

Housing Policy

Justification and Evidence

Bunbury is a rural settlement surrounded by open countryside. It has an existing settlement boundary, to which this plan proposes limited extension, in order to allow infill and small scale development in character with the village.

The Cheshire East Local Plan, Strategic Submission Version March 2014, sets the agenda for housing growth in rural areas and identifies Bunbury as a Local Service Centre (Policy PG2. 9) (All further references to the Local Plan refer to this version). This policy states that ‘in the Local Service Centres small scale development to meet localised objectively assessed needs and priorities will be supported where they contribute to the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities.’

The inspector who is examining the Local Plan has asked Cheshire East Council to revisit several matters in the Plan however he has confirmed that the proposed settlement hierarchy seems to be justified, effective and soundly based. In the meantime Cheshire East are encouraging communities such as Bunbury to plan for the future through Neighbourhood Plans and other mechanisms that will facilitate appropriate levels of development to meet local needs and satisfy Policy PG2 in the Local Plan.

The existing settlement boundary was identified in the Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan 2005 and has been included in this Neighbourhood Plan, confirmed by consultation and with the support of the Parish Council (refer also to document: Rationale for Settlement Boundary Appendix F).

Bunbury has a good range of local services and facilities which serve the wider area which are described later in this plan. This is why Bunbury has been designated as a Local Service Centre in the Cheshire East Local Plan.

We have identified a settlement boundary which tightly follows the existing form of the built up settlement. Whilst the Local Plan (PG2) indicates that, where there is a need to accommodate small scale development to meet localised objectively assessed needs, any new development over and above infilling will have to be accommodated on greenfield sites outside, but immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary.

There are 13 Local Service Centres in the Local Plan and between them they are expected to accommodate 2,500 new homes and 5 hectares of employment land in the Local Plan period 2010 and 2030. We are informed by Cheshire East that on a proportionate basis Bunbury will be expected to accommodate 80 dwellings over this period.

Within Bunbury, since the start of the Local Plan Period from April 2010, 19 dwellings have been completed and another 9 new planning consents have been granted (refer to Appendix B: Bunbury – table of planning consents and completed dwellings).

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes small developments of no more than 15 houses. It also recommends no co-location which means that one group of new houses cannot be built next to another, creating a larger development, as this would be prejudicial to the character of Bunbury and would have significant social and environmental impacts upon the immediate area.

Some consultation responses suggested that smaller groups of houses, developments of 5 or 10, may be more appropriate, however the Neighbourhood Plan Group were not only conscious of any viability arguments that may be advanced by developers, to build larger schemes, but also the latest Government advice that groups of 10 or less houses would not be required to provide any affordable housing or planning gain.

The Cheshire East Local Plan sets the agenda for housing growth in rural areas, allowing communities to plan for the future through Neighbourhood Plans and other mechanisms, which will facilitate appropriate levels of development to meet local needs.

Within the settlements sympathetic, well designed and sustainable small scale development will be permitted, to meet localized objectively assessed needs and priorities together with the conversion of buildings or infilling of a small gap with up to 2 dwellings. Development should not exceed the capacity of existing services and infrastructure unless the required improvements can be made.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that the local community is best placed to understand its needs for local services and specific housing needs. Neighbourhood Plans and other mechanisms including Community Right to Build Orders and Rural Exception Sites aim to satisfy these needs. The Cheshire East Local Plan (8.30) also confirms that any developments in settlements should be of a scale and design that respects the character and rural setting of the area.

In response to this policy context the development of the Neighbourhood Plan has involved extensive consultation with the community on the appropriate scale of development, a survey and analysis of housing needs and an evaluation of the form and characteristics of Bunbury and its capacity to accommodate development.

Delivering a choice of homes to meet Housing Requirements, including low cost market housing, is a key issue and Bunbury recognises the need for a small amount of sustainable housing development in scale and character to reflect Policy PG2 in the Cheshire East Local Plan. Whilst it is not the intention to cap the overall amount of development, the rate of sustainable growth should be in line with the forecast that some 80 houses will need to be accommodated over the Local Plan Period 2010-2030 to reflect organic growth of Bunbury. It is against this background and the views of the community that the housing policies have been formulated. In the context of this plan the Local Housing Need is defined in Appendix A.

The Cheshire East Local Plan (PG2) directs new housing development to Local Service Centres. Bunbury is identified as a Local Service Centre and the Neighbourhood Plan Policy H2 A has identified the potential for small sites of up to 15 houses, on greenfield sites, within the extended settlement boundary.

Consultations have also indicated the desire to allow limited infill and re-use of brownfield sites and this is reflected in Policy H2 B and D of the Neighbourhood Plan. This is in line with the Cheshire East Local Plan Policy MP1 and Policies SD1 and SE2 which aim to maximize the use of brownfield land.

Consultations and the 2013 Housing Needs Survey have shown a need for only a small amount of Affordable Housing (see Glossary Appendix G).

It is important that Affordable Housing is offered in the first instance to occupants who have a Bunbury connection for 12 months to provide adequate time for this policy requirement to be met in practice. This is in line with Local Plan Policy SC5 and NPPF. This approach aims to stimulate early engagement between a developer and an Affordable Housing provider to assure themselves (and subsequently the local community) that Affordable Housing Need is thoroughly proven. That being the case the 12 month stipulation would not act as a barrier to the scheme's viability.

In supporting Cheshire East Local Plan (Policy SE1) Bunbury wishes to see high quality design and sustainable construction in new housing developments. This is reflected in Policy H5 which includes the use of Lifetime Home Standards and Building for Life 12 in appropriate circumstances (see the Glossary for definitions of Lifetime Homes and Building for Life 12).

To reflect Bunbury's distinctiveness and variety of architectural styles which have evolved from its organic growth, Policy H6 requires new housing developments to be phased over the Plan Period, 2015 to 2030. At the start of the Plan Period there are already 19 dwellings which have been completed since 2010 and these will be discounted from the overall commitment of 80 new dwellings. It is essential that any new approvals are phased to take account of the actual development of these existing commitments and any changes in Housing Requirement which may occur over the Plan Period. Phasing is also required to enable the limited capacity of local services and facilities e.g. the village primary school and Heath Centre, to make provision for an increased population.

The local community is best placed to understand its needs for local services and specific housing requirements. Neighbourhood Plans and other mechanisms including Community Right to Build Orders and Rural Exception Sites aim to satisfy these needs. Any development in Bunbury should be of a scale and design that respects its character and rural setting.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Cheshire East Local Plan and will be reviewed periodically or when the Local Plan is amended or changed by Cheshire East and those changes have a material impact on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Community Feedback

Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Plan revealed the following key housing issues that policies H1 – H6 seek to address:

- To deliver a housing growth strategy tailored to the objectively assessed identified local housing needs and context of Bunbury
- To encourage sensitive development which protects and enriches the landscape, character and built setting of the village
- To provide proportionate and environmentally sustainable housing development as local need arises
- Phase development over the lifetime of the Plan
- New Housing must take account of the Adopted Village Design Statement March 2009
- The number and type of affordable homes built will be determined by Bunbury's needs, established in the recent Rural Housing Needs Survey 2013, the feedback received from the Developer Day in November 2013 and by consideration of developments within neighbouring villages. Bunbury's housing needs will be reassessed every 5 years by Cheshire East Council taking into account demographic projections, developments in neighbouring villages, local surveys and Cheshire East Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- All new housing will be encouraged to be constructed to meet Building for Life 12, the industry standard for the design of new housing developments
- Allow the expansion of the settlement boundary to accommodate developments of up to 15 houses maximum without co-location with any other new housing development
- Allow infill within the settlement boundary of up to 2 dwellings in a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage.
- Allow redevelopment of brownfield sites where this would meet all the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Allow small rural exception sites of up to 6 houses immediately adjoining the settlement boundary without co-locating with other new developments
- All new housing developments shall provide a mix of size, design and type of dwellings including social, low cost market housing and starter homes.

The following plans, documents and strategic policies support the housing policies:

- National Planning Policy Framework
 - Cheshire East Local Plan 2015
 - Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan 2005
 - Cheshire East Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2013 update
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- Bunbury Parish Plan 2014
 - Bunbury Rural Housing Needs Survey Report – 2013
 - Bunbury Village Design Statement 2009
 - Bunbury Conservation Area reports June 2007
 - Feedback from the Developer Day November 2013
 - Building for Life 12

Policy H1

Planning permission will be granted for a minimum of 80 new homes to be built in Bunbury in the period from April 2010 to March 2030 on sites within the carefully extended Settlement Boundary of the village.

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes a Settlement Boundary for Bunbury based upon the existing defined Settlement Boundary in the Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan 2005.

The purposes of the Settlement Boundary are:-

- A. Directing future housing, economic and community related development in the Neighbourhood Plan Area to the village of Bunbury, to enhance its role as a resilient and sustainable community and to protect the surrounding open spaces and countryside.
- B. Containing the spread of the village, by reinforcing its core area and maintaining an effective and coherent built up-rural edge.

- C. Proposals for housing development outside the Bunbury Settlement Boundary will only be granted where they comply with the criteria set out in Housing Policy H2 (Scale of Housing Development), or in exceptional circumstances; such as any new dwelling required for the essential need of an agricultural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.

Where the current Settlement Boundary is moved to allow development, as specified above, a new boundary will be established on the edge of the new development and will connect to the previous boundary at its nearest points.

This policy establishes the key spatial priority for the Bunbury Neighbourhood Plan, within which context all its other policies are based. Essentially, it directs all development in the Neighbourhood Plan period (2015 to 2030) to the village of Bunbury that lies at the heart of the Parish and serves the wider rural area, which should remain as open countryside.

Policy H2– Scale of Housing Development

New development will be supported in principle provided that it is small scale, and in character with the settlement phased over the period of the Plan and falling within the following categories:

A) Greenfield Development

A maximum of 15 new houses on any one available and deliverable greenfield site, within the extended settlement boundary, and not co-located with any other new housing development. New housing development is defined as a development built within the plan period, 2015-2030.

B) Infill Development

Infilling of a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage of up to 2 dwellings in character and scale with adjoining development

C) Rural Exception Sites

Sites of up to 6 houses to meet local needs and in character with adjoining developments on land immediately adjacent to the Settlement Boundary

D) Brownfield within the Parish

The redevelopment of brownfield sites within the Parish will be encouraged, where they are neither suitable for nor capable of employment development, to meet the Local Housing Needs of Bunbury and satisfy in all other respects the policies contained in the Neighbourhood Plan

E) Redundant Buildings

The re-use, conversion and adaptation of permanent, structurally sound, rural buildings of substantial construction to meet Local Housing Needs, which would lead to an enhancement of the character of the village and the Conservation Areas, will be supported subject to:

- The proposed use being appropriate to its location
- The conversion and/or adaptation works proposed respecting the local character of the surrounding buildings and local area
- The local highway network being capable of accommodating the traffic generated by the proposed new use and adequate car parking being provided within the site

Policy H3—Affordable Housing, Starter Homes and Low Cost Market Housing to meet Local Housing Needs (see appendix A)

Development that meets an objectively assessed Local Housing Need identified in the latest parish housing needs survey or, if out of date, the most appropriate objectively assessed review of housing need in the future, will be subject to planning conditions and/or planning obligations requiring the first occupants to be residents of Bunbury or with a Bunbury connection, then adjoining parishes and finally Cheshire East. In the case of essential agricultural dwellings the same criteria shall apply, and occupants will be employed or last employed in agriculture.

Any housing provided to meet a Local Housing Need when it is completed and subsequently becomes vacant shall be made available from that time for a period of 12 months for occupation by people who meet the Local Housing Need criteria as set in Appendix A.

All new housing developments shall include an element of low cost market housing and starter homes in addition to any affordable housing to contribute to a mixed and balanced community.

A summary of the findings of the Housing Needs Survey 2013 for Bunbury is included in Appendix A.

Policy H4 Tenure Mix

Proposals for Affordable Homes in the village must be of a tenure, size and type to help meet the locally identified housing needs and contribute to a mixed, balanced and inclusive community where people can live independently longer. (A definition of Affordable Housing is included in the Glossary.)

Policy H5 – Design

All new housing proposals should be in small groups of up to 15 dwellings to reflect the character of Bunbury and will be expected to be of a high quality of design taking account of the Adopted Village Design Statement 2009 and:

- Complements and enhances where appropriate the size, height, scale, mass, rural skyline, materials, layout, access and density of existing development in the plan area including where appropriate the provision of chimneys
- Demonstrates that the amenities of neighbouring dwellings will not be adversely affected through overlooking, loss of light or outlook, over dominance or general disturbance
- Provides an appropriate level of landscaping which complements and enhances the rural character of the local area
- Provides garden space commensurate with the size of the dwelling proposed, the prevailing pattern of development in the locality and the likely needs of the prospective occupiers

- Provides for the changing needs and life-styles of an ageing population and will be encouraged to build to Lifetime Homes standard in accordance with current national guidance, Building for Life 12
- Within the Conservation areas in the village any development affecting any heritage assets must pay special regard to the need to conserve and enhance the setting of heritage assets and any special architectural or historic feature of significance

Policy H6 – Phasing of Housing

Cheshire East Council's Local Plan relates to 2010 to 2030 and we are required to accommodate 80 new houses over that period.

Between April 2010 and March 2015, 19 new houses have been completed in Bunbury and these have been discounted from the 80 new homes required by the Local Plan. To ensure an appropriate phased delivery of housing over the Neighbourhood Plan period, 2015 to 2030, the 61 remaining new homes proposed should be delivered against the following schedule, unless any demonstrable increase in local housing need is identified by the local planning authority.

Phase 1: 2015 – 2020 – 21 homes

Phase 2: 2020 – 2025 – 20 homes

Phase 3: 2025 – 2030 – 20 homes

This policy allows for alternative sites to come forward through the plan period accompanied by the provision of local infrastructure including, where appropriate, contributions to sustainable transport measures, green infrastructure, local services and community facilities.

The delivery of new homes in the Plan area against the above schedule will be reviewed by the Parish Council in partnership with the local planning authority at the end of each phasing period and, where necessary, may be updated to adapt to market conditions or an advance or lessening of a local need.

When assessing whether delivery rates within the plan area are being met, monitoring will also take into account any net increase or decrease of units elsewhere in the village brought about by demolition, conversion or new build of additional dwellings on windfall or exception sites.

A schedule of permissions granted and houses completed in the parish since April 2010 is included in Appendix B.