to continue to evolve and develop throughout the plan period.
- The Zoo would welcome an update to local policy to reflect the change in national policy relating to grey belt development. This would allow for the development of land which does not contribute to the purposes of the Green Belt.
- Whilst the entirety of the Chester Zoo site is washed over by Green Belt designation, there is a boundary established on the Policies Map for the commercial site in the Green Belt (Policy GBC 1.A), it is not representative of the full extent of what is strictly speaking operational land. Chester Zoo would suggest that a review of the Policies Map is undertaken to reflect a policy boundary that correctly reflects operational land, which is subject to a variety of uses under the control of the Zoo. The policy will continue to allow for development where it is for zoological purposes or the operational improvements or the enhancement of visitor attractions and ancillary facilities.

5.0 POLICY-SPECIFIC - GREEN BELT

5.1 **Policy GB1** - Green Belt outlines the proposed approach to Green Belt and countryside development.

The current Local Plan (Part One) policy STRAT 9 may need to be updated if required to set out approach to grey belt and to reflect Green Belt review evidence (to be prepared) in terms of overall approach and to inset areas/washed over settlements.

The supporting text to Local Plan (Part One) policy STRAT 9 can be reduced as does not need to quote NPPF or to refer to future work in Local Plan (Part Two).

Delete Local Plan (Part Two) policy GBC 1 and cover the commercial sites listed in the policy within the Chester and Ellesmere Port policy sections of the plan, retaining policy requirements if relevant to the site.

Question GB 1 Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards Green Belt and countryside, as set out in GB 1 'Green Belt and countryside' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended.

Question GB 2 Should there be a separate policy for countryside and Green Belt areas

Question GB 3 Are any other uses appropriate in the countryside that should be reflected in the policy?

Question GB 4 Should the policy limit redevelopment to that of the same use and other policy compliant development?

Question GB 5 How else can rural buildings, rural character be protected to and prevent new development harming the intrinsic character through 'urbanising' the countryside?

Response

- **Chester Zoo will welcome updating Green Belt policy to reflect the change in national policy including the approach to development on grey belt land.**
- **In consideration of support for Option B (in varied form with allowance for small scale release of Green Belt), they would also welcome a Green Belt review which indicates areas which are washed over by Green Belt designation, but do not contribute to the purposes of the Green Belt or the surrounding area., to be considered for small scale releases.**
- **It is considered that there should be separate policies for the countryside and Green Belt in light of the changes to national policy and the updated exceptions to development within designated Green Belt areas.**

6.0 POLICY-SPECIFIC – VISITOR ECONOMY

6.1 **Policy VE1** sets out the proposed policy for the visitor economy in Chester with specific reference to Chester Zoo.

Visitor Attractions

The following are significant visitor attractions, identified on the policies map. Development proposals will be supported subject to criteria below:

- *Chester Zoo – zoological purposes*
 - a. Refer to Green Belt and Chester policies*
 - b. Proposals should be comprehensively planned in line with an agreed development strategy for the wider site*

Question VE1 - Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards the visitor economy, as set out in VE 1 'Visitor economy' above? If not, please suggest how it could be amended?

Question VE4 - Should a site-specific policy be considered for any other significant visitor attractions? Please provide your reasons.

Response

- Chester Zoo would welcome a specific policy in relation to the visitor economy and tourism opportunities that it delivers.
- In line with the Green Belt and Chester policies, the Zoo would welcome a review of the boundary against which Policy GBC1.A is considered – as per representation made to Question CH1. The Zoo has a long-term strategic development plan, aligned with which are sizeable financial commitments. Notwithstanding site-specific development management criteria, preliminary support in principle through the Local Plan strategic policies is paramount.

7.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

- 7.1 It is considered that Chester Zoo would be in support of Option B (in varied form with allowance for small scale release of Green Belt) as a spatial strategy for Cheshire West and Chester.
- 7.2 Chester Zoo are in favour of the retention of Green Belt land per se, whilst recognising that some small-scale release of Green Belt is likely to be required in strategic locations to support the new housing target. Large urban extensions are not necessary and are not supported.
- 7.3 In order to meet the new housing targets and contribute to boosting the supply of homes, Chester Zoo would consider that areas of the Green Belt which met the Grey Belt definition should be the priority for release from Green Belt designation.
- 7.4 What is required is an updated Green Belt Study, comparable to that undertaken for the last Local Plan review.
- 7.5 Chester Zoo would welcome the updating of Green Belt policy to reflect the changes in national planning policy, including reference to grey belt land and its exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 7.6 Additionally, the Zoo welcome the inclusion of Policy GBC 1.A within the new local plan which recognises the need for Chester Zoo to continue to grow and develop. Chester Zoo would welcome this policy being applied to a bounded area of their land ownership to provide comfort to the local authority as to the extent of their development plans and to provide certainty to Chester Zoo on the acceptability of development within the Green Belt on their land.

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