

20<sup>th</sup> January 2026**Cheshire Community Action – Consultation Response to the Regulation 16, Blacon Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Development Order**

Cheshire Community Action welcomes the opportunity to comment on the submitted Blacon Community Neighbourhood Plan (BCNP) and Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO). We have reviewed the submission version of the plan (October 2025) and appreciate the revisions made since the pre-submission consultation. Having been closely involved in the community engagement that underpins the BCNP, Cheshire Community Action would like to reiterate our support while offering a few updated observations.

**Continued support for Policies BLACON1-BLACON4**

- **Policy BLACON1 – Sports & Community Hub.** The submission version confirms that proposals to deliver a community-led Sports & Community Hub at Cairns Crescent will be supported provided they meet clear criteria, including provision for indoor sports and community uses, retention of the two full-size football pitches, re-provision of the children's play area, safe access and parking and the delivery of sustainable drainage. We remain convinced that a community-led facility is essential to meeting the needs identified through the 2024 engagement and support the NDO mechanism to provide certainty for funders and stakeholders. The policy allows for flexibility in the size and phasing of the Hub while protecting the remainder of the site as Local Green Space. In our earlier response we highlighted the high public demand for such a facility and the importance of inclusive governance; those points remain valid. We encourage the design team to continue to engage with user groups to ensure accessibility for all ages and abilities, and to explore sustainable building methods alongside the sustainable drainage requirement.
- **Policy BLACON2 – Community Facilities.** We support the plan's designation of key community facilities – including schools, places of worship, care homes and medical centres – which will be protected through existing Local Plan policies. Protecting these assets is crucial to community wellbeing and social infrastructure. We are pleased to see the list updated and clearly mapped, and we reiterate the need for flexibility to adapt and enhance facilities where appropriate.
- **Policy BLACON3 – Western Avenue Local Retail Centre.** Recognising Western Avenue as a local retail centre alongside The Parade helps to protect and enhance local shopping. This designation will help maintain a critical mass of shops and services. We support the intention to encourage a healthier, more diverse retail offer and suggest that future guidance could include support for start-up enterprises and social enterprises.

- **Policy BLACON4 – Local Green Spaces.** The plan designates fifteen Local Green Spaces, from Saxon Way Playing Field to Cairns Crescent Playing Field. We welcome this protection, which reflects the community’s desire to preserve accessible green spaces for recreation, wellbeing and biodiversity. Protecting these areas will ensure that Blacon retains valuable green assets as new development comes forward.

### **Integration with the Pride in Place Programme**

Since the Regulation 14 consultation, the Government has announced that Blacon South will receive up to £20 million over 10 years through the Pride in Place Programme. This programme provides a 10-year investment of £20 million per neighbourhood to disadvantaged areas and aims to build strong, resilient and integrated communities. Under the scheme, local people will decide how the funding is used to create thriving places with high-quality amenities and green spaces. We believe that the Sports & Community Hub and associated improvements (Policy BLACON1) align perfectly with the aims of the Pride in Place programme. Coordination between the Blacon Community Trust, Cheshire West and Chester Council and the new Neighbourhood Board will be essential to ensure that the hub benefits from this long-term investment and is delivered in a timely manner.

### **Additional observations**

- **Sustainability and resilience.** We endorse the plan’s requirement for sustainable drainage on the hub site and encourage further consideration of renewable energy generation, low-carbon materials and climate resilience measures to future-proof the development.
- **Inclusive access and governance.** We appreciate that the NDO requires the hub to be run by a community-led non-profit organisation. We encourage the governance arrangements to reflect the diversity of Blacon, giving representation to young people, older residents and under-represented groups.
- **Monitoring and phasing.** As the plan covers the period to 2040, it would be helpful to set out how progress against the objectives will be monitored and when a review might take place. This could help ensure that the plan remains responsive to changing circumstances and maximises the benefit of the Pride in Place funding.

### **Conclusion**

Cheshire Community Action continues to support the Blacon Community Neighbourhood Plan and the accompanying Neighbourhood Development Order. We believe the submission version responds well to feedback received during the earlier consultation and provides a clear framework for delivering much-needed community infrastructure in Blacon. We urge Cheshire West and Chester Council to progress the plan and order to examination and adoption, and we look forward to working with partners to help realise the Sports & Community Hub and other community priorities.

If you need any further information or wish to discuss our comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

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