Cheshire East Council’s
Environmental Strategy Consultation
Full report
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Introduction

Purpose of the consultation


The strategy set out the council’s proposed strategic goals and priority actions, in response to climate change, and to protect and enhance the local environment.

The aim of the consultation was to see what residents thought of this draft strategy, to see how they felt it might be improved, and to see how they thought the council could support the wider community to reduce its carbon footprint.

Engagement strategy

The consultation was widely promoted, including via:

- The Council Leader, Sam Corcoran – a keen advocate of the strategy
- Councillors and Town and Parish Councils
- Media releases to the public
- The council’s Digital Influence Panel
- Social media.

Consultation responses

Overall there has been a significant response to the consultation, including:

- 384 survey responses
- 32 formal written responses
- 54 social media comments.
Responses were received from a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- CEC Environmental Health Team
- Cheshire CCG
- Cheshire East Climate Alliance
- Cheshire East Countryside Access Forum
- Cheshire Local Nature Partnership
- Congleton Cycling Campaign
- Congleton Sustainability Group
- Councillor Akers-Smith
- Goostrey Parish Council
- Holmes Chapel Parish Council
- Holmes Chapel Village Volunteers
- National Trust
- Natural England
- NFU North West
- Pickmere Parish Council
- Poynton Town Council
- Sandbach Town Council
- Scotwood Nursery
- Shavington-cum-Gresty Parish Council
- The Environment Agency
- The Tatton Group
- Transition Wilmslow
- Walkers Strings Limited
- Weston & Basford Parish Council

**Report format**

This report is released as part of a collection of 3. The 3 reports being released as part of this consultation are:

1. A summary report
2. This full report
3. All formal responses
Section 1 – Survey quantitative results

In total, 384 respondents submitted their consultation response via an online survey. The following section summarises all responses to the quantitative questions in this survey.

Rating the Strategic Goals

Overall Approval Ratings

Respondents to the survey, conducted as part of the consultation, were asked to state whether they thought each of the Strategic Goals were relevant, good, comprehensive, and whether they felt the priority actions were the right areas to be focusing on.

Overall, respondents were most likely to agree the Strategic Goals were relevant (89% agreed overall), but least likely to agree they were comprehensive (64%).

Overall Approval Ratings are calculated as averages of these ratings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
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Overall Approval Ratings for the Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal 2 (Waste and pollution will be reduced) received the highest Overall Approval Rating of 81%, with Strategic Goal 5 (Sensitive and sustainable new development) receiving the lowest Overall Approval Rating of 67%.
Delivering the Environment Strategy

Respondents favoured delivery of the strategy being cost neutral to the council – though opinion was fairly split on this.

47% felt delivery of the strategy should be cost neutral to the council, 34% felt it should be subsidised from local taxation, while the remaining 19% were unsure.

Do you think that delivery of the Environment Strategy should be subsidised from local taxation, or cost neutral to the council e.g. by relying on government grants and other external funding?

Cost neutral to the council
Subsidised from local taxation
Don’t know / Not sure

Number of respondents between 326 and 360

Overall Approval ratings for each of the Strategic Goals:

- Waste and pollution will be reduced: 81%
- Protect and enhance our natural environment: 79%
- CEC will be Carbon Neutral by 2025: 78%
- Increase sustainable transport/travel: 71%
- Air quality will improve: 70%
- Sensitive and sustainable new development: 67%

Number of valid responses = 343
Section 2 – Survey qualitative results

In total, 384 respondents submitted their consultation response via an online survey. The following section summarises all responses to the qualitative questions in this survey.

Waste and pollution will be reduced

Survey respondents were asked to rate each of the 6 Strategic Goals set out in the Environmental Strategy. “Waste and pollution will be reduced” had the highest overall rating of all 6 Strategic Goals (81%).

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<tr>
<th>Strategic Goal – Key stats</th>
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Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the Strategic Goal “Waste and pollution will be reduced” – all comments received are summarised below.

This Strategic Goal lacks urgency and detail (34 comments)

Some felt that this Strategic Goal felt like "rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic", that only “minor tweaks” were being proposed, and that proposals need to become much more ambitious / severe – that it is too narrow in scope. They felt more detail was required.

Others felt there were no new suggestions in the strategy (except the recycle on the go bins), while others lamented a lack of targets and data. Others suggested the target dates for the achievement of actions were also missing or unrealistic, and that people should be incentivised to reach these targets. They suggested that targets for waste reduction for individuals, communities and organisations were needed, and that waste levels should be published regularly alongside the targets. Others wanted
effective communication on progress against these targets.

**Reduce waste (70 comments)**

Respondents were concerned at the amount of waste produced within the borough, particularly as compared to other Local Authority areas. They were concerned that none of the priority actions tackle waste reduction directly, and felt this should be a key priority.

They felt that there is an over-emphasis on recycling and recycling rates, and that the borough should be aiming for a zero waste target instead. They felt clear targets should be set in pursuit of zero waste, such as 70% waste reduction by 2025.

Respondents felt a breakdown of where waste is produced would be useful in combating waste production – some suggested the level of affluence in the borough meant people could afford to be wasteful, as one respondent suggested “I have noticed that the wealthier my friends, the more the throw out”.

Respondents also felt that behaviour change is key to successful waste reduction, that ultimately consumer and eating habits need to change to help reduce waste – as one respondents suggested people need to change their “throw away lifestyles”.

Respondents felt waste could be reduced by:

- Encouraging people to produce less waste through a combination of education, campaigning, incentives and enforcement – they felt education of both children and adults in this regard is important
- Encouraging people to consume less – some felt an emphasis on recycling encouraged people to consume, when people should be discouraged from consuming in the first place
- Reducing / eliminating black bin collections
- The council taking a lead by buying less, reusing more, and demonstrating innovation and best practice, including the adoption of the latest technology.

**Reduce packaging and single use plastic (61 comments)**

Encouraging retailers to reduce the amount of packaging was felt to be a key way of
tackling waste – respondents felt their bins were full of unnecessary packaging, particularly from supermarkets, fast food outlets, coffee shops and manufacturers. They felt this was a hidden issue that needs highlighting, and that retailers need to be encouraged to reduce their packaging through legislation, incentives and penalties.

They felt that:

- Shops should aim to become zero waste, and be leaders when it comes to zero waste
- Packaging should be replaced with recyclable material
- Stores should sell loose produce.

Respondents also stressed the importance of reducing single use plastic, suggesting it should be banned or eliminated as far as possible. They felt:

- “Life with less plastic” campaigns should be promoted e.g. Friends of the Earth – Living without plastic campaign
- The use of reusable cups should be encouraged
- Water fountains should be introduced in public areas to reduce plastic use
- Plastic bottles should be replaced with glass bottles
- Plastic bottle banks should be more widespread.

Others felt that individuals, businesses and the council are all currently unable to manage plastic waste in a sustainable manner, and that decisive central government intervention into the production and distribution of single use plastic is required.

Others felt the council should work with other Local Authorities to put pressure on suppliers to eliminate single use plastic and excess packaging. They felt offering lower business rates for greener companies could be a good way of incentivising change.

**Improve recycling (68 comments)**

Respondents felt recycling in Cheshire East could be improved by expanding the number of items that can be recycled, to include items such as all plastics, household items, shoes, clothes, and other fabric goods.
They also felt they need clearer guidance about what can and cannot be recycled, particularly with regard plastics and food waste, as current guidance does not cover the whole range of materials that can be recycled now – they requested a place to go to find out what items can be recycled.

Respondents felt the information provided when silver/green bins were first introduced was very good and useful, and suggested a similar information campaign needed repeating, as they felt people need reminding about recycling, new people have moved into the area, and such a campaign may help to encourage those who do not recycle currently to start doing so.

Respondents also requested improved transparency on what actually happens to their recyclable waste once it is collected. Some were cynical that their waste is actually recycled, others wondered whether it is shipped overseas, or whether it is used to generate energy/biofuel.

**Embrace recycling schemes (16 comments)**

Respondents suggested a number of recycling schemes they felt should be embraced/embraced further within the strategy:

- **Recycling On The Go** – Respondents welcomed the introduction of Recycling On The Go street litter bins, feeling they should be distributed as far and wide as possible, in all towns and local service centres, not just the main ones. Others had a number of queries about them, including queries as to what they are, others unconvinced they will work as people won’t use them correctly, others suggesting they had not worked in other areas, others suggesting they would need to be clearly labelled to help people use them correctly, and others asking if they would take food waste

- **Terracycle** – Some suggested that schemes such as Terracycle should be introduced more widely to collect and recycle more types of waste. It was felt that having easy access central collection points for such schemes would encourage more people to get involved, and that such schemes would work well in schools

- **Freecycle** – Schemes such as “Freecycle” should be encouraged and promoted more widely, to encourage people to restore, repurpose and
renovate household objects/furniture. Respondents felt the council should recommend a free recycling community website, and that there are charitable and voluntary groups that offer such schemes

- **Smart bins** – These should be introduced
- **Composting** – Encourage more composting and allotment growing, provide hot compost bins at a reduced price so people can compost cooked food in their back garden
- **Water collection** – Householders should be encouraged to collect water from drainpipes
- **Reverse vending machines** – It was suggested that reverse vending machines should be introduced
- **Paper recycling** – One felt a communal paper shredding facility is needed.

Others felt business waste collection and recycling needs more focus, and wondered if the strategy applied to that too. They felt the scope of the strategy needs to be wider to include schools, restaurants and businesses etc., and that the introduction of recycling collection for these types of establishment could create a significant improvement in recycling rates within the borough.

**Food waste collection (45 comments)**

A number of respondents were in favour of the introduction of food waste collection, stating they felt it would help people plan their shopping better, and that they were happy their waste would be used to create heat and power.

Several were generally opposed to the introduction of food waste collection, fearing it would be dirty, smell bad, encourage flies / vermin, and could lead to health issues. Others questioned the value of food waste recycling, feeling the critical step instead is to reduce food waste at source, and avoid the burdens associated with producing food that is never eaten. Others felt it takes a lot of effort to do, would take a lot of investment to set up for little reward, that food waste should not be mixed with green waste, and that a fortnightly collection would be inappropriate.

Others were unsure how the food waste collection system would work, wondering whether caddies or bags would be used, felt that the system had to be simple to be successful, and that collections should be weekly. Others suggested having
communal composting areas instead.

**Fly-tipping and littering is a problem (16 comments)**

Respondents highlighted that they felt fly-tipping and littering continues to be a problem, particularly in rural areas on roads and in hedges.

**Make Household Waste Recycling Centres more efficient (10 comments)**

Some felt household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) in the borough need to be better organised / signposted, so that people recycle better. They felt they do not operate efficiently, and that the rubble charge is not conducive to recycling. Others felt the closing of Arclid HWRC was not environmentally friendly, as people now have to drive further to recycle their waste.

**“Pollution” is not given any focus, should be a different section (9 comments)**

Some felt that “pollution” is not given any attention within this Strategic Goal, even though it is included in the goal’s heading. They felt it either needs to be removed from the heading and tackled separately, or given more attention / specific Priority Actions, and that Strategic Goal 4 deals with pollution more.

Others listed the types of pollution they thought should be tackled within this Strategic Goal, including:

- 5G – Creates electromagnetic pollution, which is harmful, including to insects. It also requires trees to be felled for sight lines
- Fracking – Potentially a major source of water pollution, as well as being the cause of earthquakes, and a significant user of fossil fuels
- Chemical pollution
- Overflowing sewers
- Industrial pollution into watercourses and atmosphere
• Noise pollution from industry, busy roads and railways

• Light Pollution in the countryside

• Atmospheric Pollution from traffic near schools and hospitals

Other comments (10 comments)

Other comments included:

• Municipal Waste Management Strategy – Some wondered what this is, others were supportive of it being reviewed, whilst others felt it should have been reviewed, restructured and implemented successfully before collection of food waste in January

• Others felt some were excluded from the strategy, including residents living in flats, or those living on canal boats for example.

• Some felt we should be looking towards other countries or organisations for examples of best practice.

• Others felt that centralising the waste hub would create more CO2 and pollution from the vehicles driving further, and wondered if this is environmentally friendly.
Protect and enhance our natural environment

Survey respondents were asked to rate each of the 6 Strategic Goals set out in the Environmental Strategy. “Protect and enhance our natural environment” had the second highest overall rating of all 6 Strategic Goals (79%).

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<tr>
<th>Strategic Goal – Key stats</th>
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<td>Good</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priority Actions are right areas to focus on</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>+4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>+8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the Strategic Goal “Protect and enhance our natural environment” – all comments received are summarised below.

This Strategic Goal lacks urgency and detail (76 comments)

Some respondents felt this Strategic Goal was vague, non-specific, lacked detail, and required significant targets adding. It was suggested this was “all talk no action!”. Others were cynical of an action to produce “yet another report”.

There was also confusion around the target date for the action, in that the target date for the action to produce the Green Infrastructure Plan had passed before the survey had closed. Some wondered if the plan been produced, while others stated they could not find this plan, and wondered how they could comment on this action when the Green Infrastructure Plan was not widely available – they felt this limited the meaningfulness of this consultation. One respondent felt the Green Space Strategy Update 2019 was an “extensive and comprehensive document, excellently produced”, though they were concerned that “it is so comprehensive that to achieve everything is impossible within any reasonable timescale”.

Ultimately they felt more passion is needed, and that a new, more focused, plan is required with clear, ambitious and quantified objectives, alongside outline costings. They also suggested a holistic approach was needed, with all the various strategies linked into each other.
Others were surprised that this Strategic Action appears so cursory, given the environment is under such pressure (as set out in the recent [State of Nature report 2019](#)), and is such a substantial concern to the public.

They felt the urgency of this goal is highlighted by the fact that the IPCC ([Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)) “gave us a decade to turn things around – and we are already two years into this period. We cannot waste time. Every action counts.” They felt this plan is not credible without including some concrete action.

**The council’s planning policy contradicts this Strategic Goal (66 comments)**

Others were concerned that the council’s approach to planning and development contradicted this Strategic Goal – as one respondent stated “is this some sort of joke?”, whilst another stated “Cheshire East has been responsible for the wholesale destruction of huge amounts of greenbelt land, it is ridiculously hypocritical to then talk about protecting the natural environment”.

Others felt this Strategic Goal was counter to proposed development – particularly around the protection of greenbelt land, which they noted is not mentioned in this goal. As one respondent said “we don't need 'new green infrastructure' – just stop building”. Another said “The number of new homes required (in the new Local Plan) was overstated and resulted in unacceptable loss of green space”. Some gave examples of places where they felt greenbelt land had been developed, including Bollington, Congleton, Crewe, Disley, Handforth, Macclesfield, Reaseheath and Styal.

Others suggested an exponential population increase is not compatible with protecting the natural environment, suggesting this is unsustainable and feeds environmentally unfriendly development.

**More green space needed, and better maintained (55 comments)**

On the other hand, some felt this was a laudable goal, which looked good. They felt green spaces are needed for all ages, that more green space is needed and that
these spaces need facilities, such as parking, toilets, shops and play areas. Others felt safe, accessible green space should be available to as large a proportion of the population as possible, within a short walking distance, and that this should be achieved by a specified date. They felt investment was needed in green space, PROW, and green corridors, given how essential green space is for people health and wellbeing.

Some felt the council could do a better job of maintaining green space, suggesting that some parks in the borough don't look good, and had become shabby and anti-social e.g. Queen’s Park in Crewe, or Wood Park and Linley Park in Alsager. Others suggested the peat bogs at Lindow Moss and Dane’s Moss should be restored.

Others suggested a reduction of expensive green space maintenance just for the sake of tidiness, and felt that rewilding of areas should be considered, restoring meadow diversity, woodland to hill areas and peat bogs to their natural state. The production of a local nature and ecosystem restoration plan was called for.

**Plant more trees (29 comments)**

Respondents felt the action “plant more trees” should be added into the strategy, and that targets should be set for the percentage of tree cover to aim for – e.g. Friends of the Earth propose 20%, Congleton Sustainability Group suggest 1 tree planted for every resident (circa 380,000 in total).

Respondents felt the benefits of having more trees are that they absorb CO2, help remove atmospheric pollution, help reduce traffic noise, provide habitats for threatened species, help increase biodiversity, soak up flood waters, prevent soil erosion, and enable humans and other species to live happier, healthier lives. Respondents suggested planting trees on the roadside, on new housing estates, in water run off/collection areas, and in any gaps. They also suggested replacing any trees that die, not removing them for development, and increasing the number of Tree Preservation Orders to protect them.

**Create wildlife corridors (24 comments)**

Respondents suggested creating “wildlife corridors” throughout the borough, to improve biodiversity, and to increase insects, wildlife, and native
wildflowers/pollinators. They encouraged the creation of wildlife corridors, wildflower verges, sustainable wildflower hedgerows, community orchards, vegetable gardens, allotments, community forests, and clean and diverse habitats.

They suggested stopping cutting grass verges when the wild flowers are in bloom, to encourage insects and bees. They also suggested better management of invasive species is needed.

Some suggested rewilding of hedges and verges, saying they should be cut on a 3 year rotation. Others suggested roundabouts should be planted with pollution reducing plants and trees, using bee pollinators not bedding plants which are discarded twice a year and are not good for wildlife. Others felt wildlife needed better consideration, saying there is no mention of wildlife in the plan, that too little is done to protect local wildlife, such as hedgehogs, foxes, badgers, birds, and that this is left to a few local independent groups.

Influence farming management (12 comments)

As one respondent stated “as per the recent Natural England report most biodiversity loss is down to farming practices, and as the borough is mostly rural, to improve the environment means influencing how farms operate”.

Others felt farming ruins the countryside, and felt farmers need to be encouraged to be more environmentally responsible e.g. by leaving wider margins round fields, by reducing chemical use in agriculture, and by working with the farming community to embed good environmental practices to reduce pollution, support biodiversity and soil health, and help to build economic and environmental resilience.

Some felt farmers need to be encouraged to grow crops on local fields, and that farmers, vendors and consumers should be encouraged to use local produce, so that we become more self-sufficient when it comes to food production.

Take wildlife into consideration in planning (10 comments)

Respondents felt that more weight needed to be applied to environmental and wildlife considerations during planning, they felt that new planning and development must take wildlife into consideration, including by encouraging:
- Wildlife tunnels underneath roads
- Breaks in curbs to prevent small animals from being trapped
- Hedgehog holes in fences
- Trees planted at every new house
- Restriction of the use of artificial grass, and making it subject to planning restrictions (the loss of permeable surfaces in gardens reduces the resilience of urban areas to climate change impacts)
- Living, green or ivy-clad walls on council buildings, leisure centres, schools
- Larger and more wildlife/environment friendly gardens, which are important for biodiversity – these should be subject to greater planning restrictions.

**Better flooding management (8 comments)**

Some were concerned about surface water / flooding management, with some feeling they were fobbed off with lies and delays about the reasons for flooding, when they felt development was a major cause e.g. development on flood plains, and levels of tarmacking. Some suggested it was important to minimise the introduction of new hard surfaces, and suggested the SUDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) approach should be adopted.

Others felt more attention must be given to ditches, and other water courses, as many had been neglected over the past 3 decades causing localised flooding.

**Restrict chemical use (4 comments)**

Some felt chemical use should be restricted e.g. weedkillers such as glyphosate, pesticides, herbicides and artificial fertilizers. especially on pavements, as they are dangerous.

**Work with NGO/independent organisations (12 comments)**

Respondents urged greater collaboration between the council and other organisations / stakeholders to develop and deliver an environmental strategy. Some
suggested that the council needs to lead this urgent change, by coordinating and facilitating the efforts of the various stakeholders.

Stakeholders to be collaborated with included:

- **Local Nature Partnerships**
- Other Local Authorities e.g. Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Town and Parish Councils
- Agencies, wildlife and volunteer groups e.g. National Trust, Woodland Trust
- Wildlife conservationists and experts
- **Local Enterprise Partnerships**
- Prominent land owners within the borough.

**Encourage community involvement (11 comments)**

Whilst acknowledging it is difficult to access local knowledge, some felt this would be essential to ensure the strategy was successful. They felt local people should be consulted about proposed plans for their neighbourhood, as they suggested locals may know more about their green spaces and local ecosystems than experts.

Others felt residents should be encouraged to do their bit by getting involved decision-making, and in delivering actions, wherever possible.

They suggested local communities, schools, Town and Parish Councils, GP Practices, local volunteer environmental groups, voluntary organisations should be encouraged to get involved. They felt areas should be earmarked for community management and ownership.
CEC will be Carbon Neutral by 2025

Survey respondents were asked to rate each of the 6 Strategic Goals set out in the Environmental Strategy. “CEC will be Carbon Neutral by 2025” had the third highest overall rating of all 6 Strategic Goals (78%).

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Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the Strategic Goal “CEC will be Carbon Neutral by 2025” – all comments received are summarised below.

The council to lead on a Carbon Strategy (46 comments)

Some respondents felt it is a good “lead by example strategy”, and felt the council should act as a "fast follower" (defined as a company that quickly imitates the innovations of its competitors), rather than being a leader in this area.

Others suggested that becoming a carbon neutral council would not do “anything much for Cheshire East unless you bring the population with you”, and suggested the council needs to “sharpen up” the Priority Action of “encouraging” businesses, residents and organisations to reduce their footprint. They felt the council should “impel” rather than just “encourage”, particularly businesses and residents, either through enforcement or monetary penalty.

Others felt a sub-regional Carbon Strategy would galvanise collective activity, to be monitored and reported on, and felt this would be an appropriate response to a declared “climate emergency”. Others felt the council is “best placed and indeed the only actor with the authority to lead and facilitate a process of change”, and the council should act as a leader on this agenda.

Furthermore, the Cheshire Local Nature Partnership would welcome “an overarching Carbon Strategy, which clearly identifies the role all partners, residents, businesses...
and policy can play in achieving carbon zero, with clear targets and measurables that can be reported against”.

Others felt the strategy does not go far enough, and should involve and refer to a wide range of stakeholders. They felt all stakeholders in Cheshire East must play their part, rather than just the council, to reduce energy consumption and carbon footprints. Suggested stakeholders included residents, neighbouring LA councils, town and parish councils, businesses, developers, charities, environmental groups, schools, hospitals, and the police.

Others felt the strategy required greater coordination with these stakeholders, or consideration of initiatives being conducted by these stakeholders.

Other suggestions to increase collaboration included:

- The council working with other authorities and organisations to lobby central government for policies that support local authorities working towards net zero
- The council setting up a citizen’s assembly to guide the adoption of moves towards a net-zero Cheshire East
- The council considering lessons to learn from other authorities e.g. Nottingham City Council which recently won an award for its policies.

**This Strategic Goal lacks detail (61 comments)**

Some respondents again felt this Strategic Goal lacked detailed information as to how it would be achieved, except for “very broad brush stroke wordy phrases”. Examples of phrases respondents felt could be improved included:

- “Look to” – some felt this phrase lacked commitment
- "Trial" – some felt this was a little ambiguous, perhaps implying a short term test, rather than being a concrete commitment to change. Others suggested replacing “trial” with “start implementing”, while others wondered how these trials will work exactly, and what would constitute success
- “Encourage” – some felt this was not specific nor measurable, and suggested
changing it to “incentivise”

- “Green infrastructure” – some were unsure what this was.

Others felt the Priority Actions are neither detailed nor comprehensive enough. They felt they do not set targets for residents, businesses and other organisations within the borough. They suggested the council should “establish a current emissions baseline to (define) the trajectory required to reach net zero by 2025”. Another felt “the Carbon Strategy must define the basis of carbon neutrality being aimed for, measured, and against which progress will be monitored and evaluated” and that “the value of the goal and the actions depend a lot on the content of the priority actions and the outcome indicators that will be defined”. One suggested setting a target of actual reductions in average temperatures, and not carbon emissions, since that is the goal of emissions reduction.

Others were concerned about proposed timescales, with a number feeling they were too short generally. They felt the target date for being carbon neutral of 2025 is too ambitious, that the council had no chance of meeting it – they felt it would be better to set a more realistic / achievable target date. Some suggested the proposals are not inline with the Paris Agreement, and that we won't be carbon neutral by 2025 without much more ambition.

On the other hand a few felt that the emergency requires rapid and radical action, and were pleased with the 2025 target.

Other comments about increasing detail included:

- The scale of the challenge ahead requires that the strategy brings together a set of bold plans, setting out what we all need to do, and setting out the local and national policy framework required to tackle these challenges

- It would be better to “map out a series of incremental steps to be met by target dates, in line with and consistent with government policy”

- The Greater Manchester 5-year Environment plan has clearly and effectively set out the scale of the challenge, and how it will be met. This approach and level of detail appears appropriate too for Cheshire East Council, who have
rightly placed environment and climate change at the top of their political agenda

- How will carbon reduction be embedded into procurement processes?

The Environmental and Economic Strategies are contradictory (7 comments)

Some felt the Environmental and Economic Strategies are contradictory – as one respondent stated “economic growth could not be sustained using the model shown in Cheshire East Council’s economic strategy, while at the same time reducing carbon emissions”. Others felt the strategies have contradictory goals e.g. that current planning and development is not environmentally friendly e.g. Crewe town centre, CEC support for HS2 and Airport expansion.

Where will the funding come from (7 comments)

Funding was a concern for some – some wondered where it would come from, while another wondered at what point the cost of becoming environmentally friendly will become unacceptable because of rises in Council Tax.

Respondents wanted the council to be transparent about the costs committed to the aim of becoming carbon neutral, and what the tangible benefits to taxpayers would be. Others felt there was a lack of clear cost/benefit analysis.

Don’t waste money on this issue (8 comments)

Some were cynical that there is a climate emergency, feeling “man made climate change is a hoax, the council should not be wasting any money on this”. Others felt that with other, much bigger, countries building coal fuelled power stations this “is a waste of time, all the good work will be worthless”. Others disagreed with giving priority to reducing carbon emissions, feeling it is a misuse of council resources.

Reducing our carbon footprint – Suggestions for the council (49 comments)

Respondents suggested the council could reduce its carbon footprint in the following ways:
• Suggestions for staff (9 comments) – Increase the amount of homeworking, or staff working in shared offices nearer their homes, cancel car parking subsidies for Councillors and Council staff and replace them with bus passes, stop CE Rangers driving round in diesel powered 4 x 4s and make them cycle more, have fewer face to face meetings, encourage staff to use more public transport, have more cycle to work schemes, sell the car parks and insist employees walk, increase car sharing, encourage staff to turn off their engines when diving to work

• Don’t introduce a staff workplace parking levy (4 comments) – Disagree with this as public transport alternatives are not adequate alternatives. Some asked how a parking levy will work for social workers, who travel as part of their job, and cannot use alternatives to their car – they felt the levy would be unfair on them, and extra consultation would be needed on this specific proposal

• Council procurement (7 comments) – The council must embed carbon reduction into its procurement processes, by sourcing materials and food locally and by and by applying thresholds in its procurement processes to judge the carbon suitability of the materials and services it purchases. A carbon reduction policy needs to be embedded into every Council activity, so that decisions are made taking into account the carbon impact of the decision, on an equal footing with cost, quality, health/safety, etc.

• Alternative fuels (12 comments) – The council should use alternative fuels more, including in its whole fleet. Trialling alternative fuel vehicles for the fleet is a waste of valuable time when other councils are way ahead on this – learn from other LAs and switch more quickly.

• Renewable energy (7 comments) – Use renewable energy in all council buildings e.g. solar panels on roofs, in schools, on council buildings, in new council houses. Lift planning restrictions on wind turbines and solar panels. However, don’t overpay for it, and ensure it is genuine and not green-washed via the purchase of cheap REGO certificates.
- Ensure targets apply to contractors (4 comments) – Carbon reduction targets must apply to council contractors also e.g. ANSA, Orbitas, bus companies. They should also have tougher targets to meet.

- Council bulk electricity buying (2 comments) – It should be renewable energy and offered to residents

- Become paperless (1 comment) – The council should become 100% paperless

- Locally sourced food (1 comment) – Council catering should be locally sourced

- Businesses appoint carbon neutral advisors and produce their own strategies (1 comments)

- The council’s track record of managing innovative solutions does not inspire confidence (1 comment) – e.g. by wholly owned subsidiaries and outsourcing

Reducing our carbon footprint – Suggestions for residents (83 comments)

Respondents suggested resident and business carbon footprints could be reduced in the following ways:

- Behaviour change through education (10 comments) – Respondents suggested that fundamental behaviour change would be required to reduce our carbon footprint, and that education and behaviour change campaigns would be needed to achieve this. Respondents felt people should be educated about carbon emissions, climate change, about the urgency of the situation, about reducing consumerism, and about reducing our energy demands. Respondents felt financial incentive may be needed to encourage behaviour change.

- Reduce car use (4 comments) – Respondents felt that reducing car use would be the best way to reduce our carbon footprint, and that none of what is proposed would work until there are viable alternatives to private car use.
They felt much needs to be done to dissuade people from using personal vehicles for short journeys, as much as possible, and suggested that by 2030, Cheshire East should aim for 40% of commuter journeys being made by public transport, cycling and walking, up from the 19% currently (Friends of the Earth Climate Check calculator). Respondents felt Cheshire East’s population is one which drives everywhere in private cars, at speeds which are very unfriendly to the environment and pedestrians.

- Improve public transport (16 comments) – Respondents felt public transport is not a viable alternative to car use, making it difficult for them to reduce their carbon footprint. They felt public transport needs improving, expanding and promoting. They felt there was a need to “return public transport levels to pre-austerity coverage, to reduce numbers of journeys made in private vehicles”, that local bus services are almost non-existent, and that train services are expensive and unreliable. They also lamented the reduction of bus services to schools.

- Increase walking and cycling (14 comments) – Similarly, respondents felt walking and cycling as an alternative to car use was not a viable option. They felt they were unsafe, that there are not enough cycle paths, and that roads in Cheshire are too narrow to cycle on. The called for an increase in funding for walking and cycling infrastructure, improvements to safety, and increased promotion of it.

- Increase EV use (9 comments) – Respondents emphasised support for increased EV use, including the installation of more electric car charging points, and replacement of current fleets to EV ones.

- Reduce development (11 comments) – Respondents felt our carbon footprint could be reduced by reducing the amount of development in the borough, by stopping building on greenfield sites, by rigorously enforcing planning policies by building green infrastructure, and by protect peat bogs which are carbon sinks.

- Plant more trees and hedges (7 comments) – Respondents felt an increase in
greenery in the borough would help reduce carbon levels. They want to see more trees planted, and more green areas including gardens.

- Ban fires (2 comments) – Ban log and coal burners, not included in the strategy
- Go plastic free (2 comments) – Focus here on major retailers
- Cut down food waste (1 comment)
- Gravitricity (1 comment) – Store renewable energy down mine shafts, or down the Salt Mines. See https://www.gravitricity.com
- Turn off traffic lights (1 comment) – Turn them off at 8pm, back on at 6am
- Speed humps (1 comment) – Remove them as they are environmentally unfriendly
- Fine drivers for sitting with their engine running (1 comment)
- Carbon offsetting (3 comments) – Offsetting through green infrastructure and ecological restoration (natural climate solutions) can make an important contribution and will need investment of resources. By 2025 the process of grid decarbonisation will be far from complete, and a lot of the transition to EV and heat pumps etc. will require higher levels of electricity, so a high level of offsetting the residual emissions will still be needed post-2025. We (ADAPT) think this challenge merits specific treatment in the strategy.
Increase sustainable transport / travel

Survey respondents were asked to rate each of the 6 Strategic Goals set out in the Environmental Strategy. “Increase sustainable transport / travel” had the third lowest overall rating of all 6 Strategic Goals (71%).

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Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the Strategic Goal “Increase sustainable transport / travel” – all comments received are summarised below.

The Strategic Goal lacks detail and targets (29 Comments)

Once again, some felt this Strategic Goal was woolly, and lacked detail and achievable targets. A more concrete action plan is needed, and some suggested including targets like:

- By 2024 how many more buses will there be?
- Will all buses be EV?
- What proportion of taxis will be EV?
- How many EV rapid charging points will there be?
- How many more cycle routes and safe walking routes will there be?

Others felt the targets which had been set were impossible to deliver – admirable but on current performance won’t be met.

Others felt that without seeing the LTP they couldn’t really comment.

Others felt the proposed dates, including October 2019, did not make sense, or were overly optimistic. They felt the actions were too short term, and wondered what
would happen following the review and publication of the Local Transport Plan.

Others felt it looked like a good plan, and that the identified areas were good, if not incomplete.

**Current planning contradicts sustainable transport (25 comments)**

Respondents felt that the council’s current planning policy contradicts its aims to increase sustainable transport and travel. They felt current development was “out of town”, and therefore car dependent, and that housing, services and employment centres were not close enough together, or well enough linked, to enable sustainable travel. They felt new housing developments include “token” cycling and walking provision, but “does nothing to link the new development to adjacent shopping, primary and secondary schools”. Respondents felt sustainable transport is not taken into account in planning applications, and that developments should only be allowed where the use of cycling and walking is demonstrably safe.

Others simply wanted the council to stop building new roads, with some despairing at “the number of extra highways being built to accommodate the increased use of cars and other vehicles”. Respondents wondered how this could possibly address the issue of sustainable transport.

Others wanted infrastructure built that has less queueing, and therefore less pollution, while others felt there should be more focus on new buildings providing EV charging points as a condition of planning permission.

**Impose change (12 comments)**

Respondents emphasised that they felt the council needs to incentivise, or impose, behaviour change. Some pointed out that without viable alternatives people won’t change, that there needs to be a balanced ‘carrot and stick’ approach, so residents are both discouraged from using their cars, and encouraged to use improved public transport and walking / cycling routes. Others felt electric cars need to be more affordable.
An integrated network is needed (16 comments)

Respondents felt the transport network needs to be much better linked e.g. road and rail – it is no good if people can’t get from their house to the train station via public transport. Unless travellers have the assurance of efficient, hassle free trips, devoid of danger, they will continue to use their own vehicles.

Some felt that popular routes don’t seem to link up, resulting in long waiting periods between services. They wanted key routes and nodes identifying, enabling residents to move efficiently across the sub region and beyond.

Some called for radical and comprehensive ideas for connected alternative transport plans – an ambitious Local Transport Plan. Some suggested a different approach to transport across all aspects of the community – a more comprehensive and holistic approach to tackling this issue, working with communities to plan for new ways of getting about, and investing in green infrastructure, so that there is a combined interest in improving public transport and transport sharing schemes. Others suggested that integrated transport smart cards are needed.

Reducing reliance on cars (63 comments)

Respondents felt the main challenge is in reducing car usage and reliance on cars. They felt cars are too convenient for people, and that people need to be actively discouraged from using them, particularly for more affluent residents, or those living in rural areas.

Suggested ways of reducing car use included:

- Have car free town centres on certain days
- Ban petrol and diesel vehicles from town centres
- Have congestion charges in town centres
- Ban commercial traffic from town centres at certain times
- Haulage – Reduce freight emissions and support modal shift from road to rail
- Reduce and slow traffic down to reduce emissions
• Deter travel to school by car

• Deter people from making short trips by car – change the culture of people who take short trips

• Encourage ride sharing, and shared vehicle ownership

• Develop co-working spaces closer to where people live

• Consider whether centralised education facilities are really needed at all in the 21st Century

• Introduce workplace parking levies

• Change all council vehicles to electric

• Have a council cycle to work week

• Many parents drive their children too and from school now

• You cannot get to countryside visitor centres without a car. There is no bus to Tegg’s Nose or Macclesfield forest at all

• Those in rural areas are dependent on cars, until public transport improves car ownership will remain high

• Improve public transport before penalising car drivers

A few respondents felt cars are not a problem.

**Improve public transport, especially bus services (167 comments)**

Many respondents felt that to reduce reliance on cars, better public transport, particularly better bus services, are needed. Respondents felt that current bus services are “absolutely dire”, or are “sparse, erratic, finish early, doesn't exist at weekends, or just doesn't exist (at all)”. They felt bus services needed to be more frequent, more reliable, better quality, cleaner, and more affordable, as fares were felt to be too high. Poor reliability was
highlighted as a particular concern – “workers do not trust buses, (for) fear of being late and sacked”.

Respondents also stressed that the number of services and routes needs increasing – some suggested routes and service frequency should go back to what they were in “the 1960s”. They asked for good connectivity to other towns, and to places where people live, work and spend leisure time. They also asked for services that are relevant, and at times that suit people, including running from early morning until late at night.

Respondents also felt that there needs to be more, and better quality, bus stops, shelters, timetables and digital information boards, and that these need to be well maintained – “In London they have electronic boards telling you when the next bus is due, rather than in Cheshire where it’s barely possible to find a bus stop”.

Respondents also questioned why, when the council is proposing increased travel by public transport, it has cut bus services in recent years – “(this is) all very well but we need much more use of public transport, but the council’s history is one of cutbacks under financial pressure”. Some felt the proposals “will be met with hollow laughter by residents who have had bus service funding withdrawn”, and asked whether this strategy represents a U-turn on the policy of bus service cuts, or whether this strategy is just paying lip service to this concept. Some suggested that in some areas bus services have totally disappeared, or are non-existent.

Respondents felt there needs to be a bus strategy created, that funds need to be redirected from the highways budget to support this strategy, and that the council should use the Bus Services Act 2017 (New Powers and Opportunities) to obtain such funding.

Others comments about bus services included:

- Public transport could never be efficient in rural areas and CE is largely rural
- Bus routes are ill designed e.g. to get from one side of Macclesfield to the other takes 2 buses, and a 10 minute car journey becomes a 1.5 hour commute
• The main causes of bus reliability problems are congestion, road works, development, and parked cars blocking roads

• Public transport does not work for older or disabled people

• Get old and polluting buses off the roads, they must be modern, electric powered, and not powered by fossil fuels

• Create a light railway network around the borough, better rail and tram links to nearby towns are required

• Create more park and ride schemes around the borough, especially to transport workers

• Bus fare-paying passengers can't use tickets on both D&G and Arriva buses

• Online timetables are terrible

• Customer usage satisfaction survey should be conducted annually to find areas for improvement

• No bus routes examples: Crewe to Shavington, Crewe to Leighton, A34 towards Marton, Wilmslow and Manchester, around Wilmslow, to Morley Green, Bollington and Macclesfield, Nantwich to Crewe.

**Increase cycling provision (95 comments)**

Respondents suggested that if the council is serious about increasing cycling in the borough, then far more investment in cycling infrastructure will be needed – the priority must be “to deliver segregated cycling infrastructure, to encourage vehicle users out of cars and onto bikes. Cheshire East is incredibly behind on this issue when compared to other council areas such as Yorkshire”. Some doubted there was a will to increase investment in cycling like this.

It was felt there should be a shift in spending away from cars to cycling, a commitment to investing a certain % of the highways budget on cycling provision, and a focus on cycling provision rather than EV provision.
Ultimately it was suggested that people will only cycle more if it becomes safe, easier, and quicker than driving. They suggested this has worked in other places, even if it was unpopular to start with.

Currently, respondents felt that cycling is too dangerous, people drive too fast, and roads are too dangerous to cycle on.

They wanted cycling infrastructure provided for within the Local Transport Plan, cyclists separating from cars in busy urban areas, more cycle paths, road surfaces cleaning and improving, and cycle lanes to not “just end in the most bizarre fashion, requiring cyclists to dismount”.

Respondents also suggested:

- Create a walking and cycling network like the "Beelines" network being invested in in Greater Manchester
- Have more cycle lock up and charging points
- Improve cycle hire provision
- Establish cycle-to-school schemes
- Launch a campaign to encourage more people to cycle
- Discourage people from using their cars for short journeys in particular
- Change driver attitudes towards cyclists to promote safe driving
- Stop people parking on cycle lanes
- Establish safe cycling routes to all schools
- Encourage e-bikes, and providing the infrastructure for these.

Some respondents felt that some residents are too old to cycle, and that with an ageing population, cycling will not be a viable option for a significant proportion of residents.
Increase walking provision (41 comments)

Several respondents advocated the benefits of walking for environmental purposes, and for improving well-being, fitness and general health, and felt that it needs to be strongly invested in and encouraged. They felt spending should be shifted away from cars to walking, to create more and better quality footpaths around the borough.

Ideas to increase the amount of walking in the borough included:

- Improve the quality of pavements, as in some places it is dangerous to walk on them, especially for those with a disability
- Encourage people to walk for short journeys, rather than use their cars
- Encourage ‘walking buses’ to primary schools to reduce the amount of cars used for the school run
- Improve lighting, as unlit pavements are dangerous
- Ensure pavements are designed to accommodate disability scooters
- Prioritise pedestrians and cyclists in new housing and retail developments – this should be enforced on developers for all new developments
- Don’t waste money on schemes like the Connect2 route between Nantwich and Crewe, as use of this pathway is marginal at best, and better provision is need in town centres.

Some respondents felt that some residents are too old to walk, and that with an ageing population, walking will not be a viable option for a significant proportion of residents.

Concerns about electric cars (82 comments)

A number of respondents felt electric cars are “only part of the answer”. Some felt that they are not yet affordable enough for the majority of the population to be a viable alternative to petrol/diesel cars, whilst others felt the lack of charging infrastructure made them impractical to buy/use.
Others felt it is a myth that electric cars are more environmentally friendly than petrol/diesel cars. They felt that over their whole lifetime their carbon footprint is still very significant, and that while they are better for emissions and air quality, a lot of carbon is released during their manufacture and recycling, and they are therefore not sustainable. They suggested that the council researches the “real resource cost” of producing them as compared petrol/diesel cars.

Respondents raised concerns about the environmental sustainability of electric cars:

- Their manufacture will “deplete rare Earth resources” e.g. lithium and cobalt for use in batteries
- Mining for rare resources used in their manufacture may be environmentally unfriendly and unsustainable
- Disposal of the batteries in a environmentally friendly way may be a challenge
- Traffic congestion and parking problems will still exist, and potentially worsen, with their introduction
- Battery technology as a source of power for transport is only an interim solution
- If the power source for them is coal, gas and nuclear power stations then that is unsustainable and not environmentally friendly
- The national grid will struggle to cope with the extra demands if all cars become electric powered.

They were also concerned that promotion of electric cars would proliferate the use of private transport, when they felt public transport, cycling and walking were a better long term sustainable solution. Others also were concerned the council will “discriminate” against traditional fuel private vehicles.

Others had concerns about the charging aspect of electric cars. They felt that in order for electric cars to be a viable alternative to petrol/diesel cars, “thousands of charging points” will be needed across the borough, in villages as well as towns, and
that these should be cheap to use, if not free. They felt 6 would not be enough, and that currently these cars are not practical for use in long distance journeys.

Respondents also felt a standardised charging plug will be needed, as well as standardised payment systems – “we have a hybrid car but do not use charging points as you need to have several different supplier cards and be a genius to sort out the costs”. Others were concerned that by the time electric charging points are installed vehicle technology will have progressed to self charging, making them redundant. Others wondered how those living in houses without drives e.g. flats or terraced houses would be able to use electric cars, while others felt charging points would create “street litter”.

The Local Transport Plan – LTP (9 comments)

With regard the Local Transport Plan, respondents felt that “aims and encouragement are not going to solve the climate crisis”, and that councils need to be bold and decisive in their actions. Some felt it is deficient in measurable targets and actions, and that it is vital to act on this plan, not just “supporting”, but actively taking the lead to ensure greater use of alternative transport.

Other concerns about the LTP included that:

- No one really understands the urgency of the climate crisis, or the effects it is having, and will have on us all

- It highlights how powerless Cheshire East Council is

- It lists the number of extra highways being built to accommodate the increased use of cars and other vehicles – how can this possibly address the issue of sustainable transport?

- It does not focus heavily on aggressive carbon emissions reduction

- The LTP and EV strategies simply refer to each other with neither taking the lead

- It doesn’t include any plans for hydrogen.
Air quality will improve

Survey respondents were asked to rate each of the 6 Strategic Goals set out in the Environmental Strategy. “Air quality will improve” had the second lowest overall rating of all 6 Strategic Goals (70%).

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Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the Strategic Goal “Air quality will improve” – all comments received are summarised below.

**The Strategic Goal lacks detail and targets (83 comments)**

Respondents felt that this Strategic Goal was vague, and lacked clear actions and objectives. The felt an action to “do a plan” was not substantial enough, and that this Strategic Goal “gives no indication of the level of ambition” that the council is aiming for. They felt the Priority Actions need to be practical actions – as one respondent said “The data is useful but only if it leads to action: you cannot fatten a pig by weighing it more frequently”.

Respondents suggested the following ways of improving the detail:

- Set SMART goals
- Set specific actions to improve air quality in the area, as well as just to measure it, including targets such as the specific pollutants the council would prioritise for action, the % annual improvement to be aimed for each year in each area
- Include target dates for actions – actions with no target dates rarely get completed
- Include technical data needed not words
- Don’t just do “Business As Usual”
- Don’t include so many actions with a status of ‘ongoing’
- Don’t review a plan that was only adopted 12 months ago.

Some pointed out that the target date for the action had already passed at the time of the consultation, which they felt didn’t make sense. They also wondered if the Air Quality Action Plan had been published, and if so, where it was.

A number of respondents did express support for this aim, stating they felt it was a critical issue. Others were concerned that limiting air pollution would impact on economic growth e.g. Manchester airport, haulage, and that the councils economic strategy seems to be in contrast to this strategy e.g. promoting airport expansion.

**Data falsification (17 comments)**

Some felt Cheshire East Council has a lot to do to regain trust on the issue of air quality, given the past scandal around air quality data falsification. They felt that past falsification of results makes people suspicious of the council, and that more openness and transparency on air quality data is needed to rectify this. Some felt the council needed to “acknowledge the CEC scandal over emissions”.

**Improve air pollution – Reduce traffic pollution (85 comments)**

Respondents highlighted traffic pollution as being a key cause of air pollution, and felt this needed to be tackled. They felt congestion, especially during rush hour, leads to increased air pollution, exacerbated by idling vehicles and “dirty” diesel buses.

They felt this could be tackled by:

- Reducing car use
- Creating congestion zones
- Having car free days in town centres
• Banning all diesel vehicle sales, and diesel fuel sales, in the borough

• Removing car parking and car access to town centres

• Banning heavy goods vehicles and farm vehicles from town centres (unless making deliveries)

• Reducing speed limits to reduce emissions

• Encouraging more use of start stop technology – clamp down on idling cars with enforcement and education

• Providing more buses and cheaper tickets

• Replacing polluting diesel buses with electric ones

• Stopping parents driving their children to and from school, pollution around schools must be very bad, have car free zones around schools. Ban fossil fuel cars from doing the ‘school run’

• Encouraging electric vehicle use

• Creating more bypasses to divert traffic from town centres

• Improving traffic management to keep traffic moving, to keep it flowing smoother, and to help reduce queues and pollution

• Stopping people parking on roads and pavements.

Others felt that several of the council's policies seem to increase traffic pollution, including those of building more roads, especially on green belt land.

**Improve air quality – Reduce development (36 comments)**

Others suggested that “air quality will only get worse as the council approves more and more housing developments across the borough, and what do more houses mean..... more cars!!”. Respondents also felt that new bypasses will lead to more traffic and more pollution, and that the continued development of Manchester Airport would lead to worse air quality also.
Some suggested the Council should stop any further development for at least 10 years, while others felt that air quality must be considered and monitored properly before planning permission is given for building developments – ultimately they felt that developers must be forced to build responsibly to help improve air quality, and that they felt planning applications get pushed through when there are questions over the impact on the local area. They felt projected house building numbers need to be reviewed, and felt that if these remain in place, clean air goals would be neither achievable nor sustainable.

**Other sources of air pollution (12 comments)**

Other sources of air pollution that respondents were concerned about included:

- Smoke pollution – Some complained about smoke from open fires, bonfires, solid fuel stoves and garden fires polluting the atmosphere. Some wanted these types of fires to be stopped, and others asked what had happened to the smokeless zones. They felt this affects those with asthma in particular

- Industrial sites – Monitor emissions

- The airport

- Agricultural activities – Best practice should be adopted to cut emissions, reduce pollutants such as ammonia

- Noise pollution

- The landfill site on Maw Lane, Crewe

- 5G internet

**Tackling air pollution (91 comments)**

Respondents suggested tackling air pollution by:

- Promoting green travel – They wanted to see sustainable travel alternatives promoting including buses, cycling and walking. They felt the infrastructure is needed, incentives should be offered to people to use green travel, "Nudge Theory" should be employed to get people out of cars, needs to be joined-up
• Planting more trees – Plant more trees to improve air quality, stop cutting them down for development or for 5G, create more green areas, implement an ecological restoration plan, and plant CO2 absorbing moss benches and banks

• Reducing pollution at source rather than cleaning up after the damage is done

• Educating people to be greener e.g. on driving habits

• Focusing on the worst areas – Focus on the worst towns / areas / black spots e.g. Alsager, Broken Cross, the airport, new bypasses, new housing estates, Adams Hill Knutsford, Knutsford, A6 in Disley, Middlewich, White Moss and the Stables, Handforth Dean, Macclesfield, Henbury

• Extending air quality measurements – These could be extended to more measurement points, and more widely publicised.
Sensitive and sustainable new development

Survey respondents were asked to rate each of the 6 Strategic Goals set out in the Environmental Strategy. “Sensitive and sustainable new development” had the lowest overall rating of all 6 Strategic Goals (67%).

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Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the Strategic Goal “Sensitive and sustainable new development” – all comments received are summarised below.

This Strategic Goal lacks detail and targets (31 comments)

A number of respondents commented that they felt this Strategic Goal was vague, lacked detail and definable actions. Some felt some of the language used was unclear.

They suggested adopting plans is not taking action, and were therefore sceptical that anything would happen as a result. Some suggested the goal as set out fails to address the urgency of the problem.

The planning system needs overhauling (16 comments)

Some felt that there are contradictory messages from the council with regard planning and the environment – that the council says one thing, but does another. They felt planning in Cheshire East “has been a joke for years” and that “the whole planning system needs overhauling”. Others felt “shocking decisions are still being made”, that they do not trust Cheshire East Council at all in respect of planning applications and development, and that planning rules must be more strictly enforced. They wanted planning to be “based in reality”.

Others suggested the strategies, documents and plans referred to within the strategy (e.g. The Local Plan, SADPD etc.) were written and consulted on at a different time,
and that in light of the Climate Emergency, they are not fit for purpose, and require re-writing.

**Hold developers to account (19 comments)**

Others felt that developers must be held more to account, and made more responsible for development in Cheshire East. They felt they should be discouraged from putting profit first, and prioritising development over the environment, and felt property development is increasingly commercial at the expense of both the environment and good, ethical design.

They felt that developers hold the balance of power over decisions about development / planning, and that the council has insufficient power in the face of legal opposition from developers who have “deep pockets”.

They felt that:

- The council does not have the resources to ensure that developments are carried out satisfactorily
- Developments are not held to high enough quality standards, or to “planning promises”
- There should be limits on the extent to which developers can challenge Local Authority decisions
- Developers neglect to invest in local infrastructure
- Developers are not committed to building affordable houses
- Developers “find ways to avoid having the best environmental standards applied to their developments”.

Others felt that buildings should meet the building regulations at the time they are built, rather than at the time planning permission was granted.

**Stop new housing and development (52 comments)**

Respondents here simply stated that they wanted new housing / development to
They felt the borough was too populated, that there had been too much development recently, and that there appears to be “no control on new developments”.

Respondents listed areas where they felt there had been too much development – Albion Lock, Alpraham, Alsager, Bollington, Bunbury, Calveley, Disley, Handforth Dean, Holmes Chapel, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich, and Wilmslow.

They wanted the council to stop building in spite of national planning instructions, develop existing homes rather than build new, build on brownfield as a priority, develop less desirable areas, and not develop on floodplains.

**Stop building on greenbelt (37 comments)**

Further to the amount of development taking place, respondents were also concerned about the amount of green land being built on. They simply wanted the council to not build on greenbelt, or greenfield sites, wanted green areas protecting, and wanted the council/developers to stop developing such land for profit. They also wanted woodland protecting, and floodplains to not be built on.

They felt the loss of green space meant Cheshire East loses its unique selling point, making it a less attractive place to live and spend time in. They felt green space is required for the good health of residents, as well as being needed to prevent flooding and to help keep air pollution under control. They felt that sustainable new development should be on brownfield sites, and not agricultural land, as has been the case.

**New housing development is not… (39 comments)**

Some respondents felt that current development, and planned development, has not adapted to the impacts of declaring a climate emergency.

They felt that current, and planned, housing development:

- Is too big – “the carbon footprint of a new build with 7+ bedrooms will be massive, and completely out of proportion for the number of occupants (a family of 4 or less)”
• Lacks sufficient infrastructure to handle the number of new residents

• Leads to increased traffic, and therefore increased air pollution – current highways infrastructure cannot cope with new development, and the level of traffic, nor the demand for parking. New dwelling do not provide enough space for parked cars, congestion is getting worse, and town centres do not provide for cars

• Is car dependent

• Is poor quality – “the houses are just brick boxes”

• Is not eco friendly enough – there are no solar panels, no electric vehicle charging points, no alternatives to gas central heating, no heat exchange heating systems, no underground water storage, and they are built to “outdated energy efficiency standards”

• Doesn’t have effective land drainage, front gardens are tarmacked increasing the risk of flooding

• Lack green areas – gardens are small, with fencing used instead of green hedgerows

• Is not in line with "no 'net loss' of biodiversity".

**New development must be… (122 comments)**

Further to complaints about current development, residents specified that they thought new development should:

• “Be where it is needed, and not where developers want to put it”

• Comply with the council’s environmental and carbon strategies

• Adhere to the highest building regulations (which some felt current development does not)

• Be built to Passivhaus standards to reduce use of fossil fuels
- Be carbon neutral (both when lived in, and when being built), or be Net Zero Carbon Buildings (as defined by the UK Green Building Council)

- Integrate with green infrastructure including roads, cycle lanes and facilities

- Have access to good public transport networks

- Be close to, or well linked to, local services such as schools and GPs etc.

- Be eco-friendly and sustainable

- Have EV charging points

- Have ground source heat pumps or district heating, rather than gas boilers

- Have water collections tanks for rainwater harvesting

- Have solar panels

- Be better insulated – have triple glazing, or thermal insulation in the walls

- Be built by local firms using local materials

- Include built-in wildlife habitat, such as swift boxes, bat boxes and bee bricks built into the fabric of each building

- Have gardens that have water butts, compost bins, ponds, trees, good quality soil, and incorporate more small trees and wildlife friendly hedges

- Have roads that have amphibian friendly crossings and kerbs

- Have green walls and roofs

- Have adequate parking – be able to accommodate 2 cars off the road, not have tarmacking

- Be affordable

- Have 20% renewable energy minimum on all new developments
• Have smart meters in all new homes.

**More affordable housing is needed (11 comments)**

Some felt new housing in the borough is unaffordable, and that more affordable housing is needed. They felt the local plan policy SC6 on Rural Exception housing should be strictly applied as it is felt it isn’t. The definition of affordable housing also seems to change between approval and building stage, doesn't meet guidelines, and doesn't seem to be affordable.

**The Local Plan (18 comments)**

Some felt the council’s Local Plan should be reassessed, as it “forces housing on communities”, and as the “number of new homes required in the Local Plan has been vastly overstated, and does not comply with more recent Government requirements and ONS data”.

Others urged “a full, urgent and comprehensive review of the Local Plan in response to the climate change emergency motion”, believing it has not been adequately assessed in response to the challenges ahead.

Others suggested reviewing local plan allocations to reflect reduced house demand from the previous version, and “deallocating some un-started developments” so they “remain Green Belt”. Some felt the council should use ONS 2018 stats for housing need, “rather than the trumped up numbers that you lot are currently using”. They felt that some of the Local Plan sites would simply not be accepted against the current strategy.

Others felt that building on greenspace, and expecting a “payment from a developer or contractor” to offset this loss is unacceptable – “this is completely the wrong attitude. Anything that is detrimental to the environment should not be built”.

Others felt Local Plan’s are “not worth the paper they are written on if central government can override local planning decisions upon appeal”, or wondered what the point of a Local Plan was if developers can go above the agreed level anyway, quoting it as a minimum.

Others pointed out contradictions between The Local Plan and the Environmental
Strategy:

- Local Plan aims for increased road capacity, which appears to be in contradiction with the Environmental Strategy goal number 4 – to increase sustainable forms of transport over reliance on cars.

- The Local Plan has selected sites that are contrary to the goals of sustainable design with minimised environmental impact – “the sites proposed between Macclesfield and Henbury would cause extensive environmental habitat loss which can not be mitigated in the directly local area. Very large quantities of peat will need to be excavated, and presumably removed, and a Site of Biological Important heavily impacted”.

- Another site example included site (19/3097M) – “a community tree-planting project established a small woodland of nearly 500 trees in 2013. This is maturing nicely, however the planning application proposed complete removal, currently with no replacement. With a 3 for 1 policy this would require approximately 1400 trees to be planted. The original documentation proposing Local Plan incorporation stated that this woodland would be retained. Once this site was accepted into the Local Plan this point was conveniently ignored, and the plans now show complete removal”.

It was also felt that a review of The Local Plan should however not delay action, that an emergency requires emergency measures to be put in place, for it to be fit for the future.

Site Allocations and Development Policies Document – SADPD (13 comments)

As with the Local Plan, respondents felt the SADPD needs reviewing in light of the declared Climate Emergency, that it currently does not reflect the Climate Emergency strongly enough, and that the time period for adoption of the SADPD seemed ambitious.

It was felt it needs to be reviewed and amended on the basis that the Cheshire East have overestimated the number of properties needing to be built in certain areas of the borough.
Others felt that proposed sites for development in the SADPD are in direct conflict with the aims of the sustainable development approach. For example they felt the SADPD latest draft continues to propose developments on green belt “with no real justification” – for example Hall Hill in Bollington. They felt “urban sprawl” across CEC continues.

Other examples included sites proposed between Macclesfield and Henbury, which they felt would cause extensive environmental habitat loss which could not be mitigated in the directly local area, as well as proposals to build on the high school field in Poynton, and sites allocated for development in areas known to flood in Poynton.

One suggested that contrary to current practice, councils are allowed to set higher standards than Building Regulations, and that the SADPD did not seem to go far enough in requirements for new developments.

Others felt the council should focus more on developing small sites across the borough, mainly infilling small gaps in existing settlements.

**The Minerals and Waste Plan (5 comments)**

Some were against shale gas and peat extraction, feeling this is not compatible with a responsible environmental strategy. They felt this plan should commit to keeping coal, gas and shale in the ground, and that it needs reviewing in light of the declared Climate Emergency. It was suggested that on the sites proposed between Macclesfield and Henbury, very large quantities of peat will need to be excavated, and presumably removed, and a Site of Biological Important heavily impacted.

**Collate Environmental Planning policies (6 comments)**

We would ask that the various environmental planning policies are collated within this Environmental Strategy, as currently they are spread across various planning documents. These are essential tools which must be strengthened. It would be helpful if the Borough Council’s Environmental Strategy could collate environmental planning policies into one place, perhaps an Appendix to the Environmental Strategy, or better still through the Design Review SPD the Council intend to prepare as confirmed under Policy SE 1 of the adopted Local Plan Part 1. This should clearly
set out how such policies will be applied to different types of proposals at different stages in the planning process. This action should be listed in the Priority Action Table. All environmental policies should still consider the potential impact on social and economic issues to ensure there is a rounded sustainability agenda.

**Neighbourhood plans (5 comments)**

Reference to these is needed in the strategy. Areas that need one include Macclesfield.

**National policies will dictate (4 comments)**

National policies will dictate what happens here – local government organisations need to put pressure on national government to change policies/lobby central government for change. Building regulations are key, and are outside council control.

**Section 106 – Ensure it is enforced (2 comments)**

Extension and revision of the Section 106 provisions, so that developers contribute more funds into the health and wellbeing of the local community, for example for local sustainable transport, green spaces, local shops, schools and health centres, etc.
Measuring progress

Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on how they felt progress against the Strategic Goals should be measured – all comments received are summarised below.

Think bigger, be radical (23 comments)

Some thought the stated aims looked good, though a few wondered how this was going to be funded.

Others felt that the targets within the current strategy could be improved. They felt current targets are not challenging, success criteria are not defined, and so felt the council is “bound to succeed”. They felt the "action plan" seems to be a series of ideas, and that targets needs to be specific. They urged the council to “think bigger, be radical”.

Others were unsure whether targets would apply to the whole borough, or just the council, and felt this was unclear in the strategy.

Metrics used to measure progress must be... (91 comments)

Respondents felt that the metrics used to measure progress should be:

- Realistic, accurate
- Not manipulated
- Joined up
- Base-lined – where are we now?
- Quantifiable, measurable e.g. SMART
- Milestoned – how much improvement is targeted in what time frame? Realistic dates needed
- Benchmarked e.g. using a Local Authority focussed emissions tool such as
SCATTER

- Reported on, transparent e.g. RAG, trend, or hotspot data
- Reviewed regularly – quarterly, biannually, annually
- Well publicised including on social media, in local media, on the website, in libraries, in public meetings, on billboards. They should be reported on and viewable in real time
- Independently verified – perhaps by members of the public e.g. an Environmental Review Panel
- Consulted on to ensure they are adopted and acted on.

One respondent however, warned “targets and goals do not work, even the person who came up with the idea William Edwards Deming acknowledged this”.

Engage with others on measuring progress (27 comments)

Some felt that external stakeholders should be involved in defining outcome indicators and measuring progress. They suggested that environmental and community groups should be involved, alongside other experts, residents, councillors, businesses, education establishments and other organisations.

One respondent suggested community environmental audits – “could you add community audits where citizens can report online on pre-set days key measures such as litter, traffic, wildlife, cycling/walking behaviours?”.

Others suggested there needs to be wider engagement on this issue, and that it needed to be interesting to appeal to a wide range of stakeholders. They felt the council must consult on proposals, and not “build and be damned”, and that this consultation must be engaging and interesting to appeal to all those who might be interested. They felt the council begin open ongoing engagement on this issue, and have a dedicated portal about it for feedback e.g. a community information hub with progress display. Others suggested that public surveys measuring satisfaction and agreement with proposals and metrics should be conducted.
Suggested indicators to measure (181 comments)

Respondents suggested the following measures:

- **Sustainable transport** – Measure the amount invested in sustainable transport

- **Public transport** – Measure usage, publish bus and train annual passenger numbers, measure numbers of journeys to work. Report on transport reliability figures. Conduct bus passenger satisfaction surveys (e.g. the Transport Focus annual bus passenger survey)

- **Reduce car usage** – Measure the number of cars on the roads, including the proportion that are EV and hybrid vehicles, measure car ownership levels

- **Traffic** – Measure vehicle numbers, including by different types e.g. lorries etc. Measure traffic speed, congestion, roadworks and traffic flow

- **Air quality** – Measure it generally, place monitors in areas with high pollution, do not falsify figures, measure roadside CO2 and particulate levels, measure should be level of CO2 per capita, count the number of events where emissions / air quality exceeded acceptable levels, especially during rush hour, measure smoke levels from log and coal burners, wood chip burning

- **Amount of waste and recycling** – Report on the type of waste being processed, where it originates from, what is recycled, amount of waste per person, amount of packaging, focus on waste figures as well as recycling, set targets for reducing household waste since to the national average (or ideally below), measure both domestic and industrial waste

- **Planning** – Measure and report on the number of houses being built (lower is better), review the number of new homes required in line with more recent ONS data and Government requirements, measure the ratio of green space to built environment in CEC at local and overall levels, measure the amount of land rejected for building, measure the EPC rating/energy efficiency of new homes built, and the proportion of new houses that are built to the highest environmental standards
• Carbon emissions / carbon neutrality / energy use – Identify areas of greatest carbon production

• Wildlife levels – Monitor species diversity, amount of habitat created, amount of native animals, insects and plant life, the amount of biodiversity net gain or habitat creation/enhancement delivered through new development

• Cycling, walking levels – Measure the length (km) of new or improved “routeways” for cycling and walking, the total length of pavements and cycling lanes, the numbers of people cycling, including to work, the numbers walking and cycling after improvements have been put in place, the numbers on ‘Love to Ride’ initiatives

• Tree and hedgerow coverage – Numbers of trees planted each year

• Cheshire East Council – Energy consumption of buildings, overall council emissions, proportion of petrol / diesel council vehicles vs proportion of electric vehicles, departmental environmental impact assessments, amount of meat sold in CEC outlets

• Electric Vehicles – The number of charging points

• Litter levels, fly tipping

• Green space – Measure how much there is, measure building on greenfield sites, publish the number of acres of previous green belt land which have been built on over the last 12 months

• Water – Usage and quality

• Floods - Monitor areas of localised flooding

• Businesses – The number that are environmentally friendly, number of employees that work in such businesses

• Natural Capital Audit – Complete one

• Pesticide use
- Plastic reduction target
- Soil quality.
Supporting the community to reduce its footprint

Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on what they thought the council could do to support the wider community to reduce their carbon footprint – all comments received are summarised below.

Reduce car use (32 comments)

- Increase car parking charges to dissuade car use (16 comments)
- Reduce congestion in order to lower emissions and air pollution (6 comments)
- Ban roadside parking outside schools (3 comments)
- Ban engine idling (3 comments)
- Reduce the urban speed limit to 20mph in order to reduce emissions and air pollution (2 comments)
- Ban cars completely in urban centres (1 comment)
- Reduce parking charges in towns to encourage residents to travel the potentially shorter distance to a nearby town for amenities, this opposed to travelling longer distances to retail parks for the same amenities (1 comment)

Discourage private transport (18 comments)

- Provide more electric car charging points to make electric cars more practical (10 comments)
- Encourage shared mobility schemes to cut the amount of vehicles on the road (3 comments)
- Provide financial support to residents to assist them switching to electric vehicles (2 comments)
- Stop subsidising council staff private vehicle travel, in order to dissuade staff from unnecessary travel (1 comment)
• Ban out of jurisdiction taxis operating in Cheshire East to reduce emissions (1 comment)

• Tax car ownership to dissuade people from owning private vehicles (1 comment)

**Increase public transport (62 comments)**

• Encourage residents to use public transport (26 comments)

• Expand public transport to cover more rural areas, and to be more frequent (10 comments)

• Ensure vehicles used by the council and for public transport are “green” (10 comments)

• Establish a council run bus company with “green” vehicles to compete with the existing services (2 comments)

**Encourage cycling and walking (35 comments)**

• Encourage walking and cycling to residents as an alternative for commuting (16 comments)

• Create more cycle/walking paths for commuting, in order to make travelling this way safer (14 comments)

• Build secure bike parks at practical locations, in order to make cycling a safer and more realistic option (4 comments)

• Lower the speed limit on rural roads to make cycling and walking safer (1 comment)

**Increase public engagement (53 comments)**

• Have more frequent public briefings regarding this issue – release periodic progress reports on actions taken and to be taken (13 comments)

• Support and consult with existing environmental groups in Cheshire East to
assist in making changes at the local level (10 comments)

- Discuss changes on a more local level, with some suggesting a “Peoples Assembly” or similar body (8 comments)

- Raise awareness of the issue in schools (8 comments)

- Inform residents how they too can contribute and what the cost would be (8 comments)

- Reintroducing the ‘Best kept village competition’ to bring attention to the environment (1 comment)

- Encourage schemes like “Meat Free Monday” to reduce individual carbon footprints (1 comment)

- Follow the “Barcelona model”. This being to raise revenue for Green projects agreed on by a citizen’s panel through crowd sourced business initiatives (1 comment)

**Restrict development (12 comments)**

- Restrict further development on Greenbelt land (5 comments)

- Restrict housebuilding generally across Cheshire East (3 comments)

- Restrict retail centres being developed outside of urban centres. This being in an effort to reduce the amount of travel required to reach these amenities (2 comments)

- Restrict housebuilding in isolated rural areas, as this necessitates the occupant to travel longer distances for daily life (1 comment)

- Restrict development on peat bog land as it requires to extraction of peat in order to happen (1 comment)

**More “green” development (24 comments)**

- Build more environmentally friendly new housing (12 comments)
• All new developments to have solar panels installed (6 comments)

• Build more residential developments to be in urban centres, so residents will have less distance to travel to reach amenities (3 comments)

• Include cycle paths in any new developments (1 comment)

• Include green open spaces in any new developments (1 comment)

• Require that landlords upgrade their properties to be more environmentally friendly (1 comment)

Influence business / industry (26 comments)

• Encourage local business and industry to become more environmentally friendly, through tax cuts, subsidies and award schemes (13 comments)

• Lower business rates in town centres to support local business which requires residents to travel less (5 comments)

• Tax large organisations for their car parks, to encourage these organisations to run their own programs to encourage staff to use alternative transport for commuting (2 comments)

• Have greater scrutiny and consequences for business and industry with a large carbon footprint (2 comments)

• Subsidise grocery home delivery to lower vehicle emissions (1 comment)

• Improve farming methods to be more environmentally friendly (1 comment)

• Place greater restrictions, or more significant consequences, on fast food businesses for littering of their product (1 comment)

• Help facilitate high speed broadband being available to rural areas, in order to enable working from home (1 comment)

Environmentally friendly energy (25 comments)

• Give grants and subsidize residents upgrading their home insulation (9 comments)
- Help residents switch to renewable energy sources through group or area offers to suppliers (7 comments)

- Incentivise larger solar farms, and incentivise the installation of private home solar panels (3 comments)

- Install solar panels on school buildings (2 comments)

- Install solar panels on council buildings (1 comment)

- Use local geothermal energy potential to provide heating to Cheshire East (1 comment)

- Ban log/coal burning stoves (1 comment)

- Relax planning regulations to enable the installation of private wind turbines (1 comment)

**Improve recycling & waste collection (24 comments)**

- Publish a recycling guide to assist with waste disposal (5 comments)

- Have easier access to recycling centres/facilities (5 comments)

- Have more public recycling bins (4 comments)

- Have the council stop using single use plastics (3 comments)

- Have the council promoted upcycling schemes at recycling centres (3 comments)

- Have the council use less paper in publishing documents such as this strategy document, instead making it available only digitally or at council buildings / libraries (1 comment)

- Have recycling bins to operate more frequently during winter to avoid recyclable waste being disposed as general waste (1 comment)
• Follow the “Norwegian model” of issuing vouchers to residents for recycling (1 comment)

• Collect rubbish at the end of streets instead of at each individual home to reduce vehicle emissions (1 comment)

**Protect the environment (14 comments)**

• Plant more trees on CEC land (9 comments)

• Beautify the local environment (2 comments)

• Have the council cease using bedding plants, and instead use more sustainable plants that don’t need to be disposed of each year and imported (2 comments)

• Prevent residents from paving over grass verges and / or removing trees (1 comment)

**Other (30 comments)**

• Have more support from central government to achieve the carbon neutral goal, including financial aid to fund “green” schemes but also political assistance, specifically the drafting of legislation and policies to regulate carbon output in the private sector and the creation of national infrastructure to enable this transition (6 comments)

• The council shouldn’t do anything, climate change is not manmade (5 comments)

• Immediate action is needed (3 comments)

• Incentivise the carbon neutral goal (3 comments)

• Increase council tax specifically to tackle the “Climate Emergency” (3 comments)

• Look what has worked elsewhere, and adopt best practices in Cheshire East (2 comments)
• Prioritise the “Climate Emergency” above economic growth (2 comments)

• Establish a “circular economy” in Cheshire East (2 comments)

• Divert funds to be spent on council events to be used to tackle the “Climate Emergency” instead (1 comment)

• Have the council encourage and practice sourcing food locally (1 comment)

• Reduce the number of council buildings and staff (1 comment)

• Use funds currently spent on agency staff to be used to tackle the “Climate Emergency” (1 comment).
Final comments

Respondents were given a final opportunity to add any further comments about this consultation that they wished to – all comments received are summarised below.

Feedback on the strategy (99 comments)

While a number of respondents generally praised the Environmental Strategy (24 comments), others suggested:

- The strategy needs to be more ambitious to tackle the “Climate Emergency” (17 comments)
- Action needs to happen at a faster rate than what is proposed (14 comments)
- The Environmental Strategy needs more detail, including on funding / costings for the Priority Actions (13 comments)
- The Environmental Strategy needs to be made consistent with all other council policies, and not contradict them as it currently does. It needs to be brought in-line with all other areas of policy (6 comments)
- The strategy should be refer too the recent “The State of Nature” report published by the National Biodiversity Network (1 comment)
- The strategy should clarify in reaching the carbon neutral target, what proportion would be covered by carbon offsetting and what would be an actual real reduction in carbon output (1 comment).

Others generally criticised the strategy, feeling that the process of producing and consulting on an Environmental Strategy was a waste of council time and resources, and that the council shouldn’t do anything to tackle climate change, believing it to be unavoidable and not manmade (15 comments).

Others felt that:

- The strategy is not realistic, residents will not be to make the necessary changes, and the actions will not be acted on (3 comments)
• Proposed actions should be implemented at a slower rate to reduce costs and disruption (1 comment)

• The terminology used in the strategy was too complex, and overall the document was difficult to understand (2 comments)

• There are possible errors in the strategy document – the first being the use of “50kV” instead of 50kW, the second being the use of “complimentary” instead of complementary (2 comments).

**Funding the strategy actions (11 comments)**

Some made comments on how they felt the strategy should be funded:

• The council should prioritise the ‘Climate Emergency’ in current and future budgets (4 comments)

• Central government should provide more support and financial aid to achieve that aims of the Environmental Strategy (4 comments)

• The council should seek to expand and be a part of the ‘Green Economy’, using funds raised from initiatives to fund further projects (1 comment)

• The council should remove the position of Mayor to create more funds to be used for ‘Green’ projects (1 comment)

• More wealthy residents should be encouraged to make environmental changes themselves, or to fund public environment projects (1 comment).

**Wider engagement to deliver the strategy (29 comments)**

Respondents called for greater reference to, and involvement of, a wider range of stakeholders within the strategy.

They felt the role of residents and partners needed to be specified within the strategy, and that local groups and experts should be used to achieve the aims set out in the Environmental Strategy.

They felt that:
• The council should consult and deliver the contents of the strategy at a more local level, perhaps through Town and Parish councils

• The council should arrange public meetings to better educate residents of the consequences of the “Climate Emergency”, in order to make policy changes more acceptable

• A “Citizens Assembly” should be created to decide and implement environmental changes

• Cheshire East Council should adopt Cheshire West’s Design Review Panel and Growth Hub structure

• The council should publish progress reports in the future regarding actions taken in this strategy.

Others felt the council is not a trusted authority, and that this might impact residents’ willingness to cooperate or believe the contents of the strategy (1 comment).

Increase sustainable transport (15 comments)

Respondents reiterated ways they felt the borough could move towards sustainable transport:

• Existing public transport infrastructure and networks need to be expanded to enable more people to avoid using private transport (7 comments)

• More cycle and walking paths need to be created across Cheshire East (2 comments)

• The council should create bus only traffic lanes to encourage residents use (1 comment)

• The council should introduce parking permits for residents to discourage on-street parking and by extension car use generally (1 comment)

• The council should make efforts to reduce congestion and in doing so, lower air pollution (1 comment)
• The council should discourage air travel (1 comment)

• The council should give financial assistance to council staff to switch to electric vehicles (1 comment)

• The council should discourage council staff from unnecessary travel by ending subsidies (1 comment).

**Sustainable new development (14 comments)**

Respondents reiterated concerns about planning within the borough:

• Any further developments on Greenbelt land should be restricted (7 comments)

• Housing developments outside urban centres should not be allowed, to reduce the need for transport, particularly private transport (2 comments)

• Town centres should be supported, to reduce the need for travel to amenities elsewhere (1 comment)

• More ambitious environmental standards must be introduced for new developments (1 comment)

• New developments should be required to plant more trees, either on site or elsewhere in Cheshire East (1 comment)

• New developments should be required to include SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) (1 comment)

• The council should require any ‘isolated’ retail centres to have public transport links (1 comment).

**Protect our natural environment (20 comments)**

• The council should plant more trees, and restrict the removal of current trees (4 comments)

• The council should expand Wildlife Corridors for greater biodiversity (2 comments)
- Stop cutting grass verges as much, allow wildflowers to grow (1 comment)
- Preventative measures for flooding should form part of another separate strategy document (1 comment)
- The strategy should include plans for water conservation (1 comment)
- The council should try to limit population growth (3 comments)
- The council should encourage residents to reduce their meat consumption (3 comments)
- The council should encourage farming in Cheshire East to be more sustainable (3 comments)
- The council should encourage locally sourced food by opening up more allotments and common land for community use (1 comment)
- The council should penalise residents whose actions compromise reaching the carbon neutral target (1 comment).

Encouraging renewable energy (6 comments)
- Create of more wind farms and individual wind turbines (2 comments)
- Partner with renewable energy firms to assist in reaching the carbon neutral target (2 comments)
- Install solar panels on council buildings (1 comment)
- Air conditioning units should be used more sparingly and be as efficient as possible (1 comment).

Feedback on the survey (3 comments)
- The survey should have allowed for comment regarding the “funding question” (1 comment)
• Results of the survey must be published (1 comment)

• The survey was difficult to understand and complete (1 comment).
Section 3 – Formal responses

In total, 32 formal written responses were received as part of the consultation via email.

Of these, 22 gave permission for their response to be published alongside all other consultation analysis.

Summaries of these 22 formal responses are given below, with full responses available in the accompanying consultation report “All formal responses”.

These responses are split into the following categories and are presented below in alphabetical order:

- Responses from organisations
- Responses from Town and Parish Councils
- Responses from individuals
- Anonymous responses.

Responses from organisations

Cheshire CCG

The CCG has already signed up to the 10 Cheshire and Warrington Climate Change Pledges made in May 2019. Additionally, both draft 5 year Place Plans of Autumn 2019 included a commitment to support the improvement of air quality by cutting business miles and fleet air pollutant emissions, and fully phase out the use of coal and oil in heating systems at NHS sites. On the 23rd January 2020 the CCG will receive a recommendation to declare a Climate Emergency and will as such consider actions to be taken accordingly, including working alongside the Council.

Cheshire East Climate Alliance

Pleased that Cheshire East has started developing an Environmental Strategy. Additionally, the following points were made:
• Strategy does not include any measurements for current carbon footprint or any reduction targets against those measurements, this making the commitment to carbon reduction abstract. Additionally, the strategy does not confirm what methods are used to source the carbon footprint data that this strategy is based upon.

• Strategy does not provide for a Cheshire West style Design Review Panel, staffed by voluntary experts drawn from the community.

• Strategy does not include requirements for planning applications to meet stricter environmental criteria.

Strategy is not as ambitious as other authority’s and does not include the “33 actions local authorities can take” list produced by Friends of The Earth. https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/33-actions-local-authorities-can-take-climate-change.

• Recent development site allocations and developments policies do not seem to be compatible with the aims of the Environmental Strategy.

• Agree with proposed 20mph speed limit in residential areas, provided this is done via signage and not speed bumps.

• Strategy does not provide a long term plan to discourage the use of cars and encourage the use of integrated bus and train networks. Keen for CEC to implement similar policy to the Bus Services Act 2017, active in Cornwall.

• Group are willing to volunteer assistance in Council Environmental activities.

• Cheshire East Council needs to better inform residents what it is doing and why in all formats available for communication.

**NFU North West**

NFU representing the farming industry is currently aiming to be carbon neutral by 2040 and while agreeing with the Councils ultimate aim, considers it necessary to take a balanced approach. Furthermore, the NFU hopes that when determining what sectors are most responsible for carbon output national figures should be used
instead of international figures; for example “British beef has a carbon footprint 2.5 times lower than the global average”.

It should also be considered that changing what farmland is used for can be limited due to land quality, regulations and in some cases the transition can cause more environmental harm.

Additionally, the NFU offers support in flood management and drainage but states that more consideration needs to be placed on where surface water flows from new developments, proposing that in these cases property owners contribute towards the costs of maintaining the drainage system this water then puts pressure on.

The Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is supportive of DEFRA’s 25 Year Environmental Plan and believes that the Council’s Environmental Strategy needs to more closely align to the contents of this plan. Additionally, the Environmental Agency itself has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and recognises that to achieve this, partnership with likeminded stakeholders will be necessary. It is because of this need for partnership that the Environment Agency wishes for the Council’s and their aims to be uniform, with the following comments:

- Clarity on whether the strategy relates to Cheshire East as a whole or just Cheshire East Council and its operations.

- The strategy when referring to other strategies/projects to achieve goals should go into more detail, setting specific actions and explaining how these contribute to the strategy’s goals.

- When setting goals the strategy should include exact figures, including for example a current ‘baseline’ figure for our carbon footprint.

- The strategy should include actions around skills and investment in the ‘Green’ economy.

- Strategy should pledge not only to adapt to climate change but also mitigate these changes.
• The link between the Environmental Strategy and the Economic Strategy should be further strengthened with specific reference to the benefits to the economy brought by ‘natural capital’.

• Strategy should commit to considering carbon output during procurement processes.

• Support paragraph 7 but would like to see more reference to the GI strategy and actions such as the ‘greening’ of buildings and the decarbonising of the building industry to be made priorities (“the built environment contributes to around 40% of the UK’s total carbon footprint and 80% of buildings that will be around in 2050 have already been built”).

• Council should undertake tackling ‘Carbon illiteracy’ in its residents. Additionally, the strategy should include expected effects of climate change.

• Support the commitment to produce a ‘Carbon Reduction Roadmap’.

• Council should consider the implications of the upcoming Future Homes Standard and the amendment to the Planning and Energy Act, which will restrict the Council’s ability to set higher environmental standards on new housing.


• Air Quality Action Plan should include reference to ‘natural capital’ gained by improved air quality.

• Strategy should more fully commit to the role of ‘Green’ infrastructure in providing active travel options to residents.

• Rather than merely a commitment to avoid ‘no net loss’ to the environment for planning projects the strategy should commit to a mandatory ‘net gain’, in line with national policy.
• Strategy should have a stronger focus on flood risk and how the Council intends to mitigate these risks. Possibly the creation of a separate flooding risk strategy document to address these issues.

• The Environment Agency itself has a statutory role to oversee the central governments flood and coastal risk management programme. To undertake this work which supports Cheshire East, the Agency is granted certain funding from central government depending on various factors but for the upcoming review the “funding gap remains a significant challenge to delivery”.

• Unclear of what a ‘co-ordinated approach’ to the management of green infrastructure in paragraph 3 means, whether this is efficiency in resource and management or not?

• Strategy should reference the role of river systems and the water quality of the network. The Environment Agency additionally would be interested in coordinating with the Council in regards to river system management and maintenance.

The Tatton Group

Overall pleased to see Environmental Strategy being developed but think it lacks ambition. CEC should look at the Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan as a basis for the strategy, including more measurable goals being set. Additional comments made were as follows:

• CEC should collaborate with Cheshire West and Chester, Tatton Park and landed estate owners within the authority to achieve our mutual carbon neutral goal. To this end, the strategy should set targets for carbon reduction over the entire sub region instead of merely CEC.

• Pleased to see attention given to managing waste more effectively but would like to see a greater priority placed on reducing waste output.

• In respect to flight paths to and from Manchester Airport, consideration needs to be given on the balance between economic growth and environmental affects.
- A review of the Air Quality Action Plan is needed alongside measures to reduce levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter.

- Proposed actions on transport are particularly not ambitious enough, needing to be more comprehensive and integrated with other areas i.e. planning. As an example to follow, CEC should look at Poundbury that Cllr Quentin Able has visited recently.

- The Tatton Group would welcome the inclusion of their projects in this strategy, including the River Bollin project which includes collaboration with the National Trust to create integrated active travel routes.

- Alongside the creation of additional EV charging points, CEC should support the development of smart grids.

- The Local Plan needs to be reviewed from an environmental perspective. Again using methods used in Poundbury, such as mixed communities as well as the use of modular homes and compulsory smart meters in new homes. Additionally, requiring new developments to yield an environmental 'net gain'.

- As such, existing and new environmental planning policies should be collated and included within the Environmental Strategy as specific actions with targets for implementation.

- A flood risk assessment should be conducted and included in this strategy.

- Climate adaption actions should be included in the strategy to adjust to mitigate the affects of climate change.

- Collaborating with relevant partner CEC should consider the impact of unsustainable farming practices.

- Future policies should be built around a Natural Capital Audit, which has been carried out by other authorities such as Liverpool City.

- Creation of Environment Fund as part of a natural capital investment plan is needed to leverage and bolster regional natural assets.
• Agree with strategy and reiterate the importance of an Annual Status Report.

• The role of partners, residents and policy need to be included in detail in the strategy.

Responses from Town and Parish Councils

Holmes Chapel Parish Council

While the carbon neutral goal by 2025 is “laudable” it is potentially unrealistic when compared to the central government’s goal of 2050. Any actions taken should be carefully considered and “proportionate and framed within a realistic timescale”. Additional comments made were as follows:

• In the introduction it is stated that we have seen “increased incidents of flooding and increased impact on the elderly of extreme heat”, the supporting data for this statement should be referenced.

• Cheshire East Council’s claim that a CO2 reduction of 42% has been achieved should be referenced with appropriate data.

• The introduction of a parking levy would seem unfair for residents who struggle to access alternative transport. As an alternative, a scheme to encourage shared travel could be introduced instead.

• Welcome commitment to plant more trees (especially larger trees i.e. oak) but based on previous experience with the Highways department, this may prove difficult due to financial constraints.

• Priority action 2 is not strong enough a commitment and needs upgrading to a pledge to eliminate fossil fuel vehicles by 2025.

• The reason Cheshire East resident’s high levels of waste should be reviewed in order to take appropriate action.

• Cheshire East Council’s support of incineration (where it generates energy) is counter productive to the carbon neutral goal.
• Waste management should be dealt with within the authority and not exported as a way of meeting carbon targets here but ultimately still contributing more to carbon levels.

• The reference to fostering local community pride in towns and villages should be supported by the return of the ‘Best Kept Village Competition’ or similar scheme.

• Disagree with the link between high car ownership and air pollution. Instead believing that high car ownership is linked to lack of public transport, especially in rural areas.

• Consideration of electric car infrastructure should be required in all new developments. Additionally, public charging points should be created at practical locations i.e. workplaces.

• In section 6.1 (bullet points 2 and 3) the expressions “seek proportionate opportunities” and “biodiversity metric calculation” need explanation.

**Pickmere Parish Council**

The strategy should include consideration of HS2 and the Manchester Airport expansion. Additionally, the Environmental Strategy should be consistent with the Council’s Economic Strategy.

**Poynton Town Council**

The consultation document does not explain how the strategy was produced, i.e. its context and whether during its creation other authority’s good practice were considered.

Agreement with goals 1 to 3.

Disagree with goals 4 to 6, believing them to be “an attempt to retrofit the strategy to the planning decisions made by the Borough Council over the last decade”.

Cheshire East Council should support the Poynton Neighbourhood Plan, specifically the provision of greater public transport to support the planned developments arising
from the Cheshire East Local Plan.

Believe goals 4 is already not being met because:

- Planned developments on greenbelt land in and around Poynton.

- Lack of an impact assessment for areas affected by new developments. With new developments in Poynton not being within “reasonable walking distance to either railway station in Poynton”, thus increasing the need for private car use.

- Local plan not abiding by National Planning guidance, which requires infrastructure investment to cope with increased demand from new developments.

- Strongly disagree with paragraph 6.1 of the Environmental Strategy which states that the Local Plan is “a powerful tool for protecting and enhancing the environment of the Borough”. Being of the opinion that on the contrary the Local Plan has had the opposite affect on Poynton’s local environment. Additionally, Cheshire East Council has on occasion it is claimed ignored their own Local Plan to enable development.

Flood risk and precautionary measures are not given enough attention in the Environmental Strategy. Instead the Flood Risk Management Strategy should form part of the Environmental Strategy.

The strategy should take account of the decisions and plans of local Town and Parish Councils.

Overall the strategy is not wide ranging nor detailed enough for managing the environment.

**Sandbach Town Council**

Finds the strategy to be overall admirable but would like to see the Councils progress tracked towards the 2025 target as it considers elements of the strategy too ambitious. Additionally, the following points were made:
• Satisfied with Action point 4

• Pleased to see Action point 7 regarding air quality recording, but feel this will require “some real change in process and policy”.

• Action points 10-12 will depend on central governments policies.

• Sandbach Town Council echo support made in strategy for more EV charging points.

• Goal 6 may be difficult to implement in regards to for example conserving heritage buildings character while also improving insulation.

• Believe Action 10 to be already in doubt, with the SADPD being delayed into 2021.

**Weston & Basford Parish Council**

Propose that the current Environmental Strategy is withdrawn and redrafted with the following changes.

• The Environmental Strategy should be based off the Environmental Strategy developed by the Central Government, the guidance in the NPPF and the National Design Strategy. Specifically, supporting the principal of an environmental net gain and the enhancement of environmental protections in all areas.

• Developers should be encouraged for their future developments to include various “Green” features. These features being:
  
  o Efficient use of natural light, ventilation and water

  o Solar panels

  o Electric car charging points

  o Nearby local amenities to discourage travel

  o Green spaces and cycling / walking paths to connect settlements
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- Access to public transport
- Tree & hedgerow planting

- Provision for improved public transport links to Crewe and Macclesfield
- Investment in towns to promote travel and use of town amenities over longer distance alternatives.

Additionally, the redrafted version of the Environmental Strategy should be considered and integrated with a modified Local Plan and the upcoming SADPD.

Responses from individuals

Alec & Val Scaresbrook (members of the public)

Overall pleased to see Council developing an Environmental Strategy but feel it is not ambitious enough, in that it only concerns the Council and its activities rather than the whole Cheshire East area when pledging to become carbon neutral. Additionally, the following points were made:

- While the strategy confirms that the Council will consider the climate change implications of all its actions, this does not make clear what the Council would consider once considered, acceptable to climate change.

- Furthermore the balance and priority given between economic growth and the environment need to be made clear in the strategy.

- Cheshire East shouldn’t just meet the standards set by central government, but exceed these targets. For example implementing more stringent business/industry regulations.

- The Council should make efforts to reduce business/industry waste, having both an economic and environmental positive result.

- The trialling of alternative fuel for Council vehicles should be accompanied by a review into existing routes to gauge their necessity.

- Action points in the strategy need to be explained to residents thoroughly.
Specifically stating the reason for implementing them, how and when these will be implemented.

- Cheshire East Council should coordinate with other local authorities to lobby the central government for further funding, policies and power to tackle the Climate Emergency.

- The strategy needs to focus less on managing and recycling waste and more on reducing the amount of waste to be processed.

- Possible adoption of ‘Norwegian style’ credit system for recycling.

- Cheshire East Council should leverage all media platforms available to encourage action on this issue.

- To tackle littering and fly tipping, the introduction of further education and enforcement needs to occur. This coupled with a change to the fly tipping reporting system to be easier and a review of charges at refuse centres.

- The Council needs to put as much effort into tackling food waste as they do in tackling other forms of waste.

- Council should run an energy waste awareness campaign.

- Fears that the Council may consider average air quality results covering the entirety of Cheshire East (and its predominantly rural areas) as representative of every location within the authority.

- If possible the Council should ban engine idling, particularly outside schools, leisure centres etc.

- Targets regarding switching to more sustainable transport needs to be measureable and set to a specific date.

- When planning infrastructure multiple modes of transport need to be considered together in an integrated decision making process. For example rail/bus/cycle/walk routes need to be interconnected and within practical distance of each other.
• The aim to reduce and reuse need more consideration than at present compared to recycle if change is to be made.

• Prioritise the promotion of e-bikes and charging stations over electric cars and charging points.

• Furthermore the Council should prioritise pedestrians over transport, expanding and creating new pedestrian only areas, congestions zones and street crossings.

• Expand existing public transport system to be more affordable, widespread and more frequent to make it practical for workers to commute on.

• Cheshire East Council should upgrade building/planning regulations to meet much higher standards regarding carbon reduction. Additionally, new developments should consider access to public transport.

• S106 arrangements should be enforced more thoroughly, with demolition being an option.

• Avoid housing development in areas that lack local employment and thus require extensive travel by householders to work.

• Encourage development and employment in ‘Green sector’.

• Increased appropriate tree planting

**Councillor Akers-Smith (Cycling & Walking Champion for CEC)**

Overall the strategy’s content regarding the promotion and encouragement of sustainable transport is too vague and lacks tangible targets, investment and infrastructure. Comments made regarding this topic and others are as follows:

• At present roads are too dangerous for enough people to consider cycling or walking. To remedy this, 20mph zones should be created in town and village centres and implementing other measures set out in the Department for Transport guidance **LTN02/08**.
Increase the number of street crossings and design junctions/roundabouts to calm traffic and prioritise walkers/cyclers.

Increase the number of covered bike shelters.

Increase the amount of dropped pavements for walkers, mobility scooter and wheelchair users.

Creation and advertisement of an ‘Active Travel Network’ connecting town centres to schools and housing, alongside a pledge to build x amount of active travel routes each year.

Link railway stations to town centres and other transport hubs, possibly using E-bikes and E-scooters to achieve this. Additionally, the provision of secure bike storage on trains and at stations.

The Council should lobby railway operators and central government to decrease train fares to make railway travel more economical over car use.

Bus stops should be covered and in practical locations to encourage their use.

Existing bus service needs to be expanded to be more frequent and direct to decrease individual route travel time.

Implement an affordable shared ticket scheme that can be used on all bus operators.

Enable people to take and store their bikes on buses.

Priority should be given to promoting and encouraging active travel over electric vehicles.

Planning department should require new developments to include cycle parking provision and other active travel infrastructure.

Colin Dore (member of the public)

Pleased to see action on food waste recycling but would like clarity on what will be
done with resulting waste. Additionally, the following points are made:

- The final Environmental Strategy needs to be more detailed than its current state.
- More spaces should be made available for residents to grow their own food.
- Provision of food drop off points, potentially at Council buildings.
- Council should encourage local level renewable energy projects such as wind turbines.

Michał Piątek (member of the public)

Pleased to see Council developing an Environmental Strategy but thinks that producing annual progress reports for residents to comment on is not enough, preferring reports to be published at least every 6 months for residents comments. Additionally, other comments made were as follows:

- The strategy’s aim to provide public transport for residents to access places of recreation, leisure and the countryside will not reduce car ownership or use substantially. To reduce car ownership, public transport links will have to be provided for residents to travel to work and other amenities.
- Furthermore, these public transport links will have to be made accessible, reliable, widespread, integrated, desirable and affordable for all residents to encourage there use.
- Similar efforts should be made to promote active transport such as cycling. This could be achieved through the creation of cycle lanes, bicycle shelters and public transport equipped with a bicycle compartment for convenience.
- Goals outlined in strategy should be more specific and be measureable.
- IPCC report data should be referenced in the strategy and this same data should be communicated to the general public, in order to better prepare residents for the consequences of the climate emergency.
Nick Billington (member of the public)

Pleased to see Environmental Strategy developed that is “clearly the product of careful thought and extensive work”. However, they believe the strategy is ultimately not ambitious enough. Additionally, the following points were made:

- Pleased to see food waste recycling initiatives.
- Agree that Council Economic and Environmental Strategies should be complimentary and integrated. However questions whether the objectives of either strategy can be achieved without compromising the other and if not, this reasoning should be included in both strategies.
- If there is indeed a conflict between economic growth (as suspected in the previous point), then environmental concern should be given priority.
- In line with support for recycling the strategy should include promotion of a greater “repair industry” to decrease waste in manufactured goods and appliances.
- Strategy does not make provision to encourage use of sustainable travel, i.e. pedestrian crossings, reducing free parking spaces and the reopening of the Sandbach-Middlewich-Northwich railway line.
- Current EV charging points are poorly designed, time consuming and difficult to operate and discourage residents switching from petrol/diesel vehicles.
- Council should extend its commitment for reducing plastic waste, as stated in the Environmental Strategy to its own offices and staff.
- Strategy should make provision for more public recycling bins.
- Advice and guidance to residents and businesses on how to mitigate and adapt to climate change should be promoted within the strategy. Specifically, attention should be drawn to the advice offered on the CLASP website. (http://claspinfo.org/smeadapt)
- Strategy does not go into detail about how the Peak District’s environment
could be better managed. For example, Cheshire East Council persuading other Peak District partners to increase tree coverage in the area.

- Strategy should explain how the Council intends to limit the environmental impact of Manchester Airport while still pursing greater access to the airport for residents.

**Reverend John Whitehead (ADAPT member and Cheshire CPRE trustee)**

Overall pleased to see Environmental Strategy being developed and would like to see progress reported on specific actions. Additionally, the following points were made:

- Think the target to be carbon neutral by 2025 is not ambitious enough
- Food waste requires a bottom up education campaign alongside a Council collection strategy
- Proposals on sustainable transport and travel need to be urgently accelerated, specifically the creation of EV charging points
- While the decentralising of energy is proposed there is no consideration of the potentially challenging process of implementing this
- The protection of trees, woodland and hedgerows should be mandatory on both public and private land
- Projects in the Local Plan, such as the widening of the A500 by Wolstanton promote vehicle use and the subsequent contribution to air pollution. Such projects should be downgraded in favour of public transport and alternative travel
- Would like to see the Green Infrastructure Plan referenced in the strategy, particularly when discussing protecting and enhancing the natural environment
- Mandatory biannual progress reporting should be undertaken
• Introduce a requirement for residents to attend educational discussions on the Climate Emergency.

**Rita Ledgar (member of the public)**

Concerned that this consultation and the Environmental Strategy is not well known enough to the general public. Additionally, the awareness of climate change and its affects is also not well known enough to residents.

Did not find the questionnaire to be ‘user friendly’.

Pleased to see Environmental Strategy created but think the document could be more ambitious.

Unclear about whether the strategy applies to Cheshire East as a whole or just to Cheshire East Council. If the strategy applies just to Cheshire East Council, then this should be expanded to residents.

Pleased with section on waste and pollution.

Would like specific data regarding air quality to be published for resident’s welfare.

Feel they cannot comment on the transport and travel elements of the strategy as this is “pending the results of the local transport plan”.

Wants more detail on the measuring progress section of the strategy, specifically what will be measured and reported on and how.

**Sarah Allwood (CEC Environmental Health Team)**

Consider the strategy a “good starting point with actions that need undertaking”. However, they feel action 7 is redundant (commits to publishing the 2019 Air Quality Annual Status Report) as this is an annual report that is mandatory. Instead the action should simply be to “publish the Air Quality Annual Status Report”.

**Anonymous responses**

**Anonymous response 1**

Considers the motivation and the proposed measures as “noble” but believes the
root cause of the Climate Emergency to be population growth. Therefore, proposes that measures be implemented to encourage residents to have fewer children (2 or less) to tackle the emergency.

**Anonymous response 2**

Pleased with aims set out in strategy in respect of the Local Plan and food waste collections, as well as the other general aims of the strategy. However, they are concerned over the planned construction of 225 houses on a biodiversity site near Longridge, which accommodates various species. Rather than using this land for housing it is suggested the land be used instead as a green space beneficial to mental health.

**Anonymous response 3**

Concerned specifically about the planned creation of a car park on 25% of the existing Heyes Lane allotments, finding this to be counter intuitive to the aims set out in the Environmental Strategy such as discouraging car usage and protecting wildlife habitats.

**Anonymous response 4**

Concerned that recently confirmed road building projects are counter intuitive to the aims set out in the Environmental Strategy, specifically sections 4 and 6. In these sections it is called for an improvement in the availability and use of sustainable transport and the management of the environment to restore, conserve and enhance environmental assets.
Section 4 – Social media feedback

During the consultation a wide ranging social media campaign was conducted to widen engagement on the Environmental Strategy.

This social media campaign was conducted on Twitter and Facebook, and consisted of a series of posts such as:

- How can we help you reduce your carbon footprint? Let us know in our quick poll - or visit our website to learn more about the consultation on the environmental strategy
- Our consultation on the environmental strategy is now live - we’re urging everyone to have their say on the priorities and vision for the future
- Find out why we’ve welcomed the climate change campaign issued by Friends of the Earth which enables people to see how climate-friendly their area is.

In total, 61,486 social media impressions, 1741 engagements and 54 comments were received in response to this social media campaign.

The 54 comments received are summarised below.

Carbon neutrality by 2025 is an unrealistic target (2 comments)

Residents felt the target of becoming carbon neutral by 2025 seems unrealistic. On the one hand some felt this date was too ambitious, while on the other hand some felt this date was too late.

Example comments included:

“2025? Really? Have any of you actually cycled around on the average Cheshire East Road? Or tried to get a bus in Wilmslow? Or looked at the appalling Jones Homes developments? I mean I don't want to put you off... but that seems an enormous stretch.”
“Carbon neutral by 2025 is way too late – we are already in a climate emergency and by 2025 there will be no going back.”

**Aims need to be specific (3 comments)**

Some felt the environmental strategy is too broad in scope, and is vague in its goals. Some also asked how exactly these goals will be achieved. They felt the aims of the strategy need to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time committed.

Example comments included:

“1 target and 5 aims. Can you be more specific?”

“Plans on how you will achieve this.....”

“Recycle more... how much more and by when? You don’t even collect garden waste yet. Improve air quality how? By when? Increase sustainable transport and travel and development - you are planning to build more houses in my town with roads that are already busy with no plan to improve infrastructure. How will it be sustainable if a. the infrastructure doesn’t meet demand and b. if it did, it would contribute further to the climate emergency? Protect and enhance the natural environment how? By turning greenbelt land into urban housing?”

**Suggestions (14 comments)**

Respondents made a number of suggestions to improve the strategy, from not using pesticides to environmentally friendly taxes.

Example comments included:

“Sustain and increase biodiversity, reintroduce extirpated flora and fauna, protect SSSIs, massively decrease the use of pesticides and herbicides, ban the culling of native wildlife on grouse moors and shoots, cultivate roadside verges as wildflower meadows, give us our busses back.”

“Energy saving with home improvements, insulation grants and new efficient heating grants. ECO funding from utility companies will bring fuel lower bills reduced carbon and well being.”
“Create a structured roll out of air source heat pumps and solar to bring down the cost because of economies of scale. There is too much wastage in the scatter gun approach currently being used.”

“Some very simple things a council can do. Stop using weed killer everywhere, mow verges only when they obstruct road safety, scatter wild flower seed instead and for HEAVENS SAKE litter pick verges BEFORE mowing! Stop shredding plastic!”

“Campaign for a tax on aviation fuel.”

“Action speaks louder than words. A start would be; stop using weed killer in parks, stop cutting down trees (prune!), stop mowing wildflower verges unnecessarily.”

“Improve recycling facilities and don’t send it off overseas plus improve education/information about how individual households can help. Make sure energy is procured from renewable sources.”

**General negative comments (9 comments)**

Some made a number of general negative comments in response to the post.

Example comments included:

“Picture on the right is the devastation HS2 is causing, and will bring here.”

“Get rid of Cheshire East.”

“The word “sensible” and Cheshire East don’t work do they?”

**Planting Trees (6 comments)**

A few expressed a desire for a policy to plant more trees to help the environment.

Example comments included:

“Pollution & air quality won't improve if you keep building more & more houses because those houses are going to bring in more & more cars. We need more trees planted.”

“Where are the replacement trees on Lime Tree Avenue field you promised as they
were cut down?”

“Trees and ponds please.”

**Greenbelt building (9 comments)**

Residents expressed frustration over the housing strategy plans to build on greenbelt sites.

Example comments included:

“STOP BUILDING ON OUR GREENBELT.”

“You know what people want: STOP. BUILDING. ON. THE. GREENBELT!!!!”

“From the people allowing homes to be built on green belt.”

“My comment is “stop building cardboard homes on green belt land”

“I am so sad to see houses built on green belt across Cheshire East. Not just a few either. Big estates on what was farm land.”

“Listen to residents and stop building on green belt land.”

“What hypocrisy allowing houses to be built on green belt causing more traffic and more pollution!”

**Flood Plains (2 comments)**

A few comments expressed frustration that the council is building on known flood plains.

Example comments included:

“Building on flood plains and closing our roads?!!”

“And areas that are commonly known for previous flooding!!!!”

**Building too many houses (2 comments)**

There were comments that the council’s is building too many houses, which is
rapidly expanding villages and towns, and is counterproductive to the environmental strategy.

Example comments included:

“STOP building unnecessary housing estates and ruining the land and villages. You have already made a complete mess of our towns!!”

“Stop building so many houses.”

**Building too many roads (3 comments)**

There were also comments that the council is building too many roads, which is counterproductive to the environmental strategy.

Example comments included:

“Building on green belt and building more roads, yeah care about the climate...”

“Stop ripping up the countryside to build houses and roads.”

“No more new roads @CllrSam.”

**Air quality (4 comments)**

There were also comments that were generally negative about the air quality reports considering the history of those figures.

Example comments included:

“Link to [https://www.google.co.uk/.../cheshire-east-council-admits-air-pollution-report-was-falsified...](https://www.google.co.uk/.../cheshire-east-council-admits-air-pollution-report-was-falsified...)

“I assume you’ll just improve air quality by lying about it?”

“Restrictions on HGVs coming off the motorway to cut through Middlewich (in particular Lewin Street) and some honesty about air quality in that area would also help.”

“How about air pollution in Disley, East Cheshire..what are the REAL numbers?”. 
Conclusions

A passionate response

The Environment Strategy consultation received a high number of responses, from a wide range of stakeholders. Responses received were extremely lengthy, detailed and covered a wide scope.

Respondents seemed particularly passionate on the topic, and as such it may be in the council’s long term best interests to ensure it listens to, and acts on, this response.

On the whole, Cheshire East Council’s draft Environment Strategy was well received, with very large proportions of respondents agreeing the Strategic Goals were relevant (89%) – this suggests the strategy focuses on the right areas.

More detail needed

However, lower proportions of respondents felt the Strategic Goals were comprehensive (64%). This point was repeatedly emphasised throughout written consultation feedback, with respondents feeling that much more detail will be needed for the strategy to be effective.

Greater urgency needed

Similarly, respondents felt the strategy required a much greater sense of urgency. If this council truly believes there is a climate emergency, fundamental policy changes, and council transformation, may be required to meet the challenge – potentially leading to fundamental change in the way we live, and in the way our communities function.

Key challenges

Throughout the consultation respondents highlighted some of the key challenges the council will need to meet to face the climate emergency:

Economic growth – Respondents felt that economic growth has in many ways only
been possible at the expense of the environment – on a “throw away” economy, increasing populations and constant development. They questioned how the council will balance economic growth with environmental sustainability, and whether there needs to be a move towards a circular economy.

Development – Respondents are extremely agitated at current and planned levels of new housing and development within the borough – they felt there has been too much and want it to stop. They fail to see how this development, and associated increases in traffic and loss of green space, is environmentally friendly, and urge a full and comprehensive review of the Local Plan in light of the climate emergency. The questioned how the council will balance demands for new housing, and new roads, with environmental sustainability.

Reliance on cars – Respondents are clearly aware of their reliance on cars, even for short journeys, but feel that there is currently no practical, viable alternative. The challenge of moving people out of cars, and onto more sustainable forms of transport is formidable – significant infrastructure investment may be required. Current development is not supportive of this aim – it is “out of town” and therefore car dependent, little green infrastructure is being built, and cuts to bus service subsidies lessen the sustainable transport options available. Electric cars are presented as a solution, but there is doubt that these are environmentally friendly enough to provide a long term viable alternative.

Reducing waste – Reduction of the amount of waste produced by residents was seen as a high priority – achieving this with an affluent population will be a challenge, particularly in a consumer economy, as will reducing use of packaging and single use plastic by manufacturers and retailers.

Further to these key challenges, respondents highlighted many other challenges and suggestions, which will need consideration in the fight against climate change.

The council’s role

Respondents called for the council to be clearer in the strategy about what its role would be in tackling the climate emergency. Some called for the council to lead on this issue, and felt that its strategy should not be solely internal facing, but that the
council should lead on a process of change throughout the whole borough. They felt that unless it does, efforts will not do much for Cheshire East unless the council brings the whole population with it.

Some suggested a sub-regional Carbon Strategy which “clearly identifies the role all partners, residents, businesses and policy can play in achieving carbon zero, with clear targets and measurables that can be reported against”.

**Future engagement**

Fighting the climate emergency is a global, national and local issue. Cheshire West and Chester Council recently declared a climate emergency, stating “radical change” will be need to meet the challenge, committing £16 million towards this aim.

For Cheshire East Council, this consultation will be the beginning of an ongoing engagement process on a challenging and emotive issue, which will need to be well resourced and carefully managed to be successful.
Appendix 1 – Supporting information

Cheshire East net housing figures

The Local Plan net housing completions target is 1,800 per year.

Source: Cheshire East Council Housing Monitoring Update

Media articles

Cheshire West and Chester Council commits £16 million towards tackling climate change (Cheshire Live 26/01/2020)

Cheshire West and Chester Council – “Reductions on this scale and timetable would require a radical change in the political, social and economic context, beyond anything currently envisaged by either national or local government.”

Cheshire West and Chester Chief Executive – “radical changes” will be needed

Cities moving towards a car free future