

	Meeting (No)	Extraordinary Full Council Meeting (3)
	Time & Date	19th August 2025 at 6.00pm
	Location	Neston Town Hall
MINUTES		

Present: Cllrs: Davies (Chair), Adderley, Braithwaite, Griffiths, Halford, Hudspeth, Jones, Kynaston, D. Ruscoe, N. Ruscoe, Swaffer, Warner and Wastell.

In attendance: CWaC Cllr M. Barker, CWaC Cllr K. Millar, Z. Dean (Locum Chief Officer), A. Duncan (Community & Environment Manager). A large number of members of the public were also in attendance.

PART 1: Items considered in the presence of the press and public

The Mayor of Neston welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting fire safety and general house rules.

We are pleased to welcome Rob Charnley, CWaC's Head of Planning to this evening's meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the Cheshire West & Chester Local Plan Consultation, which is coming directly from Central Government, with borough councils across the country are being asked to undertake this work.

The Local Plan for Cheshire West and Chester is the key document guiding land use and development for the next 15 years. It determines where new homes, jobs, and other development will be located, while also addressing environmental protection and infrastructure needs. The current plan is being updated, with a consultation on "Issues and Options" currently underway to gather feedback on potential approaches.

Tonight's meeting is chiefly for the Town Council to discuss the plan and submit a response, also for questions to be answered by the Head of Planning.

I do urge all residents to respond as individuals to the consultation as the Town Council's collective response cannot possibly feature everyone's personal views. The more responses that are received by CWaC, the better.

Members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak later in the meeting, with a three-minute limit; it is likely that the 30 minutes will need to be extended judging by the number of people who are present.

You can respond online until 29th August 2025 by following the link which is attached to the agenda.

<https://consult.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/kse/event/38393>

or email: planningpolicy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

I ask everyone to be respectful of Mr Charnley who has given his time to attend tonight's meeting.

43 Apologies for Absence

It was RESOLVED: To accept the apologies from Cllr Marple – personal reasons. Cllrs Doughty and Townsend were absent.

44 Declarations of Interest

Cllrs D. Ruscoe and N. Ruscoe declared a pecuniary interest in items 45 and 46 as landowners with potential land to sell.

45 Presentation from CWaC's Head of Planning

a)	Mr Rob Charnely spoke in detail about the current Issues and Options Local Plan Consultation from Cheshire West & Chester Council which was running until 29th August 2025, noting that he is always happy to speak to the public as knowledge is power. The key message from the presentation was that this is a consultation only. The target for Cheshire West and Chester Council has previously been 500 new homes, however the Council has consistently delivered 1,000 each year. The Council does not currently have a five-year housing stock; without a plan there is a risk of development on the edge of the boundary. The broad options that are presented in the consultation are for the public to comment on. All options are on the table, even the potential to set up a new town. If all locations within the borough say “no to houses” then planning officers will need to make decisions. The earliest the new plan will come into effect is 2027, but it could take longer than that. The government is looking for faster ways to produce local plans. A new plan needs to be submitted by 2026. Doing nothing is not an option. Ad-hoc developments are worse as CWaC cannot plan for infrastructure. A Local Plan can help to plan for infrastructure improvements; it can also make sure that places do not join up through the green belt. Mr Charnley asked those present to consider whether there are any potential development sites that residents can live with and to bring comments forward. CWaC also has to identify sites for traveller communities and employment. At the current time nothing is set in stone. Another government could start this over from scratch. However, there is a need to find a solution to the problem.
b)	Questions from Town Councillors & CWaC Councillors Town Councillors asked a number of questions which were answered by Mr Charnley: Do plans take into account the town’s transient population, i.e. students? – No, they do not. A new Local Plan could take this into consideration. Could a developer come without permission? – No. Developments can still be refused on highways grounds and other reasons. However, they are becoming tilted in balance i.e. not enough within previous targets. Previously refused developments have gone to the secretary of state which costs CWaC money. – Council is not liable to appeal costs if they refuse on good grounds, but it is more difficult to stop boundary development. A better design standard for housing is needed for the borough. We need smaller social housing over 4-5 bedroom homes – Developers have to deliver a profit. If building on the green belt, a minimum of 45% of the housing provided per site has to be affordable. 200 houses have been built between 2010 and 2023, most of which are executive homes, which means we have reached the area’s limit for drainage. Younger families are moving away from the area and their support networks. Does Section 106 money feed into affordable housing? – We can push the green belt to 50% for affordable homes with a Local Plan. Affordable rent is coming forward. S.106 has to be delivered onsite if it is not added to the local area. More CIL could be available through the neighbourhood plan with a greater percentage being offered. Can we put a stop to people bidding for and buying land? – Any identified sites are still only options; no decisions have been made. Ultimately, planning permission has to be gained prior to developments. What is the housing target for the borough? – 29,000 over the next 15 years (1,928 each year). Nothing yet for Neston.

46	Questions and Comments from Residents It was RESOLVED: To suspend Standing Orders for the purpose of Public Participation. The Mayor of Neston extended the Public Participation session due to the large number of members of the public present. The Mayor directed the roving microphone to those members of the public who wished to ask Mr Charnley a question. A number of questions were then heard from members of the public, to which Mr Charnley answered in turn. The topics covered included the issues surrounding: • Concerns over wildlife conservation • Number of houses within the land bank • Challenge option assumptions of existing sites including former garage site on Chester High Road (A540) and the former caravan park. • Infrastructure concerns for up to 3,000 additional homes. • Importance of fields for wildlife (over-wintering birds) and the Dee Estuary. • Run off from sites raise concerns over sewerage, wildlife and loss of tourism and the visitor economy in Parkgate. • Concerns over field next to Brook Lane due to precious family connection. • The reasons for three options within the Plan (options a, b and c). Can there be a mixture of all? • Neston train station does not directly link to Chester or Liverpool. • Concerns over fears of compulsory purchase of land. • Reliance on landowners who wish to sell. • There are a lot of very small, narrow roads in the area. • The need for more social housing. • A request to extend the consultation deadline. It was noted that CWaC is not looking to compulsory purchase land in the area. The Mayor once again urged members of the public to contact the Planning Department directly, either through the consultation online or to email general comments through to: planningpolicy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk Paper copies of the Local Plan consultation are available in local libraries. Councillors thanked Mr Charnley for the update.
	There was a brief ten-minute hiatus whilst the majority of members of the public left the meeting. Cllrs Barker and Millar left the meeting. Cllr Warner and Mr Rob Charnley left the meeting at 7:40pm.
47	Cheshire West & Chester Local Plan
	It was RESOLVED: To reinstate Standing Orders. Neston Town Councillors debated the Local Plan consultation and discussed comments and areas of concerns which had been raised by residents earlier in the meeting. Cllr Hudspeth left the meeting at 8:15pm. Formal response to the CWaC Local Plan Consultation (Issues and Options):

	"In principle, Neston Town Council agrees that development is necessary, angled strongly towards a high percentage of affordable and social housing. Infrastructure needs to be increased and improved for this to happen. In the first instance, there needs to be a focus on derelict and unused sites. Neston will look chiefly at areas of significant green belt which needs to be retained for recreation. Any land identified as brown belt is to be developed first, followed by grey belt. Neston Town Council considers that NEP02 would be suitable for some mixed-use development as well as NEP03 for potential sites. Neston Town Council does not consider that NEP01, NEP04, NEP05 or NEP06 are suitable for any development. Constraints for any developments would need to include new schools. Any further development would require a new water treatment centre and sewerage system upgrades. Appropriate upgrades of all essential services and improvements to public transport are a must. Neston Town Council considers that a blend of a healthy amount of all options would be most suitable, whilst retaining as much of the green belt as possible from Option 'A' with not as many houses as suggested in Option 'C'. The Town Council notes that increased development in the area could have a big impact on wildlife and wishes to preserve the town's sanctuary for wildlife and areas of outstanding natural beauty. Neston Town Council is mindful that there needs to be a balance of nature with its significant impact on tourism and businesses." It was RESOLVED: To submit the above formal response in full to Cheshire West & Chester's Local Plan Consultation.
48	Date of the next meeting It was noted that the next scheduled Full Council meeting would take place on 21st October 2025 at 6pm.

Meeting closed at 20:30.

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____