

Report to: Council

Report Ref: C1920
Meeting Date: 4th November 2019
Agenda Item: 13
Prepared By: Town Clerk



Subject: Community Governance Review

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In 2017, the Town Council launched a petition to trigger a Community Governance Review (CGR) for Knutsford. Noting the pending submission of petitions from Knutsford and a number of other towns/parishes, Cheshire East Council resolved to launch a borough-wide review following the 2019 elections; this process has now commenced.

This report sets out a background to community governance reviews, the specific issues the Town Council recognised which led to it launching a petition and the current data produced by Cheshire East Council.

Cheshire East Council has launched an initial survey to gather input for the review and it is recommended that the council established a working group to prepare a response on the consultation.

1.2 ABOUT COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

A Community Governance Review (CGR) is a review of local governance arrangements undertaken by a principal council for the whole of or part of its area. The process for undertaking a CGR is set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as amended by the Legislative Reform (Community Governance Reviews) Order 2015.

A principal council may undertake a CGR on its own initiative or it can be triggered by petition. In this instance Cheshire East Council has decided to undertake a CGR for the whole borough noting a number of parishes were arranging petitions to trigger reviews for their areas. Cheshire East Council has established a Community Governance Review Sub-Committee to lead on the review.

A CGR can address a number of matters in community governance including:

- The creation or abolition of parish councils
- Amendments to existing parish boundaries
- Merging or grouping of parishes
- Parish warding arrangements
- The number of councillors



Government guidance advises it is best practise to hold a CGR every 10-15 years. The Town Council's governance arrangements were last amended for the 1999 elections when the previous wards of Over, South, West and North were replaced with the present wards of Over, Nether, Norbury Booths and Bexton and the number of councillors was increased from 12 to 15.

1.3 PROCESS

Cheshire East Council has now launched a pre-consultation survey. This survey is to gather initial views on the current governance arrangements and to identify where changes are required. This survey runs from 28th October to 31st January.

Cheshire East Council then intends to publish a report on the survey around 19th March and between 19th March and 24th June develop proposals for change. These changes will then be subject to a formal consultation from 25th June to 16th September. Cheshire East Council then looks to approve the proposals between December 2020 and March 2021. The new arrangements would come into effect from the May 2023 elections.

2.0 KNUTSFORD COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE ISSUES

2.1 NORTHWICH ROAD DEVELOPMENT

The development site on Northwich Road (see figure one) straddles the boundary of the Knutsford and Tabley parishes, with the majority of the area being within Tabley. The existing parish boundary is not coterminous with the layout for housing on this site. This boundary is also the boundary of the Cheshire East wards of Knutsford and High Legh.

It is expected that the residents of this new housing estate would consider themselves part of Knutsford, not Tabley, and that their expectation for democratic representation would accord with this. At present, some residents on the estate would be within Knutsford and some would be in Tabley.

2.2 LONGRIDGE DEVELOPMENT

The land south of Longridge is within Knutsford parish but split between the wards of Norbury Booths and Over (see figure two). The boundaries of the wards would likely not accord with the road layout of the new housing area leaving no clear borders for the wards. This would be both confusing for new residents in town council elections and for representation.

2.3 IMPACT OF NEW HOUSING

The existing warding arrangements create roughly equal (within 10%) councillor to elector ratios. When all development has taken place, and presuming it is within modified ward boundaries (as per 2.1 and 2.2) the ratios would be unbalanced as no development is planned for Norbury Booths or Bexton wards.



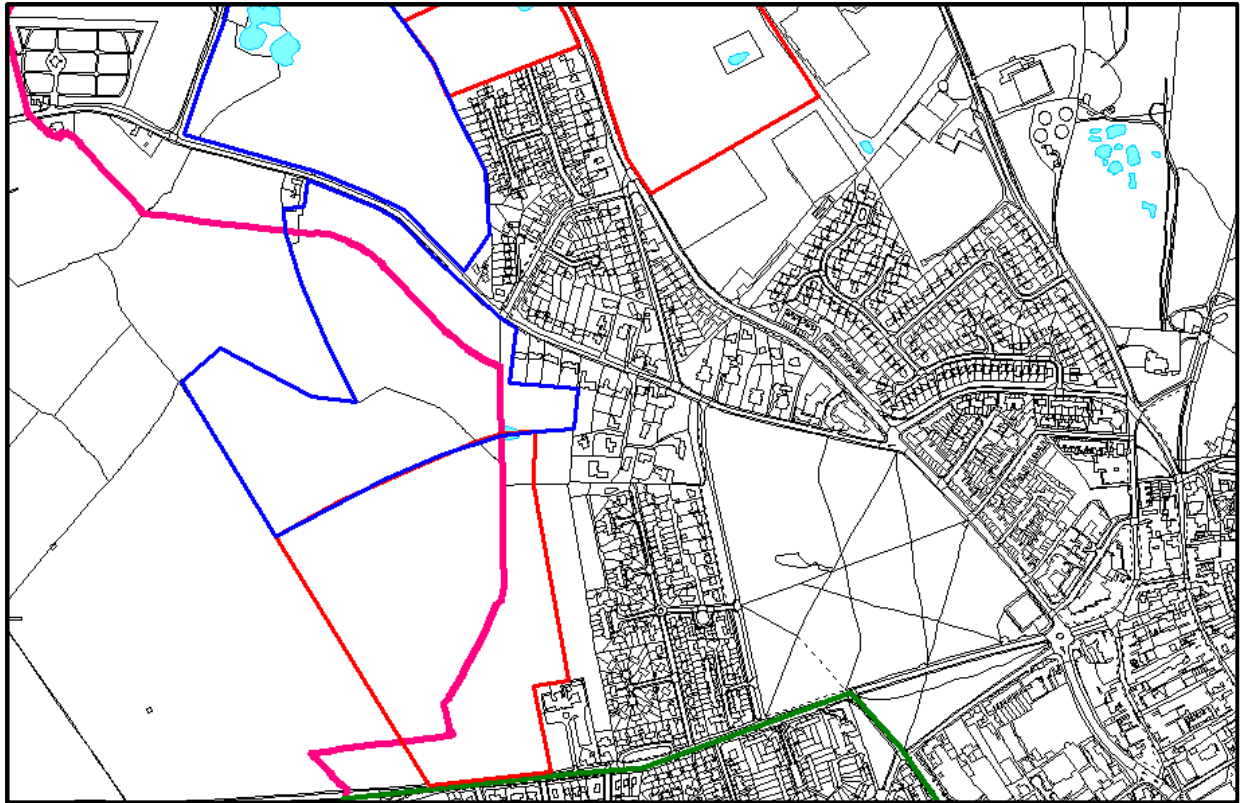


Figure One: North West Knutsford Strategic Development

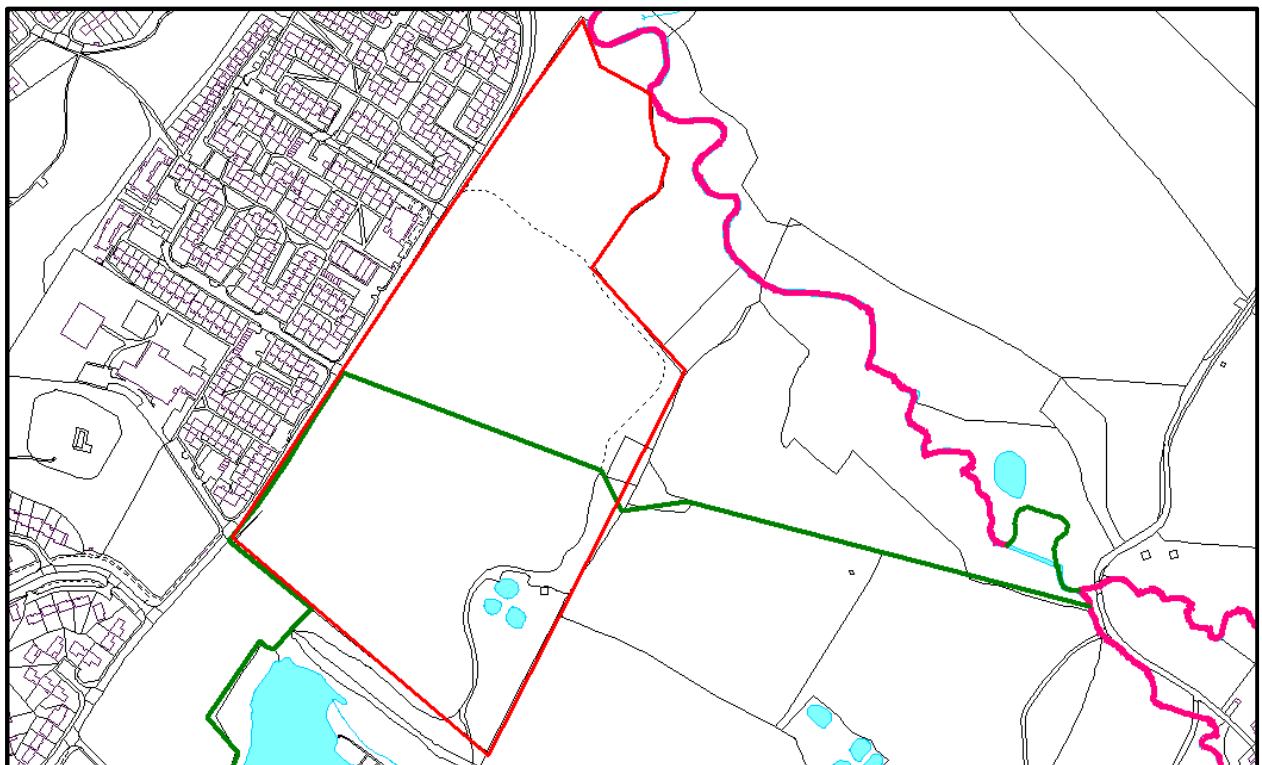


Figure Two: Longridge Development

Red - housing allocation **Blue** - safeguarded land **Pink** - Parish Boundary **Green** - Ward Boundary



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3.0 ELECTORAL FORECAST DATA

Cheshire East Council is undertaking the review based on forecast electorates as at 31st December 2025. The data (see table one) indicates an increase in the Knutsford electorate of 278 in this period, principally from the development at Parkgate.

Cheshire East Council calculate the electorate forecast using a housing to electorate ratio. The 2010 ONS dwelling stock data for Knutsford identified a total of 6,103 households. Between 1st April 2010 and 1st December 2018 there have been 116 net housing completions. Cheshire East Council forecasts that there will be a further 222 net housing completions by 31st December 2025 (see table two).

Cheshire East Council has identified that the average number of electors per household in Knutsford is 1.698 as of 2018. Cheshire East Council's Local Plan forecasts predicted that the borough wide ratio will decrease 1.1% and the electorate forecasts factor this in with a predicted ratio of Knutsford of 1.679 in 2025.

	2018	2025	Change	% Change
Bexton Ward	2,128	2,117	-11	-0.5
Nether Ward	2,145	2,146	1	0
Norbury Booths Ward	2,128	2,132	4	0.2
Over Ward	4,136	4,420	284	6.9
Knutsford (total)	10,537	10,815	278	2.6%

Table One: Knutsford Electorate Forecasts 2018-2025
Source: Report to CEC CGR Sub Committee 31/07/2019

Cheshire East Council has stated that it will not be updating the forecasts during the review as "otherwise we would continually be revising them, adding considerably to the council's workload but with little benefit".

The forecasts do not include Memorial House (pending approval, 46 units). The forecasts include Land North of Parkgate but does not include Land North of Northwich Road; both of which have outline consent. The phasing plans for the reserved matters application for Northwich Road indicate a build out over 6 years, so would include completion within the period. No other strategic sites have planning consent at present.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

The current consultation being run by Cheshire East Council is asking for residents and parish/town councils to highlight the issues that should be addressed. As outlined in 1.3 Cheshire East Council will then develop its proposals.

It is suggested that the Town Council may wish to get ahead of Cheshire East Council and make initial proposals for changes rather than just highlighting issues for Cheshire East Council to address. It is

Site	Ward	Planning Status	Net Housing Completions							
			2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	TOTAL
LPS37 Land North of Parkgate	Over	Outline / Not started			37	37	37	37	37	185
Eight Oaks, Goughs Lane	Norbury Booths	Permission / Not started		12						12
Longview Hotel, Manchester Road	Nether	Permission / Not started		10						10
Elsterne, Toft Road	Bexton	Permission / Not started		3						3
2 Branden Drive	Over	Permission / Completed	2							2
20 Sandiway	Over	Permission / Not started		2						2
56 Meadow Drive	Bexton	Permission / Not started		2						2
2 Mobberley Road	Over	Permission / Not started		1						1
3 Coronation Square	Nether	Permission / Not started		1						1
29 Boothfields	Over	Permission / Not started		1						1
Bexton Fold, Bexton Lane	Norbury Booths	Permission / Not started	1							1
Gate Mews, Chelford Road	Norbury Booths	Permission / Not started		1						1
Turtle Beach, Tabley Road	Nether	Permission / Not started		1						1
TOTAL			3	34	37	37	37	37	37	222

Table Two: Knutsford Housing Competitions 02/12/2018 to 31/12/2025
Source: Cheshire East Council Strategic Planning Team Database at 15/03/2019



therefore recommended that Council establishes a working group to consider the community governance issues in Knutsford and prepare a submission for Council approval The submission would outline the key issues, appraise the available data and suggest specific changes that should be considered.

It is recommended that the working group comprise a member from each electoral ward and comprise both Conservative and Independent members.



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