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Date: 12/06/26

OUR REF: CNP

YOUR REF: 01/PW/CNP

Dear Mr Whitehead,

Thank you for your letter dated the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2026 regarding the independent examination of the Cranage Neighbourhood Plan.

Please turn overleaf for our response to the questions put forward to us Cheshire East Council's.

We have also received Cranage Parish Council's response to your questions, which we have appended to this letter for your convenience.

Kind regards,  
**Greg Woolridge**  
Strategic Planning Officer

## Questions for CPC and CEC

1. So far as CPC considers it appropriate, the Plan must be designed “to secure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change”. In this respect, does CPC consider that additional text should be included in the Rural Values, Green Infrastructure and Sustainability Strategy set down on page 14?

### **Cheshire East Council response:**

Cheshire East Council considers that the Plan makes a positive contribution towards climate change mitigation and adaptation, particularly through its focus on biodiversity, green infrastructure and protection of natural assets within Section 5 and the environmental policies. However, it would be helpful to include a short addition to the strategy section to make this more explicit, so that the link to climate change mitigation and adaptation is clearly set out.

2. In view of the fact that the Plan area lies within a Local Nature Recovery Strategy that includes CEC, could CPC suggest appropriate text making reference to the fact?

### **Cheshire East Council response:**

The Council confirms that the Plan area falls within the Cheshire East Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) area. The approach taken in the Plan, particularly around ecological networks, wildlife corridors and biodiversity enhancement, is broadly consistent with the aims of the LNRS. That said, it would be useful to include a brief reference to the LNRS in the supporting text to demonstrate that this has been taken into account.

3. Can CPC and CEC indicate whether there are any implications for the submitted Plan as a result of the new Basic Condition (see Annex 1) indicating, if necessary, any revisions/text considered necessary?

### **Cheshire East Council response:**

The Council is satisfied that the Plan would not lead to a reduction in housing delivery. Cranage is identified as an infill village where only limited development is expected, and no specific housing requirement is set in the adopted Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites or introduce additional restrictions beyond the development plan and therefore would not result in less housing coming forward than would otherwise be the case.

## Response to the examiners questions

### A submission by Cranage Parish Council (CPC) as the Qualifying Body (Rev A)

The following is a formal response to the 13 questions that were posed by the examiner in his procedural matters letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> May 2026 regarding the submitted version of the Cranage neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council are grateful for the opportunity to provide clarification on a number of these points. These answers have been prepared by the Parish Council in consultation with their clerk and planning advisors Urban Imprint.

For clarity and in the avoidance of doubt, the question numbers have been retained as per the examiners letter, with answers provided below each. The short answer to each question is provided at the beginning of each answer and is underlined for ease of reference. Where new or amended wording has been drafted this is clearly indicated in blue.

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#### Questions for CPC and CEC

- 1. So far as CPC considers it appropriate, the Plan must be designed “to secure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change”. In this respect, does CPC consider that additional text should be included in the Rural Values, Green Infrastructure and Sustainability Strategy set down on page 14?*

CPC support the inclusion of additional references within the plan which seek to ensure that they can clearly demonstrate a commitment to mitigating and adapting to climate change. If the examiner considers it relevant this could be included as additional wording (as outlined in the question from the examiner) as part of the first paragraph of the Rural Values, Green Infrastructure and Sustainability Strategy on page 14.

The CPC also believe that climate change is a broader, cross cutting exercise and perhaps the plan should be clear that it should be integrated within all the five areas of the plan. With that in mind, and given that it was one of the ten areas that residents considered important to be included in the plan (see para. 3.8), it could form part of an objective under para 4.3 along the lines of: *“To secure new development which contributes to the mitigation and adaption to climate change.”*

- 2. In view of the fact that the Plan area lies within a Local Nature Recovery Strategy that includes CEC, could CPC suggest appropriate text making reference to the fact?*

CPC have no objection to providing a cross reference within its plan to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) noting however that it is very high level and is not as place specific as the detail and specific work undertaken by the Wildlife Trust specifically for Cranage Parish. It is noted that the LNRS is a new document and was not adopted when much of the plan was being developed, but for consistency it is important to include it now.

It may be prudent to include this reference within policy ENV2 (page 19), and the third and fourth paragraph. (see over)

The 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph could be amended to read (new text in blue) : *“Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity will be encouraged, subject to a proposal’s compliance with other relevant planning policies contained within this neighbourhood plan and the Cheshire East Local Plan, as well as the Cheshire and Warrington Nature Recovery Strategy”.*

The first sentence 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph could be amended to read (new text in blue): *“New developments will be required to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity of 10% using appropriate evaluation methodologies and avoidance/mitigation strategies, and where relevant taking account of the Cheshire and Warrington Nature Recovery Strategy.”*

- 3. Can CPC and CEC indicate whether there are any implications for the submitted Plan as a result of the new Basic Condition (see Annex 1) indicating, if necessary, any revisions/text considered necessary?**

This new (revised) basic condition requires the neighbourhood plan to avoid further restricting housing delivery over and above the current status quo development plan. In fact, the Crnage neighbourhood plan takes the approach that strategic housing delivery should remain with the LPA, the local plan and national policies – this is especially the case when the neighbourhood plan area lies within a restrictive policy context for new housing (Green Belt, Open Countryside and within the Jodrell Bank WHS). As a result, you will note that there are no policies on housing delivery included within the plan.

Unlike many other neighbourhood plans within Cheshire East, the Neighbourhood plan for Crnage focuses on the landscape, environment and design quality of new development. This means that if development does come forward (which is entirely in the purview of the local plan policies) it is positively delivered to meet the objectives of the plan. The area includes two infill village boundaries that were defined by policy PG10 of the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD). PG10 is unaffected, nor is it modified by this neighbourhood plan.

CPC do note that they have identified a series of Local Green Spaces, many of these already are protected under other policies within the Local Plan (REC1 of the SADPD) and are playing fields that are protected by national policy. Those that are additional include the Community Orchard and the Village Hall grounds. As a result, these restrictions do not reduce or restrict possible future housing sites.

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## Questions for CPC

4. *CEC has suggested the Plan period should be aligned to that of the current Local Plan – 2025 - 2030. Does CPC agree?*

CPC strongly disagrees with this position. This would seem counter-productive as the plan would have a lifespan of less than five years (probably closer to three once made!) which is not considered to be suitable for a plan of this type. The Neighbourhood Plans current timescales of 2025 – 2035 will also ensure some planning policy stability within the transition to the new Cheshire East local plan, on which production has recently begun in earnest. Having considered the current content of the local plan, and to a lesser extent the direction of travel with emerging national policy (draft NPPF from December 2025) it does not appear that the plan existing beyond 2030 would be out-of-step with the prevailing planning strategy.

5. *Would CPC accept that the inclusion of the term maintenance in the first sentence of Policy ENV1 could be misleading, since maintenance of a right of way is not a matter within the scope of the planning system? Would it also accept that a significant part of the second paragraph to Policy ENV1 appears to be descriptive matter more appropriately included with the evidence and justification?*

CPC accept that the word ‘maintenance’ is confusing and does not necessarily reflect what the policy seeks to achieve. The policy wished to maintain (i.e. safeguard from loss) existing footpaths within the Parish. The neighbourhood plan - and this policy in particular – are keen to ensure that developments that may be on land crossed by footpaths or be close to public footpaths seek to enhance them (make them more convenient and commodious). This is, in the view of CPC a material planning matter and consideration. It may be that the policy ought to include a statement within it setting out that developments ought to respond to these matters, where relevant. In this respect, the CPC suggest the following replacement wording to clarify these matters as part of the first paragraph to read (as shown in blue):

*“All new developments should ensure that they protect access to the countryside through safeguarding and enhancing the existing public rights of way network (Figure B), and where relevant, ensuring that routes are improved in terms of their safety, convenience and commodiousness. New development along these routes should take opportunities to encourage more frequent pedestrian access to shops and local businesses.”*

CPC do accept that the second sentence of the second paragraph could be moved to the evidence / explanatory text as it simply provides a series of examples of how these improvements might be manifest. CPC remain of the view that the specific references to the Dane Valley Way and other routes should be retained within the policy as they are important for tourism and visitors, and assist any decision taker in understanding the key local priorities.

6. *The first paragraph of Policy ENV2 includes reference to “all proposals” being “required to demonstrate that the benefits of development clearly outweigh the harm it is likely to have on the ecological network”. Can CPC clarify whether this is intended to apply to all proposals, or only those directly affecting areas identified as being of high and medium habitat distinctiveness?*

The intention of this part of the policy is simply to protect and enhance those areas identified in figures C and D. Clearly proposed developments that are neither within or adjacent to these areas will be very unlikely to harm these assets. In that respect, the intention of the policy is to make sure that there is a clear assessment of the ecological harm identified with any scale of development within or adjacent to these areas, and that in these cases betterment is achieved.

The reference to these sites being enhanced from wider development may be best left to the role of BNG as outlined within the fourth paragraph of the policy.

7. *In its Regulation 16 response, CEC has suggested a revised form of wording to the third paragraph of Policy ENV3. Does CPC agree that this is a significant improvement to the clarity of the text? Is it also accepted that the fourth paragraph is supporting text rather than a statement of policy?*

The suggested wording from CEC in their regulation 16 submission is acceptable and there is no objection from the CPC in using this in place of the third paragraph of ENV3. CPC can see the benefits of offering some policy protection to the loss of a tree prior to development through identifying this as a material consideration even when this was a lawful removal. This approach is consistent with the approach being taken on BNG assessments where the vegetation and habitat baseline should look back to the recent situation – often prior to lawful clearance.

CPC accept that the fourth paragraph is a statement – but it is an operational statement for applying and implementing the policy by decision makers. This is why it was included within the policy. Whilst CPC agreed that this could be moved to the evidence and justification, it is considered that reference to figure F should be retained within the policy.

8. *In the interests of clarity and precision, could CPC give consideration to a more precise wording to Policy COM1, to include the Green Belt requirement that development will not be permitted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated?*

CPC suggest the following rewording of policy COM1 as shown in blue:

*“The neighbourhood plan designated the following areas (as mapped in Figure H) as local green space.*

*[Insert list of spaces as per existing policy]*

*The management of development within these areas should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts (excluding policies regarding ‘grey belt’ or brownfield land) and only redeveloped where they met a specific exception or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated. Where these policies are also a playing field or recreational land (including children’s play), decisions should also be consistent with policies regarding the protection of these assets in national and local policies.”*

9. *The Regulation 16 consultation responses include a suggestion by CEC for a clearer statement of policy for the second paragraph of Policy COM2. Does CPC agree that the suggested text does provide clarification?*

CPC have no objection to accepting the rewording of the policy as suggested by CEC in paragraph 2.20 of their Reg 16 submission. CPC also confirm that whilst not strictly required with the existing wording there is now the necessity to include the modifier of *‘Existing community facilities include:’* which is detailed within CEC’s paragraph 2.21.

10. *Is Policy COM3 an unnecessary duplication of the Local Plan policies contained in the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document as suggested in the Regulation 16 consultation responses?*

Whilst it is undeniable that there is some cross over with policies within the SADPD – specifically on matters of reuse of rural buildings and farm diversification - but this policy is more specific and identifies a series of key employment / leisure / tourism sites within the parish which should be the focus of new small scale business expansion. These sites are far too small to be identified and allocated within a borough wide plan, but this policy adds a local level of detail. It also supports rural economic development in line with national policy.

In addition, the policy also supports certain forms of economic activity that have little or no reference in the SADPD – including the specific reference to home working and home enterprise. This policy therefore wishes to take advantage of the opportunity to develop home working, small home-based business and enterprise as part of the support for the rural economy. The SADPD only makes a passing reference to home working as part of its explanatory to its housing mix policy which is a significant oversight given this is becoming a very popular mode of work.

**11. Can CPC direct me to the evidence of appraisal to support the policy stance in paragraph A of Policy DES1 regarding areas identified as sensitive to change on figure L?**

There is no specific single point of evidence to support this stance, however the CPC advance that this is a logical conclusion from a collective assessment of the Character Study and the Natural Environment Study. In both documents the landscape and townscape mosaic that characteristics does not include large buildings, and placing these in prominent locations would counter to the landscape and townscape character of the area. In that respect the first part of statement A – the resistance to prominent larger scale buildings in the landscape – is well documented and sensible.

Figure L has identified a series of key views that were identified during the plan making stage that were used as exemplars to establish the character areas, but they illustrate the previous point well – i.e. the absence of large footprint prominent buildings. Nevertheless, it is accepted that the evidential link between these points is not as strong as it might otherwise be and is of course limited by the time and resourcing of the community members who have produced the plan. It was the intention of the policy to allow the decision maker some flexibility in determining what were the ‘most sensitive’ locations simply using Figure L as a starting point given that the key views included here are considered representative of the landscape.

CPC would welcome any suggestions from the examiner as to how these aspirations for the policy could be more effectively delivered.

**12. Should the third paragraph of Policy DES2 form part of the supporting text?**

**Note:** It is unclear what is referred to as the third paragraph – whether this is the third paragraph of the whole policy (which is in fact the first bullet point) or the third paragraph that is not bulleted. In this respect we have assumed that this refers to the third full paragraph (not the bullet).

CPC agree that some of the third paragraph is broadly descriptive of the content of the Cranage Character study, but to move the whole paragraph to the explanatory /justification would appear to miss out on the opportunity to require (or request) that development proposals make reference to this study in their submissions. This is easily rectified by making reference to the document alongside Figure M in the opening to the second paragraph. In that respect, then the majority of the paragraph could be moved.

**13. I understand that the Plan area lies outside the boundary of the Mersey Forest Plan (MFP) but the Mersey Forest Team has suggested in its Regulation 16 consultation response that it would welcome a reference in the neighbourhood Plan. Whilst I have not yet taken a firm view whether this is strictly necessary to satisfy the Basic Conditions, the Plan area is adjacent to the MFP boundary so does CPC agree that a reference would be appropriate?**

As a matter of principle, the CPC have no objection to including some reference in the plan to the Mersey Forest within the Neighbourhood Plan. For clarity, it is our understanding that

the Mersey Forest has very recently expanded its operational area to cover the entirety of Cheshire East having previously only covering part of the Borough. If the examiner were indeed to include some reference to this it would likely be part of the explanatory to policy ENV3 (Trees, hedgerows and watercourses). If the examiner feels that referencing the plan will assist the plan to more effectively meet the basic condition (perhaps specifically the new requirements for climate change) then CPC would welcome any suggested modifications. The Mersey Forest had not commented on this plan before the Regulation 16 consultation.

Having examined the comments from the Mersey Forest in detail, these appear to be somewhat in depth and beyond the scope of planning policy in many ways (many are focused on detailed implementation) but some of their comments about specific planting species could be integrated into neighbourhood plan policy ENV3 (second paragraph). It may also be prudent to include a reference to enhanced tree cover and planting as part of the requirements for new developments under policy ENV2 which responds to the aspirations of the Mersey Forest.

It may also be prudent to include reference to the ability of the Parish Council and the Mersey Forest to work together to provide new woodlands. This of course cannot be a policy but a reference in the plan (probably as part of the explanatory to policy ENV3) means that some of the wider opportunities provided by the Mersey Forest for local groups and organisations could be referenced.

It is suggested that if the examiner is minded to explore this further, that clarification on this matter is sought from the Mersey Forest as their current response is somewhat generic and lacks specificity. Matters that would be directly relevant to Cranage Parish and can be added to policies ENV2 and ENV3.