

**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Planning Committee		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	12 September 2024	<b>LOCATION</b>	Congleton Town Hall
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	David McGifford Chief Officer and Jackie MacArthur, Marketing and Communities Manager and DCO		
<b>AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>9 Neighbourhood Plan</b> <b>9.1 See Appendix 1.</b> <b>9.2 Appendix 2 Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan document word version</b> <b>9.3 Early Draft Consultation Plan for Regulation 14</b>		
<b>9.2</b>	<p><b>Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan document word version</b></p> <p>In <b>Appendix 2</b> you will find the latest proposal for the Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan which has been developed on our behalf by Urban Imprint.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At the time of writing this report the Working Group will have received the same plan and they have been tasked to review amendments made following their meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2024.</li><li>• Any further proposed amendments from the working group will be brought to the committee's attention at the meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September.</li><li>• Once the plan has been approved for public consultation (with any agreed minimal changes) CTC staff will then authorise setting the main document in an engaging and accessible way. Draft pages showing the proposed design will be shared at the meeting.</li><li>• A designer has been commissioned to start working on the design – with the instruction of having a designed document with the Town Council by the 20<sup>th</sup> of September. To achieve this they have cleared next week to focus on this task.</li><li>• The designed draft document will go to the Council for approval on 3<sup>rd</sup> of October.</li><li>• If approval is given, printing will be authorised. The expectation is that we will be in a position to start consultation on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October.</li><li>• Consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks. 6 weeks will finish on Monday 26 November. We would recommend extending it to 30 November to make it more memorable.</li></ul>		

### 9.3 Proposed Consultation

#### Run Consultation from Monday 14 October to Saturday 30 November 2023

- a) Press release prepared after 3rd October to announce a 14th October start of consultation.
- b) Survey Monkey prepared to make it easier for people to give feedback and comments.

#### Physical Marketing

- a) Posters - noticeboards from 14 Oct to 30 November
- b) Banners - Fire Station, Bear Roundabout, High School – six weeks
- c) Pop-up banners for stalls
- d) 4 page pull out in Bear Necessities – out mid-October
- e) 1 page in Bear Town Voice – early October – the expectation of consultation
- f) 2 page in Bear Town Voice – early November - pushing the consultation
- g) Postcards delivered to houses and shops with a QR code link
- h) Articles in the press - all six weeks in the Chronicle starting 17 October – policy area per week
- i) Drop-in sessions in the Town Hall – will need display materials
- j) Stall booked for Makers Market – on the 26 October – will need to be staffed
- k) Roadshow tables at West Heath, Tescos, Barn Road.
- l) Paper copies of Survey Monkey – Library, CIC, NLC, St John’s Community, cafes
- m) Letter to businesses via Chamber of Commerce (paid for)
- n) Advertise the prize draw to encourage more people to respond to the questionnaire
- o) Articles and items for discussion sent to group meetings across Congleton
- p) School assemblies - High School - (should we do something for primary schools?)

#### Digital

- a) Upload all the policies on [www.Congletonneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.Congletonneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)
- b) Create URLs for each of the 28 policies
- c) On-line Survey Monkey created for wide consultation – offer one prize of £100 and 2 of £50 for non-statutory responses drawn at the end of the close of the consultation. Paper copies will be added into the mix for the draw
- d) Mail Chimp set up to mail out information about the policies.
- e) Database has been created containing statutory addresses sent by CEC, local contacts, local groups. They will be sent an email and links to the document and checked on response numbers. There are around 250 emails in this database.
- f) Emails will be sent to all shops via the office database.
- g) A schedule of social media posts will be scheduled to cover all 28 policies and seek feedback on individual policies. The consultation will be via Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter).

Provide editorial for local newsletters – schools, U3A, church groups, rotary, WI – large groups which have regular news updates.

<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>There will be extensive staff and councillor resource time spent on the six-week consultation as well as external costs for design, print and delivery depending on options chosen by the Council. Best estimate costs will be discussed further in the meeting.</p>
<b>Environmental Implications</b>	<p>As with Bear Necessities, we will look to use sustainably sourced paper for printing. To reach as many of our community as possible we will need to produce physical copies of the plan, as well as summary documents and publicity materials.</p>
<b>Equality and Diversity</b>	<p>The plan will be accessible to all which needs to be incorporated into the Regulation 14 Plan and the proposed methods of consultation</p>
<b>Decision Requested</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To approve Regulation 14 Neighbourhood Plan for consultation with any agreed minor amendments on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September for ratification by the Council on the 3rd of October (9.2)</li> <li>• To make comments relating to the draft Consultation Plan (9.3)</li> <li>• Consider and advise officers of any support you can provide</li> </ul>

**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>Planning Committee</b>		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> September 2024 7.00 pm</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Town Hall</b>
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	<b>David McGifford – Chief Officer</b>		
<b>AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>9.1 Planning Considerations</b>		
	<p>There have been previous discussions within this committee with regard to updating the current Town Council Planning Checklist which is taken from the CEC Planning Portal for guidance. No decisions could be made from these discussions as it was not an agenda item, the additions came under two headings <b>Building Sustainably and Inclusively</b>. There were some comments that these should / could be included within the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is almost ready for Regulation 14 Consultation so for the proposed additions to be considered the committee would need to agree to the changes (with amendments if required) to the planning checklist. The validity of including these additions within the Neighbourhood Plan was questioned by the Chief Officer.</p> <p>Our professional planning advisors Urban Imprint stated that the planning checklist has been referenced within the justification of the policy rather than within the policy itself. It therefore does not carry as much weight as it would within a policy and is therefore more likely to be accepted by an examiner. It is useful for those submitting applications to know what the Town Council's committee will be considering when commenting on applications.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Congleton Town Council Current Planning Checklist</b></p> <p>When considering planning applications the most common ‘material considerations’ include the following, the list is not exhaustive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local, strategic, regional and national planning policies</li> <li>• Government circulars, orders and statutory instruments</li> <li>• Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions)</li> <li>• Design, visual appearance and materials</li> <li>• Layout and density of the building</li> <li>• Loss of daylight or sunlight</li> <li>• Overshadowing/loss of outlook (but not view loss)</li> <li>• Overlooking/loss of privacy</li> <li>• Noise and disturbance from use</li> <li>• Smells</li> <li>• Light Pollution</li> </ul>		

- Highway and safety issues
- Traffic generation
- Vehicular access
- Adequacy of parking
- Loss of important trees
- Landscaping
- Nature conservation
- Intrusion into the open countryside/green belt
- Risk of flooding.
- Effect of listed buildings and conservation areas
- Archaeology
- Hazardous materials and ground contamination
- Disabled Persons access

## **2. Proposed additional sections to the list**

When considering any decisions, the Town Council Policy is to consider the environmental issues associated with that decision. The context of the planning process this checklist provides prompts for councillors to review the sustainability of developments. All points are compatible with the National & Cheshire East Policy.

### **Building Sustainably**

- *Does the proposed design aim to minimise energy requirements?*
- *Is the use of reclaimed or recycled materials apparent in the application?*
- *Does the application address standards for energy efficiency? For example triple glazing and LED Lighting.*
- *Are new homes to be fitted with a source of renewable energy?*
- *Are sites allocated for new housing easily accessible by walking/cycling /public transport?*
- *Does the application avoid the loss of local nature sites and green spaces?*
- *Where the application includes a new open space, does it include sufficient new native tree coverage and other plant life?*
- *Does the application support low-carbon vehicles, for example, with electric vehicle charging points easily accessible?*
- *Does the application propose building on a flood plain?*
- *Does the application include where appropriate water-saving measures such as using water butts, and toilet flushers that save water and runoff water in concrete areas?*
- *If it is a community or non-residential building, is it being built as close to net zero as possible?*

### **Building Inclusively**

The consideration of equality issues is also Town Council Policy. This checklist has been reviewed in conjunction with Congleton's Equal Advisory Access Group as a prompt for councillors on relevant planning applications.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the site have a Travel Plan which meets the standard of the Transport for New Homes framework?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is supporting public transport infrastructure appropriately designed – for example, dropped kerbs, wide enough roads, bus stops?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are open spaces designed with accessibility and inclusion in mind – for example playgrounds and community open spaces?</i></li> <li>• <i>Has appropriate lighting been included to ensure night-time safety?</i></li> <li>• <i>Have developers included security measures related to home access – lighting, cameras, locks etc?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is any affordable housing component distributed rather than ‘ghettoed’?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the development include a community hub or consider access and connection to local community facilities?</i></li> <li>• <i>Has multi-generational living been considered? For example, sufficient car parking for extended family and level access for those with limited mobility.</i></li> <li>• <i>If this is a supported living facility has extra consideration been given to access to transport and community facilities?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Environmental</b>	Acts as a prompt for councillors on relevant planning applications.
<b>Equality</b>	Acts as a prompt for councillors on relevant planning applications.
<b>Financial</b>	No financial impact
<b>Proposal</b>	To approve the proposed update to the Planning Considerations Guidance

# Congleton Neighbourhood Plan

**4<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

Regulation 14 consultation  
version

**DATES for consultation period**

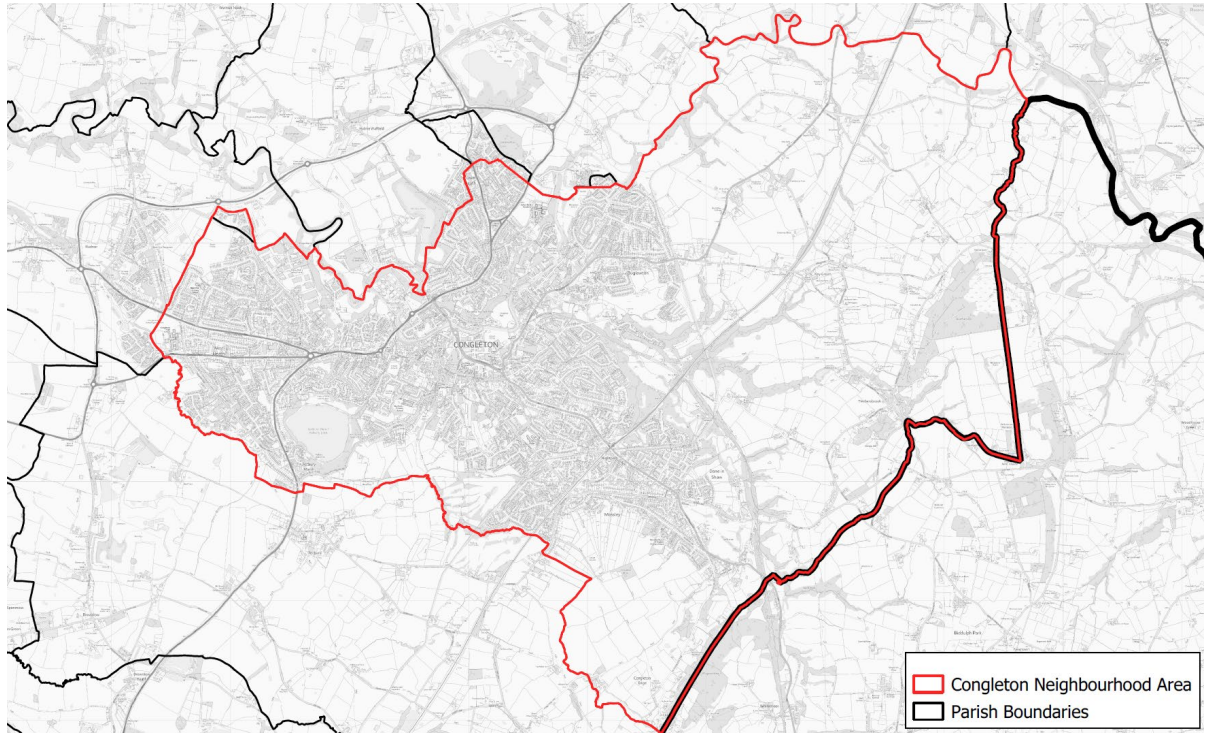
Plan period 2014 – 2030

Foreword – to be written by CTC



## **Contents**

## Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Area



*Map 1 – Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Area\**

*\*Please note that the Congleton Town Parish Boundary has been altered and the designated Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Area will be formally amended to match the parish boundary.*

## What is the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood Planning gives the local community as loud a voice as the Council and developers.

- It is all about improving the town we live and work in, by producing a vision for its future
- It gives us a chance to think about what we care about in our local area and what kind of place we all want to create
- We know what is best for the town as we live here

A Neighbourhood Plan is drawn up by the community. It sets out a shared vision and policies to shape the future growth and development of the town. It will be used by Cheshire East Council in deciding planning applications alongside their planning strategy documents, known as the Local Plan. It also helps to identify projects that are most important to the community.

The Congleton Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Working Group on behalf of the Town Council following study, research and consultation with the local community. We have also worked closely with Cheshire East Council.

We have consulted with the community through open days, interest group meetings and surveys and we believe that the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan reflects the views of our community. A strong message emerging from the consultation process was that local people are proud of their town and have a very strong desire to build upon this for the future. This was key in developing the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Vision.

The Congleton Neighbourhood Plan sets out a series of policies which, once made, will be used to guide development and the preparation of planning applications. The policies will be used by Cheshire East Council in determining planning applications for all development proposals in Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Area.

## A Brief History of Congleton

Congleton is a long-established market town on the banks of the River Dane. Situated at a point where the foothills of the Pennines meet the Cheshire Plain, the town and its surrounding parishes have a rich history. The earliest settlements appear to have been in Neolithic times with archaeological finds from the Stone and Bronze ages. There is evidence of activity from the Romans and the Vikings in the vicinity and the Saxon Earl Godwin of Wessex held the town until it passed to the Norman Earl of Chester, as recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086.

During the latter part of the twentieth century, the town lost much of its traditional industrial base in textiles, although there has been some success in introducing new manufacturing, notably Siemens. Silica sand extraction has also provided a major industry during this time. One of the town's older manufacturers, in ribbons and labels, continues to thrive, but many of the mills that characterised the town have been demolished or renovated and put to new use. Many of the older buildings within Congleton remain, contributing to the three conservation areas which can be found within the town. Increasingly modern development, both commercial and residential, has taken place since the 1960s on the western periphery of the town and has spilled over into neighbouring parishes.

Congleton has historically been a "green" town, where tongues of landscape, such as hedges, fields and clumps of trees, extended into the heart of the town. Much of this has been lost to development in the recent past and there is little undeveloped space in the modern town. The valleys of the River Dane, Howty Brook and Timbersbrook run to and around the town, as does the Macclesfield Canal. These provide biodiversity and a green resource for recreational and leisure activities for the people of the town.

The Victorian Congleton Park, in the central Dane Valley and the redeveloped sand quarry known as Astbury Mere, together with some small community gardens, also help to preserve some of the traditional green environment of the town.

## Vision and Objectives

*Congleton will thrive as a distinctive town that offers a comprehensive range of homes, shops, jobs, services and facilities supported by the required infrastructure to cater for the needs of all our residents and businesses and encourage an environmentally friendly and sustainable approach. The special and unique character of Congleton, including its heritage assets and the surrounding countryside, will be protected, enhanced and promoted to make the town an attractive place in which to live, work and visit.*

1. To enhance our environment and implement sustainable building and renewable energy initiatives.
2. To develop an integrated sustainable transport framework within the town improving walking and cycling routes between everyday facilities such as shops, services, open spaces and the surrounding countryside.
3. To improve the attractiveness, vibrancy and accessibility of the town centre.
4. To deliver high-quality, distinctive and safe places which respect the town's heritage and character.
5. The long-term objective for Congleton is to have a range of high-quality community, leisure, health, social, creative and cultural facilities available and accessible to everyone who lives in the town.
6. The objective of the policies is to preserve and extend our green spaces.
7. To meet the objectively assessed local housing needs of Congleton especially the needs of the existing and future residents of the town to create a vibrant and inclusive local community.
8. To secure the future prosperity of Congleton, it is important to retain and attract a variety of new employment opportunities within the town to meet local needs and to support the local economy.

## Key Themes

Having outlined the issues and concerns which exist in present day Congleton, the key themes below form the backbone of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan.

- Protecting and enhancing the environment
- Creating a town that is accessible for all
- Improving health, education and wellbeing
- Providing for an ageing population
- Improving traffic flow
- Regenerating the town centre
- Ensuring the right housing supply
- Stimulating employment

# The Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Policies

## **Title page**

# Strategic Sustainability Policy

## Policy 1 – Congleton for Everyone Now and in the Future

Where planning permission is required, development of all scales will be expected to contribute positively to the quality of life offered by the town, to its unique character and to its adaptation to climate change through the promotion of sustainable contextually responsive inclusive development. All schemes will be required to meet the following criteria where applicable:

- **Resilience to climate change through careful use of low and zero-carbon technologies, including on-site energy production, prioritising the use of locally sourced materials, ensuring high energy and water efficiency, reducing reliance on the private car and future-proofing the town’s public spaces from the effects of extreme weather, improving sun, wind and rain tolerance**
- **Clustering of uses should be carefully considered to encourage sustainable transport modes and reinforce vitality and vibrancy of place**
- **Pedestrian and active travel links into Congleton Town Centre should be protected, enhanced and created where possible**
- **Promote good urban design that functions well and enhances the experience and opportunities of end users, with particular focus on creating socially inclusive communities that integrate well with existing communities**
- **Protects or enhances Congleton’s special landscape character, setting and the green infrastructure that inhabits the town**
- **Promote design that contributes to the character of Congleton as a town and the character areas across the town**
- **Encourages sufficient mix of housing types and tenures to serve the needs of new and future residents, including those who require supported or assisted accommodation**
- **Ensuring new homes, workplaces and facilities function well for all users with a special focus on the needs of the very old, the very young and the disabled**

### Justification

The neighbourhood plan seeks to build on the work that is already being undertaken by the Town Council and other stakeholders by providing a framework for the implementation of the ideas, principles and collective vision that is shared by residents. When reviewing planning applications, the Town Council will assess proposals against their Planning Checklist which encourages consideration of sustainability and biodiversity in decision making. The Planning Checklist can be found in Appendix 2.

This strategic policy incorporates all the key issues and topics that were raised by residents throughout previous rounds of consultation on the neighbourhood plan and reflects the overall focus of the plan as a whole. Congleton is a historic and vibrant market town, that services a significant rural hinterland of small villages, hamlets and parishes.

In this respect, this policy, which should be treated as a strategic policy in decision-making, sits alongside the policies in the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy which was adopted in 2017. Cheshire East Borough Council developed a series of town strategies in 2012 as part of the

early evidence base for the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2017 and this policy uses this as a starting point, although bringing it in line with more modern policy contexts.

The policy sets out, by way of a series of criteria, the form and function that development should take, promoting sustainable and climate-resilient growth – essentially a shared vision for the area (see paragraph 29 of the NPPF). The policy covers all the types and forms of development that might come forward, however big or small, as all of these in some way can contribute to creating a vibrant and sustainable town centre. Even small-scale householder extensions or changes of use can contribute in a small way. This approach to policy direction reflects guidance in national policy where neighbourhood plans offer localised interpretation of strategic policies.

#### Evidence base

- Congleton Town Strategy – Cheshire East Council 2012
- Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) – July 2017
- Congleton Estate Agents Survey Report – Congleton Town Council (September 2016)
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment (Part 1, 2 and 3) - Ruth Benson Landscape Planning (March 2020)
- Congleton Town Council Business Plan 2020 – 2023 – Published 2020
- Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan – Cushman and Wakefield December 2022
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 – paragraphs 13, 21 and 29



# Development Strategy

## Policy 2 – Brownfield Land First

**Planning applications for the redevelopment of previously developed land (brownfield) and small-scale windfall development within the settlement boundary of Congleton should be approved, subject to the compliance of the proposal with other relevant policies within the development plan. Applications will be required to clearly evidence how they contribute to the long term social, economic and environmental sustainability of the town.**

**Substantial weight will be given to planning applications on brownfield land within the settlement boundary for providing new high-quality homes which are accompanied by the adequate provision of recreational facilities including play areas. New business opportunities or the provision of community facilities, subject to ensuring safe and healthy living conditions, will also be supported on brownfield land.**

**Applications which seek to make more effective and efficient use of existing community services (e.g. schools, healthcare or leisure facilities) will be supported, subject to them demonstrating clearly how they can improve or maintain the quality of the service and ensure that there is no detriment to local ecological networks and their biodiversity value.**

**Outside of the settlement boundary the land remains open countryside and Green Belt and applications for the reuse of land and buildings will be determined in line with national and local policies. Within such locations, support will be given to developments which make provision for outdoor sport and recreation, particularly through new sports pitches, subject to local and national policy relating to appropriate development within the Green Belt. The redevelopment of previously developed sites where there is an improvement to the visual qualities within the wider landscape will also be supported, consistent with local and national planning policy.**

### Justification

Whilst it is accepted that the strategic growth priorities for Cheshire East include a significant number of larger housing sites at the edge of Congleton – many within other adjacent Parishes – and that much of the neighbourhood plan area is covered by rural agricultural land and communities, the town of Congleton itself has an important role to play in the future sustainable growth of not only the neighbourhood plan area but of the south-eastern area of Cheshire East.

The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (2017) is relatively silent on development within settlement boundaries and the Site Allocations DPD (2022) policies focus effectively on strict controls for testing the acceptability of development. This policy bridges the gap between these two levels of policy, setting out clear guidance for the nature and scale of development that will be deemed appropriate within the settlement boundary. Providing good quality new homes in the heart of the town has been identified as an important part of the community aspirations for Congleton, recognising that these can help support wider business and economic growth.

Development that happens within the settlement boundary of the town itself is supported by this policy. Development here will be seeking to make more efficient use of land, make better

use of underutilised buildings and redevelop previously developed / brownfield land. Essentially this policy would support the redevelopment of poor-quality buildings and sites, the careful redevelopment of former industrial land and the diversification of existing businesses and community facilities. The Town Council and its partners recognise clearly that inward investment into the town is an important part of creating a sustainable future (much of this outlined in the recent town centre vitality study – 2022).

#### Evidence base

- Congleton Town Strategy – Cheshire East Council 2012
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment - Ruth Benson Landscape Planning (March 2020)
- Is Uncontrolled Growth Causing Economic Decline? – Council Town Council February 2016
- Congleton Town Council Business Plan 2020 – 23 – Published 2020
- Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan – Cushman and Wakefield December 2022

## Policy 3 - Householder Conversions and Extensions

**Applications for the extension and alteration of existing homes (including making use of upper floors and the roof space) within the settlement boundary will be supported, subject to ensuring that they meet the amenity distances set out within policy HOU13 of the Cheshire East Local Plan (or subsequent replacement policy) and reflect the character and appearance of the original host building. Where applications relate to or fall within proximity to designated heritage assets, particular emphasis will be given to the external appearance and relationship of a development to its surroundings. Applications which are designed to enable people to adapt their homes to accommodate family growth or to stay in their homes longer (as a result of ill-health or age) will also be supported.**

**Where planning permission is required, applications for the re-use of upper floors of retail and other commercial premises will be considered acceptable in principle subject to ensuring that appropriate parking and servicing (including waste storage and collection) arrangements are in place. Planning applications which propose the loss of ground floor retail or commercial premises through small-scale conversion should be determined on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the following:**

- **The site's specific contribution toward wider shopping parades within the town**
- **The relative importance of retaining an active frontage or use at that location**
- **The compatibility of the use which is proposed relative to the surrounding area**

### Justification

Whilst previous policies have considered the broad principles for new development within the urban area and on existing sites, the vast majority of planning applications submitted will be for smaller-scale development. This policy is designed to support homeowners, local businesses, and local landowners in making the best use of their properties and adapting and changing them to meet economic, social and environmental needs. Not all of these changes will require planning permission – many being covered by the permitted development rights – however, where this is not the case this policy seeks to provide additional flexibility in the approaches taken.

There are two broad strands to this policy, which are based around two socio-economic trends in the town. The first focuses on ensuring that homeowners can change and adapt their homes to deal with their changing circumstances. Congleton, like many Cheshire market towns, has an increasing need for older people's accommodation and allowing adaptation of their homes is important.

Coupled with this, the changes in retail and commercial markets means that there are often underutilised or disused retail and commercial premises. It is important that these are brought back into use wherever possible in order to maintain the vitality and vibrancy of the town, and on that basis this policy seeks to promote a flexible approach to change of use applications within the town centre. National policy is particularly supportive of this approach - Paragraph 90 sets out a flexible policy context for town centres and urban areas, which this policy seeks to capitalise upon.

Evidence base

- Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan – December 2022
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraphs 90 and 124 – 126

## Policy 4 - Conversion and Protection of Traditional Mill Buildings

**Planning applications for the reuse and conversion of the larger traditional brick and stone mills and buildings in the town will be afforded significant weight in any planning decision where they ensure that the character and identity of the building is retained, enhanced and accompanied by a clear delivery strategy.**

**Impacts on the historical significance of these buildings will be considered in accordance with policies in the Cheshire East Local Plan. Modest extensions and alterations to these buildings will be considered acceptable where it is required to ensure that the converted properties can meet modern standards in terms of accessibility, building regulations and marketability. Bringing these buildings into long-term use will be considered in the planning balance as having substantial public benefits.**

### Justification

Congleton has a long history of local industry, much of it associated with silk weaving, but more recently moving towards specialised industrial processes and engineering. However, modern industrial processes mean that many of the older, and more traditional buildings in the town now are vacant and under-utilised. Over the years many of these buildings have been converted to office uses, however, post-COVID trends towards people working from home mean that in many locations these buildings are vacant.

In much the same way as the previous policy on small-scale development, this policy focuses attention on how the future of these historical, and attractive buildings, might be brought forward into full economic use. Traditional policy objectives have sought to keep these buildings in economic use. However, national policy accepts that housing and leisure uses are important uses within built-up areas, and this policy is designed to both encourage and further facilitate the diversification of these existing buildings.

Of course, when dealing with historical buildings, many of which are listed buildings and otherwise often recognised as non-designated heritage assets, there is always a balance between bringing the asset back into use and protecting its heritage value, with public benefit (see paragraphs 208 and 209 of the NPPF) being a key element of a decision-making process. Following feedback from the community, bringing these buildings back into use is identified as being a key public benefit and will carry significant weight when determining planning applications. This benefit will carry even further weight where building is listed within Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' register, or where it can be otherwise demonstrated that the heritage asset is at risk.

### Evidence base

- Congleton Town Council Business Plan 2020 – 23 – Published 2020
- Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan – December 2022
- Cheshire East Local List SPD – 2011
- Historic England – Heritage at Risk Register

## Aspiration 5 – Celebrating Congleton’s Markets

**Congleton is keen to retain its markets and its role as a market town – receiving its market charter in 1272, serving the wider rural hinterland of South East Cheshire and North Staffordshire. This means that the Congleton Market Quarter, which occupies a site between the roads of Market Street, Bridge Street and Mill Street, should continue to be supported in its role as a market. The market quarter should be a vibrant and lively centre for the town offering a range of food and drink, shopping and cultural experiences, including the introduction of some new workspaces.**

**The Town Council will work with local businesses and partners within the town to ensure that the market remains at the heart of the community, with decisions (including planning decisions) designed ensure its long-term sustainable future. This will include the retention of the traditional Congleton market days, as well as supporting a range of new events and markets including the makers markets. The continued success of the markets, events and fayres in the town centre is a strong material consideration in all decisions affecting the town centre in Congleton.**

### Justification

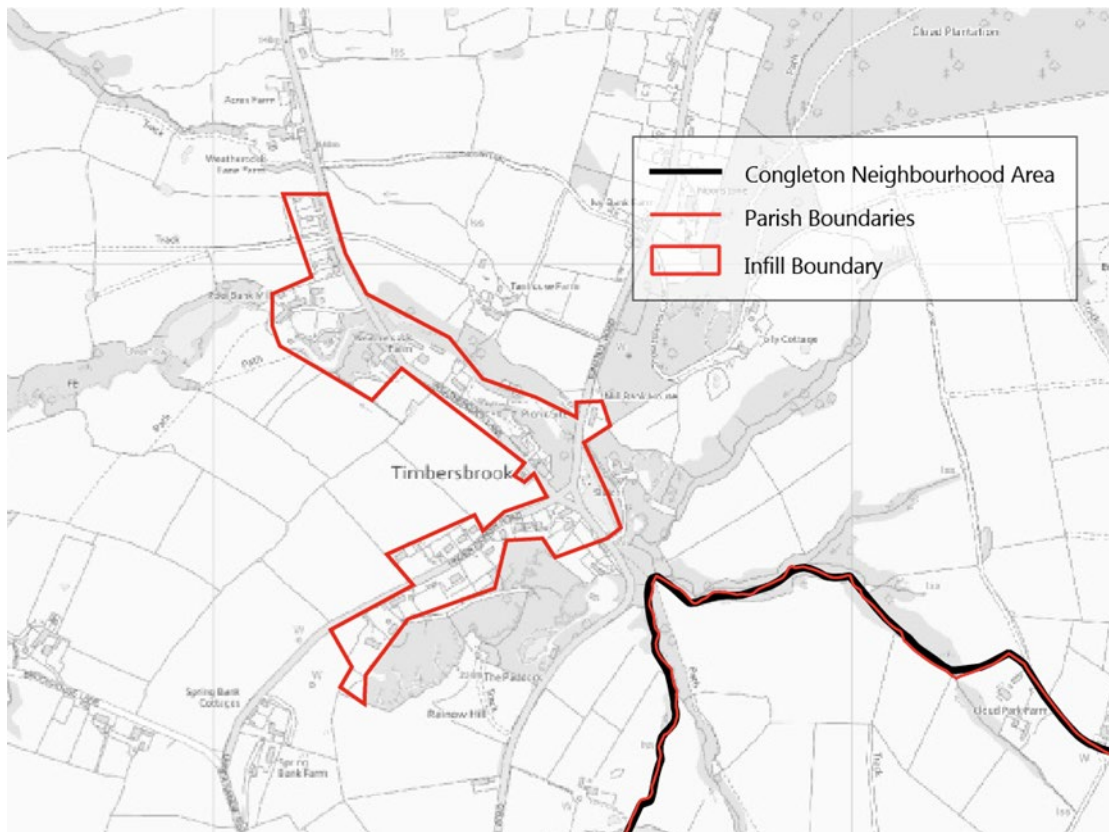
Whilst Congleton has been a market town for more than 700 years, the market has over the last 25 years seen a steady decline. It still operates on a Tuesday and Saturday, with a car boot / flea market on a Sunday. The site is operated by Cheshire East Council. The Congleton Market Quarter (CMQ) development adjacent to the market has since 2023 emerged as an exciting new food, drink and evening economy venue in the heart of the town centre, bringing new life into the old covered market and supporting the remaining market uses. A highly successful makers market also operates in the town on the last Saturday of the month.

The Town Council has developed this aspiration, which sits at the centre of the wider plans, policies and strategies for the town centre, in order to reaffirm its commitment to working with all actors and agencies – including local businesses and traders – to safeguard and improve the areas around the market. Much of this is about management and ownership of sites and working together towards a shared goal of revitalising this area of town focused around a ‘market’ type setting. The Town Council is committed to taking the lead with this role, helping to link the ideas and aspirations of many partners behind the shared vision.

## Policy 6 - Timbersbrook Village

The neighbourhood plan establishes a boundary for the village of Timbersbrook, which remains in the Green Belt, see Map 2. Within this boundary infill development, replacement dwellings and extensions will be permitted in line with policy PG10, RUR11, RUR12 and RUR13 of the Cheshire East Local Plan (or any subsequent replacement policies). Outside of these boundaries infill development will not be considered acceptable.

Within the boundary applications for community facilities or to deliver smaller family homes will be afforded significant weight.



Map 2 – Timbersbrook Village Infill Boundary

### Justification

The village of Timbersbrook lies to the east of the town of Congleton and is within the Green Belt. The location within the Green Belt means that development is strictly controlled with most forms of development being identified by local (policy PG3) and national policy as being inappropriate. However, certain forms of development are considered appropriate, including conversions of existing buildings, extensions and alterations to existing buildings and infill within villages. Timbersbrook is identified by the community as being a village, based around the junction of Weathercock Road, Tunstall Road and Under Rainow Road. Whilst Timbersbrook has not been identified by Cheshire East as being a village this is not necessarily determinative (see case *Law Wood v SoSCLG*, 2014), and each case should be on its own merits following an ‘on the ground assessment’.

Neighbourhood plans are not able to release land from the Green Belt, and as a result whilst a boundary is drawn around Timbersbrook to define the village, all the land within the area remains 'washed over' by the Green Belt. The area identified is focused around the key junction mentioned above and includes all properties running from this junction along the routes noted until a gap in excess of 50 metres or more is found between buildings – which is approximately the size of a development of 2 dwellings if built to a similar density and form as the surroundings. The boundary includes the whole of any defined curtilage, and in most cases these are all related to a road frontage -albeit there are a number of larger farmsteads or manorial plots included.

Collectively there are a finite number of sites that might come forward for infill development, or extension, or community uses within this boundary, however the development here would contribute to the network of small hamlets and scattered farmsteads in the wider rural area, in line with paragraph 83 and 89 of the NPPF, that are important for providing modest and sustainable economic and housing growth. Whilst not identified as a village in current Cheshire East policies, neighbourhood plans are not precluded from promoting additional development. The policy links directly with several policies in the Cheshire East SADPD (2022) for completeness and to ensure appropriate delivery.

#### Evidence base

- Wood v SoSCLG High Court Appeal Decision – 2014
- Cheshire East settlement boundary review – August 2020
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraphs 29, 83, 89 and 152 onwards



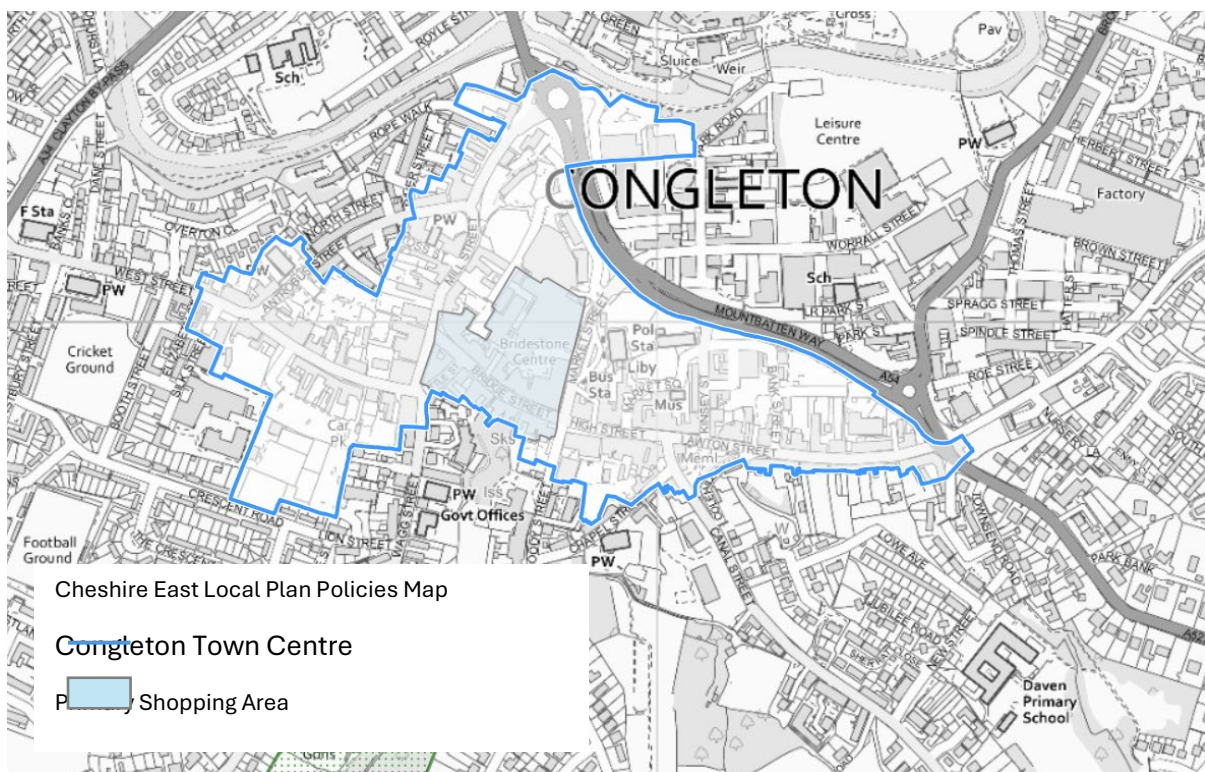
# Town Centre and Retail

## Policy 7 – Ensuring a Vibrant Town Centre

Within the primary shopping area (as defined by the Cheshire East Local Plan) all planning applications which would result in a change in land use should demonstrate how they will contribute positively towards the long-term sustainability of the town centre and high street. Mixed use developments will be encouraged throughout the town centre, with a focus on food and drink, evening economy and office uses. Residential development which is limited in its scale and would not interrupt an otherwise unbroken frontage consisting of active uses will also be considered acceptable.

With the exception of householder applications, all new development within the town centre boundary (as defined by the Cheshire East Local Plan), will be required to demonstrate how the proposal has sought to connect to and enhance the quality of the public realm through the effective design and treatment of all new streets, spaces, forecourts and public areas. Where opportunity arises, applications which propose new pedestrian routes as part of any development which contributes to the wider permeability and connectivity within the town centre will be supported. Care should also be taken to use a suite of surfacing materials which successfully reflect the character of the street scene and wider area.

All new developments, including public spaces and retail areas, must ensure accessibility for all individuals, including wheelchair users. This includes providing level access, appropriately designed ramps, tactile paving, and adequate space for manoeuvrability in public and retail areas, ensuring that all facilities and services are accessible.



Map 3 – Cheshire East Local Plan Policies Map Extract

### Justification

Safeguarding and enhancing the future of Congleton town centre is at the core of the neighbourhood plan. Traditionally, like all market towns, this was as a retail centre, offering shops and services to the rural hinterland. Over the last 30 years, the role of our town centres has irrevocably changed, and with new retail practices, including the growth of out-of-town shopping, the growth of online retailing and the changing patterns brought on because of COVID-19, town centres need to reinvent themselves. In Congleton this process began as early as 20 years ago in the work that led to the 2008 Congleton Town Masterplan, the Public Realm Strategy (2012) and culminated in the 2022 Town Centre Vitality Plan.

The neighbourhood plan embeds much of the thinking behind these documents and strategies within this policy. Applicants are encouraged to think carefully about the uses they are promoting, and how the streets and spaces around them can collectively ensure that a high-quality experience is provided for residents and visitors alike referring, where appropriate, to these documents. Maintaining a strong active frontage along Duke Street, Bridge Street and High Street will help to protect the ‘heart’ of the town, within which a mixture of different activities and uses will be promoted in order to create a flexible and resilient high street and town centre.

### Evidence base

- Congleton Town Centre Masterplan and Implementation Plan - 2008
- Congleton Public Realm Strategy – 2012
- Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan – December 2022
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraphs 90, 108 and 135

## Policy 8 - Tourism and Leisure in the Town Centre

**Planning applications for food, drink and other evening economy uses will be considered acceptable within Congleton Town Centre, particularly where the nature of the use proposed is family oriented and can demonstrate that it is genuinely inclusive and accessible, catering for all ages, genders and levels of mobility. Such development must also demonstrate compliance with all relevant amenity standards set out within the neighbourhood plan and Cheshire East Local Plan documents.**

**Planning applications for tourism related uses (including but not limited to museums, galleries, hotels) will normally be acceptable within the town centre or in the improvement areas identified within the neighbourhood plan, with support given to applications which seek to co-locate these with other leisure and civic uses.**

### Justification

This policy focuses on making sure that there is increasing flexibility to provide and accommodate a range of retail, leisure, food and drink and other community uses within the town centre. This means that Congleton can continue its transformation towards a 21<sup>st</sup> century service centre. Changes to the use classes order and relaxation of permitted development rights have already added a degree of flexibility in certain cases and this policy is designed to ensure that where planning permission is required that this is equally supported in principle.

The policy sets out a series of criteria or requirements that all developments of this type should meet in terms of making them accessible for all. It's really important that where these are delivered, they can be for the benefit of all people within the town, residents and visitors alike. One of these considerations is how these might co-locate or work alongside other extant civic and leisure uses and buildings within the town to help improve the range of services on offer, share resources and ensure that activity can occur day and night, evenings weekend and holidays.

### Evidence base

- Congleton Town Council Business Plan 2020 – 23 – Published 2020
- Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan – December 2022
- The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraph 90

## Policy 9 - Leisure Development Outside of the Town Centre

**Applications for small-scale tourism and leisure uses (applications that would not be considered major) outside of the Town Centre, but within the settlement boundary will normally be considered acceptable where they do not impact negatively on residential amenity of adjoining or nearby uses and are provided with appropriate parking and servicing to meet their need.**

**Outside of the settlement boundary, new or expanded tourism and leisure development will be supported, particularly where proposals would include the re-use of existing buildings, would be well related to an existing facility or attraction, and where these are delivered in accordance with policies PG3 - Green Belt, PG6 – Open Countryside, EG 4 – Tourism and SC 1 – Leisure and Recreation of the Cheshire East Local Plan.**

### Justification

The role of tourism and leisure in Congleton is valued by the Town Council and often complements other land uses in and around the town centre, for example the flourishing Market Quarter. This policy welcomes tourism and leisure developments of a small scale within the settlement boundary yet outside the town centre, acknowledging the contribution such facilities can make, whilst ensuring residential amenity is protected.

Outside of the settlement boundary tourism and leisure will be supported where they relate to an existing facility or attraction, protect amenity and comply with the Cheshire East Local Plan policies relating to the Open Countryside and Green Belt.

### Evidence base

- Congleton Town Council Business Plan 2020 – 23 – Published 2020
- Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan – December 2022
- The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraph 90

## Policy 10 - Local Retail Locations

**In addition to the retail hierarchy identified within the Cheshire East Local Plan the following three local convenience shopping locations are identified within the neighbourhood plan area:**

- **Lower Heath – Rood Hill / Manchester Road**
- **Buglawton – Buxton Road**
- **62-68 Havannah Street**

**Small scale retail development (less than 280sq/m net retail space) will be allowed along these routes which are designed to provide convenience shopping for the local communities that they serve. New retail development that is less than 280sq/m adjacent to any of the established Cheshire East Local Plan retail areas will also be permitted.**

**New hot food takeaway uses within these the neighbourhood plan area will only be acceptable where they are accompanied by a management strategy to ensure that the amenity impacts, parking and servicing arrangements are effectively managed.**

**All new developments, must ensure accessibility for all individuals, including wheelchair users. This includes providing level access, appropriately designed ramps, tactile paving, and adequate space for manoeuvrability.**

### Justification

In Congleton several locations are identified within the Cheshire East Local Plan including a 'local urban centre' at West Heath Shopping Centre and a neighbourhood parade of shops at Hightown (adjacent to the railway station on Biddulph Road). There are three additional neighbourhood local shopping streets where retail would be acceptable. The delivery of these would be in accordance with guidance within the Cheshire East Local Plan policies RET1 and RET2. Collectively this means that there is a spread of local shopping areas around the town servicing local people. Small scale retail development (less than 280sq.m – as this is the threshold for exclusion from Sunday trading laws) outside of these areas is also permitted to ensure that local corner shops and newsagents can be both delivered and expand effectively, whilst at the same time ensuring that they do not unduly harm the amenity of any surrounding uses, particularly including residential dwellings.

Hot food takeaways are very much part of the modern retail landscape, especially after they have now become a *sui generis* use. Whilst policy RET5 includes some criteria that should be met – mainly design and amenity - this policy adds additional criteria that sets out that a management strategy (that could be effectively conditioned and monitored in line with policy RET5 criterion 2) to help deal with any residual effects.

The evidence that sits behind the Cheshire East Local Plan (Table 9.2 of the SADPD) clearly shows that there is a significant undersupply of retail capacity within Congleton, in the region of between 1300 – 1600 square metres. The Cheshire East Local Plan policy RET 1 (of the SADPD 2022) sets out a retail hierarchy for the whole borough and identifies several shopping areas, outside the town centre, where new retail development should be focused. However, these areas are relatively small and do not include land that would meet these demands. In that respect, development would normally be provided within the town centre.

Evidence base

- Cheshire East Retail Study Partial Update – WYG (2020)



# Community Wellbeing

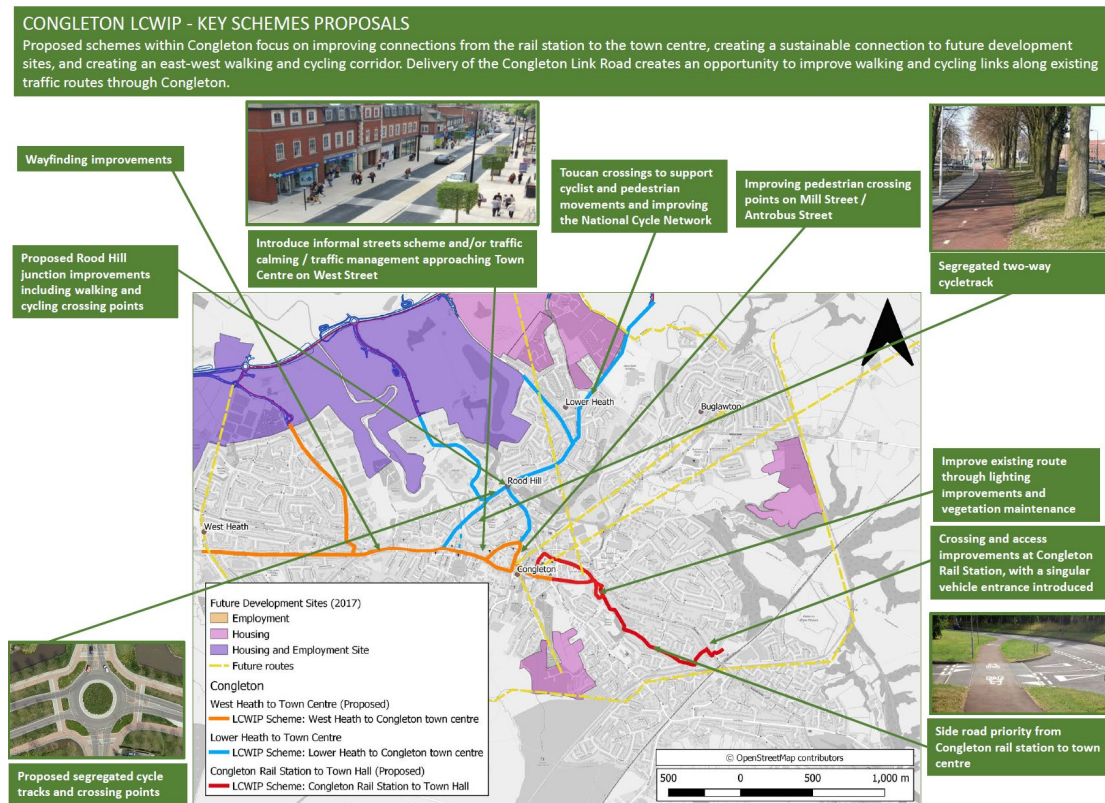
## Policy 11 – Walking and Cycling Strategy

Walking and cycling provision are central to Congleton for leisure and recreation purposes and for enabling residents to access everyday services without the need for a private car. This is key for the future adaptation of the town to climate change and reduction of carbon emissions. All development proposals, excluding householder applications, will be required to demonstrate how they have considered the needs of cyclists and pedestrians through provision of and contribution to infrastructure and facilities.

The delivery of improvements to the local walking and cycling network as identified within the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) will be supported.

All major development proposals should seek:

- To encourage walking and cycling within layouts through design of safe convenient routes and provision of secure storage facilities.
- Consider how the site will be effectively serviced by a range of users including disabled people and those with small children (including safe routes to schools).
- To improve or extend the network beyond the application site, where appropriate, including bridleway provision.
- To seek input from local groups and organisations and national associations at an early stage to review schemes from a walking and cycling perspective.



Map 4 – Cheshire East Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure for Congleton (2021)

### Justification

The community consultation undertaken in support of the neighbourhood plan has clearly demonstrated that ensuring that new development is connected to good quality walking and cycling routes is vitally important to addressing the overarching development strategy for the town. It is universally acknowledged that many trips made by private cars are less than 5km – being easily walkable or cyclable. National planning policy and guidance is clear that making sure that new and existing development have access to walking and cycling as realistic alternatives to using the private car.

To ensure accessibility for all, including disabled people, this policy seeks to ensure that major development includes appropriate infrastructure such as accessible pavements, dropped kerbs, and smooth surfaces. Consideration should also be given to the needs of individuals who rely on mobility aids, ensuring routes are navigable and safe. Additionally, include tactile paving and other aids for visually impaired individuals to enhance usability and safety.

The Town Council and Cheshire East Council have both been working closely with other partners in the town for several years to identify and enhance the network of specific cycle connections in the town. In 2019 the Town Council published a revised cycling masterplan for the town, and it identified several routes that should be prioritised within the town. This fed into the recently published Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) that have been prepared by Cheshire East Council. The LCWIP identifies a series of priority schemes (West Heath to the town centre, Lower Heath to the town centre and the railway station to the town centre that provide links between existing infrastructure to provide strategic links within the town.

This policy seeks to bring together the findings of these documents and ensure that any new development contributes towards the principles and framework set out by these documents in a manner that is both effective and proportionate relative to the development which is proposed. Major developments have the ability to contribute directly to these routes, whilst other development can ensure that it responds and does not undermine the wider delivery of these routes.

### Evidence base

- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Congleton, Macclesfield and Wilmslow – Cheshire East Council Feb 2021
- Congleton Cycling Masterplan – Congleton Town Council Jan 2019
- Congleton Town Strategy – Cheshire East Council (2012)
- North Congleton Masterplan – Cheshire East Council (October 2015)
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraphs 108 and 110



## Policy 12 – Sustainable and Public Transport

**Proposals that do not provide sufficient opportunities for use of public transport and sustainable modes of transport will not be supported.**

**The Town Council and community will actively work with developers and applicants to share and contribute towards this commitment be that by considering how to achieve:**

- **Safe and attractive connections to existing bus, train and pedestrian routes.**
- **Provision for new bus routes, such as bus laybys, new roads that can accommodate buses and turning spaces for buses.**
- **Travel plans prepared by developers should state how they are going to encourage residents and businesses to use sustainable and active travel, including detailing their investment in infrastructure to support this within the development.**
- **Improvements to public realm within minor scale and larger scale development that encourage walking and cycling through well designed layouts, routes and spaces in addition to secure bike storage and facilities.**
- **Consideration for town events and activities will need to include a strategy for how attendees will access with a focus on sustainable modes.**

**The Town Council will work to improve facilities across the town for walking, cycling and public transport through identifying and targeting areas that are currently lacking. All town centre major development, including all Key Areas for Improvement identified within this Neighbourhood Plan, will be expected to prioritise this function both on site but also in terms of connecting into the surrounding context.**

**Financial contributions from qualifying development will be utilised to ensure:**

- **Safe, convenient and attractive pedestrian and cycle access to new and existing public transport facilities including the bus station and railway station, especially for those areas not covered by public transport**
- **Safe and convenient access to new and existing public transport facilities for those with additional and mobility impairments, including those with visual impairments, and ensure that facilities are designed to meet their needs effectively.**
- **Improved bus routes and facilities including priority facilities for buses within road junctions and bus lay-by facilities, specifically along cross-town-routes**
- **Improved networks and connections beyond Congleton, including connections to nearby towns and support for alternative transport services for the rural hinterlands.**

### Justification

Congleton experiences a high level of private vehicle use in and around the town. Whilst this may provide some benefits in providing residents with the freedom and autonomy to choose where, how and at what time they travel from one place to another, there are also negative impacts on congestion, air pollution and road safety within the town. However, as detailed within the Transport in Congleton report by Stephen Joseph Associates, such impacts are not inevitable and moving forwards the Town Council is committed to improving transport accessibility, efficiency and sustainability. In this respect the Neighbourhood Plan has been identified a primary vehicle through which it is considered this can be delivered.

Congleton Town Council is committed to the retention and improvement of the public transport network that serves the town and the wider area it serves. This commitment extends to the championing of sustainable transport modes and an aim to ensure all residents have convenient, affordable alternatives to the private car for everyday journeys.

Matters of public transport, like any other elements of service delivery, are important to consider as part of the achievement of sustainable development. The priorities set out for Congleton within the evidence base for Local Development Framework in 2012 highlight public transport as a key priority. The Cheshire East Local Plan does provide where appropriate, some limited planning policy guidance but this is not effectively linked to the specifics of Congleton, nor to the matters that have been raised by local people when responding to the neighbourhood plan consultation.

As a result, the Town Council is committed to championing change and improvements to the public transport network. The policy that is set out above provides the framework for how the Town Council will work with local partners, including but not limited to, Cheshire East Council, public transport providers (including rail providers) and community groups to enhance the public transport connectivity within the town and make sure that it is integrated with other sustainable modes such as walking and cycling.

While promoting walking and cycling is a priority, it is essential to recognise that not all residents can participate in these modes of transport due to disabilities, health conditions, or other mobility issues. As such, developments should also include provisions for convenient and accessible parking for disabled people and ensure that public transport options are inclusive, with appropriate facilities such as accessible bus stops and clear wayfinding.

#### Evidence base

- Transport in Congleton – Stephen Joseph Associates, March 2024

## Aspiration 13 – Active Travel and Connectivity Improvements

Seeking to realise the aims of policy 11, a number of existing opportunities have been identified within Congleton whereby there is potential to improve connectivity between and within different areas of the town and its surrounding catchment. These opportunities include strengthening and improving existing sustainable and active travel routes, as well as providing increased interconnectivity between walking, cycling and public transport.

Throughout the neighbourhood plan period the Town Council will seek to encourage the delivery of the following interventions:

- **Creation of a formalised pedestrian route between Dobson Way and Wheatfield Place, in order to provide a convenient and immediate connection between two separate housing developments**
- **Improvements to the surface of the bridleway between Havannah village and Crompton Close**
- **Improvements to Biddulph Valley Way, including providing step-free access and removal of ‘horse styles’, A-frames and other barriers to access by mobility scooters and other non-motor vehicles**
- **Widening and surface improvements to Lambert’s Lane, an underutilised but important cross-town route**
- **Installation of refuge on Clayton Bypass between Dane Street and Broadhurst Lane in order to facilitate safe crossing for pedestrians**
- **Installation of refuge at the junction of Mill Street and Antrobus Street in order to facilitate safe crossing for pedestrians**
- **Full implementation of a crossing between Bradshaw Drive and Walfield Avenue;**
- **Installation of a pedestrian crossing at the Reade’s Lane/Biddulph Road traffic lights**
- **Installation of a pedestrian and cycle crossing on Leek Road near the end of Southlands Road**
- **Installation of a pedestrian crossing on Rood Hill close to the junction of Daisybank Drive**
- **Installation of a pedestrian crossing at Mossley Traffic Lights**
- **Installation of a controlled crossing at Eaton Bank**
- **Installation of a pedestrian crossing at the Mount, A34 Newcastle Road**
- **Improved surface and lighting at Tommy’s Lane and a pedestrian crossing on Brook Street**
- **Installation of a new crossing on Newcastle Road near Sandy Lane to enable pedestrians and cyclists to reach West Heath safely via bridleway BR12**
- **Improvement to crossing at Antrobus Street and West Street**
- **Improvement to crossing at Mountbatten Way and Rood Hill**

The Town Council will also continue to work with relevant stakeholders including Cheshire East Council and local landowners to seek the delivery of the interventions listed above, as well as others which may arise.

### Justification

Policy 11 provides a strategy for overarching change and transformation to movement and connectivity habits within Congleton as informed by the Transport in Congleton Report. In addition, the Town Council are also aware that localised, small-scale interventions also have an equally important role to play in improving the quality of sustainable travel routes and connections throughout the plan area.

Through initial consultation with local stakeholders, a series of small-scale interventions have been identified where improvements to the local network would be beneficial. It is acknowledged that some of these interventions are planning matters to greater or lesser extents, but nonetheless their inclusion within the neighbourhood plan as an aspiration is important in order to indicate the scope for improvement in these locations. Where relevant, the potential impact of planning applications on the interventions listed above or the routes to which they relate will be considered, and more generally the inclusion of these proposed changes within the Neighbourhood Plan provides a starting point for further work with stakeholders to deliver change which is partly outside the scope of this neighbourhood plan.

In promoting the implementation of these proposed changes, the Town Council hope that the physical qualities of the sustainable travel network can be improved, contributing to its attractiveness as an alternative method of travelling through the town.

### Evidence base

- Congleton Local Transport Development Plan – August 2022
- Transport in Congleton - Stephen Joseph Associates, 2024

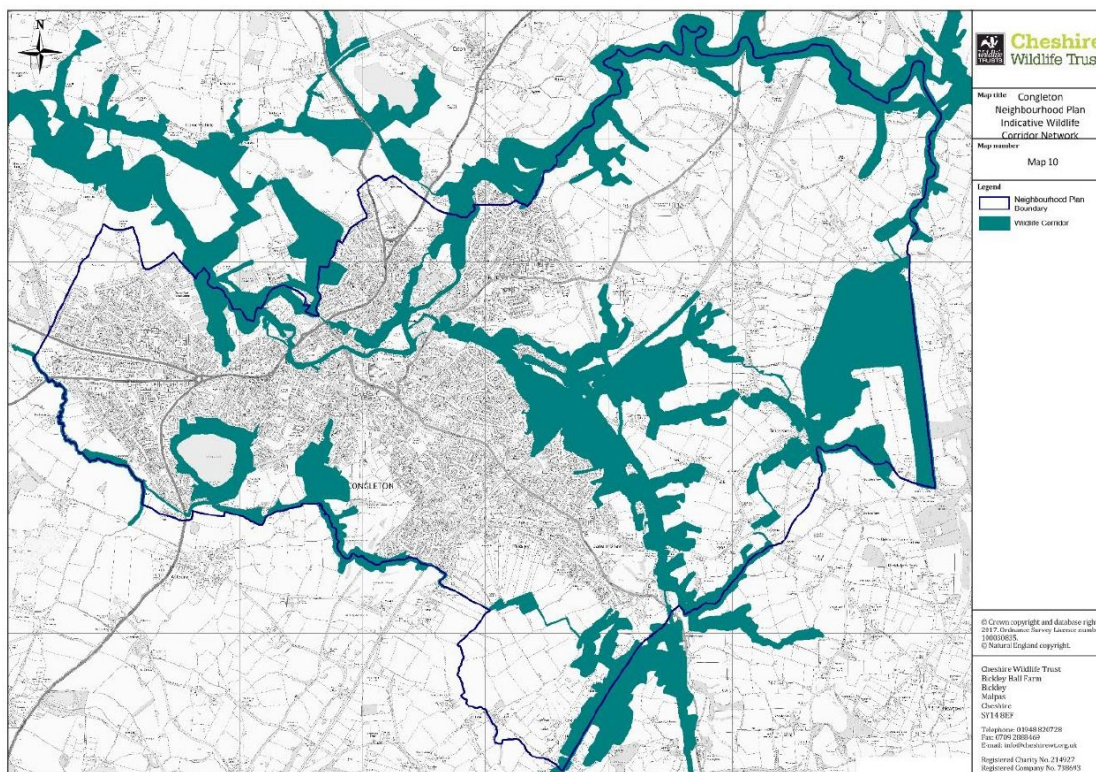
## Policy 14 – Local Ecological Networks

Planning applications should conserve and enhance the identified local ecological network (Map 5) particularly where it contributes to wildlife corridors. All development will be required to comply with national policy and regulations regarding biodiversity net gain and respond to policies within the Cheshire East Local Plan that require enhancement of the local ecological network. Projects and development which introduce new or improved biodiversity areas across the parish will be supported and encouraged, especially where it utilises unused or brownfield land and/or community owned or run land.

Where required, planning applications should consider incorporating biodiversity net gain in creative and innovative ways, that enhance areas for a range of species and contribute to the visual amenity of those who live, work or use an area.

The loss or damage of local woodland, trees, hedgerows or wide verges will be resisted. Where removal is necessary it should be seen as a last resort, and appropriate, three to one, like for like replacement planting (using standard and heavy standard sized trees) will be required in accordance with the Town Council’s corporate trees policy. Replacement planting should focus on native species. The scheme’s landscape design proposals should demonstrate the new planting’s contribution to the identified local ecological network. Where it is demonstrated that appropriate replacement planting is not possible, the Town Council would request a donation towards its own tree planting efforts elsewhere within the town.

All planning applications, excluding householder applications, should be accompanied by a detailed landscape plan that confirms how the above policy is met and makes reference to the Cheshire Wildlife Trust work.



Map 5 – Cheshire Wildlife Trust Indicative Wildlife Corridor Network

### Justification

Congleton benefits from an expansive Green Infrastructure network which features a wide range of different habitats supporting a rich variety of plants, birds and animals. The ecological and biodiversity qualities which benefit this network are already matters which the public and Town Council have recognised as being particularly important to the town, evidenced by recent guidance approved by Congleton Town Council's Planning Committee relating to trees and shrubs. The neighbourhood plan has been identified as an important opportunity to help further consolidate the importance of this local network within local planning policy.

As part of the work that underpins this neighbourhood plan, a detailed assessment of the ecological qualities of the whole of the Congleton was undertaken by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) during 2017 and 2018. The work by CWT looked in detail at the ecological networks throughout the town, the areas of highest habitat distinctiveness. As part of this, it concluded by showing an initiative wildlife corridors plan which is the basis for the map that accompanies this policy. This was in response to community feedback on the neighbourhood plan which identified the protection and enhancement of places for wildlife and ecology being particularly important – the river valleys being identified frequently as being special.

Whilst there are a number of wide-reaching policies within the Cheshire East Local Plan that seek to protect biodiversity and wildlife, the establishment of clear ecological corridors has not been identified. This policy seeks to achieve that role, in line with guidance in national policy. Additional protection is provided for these areas from any development, with the policy clearly setting out how any landscape proposal within these corridors (or adjacent to them) should be delivered – including provision of larger trees and native planting.

### Evidence base

- Protecting and Enhancing Congleton's Natural Environment – Cheshire Wildlife Trust (March 2017)
- Congleton Habitat Distinctiveness Map – Cheshire Wildlife Trust (2018)
- National Planning Policy Framework – paragraphs 185 and 186
- Congleton Planning Committee Trees and Shrubs Guidance

## Policy 15 – Accessibility to Health and Wellbeing

**Proposals for new health and wellbeing facilities and services will be strongly supported and encouraged particularly where they serve the elderly, those with additional needs or provide mental health support.**

**The loss of existing facilities that provide for local health and wellbeing will be resisted unless a suitable replacement is provided in accordance with policies in the Cheshire East Local Plan. The retention and enhancement of such facilities will be strongly supported.**

**All major development, should encourage access to such services and facilities via public transport, walking and cycling or through the provision of on site facilities.**

**All major developments should be designed having considered the way it can benefit the mental wellbeing of new and future uses and occupiers. This may include provision of, or improve access to, new community, recreation and leisure facilities and new green and open spaces.**

### Justification

Improving access to healthcare and other community wellbeing assets in the town is important to ensure sustainable development is delivered. This policy sets out that new health and wellbeing facilities (and in this sport and playing pitches and children's play are also included) should be delivered to be as accessible as possible through walking and cycling. This also means thinking carefully about on-site facilities such as cycle parking to make sure that this is effectively delivered.

The neighbourhood plan cannot request or identify new or expanded provision of services and facilities – this being the role of local NHS trusts and other partners, including Cheshire East Council – however, the neighbourhood plan can ensure that land use planning decisions prioritise the retention, reuse and repurposing of existing facilities to improve the network of facilities across the town working in tandem with policies supporting education diversification and protection of community facilities.

Major developments, through their design and landscape treatment have the opportunity to contribute effectively to mental wellbeing of future users and occupiers. Work by the Royal Town Planning institute on Mental Health and Wellbeing and Planning for Dementia (2020) both set out the importance of considering mental health as part of planning decisions. This in part is picked up in the National Design Guide (2019). Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Building Regulations Part M will be required as standard to ensure provisions for disabled access.

### Evidence base

- Congleton Town Strategy – Cheshire East Council (2012)



## Policy 16 – Education Development

**Proposals for the development of new, or extension of, existing day nurseries, playgroups, primary and secondary schools will be encouraged where the following criteria are satisfied, where relevant and appropriate:**

- **The proposed location is easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling**
- **The proposal includes secure and adequate area for outdoor play**
- **The scale of the proposal will not affect the amenity of residents as a result of an increase in comings and goings along residential streets, or from increased noise and disturbance**
- **Sufficient on-site car parking is provided for staff and visitors without resorting to on-street parking, to meet the standards set out in Appendix C of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy**
- **There are safe and satisfactory arrangements for the dropping off and collecting of children by car that will not impact negatively on the traffic flows and safety of pedestrians and cyclists**

**Where these criteria cannot be met, applicants will be required to demonstrate a mitigation strategy which may include consideration of transportation and travel measures, or additional design or landscaping.**

### Justification

One of the key priorities identified as part of the 2012 Congleton Town Strategy that preceded the adoption of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy in 2017 which allocated sites to the north of Congleton, was that the town needed to prioritise the delivery of new educational provision. Whilst some limited educational facilities are provided as part of the wider allocations (including a new special needs school), there is still needs for the improvement and enlargement of existing educational establishments all types across the town. The Cheshire East Local Plan is silent on all matters pertaining to planning applications for new educational facilities.

This policy is designed to both encourage the provision of new and expanded educational establishments in the town (a key target of the NPPF) and ensure that several concerns that have been highlighted by the community when these occur. The biggest issue is the impact of parking at pick up and drop off times from schools, or noise and disturbance from outside sport and play. It is important that new schools and other education facilities are easily accessible by, and give preference to, walking, cycling and public transport over the use of private cars.

### Evidence base

- Congleton Town Strategy – Cheshire East Council August 2012
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 - paragraph 99



## Policy 17 – The Future of Local Community Facilities

**Planning applications that would lead to the loss of any identified community facilities as outlined in Appendix 3 will not be supported, unless it can be clearly demonstrated as part of their planning submission that they are no longer required to meet a local need, and that there are no other community groups or organisations that are in need of these facilities.**

**Planning applications that may affect in whole or in part, an identified community facility (as outlined in Appendix 3) must demonstrate how they will ensure that the effective long-term future of the community facility will be safeguarded. Applications that are focused on enhancing the offer or service provision provided by community facilities will be looked upon favourably.**

**Planning applications that assist with the diversification and enhancement of the tourism and leisure officers associated with the town centre – including but not limited to art galleries, music venues and social clubs – will be supported subject to them enhancing the variety and diversity of the current offer and being accessible to all ages and those with disabilities. Schemes that seek sustainable methods of construction and renovation will be strongly supported subject to all other policy requirements.**

### Justification

Preserving and enhancing community facilities has been a significant matter for local residents and the Town Council – it is written into both the 2012 Congleton Town Strategy that was prepared in partnership with Cheshire East Council, but also the last business plan prepared by the Town Council in 2020. The growth of the town and its hinterland over recent years, as a result of the allocations delivered in the Cheshire East Local Plan, mean that the need to preserve and enhance community facilities is vital for achieving the sustainable communities as outlined in the criteria in paragraph 97 of the NPPF.

This policy includes three different elements. The first sets out a policy position designed to protect the existing community facilities in the town that have been identified by the Town Council and the community as being particularly important for their health and wellbeing. It also sets out that where a facility is no longer required by its current user, other community organisations should be sought first before allowing its redevelopment. The second part seeks to do this where only part of the facility might be affected, and where applications are designed to enhance the offer.

The final section looks to wider community well-being and civic uses that will help the town to function as a community. Galleries, music venues and social clubs are all important aspects of delivering the health and happiness of the local community, through offer cultural and arts provision. There are wider benefits such as ‘social prescribing’ and addressing the impacts of loneliness that can be delivered through an improved range of cultural activities.

### Evidence base

- Congleton Town Strategy – Cheshire East Council August 2012
- Congleton Town Council Business Plan 2020 – 23 – Published 2020
- Cultural, arts and community engagement can benefit wellbeing, but how do our neighbourhoods influence our participation? – What works wellbeing foundation (2022)
- The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraphs 96 and 97

# Landscape and Townscape

## Policy 18 – Congleton's Unique Character

**Planning applications of all scales, where appropriate, within the Neighbourhood Plan area must demonstrate good quality design. This means demonstrating as part of their submissions how they have responded to, and integrated with, local surroundings and landscape context as well as the built environment. All proposals should demonstrate how they have responded (where relevant) to the local characteristics outlined in the Cheshire East Design Guide and the Congleton Design Guide (CDG) prepared by AECOM.**

**Proposals must complement local character in terms of plot size, height, scale, mass, skyline / roofscape, materials, layout, access and density of existing development. Schemes should reflect the local vernacular set out within the CDG, specifically the requirement to include chimneys and local detailing. Innovative materials and design are encouraged provided they are sympathetic to the immediate context and relate to the local vernacular style.**

**All development proposals within or adjacent to a conservation area must have special regard to the designated heritage asset and protect and enhance its character in line with policy SE7 of the Cheshire East Local Plan. Conservation areas within Congleton have defined character areas that should inform the design of new development and be evidenced through the planning application package.**

**Proposed garden space should be commensurate with the size of the dwelling proposed and the prevailing pattern of development in the locality. Garden spaces should be functional and include a portion of private space not visible from the highway.**

**All development proposals, excluding householder applications, must include an appropriate level of landscaping which complements and positively contributes to the existing character of the local area. Innovative and creative landscaping solutions will be welcomed that incorporate green and blue infrastructure into developments.**

### Justification

Central government places great weight on new development creating beautiful and well-functioning places, which is reflected in the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and within the Cheshire East Design Guide (2017). However, national policies set out that local groups and organisations, through the mechanism of neighbourhood plans can help this whole process by setting out the special qualities of an area through their own plans, guides, and codes. The Town Council commissioned a design guide for Congleton which was published in 2013 – the Congleton Design Guide (CDG). This document sits alongside other Town Council design documents including the 2012 Public Realm Strategy.

The policy above sets out how the CDG sits within the framework of other design documents but begins to highlight some of the important built form and landscape characteristics that are important to ensure that development responds to local character. This means that any development that requires planning permission (from an extension or alteration to a home or

business right up to a major housing or commercial development) should seek to reflect local character through the materials, detailing and landscape. The policy pulls out some of the most important aspects identified in the CDG.

#### Evidence base

- Congleton Design Guide prepared by Locality / AECOM - dated March 2023
- Congleton Public Realm Strategy - Town Council dated October 2011
- Cheshire East Design Guide (Volumes 1 and 2) SPD – dated May 2017
- National Design Guide – dated October 2019
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraphs 134 and 135

## Policy 19 – Designated and Non-Designated Heritage Assets

**All development proposals must consider the impact of development on designated and non-designated heritage assets, seeking to protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance in line with the relevant policies within the adopted development plan.**

**The Cheshire East Local List of Historic Buildings SPD identifies a range of non-designated heritage assets throughout the borough, with a list of those within the neighbourhood plan area found within Appendix 4. Any impacts, or loss of these assets, should be considered in line with local and national policies.**

### Justification

In a historic market town like Congleton there are a great number of historic buildings and structures, a considerable amount of which are nationally listed. Within the Town Council area there are over 130 listed assets which includes the Grade I listed Church of Saint Peter, as well as many other Grade II and II\* listed buildings including the Town Hall (II\*), Overton House (II\*) and the Lion and Swan Inn (II). These buildings, including Congleton's three conservation areas (West Street, Moody Street, Park Lane, Macclesfield Canal) are known as 'designated heritage assets' – i.e. they are formally identified within a list for having special historical or architectural significance or the contribution that they make to the visual qualities of the town.

Beyond this 'designated' list, there are several buildings that may have some special value to the community because of their aesthetic, cultural, or historical value that are also worthy of further consideration where a planning application might come forward that affects them. Cheshire East have a relatively limited list of these types of buildings which is included as part of the Local List of Historic Buildings SPD dating from 2010 (pages 30 – 38). Whilst it is good that the buildings and structures included in this document are afforded some additional protection under local policies, this list has not been updated for nearly 15 years. As a result, the neighbourhood plan includes this policy in order to add additional buildings that are included because of their contribution to the town by virtue of their aesthetic (the look and feel of the architecture), cultural (having a special link to the history of the town or key people) or historical significance ( a particularly fine example of a type of building or because it's the last of its type locally). By listing these buildings, the consideration, and protection can be considered under policy SE7 of the Cheshire East Local Plan.

### Evidence base

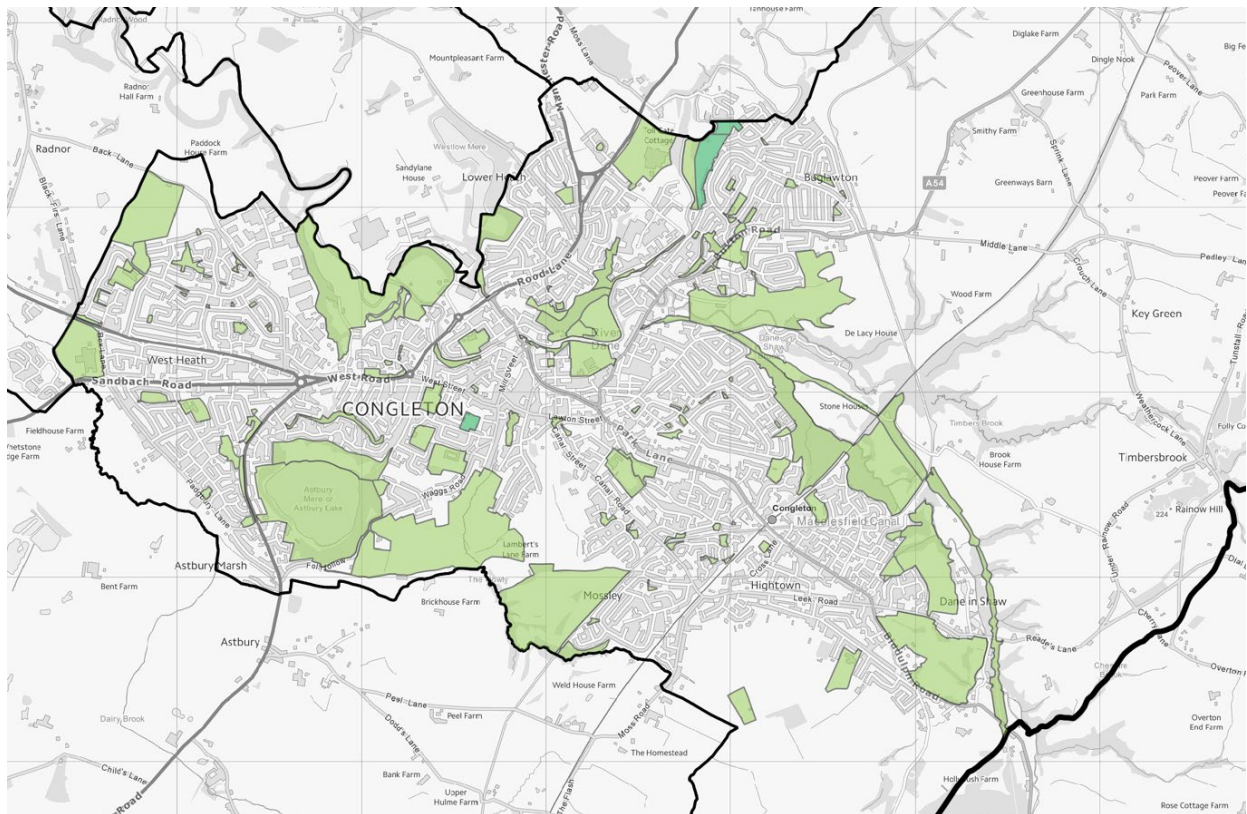
- Cheshire East Local List of Historic Buildings SPD (October 2010)
- Lawton Street and Moody Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2010)
- West Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2010)
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraphs 209 and 210

## Aspiration 20 – Congleton’s Green Spaces

Congleton Town Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of the Town’s green spaces. Many open and green spaces within built environments have special value or purpose for the communities they serve. These include activities and functions which may be regularly held there or regular recreational use.

The key green spaces in Congleton are protected from inappropriate development within the Cheshire East Site Allocations and Detailed Policies Document (SADPD) policy REC 1 – Open Space Protection. Any development proposal that affects one of these sites must be supported by an assessment of the space and its contribution to the town’s open space provision. These spaces include parks, playing fields, sports pitches and courts, play areas, allotments, amenity open space, incidental open spaces of public value.

The creation of new open and green spaces to serve new dwellings across the town will be strongly supported.



Map 6 – Congleton’s Key Open and Green Spaces (Ruth Benson 2019)

### Justification

A significant amount of work has been done to collate and assess the open and green spaces that contribute to the special character of Congleton. A full assessment of these spaces has been undertaken within the Congleton Landscape Character Area and key open spaces have been identified and their contribution detailed within Part 2 of the document. The Cheshire East Green Space Strategy Update 2020 augments this work and resulted in these key open spaces being protected within the Cheshire East Local Plan policy RED 1 – Open Space Protection. All developments affecting any of the spaces must consider the criteria of REC 1.

Evidence base

- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 2 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Green Space Strategy Update (2020, Cheshire East Council)

## Policy 21 – Congleton's Landscape Character

All new development should respect and enhance the local landscape character and its quality whether located within the settlement boundary or within the open countryside. All non-householder development proposals should demonstrate how they have sought to accord with guidance contained within with the relevant landscape character area profile set out within the Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 2 (2020).

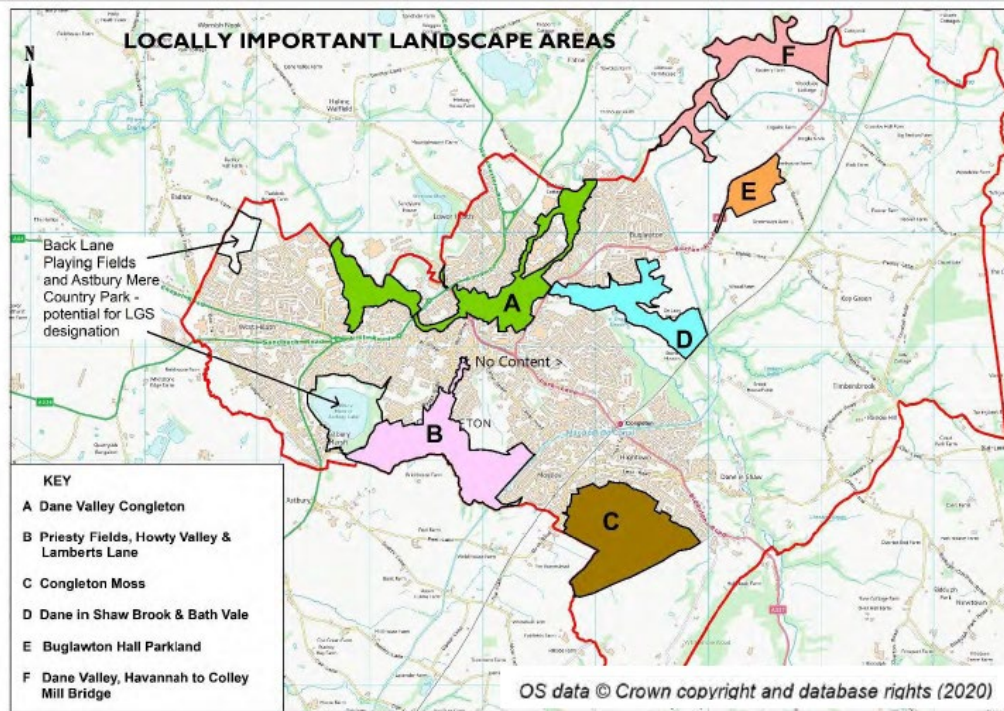
The protection and safeguarding of the locally important landscape areas as identified within Part 3 of CLCA (Map 7 included below) should be given significant weight in decision-making, in addition to the retention and protection of the following river valleys and associated landscape features:

- The urban river valleys (areas A) including those extending into the heart of the urban area of Congleton, including the wooded escarpment and valley sides within the town
- The Meres to the south-west and south of the town (Area B)
- The Moss Rooms to the south of the town (Area C)
- The tributaries of the River Dane-in-Shaw Brook and Bath Vale (Area D)
- The Parkland associated with Buglawton Hall (Area E)
- The Upper Dane Valley (Havannah of Colley Bridge) (Area F)

New built form within these landscape areas should be small scale and demonstrate a clear public benefit and demonstrate how the unique landscape characteristics of these area (as set out in the CLCA) have influence the scale, mass and layout of the developments proposed. The loss of any portion of these local important landscapes must clearly be outweighed by public benefit. Recreational uses within these zone may be appropriate subject to consideration of the overall landscape setting and the integrity of field patterns and mature vegetation.

In addition to these special landscapes listed above, wooded escarpments and higher ground outside the town, including those related to The Cloud (CLCA area 5c), Congleton Edge (CLCA area 5a) and around Timbersbrook (CLCA area 5b), specifically the transitional landscape between the plains and hills, should also be considered with applications demonstrating how they have preserved the specific landscape qualities of these areas.





*Map 7 – Locally Important Landscape Areas from the Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 2 (2020)*

### Justification

As a market town at the edge of both the Cheshire Plain and the Peak District, Congleton has a unique and highly prized landscape setting and quality. The landscape is important to the area's identity, from the strong wooded valleys that run through the town, to the former moss rooms to the south of the town and even to the most visible of natural features; The Cloud. The community identified that ensuring that new developments effectively respond to the wider landscape was an important consideration. Whilst policies in the Cheshire East Local Plan provide some general guidance for new development, the policies are not specific to Congleton.

During 2020, Congleton Town Council commissioned Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design to conduct an independent landscape character assessment - The Congleton Landscape Character Assessment (CLCA). This document builds on and updates the Cheshire wide landscape character assessment undertaken by Cheshire East Council dated 2008. Over three highly detailed parts the CLCA details the character and key design principles were set out for 24 different urban and rural character areas (fully detailed in part 2) and set a series of six locally important landscape areas (Areas A – F in CLCA part 3). This policy is designed to ensure that new developments respond to the unique landscape setting and characteristics. When implementing policies within the Cheshire East Local Plan policy SE2.

### Evidence base

- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 1 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)



- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 2 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 3 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment (2018)
- Cheshire East Local Landscape Designation Review – LUC May 2018
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 – paragraphs 135 and 180

## Policy 22 – Design for Small Scale Residential Development

**To retain suitable housing stock for an ageing population the replacement, redevelopment or demolition of existing bungalows within the parish will not normally be supported unless the replacement dwellings are designed to meet part M4(3) of the building regulations and can be implemented in such a way that ensures of the site does not detract from the character of the surrounding area nor has a detrimental effect upon the privacy and amenity of adjoining properties. Additionally, these dwellings should be designed to be fully accessible to disabled individuals, including wheelchair users.**

**Small-scale developments providing specialist, accessible or affordable housing will be strongly supported where they are in a sustainable location with good accessibility to local services and facilities.**

### Justification

Small-scale residential development will account for most planning applications in Congleton until 2030, with only a few larger applications on the allocated sites. This is typical of market towns where a larger collection of infill and windfall sites within the settlement boundary will come forward. Cheshire East has a relatively high proportion of homes delivered through these forms of development - so much so that the Site Allocations Detailed Policies Document (Cheshire East Local Plan part 2) when adopted in 2022 didn't need to allocate additional sites to meet the identified need.

Notwithstanding the contents of this policy, it is acknowledged that General Permitted Development Order (GPDO, 2015) makes provision for a range of householder development which can in effect offer a route to adding first floor accommodation to a single-storey dwelling or bungalow. It is anticipated that this policy will not be applied and enforced where a property benefits from such rights and proposes a similar form of development through a householder planning application.

### Evidence base

- Cheshire East Residential Design Guide – Cheshire East Council 2017
- Congleton Design Guide prepared by Locality / AECOM - dated March 2023
- Building Regulations Part M4(3)

## Policy 23 – Design at the Settlement Edge

All development, where appropriate, that is proposed on the edge of the settlement boundary (or at the edge of any of the river valleys) should contribute to a positive ‘green’ character by incorporating high quality landscaping. The following design principles should be followed when developing design proposals and landscape treatments:

- All development proposals should create a sensitive transition between built form and the wider landscape - this includes making sure that new properties have a positive visual relationship with the wider landscape and are outward looking, avoiding rear boundaries
- Special attention should be given to the retention or creation, where relevant, of clearly defined gateways into the settlements within the neighbourhood plan area
- Retaining and enhancing the tree lined approaches to the town should be prioritised
- The incorporation of features such as SUDS, including ponds and swales that soften the settlement edge, provide recreational value and contribute towards the green infrastructure network will be strongly supported
- In all cases, existing planted features at the settlement edge – including boundary hedges, trees and other planting – should be retained wherever possible
- Opportunities to integrate green space, community facilities, recreational activities such as parks and children’s play may be appropriate as part of the urban edge environment
- All walking and cycling routes within major developments particularly should be designed to better connect residents with the countryside and may also form part of the design of the urban edge environment

Where planning permission is required, or as part of detailed landscape proposals, close boarded fences and other hard urban edges to the rear of properties will not be considered acceptable. In such locations softer planted treatment is considered more appropriate. Fences including features such as ‘hedgehog holes’ and coupled with additional planted buffers may be considered appropriate where this is not possible. Removal of certain permitted development rights for rear boundaries may be considered to retaining an appropriate visual transition at the settlement edge.

### Justification

The Cheshire East Residential Design Guide includes some guidance for major development sites, which includes some guidance for the edge of developments. However, urban rural edges don’t always occur on strategic or major housing sites and given the landscape and topography within Congleton they occur frequently along river valleys, against parks and open spaces. In most cases these are visually prominent. This is something that has been identified through the Congleton Landscape Character Appraisal (2020) but also identified as part of the community consultation on the plan.

As a result, this policy includes a clear set of design criteria (and approach advocated by national policy) that new developments should follow. It applies to all developments, regardless of scales, as inappropriate householder development can begin to undermine and

weaken the integrity of the urban edge. In many cases this includes careful landscape and planting treatment, but also avoiding the use of hard fenced boundaries, which whilst good for security are visually unattractive and poor for wildlife. Post and wire fencing, planting and native planting can provide equally effective screening and security.

#### Evidence base

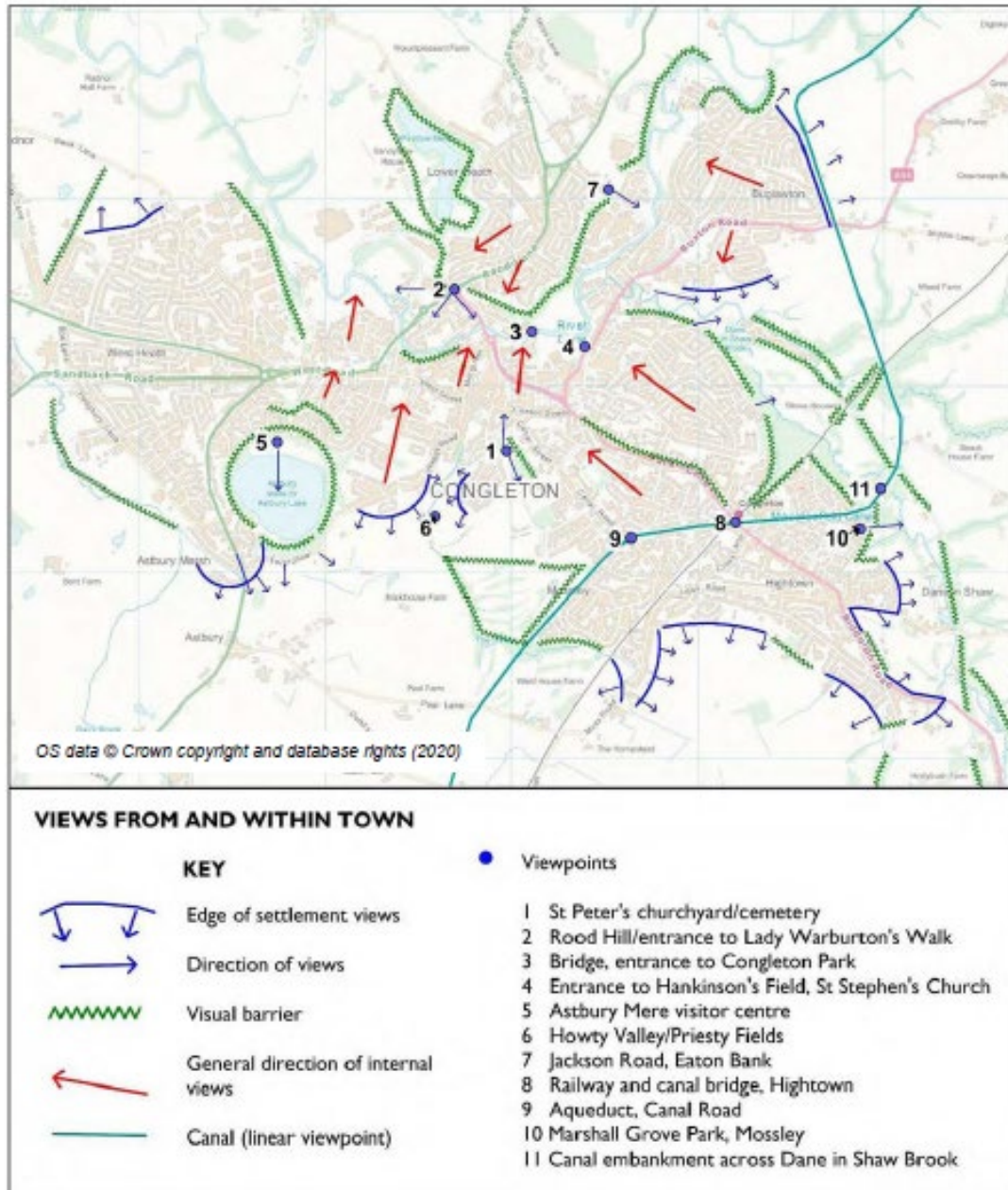
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 1 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 2 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 3 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Cheshire East Residential Design Guide – Cheshire East Council 2017
- Congleton Design Guide prepared by Locality / AECOM - dated March 2023

## Policy 24 – Views, Vistas and Gateways

**All new development should protect or enhance key views, vistas and landmarks, where relevant. The Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 2 (2020) identifies a series of features and views that should be considered, with key views within the town shown on (Map 8 – Views within and from Congleton). Landscapes of specific importance also include the Bosley Cloud and Dane-in-Shaw Pastures and Site of Specific Scientific Interest. Planning applications within the town centre and each Landscape Character Area should demonstrate how the key views identified will be protected or enhanced as part of the development.**

**Applications that are located on visual gateways into the town (along the key roads, canal or off-road routes) should seek to enhance the quality of the public realm through ensuring that there is suitable planting and landscaping, and through the use of locally appropriate materials.**

**Landmark buildings within the town centre and the wider landscape setting make an important visual contribution to local character and skyline and identity and existing sight lines of them should be retained and incorporated into development layouts where relevant. Any development that undermines or blocks any of the identified views of the Town Hall Clock Tower and St Peter’s Tower is unlikely to be considered acceptable.**



Map 8 – Views within and from Congleton (extract from the Congleton LCA 2020)

### Justification

This policy seeks to protect the key views and vistas, gateways, skyline and landscape setting that make up the local townscape and landscape character, which are so important to the 'feel' of the Town.

These features have been identified through the Congleton Landscape Character Assessment. Where key views and vistas are affected, applications must be supported by an assessment which assesses the impact of the proposal on the wider landscape and townscape setting.

Evidence

- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 1 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 2 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 3 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Cheshire East Residential Design Guide – Cheshire East Council 2017
- Congleton Design Guide prepared by Locality / AECOM - dated March 2023

## Policy 25 – Biodiversity Net Gain and Improvement

**Proposals that seek to create wildlife habitats of biodiversity value, including those that might be part of a wider biodiversity offset scheme mitigating the losses from outside the town, will be strongly supported within the neighbourhood plan area, especially where this is located within or adjacent to the ecological network and wildlife corridors established within Policy 14 – Local Ecological Networks.**

**In all cases, there is a strong preference for biodiversity net gain to be accommodated on site, or on site immediately adjacent to development proposals in line with the hierarchy set out in national legislation. Where this is not possible, biodiversity offsetting sites should ideally be located elsewhere within the neighbourhood plan area.**

**Within Congleton there are a number of sites where specific biodiversity improvements and enhancements will be promoted, contained within Appendix 6. The delivery of these interventions will be strongly supported throughout the neighbourhood plan period.**

### Justification

The Town Council wants to encourage local enhancement of biodiversity and where biodiversity offsetting linked to new development is required for it to be located in the town. They would also be delighted to welcome others to promote areas that can deliver biodiversity enhancement within Congleton. This policy is designed to support planning applications for these schemes – where required – and to ensure that these are well placed to effectively contribute to the wider biodiversity network in the town but also not to simply remove some of the most versatile agricultural land to be replaced. It is recognised that there is a balance to be struck.

This policy also sets out that whilst the town is happy to offer opportunities for offsetting locally, they still retain the preferences for sites within the town to deliver any Biodiversity Net Gain requirement on site or within the immediate local of the development. It is clearly not the intention of this policy to set out that developments with less onsite biodiversity be promoted in Congleton. It is important that access to wildlife and biodiversity is included across the town in accordance with the aspirations of the Town Council.

### Evidence

- Biodiversity 2020 ‘A Strategy for England’s Wildlife and Ecosystem Services’ – DEFRA 2011
- Peatlands of Cheshire East: An Assessment of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Biodiversity, June 2021
- Protecting and Enhancing Congleton’s Natural Environment – CWT March 2017
- Planning Practice Guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain (constantly updated)
- The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 –paragraph 186
- Congleton Green Spaces: Site-Specific Biodiversity Plans, April 2022



## Policy 26 –Tree Protection and Planting

**Congleton Town Council will work with Cheshire East Council to prioritise the protection of trees across the town and encourage an increased number of trees over the plan period. All tree-related matters which arise throughout any planning application across this plan area will be considered and assessed against ENV 6 of the Cheshire East Site Allocations Development Policies Document (SADPD) as well as Congleton Town Council’s Trees and Shrubs guidance as found within Appendix 5.**

**Planning proposals that incorporate additional tree planting, above the minimum required through local and national planning policy, will be encouraged and welcomed. Locally led projects to enhance and increase tree coverage will be supported particularly where they utilise sites close to existing residential areas and provide recreational and aesthetic value within the street scene.**

**Within the plan area there are a large number of trees and woodlands that make a particularly significant contribution to local landscape and townscape character. Some are formally protected by existing tree preservation orders (TPO) and their protection should be managed in accordance with local policy. The loss of other non-protected trees will be resisted where their street scene presence and amenity value is particularly valuable, unless it can be demonstrated that there is a strong public benefit. Across the Neighbourhood Plan Area where the loss of trees is unavoidable, they should be replaced at a ratio of at least three to one, in line with the Town Council’s Trees and Shrubs Guidance 2023.**

**New planting must be accompanied by a planting and management plan that prioritises native species that will thrive in the chosen position and be suitable for the space they occupy in terms of potential amenity impact over the long term. Proposals which would result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land will not normally be supported.**

### Justification

Throughout the development of the neighbourhood plan trees have always been at the forefront of the communities’ considerations. The Town Council for many years has been promoting new tree planting in the town. This is reflected in community initiative led by the Trees for Congleton Group within the Congleton Partnership to plant some 30,000 new trees before 2025 across the town. As part of this programme it is apparent that even the smallest of planning projects could assist in achieving this aim. This policy opens up opportunities for tree planting working with existing partners in the town as part of the delivery of new developments.

This policy therefore goes beyond the provisions of the local plan, seeking to ensure that new developments – regardless of scale – contribute to the goal of planting 30,000 trees. It also supports projects where the focus is entirely on the planting of new trees and hedgerows, or where space is provided to allow for additional tree planting within new public spaces and parks. The NPPF (paragraph 136) sets out trees have an important role to play in the character and quality of an area. It highlights the importance of street trees, parks and orchards as part of the ensuring that the beautiful places are delivered.

However, this can only be achieved if new development protects the trees that already exist and are so much part of the character and identity of the town (see the Congleton Landscape Character Assessment). The Town Council has worked with partners to identify some of the most important trees and woodlands in the town. These should be protected and preserved under the provisions of the local plan – specifically policy ENV6.

#### Evidence

- Trees in the Townscape: A Guide for Decision Makers (2022, Trees and Design Action Group)
- Congleton Planning Committee Trees and Shrub Guidance (Appendix 5)
- Trees for Congleton Review of Planting Season 2021/22 (summary) and Main Planting Sites up to April 2023 – Published Trees for Congleton April 2022

# Key Areas for Improvement

## Policy 27 – Pop-up Uses in the Town Centre

**Where planning permission is required, planning applications which seek permission for short term (less than 5 years) or temporary uses and structures that result in improved public realm within the town centre will be strongly supported.**

**Applications for these temporary or short term uses or structure should demonstrate how they will encourage increased footfall and time spent in each space. Each application should be accompanied by a management plan.**

**Temporary events, seating areas, parks and planting (including those associated with established uses) will all be supported subject to matters of highways, public safety and the amenity of neighbouring residential dwellings. In addition, temporary structures or spaces should also ensure that they are genuinely accessible and welcoming to all.**

### Justification

As part of the overarching approach to add flexibility within the town centre, the neighbourhood plan seeks to provide a policy that would encourage temporary – sometimes known as ‘meanwhile’ uses (where planning permission was required) - so that possible investors and business owners could seek to establish different uses that would not only support their own business growth, but further support the vibrancy of the town centre. Typically, this might account for the use of land or areas for outdoor seating, but may include any number of semi-permanent structures for which planning permission may be required.

It is often a ‘technicality’ that means that planning permission is required, and this policy is designed to ensure that whilst public health and wellbeing is maintained, a business owner or developer can explore a range of different aspirations in the confidence that they would be supported by the neighbourhood plan. In many cases the temporary nature of such development means that the Local Plan (parts 1 and 2) is entirely silent for decisions of this nature.

### Evidence

- Congleton Town Council Business Plan 2020-23
- Congleton Public Realm Strategy – March 2012
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 - paragraph 86

## Policy 28 – Areas for Improvement across the Town

A series of improvement areas have been identified across the Town. This policy does not invite redevelopment of these areas but instead looks for tailored interventions of varying scales to ensure these areas make a more positive contribution to the visual quality and functionality of the Town.

These are:

1. The area around and including surface parking on Stonehouse Green
2. Areas of hardstanding immediately surrounding Mountbatten Way, including car parks
3. Congleton Railway Station and the immediate area that surrounds it
4. West Street Conversation Area
5. Mill Street
6. Green Space behind the Town Hall
7. Capital Walk
8. Congleton Market

Proposals, of all scales, that enhance the identified improvement areas will be supported in principle subject to the following criteria:

- They consider parking provision and incorporate it, where necessary, into designs which avoid expansive surface car parks but at the same time incorporate a sufficient level of parking
- They support existing businesses, services and facilities and where possible enhance them
- They promote a mix of community and cultural uses that contributes to the existing activities in the Town
- They protect and enhance the character and appearance of designated and non-designated heritage assets on or adjacent to each area, including the Conservation Areas
- They prioritise walking and cycling connections into the town centre and ensure any new routes are designed for all users and traffic free where possible
- Improve access to public transport services
- They prioritise high quality public realm and incorporate landscaping and tree planting, creating new public spaces where possible
- They protect and make the most of key vistas and sight lines ensuring they are not lost through permanent or temporary structures
- They prioritise specialist housing and affordable housing where residential development forms part of the proposal

Development proposals involving the loss of public car parking spaces must demonstrate that:

- The spaces are adequately replaced either on the site or nearby; or
- It is satisfactorily evidenced that the spaces lost are surplus to demand; or
- Their loss can be acceptably offset through improvements to other nearby transport facilities and these improvements are provided or funded by the developer

### Justification

This policy seeks to encourage and attract investment to improve the identified areas whether that be for simple public realm improvements, temporary initiatives to make better use of the space available or more involved redevelopment projects. This policy also seeks visual improvement, which may be achieved by investments in landscaping and Green Infrastructure provision. This and other interventions would not require the full redevelopment of a site.

There are areas across the town that do not make a positive contribution to the Town in terms of the condition and quality of the public realm and buildings. Some of these areas contain buildings and uses that are key to the town, for example the bus and railway stations, the library and police station. Other areas have already been invested in to some degree and improvements made but there is more to do, for example the Market Quarter.

All these areas form large important parts of the town centre that currently detract from the visual appearance of the Town or interfere with walking and cycling connections to, from and across the Town. Many of the areas are dominated by large surface car parks, some of which are located in key visual gateways into Congleton, giving a poor first impression to visitors. The only identified area not within the town centre is the area around the railway station. This is strategically important for sustainable transport to and from Congleton but currently does not offer a convenient, pleasant environment for those walking, cycling or taking a bus to or from the railway station.

### Evidence

- Congleton Town Council Business Plan 2020-23
- Congleton Public Realm Strategy – March 2012
- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 - paragraph 86
- Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan 2023

## Monitoring and Review

The Congleton Neighbourhood Plan, once made, will form part of the Development Plan for Cheshire East Borough Council. It may be necessary for Congleton Town Council, in conjunction with Cheshire East Borough Council, to monitor specified indicators or to agree to a certain time period for review of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan. These indicators will establish whether the policies are having the desired outcomes and will highlight policies requiring immediate or timely review to align them with their original purpose.

Subsequently, key indicators from approved planning applications and relevant policies (although other policies in the Plan should also be taken into account) covering applications only within Congleton relating to the Neighbourhood Plan are (but not limited to):

- Revisions to national policy and guidance
- Revision to the Cheshire East Local Plan or its evidence base

The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to guide development up to 2030.

There are a number of circumstances under which a partial review of the Neighbourhood Plan may be necessary. These may include a revision of the existing local planning documents or if the policies highlighted for review are not adequately addressed in the objectives set out for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Once the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan is formally 'made' the Town Council will review planning applications that come forward within the neighbourhood plan area and provide comments on proposals as to whether they comply with the policies, vision and objectives of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan. This group will also be responsible for monitoring the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan and determining if the document in whole or in part needs to be reviewed or updated.

## Glossary

**Active Travel** – A method of transportation which involves some form of physical activity. This may include walking, cycling or use of a wheelchair.

**Affordable housing:** housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

a) Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government’s rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

b) Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household’s eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.

c) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

**Amenity** – An element that contributes positively to the overall character or enjoyment of an area.

**Biodiversity** – A measure of the number and range of plant or animal species and their relative presence within an area.

**Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** – seeks to ensure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurable better state than they were before development. Under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021), developers must deliver a BNG of at least 10% unless the development meets an identified exception.

**Brownfield Land** – See Previously Developed Land.

**Cheshire East Council (CEC)** – The Local Planning Authority for Congleton.

**Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy** – A development plan document for Cheshire East adopted on 27 July 2017 which sets out strategic priorities for the development of the area, along with planning policies and proposals to make sure that new development addresses the economic, environmental and social needs of the area. This is the first part of the Cheshire East Local Plan.

**Cheshire East Site Allocations Development Policies Document** - The Site Allocations and Development Policies Document is the second part of the Cheshire East Local Plan and provides detailed planning policies and land allocations in line with the overall approach set out in the Local Plan Strategy. It was adopted on 22 December 2022.

**Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Area** – Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Area or the ‘plan area’ in shorthand is the area for which the neighbourhood plan will apply and will be taken into account within decision-making.

**Community Facility** – A physical space or service which is open to the public and provides facilities providing for the health, welfare, social, educational, spiritual, leisure and cultural needs of the community. Community facilities can be provided by public, private or voluntary organisations.

**Community Infrastructure** – The basic facilities, services and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society. It includes community buildings and halls, leisure facilities, cultural facilities, education services, and healthcare facilities.

**Designated Heritage Asset** – Any building, site or landscape which is formally protected by law and recognised as having some sort of significance. This includes Listed Buildings and Conservation areas, as well as world heritage sites, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens.

**Development** – Defined within the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, development means *‘the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land’*.

**Development Plan** – The development plan comprising the Development Plan Documents contained within the Local Development Framework. Within Cheshire East, this includes the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) and the Cheshire East Site Allocations Development Policies Document (SADPD). Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made. The policies and documents which are contained within the development plan as a whole are used to determine all planning applications within an authority.

**Evidence Base** – The research, documents, analysis and verified evidence which has contributed to the preparation of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan. It consists of many documents produced over a period of years by a range of different organisations the Local Authority as part of the process of developing its Core Strategy.

**Examination** – An independent review of the Neighbourhood Plan carried out in public by an independent examiner.

**Green Belt** – The Green Belt is a planning designation which serves five main purposes, including preventing urban sprawl, safeguarding the countryside from encroachment,



preserving the setting of historic towns and to assist in urban regeneration. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

**Infrastructure** – The entire ancillary works and services which are necessary to support human activities, including roads, sewers, utilities, schools and hospitals.

**Localism Act** – An Act of Parliament which became law in April 2012. The Act introduces a new right for local people to draw up ‘Neighbourhood Development Plans’ for their local area.

**Local Plan** - A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two. Within Cheshire East, the local plan is understood as the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) and the Cheshire East Site Allocations Development Policies Document (SADPD).

**Material Consideration** – A material consideration is a matter which should be taken into account in determining a planning application. This does not include the loss of view or negative impact on property value. A list of matters which are understood to form material considerations can be found within appendix 2.

**Mixed Use** – Developments where more than one use is proposed. This may be at the site scale, whereby one site could have houses, shops and community facilities for example. Alternatively, one building could be used for different purposes such as offices or residential uses over shops.

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** – The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by the Government in March 2012 and most recently updated in December 2023. It sets out the Government’s Planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

**Neighbourhood Plan** – A plan prepared by a parish or town council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area, subject to examination and approval by local referendum. Once ‘made’, neighbourhood plans form part of the development plan and are used in the determination of planning applications by the Local Planning Authority which fall within the plan area where there are policies within the plan which are relevant to a development proposal.

**Non Designated Heritage Asset** – Buildings, sites or landscape which are identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions due to their heritage interest, but which fail to be of a significance which warrants formal designation.

**Open Space** – All spaces of public value, including public landscaped areas, playing fields, parks and play areas and areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs, which may offer opportunities for sport and recreation or act as a visual amenity and a haven for wildlife.

**Part M4 Building Regulations** - Part M of the building regulations relates to the access to and use of buildings, which requires the inclusive provision of, ease of access, and circulation within, buildings, together with requirements for facilities for people with disabilities.

**Permitted Development** - are a national grant of permission which allow certain building works and changes of use to be carried out without the need for a full planning permission. Such rights cover residential, commercial and agricultural related development. Some permitted

development rights are subject to conditions and limitations to control impact and to protect local amenity.

**Plan Period** – The period for which the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan will set policy for Congleton. This will be backdated to 2014 from the adoption of the Plan until 2030 by agreement between Congleton Town Council and Cheshire East Council.

**Previously Developed Land** - Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.

**Referendum** – A vote by the electorate on a single question that has been referred to them for a direct decision. In the case of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan, the referendum will decide whether or not to adopt the final version of the neighbourhood plan.

**Servicing** – The necessary activities and space which enables a use to function in its location. This includes things such as bin storage, deliveries and parking.

**Settlement** - Settlements are any urban areas which may include cities, towns, villages and small hamlets. The precise definition of which category each settlement falls into, often referred to as a settlement hierarchy, forms part of the development plan.

**Settlement Boundary** - The defined extent of an individual settlement as set out within the development plan. This boundary used to manage development within and outside of the settlement through related planning policies.

**Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI)** – A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the land notified as an SSSI under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended. SSSI's are a conservation designation which seek to protect the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in England, supporting many characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features.

**Sustainable Development** - Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future set out five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development: living within the planet's environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

**Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)** - A drainage system that controls the rate and quantity of run-off of surface water from developments. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are designed to manage stormwater locally (as close its source as possible), to mimic natural drainage and encourage its infiltration, attenuation and passive treatment. SuDS have many benefits including flood risk management, water quality management, improving amenity and biodiversity and providing space for recreation.

**Urban Design** – The process of delivering attractive, high-quality and sustainable places for people through development which is contextually responsive.

**Use Classes** – The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as ‘Use Classes’.

**Vernacular** – In built form terms, vernacular relates to the architectural styles, features and building types which contribute to the local and regional differences in the character of buildings which may be observed.

**Wildlife Corridor** – Strips of land, for example along a hedgerow, conserved and managed for wildlife, usually linking more extensive wildlife habitats.

**Windfall development** – Sites not allocated for in the development plan which come forward for development. These are usually, but not always, small sites under 10 dwellings.

**Working Group** - A group of local people and Councillors representing the Town Council, community groups and businesses who have informed and guided the work on the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan.

## Maps

Map 1 – Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Area

Map 2 – Timbersbrook Village Infill Boundary

Map 3 – Cheshire East Local Plan Policies Map Extract

Map 4 – Walking and cycling map

Map 5 – Cheshire Wildlife Trust Indicative Wildlife Corridor Network

Map 6 – Congleton's Key Open and Green Spaces (Ruth Benson 2019)

Map 7 – Locally Important Landscape Areas from the Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 2 (2020)

Map 8 – Views within and from Congleton (extract from the Congleton LCA 2020)

## Appendix

Appendix 1 - Evidence Base Library

Appendix 2 – Congleton Town Council Planning Checklist

Appendix 3 – List of Community Facilities

Appendix 4 - Non-designated Heritage Assets

Appendix 5 – Congleton Planning Committee Tree Policy 2023

Appendix 6 – List of Biodiversity Enhancement and Improvement Sites in Congleton

## Appendix 1 - Evidence Base Library

The following documents and strategies support the proposed Congleton Neighbourhood Plan policies:

- Action for Market Towns Benchmark Surveys 2010-2012
- Basic Facts about Congleton – Local Government Association
- BREEAM UK New Construction 2018
- Building for Life 12
- Building Regulations M4
- Biodiversity 2020 ‘A Strategy for England’s Wildlife and Ecosystem Services – Defra 2011
- Canal and River Trust ‘Planning for Waterways in Neighbourhood Plans’
- Chartered Institute of Health – Houses in Multiple Occupation and Possible Planning Responses - CLG Consultation
- Chelmsford City Council Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford’s River Valleys - Amec Foster Wheeler February 2017
- Cheshire Archives and Local Studies website
- Cheshire East Cycling Strategy 2017
- Cheshire East Design Guide 2016
- Cheshire East Housing Supply and Delivery Topic Paper August 2017
- Cheshire East Housing Land Assessment (SHLAA) Congleton
- Cheshire East Interim Summary of Housing Completions and Losses 2009/10-2014/15
- Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment (2018)
- Cheshire East Link Road Options Assessment Study January 2016
- Cheshire East Local Landscape Designation Review – LUC May 2018
- Cheshire East Local List of Historic Buildings SPD (October 2010)
- Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) July 2017
- Cheshire East Local List SPD (2011)
- Cheshire East Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
- Cheshire East Private Rented Sector Housing Condition Survey 2010
- Cheshire East Private Rented Sector in Cheshire East Report 2013
- Cheshire East Residential Design Guide – Cheshire East Council 2017
- Cheshire East Retail Study Partial Update – WYG (2020)
- Cheshire East Settlement Boundary Review (2020)
- Cheshire East Strategic Site Selection Report (Congleton)
- Cheshire East Town Wood Congleton – Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland
- Cheshire East Vulnerable and Elderly Persons Housing Strategy Report May 2014
- Cheshire Historic Towns Survey 2003
- Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation 2013 Cheshire Open Space Report 2012
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust – Protecting and Enhancing Congleton’s Natural Environment – March 2017
- Coin Hoards from Priestly Fields – Survey and Documentary Research CSMR 2327 – Robert Philpott November 1992 – National Museum and Galleries Merseyside
- Congleton Estate Agents Survey Report – Congleton Town Council (2016)
- Congleton Cycling Masterplan – Congleton Town Council (2019)
- Congleton Design Guide prepared by Locality / AECOM – March 2023
- Congleton Green Spaces: Site-Specific Biodiversity Plans, April 2022
- Congleton Habitat Distinctiveness Map – Cheshire Wildlife Trust (2018)
- Congleton Local Plan First Review 2005 Congleton Public Realm Strategy –Escape Urbanists – 2011
- Congleton Local Transport Development Plan (2022)
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 1 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 2 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)

- Congleton Landscape Character Assessment Part 3 – Ruth Benson Landscape Planning & Design (March 2020)
- Congleton Planning Committee Trees and Shrubs Guidance
- Congleton Public Realm Strategy – March 2012
- Congleton Sports Trust Presentation
- Congleton Town Strategy – Cheshire East Council August 2012
- Congleton Town Centre Masterplan and Implementation Plan (2008)
- Congleton Town Centre Plan –Taylor Young, King Sturge, J-Transport 2008
- Congleton Town Centre Strategy – Cheshire East Council Local Plan – 2012
- Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan 2023
- Congleton Town Council Business Plan 2020-23
- Congleton Traffic Model January 2016
- Congleton Planning Committee Trees and Shrub Guidance (Appendix 4)
- Cultural, arts and community engagement can benefit our wellbeing, but how do our neighbourhoods influence our participation? What works wellbeing foundation (2022)
- Cycling Masterplan for Congleton 2018
- ECOTEC Final Report on behalf of CLG – Houses in Multiple Occupation and Possible Planning Responses – September 2008
- Historic England- ‘The Setting of Heritage Assets’
- Green Space Strategy Update (2020, Cheshire East Council)
- Historic England – Heritage at Risk Register
- House of Commons Ministerial Statement by Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP: Support for small scale developers, Custom and Self Builders – November 2014
- Is uncontrolled growth causing economic decline – East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce February 2016
- Is Uncontrolled Growth Causing Economic Decline? - Town Council (2016)
- Lawton Street and Moody Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2010)
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Congleton, Macclesfield and Wilmslow – Cheshire East Council (2021)
- Local Plan Strategy Library – Reference RE-FO14
- Mary Portas Review 2017
- Moss Rooms paper prepared by Mrs J. Unsworth, April 2018
- National Design Guide (2019)
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Neighbourhood Plan Completions in Congleton Service Centre
- Neighbourhood Plan Estate Agents Survey Report 2016
- Neighbourhood Plan Housing Completions Schedule 2017
- Neighbourhood Plan Housing Group Dementia Summary paper and Appendices 2016
- Neighbourhood Plan list of HMO locations in Congleton 2016
- Neighbourhood Plan Older Persons Accommodation Needs from SHOP data for Congleton 2015-2030
- Neighbourhood Plan Small Sites Schedule
- North Congleton Master Plan Barton Willmore 2015
- OCSI Report 2016
- Peatlands of Cheshire East: An Assessment of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Biodiversity, June 2021
- Planning Practice Guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain
- Plus Dane Housing Association Community Insight Profile February 2015
- Protecting and Enhancing Congleton’s Natural Environment – CWT March 2017
- RoSPA Study on Road Safety March 2014
- Sustainable Travel in Congleton – Stephen Joseph Associates (2024)
- The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation 2007 (Moss Rooms)
- Town and Country Planning Advice Note – ‘Inland Waterways 2009’

- Transport in Congleton – Stephen Joseph Associates (2024)
- Trees in the Townscape: A Guide for Decision Makers 2022, Trees and Design Action Group)
- Trees for Congleton Review of Planting Season 2021/22 (summary) and Main Planting Sites up to April 2023 – Published Trees for Congleton April 2022
- Urban Vision Neighbourhood Plan Housing Needs Assessment
- West Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2010)
- White Young Green Cheshire Retail Study Update (2011 updated 2016)
- Wood v SoSCLG High Court Appeal Decision 2014



## Appendix 2 – Congleton Town Council Planning Checklist

When considering planning applications the most common ‘material considerations’ include the following, the list is not exhaustive:

- Local, strategic, regional and national planning policies
- Government circulars, orders and statutory instruments
- Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions)
- Design, visual appearance and materials
- Layout and density of the building
- Loss of daylight or sunlight
- Overshadowing/loss of outlook (but not view loss)
- Overlooking/loss of privacy
- Noise and disturbance from use
- Smells
- Light Pollution
- Highway and safety issues
- Traffic generation
- Vehicular access
- Adequacy of parking
- Loss of important trees
- Landscaping
- Nature conservation
- Intrusion into the open countryside/green belt
- Risk of flooding.
- Effect of listed buildings and conservation areas
- Archaeology
- Hazardous materials and ground contamination
- Disabled Persons access

## **Building Sustainably**

When considering any decisions, Town Council Policy is to consider the environmental issues associated with that decision. In context the context of the planning process this checklist provides prompts for councillors to review the sustainability of developments. All points are compatible with National & Cheshire East Policy.

- Does the proposed design aim to minimize energy requirements?
- Is the use of reclaimed or recycled materials apparent in the application?
- Does the application address standards for energy efficiency? For example triple glazing and LED Lighting.
- Are new homes to be fitted with a source of renewable energy?
- Are sites allocated for new housing easily accessible by walking/cycling /public transport?
- Does the application avoid the loss of local nature sites and green spaces?
- Where the application includes a new open space, does it include sufficient new native tree coverage and other plant life?
- Does the application support low-carbon vehicles, for example, with electric vehicle charging points easily accessible?
- Does the application propose building on a flood plain?
- Does the application include where appropriate water saving measures such as using water butts, toilet flushers that save water and runoff water in concrete areas?
- If it is a community or non-residential building, is it being built as close to net zero as possible?

## **Building Inclusively**

The consideration of equality issues is also Town Council Policy. This checklist has been reviewed in conjunction with Congleton's Equal Advisory Access Group as a prompt for councillors on relevant planning applications.

- Does the site have a Travel Plan which meets the standard of the Transport for New Homes framework?
- Is supporting public transport infrastructure appropriately designed – for example, dropped kerbs, wide enough roads, bus stops?
- Are open spaces designed with accessibility and inclusion in mind – for example playgrounds and community open spaces?
- Has appropriate lighting been included to ensure night-time safety?
- Have developers included security measures related to home access – lighting, cameras, locks etc?
- Is any affordable housing component distributed rather than 'ghettoed'?
- Does the development include a community hub or consider access and connection to local community facilities?
- Has multi-generational living been considered? For example, sufficient car parking for extended family and level access for those with limited mobility.
- If this is a supported living facility has extra consideration been given to access to transport and community facilities.

## Appendix 3 – List of Community Facilities

Name	Location	Purpose	Serves
Town Hall	High Street	Function, Information centre	All ages
Congleton Police Station	Market Square	Police Station (no front desk)	Community +
Congleton Fire Station	West Street		Community +
Ambulance Station	Manchester Road		Community +
Congleton Library	Market Street	Library, warm space, meetings	All – town centre
Congleton Museum	Market Square	Local history museum	Community +
War Memorial Hospital	Canal Road	Non A&E Community Hospital	The town
Lawton House Surgery	Bromley Road	GP Surgery	Community +
Meadowside Surgery	Mountbatten Way	GP Surgery	Community +
Readesmoor Surgery	West Road	GP Surgery	Community +
Moody Terrace Dentist	Moody Street	Dentist	Community +
Congleton Dental Centre	West Street	Dentist	Community +
Bupa Dental Care	West Street	Dentist	Community +
Congleton Leisure Centre	Worrall Street	Public Leisure Centre	Community +
Congleton Park	Park Road	Large Victorian Park and Playing fields	Community +
Back Lane Playing Fields	Back Lane	Sports pitches	Community +
St John's Playing Field	Buglawton	Playing Fields	Community +
Congleton Theatre	Park Road	300-seater theatre run by a trust	Community +
Congleton Football Club and ground	Booth Street	Football club in town centre attracts around 600 per game	Community +
Congleton Cricket Club and ground	Booth Street	Ground and club house	Community +
Congleton Tennis Club	West Street	Courts and club house	Community +
Congleton Bowling Green	West Street	Bowling Green – shares club house with the Cricket Club	Community +
Coronation Bowling	Worrall Street		Community
Congleton Bowling in the Park	Congleton Park	Public Bowling Green with club house	Community
Congleton Railway Bowling Green	Cross Street	Close to the Railway PH	
Congleton Paddling Pool	Park Road	Facility for children in summer	Young families
Congleton High School	Box Lane	School with sports centre	11-18 school
Eaton Bank Academy	Jackson Road	School with sports hall	11-18 school
Blackfirs Primary School	Longdown Road	School	Primary and Nursery
Buglawton Primary	Buxton Old Road	School	Primary and Nursery
Daven Primary School	New Street	School	Primary and Nursery
Havannah Primary	Malhamdale Road	School	Primary and Nursery
Marlfields Primary	Waggs Road	School	Primary and Nursery

Mossley Primary School	Boundary Lane	School	Primary and Nursery
St Mary's Primary RC	Belgrave Avenue	School	Primary and Nursery
The Quinta Primary School	Ullswater	School	Primary and Nursery
Mossley Village Hall	Leek Road	Community space	Community +
St John's Parish Centre	Old Buxton Road	Community space	Community +
New Life Church Hub	West Road	Various clubs and groups	Community +
St Mary's Parish Centre	West Road	Various clubs and group	Community +
St Stephen's parish rooms	Brook Street	Various clubs and groups	Community
Bromley Farm Community Centre	Edinburgh Road	Various clubs and groups	Community +
Bromley Well Being Hub	Parnell Square	Various clubs and groups	Community +
Mossley Old School Hall	Leek Road	Various clubs and groups	Community +
Chappell Centre	Leek Road	Various clubs and groups	Community +
Masonic Hall	Mill Street	Community Group space	Community +
Old Saw Mill	Back River Street	Community Group space	Community +
Scout Hut	Rope Walk	Community Group space	Young people +
ATC HQ	Rope Walk	Community Group space	Young people +
Scout Hut	Worrall Street	Community Group Space	Young people +
Ruby's Fund	Roe Street	Children with additional needs	Young people +
Congleton Family Hub	New Street	Children and young families	Young people +
Visyon – Fellowship House	Park Road	Charity HQ and location of mental wellbeing support	Young people +
Carter House Day Care Centre	Lawton Street	Meeting space for adults with learning difficulties	Additional needs
Electric Picture House	Spindle Street	Collection of art studios and creative community space	Community +
** private gyms			
** dance studios			

## Appendix 4 - Non-designated Heritage Assets

### St James Church

Astbury Street

CW12 4EF *James Trubshaw of Newcastle under Lyme designed the church in 1847. Gothic Revival style to accommodate the growing population in the area.*

### 28 High Town Works

Biddulph Road

CW12 3JT

*Shows on 1836 Tithe Map as "Poor House". Modern canopy independently stands to the frontage.*

### Holy Trinity Church

Biddulph Road

CW12 3LZ

*By C and J Trubshaw, built 1844-5, stained glass, the E window has Morris glass dated 1889.*

### Mossley House

Biddulph Road

CW12

The building group is linear in form, a succession of properties added to the original building over the period 1800-1900. Attractive composition, comprising of varied sequence of architectural styles and materials, with a garden context. Rear buildings are of simple vernacular style set within large gardens.

The buildings reflect local vernacular in this part of Cheshire.

### St Stephens Church

Brook Street

CW12 1RJ

*1858-1860 by Joseph Clarke of London, St Stephens has group value to the more successful listed Vicarage also by Clarke.*

### Castle Inn

Castle Inn Road

CW12 3LP

*An old smithy dating back to the mid-late 18th century, more recent porch extension to frontage, constructed from red brick, now rendered under a slate roof.*

### Bracken Cottage

Castle Inn Road

CW12 3LP

Quintessential country cottage dates circa 1830.

### Old Grammer

Cockshuts Path

Cockshuts Path which retains its cobbled surface and is

bordered on both sides by yellow dressed stone walls with rounded coping stones for part of its length.

Congleton Edge Methodist Chapel  
Congleton Edge Road  
CW12 3NB

*This rock-faced gritstone Ashlar Chapel is the second on the site, built in 1889 to replace an 1833 building. The roof is of blue plain tile, and windows are original timber. A small early 20th century addition is at the north end.*

40 (Crofters)  
Cross Lane  
CW12 3JX

*Late Victorian villa in Flemish bond red brick with slate roof surmounted by decorative terracotta ridge tiles and finials. Sandstone sills and lintels with brick hood moulds over openings. Tower has a pyramidal roof with flared eaves. Original timber sash windows and bargeboards remain. A significant range of outbuildings contemporary to the house exists in good condition.*

Pentecostal Chapel  
Cross Street  
CW12 1HQ

The Pentecostal church hall on Cross Street was built as a chapel for the Unitarians but later taken over. The new Pentecostal Chapel opened in 1883, built of pink sandstone from the Tegnose Quarry near Macclesfield.

1 Duke Street  
CW12 1AP

1 Duke Street is another example of 1930s architecture with strong horizontal lines formed by decorative brickwork and banding.

West Heath Mill  
Bryn Hall (40)  
Holmes Chapel Road  
CW12 4NG

Former 19th century silk ribbon mill, extensive restoration 2004. The textile industry was the major activity in succeeding decades; the mill is a lasting reminder of social and economic history in Congleton.

War Memorial  
Lawton Street

The memorial is a stone cross set in a small garden. The inscription records the name of those from Congleton who fell during World War I and World War II.

87  
Stone House  
Leek Road  
CW12 3HX  
Two storey square plan, well presented stone cottage. Mid

Victorian detached house, stone hood mouldings to front façade, ground floor bay windows either side of front door, Boundary wall included in the listing.

#### Mossley Old School

Leek Road  
CW12 3HX

Victorian former school, now community centre. Bellcote (without bell) on western gable of northernmost building. Bay windows projecting toward road on north side. Windows a mixture of original and replacement.

#### The Cedars

Leek Road  
CW12 3HS

An extensive post-Edwardian house now divided into flats. The house is covered by hipped blue plain tiled roof, which has been pierced by a late 20th century dormer.

#### The Chapel

Castle Hill Road  
CW12 3LP

Small 19th century former Wesleyan Methodist chapel in red brick, laid in Flemish bond. Stone copings on western gable end. Tiled roof with distinctive conical shape over the semicircular apse. Terracotta decorative ridge tiles. Lancel windows with shaped brick voussoirs and hood moulds. Windows are original timber. Limestone blocks and imprinted bricks bear names and initials at the top of the brick plinth. The building has not been extended despite now being in use as a dwelling.

#### Congleton Museum

Market Square

The old Police Station, now the Congleton Museum, was built in 1870, adjoining the new Town Hall and later provided accommodation for the Chief Constable. The Old Police Station symbolises a past self sufficient community, the building was central to town life.

#### The Music Box (12)

Mill Street  
CW12 1AB

Three storey 19th century public house, formerly known as the Lion and Bell. Somewhat altered, though some original fenestration survives.

#### Swan House

2, Swan Bank  
CW12

An interesting example of a polychrome brick building with decorative panels on the ground floor. Later 19th century. Occupies a prominent corner location and provides an attractive element in the street scene.



Coach and Horses  
Under Rainow Road  
CW12 3PL

Turn of the last century public house with coursed sandstone outbuildings, of earlier origins.

29- 35

West End Villa  
West Road

Modest range of terraced housing constructed in red brick with stone string course.

Westholme House

West Road  
CW12 4EY

Westholme House is an individual and distinctive Victorian house. Formerly used as the headmaster's house to Danesford School, the house has considerable style and character. Believed to have been constructed around 1888, attractive brick elevations and decorative architectural detailing under a slate roof.

English Garden Wall Bond boundary wall included in listing

## Appendix 5 – Congleton Planning Committee Guidance on Trees and Shrubs 2023

### **Congleton Town Council Planning Committee – Guidance on Trees and Shrubs Approved at Congleton Town Council Planning Committee – 19 October 2023**

Congleton Town Council believes that the positive impact of trees and shrubs on our environment and communities cannot be overstated and include:

- Countering climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide
- Trapping through their leaves toxic pollutants and microscopic particles
- Tempering severe weather with their capacity to attenuate heavy rains and floodwater
- Moderating temperatures with their ability to evaporate water, reflect sunlight and provide shade
- Helping prevent soil erosion through their intricate root systems which act as filters.
- Reducing noise as they act as sound barriers
- Providing increased biodiversity by supporting many species of fungi, lichens, mosses and plants as well as birds, invertebrates and other animals. The nuts, seeds and fruits of our trees and shrubs are essential food sources for British wildlife. Many species of wildlife are threatened and becoming rarer
- Delivering a range of health benefits including improving the air for asthma sufferers, lowering the risk of skin cancer and creating positive impact on mental health and wellbeing

**Since May 2019, Congleton Town Council’s Planning Committee has ensured that all planning applications that relate to the pruning, pollarding or felling of trees must be considered by and voted on by the Planning Committee. They cannot be ‘starred’ as planning applications that can be approved on block.**

Congleton Town Council actively encourages residents to protect trees by obtaining a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), which protects all types of trees. Anyone can apply for a TPO. The applicant does not have to own the land upon which the tree is situated to apply. There is no charge to apply for a TPO. Applications for a TPO in Cheshire East should be sent to [PlanningTrees@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningTrees@cheshireeast.gov.uk) with details of the tree(s), their location and why they should be considered for a TPO.

There are special rules regarding the protection of trees in designated Conservation areas of which there are three in Congleton – Lawton Street/Moody Street, Park Lane and West Street.

In view of their significant environmental and economic benefits, this Council urges those submitting planning applications for new developments to include as many additional trees and shrubs as is feasible.

Felling any tree will have implications for people and wildlife and any decision to fell a tree should be a decision of last resort. Where tree(s) are causing a real problem, this Council urges residents to talk to a tree adviser or consultant about how to best manage a problem tree. This Council urges residents to find a quality assured tree surgeon if major work is to be carried out, such as pollarding and pruning which can remove dangerous hanging branches or reduce the weight or impact of a tree without killing it.

Sometimes it is necessary to fell a tree where a tree poses a risk to safety owing to its location or condition, or is shown to be damaging a property. In line with the recommendations of the Woodland Trust, Congleton Town Council recommends planting replacement trees at a ratio of at least three to one. Even at this replacement rate, it will take years for the replacement trees to match the benefits of a felled tree.

Replacement trees should be native trees, and the size of the replacement trees should reflect both the trees removed and the local ecosystem. Congleton Town Council urges residents to talk to a tree adviser or consultant about the native trees best suited for their locality. Once established, native trees should require little maintenance or special treatment, and they should thrive naturally if planted in favourable conditions.

In the event that circumstances, such as a lack of space, prevent an applicant from replacing a felled tree at the ratio of three to one, Congleton Town Council requests that the applicant gives the replacement trees that cannot be planted to the Trees for Congleton project or to a similar local Community project so that they can be planted in a suitable alternative location.

**In summary, the key points for Congleton Town Council's Planning Committee to consider when an application involves trees are:**

1. All planning applications concerning trees have to be considered by and voted on by the Planning Committee.
2. Congleton Town Council actively encourages residents to protect our trees by obtaining a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).
3. Congleton Town Council urges those submitting planning applications for new developments to include as many additional trees and shrubs as is feasible.
4. Felling any tree will have implications for people and wildlife and any decision to fell a tree should be a decision of last resort.
5. Congleton Town Council urges residents to find a quality assured tree surgeon if major work is to be carried out, such as pollarding and pruning.
6. Sometimes it is necessary to fell a tree where a tree poses a risk to safety owing to its location or condition or is shown to be damaging a property. This Council's policy is for planting replacement trees at a ratio of at least three to one for every tree felled.
7. Replacement trees should be native trees, and the size of the replacement trees should reflect both the trees removed and the local ecosystem.
8. This Council requests that when the applicant is unable to plant all the replacement trees, they give them to the Trees for Congleton project or to a similar local Community project.

## Appendix 6 – List of Biodiversity Enhancement and Improvement Sites in Congleton

### West Heath

- Padgbury Lane/Langdale Close/Rydal Close (CTC rewilding site)
- Thirlmere Close
- Newcastle Road linear green space
- Quinta Park Play Area (Key site)
- Sycamore Avenue-Chestnut Drive
- Longdown Road-Chestnut Ave (CTC rewilding site)
- Bowness Court
- Newcastle Road-Solly Crescent
- Back Lane/Hawthorne Close group of small green spaces (Key site)

### Central

- Hankinson's Field (CTC rewilding site)
- Banky Fields (CTC rewilding site)
- Thames Close-Townsend Road
- Quayside-Goldfinch Road
- West Road (former Danesford frontage)
- Stirling Close (CTC rewilding site) (Key site)

### Lower Heath

- Land off Hillfields Close (CTC rewilding site) (Key site)
- Lower Heath Play Area
- Hertford Close - Riverdane Road
- Lady Warburton's Walk. Ownership unclear (CTC rewilding site)
- Buglawton
- Mardale Close
- Havannah Lane/St John's Road
- St John's Recreation Ground, Play Area and River Dane floodplain
- Redfern Avenue-Buxton Road (CTC rewilding site) (Key site)

### Bromley Farm

- Bromley Woods (has an old management plan)
- Bromley Farm Play Area
- Windsor Place (Key site)

### Mossley, Astbury Lane Ends, upper Canal St

- Derwent Drive (CTC rewilding site)
- Isis Close-Tamar Close (CTC rewilding site)
- Bridgewater Close (CTC rewilding site)
- Blackshaw Close (Key site)

## **Buglawton**

- Havannah Lane – St John's Road
- Mardale Close
- Redfern Avenue – Buxton Road (Key site)
- St John's Playing Fields & Riverside