



Cheshire Community Action Response to the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Scoping Consultation

September 2026

Purpose and overall position

CCA supports a positive and deliverable Local Plan that meets development needs while strengthening the places and services on which communities depend. We broadly agree with the proposed scope. The plan should concentrate its locally distinctive content on the policy choices that national policy cannot resolve for Cheshire West and Chester: rural settlement roles, the mix and delivery of housing, infrastructure capacity, community facilities and the relationship with neighbourhood plans.

This response updates CCA's June 2025 submission and the joint CCA and Cheshire West Voluntary Action response. It reflects the August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework, the Cheshire and Warrington Rural Needs Analysis and delivery pressures discussed by the Rural Housing Task Group.

Main policy priorities

- A settlement hierarchy and rural-cluster approach based on functional links, service catchments, transport and digital access, planned investment and realistic infrastructure capacity, not only current service counts.
- A locally distinctive rural housing framework covering exception sites, community-led housing, affordable housing within larger schemes, local connection and long-term affordability.
- Clear expectations for housing mix, tenure, size and accessibility, informed by parish evidence alongside housing-register, demographic, market and planning data.
- Infrastructure-led growth, with allocations and phasing based on credible evidence about water, wastewater, drainage, highways, energy, health, education and other services.
- Protection and planned provision of community and social infrastructure, including viable arrangements for contributions, co-location, management, running costs and stewardship.
- A clear relationship with neighbourhood plans so that effective local evidence, allocations, designations and distinctive policies continue to carry appropriate weight.

Question 1 Scope of the new Local Plan

CCA broadly agrees with the proposed scope. The following points identify where local policy and evidence could add most value.

Topic	CCA policy view
Settlement hierarchy and place visions	Reflect functional rural relationships, service catchments and opportunities for proportionate renewal. Town strategies should consider surrounding rural catchments.
Housing and rural housing	Keep several delivery routes open: small exception sites, community-led schemes, council land and affordable housing within larger developments.
Movement, design and environment	Combine safe walking and wheeling, public and community transport, realistic rural parking, digital connectivity, green infrastructure and locally distinctive design.
Health, services and community facilities	Treat accessible services and community buildings as social infrastructure and address their provision, retention, contributions, management and long-term viability.
Local labour and skills	Link strategic development to local employment and training, recognising rural access barriers and relevant voluntary or social-enterprise delivery.
HMO Article 4 areas, Jodrell Bank and retail thresholds	CCA offers no specialist view, but does not object to their inclusion.

Evidence for rural policy

The Rural Needs Analysis reports that 18 per cent of the Cheshire and Warrington population and 67 per cent of its land area are rural. Area-wide averages can conceal poor public transport and last-mile access, uneven digital coverage, housing mismatch, utility constraints, fragile services, isolation and hidden deprivation. The settlement strategy should therefore use functional evidence rather than assume that places with fewer existing services are inherently unsuitable for any growth.

CCA's thirteen parish housing studies identified a need for 844 additional homes, including 363 affordable homes, with strong demand for one and two-bedroom properties and marked local variation in tenure. This supports parish-sensitive policies for housing mix, accessible homes, older people's housing and affordable provision. Parish findings should be considered alongside wider market, register and demographic evidence, with requirements proportionate to the scale of a proposal.

Delivery pressures

The rural small site pipeline contained 5 schemes with potential for around 166 affordable homes in September 2026, but only two had permission and none had started. Several smaller sites had been withdrawn, constrained or moved towards market-led proposals. The plan should keep small locally led routes viable while testing land, infrastructure, provider appetite, funding and management early. Strategic allocations should not depend on infrastructure assumptions that are not credible.

Question 2 Other local policies

CCA suggests five priority areas for concise, locally focused policy. They would add Cheshire West and Chester evidence and delivery detail without duplicating national decision-making policy.

1 Rural places and sustainable service networks

Define settlement roles using current and planned services, travel and digital access, service catchments and community capacity. Policy should allow proportionate renewal where it would meet evidenced needs, while aligning the scale and phasing of growth with infrastructure and cumulative-impact evidence.

2 Needs-led rural and community-led housing

Retain a locally distinctive framework for rural affordable housing, exception sites and community-led development. In applying NPPF policy HO10, specify proportionate local evidence, local connection, long-term affordability and any justified circumstances for exceeding national exception-site size parameters. Keep affordable housing within larger schemes as an important parallel route.

3 Neighbourhood planning and local distinctiveness

Neighbourhood plans remain part of the development plan and can address local allocations, design, community facilities, green space, gaps, heritage and infrastructure. The Local Plan should identify its strategic policy boundary, recognise effective neighbourhood-plan evidence and policies, provide housing requirements early and explain how overlaps or inconsistencies will be resolved. Older or non-allocating plans may still contain valuable evidence even where the additional NPPF safeguard for recent allocating plans does not apply.

4 Community and social infrastructure

Use existing Council, parish, neighbourhood-plan and VCFSE evidence to identify service gaps, growth pressures and assets at risk. In applying NPPF policies HC1 and HC3 to HC7, set locally justified expectations for land, contributions, phasing, co-location, management and stewardship. Treat village halls, community centres, faith buildings, recreation space and voluntary-sector premises as part of the infrastructure needed for healthy and connected places.

5 Deliverable growth and community benefit

For strategic sites and area frameworks, identify critical infrastructure, sequencing, delivery bodies, funding assumptions and monitoring. Apply NPPF policies PM12 and PM13 through clear but viable local expectations. A small set of measurable outcomes could cover affordable and accessible housing, community space, sustainable transport, digital connectivity and local employment or training.

Questions 3 to 5 Information and participation

CCA agrees with the proposed communication methods. Engagement will be most useful when it is linked to clear choices about settlement strategy, housing, infrastructure and community facilities, supported by plain-language summaries and neighbourhood-scale maps.

Question 4 - additional methods

Existing partnerships: Use established rural housing, neighbourhood-planning, health and VCFSE networks.

Policy roundtables: Focus discussion on the principal policy choices and their delivery implications.

Community evidence route: Provide a simple way to submit local data, maps, service evidence and case studies.

Feedback on influence: Explain briefly how evidence affected policy choices and what remains unresolved.

Question 5 Five ways to widen participation

Work through trusted community organisations; hold short discussions in familiar community, health, education and advice settings; offer paper, telephone, assisted, Easy Read, translated and accessible online and face-to-face routes.

Role of the voluntary and community sector

Voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations hold useful evidence on demand, referrals, travel barriers, building use, volunteer capacity and groups experiencing exclusion. This can help identify policy gaps, infrastructure priorities and the practical effects of growth. CCA and CWVA can help coordinate shared evidence, while individual organisations should remain able to describe the people, places and services they know.

Sources

[Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Scoping Consultation](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework, August 2026](#)

[Putting communities at the heart of Cheshire and Warrington's devolution story](#)

Supporting evidence: Cheshire and Warrington Rural Needs Analysis; Rural Housing Task Group minutes and Rural Housing Enabler report; CCA and joint CCA and CWVA 2025 responses.

For more information about this response, please contact:

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