



Christleton and Littleton Reg 16 Neighbourhood Plan Representations

Land to the west of Rowton Bridge Road, Christleton

On behalf of Hilbre Overlea Estates
June 2026

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – Site Location Plan

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This submission has been prepared by Asteer Planning LLP (“Asteer”) on behalf of Hilbre Overlea Estates in response to the Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan Reg 16 Version (“the Neighbourhood Plan”) which is open for consultation, running from 30th April until 15th June 2026.
- 1.2 This emerging Neighbourhood Plan provides a major opportunity for the Christleton and Littleton Parish Councils to holistically plan for the sustainable future economic and social growth of the area over the next 17 years until 2042. A proactive approach to the development of the area will identify sufficient, sustainable locations for housing development to meet the needs of local residents while also providing key benefits for the wider community. Such an approach will enable the Parish Councils to retain control over the location and type of new development and prevent a speculative developer-led approach to development.
- 1.3 These representations provide Hilbre Overlea Estates’ response to the Neighbourhood Plan Consultation and have been prepared in the context of the land under Hilbre Overlea Estate’s control at Land to the west of Rowton Bridge Road, Christleton (“the Site”), which is shown in **Appendix 1**. This land is currently subject to a planning application pending determination under reference 26/01188/OUT.
- 1.4 These representations also seek to demonstrate the sustainability of the Site and the benefits that its development would bring to the local community of Christleton.

Structure of these Representations

- 1.5 The remainder of this submission provides:
- **Section 2 – Policy Context** sets out the relevant policy context and the basic conditions applied to the making of Neighbourhood Plans;
 - **Section 3 – Comments on the Neighbourhood Plan:** providing comments on the suggested policy approaches;
 - **Section 4 – Summary and Conclusion:** providing conclusions and recommendations on the Neighbourhood Plan Consultation.

2 POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (published 12th December 2024) reflects the Government’s continued commitment to significantly boosting housing supply and accelerating land delivery for development across England.
- 2.2 The NPPF includes significant changes regarding housing need and housing delivery, including the introduction of a new standard method for calculating housing need. Cheshire West and Chester’s housing need has risen significantly (from 532 dwellings per annum to a mandatory 1,930 dwellings per year).¹
- 2.3 As required, the Council has applied this new housing need figure immediately to its 5YHLS², and has proposed to adopt it as the baseline requirement in the emerging Local Plan. This results in CWaC currently being able to demonstrate a housing land supply of approximately **1.89-years**.
- 2.4 This significant increase in CWaC’s housing requirement requires an equally increased rate of growth and delivery across the Authority. The majority of this growth will likely be delivered in accordance with the relative settlement size, although this approach will still require smaller settlements such as Christleton and Littleton to accommodate sustainable growth. The land to the west of Rowton Bridge Road offers the ability to deliver this level of sustainable growth for Christleton.
- 2.5 Alongside introducing the increased housing requirement, the December 2024 NPPF introduced the concept of ‘Grey Belt’ whereby new homes in the Green Belt may not be regarded as “inappropriate” where they meet specified criteria and satisfy a series of ‘Golden Rules’. Specific to settlements such as Christleton and Littleton, which are washed over by Green Belt, this introduces the opportunity to receive planning permission for major housing development on any land within the Green Belt where the relevant criteria is met.
- 2.6 In December 2025, MHCLG published their draft text for consultation for a new NPPF, likely to be finally published in the summer of 2026. Regarding Grey Belt policy, there is little functional change although it is notable that it is proposed to remove the element of

¹ The Standard Method of Assessing Housing Need (Turley, May 2026)

² In accordance with Paragraph 78 which requires that Local Planning authorities identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies.

the Grey Belt definition that excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. This is particularly relevant for the site as it lies within the Christleton Conservation Area. However, it is not considered that the application of policies relating to Conservation Areas (most notably the test found within NPPF Paragraph 215) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development, and in any case it is proposed that this part of the definition is removed.

Legislative and National Policy Context for Neighbourhood Plans

2.7 As outlined within Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') Ref 41-065-20140306 Paragraph 65, only a draft neighbourhood plan or order that meets each of a set of basic conditions can be put to a referendum and be 'made'. These are set out within Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as applied to neighbourhood plans by section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The basic conditions are:

- a) Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the order (or neighbourhood plan);
- b) Having special regard to the desirability of preserving any listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses, it is appropriate to make the order. *This applies only to Orders;*
- c) Having special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of any conservation area, it is appropriate to make the order. *This applies only to Orders;*
- d) The making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- e) The making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
- f) The making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations;
- g) Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the Order (or plan) and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the order (or

neighbourhood plan). *These conditions relate to the merits of the Conservation Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and EIA development.*

- 2.8 At this stage – given b) and c) don't apply to the making of a Neighbourhood Plan – the key basic conditions against which a draft Neighbourhood Plan may be assessed for conformity are a), d) and e).
- 2.9 The NPPF reiterates the requirement imposed by Planning Law for applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan (which includes neighbourhood plans).
- 2.10 Paragraph 74 of the NPPF considers that neighbourhood planning groups should give particular consideration to opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites suitable for housing in the area – these are sites no larger than 1ha.
- 2.11 A pro-active approach to neighbourhood plan-making which makes allocations to meet identified local housing requirements will therefore give the Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan greater power to challenge speculative planning applications in the Green Belt.

3 COMMENTS ON PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONTENT

Meeting the Conditions

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan as drafted fails to meet the tests outlined in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Conformity against conditions a) and e) are assessed together below:

Condition a) Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the order (or neighbourhood plan); and,

Condition e) The making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area).

- 3.2 The key national document setting out the Government's planning policies, and their application, for England is the NPPF. There are several points where the document shows clear conflict with the plan-making policies set out within the document. Appeal precedent has also confirmed that the legal status of the NPPF and the PPG is essentially the same, in that both are statements of national policy issued by the Secretary of State. It is therefore equally pertinent to assess the relevant Planning Practice Guidance. The PPG on Neighbourhood Plans, under PPG Ref 41-070-20190509 Para 70 concludes that policies within paragraph 13 and 29 (now 30), amongst others, will be relevant to the making of Neighbourhood Plans.

- 3.3 Paragraph 13 states that:

"The application of the presumption has implications for the way communities engage in neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies".

- 3.4 Paragraph 30 states that:

"Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies"

- 3.5 In this there is a clear national drive for Neighbourhood Plans to plan positively for, and support, the strategies included within local plans and spatial development strategies. As

a result of the revised standard method, CWaC's housing requirement has risen sharply, from 532 dwellings per annum to a mandatory 1930 dwellings per annum. It is acknowledged that CWaC are unlikely to be able to demonstrate a 5YHLS and their most recent published position has this at **1.89-years**. As such, land in CWaC is subject to the merits of national policy where a lack of 5YHLS acts as a policy trigger – for example, NPPF Paragraph 11(d) or NPPF Paragraphs 155 to 158.

- 3.6 The Neighbourhood Plan as drafted, is in direct conflict to these principles and does not seek to aid or support the delivery of strategic policies (i.e. meeting housing need) as it does not allocate any sites for development and will not help meet the identified housing need either for CWaC as a whole, nor for the plan area.
- 3.7 It will actually exacerbate CWaC's inability to demonstrate a 5YHLS by adding another policy layer (e.g. Green Gaps) to sites that could otherwise achieve significant housing delivery in-line with national policy. The merits or otherwise of incorrectly identifying several 'Green Gap' sites have been explored later in these representations.
- 3.8 A key national policy recently introduced by the NPPF, that being Grey Belt (NPPF Paragraphs 155 to 158) is also omitted from the Neighbourhood Plan. This is particularly pertinent given the Site represents an excellent example of Grey Belt land, and should be allocated for housing in the Plan, but is proposed to sit within Green Gap allocation GG5 which would significantly obstruct its potential for development and subsequently its ability to contribute to the identified shortfall in housing. This further failure to recognise important national policy again demonstrates the Plan's direct conflict with Condition a).
- 3.9 Furthermore, the Neighbourhood Plan's authors have themselves identified a shortfall in the supply of affordable housing through their Housing Needs Survey³.
- 3.10 The shortfall is identified through 77 entries on the housing register, as well as an additional 12 households identifying a need for affordable housing – totalling 89. An existing 'supply'⁴ of 14 no. affordable homes has been identified bringing the requirement down to 75 no. dwellings. The Neighbourhood Plan rationalises this further, concluding that a requirement for 15no. dwellings are identified – that being the 12 households who have identified a need for affordable housing, plus an additional 3 on the housing register

³ Christleton and Littleton Housing Needs Report (Cheshire Community Action, June 2024)

⁴ It should be noted this supply includes extant approvals that it is known are not deliverable due to lack of RP interest.

who have a local connection with Christleton and Littleton. The remaining 74 entries on the housing register who don't have a local connection have essentially been disregarded.

3.11 The limitations of this methodology are significant. In essence, what has been identified is the current number of qualified persons on the housing register (who would be eligible to live within Christleton) plus an anecdotally identified 12 households from a survey that only received a 24% response rate, for affordable dwellings only. This doesn't equate to a total identified housing need or requirement (including both market and affordable).

3.12 Exacerbating this, this quantum is poorly reflected into the actual wording of the policy. Policy HN1 – which only reads as follows:

“The housing needs survey identified a need for 12 houses plus 3 applicants on the housing register who have a local connection with Christleton and Littleton.”

3.13 Effectively, this survey has totalled:

- a) The total number of eligible entries onto the housing register, and;
- b) An anecdotal figure of those who already live in the area who have requested affordable housing.

3.14 Whilst a Housing Needs Survey undertaken in this manner is required by the CWAC Local Plan to demonstrate Local Need to justify the release of land for rural exception sites, it is not an appropriate manner in which to identify a total housing requirement for the plan area.

3.15 The PPG⁵ on Neighbourhood Planning – in relation to the setting of a housing requirement figure – sets out a stepped process:

1. It outlines that housing requirement figures for neighbourhood plan areas **are not binding** as neighbourhood planning groups are not required to plan for housing.
2. This is generally because housing requirement figures are expected to be set in strategic policies (such as those within CWaC Local Plan Part 1). In this case, the figure set out in strategic policies is significantly out-dated and not in-line with the new

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#evidence-to-support-a-neighbourhood-plan>

current figure set out using the Standard Method. As such, these figures have not been appropriately set out in strategic policies.

3. In this case, it is not unreasonable for a Neighbourhood Plan group to plan for housing. However, there is an expectation that an indicative figure is provided to them by the Local Planning Authority on request. There is no evidence that this has been requested by the Neighbourhood Plan group nor provided by the LPA.
4. The Neighbourhood Plan group may exceptionally need to determine a housing requirement figure themselves, in this case – taking into account relevant policies, the existing and emerging spatial strategy, and characteristics of the neighbourhood area.

3.16 Crucially, the PPG also advises the use of the neighbourhood planning toolkit on housing needs assessment for this purpose⁶, and advises bodies to work proactively with the local planning authority through this process given the figures will need to be tested at examination.

3.17 The neighbourhood planning toolkit outlines how a Neighbourhood Plan group should produce a Housing Needs Assessment at Neighbourhood Plan level. The toolkit is extremely thorough and wide-ranging, and it would be onerous to replicate its contents within these representations. Likewise it is not the purpose of these representations to examine the merits of the HNS in granular detail particularly as this will occur at examination. However it is clear the Neighbourhood Plan group have paid no regard to this toolkit within their HNS and that the HNS has not been prepared in-line with the recommendations and guidance put forward.

3.18 The guidance outlines a huge number of data sources that, through assessment could be used to inform a neighbourhood plan HNA. These include:

- The most recent local authority Strategic Housing Market Assessment and/or Local Housing Needs Assessment;
- Review of the adopted/most recent Core Strategy/Local Plan, as well as emerging policy;

⁶ How to undertake a Housing Needs Assessment (AECOM for Locality, 2021)

- The local housing waiting list;
- Data from the most recent census;
- A review of local house/rental prices;
- A review of local incomes;
- Median workplace-based affordability ratios;
- Interview with estate agents.

3.19 Aside from the local housing waiting list, none of the above sources have been used to ascertain an indicative housing need. What has been ascertained is that a small portion of a surveyed area have requested affordable housing tenures. There is no assessment of population projections, market trends, commuting or immigration patterns, affordability or existing and projected stock.

3.20 The weight therefore given to this Housing Needs Survey should be, even for its use in justifying the release of rural exception sites, be considered in the proper context. It should not be used to identify a maximum quantum for all new housing for the Neighbourhood Plan area and justify upper limits or restrictions.

3.21 In any case, a Housing Needs Assessment covering the LPA area of CWaC has recently been completed by Iceni in February 2026⁷ to inform the production of the new CWaC Local Plan. Not only does this outline the annual housing requirement as calculated by the Standard Method (now at 1930dpa), but it also relates this to projected population growth.

3.22 As of mid-2024, the population of CWaC was 371,652. This represents an increase of 35,212 residents (10.5%) since 2014 – which is a faster growth rate than regionally (8.4%) and nationally (7.8%).

3.23 ‘Rural South’ – the Housing Market Area which includes Christleton and Littleton – has seen growth closer to 21% over the same time period.

3.24 In order to justify the housing requirement outlined in the Standard Method, the projected population change for CWaC from 2025 to 2045 is calculated at an increase of 54,335

⁷ Cheshire West and Chester Housing Needs Assessment (Iceni Projects on behalf of CWaC, February 2026)

(14.5%, or 0.7% per annum). That means a population increase of 54,335 just to fill the additional dwellings required by the SM.

- 3.25 This number is actually **lower** than the trend data identified by the ONS, based on the 2022 subnational population projections. The ONS trend data from 2014 to 2024 averaged 1.0% per annum. Icenis suggest there is broad alignment between the Standard Method and the latest ONS projections.
- 3.26 It is therefore clear that the figures derived using the Standard Method can be supported through critical analysis and evidence and that they suggest significant population increase, ahead of national trends, over the Plan Area.
- 3.27 According to the Housing Needs Survey, Christleton and Littleton have a population of 3034 as of 2021. As a percentage of 371,652 (the population of CWaC), this is approximately 0.82%.
- 3.28 As a ball-park figure to suggest the total housing requirement of the plan area that Christleton and Littleton take on, it is not unreasonable to directly pro-rate this figure against the annual housing requirement. It is also worth noting that CWaC can only identify land to supply 3,788 net dwellings, out of a required 10,038 over the next 5 years. They are effectively short of land to supply to supply 6250 dwellings *just over the next 5 years*.
- 3.29 The above can be calculated as 0.82% of 1930 **to clear up** – the final figure being 15.83. Rounding up, this comes out at **16 dwellings per annum**.
- 3.30 It is therefore entirely appropriate to suggest – as Christleton and Littleton wish to identify a housing requirement – that in order to adequately contribute to CWaCs significant shortfall in housing land, the neighbourhood plan area allocate land able to deliver 16 dwellings per annum – as a minimum – over the plan period to 2042. Assuming a plan period spanning 2026-2042 (as outlined within their Neighbourhood Plan), the Neighbourhood Plan Group should be allocating land to provide for 256 dwellings over the Plan Period – 80 of those should be deliverable within the next 5 years.
- 3.31 This brief assessment does not take into account that local growth is not linear and different areas within boroughs grow at different rates, nor has it been tested at examination. However, it does demonstrate the unsuitability of using the Housing Needs Survey produced by the Neighbourhood Plan Group to try and quantify a total housing requirement for the Plan Period.

- 3.32 Coming back to basic condition a), it is clear that the imposition of this housing target does not have regard to national policies and advice contained within the guidance issued by the Secretary of State ('SoS') and at points it appears directly contrary to that advice.
- 3.33 Regarding basic condition e), the strategic policies contained within CWaC LPP1 are significantly out-dated and based off an annual housing requirement that sits well below the current annual housing requirement calculated through the Standard Method. It would be unsound to base Neighbourhood Plan policies relating to housing requirement on these numbers which no longer reliably inform the Local Plan.

Condition d) The making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

- 3.34 The objective of Sustainable Development is described within the NPPF, at a high level, as:
- 3.35 *"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".*
- 3.36 As discussed above, and explored further in these representations, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to explicitly restrict development and makes no allowance for the existing shortfall in terms of housing need, and seeks to limit site density to no more than 16 dwellings per hectare (dph) on sites that 'should not be co-located', with sites that are no larger than single hectare under Policy HN2. This approach severely limits the quantum of sites that can actually deliver the housing that the neighbourhood plan and local plan area need because the number of sites that fulfil these criteria is likely to be extremely small.
- 3.37 The site would need to be no bigger than 1ha, which rules out a large number of vacant agricultural fields that are – generally – bigger than this. Brownfield or infill sites are more likely to fulfil this smaller site threshold but generally require greater levels of site remediation at a higher cost. A density of 16dph is likely to severely limit the return a developer can expect to achieve and make already challenging brownfield sites even more financially difficult. In addition, by ensuring these sites cannot be located, any adjacent/adjoining sites to those that meet the above criteria are automatically discounted.

Comments on Green Gaps Policies (Policy GG5: Land Separating Christleton from Rowton)

- 3.38 Section 6.5 of the Neighbourhood Plan identifies the designation of land around the Plan area as Green Gaps. The justification provided for identifying these Green Gaps is to *'reinforce the protection provided by greenbelt, prevent settlements from merging into one another and provide access to open countryside.'*
- 3.39 Hilbre Overlea Estates support the protection of land which serves the purposes of the Green Belt, however to ensure a fully justified approach, the designation of these Green Gaps need to be underpinned by clear assessment criteria and principles. As the purposes of the Green Gap designations mirror and reinforce the purposes of the Green Belt, the approach taken to the Green Gap identification should follow the relevant assessment principles set out within the 'Green Belt' National Planning Policy Guidance. These principles are as follows:
- *to ensure any assessment of how land performs against the Green Belt purposes is robust, assessment areas should be sufficiently granular to enable the assessment of their variable contribution to Green Belt purposes*
 - *a small number of large assessment areas will not be appropriate in most circumstances – authorities should consider whether there are opportunities to better identify areas of grey belt by subdividing areas into smaller assessment areas where this is necessary*
 - *authorities should consider where it may be appropriate to vary the size of assessment areas based on local circumstances. For example, the assessment of smaller areas may be appropriate in certain places, such as around existing settlements or public transport hubs or corridors*
- 3.40 In considering the land at Rowton Bridge Road, which is located within Green Gap 'GG5', it is clear that these principles were not followed. This is because there is a significant variance in the contribution to the Green Belt/Green Gap purposes that the land at Rowton Bridge Road makes in comparison to the land to the east of 'GG5'.
- 3.41 The general justification within the draft Neighbourhood Plan of identifying these Green Gaps outlines that a failure to maintain these green gaps will:
- Erode the physical gap required to maintain the integrity of each settlement;
 - Adversely affect the visual character of the landscape;
 - Significantly affect the undeveloped character of the Green Gaps;

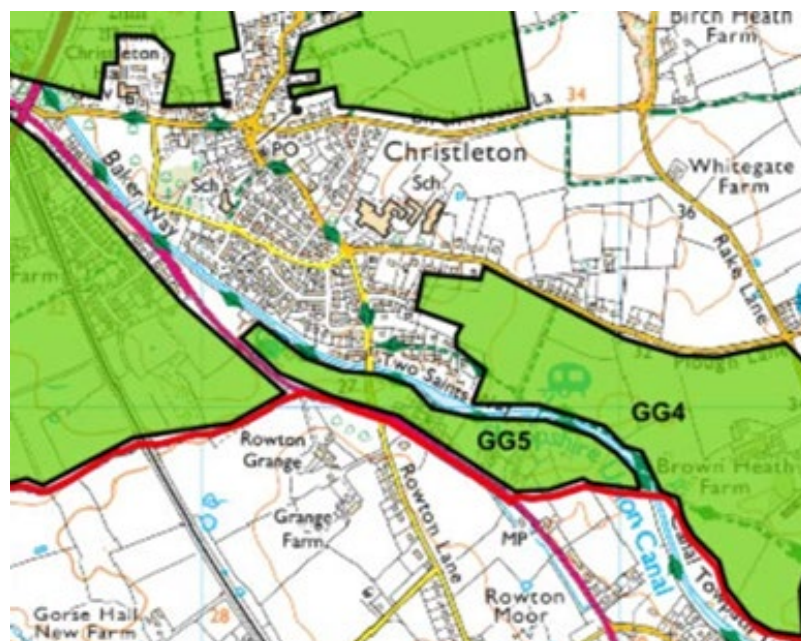
- Lead to coalescence of the settlements; and,
- Eliminate the exercise and health benefits of easy access to open countryside.

3.42 The designation of GG5 is fundamentally at odds with a number of these justifications and is mischaracterised within the Neighbourhood Plan as an undeveloped strip of land. This is not reflective of the true nature of the area the allocation washes over, which appears to include various forms of built development, including The Cheshire Cat and associated car park, a number of dwellings sited off Rowton Bridge Road and Whitchurch Road, and a sizeable agricultural complex. This is demonstrated via Figure 1.

Figure 1 – satellite image of ‘GG5’



Figure 2 – outline of ‘GG5’



3.43 It is accepted that Green Gaps do not need to be devoid of built development in order to be allocated as such. However, where a proposed allocation already incorporates such a quantum of built development, the above criteria are clearly not met and indeed there is no explanations or assertions in this regard.

3.44 Taking the points outlined above in turn;

- The physical gap proposed by this Green Gap is already severely diminished by the quantum of built form already in-situ and fails to act as a true 'gap' in this regard.
- Whilst a full LVIA has been undertaken regarding the Site in particular, it should also be considered that the visual character of the existing landscape covered by GG5 should be afforded limited merit, again given the quantum and variety of existing built form, intrusion of Whitchurch Road and Rowton Bridge Road and limited outward views.
- There is limited 'undeveloped character' of this particular Green Gap given the quantum of existing character; much of the allocation is already developed.
- The closest settlement is that of Rowton which sits some 800m south of the allocation. A failure to maintain this Green Gap allocation would be unlikely to lead to coalescing of the two settlements as a result of this significant distance. In any case, the entirety of this land further south, separating the two settlements, is allocated within the CWAC LADP both as Green Belt and Countryside which provides further protection against such coalescing.
- Whilst the exercise and health benefits of easy access to open countryside are welcomed, GG5 is unlikely to contribute to these benefits in any capacity. There is one public footpath within the allocation (078/FP21/1) running north-south between the Shropshire Union Canal and Whitchurch Road. It should be noted this footpath does not encroach upon or cross the Site. To the best of our knowledge, there are no other publicly accessible areas of countryside within the proposed allocation.

3.45 The following table sets out each of the provided reasonings for designating 'GG5' and how the site at Rowton Bridge Road performs against these criteria.

Criteria for Policy GG5 Designation	Impact of the Land at Rowton Bridge Road ('the Site') on this Criteria
Provides open access to open countryside for both Parishes	The Site is located between the existing built development of Christleton to the north, east, and west, and the A41 to the south. The character of the Site is therefore heavily urbanised and it serves limited purpose by itself as open countryside. The Site is currently private land and not accessible to the public. As such, it does not provide any open access to the wider countryside for either Parish and has no relationship, either physical or visual, with Littleton. The development of the Site would provide permeability through the Site, as well as some publicly accessible amenity space and is considered to improve the accessibility to the wider open countryside from Christleton. Currently, the Site therefore does not serve as either open countryside, or as providing open access to the wider open countryside.
Critical piece of green belt that separates Christleton from Waverton and Rowton	Rowton sits significantly south of the site, and Waverton even further to the south-east – and both are separated from the site by large amounts of designated Green Belt and Countryside. Development of the site would in no way compromise this separation.
GG5 therefore checks the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, preserves the setting of Chester and the uniquely historical civil war site of the Battle of Rowton Moor	GG5 fundamentally cannot be said to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas as Christleton is not a large built-up area, but a village. The PPG is clear in that villages should not be considered large built-up areas. In any case, the Site itself is physically and visually contained by strong, defensible boundaries on all sides. To the south, the A41 (Whitchurch Road) acts as a significant transport corridor and physical boundary; to the north, the Shropshire Union Canal Main Line provides a natural and established edge, beyond which lies the majority of the existing housing and built development in the village; to the west by the Cheshire Cat public house and its associated car park, and further residential development; and to the east by Rowton Bridge Road and more scattered dwellings. These existing boundaries serve to contain the site effectively and prevent any form of outward or piecemeal expansion into the wider countryside. As a result, the site does not facilitate nor contribute to the unrestricted sprawl of nearby built-up areas. In this context – and on the occasion that Christleton is considered a built-up area (which it should not be) – the site performs poorly against purpose (a) of the Green Belt and can be reasonably considered as making a weak contribution to this objective. The Site does not contribute to the setting of Chester, given its location is 4km from the historic centre.

	Likewise, the site cannot be said to contribute to the setting of the Battle of Rowton Moor. This battlefield sits 1.8km south-west of the site.
GG5 is therefore a green gap and not grey belt	The definition of 'grey belt' does not expressly exclude land that sits within a Green Gap (assuming it sits within the Green Belt). Asteer have provided significant and detailed analysis of the Sites Grey Belt credentials within the submission ⁸ and concluded that the site meets the definition. No similar analysis has been undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan group.
Location of uniquely historical civil war Battle of Rowton Moor	Historic England identifies the location of the Battle of Rowton Bridge as being on the eastern extent of GG5. At the closest point, the Site is 1.8km from the Battle of Rowton Moor location. Its development would therefore not impact on the significance of this point. Archaeological work has been undertaken by the applicant in the form of a Desk-Based Archaeological Study undertaken by Orion and assessed by the Cheshire APAS (Archaeology Planning Advisory Service) who have confirmed they have no concerns relating to archaeology over the site. Furthermore, a dig was undertaken in 2008⁹ comprising 9no trenches. Some archaeological remains were found in trench 14 and trench 17. As the 2008 archaeological evaluation investigated and recorded the archaeological deposits within the current proposed development area, there are no further archaeological requirements for this site and the Battle of Rowton Moor cannot be considered to have any impact or relevance towards the Site.
Very important PROW walking route and distant views of the Village	There is no PROW which passes through the Site or along its boundaries. The development of the Site would therefore have no impact on this criteria. It is acknowledged the towpath for the Shropshire Union Canal abuts the site to the north. It sits outside the red-line boundary for the Site and would not be impacted by development to the Site.
Christleton does not need the large number of houses possible on this site	As has been demonstrated within this representation, Christleton and Littleton are likely to require a significantly higher number of dwellings than has been provisionally provided for within this draft plan. This assertion is therefore incorrect and open to challenge.

⁸ 26/01188/OUT⁹ CHER4722

Long rural view would be irreversibly damaged	A Landscape and Visual Appraisal ('LVA') of the Site and the proposed development has been undertaken. This measured the overall visual effect of the proposals from a number of viewpoints' found that the proposals would only, at most cause Minor Adverse effects in the longer term. In all, the following was concluded: <i>that the visual effect of the proposals upon various viewpoints identified is Minor Adverse in the short term, reducing to Minor Adverse/Negligible in the longer term. In terms of the effect upon the landscape features of the site itself, it is considered that there would be a Minor Adverse/Negligible effect in the short term, and a Minor Beneficial effect in the longer term as the planting scheme becomes established.</i> <i>Overall, the proposed development is expected to generate some tangible landscape and visual effects however, these effects would be limited and very much localised and as such, the development is not expected to exert itself upon the wider landscape. The development is unlikely to generate any unacceptable levels of adverse landscape or visual effect upon its immediate context due to the urban fringe location, the existing landscape and townscape character and context, and the appropriateness of the development proposals in terms of their scale, grain, appearance and low visual prominence.</i>
A planning application submitted for a development between the Cheshire Cat and Rowton Bridge Road would compromise separation from Rowton and the site of the uniquely historical civil war Battle of Rowton Moor	Notwithstanding that this is pre-determinative, the wording of this policy is incredibly vague. The definition of development as outlined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 reads as follows: <i>the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.</i> The drafting of Planning Policy should not be reactive to applications submitted at the time said Policy is drafted – it is particularly notable that this justification didn't appear in the previous draft of the Neighbourhood Plan (Reg 14), but has appeared here, when the applicants application on this land was submitted in the interim period. The Parish Council and the village were both consulted upon in late 2025, prior to submission of the application. This policy applies a broad brush in that it asserts that any development on this land would compromise separation both from Rowton and from the site of the Battle of Rowton Moor. Both of these elements have previously been addressed in this table as above.
This one such examples has inadequate access off narrow Rowton Bridge Road and traffic queuing	NPPF Paragraph 116 notes that <i>'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network,</i>

from the A41 to Rowton Bridge.	<i>following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.'</i> No supporting information has been provided to support the comments made in the neighbourhood plan and the policy does not reflect the fact that significant access and highways improvements form a part of the application package. The application in question has been supported by a detailed Highways Technical Note which concludes that the application would not result either in an unacceptable impact on highway safety, nor would the residual cumulative impacts on the road network be severe. Conversely, the package of highways improvements are likely to improve the safety of the local highway network providing consistent pavement access up toward Rowton Bridge.
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- 3.46 The above table demonstrates that the land at Rowton Bridge Road does not serve any of the purposes for which the Green Gaps have been designated and should therefore be removed from Green Gap designation GG5.

Further Potential Benefits

- 3.47 The proposed development at Rowton Bridge Road would contribute to a number of proposed Policies and identified improvements within the Neighbourhood Plan to help Christleton achieve its key objectives by 2042. These benefits are as follows:

- **Policy SUC2 'Development along the Canal in Christleton'** – Policy SUC2 states that development proposals must achieve a number of criteria but generally the goal is to ensure the multi-functional benefits and general form of the Canal is retained. The proposed development at Rowton Bridge Road seeks to make the best of use of the canal, providing an indicative pedestrian link onto the Canal Towpath, retaining significant landscaping.
- **Policy SUC 3 'Heritage along the canal in Christleton'** – Policy SUC 2 requires that any development safeguards and protects the heritage value of the local Canal Conservation Areas and Listed Structures. A Heritage Statement has been submitted with the application, concluding that the development would have an effect on the significance of the Chester Canal Conservation Area, and the Christleton Conservation, in the lower ranges of 'less than substantial harm'. As per NPPF Paragraph 215, this harm has been weighed against the public benefits of the proposal within the Planning Statement – with the public benefits demonstrably and considerably outweighing this identified harm.
- **Policy SUC 6 'Green Infrastructure'** – Policy SUC 6 identifies the Shropshire Union Canal as contributing to the provision of Green Infrastructure. The development of the

Site will improve connectivity through to the Canal via a pedestrian/cycle link, while the treeline along the Site's northern boundary will be strengthened enhancing the natural features and biodiversity along the canal towpath. The development will also deliver a 10% biodiversity net gain on-site in relation to habitats and hedges, which will improve the Green Infrastructure network in Christleton.

Comments on Design Code Policy HDC1

- 3.48 The aspirations of the draft Design Code are positive, and it is important that development adheres to strong design principles.
- 3.49 It is not the purpose of these representations to assess each individual design policy turn by turn. However, it should be noted that many of the design policies may result in the imposition of particularly onerous design requirements that could challenge deliverability and, in some cases, scheme viability. It is not clear whether these design policies have been tested against the real-world implications of imposing these requirements.
- 3.50 Where departure from national standards has been proposed (for example, use of the minimum space standard within the London Housing Design Guide, rather than NDSS), no justification is given. This would have real world impacts on deliverability and viability and requires full and thorough testing. Whilst the majority of 4-beds are likely to adhere to minimum space standards within the London Housing Design Guide, it can be more difficult for 1, 2 and 3-bed dwellings to remain viable if these higher standards are sought and could well affect the affordability of these dwellings. The first objective of the NP is to support affordable, low cost 2/3 bed houses – enforcing such standards is likely to sit in direct conflict with these objectives.
- 3.51 Similarly, requiring all new buildings and retrofit developments to adhere to Passivhaus standards does not reflect the active challenges and site-specific constraints that different developments will face. The forthcoming FHS has reviewed the Passivhaus standard and offers a more realistic and appropriate approach to the delivery of low carbon, energy efficient homes.
- 3.52 Bizarrely, some of the policies (as in those in HDC4 – Biodiversity) attempt to write into policy the restriction on work that would not even require planning permission. This in reference to the Policy wording that '*Artificial (plastic) planting of any kind, including artificial grass, must not be used within front or back gardens.*' Evidently this Policy should be removed and, if retained would be completely unenforceable.

- 3.53 Policy HDC8 requires that new developments must include squares, park and greens or other communal gathering spaces. It has clearly not been considered how this Policy would work in conjunction with HN2 which requires that housing development takes place on sites no bigger than 1ha and with a quantum no higher than 16no. dwellings.
- 3.54 This directly contrary to the threshold limits within the CWaC Local Plan Part 2, as noted below, which clearly show that only developments of 20no. dwellings or more need to provide open-space on-site. HDC8 de-facto requires that developments of 16no dwelling *or less* need to provide open-space on-site. It is clearly impossible to comply with both of these policies at the same time and further demonstrates the unsuitability and limited quality of the drafting of the Design Code policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.

Table 14.2 Thresholds for on-site open space requirements

Typology	Threshold (no. of units)
Allotments	100 or more
Amenity Green Space / Natural Green Space	20 or more
Parks and recreation grounds (excluding pitches and fixed sports space)	200 or more
Play Space (Children)	50 or more
Play Space (Youth)	200 or more

- 3.55 Whilst a full and detailed analysis of each Design Code policy has not been made, it is clear that many of the assertions within the Design Code are made with reference to relatively vague assumptions and assertions, in order to inform policy. No Character Appraisal has been undertaken to identify key characteristics and vernacular that run through Christleton and as such some of the more onerous requirements – particularly those set out within the ‘Materials’ section, where primary facades *must* use local red sandstone– are not overtly justified and could give rise to visually discordant developments.
- 3.56 As no Character Appraisal has been undertaken, it is evident that much of the Design Code applies *generally* and is not borne from a genuine assessment of the characteristics and vernacular of the village. A rigid ‘must – should – could’ approach as set out within the Design Code is likely to prove excessively onerous, particularly where many of the ‘musts’ are vague, subjective and sometimes likely to be unachievable.

Comments on Approach to Contributions

- 3.57 References to S106 contributions are scattered throughout the document, albeit with limited detail and not written into policies, but rather ‘Actions’. CWAC have adopted CIL and so all developments within the plan area will be liable for CIL where they meet the thresholds and criteria.

- 3.58 As per Section 122, a planning obligation may only constitute a reason for granting planning permission for the development if the obligations is
- a) Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - b) Directly related to the development; and,
 - c) Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 3.59 They cannot be used for more general improvements, where there is little empirical data on the impact of *that scheme* identifying required mitigation. This is particularly notable within Action F1 which requires any developments in Christleton and Littleton to make an S106 contribution to the elimination of the serious flooding adjacent to any development, and at a number of specific locations.
- 3.60 Likewise, under Action AQ2, S106 funding is required to ensure continuous monitoring and reporting of particulate matter and air quality on the A41/A51 and in the centre of Christleton.
- 3.61 Limiting sites to no more than 16no. dwellings is likely to severely limit and constraint the quantum of financial contributions any one development can put forward.
- 3.62 These can only apply where it has been demonstrated that they meet the merits of S122 of the CIL Regulations. As written, requesting obligations on the basis of those policies is unlikely to meet those tests.

Comments on Evidence

- 3.63 Evidence base used to inform and input into the Neighbourhood Plan must be up-to-date, reliable and relevant.
- 3.64 On a review of the submitted evidence base, it is clear there are various shortcomings and issues with a number of the submitted documents.
- 3.65 It is noted the Air Quality Report has been used to justify a number of the proposed policies; most notably the restrictive policy relating to the provision of new housing under H1. The Air Quality Report, at the time of writing this report, is nearly 6 years old and appears to rely on data that was, at that point, up to 5 years old. The methodology relies on 'Christleton volunteers' utilising a hand-held device to measure particulate in the air. The data is out-of-date and its method of collection does not appear to have been undertaken to a professional standard.

- 3.66 None of the evidence has been independently verified, endorsed or adopted the AQWG monitoring programme or its conclusions. Neither DEFRA nor Imperial College are undertaking a formal verification role in respect of a parish-level volunteer monitoring exercise, and no evidence of such verification appears to have been provided.
- 3.67 The AQWG material provides useful contextual information but sits outside recognised regulatory assessment procedures and should not be afforded the same evidential weight as statutory monitoring data or an assessment prepared in accordance with EPUK/IAQM guidance.
- 3.68 The High School Travel Survey is based on travel patterns from January 2021. 'Traffic' is mentioned 35 times within the document, including anecdotal references to 'twice daily half mile queues', 'unacceptable serious and life changing accident injury rates from traffic', and 'the A41 gridlocked with traffic queues from Waverton to Hamburger'. Those statements may reflect local perceptions, but they are not supported by any quantified traffic counts, collision analysis, queue length surveys, journey time data or other objective transport evidence that would allow their accuracy, frequency or planning significance to be properly tested.
- 3.69 In the absence of that evidence, the survey can only be afforded very limited weight in plan-making terms. It does not provide a robust basis for restrictive policies or for conclusions that development would give rise to unacceptable highway safety impacts or severe residual cumulative effects on the road network. If traffic conditions are to be relied upon to justify policy constraints, they must be evidenced through proportionate and up-to-date technical assessment rather than anecdote or unverified assertion.
- 3.70 Comments on the suitability of the HNS have already been made in detail in the body of these representations.
- 3.71 There are various other anecdotal mentions to unacceptable congestion within the Christleton area, and speculation or conjecture surrounding the impact of potential development sites on the local highway network, but no empirical or demonstrable data to support any of these assertions. It is vital that where policies are imposed, based on the impact on the local highway network, that they are supported by real evidence.

General Comments

- 3.72 Generally, the tone and direction put forward by the draft Neighbourhood Plan is still too negative. No individual sites or allocations are made within the document. Analysis above shows that if the Neighbourhood Plan Group wish to identify a housing requirement, the

true number – in alignment with CWaCs identified housing requirement as determined by the Standard Method – is likely to be well, well above the identified figure of 15. Under-allocating is likely to cause issues relating to soundness of the Neighbourhood Plan and also lead to speculative, developer-led applications when it becomes apparent the Neighbourhood Plan has not identified a sufficient amount of land to help deliver the LPAs housing requirement.

- 3.73 The approach to new housing is extremely restrictive, as is explored below, and many of the requirements in the design code are likely to prove excessively onerous and may have serious real-world impacts on viability and deliverability. There are doubts about the validity of the historical information and compliance with relevant guidance documents and standards in the surveys undertaken, and upon which much of the proposals are based; these will be rigorously reviewed and contested by specialist consultants on future planning applications.
- 3.74 This approach would limit the Neighbourhood Plans ability to benefit from the merits of NPPF Paragraph 14 and as such, where NPPF Paragraph 11d applies, the Neighbourhood Plan would offer no additional protection through policy. Conversely, by not allocating any land for development to approach the areas identified housing shortfall, the area may be more vulnerable to speculative development. Likewise, not allocating any sites for housing sits in conflict with Paragraph 74 of the NPPF.

4 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 These representations have been prepared by Asteer on behalf of Hilbre Overlea Estates in response to the Christleton and Littleton Neighbourhood Plan Consultation, running from 30th April 2026 to 15th June 2026. These representations provide a response to the Neighbourhood Plan specifically in relation to land under Hilbre Overlea Estates' control at Land at Rowton Bridge Road. An outline application for 29 no. dwellings is currently pending determination under application reference 26/01188/OUT. A Site Location Plan is enclosed at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 The draft Neighbourhood Plan fails to conform to a number of the relevant conditions outlined in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act. It fails to support and provide for the merits of the relevant national and local policy by allocating no land for housing and further restricting existing land which may otherwise be able to do so. The Plan can also not be said to achieve sustainable development. This sits in direct conflict with Conditions a), d) and e).
- 4.3 As set out above, there is a distinct need to deliver sustainable housing development across the Neighbourhood Plan area, and these will be delivered either through the Plan process or via speculative planning applications. The land at Rowton Bridge Road provides an opportunity for Christleton and Littleton Parishes to deliver moderate, sustainable housing growth while providing for the needs of the villages and delivering a suite of tangible benefits as set out within the application. These benefits are set out in detail in the Planning Statement for the application, but include:
- Contributing to the Councils 5YHLS both in terms of the provision of market housing, and the provision of affordable housing.
 - Economic benefits associated the construction phase and additional consumer expenditure from new residents.
 - Deliverability within 5 years of a genuinely sustainable and achievable site.
 - Provision of on-site public open space
 - Improvements to the local highway network
 - Other financial contributions forming part of any agreed S106 agreement.

- 4.4 Based on these representations, it is clear that the Neighbourhood Plan, in order to be sound and to conform with the basic conditions, must take a more proactive approach to addressing the Plan area's housing needs by:
1. Removing or amend Policy HN1, which introduces a housing requirement likely to be substantially below what it can be demonstrated is actually required, and Policy HN2 which significantly limits the sites available for development in Christleton and Littleton, and allocate sufficient, sustainable land to deliver the actual housing needs of Christleton. As identified above, a total identified housing requirement of just 15no. dwellings over the Plan Period has not been calculated using any accepted methodology and is substantially inconsistent with the identified housing requirement for CWaC as a whole;
 2. Acknowledge and be consistent with Grey Belt policy in the NPPF and recognise that the site is a Grey Belt site as set out within application reference 26/01188/OUT;
 3. Remove the Green Gap from the land at Rowton Bridge Road, and allocate the Site for residential development within the Neighbourhood Plan;
- 4.5 Hilbre Overlea Estates is fully committed to engaging in further discussion with the Parish Council to deliver high-quality homes and are committed to robustly demonstrating the merits of the Site as the Neighbourhood Plan is progressed. We would be happy to provide further information or a meeting on site which can be facilitated by Asteer.

APPENDIX 1 – SITE LOCATION PLAN

