Baseline evidence report

New local plan for Cheshire East

October 2026

Enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all

Cheshire East Council

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1 Executive summary

Introduction

1.1 Cheshire East Council is preparing a new local plan for the borough, covering the period into the 2040s. This work will comply with the government's new style local plan arrangements. Government guidance on these new style plans states that local planning authorities are required to gather baselining evidence to inform their preparation work. The guidance specifies a need to assess the current picture of the local plan area and its potential future, as well as taking account of existing priorities and strategies. The guidance also requires planning authorities to undertake a critical analysis of this collective evidence base. This report is the primary output from that baseline evidence and analysis. The critical analysis is presented in the form of a table (Table 1.1 of this executive summary) identifying 'SWOT' (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) issues and other challenges.

1.2 The report focuses largely on the borough of Cheshire East, and key sub-areas within it, particularly its main settlements and the distinctions between its urban and rural areas. However, it also takes account of links and interactions with neighbouring authorities, including the other 2 councils (Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington) that are part of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority. Comparisons between the borough and the national average (and in some instances the regional average) are also made to put Cheshire East within a wider perspective.

1.3 The new local plan will (like the current one) exclude the part of Cheshire East that falls within the national park, as the Peak District National Park Authority is the responsible local planning authority for that area. However, data limitations mean that most of the statistical evidence presented in this report is not available for geographical sub-areas that match or cover similar areas to the small part of the borough that falls within the Peak District. Consequently, except where stated otherwise, the statistics in the report for 'Cheshire East' relate to the whole borough, including the Peak District part.

1.4 The report is structured as follows:

- the rest of Chapter 1 provides a summary of the key findings and issues arising from the report: it starts with a list of the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and other challenges for Cheshire East, followed by a comprehensive summary of the key supporting evidence on each topic (drawn from the details in chapters 3 to 9)
- Chapter 2 provides a more detailed background to the baseline evidence report, as well as some health warnings on the limitations of the report's data sources and some general technical notes (such as how settlements and rural areas are defined)
- Chapter 3 contains a general overview of Cheshire East's characteristics and diversity

- Chapters 4 to 9 set out the baseline evidence on specific topics (population, the economy, health, wellbeing and society, housing, the environment, and transport and infrastructure)
- the appendices contain definitions and detailed technical information

Key findings and issues: summary table (SWOT-based analysis)

1.5 Table 1.1 presents an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats ('SWOT') and other challenges for Cheshire East that have been identified from the evidence in this baseline report. The table also includes ongoing and potential future national and global challenges that are likely to have implications for the borough.

Table 1.1: Key findings summary table (SWOT-based analysis)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• attractive location to live, work or visit, with the closeness of Greater Manchester and its services/facilities (such as higher education provision) being a related strength • demographically diverse communities, with a large majority feeling people from different backgrounds get on well in their local area • substantial manufacturing sector presence, especially in pharmaceuticals (AstraZeneca and Bespak) and vehicle manufacturing (Bentley) • major scientific research bases in the borough (Alderley Park and Jodrell Bank) and adjacent Greater Manchester conurbation • generally robust labour market: number of jobs high relative to size of local labour supply, high qualification levels of working-age residents, large share of jobs in professional and managerial occupations, low unemployment rate	• pockets of significant deprivation, particularly concentrated in Crewe • low qualification levels in Crewe area and Middlewich, and severe education, skills and training related deprivation in Crewe • socioeconomic/housing issues in Wrenbury (for example, it has the highest rates of any main settlement for unemployment, poor health and social renting) • relatively low number of jobs (compared to local labour supply) in some towns, particularly Alsager, Congleton, Poynton and Sandbach • higher out-of-work benefit claimant rates for younger people (compared to older groups) • inequality within the borough in terms of household income levels and health indicators, with parts of Crewe (and Macclesfield and Congleton for overall life expectancy or healthy life expectancy) being particularly disadvantaged • relative inaccessibility of jobs and key services to many rural parts of the borough • neighbourhoods (many town centres and some deprived suburbs) where crime rates are relatively high and Crewe communities much less likely to feel their area is safe

Strengths	Weaknesses
• resilient business base: business density and business survival rates above national average • retail vacancy rates below national average • key visitor attractions (most notably Tatton Park, Jodrell Bank and the Peak Park) and rich array of heritage and culture • high levels of community cohesion across the borough and strong community spirit in Crewe and Macclesfield • housing delivery has so far more than matched the current local plan's overall assessed need and affordable housing need • relatively small proportion (by national standards) of households with insufficient bedrooms for their needs • recent improvements in air quality (with all Air Quality Management Areas in the borough revoked in 2025) • rich mineral resources (most notably salt and silica sand) • strong transport links in most of the borough's urban areas, most notably Crewe railway station's strategic importance and regular bus routes serving all the borough's towns • high levels of transport connectivity to jobs and key services in most towns, particularly Crewe, Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Nantwich, Sandbach and Congleton	• low resident satisfaction rates with local area in Crewe and Middlewich • relative limited stock of smaller (single bedroom) dwellings, compared to national average • nearly 2,000 homeless households requiring council support • relative lack of affordability of housing (compared to national average), with house prices being particularly high in Knutsford, Poynton, Wilmslow and other settlements in the northern part of the borough • supply of deliverable sites is not currently enough to provide the required minimum of 5 years' worth of housing • river quality (both ecological and chemical quality) inadequate • high rates of fuel poverty in some of the inner areas of Crewe • high rates of dependency on cars/vans for commuting, compared to national average, with traffic volume (vehicle miles) through the borough rising to an all-time peak • journey time delays, noise and air quality issues on M6 • peak time congestion on M6/M56 and local road network, and in main towns • lack of rail connectivity for Middlewich (no station) and Knutsford (no direct connection to other Cheshire East towns) and railway station accessibility issues in some towns • lower levels of transport connectivity to jobs and key services (and greater car dependency) in rural/dispersed communities, particularly in the south and east of the borough • rural areas of the borough having much lower rates of broadband coverage than its urban areas

Opportunities	Threats
• expansion of health and social care sectors and related manufacturing sectors (such as pharmaceuticals), to meet needs of ageing population and reduce the burden on unpaid carers • increase the size and appeal of the borough's visitor economy • expand the borough's relatively large share of agricultural activity (compared to England), to help make the local area and country more self-sufficient and environmentally sustainable in terms of in food production • improvements in economic health, social cohesion and residents' wellbeing from redevelopment schemes in Congleton, Crewe and elsewhere • encouraging young graduates to work and live in the borough • maintaining and improving the provision of sports/leisure facilities and green spaces, to improve physical activity participation rates and residents' health and wellbeing • planned improvements to transport infrastructure and networks, including Crewe Hub investment programme (at Crewe railway station) and the council's Bus Service Improvement Plan • development of renewable energy, sustainable transport networks and services, and more sustainable forms of agricultural activity, so that greenhouse gas emissions can be sharply reduced • additional policy-making powers, funding and pooled public resources arising from the creation of the	• ageing population leading to lower proportion of residents being economically active and insufficient local labour to maintain a dynamic economy • impact on local economy, cost of living and supply of food/fuel/basic essentials of ongoing (Persian Gulf/ Ukraine war) global conflicts, which may increase the rates and severity of fuel poverty • loss of existing jobs (and need for retraining local workers) arising from the development and take-up of new technologies such as artificial intelligence (the council's economic model projects a net loss of jobs for some lower-skill occupational groups over next 20 years) • continued decline in the size of (and number of jobs supported by) Cheshire East's manufacturing sector • farming activity (both jobs and farmed land area) continue to decline over the long term, making it more difficult to offset the food security risks presented the UK by climate change, geopolitical conflicts or pandemics • potential of another pandemic • households continue to be relatively dependent on fossil fuels for heat/ power and on private vehicles, and domestic energy consumption in some areas of the borough exceeds need, meaning limited progress on tackling climate change • impact of climate change (more frequent/severe flooding, heatwaves, droughts, power cuts, damage to infrastructure, excess deaths) on economic stability, businesses' operations, transport networks, residents' health and social cohesion

Opportunities	Threats
Cheshire & Warrington Combined Authority	

Other challenges
• taking advantage of the skills and labour supply of incoming migrants (whether from other parts of the UK or abroad), whilst ensuring sufficient housing, jobs and public services to meet both their needs and those of existing residents • adapting employment land provision/business premises, public transport provision and ICT infrastructure to accommodate increased prevalence of home and hybrid working • promoting good mental health, wellbeing and opportunities for physical activity, and reducing levels of loneliness and social isolation • meeting the housing, employment and service needs of a population that is projected to grow (and age) significantly over the next 20 years • addressing the expected future shortfall in residual waste management capacity • ensuring that new development is concentrated in locations with existing high connectivity, where services and public transport are already available • planning the transport investment, improved bus services, active travel routes and enhanced local facilities that are likely to be necessary to support development in less connected settlements • maintaining adequate travel times for emergency journeys, particularly to and from the borough's 2 main hospitals • addressing shortages of capacity (and making greater use of existing surplus capacity/existing site expansion and upgrading opportunities) relating to GP practices, hospital services, schools and the electricity network • improving water management, water usage efficiency and the resilience of water supply, to address the region's water supply deficit • further improving broadband coverage and speeds

1.6 The above analysis of SWOT issues and other challenges, along with the supporting evidence in this report, will be used to help inform the local plan vision, strategy, policy options, and the additional analytical work that is needed to support the plan preparation work. However, the council intends to address those requirements (also specified in the government's local plan preparation baselining information guidance) through subsequent local plan work and consequently they do not form part of this baseline evidence report.

Key findings and issues: supporting evidence

Overview of Cheshire East

1.7 Cheshire East is a unitary authority with borough status, created as part of local government reorganisation in 2009. It is the third largest unitary authority in the northwest of England and the 16th largest in England, with an estimated population of 425,500, as of mid-2025. It covers an area of 1,166 square kilometres.

1.8 The borough contains many attractive locations for people to live in, work in or visit, with its transport links making it easy to travel to Cheshire East to and from other parts of the country. The M6 and M56 connect the area to other parts of Great Britain. The borough's most strategically important railway station, Crewe, is at the junction of 6 main railway lines. There are direct services from Crewe to Britain's major cities, including Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Birmingham, London, Cardiff, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

1.9 Cheshire East has a high concentration of pharmaceuticals manufacturing activity, thanks to the presence of AstraZeneca (Macclesfield) and Bespak (Holmes Chapel). Vehicle manufacturing, most obviously the Bentley plant and headquarters in Crewe, is another key industry that makes a disproportionately high contribution to jobs in the borough, due in part to the development of Crewe's railway industry and engineering expertise. Mining and quarrying, though a small proportion of the local economy, is also a strategically very important industry, with Cheshire East accounting for a major share of the country's salt extraction and processing.

1.10 Many highly-qualified workers choose to live in Cheshire East. The 2021 Census evidence showed that 37.6% of those aged 16 and above had a qualification at or above Level 4 (degree or similar level), which was substantially greater than the England average (33.9%). However, there are also areas of the borough, particularly in many parts of Crewe, where qualification levels are low and significant deprivation persists.

1.11 Local heritage, culture and the natural environment are rich and diverse, as is the borough's scientific research base. Tatton Park is one of England's most popular visitor destinations, with around 700,000 to 800,000 visitors in a typical year. The Jodrell Bank Observatory, part of the globally-renowned Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Peak District extends into the eastern fringe of the borough, and the canal and river network also forms an important element of the borough's natural environment, heritage and history. The rural economy is a core part of the borough's dynamism, and agricultural activity makes up a relatively large share of land use and local employment.

1.12 Crewe and Macclesfield are the largest conurbations. The other main centres, in terms of population numbers, are the towns of Alsager, Congleton, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow. However, more than one-sixth of the population (18.0%) live in rural areas.

1.13 Cheshire East has a relatively old population, with 22.9% of residents aged 65 and above as of mid-2025, against only 19.1% for England. It is less ethnically diverse (with, for example, a smaller non-white share of the population) than the national average, but its diversity has increased over time.

Population

1.14 The Office for National Statistics' (ONS) latest population estimates at and above local authority level, which relate to mid-2025, put Cheshire East's total population at 425,500. Population growth has been faster than the England average over the 2015 to 2025 period (averaging 1.2% per annum, against 0.7% per annum in England). Net inward internal migration (migration within the UK) was the biggest contributor (adding 39,500) to Cheshire East's population growth over that 10-year period. Net inward international migration also made a sizeable contribution (nearly 10,000) to Cheshire East's population growth. The net impact of births and deaths (minus 5,300, due to deaths exceeding births) and other population change (plus 3,000) was much smaller.

1.15 The borough has a somewhat older age structure than England does. As of mid-2025, 22.9% of the population were aged 65 and above (compared to only 19.1% in England), with 59.9% aged 16 to 64 (against 63.0% for England) and 17.2% aged 0 to 15 (17.9% in England). Its age structure also appears to reflect the relative shortage of higher education places within the borough, and a consequent outflow of young people relocating to areas of the country that are closer to university campuses (some of whom may choose to continue living outside Cheshire East after graduating).

1.16 The borough's population has also aged over time, with the proportion of Cheshire East residents aged 65 and above increasing from 21.6% in 2015 to 22.9% by 2025, whilst the proportion aged 16 to 64 has fallen from 60.9% to 59.9% over that time, and the 0 to 15 age group's percentage share has fluctuated very little.

1.17 Crewe (population 81,300) and Macclesfield (55,200) were the largest settlements in the borough, as of mid-2024.[1] The other main centres, in descending order of population size, were the towns of Congleton (33,200), Wilmslow (26,400), Sandbach (23,400), Nantwich (17,600), Alsager (14,700), Middlewich (14,600), Knutsford (13,700) and Poynton (13,500). Bollington and Handforth (with populations of 7,000 to 8,000), the only other Cheshire East settlements that identify themselves as towns, were next largest, although Holmes Chapel and Shavington (with populations of 6,500 to 7,000) were almost as big.

1.18 Based on the latest official rural-urban classification, the ONS 2021 classification, more than one-sixth of the population (18.0% as of 2024) live in rural areas.

1.19 As of 2024, an estimated 1,300 (0.3%) of Cheshire East residents were living in the Peak District planning authority area: that is, outside of the local plan area.

[1] The settlement-specific and rural population figures cited in this report relate to 2024, as figures for 2025 were not available below local authority level at the time of writing.

1.20 At the time of the 2021 Census, only 5.6% of the borough's population classified themselves as non-white, compared to an England average of 19.0%. However, Cheshire East's ethnic diversity has increased over time, and the non-white proportion is significantly above the borough average in Handforth, Wilmslow, Alderley Edge and Crewe.

1.21 Cheshire East saw a substantial inflow of migrants from Eastern Europe, from the early 2000s onwards. Many of those Eastern Europeans are still living in the borough and are very heavily concentrated in Crewe.

1.22 The 2021 Census indicated a total Gypsy/Irish Traveller population of 345. These Traveller communities are relatively concentrated in Crewe.

1.23 Over the 2015 to 2025 period, the borough's total population increased by 46,900, with net inward internal migration (39,500) being the biggest contributor to population growth, followed by net inward international migration (9,700). Natural change (deaths exceeding births by 5,300) partly offset the contributions to growth arising from these migration flows and a 3,000 increase that was attributable to 'other' population change.

1.24 Recent internal migration flows highlight the demographic, labour market and housing market ties that Cheshire East has to neighbouring local authorities. In the year ending June 2025, the largest inflows (people moving to Cheshire East) were from the neighbouring authorities of Stockport (2,050 people), Manchester (1,850), Cheshire West and Chester (1,450) and Trafford (950). Other authorities featuring among the 20 largest inflows included the other councils bordering Cheshire East, and nearby Stoke-on-Trent. The largest outflows (people leaving Cheshire East) present a similar picture, with the biggest 3 flows again involving Cheshire West and Chester (1,450), Manchester (1,000) and Stockport (950), with Stoke-on-Trent, along with all of Cheshire East's other immediate neighbours, featuring in the 'top 20' outflows.

1.25 The borough's population is projected to increase from 406,600 in 2022 to 500,100 (up 93,500) by 2047, according to ONS' latest (2022-based) subnational population projections for Cheshire East. This corresponds to an annual average growth rate of 0.8% per year. The projections point to relatively strong growth in the population aged 65 and above (up by 46.5%, or an average of 1.5% a year, between 2022 and 2047), modest growth in the size of the 15 to 64 population, and relatively little change in the numbers aged 0 to 14. However, these projections assume past trends will continue and do not factor in the future impact of local or national policy-making (such as the level of housing provision in local plans).

Economy

1.26 Cheshire East's total economic output (Gross Value Added, or GVA) was estimated to be £16.7 billion as of 2023, according to official (ONS) statistics. Between 1998 and 2013, the borough's GVA growth averaged 2.4% a year in real (inflation-adjusted) terms, which exceeded the average rates for the North West (1.8% a year) and England (2.1% a year) over the same period. However, the average was markedly slower during 2013 to 2023 (1.0% a year), both compared to 1998 to 2013

performance and to the 2013 to 2023 rates for the North West (2.1%) and England (1.6%).

1.27 Manufacturing makes up a significantly larger share of GVA in Cheshire East than at national level (28.7% versus 8.8%). However, the reverse is true for Construction, Information and communication, Finance and insurance, Real estate activities, Public administration and defence, Education, and Health and social work.

1.28 The Manufacture of petroleum, chemicals and other minerals industry had a 14.1% GVA share in Cheshire East in 2023, compared to only a 2.0% share of England's GVA. Much of this industry's activity can be accounted for by pharmaceuticals manufacturing sites, most notably as AstraZeneca's Macclesfield premises and the Bespak plant at Holmes Chapel. The other industry with a notably high local (Cheshire East) concentration of GVA is Manufacture of machinery and transport equipment: it has a 9.5% share, compared to only 2.2% in England. This can be primarily explained by the presence of the Bentley Motors plant at Crewe.

1.29 Estimates of future change in GVA can be generated by the Cheshire East Local Economy Forecasting Model (LEFM), which is supplied by Cambridge Econometrics, but maintained and operated in-house by the council. According to projections from the latest LEFM (updated in 2026), the borough's GVA total is expected to grow by an average of 1.4% a year in real (inflation-adjusted) terms during the period from 2024 to 2047. This rate compares favourably to those for the North West (an average of 1.1% a year) and the UK (also 1.1% a year). The strongest GVA growth in Cheshire East over the 2024 to 2047 period is expected in Social work and residential care (an average of 3.0% a year), Health (2.5%), Telecoms and computing services (also 2.5%), Computing and electronic products (1.9%), Motor vehicle manufacturing (also 1.9%) and Pharmaceuticals (also 1.9%). The projections imply that Pharmaceuticals will maintain its position as the largest contributor to Cheshire East's GVA, with an 18.0% share as of 2047, followed by Motor vehicle manufacturing (7.5% share in 2047).

1.30 Cheshire East's productivity (GVA per hour worked) is 20.7% above the North West figure and 11.9% higher than the England average. This is consistent with the borough's high concentration of jobs and GVA in industries like vehicle and pharmaceuticals manufacturing, and in some high-skilled service sector activities, where productivity is relatively high. However, productivity growth over the 2004 to 2023 period was very low compared to the North West and England, and consequently the gap between their productivity and Cheshire East's has narrowed over time.

1.31 Gross disposable household income per head averaged £28,000 as of 2023, which was 10.3% above the England average (£25,400). However, income levels vary significantly across the borough, even after differences in household size and composition are considered (through 'equivalised' estimates). In 2022/23, average net equivalised household income after housing costs ranged from around £25,900 in parts of Crewe, to over £40,000 in the Prestbury area and part of Wilmslow. Household income also tends to be notably higher in rural areas of the borough.

1.32 Based on the standard **workplace-based** measure of earnings, for median full-time employees **working** in the borough, earnings (estimated at £721 as of 2025) are on a par with the England average (£720). **Residence-based** earnings (the median earnings of full-time employees **living** in the borough) are somewhat higher (£755 in Cheshire East as of 2025) than workplace-based earnings. In other words, people who work in Cheshire East earn more, on average, than the people who live here (though obviously the 2 groups overlap). This accords with the picture of Cheshire East as an attractive location for people on high earnings to live (but not necessarily work) in.

1.33 The number of people employed in Cheshire East was estimated to be 214,000 as of 2024. During 2009 to 2024, employment growth in the borough (averaging 1.2% per year) outpaced that of England (1.1% a year) and the North West (1.0%).

1.34 In terms of broad industrial categories, many industries' percentage shares of the local (Cheshire East) employment total are similar to those for England. However, Manufacturing makes up a relatively high share in Cheshire East (11.2%, versus only 7.0% in England) and the same is true for Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (15.0% locally, versus 9.7% nationally).

1.35 Location quotients (LQs) measure the ratio of an industry's employment share locally to its share nationally. Of the 88 'classes' (2-digit codes) into which the Standard Industrial Classification 2007 (SIC2007) is divided, there are 2 for which the Cheshire East LQ is exceptionally high. One of these is Pharmaceuticals manufacturing (2.3% share, or 5,000 jobs, in Cheshire East and an LQ of 19.0). The other is the Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers, with 2.3% share (5,000 jobs) in Cheshire East, equating to an LQ of 5.1. Other industries with high LQs reflect the rural/ agricultural character of much of Cheshire East (one of these is Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities, and the other is Veterinary activities), as well as its manufacturing strengths and the strategic importance of mining, particularly of salt.

1.36 Survey data indicates that, of those Cheshire East residents who were in employment as of 2025, 16.9% were in the Managers, directors and senior officials occupational group, whilst a further 31.3% were in the Professional occupations group. These proportions exceeded the England averages (11.5% and 25.5%) by a statistically significant margin, so cannot be attributed to survey sampling errors.

1.37 According to the projections from the council's recently-updated economic model, the LEFM, the borough's employment total is expected to grow by an average of 0.7% a year over the 2024 to 2047 period, to reach 263,900 by 2047. This growth rate is somewhat lower than the average that Cheshire East achieved for the 2009 to 2024 period (1.2% a year, as noted earlier) or indeed for the latter 5 years of that period, 2019 to 2024 (0.8% a year). However, it compares favourably to the LEFM's projections for the North West (average growth of 0.5% a year) and the UK (also 0.5% a year). At broad industry level, the model's projections for Cheshire East point to significant declines in the number of jobs in Manufacturing, and in Transport and storage, but substantial growth for Accommodation and food services, Information and communication, the Financial, professional and business support services sector and

(predominantly) public sector services such as education and health. As for the occupational mix of employment, the model projects relatively strong growth (and increasing employment shares) for professional and managerial occupational groups and some personal service occupations, but a net loss of jobs for some lower-skill occupational groups. The LEFM also projects that labour demand (employment) will continue to exceed the local labour supply by a substantial margin, but with the gap narrowing over the long term: from 16,700 in 2024 to 7,000 by 2047.

1.38 Jobs density statistics are a useful indicator of the relative abundance of jobs within a given geographical area. The jobs density is the number of jobs in a geographical area divided by that area's resident population aged 16 to 64. The latest jobs density evidence points to Cheshire East having a modest abundance (and hence a net inflow of commuters) as of 2024. At settlement level, the towns of Handforth, Wilmslow and Knutsford have particularly high jobs densities, as do the smaller settlements of Alderley Edge and Prestbury. However, several towns have relatively low densities, particularly Alsager, Congleton, Poynton and Sandbach.

1.39 Due to it coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Census results do not offer a particularly informative guide to commuting patterns for a typical year, nor to long-term commuting trends. However, the council's analysis of mobile phone data (collected in 2023) does provide a useful post-COVID-19 overview of daily travel flows into, out of and through the borough, whether for commuting, shopping, journeys to school or other purposes. This data indicates that the largest volumes of commuting journeys across the Cheshire East boundary are those starting or ending in Greater Manchester, Cheshire West and Chester, north Staffordshire, and (to a lesser extent) Warrington. At settlement level, the major flows are those into and out of Crewe, Macclesfield and the Wilmslow/Handforth conurbation.

1.40 The COVID-19 pandemic, along with recent advances in information technology (accelerated by the challenges of the pandemic), has led to increased propensities for homeworking and 'hybrid' working (a mixture of home and office working). Whilst those shifts were partly a temporary response to the pandemic, they represent to some extent a permanent change in working patterns. There is, at present, limited hard evidence on these changes within Cheshire East, but research and analysis at national level provides a useful overview. This national evidence suggests that office occupancy rates remain well below their pre-pandemic rates. It also indicates that home and hybrid working is rather more prevalent for industries that require less face-to-face contact, as well as being more common for workers who are older, in professional and managerial occupations or more highly qualified.

1.41 The 2021 Census evidence shows that 37.6% of those aged 16 and above had a qualification at or above Level 4 (degree or similar level), which was substantially greater than the England average (33.9%). This is despite older people (who are less likely to hold higher qualifications) making up a larger share of the population locally than they do in England. More recent (survey-based) evidence, available up to 2025, has less precision, but is broadly consistent with the Census evidence. However, qualification levels vary considerably across the borough: at the time of the 2021

Census, the percentage of the 16 and above population with a Level 4 or higher qualification ranged from more than half in Prestbury, Bunbury, Wilmslow and Alderley Edge to less than a third in Crewe, Middlewich, Wrenbury, Haslington and Shavington.

1.42 The borough's unemployment rate has remained consistently below the national average in the last 20 years. As of 2025, an estimated 3.0% of Cheshire East's economically active residents were unemployed, well below the rates for the North West (4.3%) and England (4.5%). 2021 Census evidence indicated that unemployment rates were highest (above 4%) in Wrenbury, Crewe, Handforth and Macclesfield.

1.43 2.4% of Cheshire East's 16 to 64 year-old residents were claiming out-of-work benefits as of March 2026, which was far less than the rates in the North West and England (4.2% and 4.1% respectively). Worklessness is a greater issue for younger age groups, with the claimant rate for Cheshire East's 18 to 24 year-olds being 5.2%.

1.44 The largest private sector employers in the borough are pharmaceuticals giant AstraZeneca (with 5,200 employees at its Macclesfield site), Barclays Bank (6,500 staff work at its Radbroke Hall site near Knutsford) and car manufacturer Bentley (which employs over 4,000 people at its head office and plant in Crewe). The biggest public sector employers are the 2 main hospitals (Leighton in Crewe and Macclesfield District General) and the council itself, which collectively host over 10,000 local jobs.

1.45 The total number of enterprises with sites in Cheshire East was around 19,500 as of 2025. Since 2015, the borough's enterprise count has increased more slowly (by 5.3%) than in England (12.3%). Even so, business density in Cheshire East (with 560 enterprises per 10,000 population aged 16 and above, as of 2025) has stayed well above the England average (497 in 2025).

1.46 Most enterprises are very small in size (number of employees). In Cheshire East (as of 2025), 78.7% of them employed fewer than 5 people, while a further 10.7% employed 5 to 9 staff. Only 1.9% had 50 or more employees.

1.47 27.0% (over 5,000) of the borough's enterprises are in rural areas. Not surprisingly, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing accounts for a much greater proportion of the business population in rural areas (18.8%) than in urban areas (2.1%).

1.48 On key measures of business dynamism and success, Cheshire East is broadly on a par with or better than the national average. Business birth rates are close to the national average: in 2024, there were 57 births per 10,000 residents aged 16 and above, compared to a rate of 59 for England. Short- (one-year) and longer-term (up to five-year) business survival rates also exceed the England average. The council's last (2017) major survey of local businesses found that the main benefits of locating in the borough were the overall attractiveness of the area (cited by 66%), access to road links (60%) and access to markets/neighbouring cities (55%) and these factors help to explain why Cheshire East has a relatively resilient business base.

1.49 Town centre retail activity compares favourably to the national average. With an overall vacancy rate of 10.0%, Cheshire East falls below the UK Shop Vacancy Rate of 14.4%. Congleton and Crewe do exceed the UK rate, but the Congleton Market

Quarter redevelopment and the ongoing redevelopment of Crewe town centre should help to address that.

1.50 In 2024, the level of transactions (in terms of floorspace area) in the industrial property sector was similar to the average for recent years, but activity in the office property sector was historically low.

1.51 A 2024 study undertaken by the council estimated that heritage and culture currently accounts for around £1.0 billion (about 6%) of Cheshire East's economic output (GVA) and around 11,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs (about 7% of the borough's total employment (including knock-on as well as direct effects.)

1.52 According to results from the 'STEAM' model, which produces estimates of the economic impact of tourism, the visitor economy accounted for about £1.1 billion of the borough's economic output and 10,500 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs as of 2024, and attracted 14.3m visitors. VisitEngland data (also for 2024) show the largest individual Cheshire East attractions are Tatton Park (724,000 visitors), Lyme Park and Gardens (342,000), Quarry Bank Mill and Garden (255,000) and Jodrell Bank (125,000). Tatton Park is a venue of national significance, as is also (thanks to its past and ongoing scientific research activity) Jodrell Bank.

1.53 Central government (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) survey data indicate that, as of 2025, around 3,700 people were employed as farm labour (including farmers and farm managers) in Cheshire East. This was 18.0% lower than in 2007. Farm-based employment in England also fell over the 2007 to 2025 period, but by a smaller proportion (9.3%). Similarly, the total farmed area in the borough declined during 2007 to 2025 (falling 12.3%, to 82,000 ha) and the number of farm holdings also dropped (by 10.3%, to 1,433). In percentage terms, these falls in land area and holdings were also sharper than those in England (3.7% and 5.3% respectively).

Health, wellbeing and society

1.54 The latest (2025) English Indices of Deprivation (IoD) provides recent evidence of relative deprivation across England's 34,000 or so Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) (neighbourhoods with similar-sized populations). The Indices show that Cheshire East is less deprived than most parts of England, but that many of the borough's 244 LSOAs, particularly in Crewe, have levels of deprivation that are relatively severe compared to the national average.

1.55 Looking at the overall deprivation (as measured by the IoD's Index of Multiple Deprivation, or IMD), 6 (2.5%) of Cheshire East's 244 LSOAs (5 in Crewe and one in Macclesfield) rank in the top (England's most deprived) 10% of the 2025 IMD. 21 (8.6%) of the borough's LSOAs rank in the top 20% of the 2025 IMD, of which there are 14 in Crewe, 2 in Macclesfield and one each in in Alsager, Congleton, Knutsford, Middlewich and Wilmslow.

1.56 The overall (IMD) deprivation measure in turn consists of several deprivation domains (Income, Employment, Education, skills and training, Health deprivation and disability, Crime, Barriers to housing and services, and Living environment). Some of these

domains are in turn broken down into sub-domains. At individual domain level, a major concern is the severity of Education, skills and training deprivation in Crewe. Of the town's 48 LSOAs, nearly half (22) are in the top 20% of this domain and 3 of those are in the top 1% of this domain.

1.57 Rural areas of the borough do not generally feature amongst Cheshire East's most deprived areas and compare favourably to most parts of England for IMD deprivation and most of the individual domains. One of the exceptions to this is the Geographical barriers sub-domain (part of the Barriers to housing and services domain), which measures the proximity of jobs and services such as schools, shops and leisure facilities. The other main exception is the Indoors sub-domain (part of the Living environment domain), as it is partially based on data relating to the condition of local housing (an issue affecting both rural and urban parts of the borough).

1.58 The council's 'Tartan Rug' chart, derived from a wide array of data sources, identifies the correlations between the areas of relative deprivation and the areas of Cheshire East that are more likely to have significant health inequalities, showing the link between living in an area of deprivation, and an individual's own health and wellbeing.

1.59 Evidence from the Census suggests that, in most parts of Cheshire East, the general health of residents compares favourably (on average) to England. As of 2021, 49.8% of the borough's population reported their general health to be 'very good', against only 48.5% nationally. 4.7% described their general health as either 'bad' or 'very bad', whereas for England this proportion was a little higher, at 5.2%. However, in Wrenbury, Handforth and Crewe, the proportion with 'bad' or 'very bad' health exceeded the England average.

1.60 Male life expectancy at birth in Cheshire East (80.4 years) remains significantly higher than the England average (79.7 years), continuing a longstanding trend. Historically, female life expectancy at birth has been significantly higher compared to England. However, the latest data shows that (for the first time in nearly 20 years) female life expectancy in Cheshire East (83.8 years) is now statistically similar to England (83.5 years). There is also significant inequality within the borough, with life expectancy in parts of Crewe and Macclesfield being as low as 73 for males and less than 80 for females.

1.61 Healthy life expectancy (HLE) estimates the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health. In Cheshire East, HLE for both males (64.5 years) and females (66.0 years) exceeds the England averages (60.9 years and 61.3 years respectively). However, both locally and nationally, male and female HLE has recently followed a downward trend and there are large inequalities within the borough: in some parts of Crewe, Macclesfield and Congleton, the HLE for both sexes is significantly below the England average.

1.62 Almost one in three Year 6 children in Cheshire East (32.9%) are either overweight or obese. This remains significantly lower than the England average (36.2%). However, this proportion is far greater (between 42% and 49%) in several parts of Crewe.

1.63 Whilst many local residents experience good mental health and wellbeing, there is evidence of growing need and demand across the borough. This is an ongoing challenge, not just for children and young people in Cheshire East, but for its adults, with significantly higher rates of newly diagnosed depression, admissions for self-harm, and deaths by suicide, than the England average. Access to green spaces, attractive public areas, and well-designed housing is associated with improved mental wellbeing, lower stress, and better social connections. Loneliness and social isolation, which affects a significant proportion of the population regardless of age, has also been highlighted as a major issue and a key factor contributing to both physical and mental wellbeing.

1.64 At the time of the 2021 Census, residents who were disabled (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) accounted for very similar proportions of the population in Cheshire East (17.0%) and England (17.3%). The proportion of residents with disabilities that limit their day-to-day activities 'a lot' was also close to the England average (7.3%) for Cheshire East (6.9%), but reached 9.0% in Audlem and Wrenbury.

1.65 According to the 2021 Census results, 9.1% of Cheshire East residents aged 5 and above provide unpaid care to relatives or other members of their community (similar to the England average of 8.8%). For more than a quarter of the borough's unpaid carers, this support involves 50 hours or more a week.

1.66 The borough contains 2 major hospitals: Leighton (on the edge of Crewe) and Macclesfield District General Hospital. There are smaller hospital sites in Congleton and Knutsford. All 12 of Cheshire East's towns have at least one GP surgery, as do a few of the borough's larger villages. The same is true of pharmacies and dental practices. Apart from Bollington, each town also has at least one optician.

1.67 Cheshire East hosts a wide array of cultural activities and amenities. 6 of the borough's 12 towns have a theatre or cinema. There are several museums and heritage centres and 16 fixed (non-mobile) libraries covering every town and some larger villages.

1.68 In Cheshire East, adult and child physical activity rates (in terms of the average number of minutes per day or per week engaged in physical activity) are broadly similar to the national (England) average. However, local survey results show activity rates within the borough vary widely by geographical location (they are relatively low in Crewe), and also vary according to local people's social, demographic and health characteristics.

1.69 There are nearly 20 leisure services sites in the borough that are available to the general public, hosting a range of activities and facilities including swimming pools, fitness suites and sports halls. These centres serve nearly all Cheshire East's largest towns, as well as some smaller towns and villages. However, Middlewich has no leisure centre available for public use.

1.70 There are no universities within the borough. However, the Apollo Buckingham Health Science campus (Crewe) provides courses up to postgraduate level. Reaseheath College, on the edge of Nantwich, offers higher education and further education

courses in specialised (land-based) subjects, attracting students from a wide geographical area. The Crewe campus of Cheshire College South & West, along with Crewe Engineering & Design UTC (University Technical College), and Macclesfield College, are the other local further education providers.

1.71 Educational performance at Key Stages 2 and 4 remains slightly above the national average. However, the 2025 English IoD indicate that education-related deprivation (based on pupil absences, Key Stage results and higher education entry rates) is particularly severe in parts of Crewe, in comparison to both the borough generally and to England.

1.72 In Cheshire East, overall crime rates, and the rates for most types of crime, are below the national average, although the latest (2025/26) rate for public order offences (7.3 crimes per 1,000 population) slightly exceeded the England average (6.8). The 2025 English IoD's crime domain data show that crime rates are particularly high (compared to the England average) in many Cheshire East neighbourhoods, particularly some of the borough's town centres and some of the outer suburbs where multiple types of deprivation are present.

1.73 According to the combined results from 2 surveys of local residents undertaken by the council in 2023 (its Residents Survey and its Shaping Our Future Survey), 82% of residents agreed that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This finding is supported by evidence, from the council's Crewe Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and upcoming Macclesfield JSNA, of strong local community spirit.

1.74 The combined results from the Residents Survey and Shaping Our Future Survey also indicated that, as of 2023, most residents (76%) were satisfied with the local area as a place to live, though this proportion was well below the borough average in Middlewich (47%) and Crewe (57%). 84% felt safe in their local area during the day and 60% felt safe there after dark, but again the results for Crewe (62% safe during the day and 44% after dark) were less favourable.

Housing

1.75 The number of households in Cheshire East grew from 147,100 in 2001 to 174,900 by 2021. This equates to an average growth rate of 0.9% a year (compared to 0.7% for England).

1.76 Household composition in the borough (the mix of single older person households, single younger person households, families with dependent children, families without dependents and so on) is broadly similar to that in England, according to the latest (2021 Census) data, but with modest differences that reflect Cheshire East's older age structure.

1.77 The number of Cheshire East households is projected to grow by 58,700, from an estimated 177,300 (2022) to 236,100 (2047). This equates to an average increase of 1.2% a year, which significantly exceeds the growth rate projected for England (0.8% a year). Average household size is projected to fall between 2022 and 2047, both in Cheshire East (from 2.27 to 2.10) and in England (from 2.38 to 2.19).

1.78 Cheshire East's dwelling stock totalled 192,800 as of 2025, up from 169,700 in 2015 and 165,400 in 2010. The rate of growth since the mid-2010s has been significantly faster than before and has substantially exceeded the England average. During 2015 to 2025, it averaged 1.3% a year, compared to 0.9% in England.

1.79 The 2021 Census results indicated that households in Cheshire East were significantly more likely to be owner occupiers (71.9% were) than in England (61.3%). Conversely, private renting is somewhat less prevalent in the borough (accounting for 15.5% of households) than in England (20.5%) and the same is true of social renting (11.6% of Cheshire East households, against 17.1% in England). At settlement level, the proportion of households who owned their home ranged from 61.3% (Crewe) to 86.4% (Prestbury). Social renting is most prevalent in Wrenbury (with 21.7% of its households coming under this form of tenure), followed by Handforth (21.5%), Macclesfield (15.7%) and Crewe (15.2%). Households in rural parts of the borough were much more likely to own their homes (81.6% did so) than those in its urban areas (where 65.9% did so).

1.80 At the time of the 2021 Census, 29.0% of Cheshire East households had 4 or more bedrooms, 38.6% had 3, 25.2% had 2, and 7.2% had only one bedroom. The borough's households tend to have more bedrooms available, on average, than those in England (for which the respective proportions are 21.1% with 4 or more bedrooms, 40.0% with 3, 27.3% with 2 and 11.6% with one).

1.81 In 2021, 1.5% (2,700) of Cheshire East's households were living in accommodation with insufficient bedrooms for their needs. This compares favourably to the proportion for England (4.4%). Based on this measure, overcrowding is rather more common in the borough's urban areas (affecting 2.0% of households there) than in its rural areas (where the proportion is only 0.7%). At settlement level, 'bedroom' overcrowding is most prevalent in Crewe (affecting 3.4% of its households) and Handforth (2.6%).

1.82 As of 2021, of Cheshire East had 4,400 communal establishment residents: 1,900 of them living in a care home with nursing provided, and 1,000 in a care home without nursing. Most of the others (900) were in an educational establishment.

1.83 There were 1,884 homeless households in the borough as of the financial year 2024/25, of which 60.4% (1,138) were owed a Prevention duty (positive action taken by the council or its partners to assist households who consider themselves to be at risk of homelessness) and the remainder (746) a Relief duty (action to secure accommodation for households that have already become homeless).

1.84 The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy includes a requirement to deliver a minimum of 36,000 new homes over the plan period of 2010 to 2030, which is equivalent to an average of 1,800 dwellings per annum. By 31 March 2026, 29,507 (net) dwellings had been completed, averaging 1,844 dwellings per annum for the 2010 to 2026 period.

1.85 The Local Plan Strategy identifies a requirement for 7,100 new affordable dwellings over the plan period 2010 to 2030, equivalent to 355 dwellings per annum. 7,704

affordable dwellings were completed in the borough between 2010 and 2026, equivalent to an average of 482 dwellings per annum.

1.86 The Cheshire East Residential Mix Assessment (2019) identified an estimated need for specialist older persons housing of 12,435 dwellings over the 2010-30 plan period. All this need is included in the overall housing requirement of 36,000 new homes. Between 2010 and 31 March 2026, there have been 856 net older person's and specialist completions, with a further 215 (net) bedspaces with planning permission. However, not all the identified needs for older people will be delivered by specialist housing alone.

1.87 The Residential Mix Assessment identified around 16,100 households in Cheshire East for whom health problems affected their housing needs. Of those 16,100, most households were already living in a suitable home. However, it was estimated that there were around 1,280 households needing to move to a more suitable home due to a disability or another long-term health problem, whilst a further 1,350 households needed adaptations to their current home.

1.88 Average house prices in Cheshire East have generally remained within a few percentage points of the England average over the last 3 decades, ranging over that time from 10% below the national average to 15% above it. As of February 2026, the average price in Cheshire East was £293,100, or 0.8% above the figure for England (£290,900). However, since 1995, the Cheshire East average has stayed significantly (between 32% and 62%) above the North West average, and the gap is currently 35%.

1.89 House price inflation in Cheshire East has broadly matched the regional and national rates over the last 30 years or so. For the 12 months ending in February 2026, house prices increased by the same proportion (1.1%) in both Cheshire East and England.

1.90 House prices are particularly high in Knutsford, Poynton and Wilmslow, as well as several larger villages (also mainly in the north), and smaller settlements and rural parts of Cheshire East. In the year ending December 2022, just over half of Cheshire East's small areas (LSOAs) had a median house price of £270,000 or less, but there were 28 LSOAs for which the median was £500,000 or more. Those 28 areas included large parts of Wilmslow and Knutsford, as well as parts of Alderley Edge, Bunbury, Goostrey, Macclesfield, Mobberley, Poynton and Prestbury.

1.91 The affordability of housing is generally assessed by looking at the ratio of house price to earnings, or house price to household income. A common measure (and the one adopted by central government for use in its housing need standard formula) is the ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings. Over the last 5 years of data (2021 to 2025), this ratio has averaged 8.37 in Cheshire East, which is close to the England five-year average (8.31) but well above the North West figure (6.34). Looking at affordability for people on lower earnings, the 5-year average for the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile workplace-based earnings is currently 7.57 in Cheshire East. Again, this is close to the England figure (7.47), but much greater than that for the North West (5.87).

1.92 Under central government's standard method for assessing local housing need, the current housing need figure for Cheshire East is 2,530 homes per year. This includes a 64% uplift on the baseline need figure (1,543), to adjust for the borough's relatively high housing affordability ratio.

1.93 Councils are required to identify a supply of deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of 5 years' worth of housing. In Cheshire East, as of 31 March 2025, there was a 3.3 years' supply of deliverable housing sites. As of 31 March 2026, supply from sites with planning permission and allocations amounted to 13,313 dwellings.

Environment

1.94 As of 2022, ecological river quality was assessed as being 3% good, 54% moderate, 33% poor and 10% bad. The latest (2019) result for chemical river quality was 100% fail. However, there have been some improvements to local air quality, with the revocation of all 12 of the borough's Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in 2025.

1.95 Except for short-term increases in 2010, 2012 and 2021, Cheshire East's total greenhouse gas emissions from all sectors fell in every year from 2006 to 2024. The short-term deviations from trend can be explained by the fact they coincided with recoveries from severe economic downturns and with unusual seasonal temperatures, such as exceptionally cold winters that prompted more consumption of energy for heating. For Cheshire East, total emissions in 2024 were 38.4% below their 2005 level. For England, the trend was similar: generally steadily downward, with emissions in 2024 being 46.4% below their 2005 level.

1.96 The sectors contributing the most to greenhouse gas emissions in Cheshire East are transport (38.5% of all emissions as of 2024) and agriculture (20.9%). These percentage shares are high compared to the same sector's emission shares in England (transport 34.2% and agriculture 10.9%). Conversely, the proportions of Cheshire East emissions coming from the domestic sector (19.7%, versus 23.5% in England), industry (9.6%, versus 13.7% for England), commerce (6.5%), waste (4.1%) and the public sector (1.8%) are low compared to the England average.

1.97 The borough's domestic (household) greenhouse gas emissions per capita fell from 3.0 tonnes in 2005, to 1.3 by 2024, but still exceed the England average (1.1 tonnes in 2024).

1.98 Even by 2024, transport emissions were only 14.0% lower than in 2005: a relatively small long-term contraction when compared to the percentage changes reported for most of the other major emissions sectors. This broadly mirrors the picture for transport emissions in England (down 19.7%). Agriculture is the other major source of emissions for which the long-term decline is relatively modest (falling by 10.1% in Cheshire East and by 16.1% in England).

1.99 At the time of the 2021 Census, gas was still by far the most common form of central heating, both in Cheshire East and England. 78.6% of the borough's households relied solely on mains gas (76.9%) or on tank/bottled gas (1.7%). For England, a similar proportion (75.0%) of households used gas only. Of those using 2 or more types of central heating, only a very small proportion of these (0.5% for both Cheshire East and

England) said that those types included renewable energy. Only 0.4% of Cheshire East households (and 0.4% in England) relied solely on renewable energy for central heating.

1.100 Domestic energy use in Cheshire East is above the national average. As of 2024, mean domestic electricity consumption per meter was 3,600 kWh, or 6.0% above the England average. However, at small area (Middle Layer Super Output Area, or MSOA) level, this varies from 2,500 kWh in one of Cheshire East's 52 MSOAs to 6,900 kWh in another. The borough's mean domestic gas consumption per meter was 12,100 kWh, or 6.2% higher than for England, but at MSOA level this varies from around 8,000 kWh (partly explained by the use of oil heating in some rural areas) to 24,300 kWh.

1.101 Fuel poverty rates (based on the LILEE measure) also vary widely: 8.5% of Cheshire East's households were in fuel poverty in 2024 (compared to 9.9% for England), but the rate reaches 22% to 26% in 5 LSOAs that cover some of the inner parts of Crewe.

1.102 Increased rainfall and flooding present a major challenge for the borough. Cheshire East saw a 49% increase in rainfall between April 2023 and March 2024. In early 2025, sustained heavy rainfall led to the collapse of the Bridgewater Canal embankment in Little Bollington, resulting in the closure of several pedestrian and cycling routes.

1.103 The geology underlying the borough is diverse and contains a range of mineral resources including clay, peat, coal, hydrocarbons (oil and gas), salt, sandstone and sand. Salt is one of the borough's most important mineral resources. Cheshire accounts for around 85% of UK salt production, with brine extraction taking place beneath Cheshire East and processing centred at Middlewich. Salt is identified as a critical mineral and is essential to the chemical, pharmaceutical and food industries. Former salt caverns also provide nationally important gas storage facilities and may have future potential for hydrogen and carbon storage technologies. The borough's silica sand resource is also nationally significant, providing almost 44% of England's production in 2018.

1.104 The borough's latest Local Aggregates Assessment indicates a shortfall in the demand and supply of aggregate sand of 5.29 million tonnes between 2025 and 2044. For crushed rock aggregate, the shortfall in demand and supply for the wider Cheshire sub-region is 44.68 million tonnes between 2025 and 2044.

1.105 The council's 2023 Waste Needs Assessment (WNA) found that over 1.2 million tonnes of waste arose in the Cheshire East plan area in 2021, comprising the following principal waste streams: local authority collected waste (17% of the total), commercial, demolition and excavation waste (58%), commercial and industrial waste (21%), and hazardous waste (4%). The 2023 WNA concluded that there is sufficient existing capacity within Cheshire East to manage recycling and composting, inert recovery and hazardous waste up to 2041. The main issue identified was a future shortfall in residual waste management capacity, particularly for local authority collected waste and commercial and industrial waste that cannot be recycled. However, the assessment indicates that remaining capacity elsewhere in the North West may be sufficient to accommodate future needs.

Transport and infrastructure

1.106 The M6 connects the borough to Staffordshire, Birmingham, the North West and Scotland. The M56 provides access to Greater Manchester, Merseyside and north Wales. Most of Cheshire East's towns are within a few miles of one of these motorways. However, the rural, sparsely populated character and topography of the eastern fringe and the southwest area of the borough inevitably impact on the length of journeys through and beyond those areas. Current issues with the Strategic Road Network relate to journey time delay and reliability, noise and air quality at M6 J17 (Junction 17) and M6 J19 to J21, with peak period congestion issues at M6 J16 and M56 J7 to M60.

1.107 The local road network experiences peak time congestion, particularly in and around the main towns and on key routes. There is also a need to maintain adequate travel times for essential journeys, particularly to and from the borough's 2 main hospitals. Future investments include delivery of the Middlewich Eastern Bypass and several smaller active travel and highway corridor improvements.

1.108 The borough's most strategically important railway station, Crewe, is at the junction of 6 main railway lines. Crewe provides access to the West Coast Main Line (London to Scotland) and TransPennine services. There are direct services from Crewe to Britain's major cities, including Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Birmingham, London, Cardiff, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Crewe is also Cheshire East's busiest railway station. Macclesfield and Wilmslow also serve large volumes of travellers, and both lie on a direct line to London.

1.109 However, the market town of Middlewich lacks a railway station. Rail connectivity between some of the borough's major settlements also has its limitations. Knutsford (on the Chester to Manchester line) has no direct connection to any other Cheshire East towns. Disley (on the Buxton to Manchester line) has no direct connection to any other station in Cheshire East. The accessibility of local railway stations can be an issue, even for residents in some of the settlements with a station.

1.110 The Crewe Hub investment programme aims to improve capacity, infrastructure, facilities and access at Crewe railway station. There are also potential future improvements through Northern Powerhouse Rail connections and a new Midlands to North West rail link. However, there is often limited or no capacity to increase service frequencies at many of the borough's stations.

1.111 Regular bus routes serve all the borough's towns and enable direct travel between individual towns and most of the other main settlements within a few miles' radius. In total, the local bus network consists of 37 combined bus services, with around 2.9 million passenger journeys being made annually. 85% of Cheshire East residents can reach a town by bus within 40 minutes during weekday morning peak travel times. Following the weekend service changes in 2024, 54% can do likewise on Sundays. Bus usage remains significantly lower than pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels and services remain limited outside of urban areas and during off-peak times (evenings and weekends). However, the council's Bus Service Improvement Plan aims to expand the

bus network, improve integration with rail services, increase service frequencies, reduce emissions and increase passenger usage and satisfaction.

1.112 Air travel is relatively accessible, with Manchester Airport on the edge of the borough. Part of the airport's operational area, including runway 2, lies within Cheshire East. It is the third largest airport in the UK (and the largest outside of London), handling 32.1 million passengers in 2025. It connects the north of England to the world, with more than 50 airlines operating to around 200 destinations. It also handles around 95,000 tonnes of cargo per year, connecting the regional economy to the global marketplace The airport's terminals currently have capacity for around 38 million passengers per year and planned investments, including in public transport, would enable it to eventually handle around 50 million.

1.113 Car and van access has increased slightly over time. In 2021, the proportion of Cheshire East households with no car or van access was 14.5% (down from 16.1% in 2011). However, 33.3% reported having 2 cars/vans (up slightly from 32.8% in 2011) and the percentage with 3 or more cars/vans rose from 10.0% to 11.3%. Furthermore, car/van access remains more prevalent in Cheshire East than in England, where (as of 2021) 23.5% of households had no available car/van and only 9.1% had 3 or more. Unsurprisingly, car/van access was rather more common in Cheshire East's rural areas than in its urban areas.

1.114 The total number of motor vehicle miles travelled on Great Britain's roads rose to a new peak, of 342.6 billion miles, in 2025. This was up 1.9% on 2024 and 1.2% above the previous, pre-COVID-19 peak reached in 2019. Cars and taxis accounted for 76.6% of the 2025 total. In Cheshire East, the picture as of 2025 was similar, but with motor vehicle traffic volumes even higher still compared to past years. Total vehicle miles were 4.2% up from 2024 and 3.5% above their last (2019) peak, and cars and taxis accounted for 75.8% of all vehicle miles driven through the borough.

1.115 As of the second quarter of 2022, the borough had a plug-in vehicle registration rate of 2.11%, which was slightly below the national average (2.39%). However, the council expects electric vehicle ownership to rise from its current total (8,000) to nearly 100,000 by 2030.

1.116 At the time of the 2021 Census, when a COVID-19 lockdown was in place, just over a third (35.2%) of Cheshire East's employed residents worked mainly at or from home, which was above the England average (31.5%). In contrast, the 2011 Census reported only 7.4% of employed Cheshire East residents (and 5.4% of workers across England) working mainly at or from home. It is likely that COVID-19 accounts for most of the increased propensity for homeworking, but it is not possible to separate its impact from other factors.

1.117 The 2021 Census results also indicated that nearly half (48.5%) of employed people travelled to work by driving a car or van (above the England average of 44.5%) and (at settlement level) was highest (over 55%) in Alsager, Haslington, Shavington and Wrenbury. (These proportions were much higher in 2011: 68.5% for Cheshire East and 57.0% for England.) A further 3.9% (also 3.9% for England) were a passenger in a car

or van. 7.2% walked to work, making that by far the most common method of environmentally sustainable travel. For England, the proportion who walked to work was very similar (7.6%). 1.8% travelled by bicycle (2.1% for England). Only 0.8% travelled by train and only 0.7% by bus, minibus or coach. The equivalent figures from the 2011 Census were higher (train 2.9%, bus/minibus/coach 1.8%). In England, the propensity to use public transport as of 2021 (train 2.0%, bus/ minibus/coach 4.3%) was higher than in Cheshire East, but again was down compared to 2011 (train 5.3%, bus/minibus/coach 7.5%). The coincidence of the 2021 Census with a COVID-19 lockdown means that long-term trends cannot be inferred from a comparison of the 2011 and 2021 Census figures. Nevertheless, the low propensity to use sustainable transport for commuting (even in COVID-19-free 2011) is a concern, given the challenges raised by climate change and traffic volumes.

1.118 At the time of the 2021 Census, 11.7% of employed Cheshire East residents reported working mainly at an offshore installation, in no fixed place, or outside the UK. Hence nearly half (46.9%) of workers did not undertake a regular commuting journey to a single workplace in the UK (for England, the proportion was 46.0%). As for the distances travelled to work by the other 53.1%, around two-fifths had a journey of less than 5km, a similar proportion travelled at least 5km but less than 20km, and one-fifth travelled at least 20km. For England, there was a slightly greater propensity for shorter journeys. Not surprisingly, workers living in urban areas of the borough were far more likely to travel less than 5km than their rural counterparts.

1.119 Post-Census data (for 2022/23) suggests that the proportion of adults travelling on foot at least 3 days a week (14.5%) is significantly below the England average (18.6%).

1.120 The Department for Transport's (DfT) Connectivity Tool provides a national measure of how easily people can access key destinations, including healthcare, education, shopping, leisure and employment, by walking, cycling, public transport and car. The Tool's connectivity scores indicate that most towns are relatively well connected to key services, particularly Crewe, Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Nantwich, Sandbach and Congleton. In these locations, multiple services can be reached within shorter travel times by sustainable modes of transport. However, rural areas of the borough often have significantly lower scores, reflecting longer travel times to jobs, healthcare, education and retail facilities. In these rural areas, sustainable modes of travel are less accessible and car dependency consequently greater.

1.121 There are 36 GP practices located across Cheshire East, covering 9 primary care networks, each serving populations of 30,000 to 50,000 people. However, 5 of these networks (one covering part of Crewe, one serving Congleton and Holmes Chapel, and the 3 spanning the northern parts of the borough other than Macclesfield) currently lack further capacity.

1.122 There is accident and emergency provision at the borough's two main hospitals, Leighton Hospital and Macclesfield District General Hospital. Congleton War Memorial Hospital and Knutsford and District Community Hospital are the other hospitals providing public (as opposed to purely private) healthcare services within the borough. Macclesfield District currently has no significant surplus capacity for acute

(urgent and emergency) care but has secured capital funding to help address that pressure.

1.123 There are 123 primary schools and 20 secondary schools in Cheshire East, with combined net capacities of 32,713 pupils and 23,826 pupils respectively. There are 6 special schools, a special educational needs and disability (SEND) unit within mainstream education, and over 20 mainstream schools offering SEND or other specialist provision. (Details of further and higher education provision are included under the 'Health, wellbeing and society' subsection of this executive summary.)

1.124 Several new schools have been opened, or are planned, whilst others have been expanded, in response to the demographic changes arising from recent housing growth. Nevertheless, school capacity issues remain a challenge, with limited expansion capacity within some existing school estates, the need for additional land for new school sites, and building condition and infrastructure constraints on many existing or potential school sites. Cheshire East currently operates across 29 primary planning areas and 12 secondary planning areas. Of the 29 primary planning areas, 5 are indicating a shortfall in places either immediately or within the next 5 years, while several of the borough's 12 secondary planning areas indicate a shortfall in the next 7 years. However, some areas (including Crewe, Macclesfield, Middlewich, and some rural areas) have many surplus places.

1.125 There is constrained capacity throughout the mid Cheshire electricity network area at all voltage levels without surplus capacity. However, National Grid Electricity Transmission's future provision is due to focus on upgrading and expanding existing infrastructure. SP Energy Networks is working to identify where improvements are needed, with longer-term (2028 to 2033) investment expected to expand network capacity and reduce the system's emissions to net zero.

1.126 Demand for gas across the North West is expected to decline over the next decade.

1.127 In the North West region around 93% of water supplies come from river or reservoir sources, with only 7% from groundwater sources. However, there is a recognised and growing water supply deficit, and the latest Water Resources Management Plan includes measures to address this. Ongoing and planned water infrastructure investment includes pipeline improvements to make supplies for Cheshire more resilient, reduce losses from storm overflows, and works to improve water quality.

1.128 Broadband availability across the borough is generally good, with (as of January 2026) 97.3% of residential premises covered by superfast broadband (30 megabits per second or more), 84.7% having access to gigabit-capable broadband and 80% to full fibre. However, these proportions are slightly lower than the England average, and coverage is significantly lower in Cheshire East's rural areas (89.0% for superfast broadband and 63.7% for gigabit-capable broadband) than in its urban areas.

2 Introduction

Report purpose and scope

2.1 Cheshire East Council is preparing a new local plan for the borough, covering the period into the 2040s. This work will comply with the new style local plan arrangements, which are being brought forward under the planning reform system.[2]

2.2 Government guidance on new style plans states that local planning authorities are required to gather baselining evidence to inform their preparation work.[3] The baselining information guidance specifies a need to assess the current picture of the local plan area and the potential future picture, using statistical datasets, qualitative information and mapping, as well as taking account of existing priorities and strategies. Its proposed topic areas focus on population, deprivation, the economy, housing, transport, infrastructure and the environment, although the guidance leaves the ultimate choice of topics, indicators and data sources to planning authorities' own judgement. The guidance also requires planning authorities to undertake a critical analysis of this collective evidence base. This report is the primary output from that baseline evidence and analysis. The critical analysis is presented in the form of a table (Table 1.1 of the report's executive summary) identifying 'SWOT' (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) issues and other challenges.[4]

Study area and geographical comparison areas

Settlements and rural/urban areas

2.3 This report focuses largely on the borough of Cheshire East, and key sub-areas within it, particularly its main settlements and the distinctions between its urban and rural areas. It is important, therefore, to clarify the settlement and rural-urban definitions on which this report's evidence is based.

[2] Introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

[3] 'Gathering baselining information to inform a local plan', Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), November 2025: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gathering-baselining-information-to-inform-a-local-plan

[4] In addition, the government's 'Gathering baselining information to inform a local plan' guidance requires planning authorities to use their baseline evidence to help inform the local plan vision, strategy, policy options and the additional analytical work that is needed to support the plan preparation work. These requirements will be addressed through subsequent local plan work and consequently they do not form part of this baseline evidence report.

Settlements

2.4 The settlement-level statistics in this report relate to the 24 settlements[5] that are in the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy.[6] These settlement-level statistics are based, except where stated otherwise, on the boundaries of the ONS LSOAs or else on ONS' Output Areas (OAs), with each settlement being defined as a group of adjoining LSOAs or OAs (or, in the case of the village of Chelford, as a single LSOA). The rationale for this approach is that LSOAs and OAs were created by ONS for statistical purposes: consequently, a wide range of demographic, economic, housing and other data (including a lot of Census data) can be readily obtained or calculated for groups of LSOAs (and to a lesser extent for groups of OAs), whereas the availability of statistics for the exact urban extents of settlements are, at best, much more limited.

2.5 LSOAs (which consist of a few OAs, usually 4 or 5) and OAs are intended to be of similar size in terms of population and household numbers. Hence the ONS reviews and changes (merges or splits) some of them after each Census, to avoid long-term divergences in their size. Following the changes made by ONS in the wake of the 2021 Census evidence, Cheshire East has 244 LSOAs (up from 234 prior to that) and 1,298 OAs (up from 1,245 previously). It is these '2021' LSOAs and OAs that the settlement definitions in this report are based on.

2.6 The council's original LSOA-based settlement definitions were those developed for its 2010 settlement hierarchy. These definitions were used to inform the current (2010 to 2030) local plan and much of the evidence-gathering and analysis undertaken for that plan. However, the 2010 settlement hierarchy boundaries were derived from ONS' original ('2001') LSOAs, which reflected local area population and household numbers at the time of the 2001 Census. Consequently, the 2010 settlement boundaries are now rather dated in certain respects. In particular, they do not reflect the outward expansion of some towns, such as Congleton and Nantwich, over the last 25 or so years. In contrast, the LSOA boundaries arising from ONS' last review, the '2021' LSOAs, align more closely with Cheshire East settlements' current extents than the '2001' LSOAs (or the intervening, 2011 Census-based, '2011' LSOAs) did.

2.7 The council has also concluded that, for 4 of those classified as LSCs in the 2010 hierarchy (Audlem, Bunbury, Goostrey and Wrenbury), even the '2021' LSOA-based boundaries provide an inadequate approximation to the actual settlement area, covering not just the settlement of interest, but other sizeable villages or large swathes of rural land (which may themselves contain major employment centres). In such cases, LSOA-based statistics can grossly overestimate the actual number of

[5] Alderley Edge, Alsager, Audlem, Bollington, Bunbury, Chelford, Congleton, Crewe, Disley, Goostrey, Handforth, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Mobberley, Nantwich, Poynton, Prestbury, Sandbach, Shavington, Wilmslow and Wrenbury.

[6] 'Determining the Settlement Hierarchy', Cheshire East Council, November 2010: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/researchand-evidence/climate-change/en-ldf-settlementhierarchy.pdf

residents, homes or jobs in a particular settlement. However, for these 4 villages, the '2021' OAs' boundaries do provide a reasonable fit to the actual settlement area.

2.8 Therefore, except where stated otherwise, the settlement-level analysis in this baseline evidence report is based on updated settlement definitions that use '2021' LSOAs as building blocks for defining the 20 settlements where those LSOAs provide a reasonable fit to the settlement's actual urban extent, and which use '2021' OAs for defining the other 4 settlements. Where the analysis considers changes over time in these 24 main settlements (for example, changes between 2021 and 2011 Census data), the same geographical definitions are used for the earlier periods, to ensure a like-for-like comparison.

Rural/urban areas

2.9 The Census-based analysis in this report largely dates from work undertaken around 2023 as detailed data from the 2021 Census was being released, and its rural-urban comparisons use the council's preferred rural-urban classification at that time, one developed in house by the council in 2015 and covering Cheshire East only.[7]

2.10 By the time the council formally began its new local plan work, in 2026, it had decided that future rural-urban analyses should, where possible, apply the definitions in the ONS' latest (2021) Rural Urban Classification for England and Wales. This was because the ONS classification is nationally recognised and covers the whole of England and Wales, allowing (for example) meaningful comparisons between rural areas of Cheshire East and rural areas of other local authorities.

2.11 However, given the timetable for completing this report and the risk of potential confusion had the council revised its original, widely-disseminated Census analysis to reflect the ONS rural-urban definitions, the Census results in this report are still based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East.

2.12 A further complication is that the ONS classification applies rural-urban definitions to 3 different geographical tiers: MSOAs (of which there are currently 52 in Cheshire East), LSOAs (currently 244, as noted earlier) and OAs (currently 1,298). Consequently, to make sure that the actual rural-urban character of the borough is captured as accurately as possible, this report's analysis of the other (non-Census) data applies ONS' classification to the smallest geographical tier for which a particular dataset is available. For example, ONS annual population estimates are available down to OA level, so the report's rural population figures are derived from ONS' OA-based classification, whereas the latest employment statistics for rural areas (not available below LSOA level) are from its LSOA-based classification.

[7] 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council. This classification originally assigned 'rural' or 'urban' status to '2011' LSOAs (the LSOA boundaries that came into existence in the wake of the 2011 Census). However, ONS' published 2021 Census results at LSOA level related to the new '2021' LSOAs created in the wake of the 2021 Census evidence, not to the '2011' LSOAs. Hence, in cases where Cheshire East '2011' LSOAs were merged or split by ONS, in the wake of the 2021 Census evidence, the new ('2021') LSOAs were assigned to whichever category ('rural' or 'urban') matched or best fitted that of the '2011' LSOA(s) they replaced.

2.13 Because of the baseline evidence report's resulting use of different 'rural' definitions for different sets of data, great care should be taken when comparing the report's 'rural' (or 'urban') statistics on a given topic (such as population) with 'rural' statistics for another topic, as different rural-urban definitions may be involved. For the avoidance of doubt, each section with rural-urban comparisons includes a footnote specifying the classification used for the data in question. To provide a visual indication of what counts as 'rural' under ONS' respective 3 classification tiers (OA, LSOA and MSOA), Figure 3.2 shows the rural areas of the borough under the most fine-grained (OA-based) classification (with the main settlements and the Peak Park area overlaid), while Appendix 5 contains equivalent maps showing which parts of Cheshire East are classed as 'rural' under the LSOA- and MSOA-based classifications.

Links with neighbouring authorities

2.14 Whilst differing characteristics and needs within the borough (for example, between rural and urban areas) are a crucial part of the picture, Cheshire East's current status and future potential can only be understood fully by understanding its interrelationships within neighbouring areas. Therefore, the report also analyses migration and commuting flows, other linkages or shared interests with nearby (adjacent or nearly adjacent) authorities.

2.15 Cheshire East is now part of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority, with the first mayoral elections scheduled for May 2027. Under the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, the Mayoral Combined Authority will assume the role of Strategic Planning Authority and will lead the preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) for the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region. The SDS will establish a high-level strategy for long-term growth across the sub-region and identify the major infrastructure required to support it. The SDS will be prepared alongside the new Cheshire East local plan, making close collaboration with the Combined Authority, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington essential. Consequently, this report's analysis of interactions and links with neighbouring areas has a substantial Cheshire and Warrington focus.

National and regional comparisons

2.16 The borough's characteristics and needs must be set against the national (or sometimes) regional perspective, in order to place them in their proper context. Comparisons with the national average, and in some instances with the regional average[8], are therefore included where feasible. Except where otherwise specified, national comparisons are with England (rather than with England and Wales, Great Britain or the UK). This reflects the reduced availability of comparable data for Wales, Scotland and Norther Ireland and the fact that those parts of the UK are under different national planning regimes, as well as being subject in some cases to

[8] Regional figures are particularly useful context for topics or data series for which the national data offers a less comparable picture. For example, house price and other housing market data for England as a whole is significantly affected by the very high prices of properties in London. Therefore, in some respects, house price data for the North West region provides a more informative benchmark to compare Cheshire East to.

different underlying factors.[9] However, in a small proportion of cases, data at country level was available (or readily accessible) only for England and Wales, Great Britain or the UK and so statistics for those areas are used instead to provide a national benchmark.

Peak District area of Cheshire East

2.17 The new local plan will (like the current one) exclude the part of Cheshire East that falls within the national park, as the Peak District National Park Authority is the responsible local planning authority for that area. However, data limitations mean that most of the statistical evidence presented in this report is not available for geographical sub-areas that match or cover a similar area to the small part of the borough that falls within the Peak District. Consequently, except where stated otherwise, the statistics in the report for 'Cheshire East' relate to the whole borough, including the Peak District part.

Data sources, quality and update issues

2.18 A substantial volume of the evidence cited in this report comes from datasets, reports and other outputs of the ONS and certain central government departments. To avoid repetition, therefore, the narrative frequently refers to these sources by an abbreviation (for example, 'ONS' for the Office for National Statistics). However, the glossary (Appendix 1) lists and explains all the abbreviations used.

2.19 Many of the statistics in this report are from national surveys or are modelled estimates, so they are somewhat less accurate than, for example, Census data. The survey data and modelled data also tend to be less accurate for small geographical areas or other 'small population' groups (such as industries with relatively few employers). It is partly because of this reduced accuracy that the survey data and estimates for Cheshire East (and even more so for geographical sub-areas of the borough) often show more volatility over time than the equivalent statistics at country level. However, where appropriate, the report commentary includes health warnings about reduced data accuracy levels and the implications for data interpretation.

2.20 This report's analysis of population levels, changes and age structures uses the ONS' most recent mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level, which were published at the end of July 2026, and which include estimates for mid-2025 and revised estimates for some earlier years. However, the timetable for producing this report meant that much of other analysis necessarily predated that latest population statistics publication. Hence, in the case of indicators that record population-based rates (for example, GVA per head or greenhouse gas emissions per head), the population data used for calculating those rates was the latest available at the time of that analysis and may therefore predate (and so not take account) of the July 2026 estimates. In each instance where population-based rates are cited, the data source

[9] For example, house prices in Northern Ireland are significantly affected by housing market activity in neighbouring parts of the Irish Republic, whereas English house prices are not.

footnotes therefore indicate which 'vintage' of population statistics were used for the calculation.

Future evidence-gathering

2.21 A number of additional local plan evidence base reports are planned or in production. As a result, it should also be emphasised that the baseline report's coverage of some matters (such as businesses' needs, retail needs and residential housing needs) will be expanded upon through more recent (and more detailed) property market, retail, and business intelligence, as well as the new local plan's separate (forthcoming) assessments of economic development, employment land, retail and housing needs, and the emerging results from other specialist studies commissioned by the council.

Report structure

2.22 The rest of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 3 provides a spatial overview of Cheshire East, in terms of its size, its geographical and economic position within the UK, its transport network, its distinctive features and assets, its main settlements and its rural areas
- Chapter 4 covers population and other demographic evidence
- Chapter 5 focuses on economic evidence, including the labour market, adult skills and qualifications, the borough's industrial composition, the characteristics and needs of local businesses, and commercial property market issues
- Chapter 6 sets out the evidence relating to health, wellbeing and other social issues (including deprivation)
- Chapter 7 deals with the baseline information on housing, including the characteristics of the existing stock and the households living there, new housing development, housing prices and affordability, housing need and supply
- Chapter 8 reports on environmental evidence, including climate change, minerals and waste
- Chapter 9 relates to transport networks, services and usage, as well as provision and capacity issues for infrastructure more generally (such as utilities)
- Appendix 1 is a glossary of terms and abbreviations used in the report
- Appendix 2 provides definitions of the industry categories covered by the council's economic model, the Local Economy Forecasting Model (LEFM), from which the report presents key results
- Appendix 3 provides details of the occupational categories analysed in the report
- Appendix 4 contains definitions of the building use classes to which parts of the report refer

- Appendix 5 contains maps showing which areas of the borough are classed as 'rural' under the ONS 2021 LSOA- and MSOA-based rural-urban classifications[10]
- Appendix 6 contains a map of the council's own rural-urban Classification, given that (as also explained earlier in Chapter 2) the report's analysis of 2021 Census data used that alternative classification
- Appendix 7 shows which ONS 2021 LSOAs and OAs are assigned to each main settlement under the council's updated settlement definitions (it is these definitions on which most of the settlement-level analysis in this report is based)

[10] These 2 maps complement the one in Figure 3.2 (in Chapter 3), which show the 'rural' areas of the borough under ONS' OA-based classification. All 3 maps (which have the boundaries of Cheshire East's main settlements and the Peak Park area overlaid) are included, given the use (justified earlier in Chapter 2) of each of the 3 rural-urban classification tiers in different parts of this report.

3 Overview of Cheshire East

Cheshire East in a national context

Size, geographical location and population distribution

3.1 Cheshire East is a unitary authority with borough status, created as part of local government reorganisation in 2009. It is the third largest unitary authority in the northwest of England and the 16th largest in England, with an estimated population of 425,500, as of mid-2025.[11] It covers an area of 1,166 square kilometres (116,600 hectares).[12] The resulting population density (365 people per square kilometre) is significantly lower than the England average (451).[13]

3.2 The borough is bounded by Cheshire West and Chester to the west, Warrington and some of the Greater Manchester unitary authorities (Manchester, Stockport and Trafford) to the north, High Peak to the east and Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent and Shropshire to the south. Part of Cheshire East lies within the Peak District (as shown in Figure 3.2 further below), and for planning purposes this area falls under the Peak District National Park Authority regime, but other services are provided by the borough council. The council estimates that, as of 2024, 1,300 of Cheshire East residents were living in the Peak District planning authority area.[14]

Connectivity

3.3 Cheshire East has strong road and rail links. The M6 runs along the western side of the borough, connecting the area to Staffordshire, Birmingham and the rest of the West Midlands conurbation, Lancashire and Cumbria. Stretching across the northwestern part of Cheshire East, the M56 provides access to Greater Manchester, Merseyside and north Wales. Most of Cheshire East's towns are within a few miles of one of these motorways.

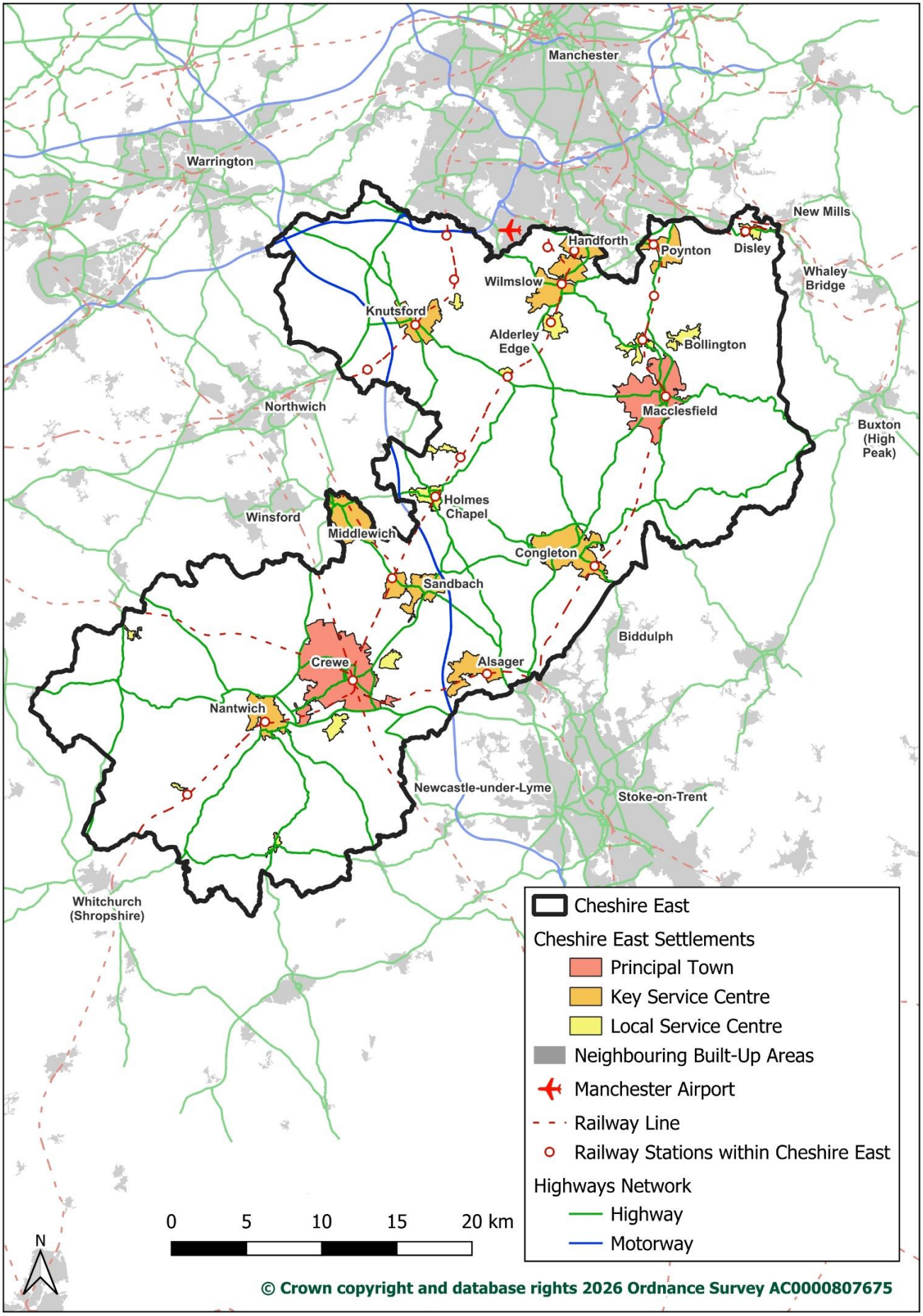
[11] Mid-year population estimates, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' July 2026 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[12] Standard Area Measurements for the County and Unitary Authorities (December 2024) in the UK, ONS Geography, November 2025: http://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/

[13] Table MYE5 ('Population density for local authorities in England and Wales, mid-2011 to mid-2025') from ONS' July 2026 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales

[14] [1] Mid-year population estimates for small areas, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' November 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates for small areas): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk. [2] National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) data as of April 2026. Accessed via Cheshire East Council QGIS mapping software. Note: Figures derived from ONS population estimates at OA level. Where an OA is only partly within the Peak District, the proportion of its (mid-2024) population living within the Peak District is assumed to be the same as the proportion of its residential properties (as of April 2026) that lie within the Peak District.

Figure 3.1: Cheshire East main settlements and transport networks



3.4 The borough's most strategically important railway station, Crewe, is at the junction of 6 main rail lines. Crewe provides access to the West Coast Main Line (London to Scotland) and TransPennine services. There are direct services from Crewe to Britain's major cities, including Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Birmingham, London, Cardiff, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Macclesfield and Wilmslow also lie on a direct line to London. Only one of the borough's towns, Middlewich, lacks a railway station.

3.5 Air travel is also relatively accessible, with Manchester Airport located on the edge of the borough.

3.6 Figure 3.1 shows the transport networks connecting the borough's settlements to each other and to key locations beyond Cheshire East.

Economic contribution

3.7 The borough contains many attractive locations for people to live in, work in or visit, with its transport links (see Figure 3.1) making it easy to travel to Cheshire East and from other parts of the country.

3.8 Whilst higher education provision in the borough itself is limited, the universities in Greater Manchester are within a short distance. Cheshire East itself has a longstanding history of hosting major centres of scientific research (notably at its Alderley Park site near Wilmslow and at Jodrell Bank) and has a high concentration of associated (pharmaceuticals) manufacturing activity, thanks to the presence of AstraZeneca (Macclesfield) and Bespak (Holmes Chapel).

3.9 Vehicle manufacturing, most obviously the Bentley plant and headquarters in Crewe, is another key industry that makes a disproportionately high contribution to jobs in the borough, due in part to the development of Crewe's railway industry and engineering expertise.

3.10 Consequently, many highly-qualified workers choose to live in Cheshire East, but there are also areas of the borough, particularly in many parts of Crewe, where qualification levels are low and significant deprivation persists.

3.11 Despite its small share of the borough's overall economic output and employment, mining and quarrying is a strategically very important industry in Cheshire East, with local quarries playing a key economic role. Its contribution (and that of neighbouring Cheshire West and Chester) to salt extraction and processing activity is of national significance and, as of 2024, the borough accounted for around one-fifth of all salt mining jobs across England.[15]

Heritage, culture and natural environment

3.12 Cheshire East contains attractions and institutions that are of national or international importance, namely:

[15] Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

- Tatton Park, near Knutsford, which is one of England's most popular visitor destinations, with around 700,000 to 800,000 visitors in a typical year[16]
- the Jodrell Bank Observatory site,[17] a UNESCO World Heritage site that is part of the globally-renowned Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics[18]

3.13 Other historic sites, parks and gardens within the borough receive hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The Peak District, which extends into the eastern fringe of the borough, is easily accessible.

3.14 There are 78 conservation areas and nearly 3,000 listed buildings in the borough,[19] as well as numerous areas designated for their landscape and wildlife value.

3.15 The canal and river network also forms an important element of the borough's natural environment, heritage and history.

3.16 Cheshire East has around 40,140 hectares of land designated as Green Belt.[20] These form parts of the Green Belts surrounding Greater Manchester to the north, and the Potteries conurbation to the south.

3.17 Agricultural activities make up a relatively large share of land use and local employment. As of 2024, they accounted for around 2.1% (4,500) of all jobs in the borough, compared to an England-wide average of 1.1%.[21] The vast majority of these jobs (around 4,000) are in farm labour.[22] As of 2025, the area of farmed land in Cheshire East amounted to 82,000 hectares, or around 70.3% of the borough's land, which is slightly higher than the farmland's share of England's total land area (68.7%).[23]

[16] Source: 2024 Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions, VisitBritain and VisitEngland, June 2025: https://www.visitbritain.org/research-insights/england-visitor-attractions-latest

[17] https://www.jodrellbank.net/

[18] https://www.jodrellbank.manchester.ac.uk/

[19] Source: Heritage and Local List Supplementary Planning Document, Cheshire East Council, June 2026: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/supplementary_plan_documents/supplementary_plan_documents.aspx

[20] Source: Local authority Green Belt statistics for England: 2024 to 2025, MHCLG.

[21] Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: The figures quoted here relate to employment within SIC2007 code 01 (Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities).

[22] Source: Defra June Survey of Agriculture, Defra, April 2026: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june

[23] Sources: [1] Defra June Survey of Agriculture, Defra, April 2026: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june. [2] Standard Area Measurements for the County and Unitary Authorities (December 2024) in the UK and Standard Area Measurements for the Countries (December 2024) in the UK, ONS Geography, November 2025: http://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/

Cheshire East's diversity

Settlements and rural-urban composition

3.18 The borough consists of several towns of varying sizes, along with an extensive rural area covering many villages and smaller settlements.

3.19 Under the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy,[24] which formed the spatial basis of the current (2010 to 2030) Local Plan Strategy, Cheshire East consists of the following main settlements (with the rest of the borough subsequently classified as 'other settlements and rural areas', or OSRA):

- 2 'principal towns' (PTs): Crewe and Macclesfield
- 9 'key service centres' (KSCs): Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow
- 13 'local service centres' (LSCs): Alderley Edge, Audlem, Bollington, Bunbury, Chelford, Disley, Goostrey, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Mobberley, Prestbury, Shavington and Wrenbury

3.20 The settlement-level analysis in this baseline evidence report takes this existing hierarchy as its foundation, presenting evidence for the 24 settlements listed immediately above: that is, the settlements in the top 3 tiers (PTs, KSCs and LSCs) of the 2010 hierarchy. However, for reasons set out in Chapter 2 of this report (in the 'Study area and geographical comparison areas' section), the 2010 settlement hierarchy boundaries for some settlements are now considered by the council to be relatively dated, or insufficiently accurate to yield meaningful statistics. As Chapter 2 explains, the settlement-level analysis in this baseline evidence report is therefore based on updated settlement definitions that use the ONS latest ('2021') LSOAs or latest ('2021') OAs as building blocks. For the vast majority (20) of the 24 settlements, the '2021' LSOAs provide a reasonable fit to the settlement's actual urban extent and so the updated definition is LSOA-based. However, for the other 4 settlements (the LSCs Audlem, Bunbury, Goostrey and Wrenbury), only OAs provide a reasonable fit and consequently (as OAs are subdivisions of LSOAs) the range of available data for the resulting OA-based settlements is more limited.

3.21 As the most recent (mid-2024) ONS population estimates for small areas indicate, Crewe (population 81,300) and Macclesfield (55,200) are the largest conurbations. The other main centres, in terms of population numbers, are the towns of Alsager, Congleton, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow (each with populations between 13,000 and 34,000) and Bollington and Handforth (with populations of 7,000 to 8,000).[25]

[24] 'Determining the Settlement Hierarchy', Cheshire East Council, November 2010: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/researchand-evidence/climate-change/en-ldf-settlementhierarchy.pdf

[25] Mid-year population estimates for small areas, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' November 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates for small areas): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

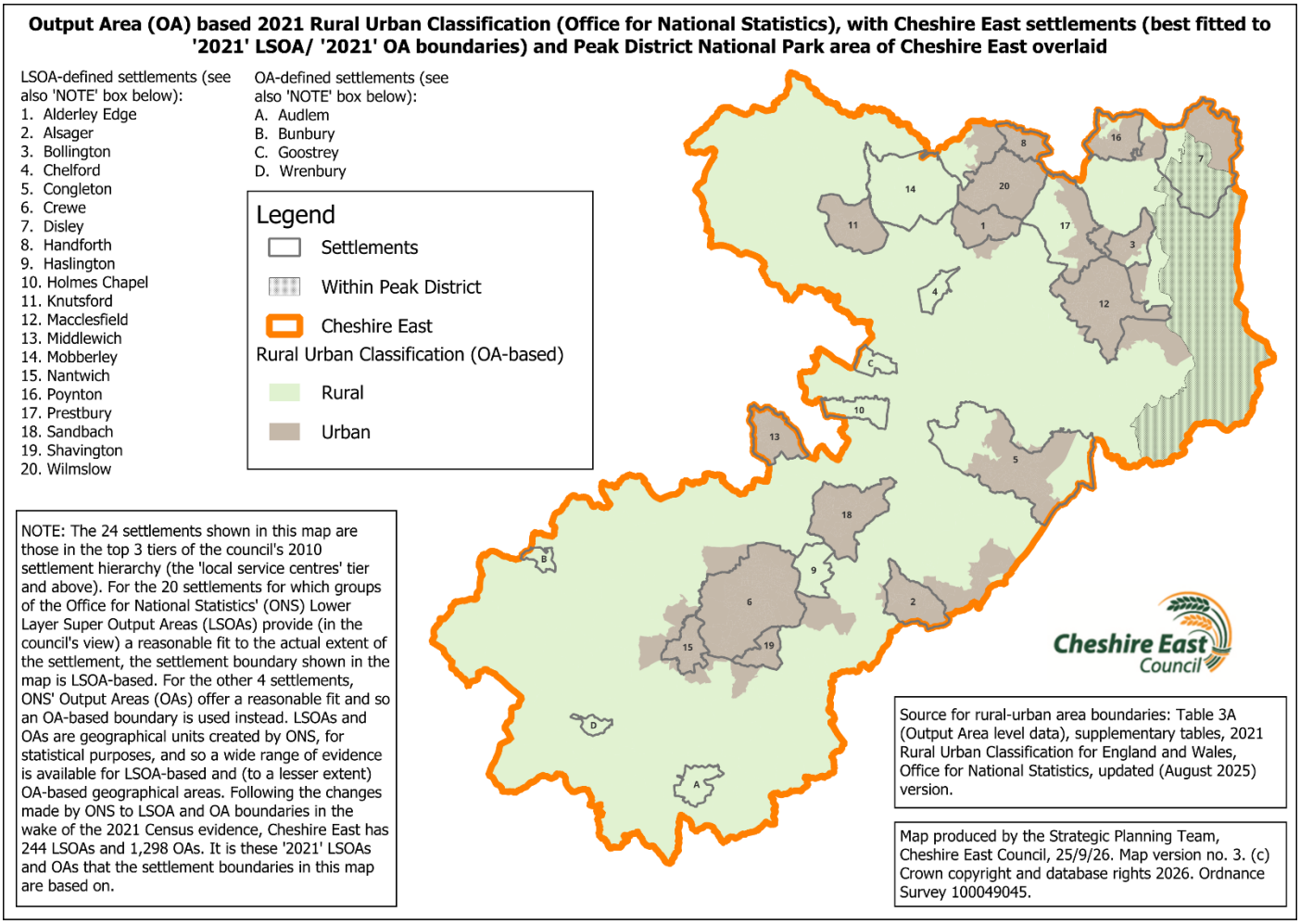
3.22 However, based on the latest and most fine-grained official rural-urban classification, ONS' 2021 classification at OA level (shown in Figure 3.2), more than one-sixth of the population (18.0% as of 2024) live in rural areas.[26] These areas include some sparsely populated and, in some cases, relatively isolated settlements, not just in the Peak District National Park area, but also the west of Nantwich.

3.23 The map in Figure 3.2 also shows the borough's main 24 settlements (those in the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy), its rural and urban areas (under the ONS OA-based 2021 rural-urban classification) and the part of Cheshire East that falls within the Peak District. The settlement boundaries shown in Figure 3.2 are those used for the settlement-level analysis in this report: in other words (as set out in more detail earlier in this chapter), they are based on ONS' latest ('2021') LSOAs (where LSOA boundaries provide a reasonable fit to the settlement's actual urban extent) or else on the latest ('2021') OAs.

3.24 Besides OAs, the ONS rural-urban classification also assigns 'rural' and 'urban' categories to larger statistical geographies, namely LSOAs and MSOAs (MSOAs consist of small groups of LSOAs). These less fine-grained classifications are used in the sections of this report (such as those on deprivation) for which some small area data is available at LSOA or MSOA level, but not at OA level. Appendix 5 contains maps (with the same settlement and Peak Park overlay as Figure 3.2), showing which parts of Cheshire East are classed as 'rural' under these LSOA- and MSOA-based classifications. Appendix 7 lists which individual LSOAs and OAs are assigned to each main settlement under the council's updated settlement definitions.

[26] Sources: [1] Mid-year population estimates for small areas, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' November 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates for small areas): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk. [2] OA based 2021 Rural Urban Classification for England and Wales, ONS, August 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/ruralurbanclassifications/2021ruralurbanclassification

Figure 3.2: Settlements, rural/urban areas (OA-based) and Peak District area



Demographic mix

3.25 Cheshire East has a relatively old population, with 22.9% of residents aged 65 and above as of mid-2025, against only 19.1% for England.[27] At the time of the 2021 Census, only 5.6% of the borough's population classified themselves as non-white, compared to an England average of 19.0%. However, Cheshire East's ethnic diversity has increased over time (non-whites accounted for only 3.3% of the borough's residents in 2011) and the non-white proportion is significantly above the borough average (though still below the national share) in Handforth, Wilmslow, Alderley Edge and Crewe.[28] Cheshire East also saw a substantial inflow of migrants from Eastern Europe from the early 2000s onwards. Many of those Eastern Europeans are still living in the borough and are very heavily concentrated in Crewe.

[27] Mid-year population estimates, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' July 2026 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[28] 2021 Census Table TS021 (Ethnic group) and 2011 Census Table KS201EW (Ethnic group), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

4 Population

Current composition and past trends

Cheshire East population level and change: overview

4.1 The ONS latest population estimates,[29] which relate to mid-2025, put Cheshire East's total population at 425,500 (up from 420,500 in 2024, and a 46,900 increase from the 2015 figure of 378,500). The 2025 figure equates to a population density of 365 people per square km (below the England average of 451).[30]

4.2 The statistics also indicate that Cheshire East's population has grown faster than England's did over the 2015 to 2025 period, and that the borough's population growth in the last 4 years of that period was high both in comparison to earlier years and to England and the North West. Population growth in Cheshire East averaged 1.2% per annum during 2015 to 2025 (against 0.7% per annum in England and 0.8% per annum for the North West), with the highest year-on-year growth rates (each between 1.6% and 1.9%) occurring in 2021, 2022 and 2023. In the most recent year, 2024 to 2025, the borough's population increased by 1.2%, which was the slowest year-on-year growth rate since 2020, but still well above that year's growth rate for England (only 0.4%).

4.3 The council estimates that, as of 2024, 1,300 (0.3%) of Cheshire East residents were living in the Peak District planning authority area.[31] (Figures for 2025 were not available at this geographical at the time of writing.)

Cheshire East population by age and gender

4.4 ONS' latest population estimates show that the borough has a somewhat older age structure than England does. As of mid-2025, 22.9% of the population were aged 65 and above (compared to only 19.1% in England), with 59.9% aged 16 to 64 (against 63.0% for England) and 17.2% aged 0 to 15 (17.9% in England), as shown in Table 4.1.

[29] Mid-year population estimates, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' July 2026 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[30] Table MYE5 ('Population density for local authorities in England and Wales, mid-2011 to mid-2025') from ONS' July 2026 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales

[31] [1] Mid-year population estimates for small areas, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' November 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates for small areas): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk. [2] NLPG data as of April 2026. Accessed via Cheshire East Council QGIS mapping software. Note: Figures derived from ONS population estimates at OA level. Where an OA is only partly within the Peak District, the proportion of its (mid-2024) population living within the Peak District is assumed to be the same as the proportion of its residential properties (as of April 2026) that lie within the Peak District. This calculation approach implicitly takes the residential property stock as of April 2026 as a proxy for the stock as of mid-2024.It also assumes that, for the OA in question, average household size is the same for both its Peak District and non-Peak District households.

4.5 The lower (mid-2025) population pyramid chart in Figure 4.1 shows the age structure of Cheshire East in more detail (by gender and single year of age), and demonstrates how this structure differs from that at national level. It should be noted that the parts of Figure 4.1 showing the national picture relate to England **and** Wales, rather than (as with all the other evidence in this chapter, except Figure 4.4) to England alone.[32]

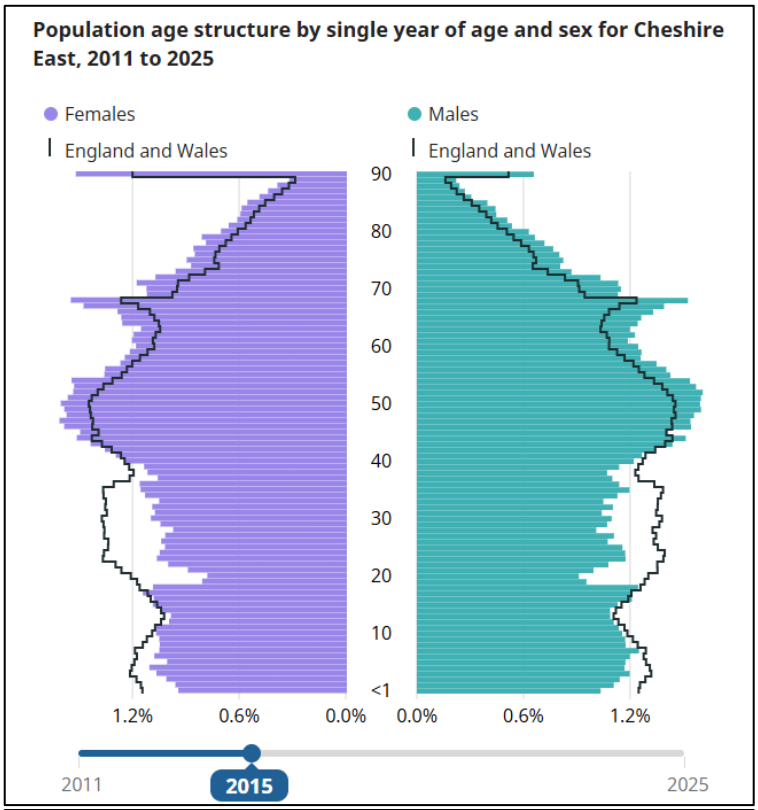
4.6 Figure 4.1 shows how the under-forties (and particularly people in their late teens and early twenties) make up a distinctly smaller share of the population in Cheshire East than nationally (in England **and** Wales), while the opposite is true for the 50 and above age groups. This is in part likely to reflect the relative shortage of higher education places within the borough and a consequent outflow of young people relocating to areas of the country that are closer to university campuses (some of whom may choose to continue living outside Cheshire East after graduating).

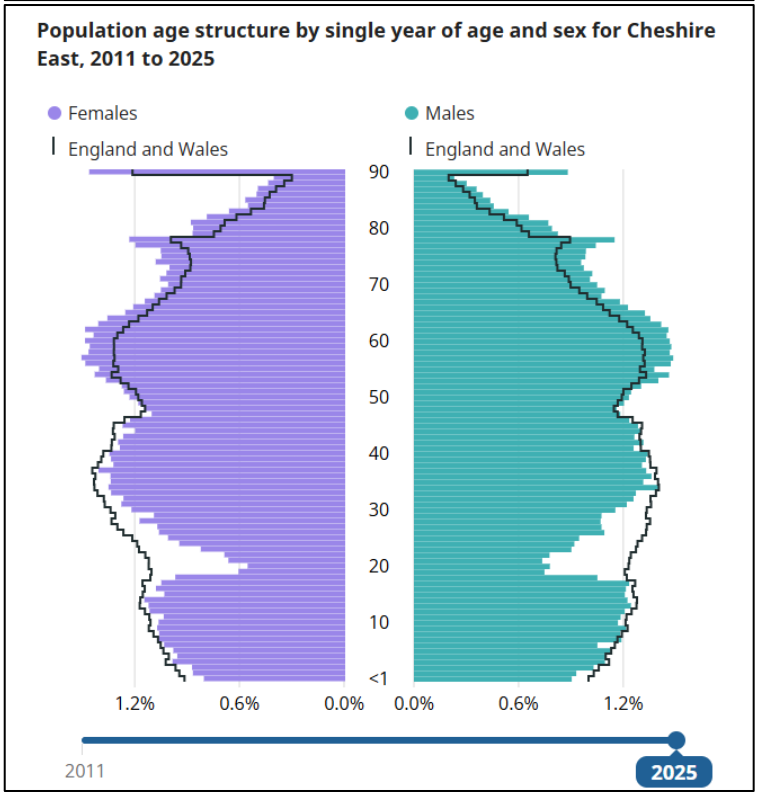
Table 4.1: Population by age group, 2015 to 2025

Age group	Cheshire East, 2015	Cheshire East, 2019	Cheshire East, 2025	England, 2015	England, 2019	England, 2025
Broad age groups:						
0 to 15	17.5%	17.5%	17.2%	18.9%	18.8%	17.9%
16 to 64	60.9%	60.1%	59.9%	63.5%	63.0%	63.0%
65 and above	21.6%	22.4%	22.9%	17.6%	18.2%	19.1%
Narrow age groups:						
0 to 15	17.5%	17.5%	17.2%	18.9%	18.8%	17.9%
16 to 24	9.4%	8.5%	7.9%	11.4%	10.7%	10.7%
25 to 34	10.7%	11.3%	11.7%	13.6%	13.6%	13.5%
35 to 44	12.5%	11.8%	13.2%	13.1%	12.9%	13.7%
45 to 54	15.6%	14.9%	12.6%	14.1%	13.7%	12.3%
55 to 64	12.6%	13.6%	14.5%	11.3%	12.0%	12.8%
65 to 74	11.8%	11.9%	10.9%	9.6%	9.8%	9.6%
75 to 84	6.9%	7.5%	8.7%	5.7%	6.0%	6.9%
85 and above	2.9%	3.0%	3.3%	2.3%	2.4%	2.6%

[32] Although, where possible, for the sake of consistency, this baseline evidence report uses data for England to provide a national picture, the ONS tool used to create these particular charts can compare local authorities only to England and Wales, not to England alone: hence Figure 4.1 presents data for England **and** Wales.

Figure 4.1: Population age structure (pyramid chart), 2015 and 2025[33]





[33] Charts created using the interactive tool within the 'Local authorities' section (section 6) of 'Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2025', ONS, July 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationestimatesforenglandandwales/mid2025

4.7 This differing age structure is also evident when comparing the median age of the population: 45.0 in Cheshire East as of mid-2025, against only 40.6 for England. However, Cheshire East's median age figure is far from being one of the highest: for example, 19 English district and unitary authorities had a median age in excess of 50 as of 2025.[34]

4.8 The population pyramid charts in Figure 4.1 also show how, for some younger age groups, Cheshire East's age structure (though still quite different) was more closely aligned with that of England and Wales as of 2025 (see lower chart) than it was back in 2015 (see upper chart): namely children under 10 and adults in their thirties.

4.9 The figures in this latest ONS statistical release also show the borough's population ageing over time, with the proportion of Cheshire East residents aged 65 and above increasing from 21.6% in 2015 to 22.9% by 2025, whilst the proportion aged 16 to 64 has fallen from 60.9% to 59.9% over that time and the 0 to 15 age group's percentage share has fluctuated very little (between 17.2% and 17.6%) since 2015. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show how population growth rates have varied by age group, for Cheshire East and England, over the last few decades (1991 to 2025). In particular, whilst the overall population growth rate in Cheshire East over that time averaged 0.7% a year between 1991 and 2025 (close to the England rate of 0.6%), the 65 and above population increased at a much faster rate (1.7% a year on average), both in comparison to younger age groups and in comparison to the 65 and above age group's population growth in England (1.2% a year).

4.10 It is also worth noting that, over the 2 years to mid-2021, growth in the number of Cheshire East residents aged 65 and above was significantly slower (an average of 1.4% per year annum) than during 2015 to 2019 (an average of 1.7% per year per annum) or 2021 to 2025 (2.0% per year). It may be that the slower growth rate for 2019 to 2021 partly reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on death rates, particularly for older age groups.

4.11 As the above analysis demonstrates, Cheshire East is experiencing relatively high rates of population growth compared to England and the North West. Different age groups are growing or contracting at different rates, changing the proportion of the overall population that they represent over the long term. As well as overall population growth, the borough's population is living longer,[35] meaning proportionately higher growth in the number of people in older age groups. People's need for health and social care support, transport provision, other public services and

[34] Table MYE6 ('Median age of population for local authorities in England and Wales, mid-2011 to mid-2025') from ONS' July 2026 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales

[35] The long-term increase in life expectancy (for both males and females) is shown in the data for Cheshire East from Figure 2 of the 'Life expectancy for local areas of the UK: between 2001 to 2003 and 2022 to 2024' statistical release, ONS, December 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/lifeexpectancyforlocalareasoftheuk/between2001to2003and2022to2024

home adaptions (to support independent living and help them remain active) increases with age. Clearly this has implications for the council's emerging local plan policies, as well as for its wider service provision.[36]

4.12 Looking at narrower age groups, whilst the number of residents aged 75 and above grew an average of 3.2% a year (from 37,200 to 51,000) between 2015 and 2025, the 65 to 74 year-old population increased by an average of just 0.4% a year and was actually marginally lower in number in 2025 than it had been at some points of the preceding decade. This contrast between the 65 to 74 and 75 and above age groups is actually not that surprising, given that many of those born during the late 1940s baby boom were in the 65 to 74 age group as of 2015 and in the 75 to 84 group as of 2025, whereas the cohort of people aged 65 to 74 in 2025 were those born in the 1950s (which largely fell between 2 baby booms).[37] This illustrates the fact that age structures even today can be determined by changes (whether in fertility rates, mortality rates or migration patterns) that occurred generations ago, not just by recent phenomena such as COVID-19. Similarly, changes in birth rates since the mid-20th century help to explain the uneven bulges and compressions in the population pyramids in Figure 4.1.

4.13 As of mid-2025, females accounted for 51.1% of Cheshire East's population, almost exactly matching their population share in England (51.0%). However, the proportion of female residents generally increases with age: in Cheshire East, it is 48.5% for 0- to 15-year-olds, 50.9% for 16- to 64-year-olds and 53.7% among the 65 and above age group. Breaking down the latter group into narrower bands, this correlation still holds: the percentage who are female rises to 55.9% for the 75 and above group, and to 61.0% for the 85 and above group. For each of these age bands, the female population shares are very similar to (within a percentage point of) those for England.[38]

[36] As an illustration, one potential consequence of the ageing population for the local plan is a probable increase in the number of people who are at risk of falls. As noted in the Cheshire East 'Falls' JSNA of August 2023 (https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/jsna/ageing-well/falls), the risk of falling is higher for older people. This risk could potentially be reduced through adaptation of existing homes and appropriate provision of additional specialist housing, which would help ease the pressure on prevention services and on the health and care system in future years.

[37] The evidence on 'baby booms' is taken from 'How is the fertility rate changing in England and Wales?', ONS, October 2024: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/articles/howisthefertilityratechanginginenglandandwales/2024-10-28

[38] Mid-year population estimates, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' July 2026 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

Figure 4.2: Population change by age group, Cheshire East, 1991 to 2025

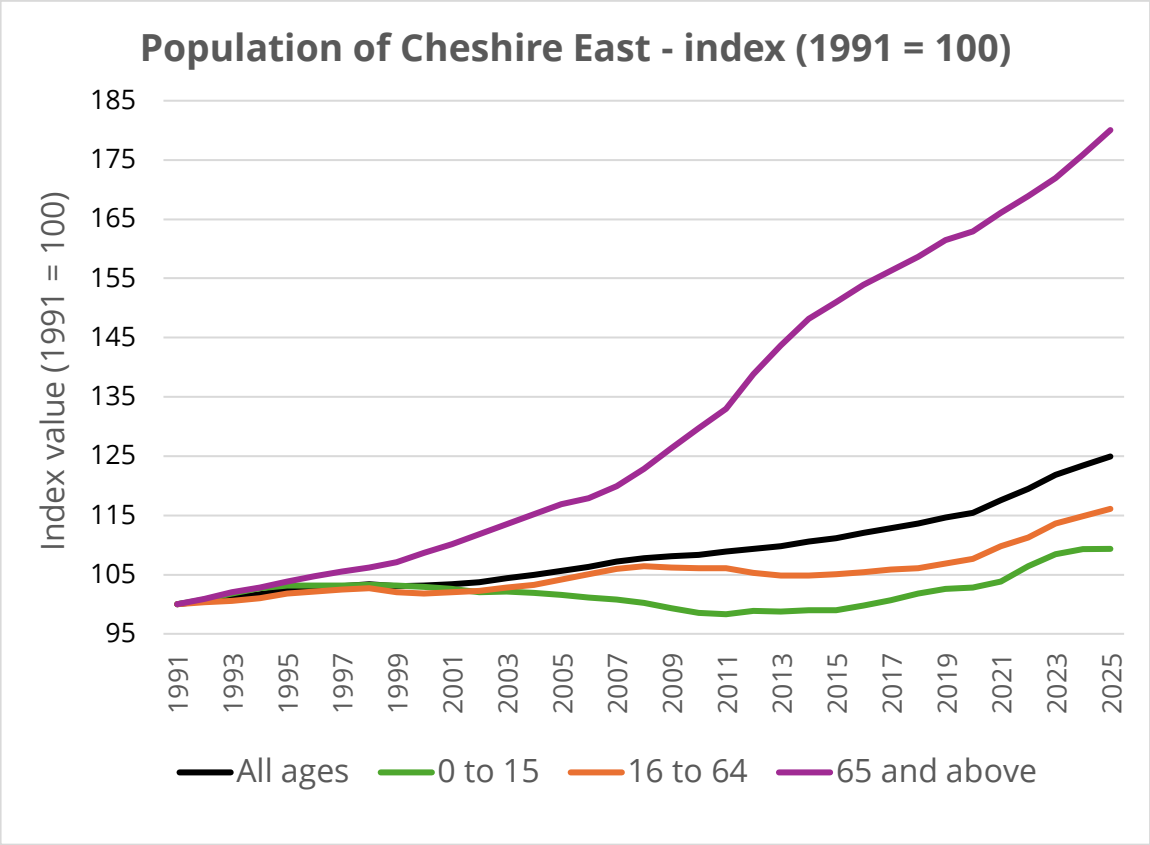
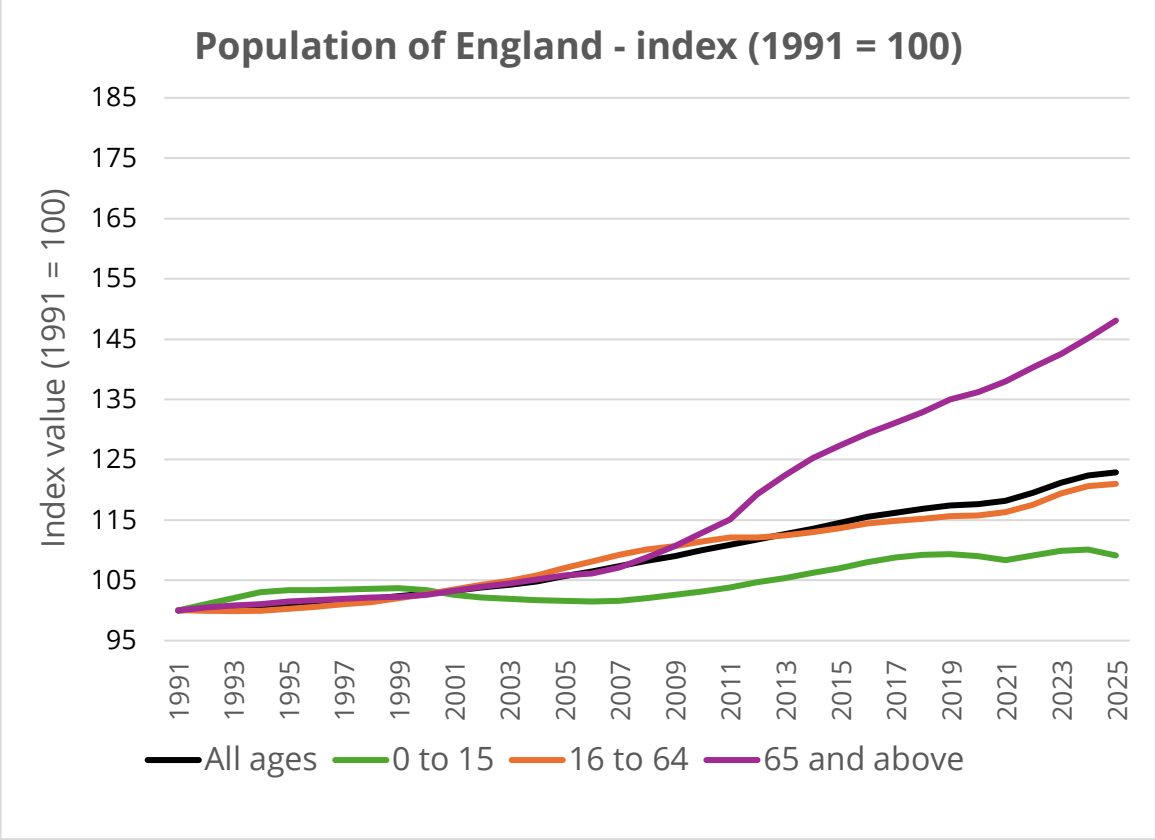


Figure 4.3: Population change by age group, England, 1991 to 2025



4.14 Looking at more local variations in the borough's gender balance, ONS' mid-2024 population estimates for small areas[39] indicate that the female population share lies between 45% and 58% in all but 2 of Cheshire East's 244 LSOAs. The only outliers are the Cheshire East LSOAs 043A (39.5% female) and 043D (37.6%), which are in central Crewe, to the immediate north of the Nantwich Road retail parade. It may be that the predominantly male composition of the population in those neighbourhoods is related to its ethnic mix and migration population flows, though it is also possible that the ONS estimates for those areas are less accurate and may be underestimating the female population. Population estimates can be much more difficult to calculate in areas where significant inward or outward migration occurs, and population groups are transitory and less commonly recorded in administrative data records.

Population by rural/urban area and settlement

4.15 For sub-areas of Cheshire East, including rural/urban areas and settlements, the most recent ONS population estimates are for mid-2024.[40] These showed that Crewe (population 81,300[41]) and Macclesfield (55,200) were the largest settlements in the borough. Even Crewe accounted for (slightly) less than one-fifth (19.3%) of Cheshire East's population (see Table 4.2a) and Macclesfield just over one-eighth (13.1%), which is an indication of how widely distributed the borough's population is between its various towns and smaller settlements.

4.16 The other main centres, in descending order of population size, were the towns of Congleton (33,200), Wilmslow (26,400), Sandbach (23,400), Nantwich (17,600), Alsager (14,700), Middlewich (14,600), Knutsford (13,700) and Poynton (13,500). Bollington and Handforth (with populations of 7,000 to 8,000), the only other Cheshire East settlements that identify themselves as towns, were next largest, though Holmes Chapel and Shavington (with populations of 6,500 to 7,000) were almost as big. Alderley Edge (5,100) and Disley (5,000) were the other settlements with populations of 5,000 or more.

4.17 Based on the latest official rural-urban classification, the ONS 2021 classification, more than one-sixth of the population (18.0% as of 2024) lived in rural areas.[42] These areas include some sparsely populated and, in some cases, relatively isolated

[39] Source: Mid-year population estimates for small areas, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' November 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates for small areas): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[40] Source: Mid-year population estimates for small areas, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' November 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates for small areas): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[41] This 'Crewe' definition covers the whole of Crewe Town Council, but also the whole residential population of the parishes of Rope, Willaston, Wistaston and Woolstanwood, most of the residential population in the parish of Leighton, and parts of the parish of Shavington (the Gresty Brook parish ward and the part of the Chatsworth Park housing estate).

[42] Sources: [1] Mid-year population estimates for small areas, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' November 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates for small areas): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk. [2] OA based 2021 Rural Urban Classification for England and Wales, ONS, August 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/ruralurbanclassifications/2021ruralurbanclassification

settlements, not just in the Peak District National Park area, but also the west of Nantwich.

4.18 Looking at the main settlements (20 out of 24) that can be reasonably fitted to ONS LSOAs (Table 4.2a), the age structure of the local population varies significantly across the borough, with the youngest age profiles occurring in certain towns (most obviously Crewe, Handforth, Macclesfield, Sandbach and Wilmslow, but others as well) and in Shavington.

4.19 Only 16.3% of Crewe's and 19.3% of Shavington's population was aged 65 and above. In Handforth, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Sandbach and Wilmslow, the proportion was also below the borough average (22.5%, as of 2024). Poynton (31.0%) was the only town where this age group's population share exceeded 26%, but the smaller settlement of Prestbury had a higher share still (32.9%).

4.20 The 0 to 15 age group's population share was greatest in Shavington (19.9%) and Wilmslow (19.1%) and also exceeded the borough average (17.4%, as of 2024) in the towns of Alsager, Congleton, Crewe, Handforth, Knutsford and Sandbach. It was lowest (13.5%) in Alderley Edge.

4.21 The 16 to 64 age group made up a substantially higher proportion of the population in Crewe (64.7%) than anywhere else, followed by Macclesfield (62.0%) and Middlewich (61.9%). Handforth, Sandbach and Shavington also had above-average shares in this age group.

4.22 Rural areas had a much older age structure than urban parts of the borough. 27.3% of their (rural areas') residents were aged 65 and above (against 21.5% in urban areas). Both the 0 to 15 and 16 to 64 age groups made up relatively low shares of the population (15.5% and 57.2% respectively) in rural areas.

4.23 For comparison, Table 4.2b shows the total population and age structure for the other 4 settlements that are within in the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy. The figures for these 4 settlements are presented separately to those for the other main 20 settlements, given that they are defined in terms of OAs, rather than LSOAs. As this indicates, all 4 of these settlements have relatively old populations (compared to the Cheshire East average). In Audlem and Goostrey, the proportion of the population aged 65 (over 40%) is significantly greater than in any of the borough's other 20 main settlements, and the proportions in the 0 to 15 and 16 to 64 age groups are correspondingly (along with Alderley Edge for 0 to 15s) the lowest of all 24 settlements.

Table 4.2a: Population (total and by age), by rural/urban class and settlement, 2024

Area name	Total, 2024	Share (%) of borough total	% aged 0 to 15	% aged 16 to 64	% aged 65 and above
Cheshire East	421,300	100.0%	17.4%	60.0%	22.5%
Rural areas	75,900	18.0%	15.5%	57.2%	27.3%
Urban areas	345,400	82.0%	17.9%	60.6%	21.5%
Alderley Edge	5,100	1.2%	13.5%	57.0%	29.5%
Alsager	14,700	3.5%	18.5%	56.8%	24.7%
Bollington	8,000	1.9%	16.3%	59.2%	24.5%
Chelford	1,700	0.4%	16.1%	55.9%	28.0%
Congleton	33,200	7.9%	17.7%	58.8%	23.5%
Crewe	81,300	19.3%	18.9%	64.7%	16.3%
Disley	5,000	1.2%	16.5%	57.6%	25.9%
Handforth	7,400	1.8%	18.4%	60.7%	20.9%
Haslington	4,600	1.1%	14.7%	57.1%	28.2%
Holmes Chapel	6,900	1.6%	17.4%	55.1%	27.6%
Knutsford	13,700	3.3%	18.6%	57.0%	24.5%
Macclesfield	55,200	13.1%	17.2%	62.0%	20.8%
Middlewich	14,600	3.5%	17.4%	61.9%	20.8%
Mobberley	3,200	0.8%	17.2%	52.3%	30.5%
Nantwich	17,600	4.2%	15.3%	58.7%	26.0%
Poynton	13,500	3.2%	17.4%	51.5%	31.0%
Prestbury	3,400	0.8%	14.3%	52.9%	32.9%
Sandbach	23,400	5.5%	17.7%	60.8%	21.5%
Shavington	6,600	1.6%	19.9%	60.8%	19.3%
Wilmslow	26,400	6.3%	19.1%	59.9%	21.0%
Other settlements[43]	75,700	18.0%	15.8%	58.3%	25.9%

[43] 'Other settlements' means the areas of Cheshire East not covered by the 20 settlements listed in this table.

Table 4.2b: Population statistics (OA-based settlement areas), 2024

Area name	Total, 2024	Share (%) of borough total	% aged 0 to 15	% aged 16 to 64	% aged 65 and above
Audlem	1,900	0.5%	13.5%	44.1%	42.4%
Bunbury	1,300	0.3%	15.4%	52.8%	31.8%
Goostrey	2,000	0.5%	12.6%	47.2%	40.3%
Wrenbury	900	0.2%	20.3%	53.2%	26.4%

Ethnic composition

4.24 The Census remains the most up-to-date source of data on ethnicity within Cheshire East.[44] At the time of the 2021 Census, only 5.6% of the borough's population classified themselves as non-white, compared to an England average of 19.0%. However, Cheshire East's ethnic diversity has increased over time (non-whites accounted for only 3.3% of the borough's residents in 2011) and the non-white proportion is significantly above the borough average (though still below the national share) in Handforth (13.3%), Wilmslow (11.5%), Alderley Edge (7.8%) and Crewe (8.6%).

4.25 Black, Asian and Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups each made up a lower share of the population in the borough's rural areas than in its urban areas. This difference was particularly notable for Asians (who comprise 2.8% of Cheshire East's urban population, but only 1.7% in its rural areas).

4.26 Cheshire East's Asian population (and particularly its Chinese population) is relatively concentrated in Wilmslow and Handforth. As of 2021, Wilmslow accounted for only 6.4% of the borough's total population, but was home to 16.3% of its Asian residents (and more specifically to 30.4% of Cheshire East's Chinese population, 18.3% of its Bangladeshis and 14.4% of its Pakistanis). Only 1.8% of Cheshire East residents lived in Handforth, but the town had 10.7% of the borough's Chinese population. Wilmslow and Handforth also accounted for relatively large shares of Cheshire East's Arab population (23.7% and 11.1% respectively).

4.27 Cheshire East saw a substantial inflow of migrants from Eastern Europe from the early 2000s onwards. Many of those Eastern Europeans are still living in the borough and are very heavily concentrated in Crewe. The Census evidence is consistent with that demographic change, with a reported 10.5% of Crewe's population in the 'Other White' (non-British, non-Irish white) ethnic sub-group, compared to shares of below 5% in all other Cheshire East settlements.

4.28 The 2021 Census indicated a total Gypsy/Irish Traveller population of 345 (up by 10.2% on the 2011 figure of 313). These Traveller communities are relatively concentrated in Crewe, with a total of 147 residents (42.6% of the borough's Traveller population) living in the town as of 2021. Congleton, Macclesfield, Middlewich and

[44] 2021 Census Table TS021 (Ethnic group) and 2011 Census Table KS201EW (Ethnic group), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

Sandbach each accounted for between 5% and 10% of the Traveller population. In the other 19 settlements (the others in the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy), the number of Travellers was below 10 (a share of 3% or less of the borough total). Compared to 2011, the figures indicate an increase of 57 (63.3%) in the number of Travellers in Crewe and the Traveller populations of Middlewich and Nantwich (49 and 25 respectively in 2011) more than halving, but these shifts may be related to the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time of the 2021 Census, rather than a permanent change or long-term trend.

Population change by component

4.29 ONS' mid-year population estimates can also be broken down into the components that make up population change, namely births, deaths, inward/outward migration and other change. The data[45] indicate that, over the 2015-25 period:[46]

- gross **inward** internal migration (197,400) exceeded gross **outward** internal migration (157,800) by 39,500, making **net** inward internal migration the biggest contributor to Cheshire East's population growth over that 10-year period[47]
- gross inward **international** migration (29,700) exceeded gross outward international migration (20,000) by 9,700, meaning that net inward international migration also made a sizeable, positive contribution to Cheshire East's population growth
- deaths (42,200) exceeded births (36,800) by 5,300, meaning that so-called 'natural' change (births net of deaths) made a negative contribution (in other words, the borough's population would have declined, were it not for migration flows more than offsetting that)
- 'other' change accounted for a net increase of 3,000 in the borough's population, though it had a negligible impact (changing the population by less 100 a year) in the last few years (2022 to 2025) of the 2015 to 2025 period[48]

[45] Source: Table MYEB3 ('Annual mid-year population estimates, estimated components of population change for England and Wales, by local authority (as of April 2023)') from the 'Population estimates and components of population change: Detailed time series 2011 to 2025' data file, 'Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2025' statistical release, ONS, July 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales

[46] All figures calculated using unrounded data and then independently rounded off to the nearest 100. Hence the net change figures reported here (for example, deaths net of births) do not necessarily equal the difference between the (rounded) gross changes.

[47] As explained in this report's glossary (Appendix 1), **internal** migration refers to moves within the UK, whereas **international** migration refers to moves into or out of the UK. Therefore, a household moving from, for example, Cardiff to Cheshire East, would be counted under internal migration, but a household moving from Dublin to Cheshire East would be counted under international migration.

[48] 'Other' change includes changes to the numbers of people in any local prisons (Styal in Cheshire East's case) and (not applicable to Cheshire East) changes to the size of UK and any foreign countries' armed forces (and their dependants) stationed in the area in question.

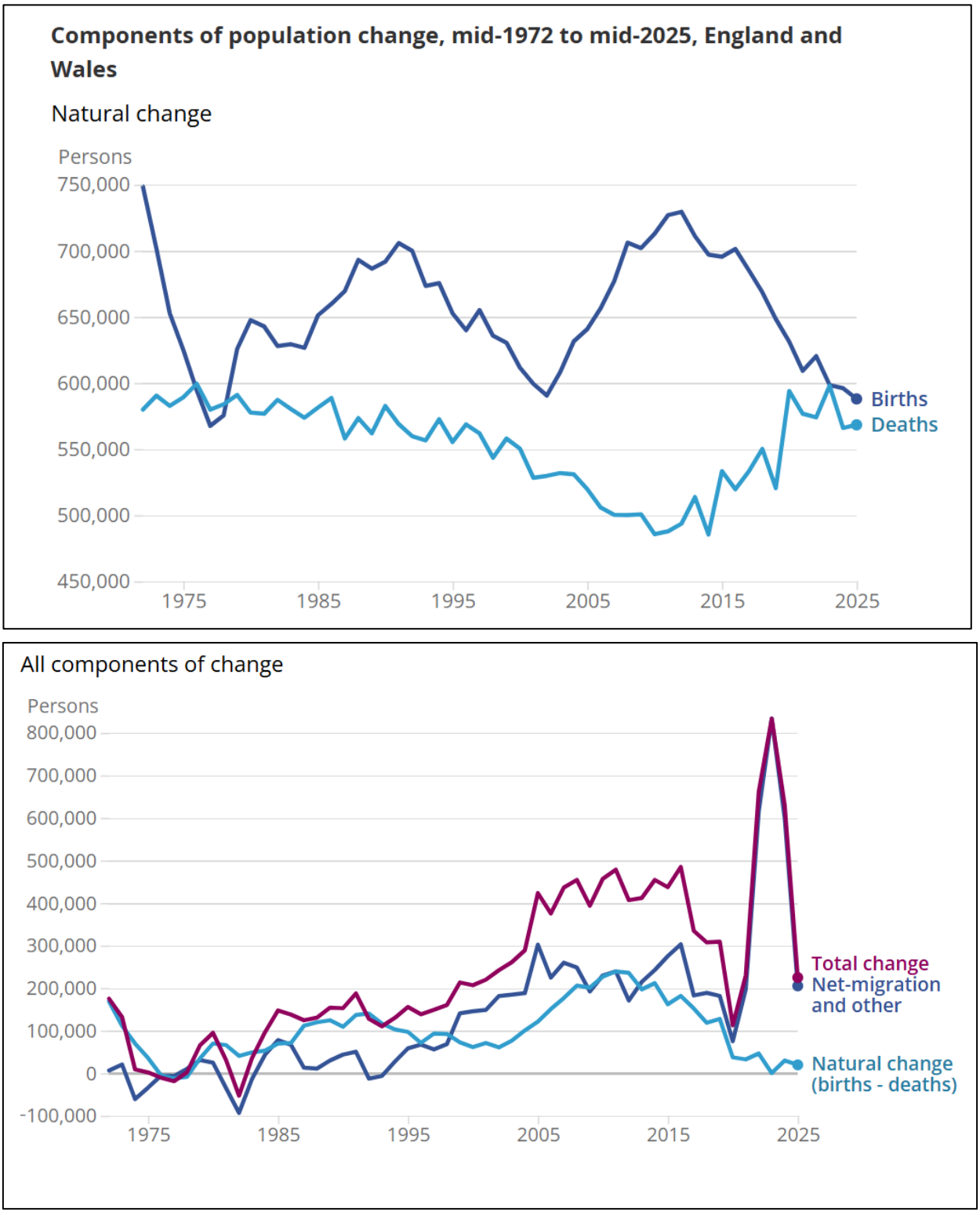
4.30 For Cheshire East, the contribution (9,700) of **net** inward **international** migration to 2015 to 2025 population growth equates to an average of around 1,000 a year. However, the contribution from this component of population change was at historically high levels in 3 of the last 4 years of the data series (2021 to 2024), reaching 2,200 for the 12-month period ending in mid-2022, 3,900 for the following 12 months, and 2,000 during the year ending mid-2024 (though for the year to mid-2025, it was only 700). In contrast, the highest net inflow of international migrants into Cheshire East during 2015 to 2021 was 1,000 (in the year to mid-2016) and 2018 to 2021 saw 3 consecutive years of small net **outflows** (100, 300 and 100 respectively). This shift in net migration is largely due to a substantial increase in **gross** inward international migration, which remained well below 3,000 in each year of the 2015 to 2021 period, but rose to 4,000 for 2021 to 2022 and 5,800 for 2022 to 2023 and remained historically high (4,100) for the 12-month period ending in mid-2024, before dropping to 2,900 for 2024 to 2025.

4.31 The most recent year's population growth in Cheshire East (that is, the 5,000-strong increase between 2024 and 2025) was primarily attributable to net inward internal migration (plus 5,100), with net inward international migration (plus 700, as noted earlier) also making a positive contribution to the year-on-year growth. Natural change (minus 900, due to deaths exceeding births) slightly offset the impact of the net migration inflows.

4.32 The charts in Figure 4.4 show how, at national (England **and** Wales[49]) level, net migration (net internal plus net international migration) increased to historically high levels during the late 1990s and early 2000s, with a further spike in the early 2020s, making it by far the main contributor to recent population growth over the last 20 years. This contrasts with the preceding 20 years (1975 to 1995), when natural change often matched and frequently exceeded the contribution of net migration. The growing importance of net migration (in stimulating population growth in very recent years) is therefore part of the national as well as the local (Cheshire East) picture.

[49] Although, where possible, for the sake of consistency, this baseline evidence report uses data for England to provide a national picture, an equivalent chart for England alone (excluding Wales) could not be very readily found or constructed: hence Figure 4.4 presents data for England **and** Wales.

Figure 4.4: Components of population change in England and Wales, 1975 to 2025[50]



[50] Charts taken from Figure 3 of 'Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2025', ONS, July 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationestimatesforenglandandwales/mid2025

Migration flows

4.33 ONS' annual population estimates datasets include data on the migration flows between individual unitary and district local authorities in England and Wales, as well as flows between those authorities and Scotland/Northern Ireland. The latest such data,[51] which relates to migration movements in the year ending June 2025, shows that the largest flows into or out of Cheshire East are ones involving adjacent and other nearby local authorities.

4.34 The largest inflows (people moving to Cheshire East) were from the neighbouring authorities of Stockport (2,050 people), Manchester (1,850), Cheshire West and Chester (1,450) and Trafford (950), as shown in Table 4.3. Other authorities featuring among the 20 largest inflows included the other councils bordering Cheshire East, namely Newcastle-under-Lyme (700), Warrington (350), Staffordshire Moorlands (350), High Peak (300) and Shropshire (300), as well as Stoke-on-Trent (700), which nearly adjoins the borough.

4.35 The largest outflows (people leaving Cheshire East) present a similar picture (see Table 4.4). The biggest 3 flows again involve Cheshire West and Chester (1,450), Manchester (1,000) and Stockport (950). The 'top 20' outflows included all Cheshire East's other immediate neighbours: Newcastle-under-Lyme (700), Trafford (400), Staffordshire Moorlands (400), Shropshire (350), Warrington (300) and High Peak (250), as well as Stoke-on-Trent (500). As with the 'top 20' inflows, others in the 'top 20' outflows list were almost all authorities that are either relatively geographically close, or among England's largest cities.[52]

Table 4.3: Largest migration inflows into Cheshire East, year ending June 2025

Origin (unitary/district authority name)	Count (number of people moving to Cheshire East)	Share (%) of total population moving to Cheshire East
Stockport	2,050	9.6%
Manchester	1,850	8.7%
Cheshire West and Chester	1,450	6.8%
Trafford	950	4.5%
Liverpool	750	3.5%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	700	3.4%

[51] Table IM2025-T2: 2023 LA boundaries, 'Internal migration estimates, England and Wales local authorities and Scotland and Northern Ireland, year ending June 2025' data file, 'Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2025' statistical release, ONS, July 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/internalmigrationinenglandandwales

[52] The presence of York (an exception to this) in Table 4.4 may possibly reflect people working in the railway industry moving there from the Crewe area, as part of a job relocation.

Origin (unitary/district authority name)	Count (number of people moving to Cheshire East)	Share (%) of total population moving to Cheshire East
Stoke-on-Trent	700	3.4%
Salford	500	2.4%
Leeds	400	1.8%
Tameside	350	1.8%
Warrington	350	1.7%
Staffordshire Moorlands	350	1.6%
Sheffield	350	1.5%
High Peak	300	1.4%
Birmingham	300	1.4%
Shropshire	300	1.4%
Nottingham	200	1.0%
Wigan	200	0.9%
Stafford	150	0.8%
Oldham	150	0.8%
Other (all other UK local authorities, including those in Scotland/Northern Ireland)	8,850	41.6%
Total	21,200	100.0%

Table 4.4: Largest migration outflows from Cheshire East, year ending June 2025

Destination (unitary/district authority name)	Count (number of people moving to Cheshire East)	Share (%) of total population moving to Cheshire East
Cheshire West and Chester	1,450	8.9%
Manchester	1,000	6.2%
Stockport	950	6.0%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	700	4.3%
Liverpool	700	4.2%
Stoke-on-Trent	500	3.2%
Trafford	400	2.6%
Staffordshire Moorlands	400	2.6%

Destination (unitary/district authority name)	Count (number of people moving to Cheshire East)	Share (%) of total population moving to Cheshire East
Leeds	350	2.1%
Shropshire	350	2.0%
Sheffield	300	2.0%
Warrington	300	1.8%
Salford	250	1.7%
High Peak	250	1.4%
Newcastle upon Tyne	200	1.2%
Birmingham	200	1.2%
Nottingham	200	1.1%
Tameside	150	1.0%
York	150	1.0%
Wirral	150	0.8%
Other (all other UK local authorities, including those in Scotland/ Northern Ireland)	7,200	44.6%
Total	16,150	100.0%

Projections of future change

4.36 In 2015, Opinion Research Services (ORS) produced population forecasts up to 2030, to inform the Local Plan's assessment of housing need. Those ORS forecasts factor in the actual level of housing delivery (1,800 net new dwellings per annum) set out in the adopted 2010 to 2030 Local Plan Strategy. The ORS forecasts remained the most reliable indicator of future population change even after the ONS published its 2018-based subnational projections, or SNPPs (in 2020). This reflects the fact that the SNPPs generally do not consider any policy changes (such as economic and housing development policies) that have not yet occurred, nor those that have not yet had an impact on observed trends. Consequently, the SNPPs are not forecasts and do not attempt to predict future demographic change.

4.37 However, as the ORS forecasts go up to only 2030 and do not take account of any demographic evidence from the last decade (most notably the 2021 Census results), they are now considered less informative, particularly for local plan update purposes, than ONS' latest (2022-based) SNPPs (published in June 2025).

4.38 The commentary that follows is therefore based on data from the 2022-based SNPPs[53] and more specifically from the particular 2022-based SNPP variant projection that ONS advises people to use by default, the migration category variant. [54]

4.39 The population is projected to increase from 406,600 in 2022 to 500,100 (up 93,500) by 2047, according to the 2022-based SNPP migration category variant (see Table 4.5). This equates to growth of 23.0% (an average growth rate of 0.8% per year) for Cheshire East over the 2022 to 2047 period (against a projected 0.5% a year, for England).

4.40 As for individual age groups, the migration category variant projects relatively strong growth in the population aged 65 and above (up by 46.5%, or an average of 1.5% a year, during 2022 to 2047), modest growth in the size of the 15 to 64 population (up 19.5%) and relatively little change in the numbers aged 0 to 14 (up 3.9%, which equates to average growth of 0.2% per year). For England, the migration category variant projected rates of change are slower for the 65 and above group (38.6%) and the 15 to 64 group (10.6%) and negative (down 7.2%) for the 0 to 14 group.

Table 4.5: 2022-based subnational population projections (SNPPs) for Cheshire East[55]

Age group	Level, 2022[56]	Level, 2047	Absolute change, 2022-47	% change, 2022-47	Age group % share, 2022	Age group % share, 2047
0 to 14	66,600	69,200	2,600	3.9%	16.4%	13.8%
15 to 64	248,600	297,100	48,500	19.5%	61.1%	59.4%
65 and above	91,400	133,800	42,400	46.5%	22.5%	26.8%
All ages	406,600	500,100	93,500	23.0%	100.0%	100.0%

[53] 'Subnational population projections for England: 2022-based' release, ONS, June 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/subnationalpopulationprojectionsforengland/2022based

[54] Looking at how the projections match up to the very latest (mid-2024) population estimates, the new (2022-based) SNPP migration category variant figure for 2024 (417,100) is, unsurprisingly, relatively close to the mid-year estimate of 421,300 (only 1.0% below it). The older (2018-based SNPP and ORS) projections and forecasts, limited by their dependency on more dated sets of evidence, fare less well, but with the ORS projection of 410,500 still being far closer to (2.6% below) the mid-2024 estimate than the 2018-based SNPP figure is (the latter is 6.8% below the mid-2024 estimate).

[55] As noted in the report's preceding narrative, these figures are for the 2022-based SNPPs' migration category variant projection.

[56] The 2022 population figures used by the 2022-based SNPPs are taken from ONS' original population estimates for mid-2022, which it has since revised.

5 Economy

Strategy and policy background

5.1 The Cheshire East Plan 2025 to 2029[57] includes a commitment to unlock prosperity for all. This commitment includes the following economic ambitions:

- opportunities created for all communities across the borough working with our world-leading industries and local businesses
- a reduction in child, family and adult poverty
- education, skills and life-long learning leading to employment and roles in the community
- a shared vision for Crewe that delivers a masterplan for jobs, affordable homes and regeneration for the benefit of the whole borough

5.2 The existing (2010 to 2030) Local Plan identifies the importance of economic prosperity, and the role played by a strong economy in achieving the wider goals of good quality and affordable housing, a better and more sustainable transport system, improved community facilities, improved educational attainment and vibrant town centres.[58] New housing and business premises (employment land) development are crucial to this ambition. The Plan provides for a minimum of 380 hectares of land for business, general industrial, and storage and distribution uses over the period 2010 to 2030, to support growth of the local economy.

5.3 Economic development and regeneration is a major priority for the council. The key regeneration schemes are those relating to Crewe and Macclesfield town centre, the Garden Village development (of 1,500 homes and associated amenities) at Handforth[59] and the development of employment opportunities at Basford, on the southern outskirts of Crewe.[60] Recent achievements in Crewe include redevelopment of the former Royal Arcade site and the refurbishment and reopening of the Market Hall. Plans for further improving the town's public realm and expanding its cultural services and activities are set out in the Crewe Public Realm Strategy and Crewe Cultural Strategy.[61]

5.4 The Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy 2023 to 2028[62] sets out the council's aspirations for its tourism industry. Its ambition is to see the value of the borough's visitor economy grow to more than £1 billion, along with several associated priorities:

[57] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/council-and-democracy/corporate-plans/cheshire-east-plan-2025-29.pdf
[58] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/local-plan/local-plan-strategy-web-version-1.pdf
[59] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/major_regeneration_projects/the-garden-village-at-handforth.aspx
[60] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/major_regeneration_projects/major-development-and-regeneration-projects.aspx
[61] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/major_regeneration_projects/crewe-town-centre-regeneration-programme/crewe-town-centre-regeneration-programme.aspx
[62] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/business/cheshire-east-visitor-economy-strategy-2023-2028/cheshire-east-visitor-economy-strategy-2023-2028.pdf

- to position Cheshire East as a destination of choice for staycations: both day and staying visits
- consideration of new, emerging and changing trends in the Cheshire visitor economy
- development of initiatives focused on sustainability and the green agenda to support business growth and extend options for consumers
- ensuring accessibility and inclusivity are prioritised in tourism development in Cheshire East
- working together with business to address staff shortage, recruitment, and retention in the Hospitality sector
- evolving the business visits and events market in Cheshire East as part of a wider place-based strategy across Cheshire and Warrington

5.5 At subregional level, the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy[63] sets out a vision for Cheshire and Warrington to be "the UK's healthiest, most sustainable, inclusive, and fastest-growing area by 2045", building on the area's longstanding economic strengths.

Economic output and productivity

Total GVA: current value and past trends

5.6 Data are published by ONS, at (and above) local authority, for 2 measures of economic output: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and GVA. Of the two, GDP is the more widely recognised measure. However, GVA can be estimated for individual industries at local authority and other subnational levels, whereas GDP cannot. Therefore, this report focuses only on GVA statistics, drawing on the latest published ONS data.[64]

5.7 All the monetary (£) figures cited in this report (whether for GVA or other indicators) are expressed in constant (2023) prices and the statistics on GVA change over time are derived from these. Hence the GVA trends figures relate to changes in the **volume** (quantities) of economic output rather than the **value** (the prices times the quantities). As such, all the GVA figures cited here are expressed in 'real' (inflation-adjusted) terms, not nominal terms.[65]

[63] Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (consultation draft), summer 2025: https://cheshireandwarrington.com/what-we-do/sustainability-inclusion/cheshire-and-warrington-sustainable-inclusive-economic-strategy/

[64] 'Regional GVA (balanced) by industry: all International Territorial Level (ITL) regions' data file published as part of the 'Regional economic activity by gross domestic product, UK: 1998 to 2023' statistical release, ONS, April 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/regionaleconomicactivitybygrossdomesticproductuk/1998to2023

[65] Source of the data used to convert the published economic output data into 2023 prices: 'GDP quarterly national accounts time series' dataset published as part of the 'GDP quarterly national accounts, UK: October

5.8 Cheshire East's total GVA was estimated to be £16.7 billion as of 2023. Between 1998 and 2013, the borough's GVA growth averaged 2.4% a year in real terms, which exceeded the average rates for the North West (1.8% a year) and England (2.1% a year) over the same period. However, as shown in Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1, the borough's average was markedly slower during 2013 to 2023 (1.0% a year), both compared to 1998 to 2013 performance and to the 2013 to 23 rates for the North West (2.1%) and England (1.6%). GVA growth in Cheshire East was particularly weak during the final 5 years of this period, averaging 0.3% a year for 2018 to 23, against rates of 1.8% and 1.0% for the North West and England respectively. In particular, the data suggest Cheshire East had a slower and less substantial post-COVID-19 economic recovery than the region or country or generally, expanding by only 1.0% in 2021 (whereas the North West and England each expanded by around 9% that year).

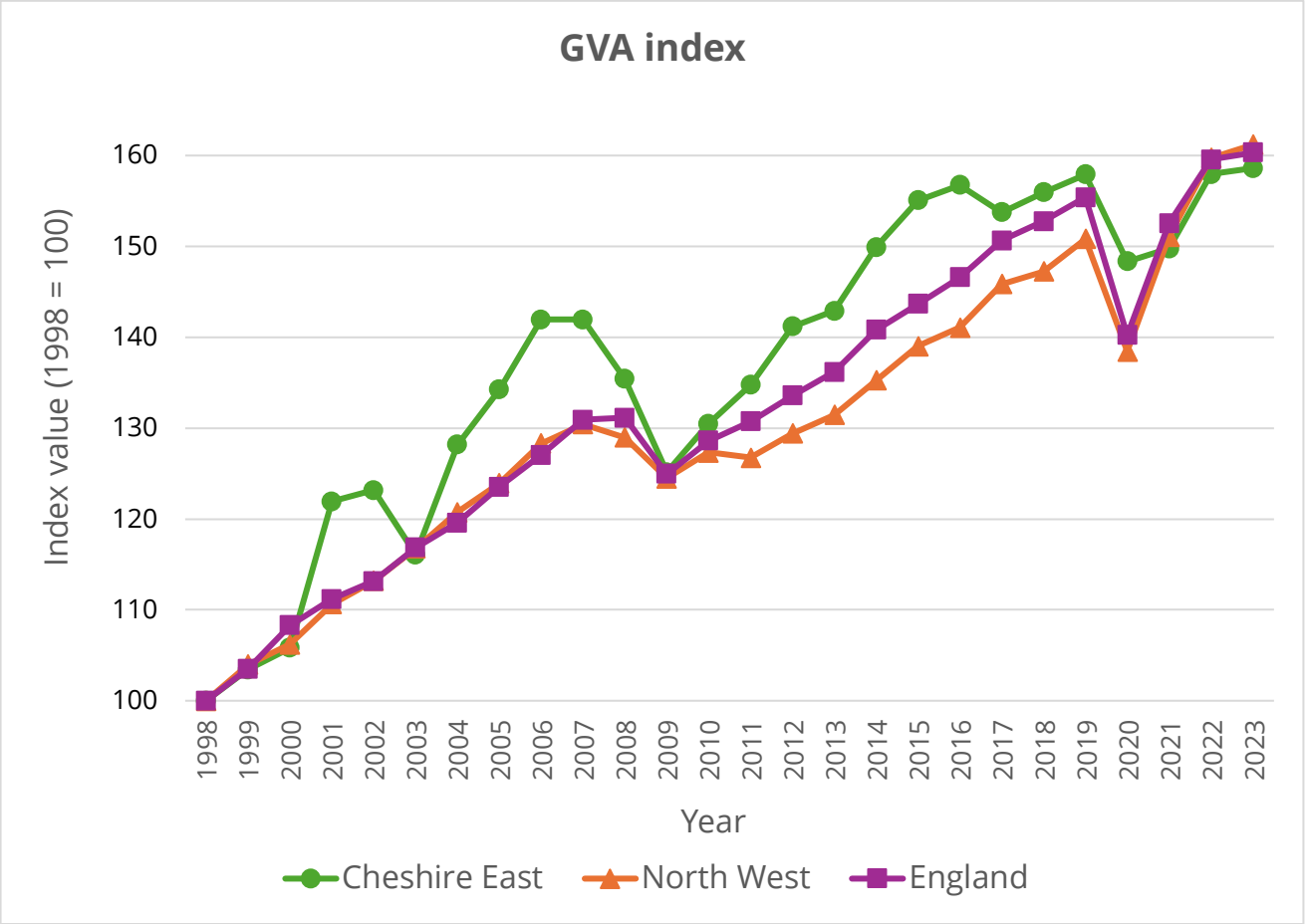
5.9 Whilst this suggests Cheshire East's economic growth rate has slowed and continues to lag behind that of the region and country, GVA and other economic output measures are notoriously difficult to estimate (particularly so for smaller geographical areas) and therefore the size of the growth rate gap (between Cheshire East and the region or the UK) should be regarded with some caution until a longer post-COVID-19 data series is available.

Table 5.1: Real (inflation-adjusted) average GVA growth per year (%), 1998 to 2023

Time period	Cheshire East	North West	England	Difference between Cheshire East and England rates
1998-2023	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	0.0%
1998-2013	2.4%	1.8%	2.1%	0.3%
2013-23	1.0%	2.1%	1.6%	-0.6%
2013-18	1.8%	2.3%	2.3%	-0.6%
2018-23	0.3%	1.8%	1.0%	-0.6%
2018-19	1.3%	2.4%	1.7%	-0.5%
2019-20	-6.0%	-8.2%	-9.8%	3.7%
2020-21	1.0%	9.1%	8.8%	-7.8%
2021-22	5.5%	5.7%	4.6%	0.9%
2022-23	0.4%	0.9%	0.5%	0.0%

to December 2025' release, ONS, March 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/quarterlynationalaccounts/octobertodecember2025

Figure 5.1: Real (inflation-adjusted) GVA index, 1998 to 2023



5.10 As of 2023, Cheshire East's GVA per head was £40,300, or 11.9% above the England average (£36,000) and 28.2% higher than the North West average (£31,400). These gaps have declined since 2013, when the borough's GVA per head exceeded the national and regional figures by 46.2% and 22.5% respectively. However, whilst it is a widely-cited economic indicator, particularly at national and international level, such comparisons between GVA per head statistics at local authority level and those for much larger geographies should be interpreted with caution. This is because the local authority level figures largely reflect the commuting inflows and outflows (which have a proportionately much greater impact on GVA and the local employment base at authority level than regionally or nationally), as well as geographical differences in the population age structure.[66]

[66] Sources: [1] 'Regional GVA (balanced) by industry: all ITL regions' data file published as part of the 'Regional economic activity by gross domestic product, UK: 1998 to 2023' statistical release, ONS, April 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/regionaleconomicactivitybygrossdomesticproductuk/1998to2023 [2] 'GDP quarterly national accounts time series' dataset published as part of the 'GDP quarterly national accounts, UK: October to December 2025' release, ONS, March 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/quarterlynationalaccounts/octobertodecember2025 [3] Mid-year population estimates, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' July 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

GVA by industry: current and past trends

5.11 The following analysis[67] looks at the industrial composition[68] of GVA, focusing on historic changes over the most recent 10-year period for which figures are available (2013 to 2023).

5.12 The data for very broad industry categories show that the Production sector still (as of 2023) accounts for a far greater proportion of GVA in Cheshire East (31.5%) than in England (11.7%), while (as Table 5.2 shows) the borough's Services sector share is low compared to the national figure (63.8% versus 82.0%), as is the Construction sector share (4.7% versus 6.3%). An important caveat here is that, at Cheshire East level, the GVA shares (even for these 2 very broad sectors) have fluctuated by a few percentage points from year to year, so the 2023 statistics are not necessarily representative of the longer-term picture. Nevertheless, the scale of contrast between Cheshire East's and England's industrial composition is clear: for example, ONS' figures put the Production sector's share at 27% or more in each year of the 1998 to 2023 period, whereas its share in England has never exceeded 15% during that time.

Table 5.2: GVA shares (%), by very broad (3-category) industry, 2013 and 2023

SIC2007 industry category and code(s)	Cheshire East, 2013	England, 2013	Cheshire East, 2023	England, 2023
Production (A to E)	33.8%	12.5%	31.5%	11.7%
Construction (F)	4.5%	6.3%	4.7%	6.3%
Services (G to T)	61.8%	81.2%	63.8%	82.0%

5.13 Looking at a more detailed industry breakdown for Cheshire East (the 16-category breakdown shown in Table 5.3 and Figure 5.2), the Manufacturing sector's GVA share has remained relatively static over the long term (though with some short-term fluctuations). In 2023, this sector made up an estimated 28.7% of the borough's economic output. According to ONS' estimates, the sector's share of Cheshire East GVA has varied between 24% and 31% since 2013, but has not followed any obvious long-term trend in recent years.

[67] Sources: [1] 'Regional GVA (balanced) by industry: all ITL regions' data file published as part of the 'Regional economic activity by gross domestic product, UK: 1998 to 2023' statistical release, ONS, April 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/regionaleconomicactivitybygrossdomesticproductuk/1998to2023 [2] 'GDP quarterly national accounts time series' dataset published as part of the 'GDP quarterly national accounts, UK: October to December 2025' release, ONS, March 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/quarterlynationalaccounts/octobertodecember2025

[68] Because of the 'chain-linking' approach followed by ONS in producing its real (inflation-adjusted) GVA estimates, ONS' published real GVA figures for individual industries do not sum to the published overall ('all industries') totals. However, the percentage shares for each industry cited in this report (shares derived by Cheshire East Council) were calculated as a proportion of the sum of the figures for individual industries, so that those shares sum to 100%, allowing meaningful comparisons of each industry's GVA share.

5.14 Other major contributors to the borough's GVA (those with GVA shares of 8% or more as of 2023) were Wholesale and retail (11.8% share in 2023, with no apparent long-term trend in its share), Real estate activities (11.4% share in 2023, virtually unchanged from 2013), and Professional, scientific and technical activities (9.3% in 2023, again very similar to its share in 2013).

Table 5.3: GVA shares (%), by broad (16-category) industry, 2013 and 2023

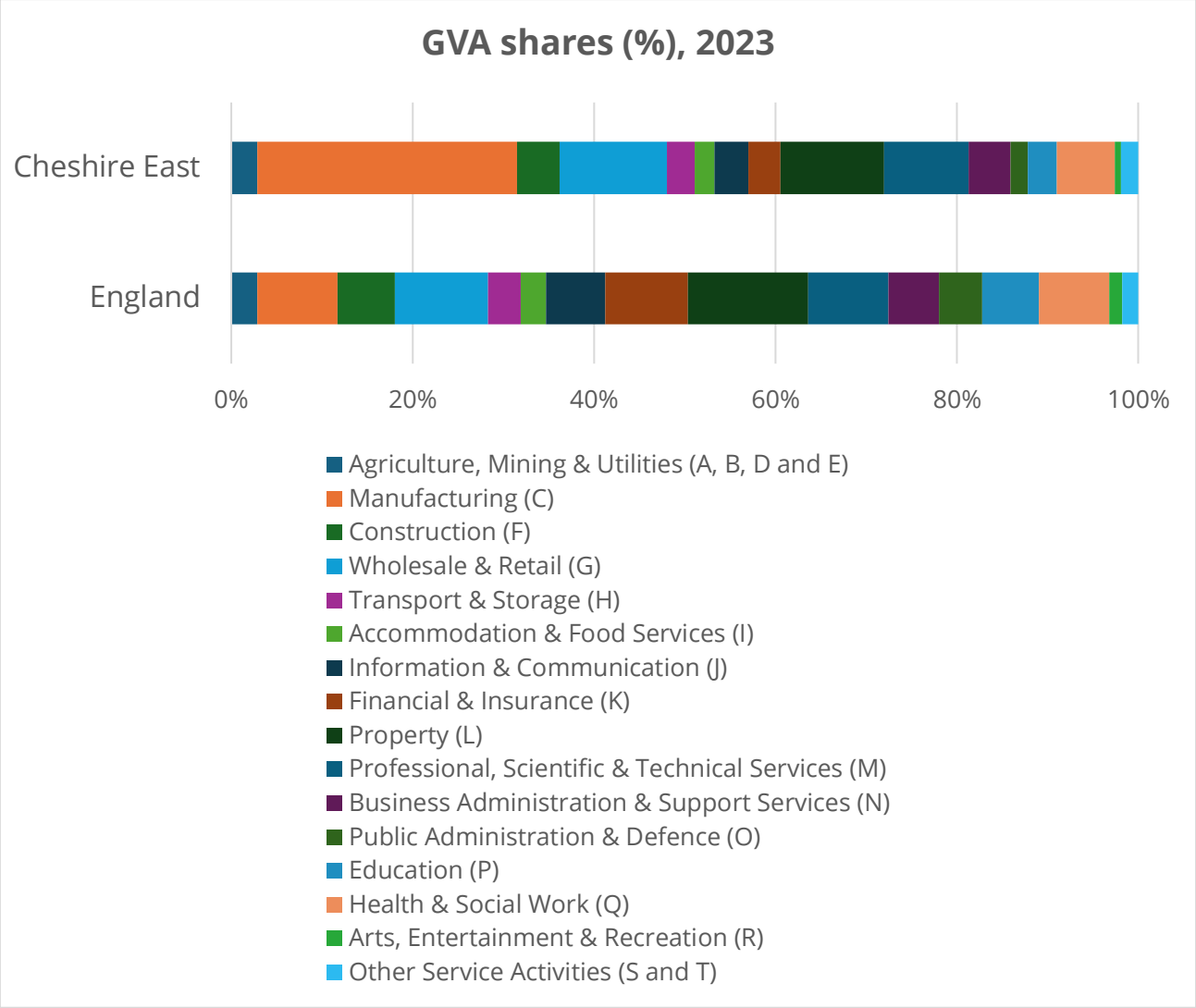
SIC2007 industry category and code(s)	Cheshire East, 2013	England, 2013	Cheshire East, 2023	England, 2023
Agriculture, mining and utilities (A, B, D, E)	2.6%	3.1%	2.8%	2.9%
Manufacturing (C)	30.9%	9.3%	28.7%	8.8%
Construction (F)	4.5%	6.2%	4.7%	6.3%
Wholesale and retail (G)	9.6%	11.2%	11.8%	10.3%
Transport and storage (H)	4.6%	4.1%	3.1%	3.6%
Accommodation and food services (I)	2.6%	3.2%	2.1%	2.8%
Information and communication (J)	2.8%	3.8%	3.8%	6.5%
Finance and insurance (K)	4.8%	10.3%	3.5%	9.1%
Real estate activities (L)	11.5%	13.4%	11.4%	13.3%
Professional, scientific and technical services (M)	8.8%	7.9%	9.3%	8.8%
Business administration and support services (N)	3.1%	4.8%	4.6%	5.6%
Public administration and defence (O)	1.8%	4.7%	1.9%	4.8%
Education (P)	3.1%	5.8%	3.2%	6.2%
Health and social work (Q)	7.0%	8.8%	6.4%	7.7%
Arts, entertainment and recreation (R)	1.0%	1.6%	0.7%	1.5%
Other services (S, T)	1.4%	1.7%	1.9%	1.8%

5.15 Although agriculture plays a relatively greater part in the economy of Cheshire East than in many other areas of the UK, the proportion of Cheshire East GVA contributed by Agriculture, mining and utilities was only 2.8% in 2023, which is similar to the

England average (2.9%). (Of this, the Agriculture and mining component[69] accounted for 1.0% of Cheshire East's GVA as of 2023, against 0.7% for England.)

5.16 The most notable evidence of sustained long-term change in the GVA shares in this more detailed, 16-category industry breakdown, is for the Information and communication sector: within Cheshire East, its share rose from 2.8% in 2013 to 3.8% by 2023 (and was just 0.6% back in 1998). For England the GVA share of this sector also increased significantly: from 3.8% in 2013 (itself a sharp rise from 1.0% back in 1998) to 6.5% by 2023. It seems likely that growth in this sector's local and national share over the last few years is in part due to the advances made in (and the consequently greater reliance of consumers, workers and employers on) ICT technology in response to the workplace and travel restrictions arising from the 2020 to 2021 COVID-19 pandemic, as the Cheshire East and England shares both peaked (at 4.6% and 6.7% respectively) in 2020.

Figure 5.2: GVA shares (%), by broad (16-category) industry, 2023 (chart format)



[69] Agriculture and Mining here means the activities falling within SIC2007 codes A and B.

5.17 As shown in Table 5.3 and Figure 5.2, Manufacturing makes up a significantly larger share of GVA in Cheshire East than at national level (28.7% versus 8.8%) and the share for the Wholesale and retail industry is also notably above the national average (11.8% versus 10.3%). However, ONS' estimates suggest that the reverse is true for Construction (4.7% GVA share in Cheshire East as of 2023, compared to 6.3% for England), Information and communication (3.8% versus 6.5%), Finance and insurance (3.5% versus 9.1%), Real estate activities (11.4% versus 13.3%), Public administration and defence (1.9% versus 4.8%), Education (3.2% versus 6.2%), and Health and social work (6.4% versus 7.7%). Bearing in mind the local and national GVA shares for the latter 3 (largely public service) industries, it is reasonable to conclude that public sector activity in general accounts for a somewhat lower proportion of economic output in Cheshire East than in England.

5.18 Of the 47 industries covered by the most detailed GVA breakdown, only 3 contributed 6% or more to GVA in Cheshire East as of 2023 and, for 2 of those, the GVA share was significantly greater locally than at national level. One of these was the Manufacture of petroleum, chemicals and other minerals, which had a 14.1% GVA share in Cheshire East in 2023, compared to only a 2.0% share of England's GVA. Much of this industry's activity can be accounted for by pharmaceuticals manufacturing sites such as AstraZeneca's Macclesfield premises and the Bespak plant at Holmes Chapel. (Despite its relatively high concentration locally, this sector's share of Cheshire East GVA has fallen in recent years: for example, during the 23 years from 1998 to 2020 inclusive, it stayed between 15% and 25%, but has remained in the 10% to 15% range since 2021.) The other industry with a notably high local (Cheshire East) concentration of GVA was the Manufacture of machinery and transport equipment: a 9.5% share, which is up from 3.6% in 2013 (and only 1.7% in 1998) and which compares to only 2.2% in England. This can be primarily explained by the presence of the Bentley Motors plant at Crewe.

Future change in GVA

Local Economy Forecasting Model: overview

5.19 Estimates of future change in GVA can be generated by the Cheshire East LEFM, which is supplied by Cambridge Econometrics, but maintained and operated in-house by the council. The LEFM can produce results for 3 geographical areas: Cheshire East (for which the council can alter some of the underlying assumptions and model input data), the North West, and the UK.

5.20 Using its latest (2026) update of the LEFM, the council produced economic projections for a principal scenario that is based on the latest available evidence on current and projected future population levels and economic activity rates. This scenario assumes that population levels over the 2022 to 2047 period will equal those from ONS' most recent (2022-based) subnational population projections (SNPPs) 'migration category' variant. (As noted in the 'Population' chapter of this report, the migrant category variant is the specific 2022-based SNPP projection that ONS advises people to use by default.) The scenario takes the post-2021 economic activity rate trends for males and

females, in different age groups, from supplementary data tables published as part of the Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) July 2018 Fiscal Sustainability Report,[70] and applies these to the 2021 Census economic activity rates for Cheshire East.[71]

5.21 However, given that the current local plan extends only to 2030 and that potential policies for the new plan are yet to be determined, the principal scenario does not make any assumptions about expected future housing provision and the knock-on consequences for demographic and economic change. Nor does it factor in the impact of any other projects, policies or strategies. Rather, the scenario is based on past demographic trends and relationships, and it assumes these past trends and relationships will continue. Hence this principal scenario is an economic projection, not a forecast. Nevertheless, its projections for future GVA (and future employment) offer a useful reference point when considering different policy options for the new local plan.

5.22 The scenario's results focus mainly on the 2024 to 2047 period. 2024 is taken, in effect, as the base year, as it is the most recent year for which detailed, local-level information on the industrial composition (the employment shares of each industry) was available for Cambridge Econometrics to feed into the 2026 LEFM update.[72] The projections for the principal scenario are reported up to 2047, given that this both is the furthest date ahead for which the 2022-based SNPPs make projections and a date that corresponds broadly to the likely end date for the new local plan.

5.23 The narrative below summarises the key results from the principal scenario's GVA projections. The LEFM's default industry categories (12 broad categories and 45 detailed ones) differ in some respects from those for which the historic (1998 to 2023) GVA data are available. However, to aid comparisons between the historic and projected data, the LEFM's default broad industry categories have been regrouped, in the analysis below, so that they correspond to the individual categories or to groups of categories from the historic data series.

LEFM principal projections for GVA for the 2024 to 2047 period[73]

5.24 Under the principal scenario, the borough's GVA total is expected to increase from £16.0 billion in 2024 to £21.9 billion by 2047, which corresponds to an average growth rate of 1.4% a year in 'real' (inflation-adjusted) terms.[74] GVA growth is projected to be

[70] https://obr.uk/frs/fiscal-sustainability-report-july-2018 Even as of 2026, this 2018 OBR report was still the latest one containing future economic activity rate projections that are sufficiently detailed and forward-looking to inform the council's own economic modelling.

[71] 2021 Census Table RM024 (Economic activity status by sex by age), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[72] Consequently, there is a small time gap (2023 to 2024) between the period covered by this report's analysis of historic GVA change (1998-2023) and its analysis of future GVA change (2024 to 2047).

[73] Principal scenario projections from the 2026 update of the Cheshire East LEFM. This scenario's projections were produced in June 2026. Projections were obtained using Cambridge Econometrics (CE) LEFM software and are consistent with CE's UK Regional Forecast of May 2026. Additional data preparation and aggregation undertaken by Cheshire East Council.

[74] For consistency with the approach taken for the historic (1998 to 2023) GVA analysis earlier in this report and most of the other monetary figures cited elsewhere in the report, the figures quoted here are (like the others) expressed in 2023 prices. The fact that the LEFM's GVA estimate of £16.0 billion for 2024 is lower than the

faster during the first 10 years of this period, 2024 to 2034 (averaging 1.6% a year), than over the 2034 to 2047 period (an average of 1.2%). The projected 1.4% a year average growth rate for 2024 to 2047 is somewhat lower than the 1.9% a year average that (based on ONS' latest historic, real GVA estimates) Cheshire East achieved over a comparably long period, 1998 to 2023. However, it is significantly greater than the average in Cheshire East (1.0% a year) over the final 10 years of that time, 2013 to 2023 (see Table 5.1).

5.25 The GVA growth projections for Cheshire East for 2024 to 2047 do, though, compare favourably to those for the North West (an average of 1.1% a year) and the UK (also 1.1% a year).

5.26 Looking at short-term GVA projections (those from 2024 up to 2028), the principal LEFM scenario indicates year-on-year GVA increases of 3.2% in 2025, 1.2% in 2026, 2.4% in 2027 and 2.5% in 2028. (From 2029 onwards, the projection is for year-on-year GVA growth to vary between 0.9% to 1.5%.) This is consistent with the LEFM's projection for the UK, with the projected increase for 2026 (0.9%) being significantly lower than those for 2025 (1.3%), 2027 (1.7%) or 2028 (1.7%). However, these outcomes are based on the underlying assumptions (determined by Cambridge Econometrics) about the current, difficult economic and geopolitical climate, with conflict in the Persian Gulf (ongoing at the time of writing) having a severe impact on the supply, production and prices of fuel, fertiliser and electronic goods and knock-on consequences for the transport sector, global food production, advanced manufacturing and the wider economy. The GVA annual growth rates, particularly the higher ones projected for 2027 and 2028, may imply a degree of confidence that the situation in the Persian Gulf will most probably be resolved in the short term and that its knock-on effects will not persist for long. If so, that assessment may perhaps prove to be unduly optimistic.

5.27 At broad industry level, GVA growth over the 2024 to 2027 period is projected to be fastest in the Information and communication sector (averaging 2.4% a year) and to also exceed the Cheshire East average (1.4% a year) in Manufacturing (1.6% a year), Accommodation and food services (1.5%) and Public, educational and care services[75] (2.0%). For each broad industry, the projected rates of GVA change in Cheshire East are not wildly different to those for the UK (see Table 5.4).

5.28 As for broad industry GVA shares (Table 5.5), there are 3 industries in Cheshire East for which the share is projected to increase significantly (by one percentage point or more) between 2024 and 2047, namely Manufacturing (rising from 32.1% to 34.1%), Public, educational and care services (up from 13.1% to 15.3%) and Information and communication (up from 4.7% to 5.8%). The largest projected contractions in GVA shares (one percentage point or more) are in Wholesale and retail, and in Financial, professional and business support services.

historic estimate of £16.7 billion for 2023 is a consequence of the 2 sources using different methodologies for estimating GVA, rather than necessarily implying that GVA fell between 2023 and 2024.

[75] This covers public administration, defence, education, health and social work.

5.29 The LEFM projections suggest that the main differences between the local and national industrial structure will remain broadly unchanged up to 2047. For the UK, the projections put the GVA shares at around 10% for Manufacturing in both 2024 and 2047 (against more than 30% for Cheshire East), around 28% (in both 2024 and 2047) for Financial, professional and business support services and around 22% to 23% over the 2024 to 2047 period for Public, educational and care services. The GVA shares of the Construction sector, and the Information and communication industry, are also projected to remain notably higher in the UK than in Cheshire East.

Table 5.4: Average GVA growth per year (%), by broad industry, 2024 and 2047

SIC2007 industry category and code(s)	Cheshire East	UK
Agriculture, mining and utilities (A, B, D and E)	0.5%	-0.1%
Manufacturing (C)	1.6%	0.9%
Construction (F)	0.7%	1.3%
Wholesale and retail (G)	0.9%	0.9%
Transport and storage (H)	0.3%	0.7%
Accommodation and food services (I)	1.5%	1.2%
Information and communication (J)	2.4%	1.7%
Financial, professional and business support services (K, L, M, N)	1.1%	1.0%
Public, educational and care services (O, P, Q)	2.0%	1.2%
Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services (R, S, T)	0.3%	0.5%
Total (all industries)	1.4%	1.0%

Table 5.5: GVA shares (%), by broad industry, 2024 and 2047

SIC2007 industry category and code(s)	Cheshire East, 2024	Cheshire East, 2047	UK, 2024	UK, 2047
Agriculture, mining and utilities (A, B, D, E)	3.9%	3.1%	5.4%	4.2%
Manufacturing (C)	32.1%	34.1%	10.1%	9.8%
Construction (F)	4.4%	3.8%	6.6%	7.0%
Wholesale and retail (G)	12.5%	11.2%	10.9%	10.7%
Transport and storage (H)	3.3%	2.6%	3.9%	3.6%
Accommodation and food Services (I)	2.5%	2.6%	3.1%	3.2%
Information and communication (J)	4.7%	5.8%	7.0%	8.2%

SIC2007 industry category and code(s)	Cheshire East, 2024	Cheshire East, 2047	UK, 2024	UK, 2047
Financial, professional and business support services (K, L, M, N)	20.8%	19.4%	28.2%	27.9%
Public, educational and care services (O, P, Q)	13.1%	15.3%	21.5%	22.5%
Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services (R, S, T)	2.7%	2.1%	3.3%	2.9%

5.30 At the LEFM's most detailed (45-category) industry level, Pharmaceuticals accounted for 15.8% of Cheshire East's GVA in 2024 (a far higher GVA share than for any of the LEFM's other 44 industries), with this share projected to increase to 18.0% by 2047. This would mean Pharmaceuticals maintained its position as the largest contributor to Cheshire East's GVA (see Table 5.6).

5.31 At this same detailed industry level, Motor vehicle manufacturing (6.7%), Wholesale (5.7%), Retail (5.2%) and Health (5.1%) were the borough's next largest industries as of 2024. By 2047, Motor vehicle manufacturing's GVA share is projected to be higher still (7.5%), maintaining its position as the borough's second biggest industry in terms of GVA, followed by Health (increasing to 6.6%), Telecoms and computing services (5.6%, up from 4.4% in 2024) and Retail (5.2%, the same share as in 2024).

5.32 As for rates of growth and decline at this detailed level, the strongest GVA growth in Cheshire East (in case averaging more than 1.8% a year over the 2024 to 2047 period) is expected in 6 major industries:[76] Social work and residential care (3.0%), Health (2.5%), Telecoms and computing services (also 2.5%), Computing and electronic products (1.9%), Motor vehicle manufacturing (also 1.9%) and Pharmaceuticals (also 1.9%). Conversely, there are 4 major industries in which Cheshire East's GVA is projected to contract over the 2024 to 2047 period: Rubber, plastics and non-metallic mineral products (a fall averaging 1.5% a year), Land transport (0.2% a year), Media (0.1%) and Metals and metal products (also 0.1%). In a further 4 major industries, the projected average GVA growth rate per year is slight (0.2% or less): Other manufacturing (0.2%), Other services (0.1%), the Motor vehicle trade (0.1%) and Agriculture, forestry and fishing (less than 0.05%).

[76] For the purposes of this report, 'major' industries means those that (as of 2024) contributed at least £40 million of GVA to the local authority's economy or employed at least 500 people in the borough. Under this definition, 39 of the LEFM's 45 detailed industries are classified as 'major' for Cheshire East. This cut-off point between a 'major' and a 'small' industry is essentially an arbitrary one. However, some kind of distinction between 'small' and larger industries is important, because the projections for smaller sectors are generally less reliable than those for other broad industries, being derived in large part from a national business survey (ONS' BRES survey) and the number of sampled businesses within a given local authority accordingly being smaller (and less likely to be representative) than for larger industries (or larger geographical areas) that have many more employers.

Table 5.6: Industries with a Cheshire East GVA share of at least 5%

SIC2007 industry category and 2-digit numerical code(s)	Average GVA growth per year (%), 2024-47	GVA share (%), 2024	GVA share (%), 2047
Pharmaceuticals (21)	1.9%	15.8%	18.0%
Motor vehicle manufacturing (29)	1.9%	6.7%	7.5%
Health (86)	2.5%	5.1%	6.6%
Telecoms and computing services (61 to 63)	2.5%	4.4%	5.6%
Retail (47)	1.4%	5.2%	5.2%
Wholesale (46)	0.6%	5.7%	4.7%

Productivity

5.33 The latest available ONS productivity estimates at (and above) local authority level cover the period 2004 to 2023. These are badged as 'official statistics in development'[77] and include 2 measures of productivity: economic output (GVA) per filled job and economic output per hour worked. The second of these measures is the more useful of the two, as output per job does not factor in differences (between geographical areas, or over time) in the average number of hours worked per job. The narrative that follows therefore focuses on this second measure.

5.34 These latest estimates put Cheshire East's GVA per hour worked at £47.43 as of 2023, which was 20.7% above the North West figure (£39.31) and 11.9% higher than the England average (£42.39).[78] This is consistent with the borough's high concentration of jobs and GVA in industries like vehicle and pharmaceuticals manufacturing and in some high-skilled service sector activities, where productivity tends to be relatively high. Over the whole 2004 to 2023 period, the borough's GVA per hour worked has remained consistently above the regional and national averages, but with these gaps decreasing gradually over time (in 2004, Cheshire East's productivity was 32.8% higher than the North West's and 21.0% higher than England's). [79]

5.35 Over the 2004 to 2023 period, real (inflation-adjusted) productivity growth was much slower in Cheshire East (averaging 0.2% a year) than for the North West (0.9% a year) or England (0.7% a year). Looking at the final 10 years of that period, 2013 to 2023, the

[77] This means ONS is still undertaking development work to improve the quality of these statistics and has not yet deemed them to be of sufficient quality and value to be published as official statistics.

[78] As with most of the other monetary data in this report, these figures are expressed in 2023 prices.

[79] Table A3 (Current Price (smoothed) GVA (B) per hour worked (£), ITL2 and ITL3 subregions, 2004 – 2023), 'Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by UK ITL2 and ITL3 subregions' data file, 'Regional and subregional labour productivity, UK: 2023' statistical release, ONS, June 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/productivitymeasures/bulletins/regionalandsubregionallabourproductivityuk/2023

situation was similar: average productivity growth a 0.1% a year for Cheshire East, compared to rates of 1.0% and 0.6% for the North West and England respectively. [80]

5.36 The lower productivity growth rates for Cheshire East, and the partial erosion of the productivity advantage over the North West and England, are likely to reflect geographical differences in industrial composition, with Cheshire East's more manufacturing-intensive industrial mix making the borough's productivity more susceptible to the long-term decline and relocation of many manufacturing activities.

Income

Household income data at local authority level

5.37 Gross disposable household income (GDHI) is the main measure of income for which official statistics are published down to local authority level. GDHI is the amount of money that households have available for spending or saving after they have paid direct and indirect taxes and received any direct benefits. As such, GDHI can be regarded as a measure of the 'material welfare' of households.

5.38 The published GDHI figures are in current (or nominal) prices: that is, with no adjustment for the effect of consumer price inflation on households' cost of living. However, the statistics reported below are expressed in constant (real) prices: that is, with the effects of inflation stripped out. The conversion of the published nominal income figures into real figures was undertaken using CPIH (Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs) data, as ONS considers CPIH to be the most comprehensive measure of consumer price inflation.[81] The GDHI monetary figures quoted in this report are in 2023 prices.

5.39 As Table 5.7 shows, the latest statistics[82] put real (inflation-adjusted) GDHI per head in Cheshire East at £28,000 as of 2023, which is 10.3% above the England figure (£25,400) and 30.1% higher than the North West (£21,500). The borough's real GDHI per head has stayed between 9% and 14% above the England average over the final ten years covered by this data series (2013 to 2023).

[80] ,Table A5 (Chained Volume (unsmoothed) GVA (B) per hour worked indices, ITL2 and ITL3 subregions, 2004 to 2023), 'Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by UK ITL2 and ITL3 subregions' data file, 'Regional and subregional labour productivity, UK: 2023' statistical release, ONS, June 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/productivitymeasures/bulletins/regionalandsubregionallabourproductivityuk/2023

[81] 'Consumer price indices, a brief guide: 2026', ONS, March 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/consumerpriceindicesabriefguide/2017

[82] Sources: [1] 'Regional gross disposable household income, UK: 1997 to 2023' statistical release, ONS, September 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/regionalaccounts/grossdisposablehouseholdincome/bulletins/regionalgrossdisposablehouseholdincomegdhi/1997to2023 [2] 'CPIH index (all items, 2015=100)' data series from the 'Consumer price inflation time series dataset', ONS, June 2026 release: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/datasets/consumerpriceindices/current

5.40 As for income change over time, Cheshire East's GDHI per head in 2023 was up 28.3% on its 1997 level and 9.6% higher than in 2013. These growth rates are slightly greater than those for England (27.5% for 1997 to 2023 and 8.8% for 2013 to 2023).

5.41 Cheshire East, the North and England had very similar rates of GDHI per head growth during 1997 to 2012, but the North West's growth rate lagged well behind Cheshire East and England thereafter. More significantly from a Cheshire East perspective, though, the borough's real GDHI per head has followed a generally downward trend since 2019, with the 2023 figure 3.3% below its 2019 peak of £29,000 (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Real (inflation-adjusted) income (GDHI) per head index, 1997 to 2023

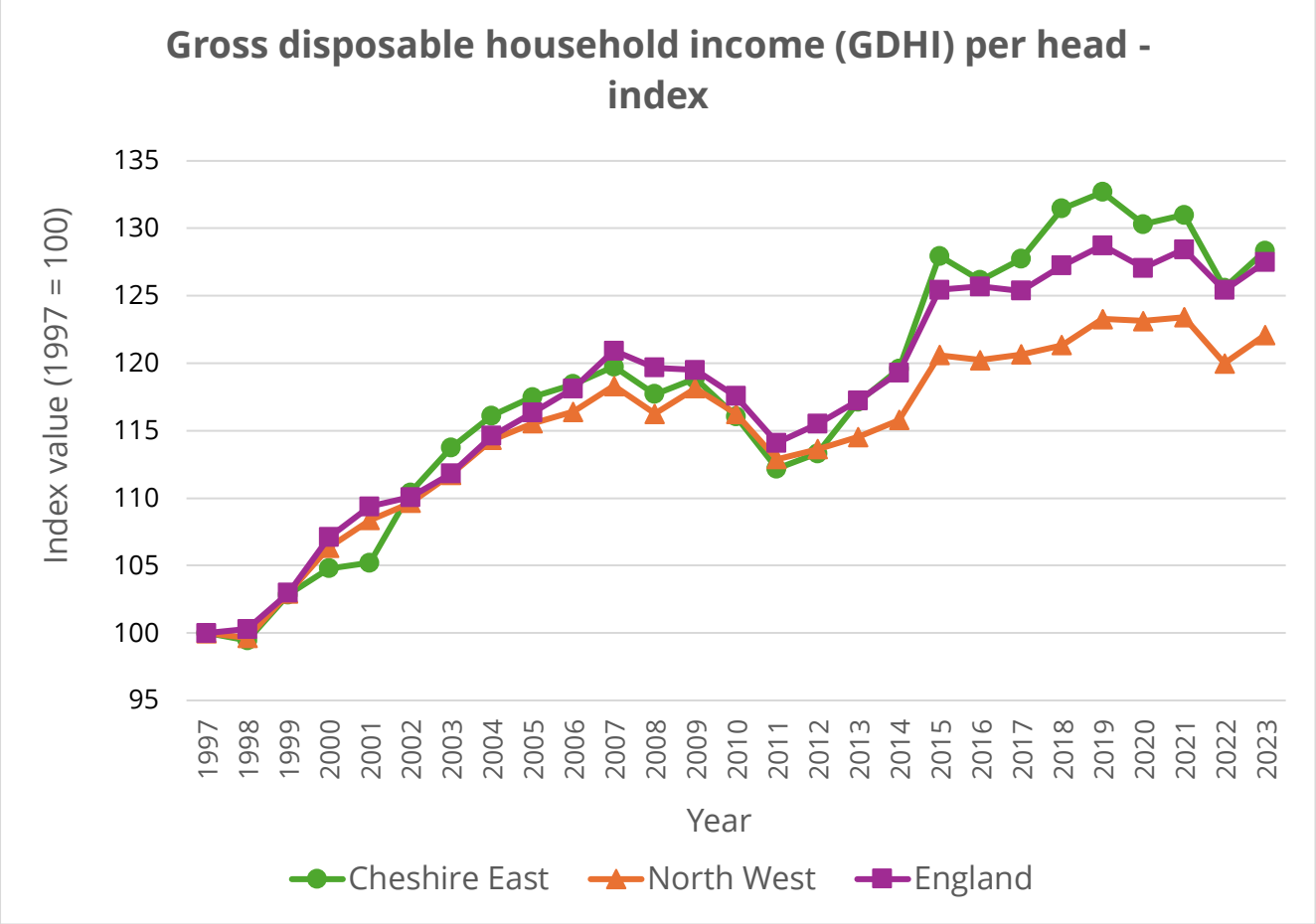


Table 5.7: Real (inflation-adjusted) GDHI (income) per head, 1997 to 2023

Area	GDHI per head (£), 1997	GDHI per head (£), 2013	GDHI per head (£), 2023	Total change (%), 1997-2023	Total change (%), 2013-23
Cheshire East	£21,800	£25,600	£28,000	28.3%	9.6%
North West	£17,600	£20,200	£21,500	22.1%	6.6%
England	£19,900	£23,400	£25,400	27.5%	8.8%

Household income variations at small area level

5.42 Household income estimates are available for small areas (MSOAs) in England and Wales. Cheshire East is currently divided into 52 MSOAs, each of broadly similar size in terms of population and households, so the income data at this level can be used to identify income variations between the borough's towns, or between its rural and urban areas. The latest such data are for the 2022 to 2023 financial year and they relate to average (mean) annual household income. [83] Whilst the data are provided for a few different measures of household income, the commentary below focuses on mean net equivalised household income **after** housing costs.[84]

5.43 The 2022 to 2023 data indicate that the average for net equivalised household income after housing costs for Cheshire East's MSOAs is lowest, at around £25,900, in Cheshire East MSOAs 039 and 043.[85] These are adjacent MSOAs in central Crewe. It is highest in MSOAs 011 (which includes Prestbury as well as Adlington and Mottram St Andrew) and 008 (which covers much of the southwestern part of Wilmslow). Mean household income after housing costs for these 2 MSOAs is estimated at £44,500 and £42,100 respectively.

5.44 Net equivalised income after housing costs is highest in MSOAs that are predominantly in the northern part of the borough (and adjacent to some similarly high-income areas of Greater Manchester), as shown in Figure 5.4. More specifically, these high-income MSOAs in Cheshire East cover the southern half (or so) of Wilmslow, as well as the areas covering Alderley Edge, Chelford, Nether Alderley, Prestbury, Adlington, Mottram St Andrew, Mobberley, High Legh, Ashley, Over Peover, south Knutsford, Poynton, the southwestern part of the Crewe conurbation (broadly south Wistaston/north Willaston) and parts of Macclesfield to the immediate west and north of the town centre.

5.45 Household income also tends to be higher, on average, in rural areas than urban ones. In fact, all of the borough's rural MSOAs fall in the higher income bands (£35,000 and above).[86]

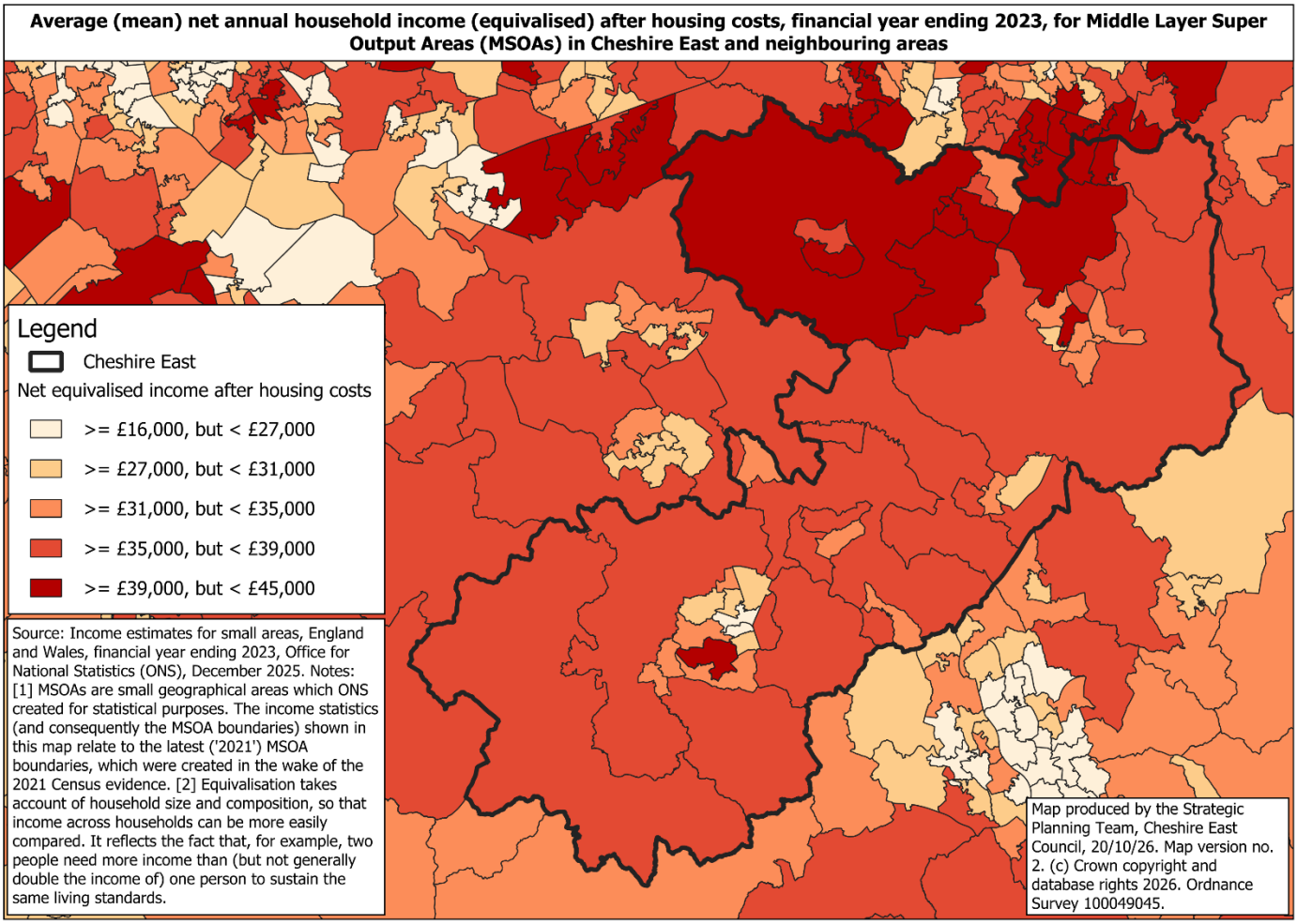
[83] Income estimates for small areas, England and Wales, financial year ending 2023, ONS, December 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/incomeestimatesforsmallareasenglandandwales Note: These income estimates are informed in part by national survey data and subject to survey sampling error margins, so there are generally wide intervals within which the 'true' mean for a particular MSOA may lie.

[84] Equivalisation is the process of accounting for the fact that households with many members are likely to need a higher income to achieve the same standard of living as households with fewer members. Equivalisation considers the number of people living in the household and their ages, acknowledging that while a household with 2 people will need more money to sustain the same living standards as one with a single person, the two-person household is unlikely to need double the income.

[85] For ease of writing, this commentary gives only the 3-digit suffixes on the end of the relevant MSOA's 'name', as all MSOA names begin with the name of the local authority they are in: for example, 'Cheshire East 039'.

[86] 'Rural' MSOAs defined for these purposes using the MSOA based 2021 Rural Urban Classification for England and Wales, ONS, August 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/ruralurbanclassifications/2021ruralurbanclassification

Figure 5.4: Mean net household income at small area (MSOA) level, 2022/23



Earnings

5.46 The main source for earnings statistics at local authority level is ONS' Annual Survey for Hours and Earnings (ASHE). ASHE is based on a 1% sample of jobs (for employees only) taken from HM Revenue and Customs' Pay As You Earn (PAYE) records and its figures relate to April of the year in question. As the ASHE data are from a national survey, the smaller the geographical area, the smaller the survey sample and the greater the survey sampling error margins are likely to be. Therefore, figures for individual local authorities, for example, should be treated with greater caution than those for regions or England.

5.47 The published ASHE data[87] are in current prices and so do not take account of inflation. However, the analysis in this report is based on real (inflation-adjusted) ASHE statistics, using the data (for April of each year) from the CPIH ([88] for converting the nominal earnings figures into real earnings. This approach is consistent with that

[87] ASHE, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Figures obtained in June 2026 and are therefore consistent with those from the 'Employee earnings in the UK: 2025' statistical release, ONS, October 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/employeeearningsintheuk2025 Note: Figures include overtime.

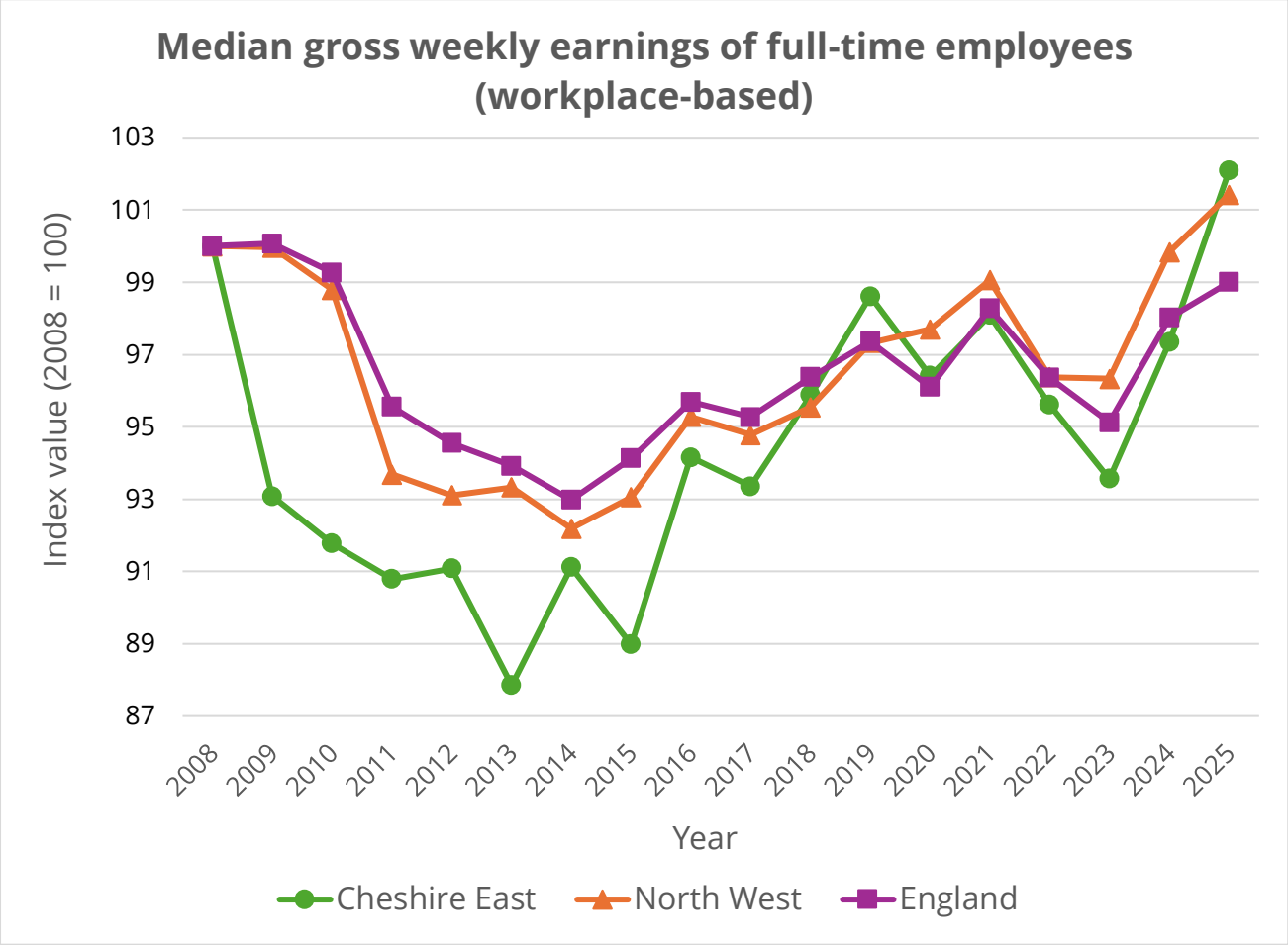
[88] 'CPIH index (all items, 2015=100)' data series from the 'Consumer price inflation time series' dataset, ONS, June 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/datasets/consumerpriceindices

followed by ONS for calculating the real earnings figures at national level. The monetary figures are reported in 2023 prices, for consistency with the price base year used in the GVA, productivity and household income sections of this report.

5.48 In the narrative that follows, results are presented for both workplace-based earnings (the earnings of employees who work but do not necessarily live in the geographical area in question) and residence-based earnings (the earnings of employees who live but do not necessarily work in the geographical area in question).

Workplace-based earnings measure

Figure 5.5: Real median gross weekly earnings, 2008 to 2025 – workplace-based measure



5.49 The median earnings of full-time employees working in Cheshire East reached £721 in 2025. As shown in Figure 5.5, real workplace-based earnings fell sharply in the years following 2008, reaching their lowest level (£620, or 12.2% below the 2008 figure) in 2013, before recovering from the mid-2010s onwards. For Cheshire East, even the 2025 earnings figure is only 2.1% greater than that recorded 2008 (£706). For England, the pattern was similar, with earnings dipping by (2014) as much as 7.0% below their 2008 level (£727) before growing again, to £720 (still 1.0% below the 2008 figure) by 2025. In other words, current real earnings, both locally and nationally, are little different to where they were in 2008. Whilst the workplace-based (and the residence-

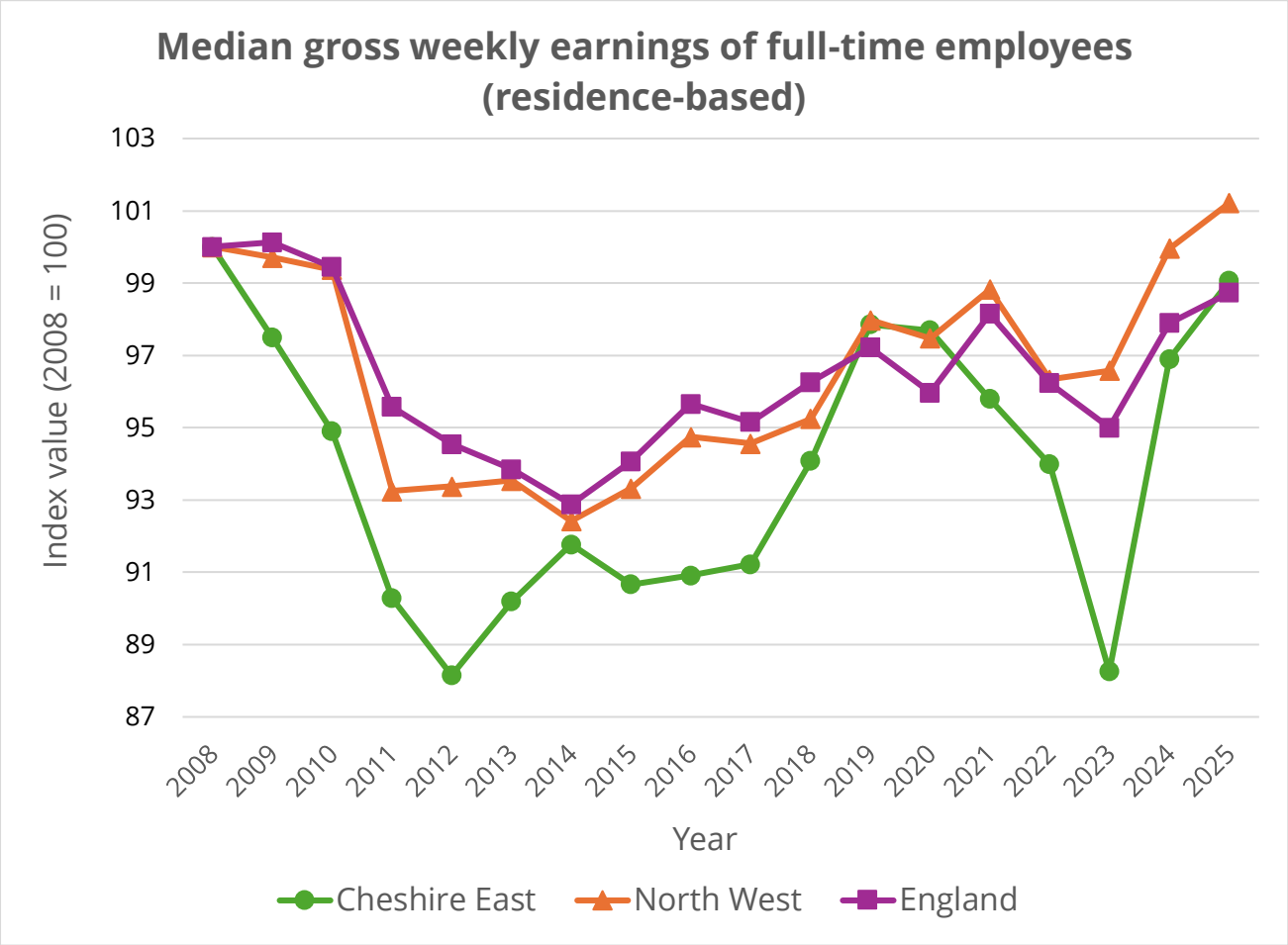
based) data point to sharper changes in Cheshire East than nationally (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6), it is likely that this reflects the larger survey sampling errors associated with smaller geographies rather than anything else.

5.50 Over the 2008 to 2024 period, median workplace-based earnings in Cheshire East varied from being 10.2% below the England average to being just 1.6% below. 2025 marked the first year in the series for which the Cheshire East figure exceeded that for England (by just 0.2%), but it remains to be seen if this result is an outlier (the result of a less representative survey sample) or the start of a sustained reversal.

Residence-based earnings measure

5.51 Residence-based earnings show a similar trend, both locally and nationally, to the workplace-based figures. In Cheshire East, residence-based median earnings stood at £755 as of 2025, which was 0.9% below their 2008 level (£762), but sharply up from low points recorded in 2012 (£672, or 11.8% below the 2008 figure) and 2023 (also £672). For England, the residence-based figure for 2025 (£719) was also slightly (1.3%) short of that recorded for 2008 (£728).

Figure 5.6: Real median gross weekly earnings, 2008 to 2025 – residence-based measure



5.52 Residence-based median earnings in Cheshire East are significantly greater than workplace-based figures. The ratio of residence-based earnings to workplace-based earnings was 1.05 in 2025 and has remained between 1.01 and 1.14 over the whole

2008 to 2025 period. In other words, people who work in Cheshire East earn more, on average, than the people who live here (though obviously the 2 groups overlap). This accords with the picture of Cheshire East as an attractive location for people on high earnings to live (but not necessarily work) in.

5.53 Unlike workplace-based earnings, the residence-based measure has generally been higher in Cheshire East than in England. In 2025, the Cheshire East figure was 5.0% above the England average, though it did dip (by up to 2.8%) below the national average for brief spells of 2008 to 2024 (specifically in 2010 to 2012, 2016 and 2023).

Employment

Total employment: current level and past trends

5.54 ONS' annual BRES (Business Register and Employment Survey) is the main source of information on employment by industry at (and below) local authority level, as well as providing some evidence on employment by status and gender. Besides employees, the BRES figures include partial coverage of self-employed people (they include those registered for VAT and PAYE schemes).

5.55 The latest BRES currently covers the period from 2009 to 2024.[89] The BRES analysis in this report focuses on the latter 9 years of this period, 2015 to 2024, as a change in survey coverage resulted in a discontinuity between the pre-2015 data and the more recent surveys.[90] However, to provide evidence of longer-term trends, the report does include some analysis of overall (total) employment growth rates for the whole 2009 to 2024 period, including comparisons between the pre- and post-2015 rates. In such cases, the rates have been adjusted, to remove the impact of the discontinuity.

5.56 According to the BRES, the employment count (number of people employed) in Cheshire East was estimated to be 214,000 as of 2024, up 2,000 (0.9%) from its 2023 level (212,000) and up 19,000 (9.7%) since 2015. This continues the largely upward trend in the borough's employment level since 2009. For the whole 2009 to 2024 period (see Table 5.8 and Figure 5.7), employment growth (19.0%, or an average of 1.2% per year) outpaced that of England (17.0%, or 1.1% a year) and the North West (16.5%). However, the Cheshire East rate was slightly slower for the latter 9 years (2015 to 2024) of that period (averaging 1.0% a year) than during 2009 to 2015 (1.4%). Breaking 2015 to 2024 further into sub-periods, employment growth was significantly

[89] Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: Figures were obtained following the release of 2024 and revised 2023 BRES data in October 2025, but (unlike the 2023 to 2024 data originally published on NOMIS) the local authority level BRES figures in this report include farm agriculture. This ensures consistency between the industry coverage of the 2023 to 2024 data and the pre-2023 data.

[90] From 2015 onwards, ONS decided to include business units with a single PAYE code for which no VAT data are available, but prior to 2015, such units were excluded. The effect of this is to slightly increase the employment estimates (for example, in Cheshire East's case, the employment estimate for 2015 was 193,000 under the old approach and 195,000 under the new one.

slower between 2019 and 2024 (averaging 0.8% a year, compared to 0.9% a year for England) than for the preceding 4 years, 2015 to 2019 (1.4%).

Table 5.8: Employment growth (%), cumulative and average per year, 2009-24

Time period	Total % change, Cheshire East	Total % change, North West	Total % change, England	Average % change/ year, Cheshire East	Average % change/ year, North West	Average % change/ year, England
2009-24	19.0%	16.5%	17.0%	1.2%	1.0%	1.1%
2009-15	8.4%	3.6%	6.8%	1.4%	0.6%	1.1%
2015-24	9.7%	12.4%	9.6%	1.0%	1.3%	1.0%
2015-19	5.6%	7.3%	4.7%	1.4%	1.8%	1.2%
2019-24	3.9%	4.8%	4.7%	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%

Figure 5.7: Employment index (2009 = 100), 2009 to 2024



Employment by industry: current composition and past trends

5.57 At very broad industry level, the Production sector accounted (as of 2024) for a far greater proportion of jobs in Cheshire East (14.4%) than in England (9.3%), while (as

Table 5.9 shows) the borough's Services sector share is low compared to the national figure (81.4% versus 85.7%%), as is the Construction sector share (4.2% versus 5.0%). This mirrors (and contributes to) the industrial composition of the borough's GVA, as analysed earlier in this chapter.

Table 5.9: Employment shares (%), by very broad industry, 2015 and 2024

SIC2007 industry category and code(s)	Cheshire East, 2015	England, 2015	Cheshire East, 2024	England, 2024
Production (A to E)	13.9%	10.3%	14.4%	9.3%
Construction (F)	4.1%	4.6%	4.2%	5.0%
Services (G to T)	82.0%	85.1%	81.4%	85.7%

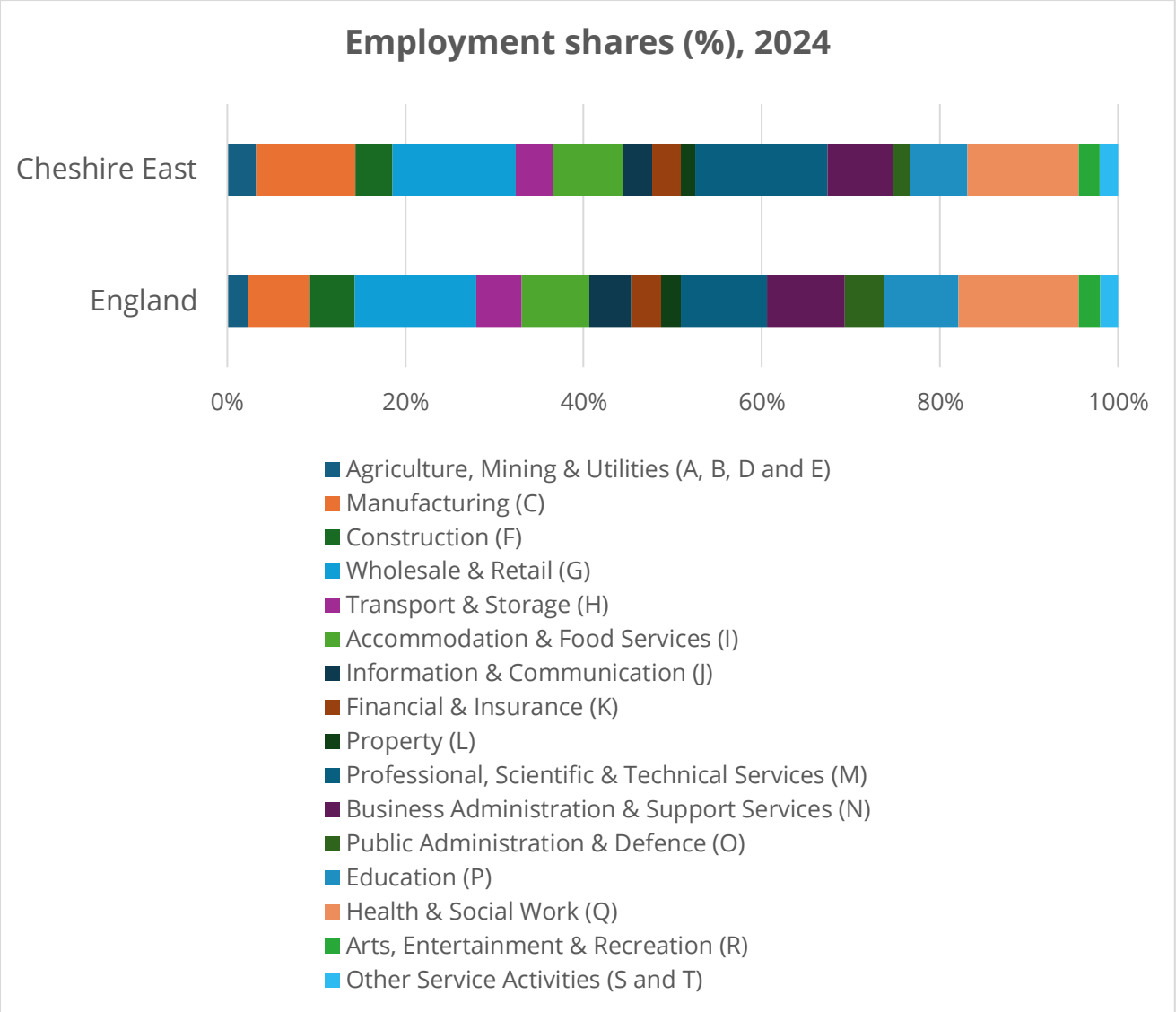
5.58 Looking at a more detailed breakdown (the 16 categories shown in Table 5.10 and Figure 5.8), many industries' percentage shares of the local (Cheshire East) employment total are similar to (within a percentage point of) their shares in England. However, as Table 5.10 shows, Manufacturing makes up a relatively high share in Cheshire East (11.2%, versus only 7.0% in England) and the same is true for Professional, scientific and technical activities (15.0% locally, versus 9.7% nationally). Conversely, the local employment share is relatively low for Information and communication (3.3% in Cheshire East, but 4.7% in England), Business administration and support services (7.5% versus 8.7%), Public administration and defence (1.9% versus 4.4%) and Education (6.5% versus 8.4%).

Table 5.10: Employment shares (%), by broad industry, 2015 and 2024

SIC2007 industry category and code(s)	Cheshire East, 2015	England, 2015	Cheshire East, 2024	England, 2024
Agriculture, mining and utilities (A, B, D, E)	3.6%	2.4%	3.3%	2.3%
Manufacturing (C)	10.3%	7.9%	11.2%	7.0%
Construction (F)	4.1%	4.6%	4.2%	5.0%
Wholesale and retail (G)	15.4%	15.7%	14.0%	13.7%
Transport and storage (H)	4.1%	4.7%	4.2%	5.1%
Accommodation and food Services (I)	7.7%	7.1%	7.9%	7.6%
Information and communication (J)	4.1%	4.3%	3.3%	4.7%
Finance and insurance (K)	4.1%	3.5%	3.3%	3.3%
Real estate activities (L)	1.5%	1.9%	1.6%	2.2%

SIC2007 industry category and code(s)	Cheshire East, 2015	England, 2015	Cheshire East, 2024	England, 2024
Professional, scientific and technical services (M)	11.8%	8.8%	15.0%	9.7%
Business administration and support services (N)	6.7%	9.1%	7.5%	8.7%
Public administration and defence (O)	1.8%	4.0%	1.9%	4.4%
Education (P)	6.7%	8.9%	6.5%	8.4%
Health and social work (Q)	12.3%	12.5%	12.6%	13.5%
Arts, entertainment and recreation (R)	2.3%	2.4%	2.3%	2.4%
Other services (S, T)	2.3%	2.2%	2.1%	2.0%

Figure 5.8: Employment shares by broad industry, 2024 (chart format)



5.59 As the analysis in Table 5.10 also indicates, the 2 industries with relatively high local employment shares, Manufacturing and Professional, scientific and technical activities, have increased their shares (by 1.0 and 3.2 percentage points respectively) since 2015. However, the BRES is designed primarily for comparing different geographies or industries at a single point in time, rather than measuring changes over employment over time, so these apparent shifts in industry shares should be treated with caution. Moreover, at Cheshire East level, the BRES figures for the intervening years reveal some year-on-year volatility (probable survey sampling errors) and a lack of a sustained trends in the employment levels for these (and some of the other) broad industries. Hence the most prudent interpretation is that the industrial mix of the borough's employment has stayed broadly the same over the last decade or so.

5.60 Statistics for even more specific types of industries can also be obtained from the BRES, though at local authority level the analysis of such granular industrial data is best limited to comparisons between different industries' statistics for a single year (as opposed to analysis of changes over time). A useful indicator for such analysis is the LQ: the ratio of an industry's employment share locally to its share nationally.

5.61 Of the 88 'classes' (2-digit codes) into which the SIC2007 is divided, there are 10 (see Table 5.11) for which the Cheshire East LQ is greater than 1.5. For 2 of these, the LQ is exceptionally high. One of these is Pharmaceuticals manufacturing, with a 2.3% share (5,000 jobs) in Cheshire East, against only 0.1% for England. Based on the underlying (unrounded) percentage shares, this equates to an LQ of 19.0. AstraZeneca's Macclesfield (Hurdsfield Industrial Estate) site accounts for the bulk of this (the firm's website reports 5,200 jobs at that site), with the Bespak site in Holmes Chapel (Bespak's headquarters) being the other main contributor. The other industry with a particularly high LQ is the Manufacture of Motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers, with a 2.3% share (5,000 jobs) in Cheshire East, against only 0.5% in England, giving an LQ of 5.1. That broadly tallies with the presence of (and publicly documented jobs total for) Bentley in Crewe (over 4,000 jobs).

5.62 Some of the other industries with high LQs reflect the rural/agricultural character of much of Cheshire East (Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities, and Veterinary activities), as well as its manufacturing strengths and the strategic importance of mining, particularly of salt. The borough's contribution (and that of neighbouring Cheshire West and Chester) to salt extraction and processing activity is of national significance and, as of 2024 (based on even more disaggregated BRES employment data), it is estimated that Cheshire East accounted for around one-fifth of all salt mining jobs across England.

Table 5.11: Industries with high location quotients, as of 2024

SIC2007 industry class name and 2-digit code	Jobs, Cheshire East	Share (%), Cheshire East	Share (%), England	Location quotient, Cheshire East
Pharmaceuticals manufacturing (21)	5,000	2.3%	0.1%	19.0
Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (29)	5,000	2.3%	0.5%	5.1
Veterinary activities (75)	1,250	0.6%	0.3%	2.3
Other mining and quarrying (08)	225	0.1%	<0.05%	2.1
Manufacture of paper and paper products (17)	600	0.3%	0.1%	1.9
Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities (01)	4,500	2.1%	1.1%	1.9
Legal and accounting activities (69)	11,000	5.1%	2.7%	1.9
Activities of head offices and management consultancies (70)	12,000	5.6%	3.1%	1.8
Manufacture of electrical equipment (27)	800	0.4%	0.2%	1.7
Manufacture of other transport equipment (30)	1,250	0.6%	0.4%	1.6

Employment by occupation: current composition

5.63 The ONS Annual Population Survey (APS) provides estimates at local authority level of the occupational and industrial composition of employment (though its industry breakdown is much less detailed than that from ONS' BRES survey). The APS includes both workplace-based and residence-based statistics on employment by occupation.[91] The APS' latest statistics for broad occupational categories correspond to the 9 SOC2020 (Standard Occupational Classification 2020) Major Groups.

5.64 The residence-based data suggests that, of those Cheshire East residents who were in employment as of 2025, 48.2% worked in professional or managerial jobs: 16.9% were in the Managers, directors and senior officials SOC2020 group, whilst a further 31.3% were in the Professional occupations group (see Table 5.12). Unlike the residence-

[91] APS residence- and workplace-based datasets, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: The APS occupational figures cited in this report relate to calendar years (January to December).

based figures for the other 7 occupational groups, the latter 2 proportions exceeded the England averages (11.5% and 25.5%) by a statistically significant margin, so cannot be attributed to survey sampling errors.

5.65 The workplace-based data suggests that, of those people based at workplaces in Cheshire East as of 2025, 42.2% worked in professional or managerial jobs: 12.3% as Managers, directors and senior officials, and 29.9% in Professional occupations. They also indicated a high share of Cheshire East-based jobs were in Skilled trades occupations (11.6%, against 8.1% for England). However, none of the workplace-based differences between Cheshire East and England were statistically significant.

5.66 The fact that the local (Cheshire East) professional and managerial occupational groups' combined residence-based employment share exceeds their workplace-based share is consistent with the evidence that the borough contains many attractive residential locations for higher-skilled, higher-paid workers who choose to live (but not necessarily work) in Cheshire East.

5.67 Comparable (SOC2020-based) APS employment data are available for the preceding 4 years (2021 to 2024), but the differences between the Cheshire East 2021 and 2025 occupational shares are statistically insignificant, so recent changes (if any) in the borough's occupational mix cannot be readily identified from the APS data.

Table 5.12: Employment by occupation, 2025

Occupational Group (SOC2020 Major Group)	Residence-based: Cheshire East	Residence-based: England	Workplace-based: Cheshire East	Workplace-based: England
Managers, directors and senior officials	16.9%	11.5%	12.3%	11.9%
Professional occupations	31.3%	25.5%	29.9%	27.3%
Associate professional occupations	14.5%	13.5%	15.9%	15.0%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	7.1%	9.9%	8.5%	9.2%
Skilled trades occupations	9.2%	9.0%	11.6%	8.1%
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	7.1%	8.6%	8.2%	8.5%
Sales and customer service occupations	3.0%	6.6%	3.6%	5.6%
Process plant and machine operatives	3.7%	6.0%	3.7%	5.5%
Elementary occupations	6.9%	9.1%	6.4%	8.9%

Employment by status: current composition and past trends

5.68 Data from ONS' BRES survey indicate that full-time posts account for around 7 in 10 employee jobs in Cheshire East (70.0% as of 2024, as shown in Table 5.13). This proportion is close to the England average (69.6%) and has changed little in recent years (in 2015, it was 69.5%). The BRES breakdown of employment by status also suggests that, whilst the number of full-time employee jobs has grown at the same rate in both Cheshire East and England (see Table 5.14), the number of part-time employees increased much more in Cheshire East than at national level.

5.69 The BRES provides only partial coverage of self-employment, but a comprehensive estimate of the scale of self-employment in the borough can be gauged from ONS' APS[92] and (for variations within the borough) the 2021 Census. The APS indicates that, as of 2025, self-employment accounted for 18.1% of all jobs in Cheshire East. However, the confidence intervals (survey sampling error margins) either side of this estimate was 4.4 percentage points, so the 'true' estimate could be as low as 13.7% (or as much as 22.5%). Furthermore, the difference between 18.1% figure and those for the previous 9 years (2015 to 2024) is statistically insignificant, as is the difference between the latest Cheshire East figure and that for England in 2025 (13.6%). In conclusion, the Cheshire East self-employment rate is at least 13% and is broadly similar to the national average.

Table 5.13: Employees by status, 2024

Year	Employees, Cheshire East	Full-time employees, Cheshire East	Part-time employees, Cheshire East	Full-timers' share of employee total (%), Cheshire East	Full-timers' share of employee total (%), England
2015	187,000	130,000	56,000	69.5%	68.9%
2024	207,000	145,000	63,000	70.0%	69.6%

Table 5.14: Change (% increase) in employees by status, 2015 to 2024

Area	Employees	Full-time employees	Part-time employees
Cheshire East	10.7%	11.5%	12.5%
England	10.3%	11.5%	7.8%

5.70 According to the last Census results, just over one-sixth (16.8%) of Cheshire East's employed residents were self-employed as of 2021, which was very similar to the

[92] Annual Population Survey, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: Figures relate to calendar years (January-to December).

England average (16.9%). Based on the council's own rural-urban classification,[93] this self-employment rate was substantially greater (20.8%) in Cheshire East's rural areas than in its urban areas (14.4%). This rate was higher in Prestbury (28.6%) and Audlem (27.0%) than in any other settlements. At the other end of the spectrum, Crewe (10.9%) was the only settlement where this rate was below 12.5%.[94]

Employment: projections of future change[95]

Projected future change: total employment

5.71 Under the principal scenario from the council's recently-updated LEFM, the borough's employment total is expected to increase from 226,500 in 2024 to 263,900 by 2047, which corresponds to an average growth rate of 0.7% a year. (The LEFM figure for 2024 is somewhat higher than the ONS BRES survey total employment figure of 214,000 cited in earlier sections, as the LEFM estimate includes all self-employment, rather than just partial coverage of that group.)

5.72 The projected 0.7% a year rate for 2024 to 2047 is somewhat lower than the average that (based on ONS' BRES-based historic employment estimates) Cheshire East achieved for the 2009 to 2024 period (1.2% a year) or indeed for the latter 5 years of that period, 2019 to 2024 (0.8% a year).

5.73 However, the employment projections for Cheshire East for 2024 to 2047 compare favourably to those for the North West (average growth of 0.5% a year) and the UK (also 0.5% a year).

5.74 Looking at the projected annual changes in jobs from one year to the next, the principal scenario indicates year-on-year employment increases of 0.4% in 2025, 0.6% in 2026, 1.1% in 2027 and 1.5% in 2028. From 2029 onwards, the projection is for year-on-year employment growth to vary from 0.5% to 0.7%. This pattern of accelerating growth up to 2028, followed by a lower but fairly constant growth rate thereafter, is consistent with the LEFM's projection for the UK (0.1% growth in 2025, rising to 0.4% in 2026, 0.8% in 2027, 1.1% in 2028 and then ranging from 0.3% to 0.6% for 2029 onwards).

Projected future change: employment by industry

5.75 At broad industry level, there are 2 industries in Cheshire East for which the employment share is projected to increase significantly (by one percentage point or more) between 2024 and 2047, namely Public, educational and care services[96] (up from 20.3% to 24.1%), and Financial, professional and business support services (up

[93] 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

[94] 2021 Census Table TS066 (Economic activity status), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[95] Principal scenario projections from the 2026 update of the Cheshire East LEFM. This scenario's projections were produced in June 2026. Projections were obtained using Cambridge Econometrics (CE) LEFM software and are consistent with CE's UK Regional Forecast of May 2026. Additional data preparation and aggregation undertaken by Cheshire East Council.

[96] This covers public administration, defence, education, health and social work.

from 26.7% to 28.9%), as Table 5.15 shows. The largest projected contractions in employment shares (one percentage point or more) are in Manufacturing (down from 10.6% in 2024 to 7.7% in 2047), Wholesale and retail (from 14.0% to 12.6%), and Transport and storage (from 5.1% to 3.8%). Based on the LEFM principal scenario results, each of the other broad industries account for less than 8% of Cheshire East's jobs in both 2024 and 2047.

Table 5.15: Projected change in employment by industry, 2024 to 2047

SIC2007 description and code(s)	Average growth/ year, Cheshire East, 2024-47	Average growth/ year, UK, 2024-47	Share, Cheshire East, 2024	Share, Cheshire East, 2047	Share, UK, 2024	Share, UK, 2047
Agriculture, mining and utilities (A, B, D, E)	-0.7%	0.0%	2.0%	1.5%	2.1%	1.9%
Manufacturing (C)	-0.7%	-1.0%	10.6%	7.7%	7.0%	5.0%
Construction (F)	0.2%	0.8%	4.9%	4.4%	6.0%	6.5%
Wholesale and retail (G)	0.2%	0.0%	14.0%	12.6%	12.9%	11.7%
Transport and storage (H)	-0.6%	0.2%	5.1%	3.8%	5.2%	4.8%
Accommodation and food services (I)	1.0%	0.5%	7.3%	7.9%	7.2%	7.4%
Information and communication (J)	1.3%	1.1%	3.4%	3.9%	4.4%	5.1%
Financial, professional and business support services (K, L, M, N)	1.0%	0.5%	26.7%	28.9%	22.8%	23.0%
Public, educational and care services (O, P, Q)	1.4%	0.8%	20.3%	24.1%	26.7%	29.0%
Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services (R, S, T)	0.3%	0.4%	5.6%	5.2%	5.7%	5.6%
Total (all industries)	0.7%	0.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.76 Within Cheshire East, it is notable that, in contrast to all the other broad industries, Manufacturing is projected to see significant GVA growth (an average of 1.6% a year during 2024 to 2047, against a Cheshire East all-industry average rate of 1.4%) coupled with a contraction of jobs (an average fall of 0.7% a year). The industry's projection at UK level is similar in this respect (GVA growth averaging 0.9% a year, but the number of jobs decreasing by an average of 1.0% a year). This implies that, for Manufacturing (both nationally and locally), GVA per job will grow faster than GVA itself. This could result from Manufacturing sector workers' hours increasing over time: perhaps due to full-time jobs making up a rising share of the industry's jobs, or (more likely) the result of improvements in productivity (GVA per hour worked), or a combination of both those effects.

5.77 As noted earlier in this report, Cheshire East's industrial composition differs very significantly from the national average, with Manufacturing making up a substantially greater proportion of GVA and employment locally than it does at national level. The LEFM projections suggest that this difference between the local and national industrial structure will remain broadly unchanged up to 2047. For the UK the projections put the jobs shares at 7.0% for Manufacturing in 2024 and 5.0% in 2047 (against 10.6% and 7.7% respectively for Cheshire East). The employment share in the Financial, professional and business support services sector is also notably lower in the UK generally (staying around 23% over the 2024 to 2047 period) compared to Cheshire East. In contrast, the share of jobs in Public, educational and care services is considerably higher for the UK (26.7% in 2024 and 29.0% projected for 2047) than in Cheshire East.

Projected future change: employment by occupation

5.78 At broad occupational level, the LEFM projections[97] suggest that the number of jobs in Cheshire East will decline significantly for 2 occupational categories (see Table 5.16): Administrative and secretarial occupations (by an average of 1.3% per year between 2024 and 2047), and Process plant and machine operatives (1.4%). For another category, Skilled trades occupations, the employment level is projected to remain more or less unchanged (with a net decline that averages less than 0.02% a year). Low rates of growth are projected for 2 other categories: Sales and customer service occupations (0.3% a year) and Elementary occupations (also 0.3%). In contrast, strong growth is projected for Caring, leisure and other service occupations (an average of 1.6% per year), Professional occupations (1.4% a year), Associate professional and technical occupations (1.2%) and Managers, directors and senior officials (0.9%).

5.79 For the UK the outlook for most of these broad occupational groups is, in general, similar to that for Cheshire East, with significant growth (an average of 0.6% a year or more) expected for Managers, directors and senior officials, for Professional occupations, for Associate professional and technical occupations, and for Caring,

[97] Unlike the latest historic (ONS APS) employment by occupation data, which are based on SOC2020 Major Groups, the LEFM's broad occupational categories are still based on the Major Groups from the previous (2010) SOC structure. For further details, see the SOC classification information in Appendix 3.

leisure and other service occupations, minimal change (averaging 0.1% a year) in the number of jobs in Skilled trades occupations and low growth rates (0.2% a year in each case) for Sales and customer service occupations and for Elementary occupations. However, unlike in Cheshire East, the number of Process plant and machine operatives is projected to grow in the UK (marginally, by 0.1% a year) and the projection for Administrative and secretarial occupations indicates a relatively slow rate of contraction (0.3% a year).

Table 5.16: Projected change in employment by occupation, 2024 to 2047

Occupational Group (SOC2010 Major Group)	Average growth/ year, Cheshire East, 2024-47	Average growth/ year, UK, 2024-47	Share, Cheshire East, 2024	Share, Cheshire East, 2047	Share, UK, 2024	Share, UK, 2047
Managers, directors and senior officials	0.9%	0.6%	15.6%	16.4%	11.2%	11.7%
Professional occupations	1.4%	0.8%	20.5%	24.1%	20.9%	22.5%
Associate professional and technical occupations	1.2%	0.6%	13.1%	14.8%	14.6%	15.2%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	-1.3%	-0.3%	7.2%	4.6%	9.6%	8.1%
Skilled trades occupations	0.0%	0.1%	7.8%	6.6%	9.7%	8.9%
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	1.6%	0.9%	9.5%	11.7%	10.2%	11.1%
Sales and customer service occupations	0.3%	0.2%	8.1%	7.5%	7.9%	7.5%
Process plant and machine operatives	-1.4%	0.1%	7.5%	4.7%	6.0%	5.5%
Elementary occupations	0.3%	0.2%	10.5%	9.6%	9.9%	9.4%
Total (all occupations)	0.7%	0.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.80 In other words, the projections, point to a further shift, both in Cheshire East and nationally, towards higher-skill (professional/managerial) occupations and personal service occupations, and away from administrative/clerical jobs, skilled manual trades and low-skill/unskilled jobs.

Projected future change in the gap between labour demand and local labour supply

5.81 The LEFM's labour supply projections (calculated from the population and economic activity rate projections that form part of the model's data inputs) suggest that Cheshire East's local labour supply (the economically active resident population) will expand by an average of 0.9% a year between 2024 and 2047, from 209,800 to 257,000. The labour supply is projected to rise at a slightly faster rate during 2024 to 2034 (an average of 1.0%) than during 2034 to 2047 (0.8%). When taken together with the employment projections (226,500 jobs in 2024 and 263,900 by 2047), this implies that labour demand (employment) will continue to exceed the local labour supply by a substantial margin, but with the gap narrowing over the long term: from 16,700 in 2024 to 12,300 by 2034, and to 7,000 by 2047.

Jobs density and commuting flows

Jobs density evidence

Jobs density at local authority level

5.82 Jobs density statistics are a useful indicator of the relative abundance or shortage of jobs within a given geographical area. The jobs density is the number of jobs in a geographical area divided by that area's resident population aged 16 to 64. For example, a job density of 1.0 would mean that there is one job for every resident aged 16 to 64. High job densities generally indicate that demand for labour exceeds local supply. Any shortfall (local labour supply not meeting demand) may be met by inward commuting. Conversely, many of those living in areas with a low jobs density may (depending on local economic activity rates and the resulting local labour supply) have to commute to work in other areas, even if they have the right skills, qualifications and experience to fill locally-available jobs.

5.83 According to the latest data published by ONS[98], Cheshire East's density in 2024 was 0.90: moderately higher than the average for England (0.86) and well above the North West average (0.82). The Cheshire East density has been consistently above the England average since 2011, but, after peaking at 0.95 in 2019, it has either declined or remained static in each of the last 5 years of the data series (2020 to 2024).

5.84 Whether a particular local authority has a shortage or surplus of local labour (and hence whether it has a net inflow or net outflow of commuters) depends not just on its jobs density, but also on other factors: most obviously economic activity rates (which determine the size of the economically active population). Economic activity rate data is available (currently up to 2025) from ONS' APS, and this offers some additional insight.

[98] Jobs density data, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Figures obtained from NOMIS in April 2026, following the release of data for 2024.

5.85 For the 12-month period January to December 2024, the APS' reported economic activity rate for Cheshire East's 16 to 64 year-old population is 82.9%, but with a 95% confidence interval (the indicative survey sampling error margin) of plus/minus 3.9 percentage points. Hence, allowing for survey sampling error, Cheshire East's economic activity rate for 16 to 64 year-olds in 2024 could be as high as 86.6% (82.9% + 3.9%), or 0.868: even this proportion is below the borough's reported jobs density of 0.90, implying a modest shortage in the supply of local labour (economically active people resident in Cheshire East) and hence a modest net inflow of commuters. That estimated gap between labour demand and local labour supply (with demand exceeding local supply and commuters making up the shortfall) would be wider still if instances of double jobbing among local residents (some workers having 2 or more jobs) were factored in, but allowing for (low) levels of economic activity among the 65 and above population would have an offsetting effect. On balance, therefore, the evidence points to Cheshire East probably having a modest net inflow of commuters as of 2024.

Employment levels and jobs densities at small area level

5.86 Official estimates of jobs density are not published for small areas (sub-areas of local authorities). However, they can be readily derived using employment data from ONS' BRES survey and mid-year population estimates.[99]

5.87 For the borough's main settlements,[100] jobs densities range from 0.34 (Haslington) to 1.56 (Handforth), as shown in Table 5.17, with the equivalent figure for the borough (based on this measure) being 0.83. (The ONS published jobs density figure of 0.90 for Cheshire East, cited in this report's previous subsection, is based on a different, more comprehensive count of jobs than the BRES, so should not be compared to the small area statistics shown in Table 5.17.) The towns of Handforth, Wilmslow and Knutsford have particularly high jobs densities (1.56, 1.20 and 1.15 respectively), as do the smaller settlements of Alderley Edge (1.54) and Prestbury (1.24). The densities for Bollington (0.85), Crewe (0.78), Macclesfield (0.82) and Middlewich (0.77) are all reasonably close to the borough average, but a number of towns have relatively low densities, namely Alsager (0.42), Congleton (0.61), Poynton (0.43) and Sandbach (0.49) and to a lesser extent Nantwich (0.68).

5.88 For the part of Cheshire East outside the individual 20 settlements listed in Table 5.17, the 'Other settlements' area, jobs density averages 1.13. For the borough's rural areas (using ONS' 2021 LSOA based Rural Urban Classification[101]), jobs density averages

[99] Sources: [1] BRES, ONS, NOMIS: www.nomisweb.co.uk [2] Mid-year population estimates for small areas, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' November 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates for small areas): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: The BRES data for small areas exclude farm-based agriculture, so (for consistency) the borough employment total and derived employment shares for each small area do likewise.

[100] This settlement-level employment and jobs densities analysis excludes 4 of the main 24 settlements (Audlem, Bunbury, Goostrey and Wrenbury), as their boundaries are defined in terms of OAs and BRES data is not available at OA level.

[101] As BRES data are not available at OA level, the rural-urban classification used here is LSOA based (source: 2021 Rural Urban Classification for England and Wales, ONS, August 2025:

0.94, which is well above the borough average of 0.83 and the density for Cheshire East's urban areas (0.81).

5.89 It is also notable that (using this same LSOA-based rural/urban classification for both ONS' mid-year population estimates and the BRES employment data), as of 2024, rural areas accounted for a larger share of the borough's employment (19.5%) than they do of its total (all ages) population (18.0%).[102]

Table 5.17: Employment and jobs density, by rural/urban area and settlement, 2024

Area name	Jobs total, 2024	Share (%) of borough jobs total	Population aged 16-64	Jobs density
Cheshire East	210,000	100.0%	252,900	0.83
Rural areas	41,000	19.5%	43,500	0.94
Urban areas	169,000	80.5%	209,400	0.81
Alderley Edge	4,500	2.1%	2,900	1.54
Alsager	3,500	1.7%	8,400	0.42
Bollington	4,000	1.9%	4,700	0.85
Chelford	400	0.2%	1,000	0.42
Congleton	12,000	5.7%	19,500	0.61
Crewe	41,000	19.5%	52,600	0.78
Disley	1,000	0.5%	2,900	0.35
Handforth	7,000	3.3%	4,500	1.56
Haslington	900	0.4%	2,600	0.34
Holmes Chapel	2,250	1.1%	3,800	0.59
Knutsford	9,000	4.3%	7,800	1.15
Macclesfield	28,000	13.3%	34,200	0.82
Middlewich	7,000	3.3%	9,000	0.77
Mobberley	1,000	0.5%	1,700	0.60
Nantwich	7,000	3.3%	10,400	0.68
Poynton	3,000	1.4%	6,900	0.43
Prestbury	2,250	1.1%	1,800	1.24
Sandbach	7,000	3.3%	14,200	0.49

https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/ruralurbanclassifications/2021ruralurbanclassification) rather than ONS' OA-based classification.

[102] By coincidence, the rural population share is 18.0%, regardless of whether the ONS classification used for the calculation is ONS' OA-based one (as used for the purely-demographic analysis cited in earlier chapters) or its LSOA-based one.

Area name	Jobs total, 2024	Share (%) of borough jobs total	Population aged 16-64	Jobs density
Shavington	1,500	0.7%	4,000	0.38
Wilmslow	19,000	9.0%	15,800	1.20
Other settlements[103]	50,000	23.8%	44,100	1.13

Commuting flows

5.90 Like previous Censuses, the 2021 Census gathered information on people's journeys to workplace, including the geographical origins and destinations and travel methods involved. However, this Census took place during one of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. This not only drastically affected commuting behaviour (and whether people commuted at all), but also adversely affected the quality and comparability of people's Census responses to the questions on workplace locations and travel to work patterns. This is acknowledged by ONS in the statistical release accompanying its published data on 2021 Census origin-destination flows data[104] and in ONS' associated data quality guidance. The release notes that:

"When completing the Census 2021 questionnaire people on furlough were advised to say that they were temporarily away from work, as were those who were quarantining or self-isolating because of the pandemic. People on furlough had specific guidance to help them respond."

5.91 However, in its publication on the quality of the Census' travel to work data[105], ONS emphasises that whilst:

"We provided extra guidance to respondents affected by the pandemic on how to respond to travel to work questions, but it is not clear how this guidance was followed… we did not collect any workplace address information for those working at home, including those following government guidance to do so. Large numbers of people were still being supported by government furlough schemes, and it is not clear how the question guidance provided was followed…some people may have provided travel information for the last time they worked, or they may have answered based on their behaviours on Census Day…"

5.92 The same publication cites ONS evidence that the varying interpretations of furloughed workers to the Census questions has had an adverse impact on the quality and comparability of the Census data:

[103] 'Other settlements' means the areas of Cheshire East not covered by the 20 settlements listed in this table.

[104] 'Origin-destination data, England and Wales: Census 2021', ONS, October 2023: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/origindestinationdataenglandandwales/census2021

[105] 'Travel to work quality information for Census 2021', ONS, December 2022: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/traveltoworkqualityinformationforcensus2021

"Part of our quality assurance indicated inconsistencies between the 'temporarily away from work' group and data from other administrative sources. So, census travel to work data are a mixture of pandemic and pre-pandemic travel behaviours."

5.93 Furthermore, whilst some of the COVID-19-induced changes to people's work locations and commuting patterns proved to be only temporary, COVID-19 also triggered some longer-term changes to these. In the same (travel to work quality information) article, ONS acknowledges this, noting that:

"Restrictions on travel ended later in 2021, and while there will have been a shift back towards some behaviours from before COVID-19, hybrid and home working remain commonplace."

5.94 Hence the 2021 Census evidence does not enable us to distinguish between temporary changes and longer-term (albeit partly COVID-19-induced) trends in commuting patterns.

5.95 Analysis of mobile phone data (collected in 2023) does provide a useful post-COVID-19 overview of daily travel flows into, out of and through the borough. Unlike the Census evidence, this data does not distinguish between commuting (the only travel flows the Census gathers) and other motives for routine travel, such as shopping or journeys to school or college. This mobile phone data put the number of daily trips across the borough at 1.6 million and estimates that over 40% of these are journeys are related to work, education or training. The data indicate that the largest volumes of commuting journeys across the Cheshire East boundary are those starting or ending in Greater Manchester, Cheshire West and Chester, and north Staffordshire and (to a lesser extent) Warrington. At settlement level, the major flows are those into and out of Crewe, Macclesfield and the Wilmslow/Handforth conurbation (see Figure 5.9).

5.96 The 2023 mobile data evidence in Figure 5.9, demonstrating the importance of Greater Manchester, Cheshire West and Chester, and north Staffordshire in particular to travel patterns across Cheshire East, was broadly reflected in the travel-to-work data from the last (2011) pre-COVID-19 Census.[106]

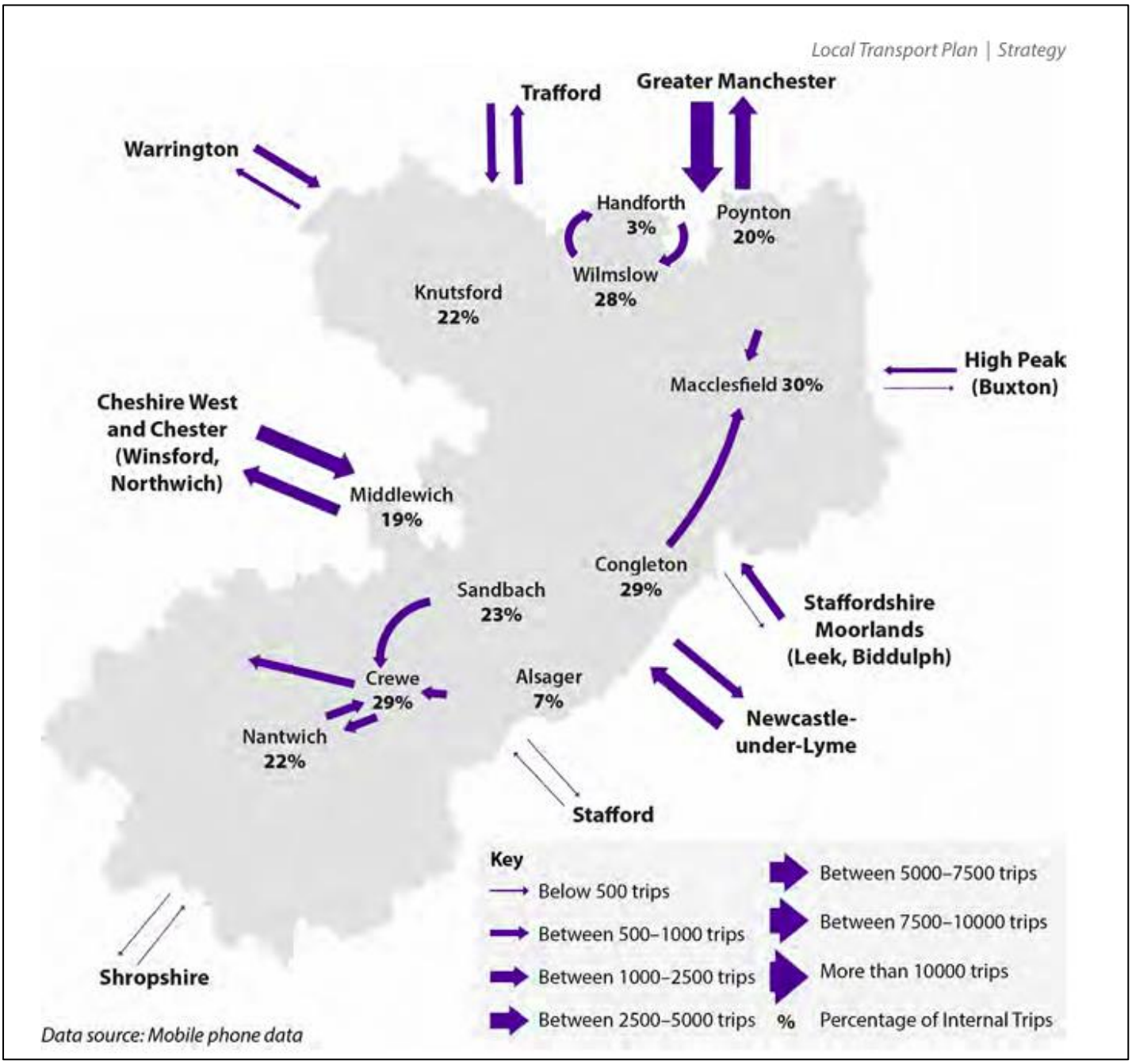
5.97 At the time of the 2011 Census, the largest commuting inflows were from Cheshire West and Chester (around 9,050) and Stockport (around 8,550). Several other local authorities also accounted for inflows of over 3,000, namely Manchester, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands and Stoke-on-Trent. In other words, Cheshire West and Chester, the southern part of Greater Manchester and Stoke/north Staffordshire were the borough's primary sources of imported labour.

5.98 The largest outflows were to Manchester (about 9,450), Cheshire West and Chester (8,000) and Stockport (6,800). 2 other local authorities also received over 3,000 inward commuters from Cheshire East, namely Trafford and Stoke-on-Trent. Hence Cheshire

[106] 2011 Census Table WU01UK (Location of usual residence and place of work by sex), Origin Destination Tables, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Notes: [1] These figures relate to all usual residents aged 16 and over in employment. [2] Figures rounded to nearest 50.

West and Chester, the southern part of Greater Manchester and Stoke/north Staffordshire were the primary destinations for Cheshire East's outward commuters. Hence the labour market flows between Cheshire East and these neighbours are very significant in both directions.

Figure 5.9: Internal and cross-border daily travel flows, Cheshire East, 2023[107]



5.99 In terms of net flows involving Cheshire East, the net flow to Manchester was by far the greatest, with outflows (from Cheshire East) exceeding inflows (to Cheshire East)

[107] Estimates reported from 2023 mobile data. Data and map taken from the Cheshire East Local Transport Plan Strategy, April 2026: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/local_transport_plan/local_transport_plan.aspx

by 5,300. Cheshire East had no other net **outflows** in excess of 1,000. However, there were net **inflows** of over 1,000 from 4 neighbours: Cheshire West and Chester (1,050), Stockport (1,750), Newcastle-under-Lyme (1,900) and Staffordshire Moorlands (2,800).

5.100 Taking the 'all-purposes' travel flows data from 2023 and the 2011Census travel-to-work data collectively, it seems likely that Greater Manchester, Cheshire West and Chester, and north Staffordshire are still, post-COVID-19, the primary origins and destinations of commuting journeys that cross the borough boundary. This is consistent with this report's findings (in the 'Population' chapter) that these areas (particularly Cheshire West and Chester, and the southern parts of Greater Manchester) account for relatively high proportions of recent (2024 to 2025) migration flows into and out of Cheshire East. However, a bespoke local study, or else updated research by central government or ONS, is probably required to confirm these expectations about commuting origins and destinations.

Homeworking and hybrid working

5.101 The COVID-19 pandemic, along with recent advances in information technology (accelerated by the challenges of the pandemic), has led to increased propensities for homeworking and 'hybrid' working (hybrid working being a mixture of home and office working). Whilst those shifts were partly a temporary response to the pandemic, the evidence shows they represent to some extent a permanent change in working patterns. This has significant implications for the future requirement for employers' premises and particularly in those sectors (most obviously office-based work) where remote working is more viable.

5.102 There is, at present, limited hard evidence on these changes for Cheshire East specifically, but research and analysis at national level provides a useful overview that can help to guide local policy-making on issues such as employment land provision and transport planning.

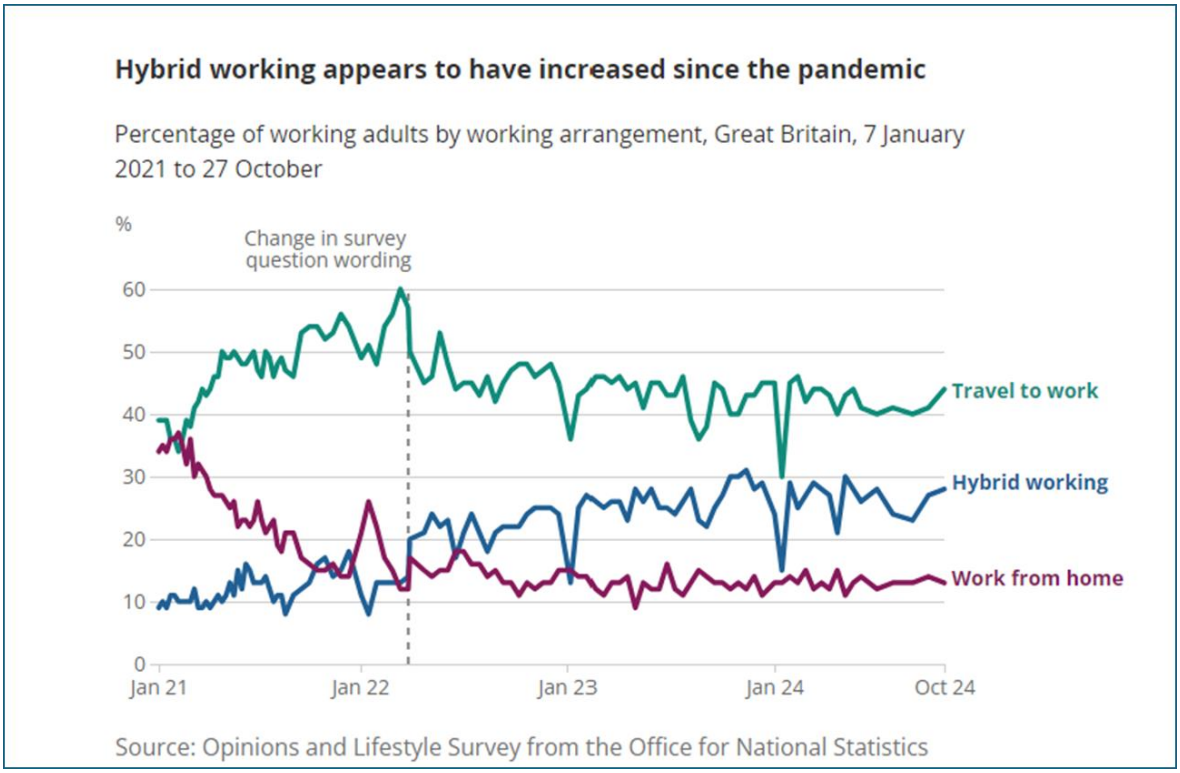
5.103 A valuable reference in this respect is ONS' November 2024 article 'Who are the hybrid workers?'[108] This article noted that, according to ONS' Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (based on interviews during October 2024), 28% of working adults were hybrid workers. The article also reported that, since early 2022, the proportion of working adults who were hybrid workers had increased significantly (though it had remained broadly constant, albeit with some very short-term fluctuations, throughout 2024). In contrast, the proportion who worked solely from home had declined a little over that time, as had the proportion who always travel to work. Figure 5.10, which is taken from the article, offers a more detailed depiction of these trends.

5.104 Looking at the survey responses over a longer period (April to June 2024), the same ONS article reports that "hybrid working was more common among those aged over 30 years, parents, those working as managers or professionals, and those in

108 https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/whoarethehybridworkers/2024-11-11

industries that require less face-to-face contact". On the issue of variations between different industries, the survey results indicated that the Information and communication sector had the highest propensity to adopt hybrid working, followed by the Professional, scientific and technical activities sector, while Accommodation and food service activities had the lowest. ONS also reported that hybrid working was more prevalent among those with higher qualifications. As for differences by age group, the article notes that younger people are more likely to work in some of those service sectors, such as retail, where staff must be physically present to serve customers and where home or hybrid working is not therefore feasible.

Figure 5.10: Home and hybrid working trends in Great Britain, 2021 to 2024



5.105 Other useful evidence of post-COVID-19 homeworking and hybrid working patterns (though a little more dated and specific to the office sector) comes from Savills' March 2023 'Spotlight: European Office Occupancy'[109] and a Remit Consulting press release from February 2023.[110] In tandem with the ONS November 2024 article, some key messages emerge from this collective evidence.

5.106 Firstly, office occupancy rates have increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, but remain well below their pre-pandemic rates. However, estimates of the extent of the gap between pre- and post-COVID-19 occupancy rates (which can be

[109] https://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/229130/343549-0

[110] 'Latest data reveals improved UK office occupancy levels', Remit Consulting: https://return.remitconsulting.com/resource-centre/35-news-release-latest-data-reveals-improved-uk-office-occupancy-levels

derived from the statistics in these articles) vary widely (from a fall of around 20% to a fall of more than 55%).

5.107 Secondly, some of the factors behind the post-COVID-19 trends and preferred patterns of working may be short-term ones (for example, prompted by job security concerns arising from economic uncertainty/weak economic performance), but others are longer-term. Some of the longer-term effects (such as homeworking 'fatigue' and a desire for increased interaction with colleagues in person) have contributed to increased office occupancy rates and less home or hybrid working. However, others (such as IT improvements enabling more productive remote working) have the opposite effect.

5.108 Thirdly, whilst there are signs that occupancy could continue to move closer to pre-COVID-19 rates, the apparent long-term changes in people's working patterns and preferences suggest that occupancy rates will stabilise at a rate well below those prior to COVID-19. On this basis, it seems reasonable to assume that some employers will require less office space per full-time employee than they did before the pandemic, with relocation to smaller premises (or a reduction in the number of sites) being a consequence. However, some other employers may find it more practical to retain their existing office space and instead use the freed-up desk space for other purposes, such as additional meeting rooms or other facilities for their staff.

5.109 Fourthly, one of the apparently permanent changes prompted by the pandemic (and by knock-on developments, such as investment in improvements to remote working technology) is a much higher propensity for office employees to work from home on Fridays (and to a lesser extent on Mondays). Hence occupancy tends to be highest from Tuesday to Thursday.

5.110 Finally, the evidence suggests that, over the period since the last COVID-19 lockdown, hybrid working has become much more common, but that the propensity to work solely from home has significantly declined.

Qualifications

5.111 The most recent evidence on qualification levels comes from ONS' APS. This indicates that qualification levels are, on average, slightly higher in Cheshire East than in the North West or England. According to the latest APS results (for 2025),[111] 50.8% of the borough's 16 to 64 year-olds had a qualification at or above RQF Level 4,[112] compared to 45.7% in the North West and 48.0% for England (see Table 5.18 and Figure 5.11). Conversely, the proportion of 16 to 64 year-olds with no qualifications was lower in Cheshire East (4.2%) than in the region (7.7%) or nationally (6.1%). However, apart

[111] Source: APS, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: Figures relate to calendar years (January to December).

[112] For details of the type of qualifications that different RQF levels correspond to, see https://skillsforschools.org.uk/training/what-is-the-right-route-for-you/rqf-qualifications/ As this indicates, RQF Level 4 and above includes Vocational Qualification levels 4 and 5, as well as first and postgraduate degrees.

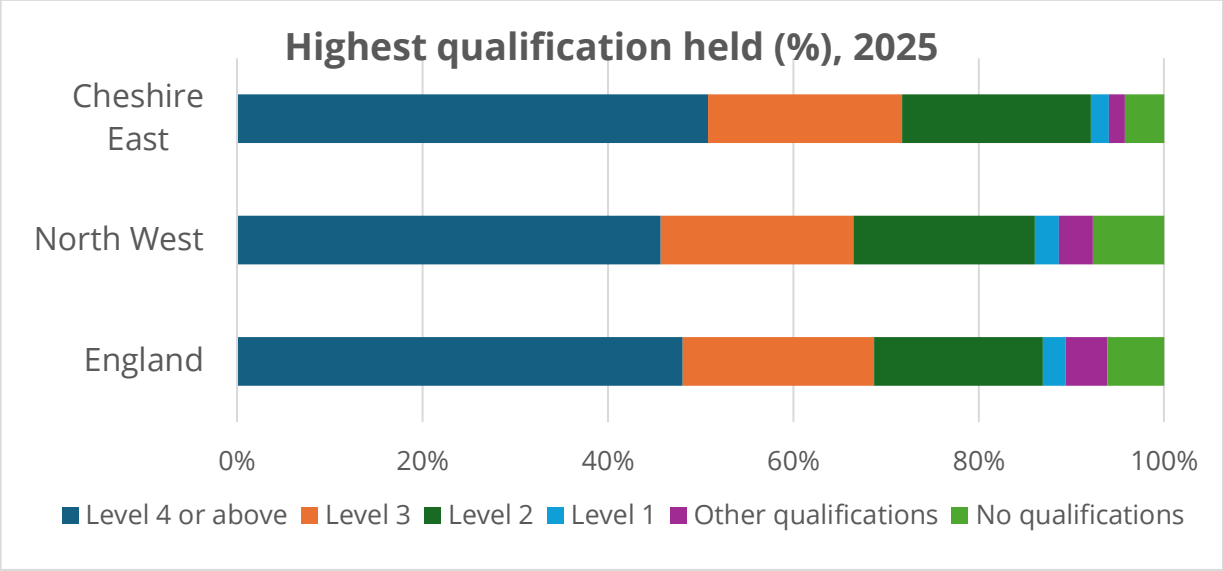
from the difference between Cheshire East and North West 'no qualifications' figures, none of these differences from the regional or national 'average' were statistically significant, so they may be due to survey sampling error alone.

5.112 Equivalent APS data are available for the preceding 3 years (2022 to 2024) and the Cheshire East proportion of 16 to 64 year-olds with a qualification at or above RQF Level 4 during that time varied from 48.5% to 54.7% and was 49.0% back in 2022. However, the difference between the 2022 and 2025 figures is statistically insignificant.

Table 5.18: Highest qualification held by 16 to 64 year-olds, 2025

Highest qualification held (RQF level)	Cheshire East	North West	England
Level 4 or above	50.8%	45.7%	48.0%
Level 3	20.9%	20.8%	20.6%
Level 2	20.3%	19.6%	18.2%
Level 1	2.0%	2.6%	2.4%
Other qualifications	1.7%	3.6%	4.5%
No qualifications	4.2%	7.7%	6.1%

Figure 5.11: Highest qualification held by 16 to 64 year-olds, 2025 (chart format)



5.113 The qualifications data from the 2021 Census[113], which offers more precise figures at (and below) local authority level, also indicates that qualification levels in Cheshire East are higher than the national average. As of 2021, 37.6% of those aged 16 and

[113] 2021 Census Table TS067 (Highest level of qualification) and 2011 Census Table QS501EW (Highest level of qualification), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

above had a qualification at or above Level 4.[114] This was a substantial increase from the proportion in 2011 (32.0%) and was substantially greater than the England average (33.9% in 2021, up from 27.4% in 2011). The gap between Cheshire East and England figures for 2021 will in part reflect the differences in socioeconomic characteristics. However, the Cheshire East proportion qualified to Level 4 and above also reflects differences in age distribution. In particular, as the borough's population is generally older than that of England (22.4% were aged 65 and above on Census Day 2021, compared to 18.4% for England[115]) and older people are less likely to hold higher-level qualifications, this partly offsets the impact of the borough's socioeconomic advantages and so it is perhaps not surprising that the qualifications gap between Cheshire East and England is relatively modest.

5.114 It is also reasonable to conclude that the more recent (though less precise) survey results from APS up to 2025 are broadly consistent with the 2021 Census evidence on how qualification levels in Cheshire East compare to England.

5.115 Based on the Council's own rural-urban classification,[116] the 2021 Census data on qualifications[117] indicate that those living in rural areas of the borough were more likely to hold a qualification at Level 4 and above (42.6% of the population aged 16 and above did) than those in urban areas (34.3%).

5.116 Among the 24 settlements in the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy, the percentage of the 16 and above population with a Level 4 or higher qualification was greatest (more than half) in Prestbury (53.0% as of 2021), Bunbury (51.7%), Wilmslow (51.1%) and Alderley Edge (50.4%) and lowest (less than a third) in Crewe (25.9%), Middlewich (30.3%), Wrenbury (32.7%), Haslington (32.8%) and Shavington (33.2%). As these statistics demonstrate, the figure for Crewe was significantly lower than those for any other settlements (though it is substantially higher than the 2011 Census figure of 19.7% and indeed every single settlement saw an increase in the proportion qualified to Level 4 or above between 2011 and 2021). Again, these geographical variations reflect both differences in the socioeconomic characteristics and the demographic make-up of each settlement.

5.117 Looking at the Census 2021 statistics for Level 2, nearly three quarters (74.0%) of Cheshire East's 16 and above population had qualifications at this level (up from 64.4% in 2011). This was above the England average (69.5% in 2021). The proportion was significantly higher in rural areas (78.3%) than urban ones (71.1%). 15.0% had no qualifications (down from 19.6% in 2011), which again compared favourably to England (18.1% in 2021).

[114] For the purposes of the Census data, Level 4 is equivalent to a first degree, higher degree, professional qualification or similar level.

[115] 2021 Census Table TS007A (Age by five-year age bands), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[116] 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

[117] 2021 Census Table TS067 (Highest level of qualification) and 2011 Census Table QS501EW (Highest level of qualification), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

Economic activity and employment rates

5.118 According to ONS' latest APS data, 79.5% of Cheshire East's 16 to 64 year-old residents were economically active (either in employment or unemployed), as of 2025 (see Table 5.19).[118] This was identical to the economic activity for England and slightly higher than the reported rate for the North West (77.3%). It is also slightly higher than the APS rate for Cheshire East 10 years previously (77.6%). However, the differences between the latest Cheshire East and North West rates (and those between the 2025 and 2015 Cheshire East rates) are statistically insignificant, so they may be due to survey sampling error alone.

Table 5.19: Economic activity rates for 16 to 64 year-olds, 2015 and 2025

	Cheshire East	North West	England
2015	77.6%	75.3%	77.9%
2025	79.5%	77.3%	79.5%

5.119 Evidence from the 2021 Census offers more precise (though less up-to-date) information on economic activity and employment rates, given its reliance on counts of the whole population, rather than survey samples. According to the Census results, 60.8% of the Cheshire East population aged 16 and over were economically active (either in employment or unemployed), as of 2021. This was very similar to the proportion (60.9%) for England. Based on Cheshire East Council's own rural-urban classification,[119] this economic activity rate was higher in urban areas of the borough (61.7%) than in rural areas (59.5%). At settlement level, economic activity rates varied from 44.5% in Goostrey, 46.8% in Audlem and 50.7% in Prestbury to 64.3% in Shavington.[120] It is likely that these geographical differences reflect to a large extent the differences in age structure between rural/urban areas and different settlements (with economic activity rates tending to be lower for older age groups), as well as socioeconomic factors and the impact of recent housebuilding on the demographic makeup on some settlements.

5.120 The economic activity rates derived from the 2011 Census are not directly comparable with the 2021 rates, given that the 2011 rates exclude people aged 75 and over (and consequently show much higher rates). However, it is worth noting that the 2011 rates (like the 2021 ones) showed Cheshire East as being close to the England average, and urban areas of the borough having a slightly higher rate than rural areas.[121]

[118] Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: Figures relate to calendar years (January-to December).

[119] 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

[120] 2021 Census Table TS066 (Economic activity status), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[121] 2011 Census Tables QS601EW (Economic activity) and QS603EW (Economic activity: Full-time students), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

5.121 The APS put Cheshire East's employment rate (the proportion of a particular age group who are in employment) at 77.0% for 16 to 64 year-olds, as of 2025.[122] This was greater than the equivalent rates for the North West and England and higher than the Cheshire East rate back in 2015 (see Table 5.20), although (apart from the gap between the North West and England) all these differences are statistically insignificant.

Table 5.20: Employment rates for 16 to 64 year-olds, 2015 and 2025

	Cheshire East	North West	England
2015	75.0%	71.2%	73.8%
2025	77.0%	74.0%	75.8%

5.122 The 2021 Census provides more precise (though more dated) evidence on employment rates. It indicates that 58.4% of the Cheshire East population aged 16 and over were in employment as of 2021, which was a little higher than the rate for England (57.4%). Based on Cheshire East Council's own rural-urban classification,[123] the employment rate was higher in urban areas of the borough (58.9%) than in rural areas (57.6%). At settlement level, employment rates varied from 42.7% in Goostrey, 45.6% in Audlem and 49.2% in Prestbury to 62.6% in Shavington (1.1 percentage points higher than anywhere else).[124] Again, these geographical differences are consistent with the differences in age structure, socioeconomic composition between rural/urban areas and different settlements and the impact of recent housebuilding on some settlements' demographic makeup.

Unemployment and out-of-work benefits

Unemployment

5.123 Under the official definition, people are counted as unemployed if they are aged 16 and above and without a job but actively looking for work.[125] The official unemployment rate is the unemployment count expressed as a percentage of the economically active population (employed plus unemployed people) aged 16 and above. Unemployment counts and rates at and above local authority level are

[122] Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: Figures relate to calendar years (January-to December).

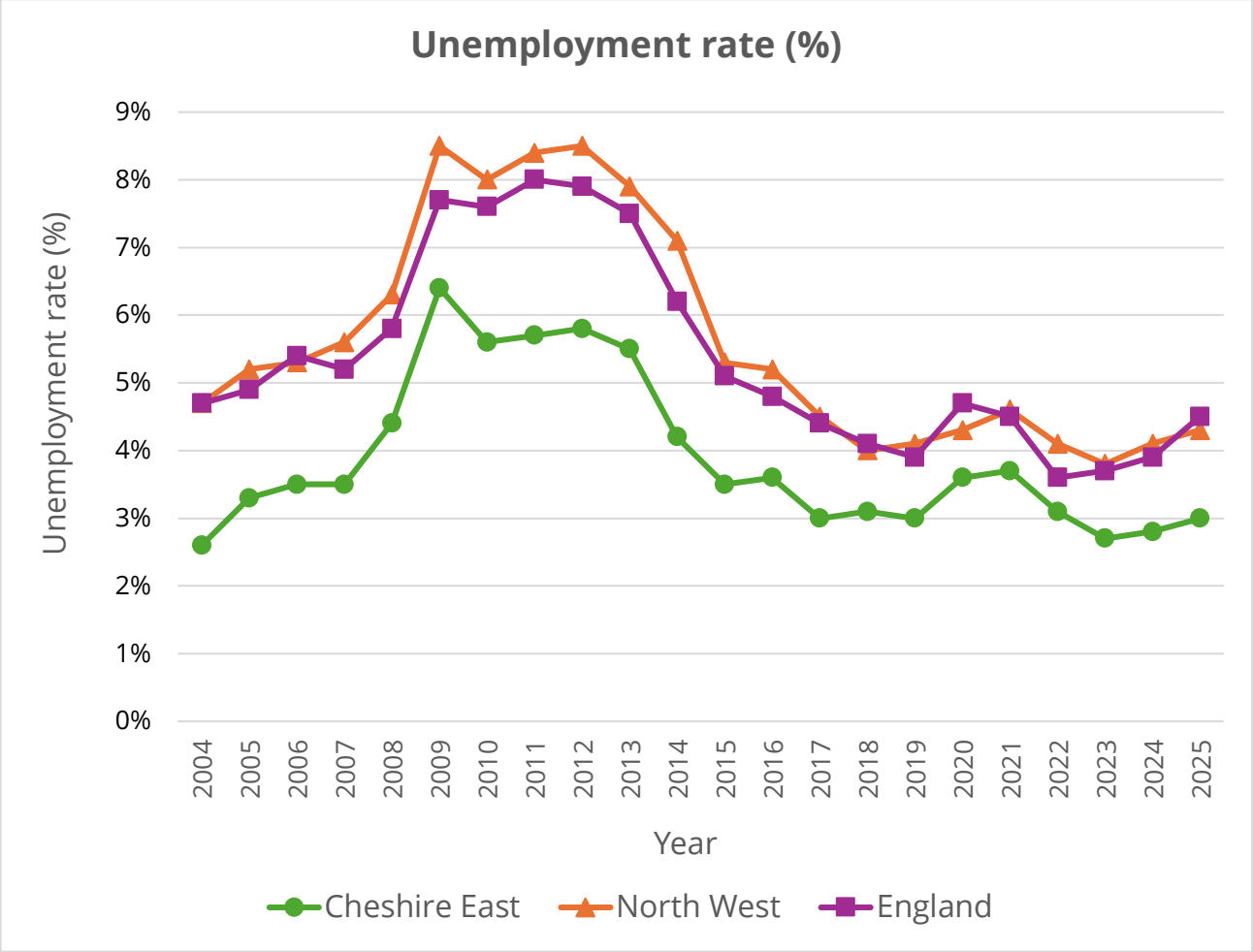
[123] 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

[124] 2021 Census Table TS066 (Economic activity status), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[125] More specifically, the count measures all jobless people aged 16 and above who are available to start work in the 2 weeks following their interview and who had either looked for work in the 4 weeks prior to interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained. (Source: variable definitions information for the model-based estimates of unemployment data series on NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

published quarterly by ONS, with the statistics at regional and country level coming from the APS and the local authority level data being modelled estimates.[126]

Figure 5.12: Unemployment rates, 2004 to 2025



5.124 Unemployment trends over the last 20 years (2004 to 2025), both locally and nationally, reflect national economic cycles, with counts and rates peaking in times of recession and usually declining thereafter (see Figure 5.12). As a result of the 2008 to 2009 financial crash, the unemployment rate in Cheshire East rose from 3.5% in 2007 to reach a peak of 6.4% in 2009, before falling back to around 3% during 2017 to 2019. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 to 2021, however, it increased only by a modest degree, to a high of 3.7% in 2021. This relatively small shift (small in comparison to the impact of COVID-19 on economic output) can be explained by the policy interventions made by central government, such as the Job Retention Scheme that [127] was intended to enable employers to continue paying furloughed workers' wages. Since the pandemic, the rate has again fallen back to around 3%. For 2025, the rate for Cheshire East was estimated at 3.0%, significantly below the rates for the North West (4.3%) and England (4.5%). In terms of counts, the total number of

[126] Source: Annual Population Survey and model-based estimates of unemployment, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: Figures relate to calendar years (January to December).

[127] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wages-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme

unemployed Cheshire East residents has varied from 4,700 (2004) to 12,200 (2009) and stood at 5,700 as of 2025.

5.125 At the time of 2021 Census, 3.9% of the borough's economically active population were unemployed, which was significantly lower than the England figure (5.7%). The unemployment rate was higher in urban parts of Cheshire East (4.4%) than in rural areas (3.0%[128]). At settlement level, the rate exceeded 4% in Wrenbury (5.6%), Crewe (5.2%), Handforth (4.6%), Macclesfield (4.6%).[129]

Out-of-work benefit claimants

5.126 6,085 of Cheshire East's residents were claiming out-of-work benefits as of March 2026, up from 5,880 in the previous month and higher than the figure for March 2025 (5,805). The March 2026 count is down sharply from the figure recorded for the same month (March) of 2021 (10,520), when COVID-19 was still severely constraining economic activity, but is still significantly greater than the count for March 2019 (4,085).

5.127 The March 2026 figure of 6,085 claimants equates to 2.4% of the borough's 16to 64-year-old population, which was significantly less than the rates in the North West and England (4.2% and 4.1% respectively).[130] It was (marginally) greater than the March 2025 rate of 2.3%, but well below the 4.4% rate recorded in March 2021, when a COVID-19 lockdown was in place.

5.128 For the borough's 18 to 24-year-olds, the March 2026 claimant rate was 5.2% (up from 4.4% in March 2025, but lower than the 8.0% rate recorded for March 2021). This was higher than for other age groups (0.2% for 16 to 17-year-olds, 2.7% for 25 to 49 year-olds and 1.4% for those aged 50 to 64) but was below the rates for this age group in the North West and England (6.3% and 6.0% respectively).[131]

[128] Based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

[129] 2021 Census Table TS066 (Economic activity status), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[130] These figures include claimants aged 65 and above, even though these people are above working age. However, claimants aged 65 and above account for a very small proportion of all claimants (less than 1.5% in Cheshire East as of March 2026, for example), so their inclusion has minimal impact on the claimant rates. In any case, calculating the overall claimant rate as the total number of claimants divided by the 16 to 64 year-old population (a common definition of the 'working-age' population) is the standard approach taken by ONS itself.

[131] Sources: [1] Claimant Count, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk [2] Mid-year population estimates, ONS), NOMIS (following ONS' July 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: This claimant measure includes all Universal Credit claimants who are required to seek and be available for work, as well as all Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants.

Business characteristics and needs

Major employers

5.129 Table 5.21 lists the major employers, from both the private and public sectors, in Cheshire East. The list was compiled in spring 2025, with partial updates (where organisation names were known to have changed) in summer 2026. The list includes only sites where the number of people employed on that individual site is estimated to be at least 250.[132]

5.130 The information in this list has been informed largely by Ordnance Survey data available via the council's corporate mapping systems, by other corporate data and by evidence that is available in the public domain: notably employers' website pages, online media articles about those employers' activities in the Cheshire East area, Google Maps/Google Street View data, Google searches and BRES data published by ONS. However, the ONS BRES data itself does not identify individual employers and so it has been used only for cross-checking evidence from the other sources.

5.131 The list excludes supermarkets and other large retail stores (except where their presence involves a head office or warehouse/distribution facility), hotels and schools. This is because their workforce numbers are generally very difficult or impossible to gauge from public data sources. (In addition, the status of some retailers, hotels and schools as 'major' employers is common to nearly all local authorities and so provides no insight into Cheshire East's specific industrial composition – though this can of be said of some of the public sector employers that do appear in Table 5.21.)

5.132 The very largest of these local employers are:

- pharmaceuticals firm AstraZeneca, with 5,200 employees at its Macclesfield Hurdsfield site: Hurdsfield is the company's second largest manufacturing site and its global IT centre, as well as a major location for packing, distribution and product development[133]
- Barclays Bank, which has 6,500 people working at its Radbroke Hall site (the company's main UK technology centre) near Knutsford[134]
- car manufacturer Bentley, which employs over 4,000 staff at its head office and plant in Crewe[135]

[132] In those few cases where an employer has multiple premises within very close proximity of each other (for example, on different streets or different sides of a major road, but still within the same business park or employment site), these are treated in the list as a single site.

[133] 'Our UK Sites', AstraZeneca website (page accessed in July 2026): https://www.astrazeneca.co.uk/about-us/uk-sites

[134] [1] 'Financial Technologies' web page, Cheshire East Council (page accessed in July 2026): https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/business-growth-and-investment/industry-sectors/financial-technologies.aspx [2] 'A new Radbroke', Barclays, April 2024: https://home.barclays/news/2024/03/a-new-Radbroke/

[135] 'About Bentley', Bentley website (page accessed in July 2026): https://www.bentleymotors.com/en/about-bentley/history-and-heritage.html

- the Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which employs nearly 5,500 staff across its 3 sites: Leighton Hospital in Crewe and 2 (much smaller) sites in Cheshire West and Chester (the Victoria Infirmary in Northwich, and Elmhurst Intermediate Care Centre in Winsford)[136]
- the East Cheshire NHS Trust, which employs over 3,300 staff across its sites: Macclesfield District General Hospital, the Trust's other 2 (much smaller) hospitals in Congleton and Knutsford, and its community outposts[137]
- Cheshire East Council, which employed around 3,800 people as of October 2025[138]

Table 5.21: Major employers in Cheshire East, 2025/26

Organisation name	Site name(s)/description	Industry (SIC2007) 2-digit description and code(s)	Location (settlement)
Adelphi Group	Global head office	Activities of head offices and management consultancies (70)	Bollington
Alstom Engineering and Services	Major UK site	Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment (25)	Crewe
AO Logistics	Head office and distribution centres	Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles (47)	Crewe
Assurant	European head office	Insurance, reinsurance and pension funding, except compulsory social security (65)	Crewe
AstraZeneca	Hurdsfield Industrial Estate (major manufacturing and product development site, European packing centre and IT centre)	Pharmaceuticals manufacturing (21)	Macclesfield
Avanti West Coast	Crewe railway station	Civil engineering (42), land transport, and transport via pipelines (49)	Crewe
BAE Systems	Radway Green site	Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment (25)	Radway Green (near Alsager)
Barclays Bank	Main UK technology centre	Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding (64) Activities of head offices and management consultancies (70)	Over Peover (near Knutsford)
Bentley	Head office and site	Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (29)	Crewe
Bespak	Headquarters and finished product manufacturing site	Pharmaceuticals manufacturing (21)	Holmes Chapel
Boughey Distribution	Head office and main site	Warehousing and support activities for transportation (52)	Wardle (near Nantwich)

[136] 'About us', Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust website (page accessed in July 2026): https://www.mcht.nhs.uk/about-us

[137] 'The Trust'. East Cheshire NHS Trust (page accessed in July 2026): https://trust.eastcheshire.nhs.uk/

[138] 3,800 figure derived from Cheshire East Council intranet statistics on the number and percentage of staff responding to an interval survey, October 2025.

Organisation name	Site name(s)/description	Industry (SIC2007) 2-digit description and code(s)	Location (settlement)
Bridgemere Show Gardens	Main site	Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles (47)	Bridgemere (near Nantwich)
Cheshire College South & West	Crewe campus	Education (85)	Crewe
Cheshire Constabulary	Crewe Police Station	Public administration, defence and compulsory social security (84)	Crewe
Cheshire East Council	Delamere House and the Municipal Buildings	Public administration, defence and compulsory social security (84)	Crewe
Cheshire East Council	Macclesfield Town Hall	Public administration, defence and compulsory social security (84)	Macclesfield
Crewe Alexandra FC	Stadium and offices	Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities (93)	Crewe
David Lewis	Head office	Residential care activities (87)	Little Warford (near Alderley Edge)
East Cheshire NHS Trust	Macclesfield District General Hospital	Human health activities (86)	Macclesfield
East Cheshire NHS Trust	Waters Green Medical Centre	Human health activities (86)	Macclesfield
Elior	Main office (and head office for 2 of the firm's subsidiary companies)	Food and beverage service activities (56)	Macclesfield
Glasshouse Accountants Cheshire	Head office	Legal and accounting activities (69)	Alderley Park (near Alderley Edge)
Greencore	Aston (Nantwich) site	Manufacture of food products (10)	Aston (near Nantwich)
HM Prison/Young Offender Institution Styal	Main site	Public administration, defence and compulsory social security (84)	Wilmslow
Information Commissioner's Office	Head office	Activities of membership organisations (94)	Wilmslow
Keynote Educational	Head office	Education (85)	Wilmslow
McCann Manchester	Head office	Advertising and market research (73)	Prestbury
Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Leighton Hospital	Human health activities (86)	Crewe
Morning Foods	Head office	Manufacture of food products (10)	Crewe
Pets at Home	Head office	Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles (47)	Handforth
Radius	Head office and global telematics headquarters	Warehousing and support activities for transportation (52)	Crewe
Reaseheath College	Main site	Education (85)	Nantwich

Organisation name	Site name(s)/description	Industry (SIC2007) 2-digit description and code(s)	Location (settlement)
Royal London	Major office	Activities auxiliary to financial services and insurance activities (66)	Alderley Park (near Alderley Edge)
Senior Bird Bellows	Head office/ factory	Manufacture of other transport equipment (30)	Congleton
Siemens	Congleton office/factory	Manufacture of electrical equipment (27)	Congleton
TFLI	Head office	Advertising and market research (73)	Macclesfield
Total Fitness	Head office	Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities (93)	Handforth
Waters Corporation	Mass spectrometry head office	Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products (26)	Wilmslow
Wrights Food Group	Main site	Manufacture of food products (10)	Crewe

Businesses by size band, industry and legal status

5.133 Annual data on business (or enterprise[139]) demography are available at and below local authority level from ONS' UK Business Counts (UKBC) data series.[140] These figures include breakdowns of the number of enterprises,[141] down to MSOA level, by employment size band and industry, as well as separate counts for public and private sector organisations.

5.134 The latest UKBC figures show that the total number of enterprises in Cheshire East (public and private sector combined) has remained fairly static in recent years, remaining between 19,250 and 19,600 between 2020 and 2025. Since 2015, the borough's enterprise count has increased by 5.3%, which is considerably less than the growth seen in England (12.3%) or the North West (12.6%). Even so, business density in Cheshire East (with 560 enterprises per 10,000 population aged 16 and above, as of 2025) has remained consistently well above the England average (497 in 2025), as Table 5.22 shows.[142]

[139] This report uses the words 'business' and 'enterprise' interchangeably: there is no intended difference in meaning.

[140] 'UK Business Counts: enterprises by industry and employment size band' data set, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[141] For the purposes of the UKBC data and this report, an 'enterprise' can be thought of as the overall business, made up of all the individual sites or workplaces. It is defined as the smallest combination of legal units (generally based on VAT and/or PAYE records) that has a certain degree of autonomy within an enterprise group. The UKBC figures in this report relate to the number of enterprises, not the number of local units. Therefore, a company with 2 business units (for example, 2 branches or 2 site different locations) within the geographical area in question will be counted only once.

[142] Densities calculated using Mid-year population estimates, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' July 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

Table 5.22: Business counts and densities, 2015 to 2025

Year	Count, Cheshire East	Density, Cheshire East	Density, England	Business count index (2015 =100), Cheshire East	Business count index (2015 =100), England
2015	18,480	592	476	100.0	100.0
2020	19,475	600	522	105.4	113.0
2024	19,275	554	495	104.3	111.9
2025	19,460	560	497	105.3	112.3

5.135 Most enterprises are very small in terms of size (number of employees). In Cheshire East (as of 2025), 78.7% of them employed fewer than 5 people, while a further 10.7% had 5 to 9 staff. Only 8.7% of the borough's enterprises were within the 10 to 49 employment band, 1.5% had 50 to 249 employees and only 0.4% had a workforce of 250 or more. The proportions of enterprises in each size band are relatively similar to those for England (see Table 5.23).

Table 5.23: Businesses by employment size band, 2025

Employment size band	Count, Cheshire East	Share of total (%), Cheshire East	Share of total (%), England
Micro (0 to 9)	17,390	89.4%	89.2%
Of which:			
0 to 4	15,315	78.7%	78.4%
5 to 9	2,075	10.7%	10.8%
Small (10 to 49)	1,700	8.7%	8.7%
Medium-sized (50 to 249)	295	1.5%	1.6%
Large (250+)	75	0.4%	0.4%
Total	19,460	100.0%	100.0%

5.136 2 broad industries account for a much higher proportion of enterprises locally than they do at national (England) level, namely Agriculture, forestry and fishing (6.6% share in Cheshire East, versus 4.1% for England) and Professional, scientific and technical activities (19.2% versus 14.5%). Conversely, there are 3 sectors (Construction, Wholesale and retail, and Accommodation and food services) that make up a significantly smaller share of businesses in Cheshire East than in England (see Figure 5.24).

Table 5.24: Businesses by industry, Cheshire East and England, 2025

SIC2007 description and code(s)	Count, Cheshire East	Share of total (%), Cheshire East	Share of total (%), England
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	1,285	6.6%	4.1%
Mining and quarrying (B)	10	0.1%	< 0.05%
Manufacturing (C)	890	4.6%	5.2%
Electricity and gas (D)	40	0.2%	0.2%
Water (E)	70	0.4%	0.4%
Construction (F)	2,150	11.0%	13.1%
Wholesale and retail (G)	2,750	14.1%	16.9%
Transport and storage (H)	590	3.0%	4.2%
Accommodation and food services (I)	1,000	5.1%	7.3%
Information and communication (J)	1,275	6.6%	5.2%
Finance and insurance (K)	495	2.5%	2.0%
Real estate activities (L)	890	4.6%	4.6%
Professional, scientific and technical services (M)	3,730	19.2%	14.5%
Business administration and support services (N)	1,750	9.0%	8.3%
Public administration and defence (O)	75	0.4%	0.2%
Education (P)	330	1.7%	1.8%
Health and social work (Q)	780	4.0%	5.0%
Arts, entertainment and recreation (R)	515	2.6%	2.3%
Other services (S)	830	4.3%	4.6%
Total	19,460	100.0%	100.0%

5.137 Of the 19,460 businesses located in Cheshire East as of 2025, 27.0% (5,255) were in rural areas and 73.0% (14,205) in urban areas. For Cheshire East, Agriculture, forestry and fishing accounts for a much greater proportion of the business population in rural areas than in urban areas (see Table 5.25). Conversely, Wholesale and retail businesses make up a much larger share of the business population in urban areas,

as do those in the Accommodation and food services sector, the Information and communication sector, the Professional, scientific and technical activities sector and the Health and social work sector. This reflects the fact that many companies in these latter sectors serve consumers (households) rather than other businesses and so are relatively likely to locate in urban areas because of the higher number of people (potential customers) living in close proximity.

Table 5.25: Businesses by industry, rural and urban areas of Cheshire East, 2025

SIC2007 description and code(s)	Count, rural areas	Count, urban areas	Industry share (%), rural areas	Industry share (%), urban areas
Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A)	990	295	18.8%	2.1%
Mining and quarrying (B)	5	10	0.1%	0.1%
Manufacturing (C)	210	680	4.0%	4.8%
Electricity and gas (D)	5	35	0.1%	0.2%
Water (E)	30	40	0.6%	0.3%
Construction (F)	560	1,590	10.7%	11.2%
Wholesale and retail (G)	650	2,105	12.4%	14.8%
Transport and storage (H)	120	470	2.3%	3.3%
Accommodation and food services (I)	170	830	3.2%	5.8%
Information and communication (J)	255	1,025	4.9%	7.2%
Finance and insurance (K)	90	405	1.7%	2.9%
Real estate activities (L)	245	645	4.7%	4.5%
Professional, scientific and technical services (M)	900	2,830	17.1%	19.9%
Business administration and support services (N)	485	1,265	9.2%	8.9%
Public administration and defence (O)	30	45	0.6%	0.3%
Education (P)	75	255	1.4%	1.8%
Health and social work (Q)	130	650	2.5%	4.6%
Arts, entertainment and recreation (R)	155	360	2.9%	2.5%
Other services (S)	150	680	2.9%	4.8%

SIC2007 description and code(s)	Count, rural areas	Count, urban areas	Industry share (%), rural areas	Industry share (%), urban areas
Total	5,255	14,205	100.0%	100.0%

5.138 Not surprisingly, most enterprises (99.4% as of 2025) are in the private sector (very similar to the England average of 99.5%).[143]

Business births, growth and survival rates

5.139 ONS' 'Business Demography' data provides key information on business dynamics and change over time that is not captured by the UKBC data series.[144] The Business Demography series includes statistics on enterprise births, deaths and survival rates, as well as data on the number of 'high growth' enterprises.

5.140 The latest Business Demography data[145] indicate that the business birth is (still) close to the national average: in 2024, there were 57 births per 10,000 residents aged 16 and above, compared to a rate of 59 for England (see Table 5.26).

5.141 The same data suggest that the number of high growth businesses per 100,000 residents aged 16 and above has generally stayed above the England average (except in 2022, when it matched the national average). In 2024, Cheshire East had 29 high growth businesses per 100,000 residents aged 16 and above, compared to 27 for England (see Table 5.27). For the purposes of this data series, 'high growth' businesses are defined as those for which employment growth has averaged more than 20% a year over the previous 3 years.

5.142 Regardless of the business birth cohort that business survival rates are based on (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 or 2023 births), the Business Demography figures place Cheshire East's one-, two, three-, four- and five-year business survival rates above the England average (see Tables 5.28 and 5.29 for the one- and five-year rates). Of those Cheshire East businesses born in 2023, 94.7% survived their first year (compared to

[143] For the purposes of these statistics, the private sector includes non-profit bodies and mutual associations, as well as companies, partnerships and sole proprietors. Public sector enterprises consist of public corporations and central and local government.

[144] The 'UK Business Counts' and the 'Business Demography' are both based on data from the ONS' Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). However, as the 2 data series serve different purposes, involve different approaches and relate to different time periods, their estimates of the total stock of enterprises from the 2 sources do differ, but not dramatically. For example, the total number of active enterprises in Cheshire East is around 19,500 according to the latest 'UK Business Counts' figure (which is for March 2025), but 19,800 according to the latest 'Business Demography' data (which is based on the period from December 2023 to December 2024).

[145] Sources: [1] 'Business demography, UK: 2024' statistical release, ONS, November 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/bulletins/businessdemography/2024 Mid-year population estimates, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' July 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

93.4% in England). Of those born in 2019, 44.5% survived their first 5 years (against a rate of 38.3% for England).

Table 5.26: Business births, 2019 to 2024

	Births, 2019	Births, 2023	Births, 2024	Birth rate (per 10,000 population aged 16+), 2019	Birth rate, 2023	Birth rate, 2024
Cheshire East	2,090	1,980	1,990	65	58	57
North West	36,805	33,005	33,685	62	53	53
England	325,355	281,860	282,680	71	60	59

Table 5.27: High growth enterprises, 2019 to 2025

	Count, 2019	Count, 2023	Count, 2024	Rate (per 100,000 population aged 16+), 2019	Rate, 2023	Rate, 2024
Cheshire East	85	100	100	26	29	29
North West	1,320	1,400	1,420	22	23	23
England	11,035	12,225	12,720	24	26	27

Table 5.28: Business one-year survival rates, by birth year, 2019 to 2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Cheshire East	95.2%	93.4%	94.8%	94.2%	94.7%
North West	94.2%	93.0%	92.1%	92.0%	93.0%
England	94.7%	92.9%	93.5%	92.4%	93.4%

Table 5.29: Five-year survival rates for businesses born in 2023

	Rate (%)
Cheshire East	44.5%
North West	36.6%
England	38.3%

Local business survey findings

5.143 Over the last 15 to 20 years, Cheshire East Council and local partner organisations have commissioned 2 surveys of local businesses' characteristics and needs: one in 2011 and another in 2017, both undertaken by BMG Research. The 2017 survey[146] covered a representative sample of just over 1,500 businesses across Cheshire East, and Cheshire West and Chester (with about 750 responses from employers in each of the 2 local authorities). Whilst many of the results from the 2017 are now rather dated and not necessarily a reliable guide to the local business community's current composition and challenges, a few of the findings highlight points that remain relevant and likely to resonate with businesses today. In particular, when asked about the benefits and disadvantages of Cheshire East as a business location:

- the most frequently-cited benefits were the overall attractiveness of the area (cited by 66%), access to road links (60%) and access to markets/neighbouring cities (55%)
- 52% could name at least one disadvantage, most commonly traffic congestion (raised by 14% of Cheshire East businesses)

Commercial, industrial and retail activity and provision

Main business premises locations

5.144 Table 5.30 below provides a list of the names and locations business parks, industrial estates and other concentrations of (non-retail) businesses in Cheshire East. The list excludes concentrations of employment at sites (such as Bentley's plant in Crewe) that host only a single very large employer, as the separate 'Major employers' subsection of this report contains detailed information on those. (It should be noted that some of these sites have no single 'official' recognised name and some are known by multiple or variant names, so the entries in 'name/description' column should not be regarded as definitive titles in every case.)

Table 5.30: Business parks, industrial estates and other major business clusters

Site name/description	Settlement
Adelphi Mill/Bailey Park/Clough Bank	Bollington
Adlington Industrial Estate	Poynton
Alderley Park	Nether Alderley (near Alderley Edge)
Alexandra Business Park	Crewe
(The) Barony and Alvaston Business Park	Nantwich

[146] Cheshire Business Survey 2017 – Cheshire East report, BMG Research, 2017: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/business-growth-and-investment/supporting-business-growth-and-investment/cheshire-business-survey/cheshire-business-survey-2017.aspx

Site name/description	Settlement
Blakelow Business Park	Shavington
Booths Hall Business Park	Knutsford
Brooks Lane/Road Beta Area	Middlewich
Buglawton Industrial Estate/Havannah Business Centre	Congleton
Calamine Street/Gunco Lane/Heapy Street	Macclesfield
Calveley Industrial Estate	Calveley (near Nantwich)
Cardway Business Park	Alsager
Clarence Mill Business Park	Bollington
(The) Clocktower	Holmes Chapel
Congleton Business Park	Congleton
Crewe Business Park	Crewe
Crewe Commercial Park	Crewe
Crewe Gates Industrial Estate	Crewe
Daneside Business Park	Congleton
Deanway Business Park	Wilmslow
Eaton Bank Industrial Estate	Congleton
Edwin Foden Business Centre	Sandbach
Epsom Avenue	Handforth
Excalibur Industrial Estate	Alsager
Fence Avenue Industrial Estate	Macclesfield
Greenfield Industrial Estate	Congleton
Holly House Estate	Cranage
Holmes Chapel Business Park	Holmes Chapel
Huntsbank Business Park	Wistaston
Hurdsfield Industrial Estate	Macclesfield
King Street Trading Estate	Middlewich
Knutsford Business Park	Knutsford
Lodge Road/Hind Heath Road Area	Sandbach
Longridge Trading Estate	Knutsford
Lyme Green Business Park	Macclesfield

Site name/description	Settlement
Macclesfield Hospitals/Health Sector Area	Macclesfield
Macon Business Park/Macon Way	Crewe
Macon Court/Herald Park/Tommy's Lane	Crewe
Magnitude	Middlewich
Marshfield Bank Employment Park	Crewe
Mere Hall Farm Business Centre	Bucklow Hill (near Knutsford)
Moss Lane Industrial Estate	Sandbach
Parkgate Industrial Estate	Knutsford
Pool Street Industrial Estate	Macclesfield
Poynton Industrial Estate	Poynton
Radnor Park Trading Estate	Congleton
Radway Green Business Centre	Radway Green (near Alsager)
Riverside Business Park	Wilmslow
Somerford Business Court	Somerford (near Congleton)
Springvale Industrial Estate	Sandbach
Stanley Green Industrial Estate/Oak Green Business Park	Handforth
Station Yard Trading Estate	Holmes Chapel
Thomas Street Industrial Area	Congleton
Tricketts Lane	Willaston
Tytherington Business Park	Macclesfield
Wardle Industrial Estate[147]	Wardle (near Nantwich)
Weston Gate	Crewe
Weston Road Industrial Estate	Crewe
Wheelock Heath Business Court	Wheelock Heath (near Sandbach)
Whiteside	Holmes Chapel
Wistaston Road Business Centre	Wistaston
Wrenbury Business Park	Wrenbury
Zan Industrial Park	Sandbach

[147] Also commonly known as Cheshire Green Industrial Park or Cheshire Green Industrial Estate.

Employment land and floorspace development

5.145 Table 5.31 provides a 'gross' amount of land taken up for employment uses.[148] The second row of the table accounts for land that has been converted from one employment use to another: such land is deducted from the gross figure to calculate the 'net' take-up, as shown in the final row. The land take-up figures exclude extensions and infill developments on existing employment sites that are not available to the wider business community (for example owner occupier sites). (For details of the kinds of buildings covered by each of the use class categories in the Table 5.31 columns, see Appendix 4 of this report.)

Table 5.31: Employment land take-up by use class, 2025/26

	Egi	Egii	Egiii	Eg	B2	B8	Mixed use	Total
Gross land take-up (ha)	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.80	3.65	4.53
Redevelopments and change of uses (ha)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.71
Net land take-up (ha)	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.09	3.65	3.82

5.146 Over the last 4 years (2022/23 to 2025/26), net take-up has varied from 3.82ha (2025/26) to 25.20ha (2022/23), with the average being 16.15ha.

5.147 During the 16-year period from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2026, total net employment land take-up was 126.74ha, with the vast majority of this being located in Crewe (28%), KSCs s (44%) and OSRA (23%). Macclesfield accounted for only 2% and LSCs for 3%.[149]

5.148 In 2025/26, 6.73ha of employment land was lost to non-employment uses (larger than the 1.24ha lost in 2024/25). However, none of the losses involved the 380ha of employment allocations identified in the 2010 to 2030 Local Plan Strategy or the 11 strategic employment areas designated in the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD). Over the last 4 years (2022/23 to 2025/26), losses have varied from 0.20 ha (2023/24) to 6.73ha (2025/26), with the average being 2.45ha. [150]

5.149 As of 31 March 2026, the total gross employment land supply stood at 382.12ha (up from 367.51ha a year earlier). 35% of the gross supply is land that is allocated in the

[148] Source: Cheshire East Council Employment Monitoring Database.

[149] Figures based on the settlement boundary definitions set out in the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy ('Determining the Settlement Hierarchy', Cheshire East Council, November 2010: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/researchand-evidence/climate-change/en-ldf-settlementhierarchy.pdf)

[150] Source: Cheshire East Council Employment Monitoring Database.

Local Plan Strategy and the SADPD, 49% has planning permission and 16% is under construction. [151]

5.150 Town centres are taken to be those centres defined in the SADPD, which are principal town centres, town centres, local centres, and local urban centres.

5.151 Most town centre use development has taken place out of town centres, as shown by the floorspace completions data in Table 5.32. In this table, a minus figure represents a reduction in floorspace, which could be for a variety of reasons, including a move to a different use class.[152] (For details of the kinds of buildings covered by each of the use class categories in the Table 5.32 rows, see Appendix 4 of this report.)

Table 5.32: Town centre use floorspace completions, 2025/26

Use class	Town centre gross (m^2)	Town centre net (m^2)	Edge of centre gross (m^2)	Edge of centre net (m^2)	Out of centre gross (m^2)	Out of centre net (m^2)	Cheshire East gross (m^2)	Cheshire East net (m^2)
C1							0.00	0.00
Ea		-2,876.40	91.00	-86.10	148.13	148.13	239.13	-2,814.37
Eb	57.20	57.20	100.10	100.10	318.13	318.13	475.43	475.43
Eci	130.00	-82.00					130.00	-82.00
Ecii				-59.00		-164.00	0.00	-223.00
Eciii		-140.50			27.00	27.00	27.00	-113.50
Ed					1,973.51	1,973.51	1,973.51	1,973.51
Egi		-120.00	343.00	-105.00	906.00	724.00	1,249.00	499.00
F1b							0.00	0.00
F1c							0.00	0.00
F2a							0.00	0.00
SG	277.00	142.00	77.00	-123.00		-627.00	354.00	-608.00
Total	464.20	-3,019.70	611.10	-273.00	3,372.77	2,399.77	4,448.07	-892.93

Retail and town centre activity

5.152 The Cheshire East Annual Property Review 2025[153] notes that, in 2024 (the latest year it covers), the borough saw a total of 72 deals involving retail lease transactions (21 of

[151] Source: Cheshire East Council Employment Monitoring Database. Note: The land supply figures exclude extensions and infill developments on existing employment sites because this land is already considered to be in employment use. The gross supply figures include changes of use or the redevelopment of sites already in one form of employment use to another employment use.

[152] Source: CEC Employment Monitoring Database and Retail Application Monitoring Database

[153] [153] Cheshire East Property Review 2025: https://begroup.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Cheshire-East-Annual-Property-Report-2025.pdf

them in Crewe), with these transactions totalling 14,269 square metres (sqm) of floorspace.

5.153 However, town centres and high street retailing are facing significant challenges. Changing trends and behaviours in recent decades, driven by a range of economic, demographic, social and technological factors, are affecting the prosperity and vibrancy of high streets up and down the country. The Annual Property Report highlights these challenging conditions in the local area, noting that retailers operating from premises are facing higher operating costs, consumer caution and competition from online businesses. The situation is creating vacancies, as well as pressures in some cases for conversion of former retail units to other uses.

5.154 With an overall vacancy rate of 10.0%, Cheshire East falls below the UK Shop Vacancy Rate of 14.4%.[154] However, as shown in Table 5.33, there are 4 town centres that exceed the UK vacancy rate (Audlem, Congleton, Crewe, and Goostrey[155]).[156]

5.155 During 2025/26, several projects in Crewe town centre progressed, including those featured in Crewe's Future High Streets Fund, Towns Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund programmes that, together, exceed £100 million in value.

5.156 The focus of the regeneration plans is on diversifying the range of uses within Crewe town centre to give 'more reasons for more people to visit, and more often'. This is evidenced by the success of the remodelled grade II listed Market Hall that opened in summer 2021 as a retail, food and event venue, as well as the Lifestyle Centre, which opened in 2016. Other enhancements include improving travel links for pedestrians and cyclists. In 2025/26, the town's new Southern Gateway was opened, in addition to phase 1 of the Mill Street redevelopment scheme that will be completed in 2026, forming the primary route between the railway station and town centre.

5.157 Working with Crewe Town Board, the council is leading in managing the £22.9 million Towns Fund programme, with most of the projects having a direct benefit for the town centre. One example of this is the Repurposing our High Streets Grant scheme which, since 2024/25, has supported 30 new businesses to occupy previously vacant premises, facilitating the refurbishment of 4,784sqm of commercial floorspace. Others include construction of a town centre Youth Zone and a redevelopment of the Cumberland Sports Arena, both of which are due to open in 2026.

5.158 Although in Congleton the headline vacancy figures are very high at 18.0%, 23 of the 51 vacant town centre units are in 2 clusters on the lower level of the Bridestones Centre (9 units) and in Capital Walk (14 units). Capital Walk has been closed and is not

[154] UK Retail Monitor, Q1 2026, Knight Frank: https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/site-assets/research/report-pdfs/retail-monitor/uk-retail-monitor---q1-2026.pdf

[155] The Goostrey rate (16.7%) resulted from one out of 6 units being vacant as of 2025-26 (and 2 of the 6 were vacant in 2024-25). However, the settlement had no vacant units in 2022-23 or 2023-24.

[156] Source: Cheshire East Council Shopping Survey Database. Note: Town centres are taken to be those centres defined in the council's SADPD: principal town centres, town centres, local centres, and local urban centres. Shopping survey data is based on observation of trading activity derived from a single site visit by planning staff.

currently available to let. The privately owned vacant units on the lower level of the Bridestones Centre are understood to have never been fully serviced or occupied since construction. Excluding these 2 locations, the Congleton vacancy rate is only 9.9%, which is well below the national average. Furthermore, the redevelopment of a cluster of premises between Mill Street and Princess Street, to create Congleton Market Quarter (CMQ), has seen 8 new units created and occupied. The CMQ development also appears to have significantly increased footfall in Congleton town centre, with the potential of a positive ripple effect on vacancy levels in future years.

Table 5.33: Town centre vacant unit counts and rates, 2025/26

Centre	Number of vacant units, 2025/26	Number of overall units, 2025/26	Vacancy rate (%), 2025/26
Alderley Edge	9	105	8.6%
Alsager	4	100	4.0%
Audlem	4	27	14.8%
Bollington	2	23	8.7%
Chapel Lane (Wilmslow)	3	42	7.1%
Chelford	1	7	14.3%
Congleton	51	283	18.0%
Crewe	48	233	20.6%
Dean Row Road (Wilmslow)	0	18	0.0%
Disley	5	44	11.4%
Goostrey	1	6	16.7%
Handforth	3	76	3.9%
Haslington	0	7	0.0%
Holmes Chapel	2	56	3.6%
Knutsford	13	249	5.2%
Macclesfield	69	516	13.4%
Middlewich	9	91	9.9%
Mobberley	0	9	0.0%
Nantwich	12	262	4.6%
Nantwich Road (Crewe)	20	184	10.9%
Poynton	5	125	4.0%
Prestbury	4	35	11.4%
Sandbach	13	203	6.4%

Centre	Number of vacant units, 2025/26	Number of overall units, 2025/26	Vacancy rate (%), 2025/26
Welsh Row (Nantwich)	2	30	6.7%
West Heath Shopping Centre (Congleton)	1	21	4.8%
West Street (Crewe)	3	31	9.7%
Wilmslow	22	283	7.8%
Total	306	3,066	10.0%

Office, industrial, storage and distribution sector activity and needs

5.159 Specific commercial premises use classes are of relative importance to particular towns and neighbouring areas within the borough. Notable concentrations for specific uses classes are in:

- Congleton, Knutsford, Poynton, Sandbach and the Nantwich area (specifically Wardle Industrial Estate) for industrial activity
- Crewe for industrial, office, and storage and distribution
- Macclesfield for industrial and office sector activity
- Middlewich for storage and distribution
- Wilmslow for the office sector

5.160 The narrative below presents key evidence from the latest annual (2025) Cheshire East Property Review,[157] which contains information, up to and including 2024, for different property sectors, including industrial premises and offices, though not storage and distribution. However, the evidence on these sectors' activity levels and premises needs in Cheshire East (storage and distribution included) are due to be updated anyway, as part of other studies that form part of the new local plan preparation.

5.161 For the industrial sector, the Property Review notes that the average rent in 2024 was £85 per sqm, or well below the North West average (£124 per sqm). That year saw a total of 40 deals and 63,779sqm of floorspace transacted. In comparison, 2023 (42 deals involving over 240,000sqm of floorspace) had seen some far larger transactions, but during the 5 years from 2018 to 2022 inclusive, the number of annual transactions ranged from 33 to 45 and floorspace varied from around 55,000 to around 124,000sqm. Therefore 2023 appears to be outlier and activity in 2024 was otherwise similar to other recent years.

[157] Cheshire East Property Review 2025: https://begroup.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Cheshire-East-Annual-Property-Report-2025.pdf

5.162 As for the geographical spread of industrial sector activity in 2024, the Nantwich area accounted for nearly half (30,660sqm, or 48%) of the floorspace that exchanged hands, with Wardle Industrial Estate[158] making up most (18,365sqm) of this, whilst Middlewich contributed 23% (14,390sqm), Crewe 14% (8,894sqm) and Knutsford 7% (4,748sqm) and deals in Macclesfield, Congleton, Poynton and Sandbach made up the remaining 8%. In 2024, major industrial development plans were approved at Basford East (Crewe), the new Avro Business Park (on the edge of Poynton) and Radway Green (just outside Alsager).

5.163 For office sector deals with floorspace over 200sqm, activity in 2024 was far lower than in other recent years, with just 13 deals, involving a collective total of 6,722sqm. In contrast, the number of deals in each year of the 2018 to 2023 period ranged from 22 to 38 and floorspace ranged from around 18,000 to around 24,000sqm. Of the 200sqm and above deals transacted in 2024, Macclesfield (5 deals totalling 3,803sqm) and Crewe (4 deals totalling 1,623sqm) accounted for the vast majority.

5.164 Looking at office deals overall (including those at or below 200sqm), there were 98 in total, with these transactions involving 10,730sqm of floorspace, mostly in Macclesfield (36% of the floorspace total), Crewe (26%) or Nantwich (20%), but Knutsford (8%) and Wilmslow (7%) also made a modest contribution. The other 3% was spread across 4 other settlements (Alderley Edge, Congleton, Middlewich and Sandbach). Nantwich was particularly notable as the source for many small office premises transactions, accounting for two-fifths (39) of the 98 deals (all of them at or below 200sqm).

Visitor and cultural economy

Economic contribution

Cheshire East heritage and culture impact study

5.165 Heritage and culture makes an enormous contribution to the lives of people of Cheshire East, not just through its economic impact, but in strengthening and broadening social bonds and community identity, in improving health and wellbeing, helping to educate and develop residents' skills, and in protecting the natural environment.

5.166 In 2024, the council carried out a study of these various impacts on Cheshire East,[159] to help support the case for continued maintenance and further development of the borough's heritage and culture. The study included new estimates of the economic impact of heritage and culture within Cheshire East specifically, but its findings on non-economic impacts were taken from national and international studies or based on case studies relating to other parts of the UK.

[158] Referred to as Cheshire Green Industrial Estate in the Property Review. Both names (and Cheshire Green Industrial Park) are in common use locally.

[159] 'The Impact of Heritage and Culture on Cheshire East', Cheshire East Council, August 2024.

5.167 Quantifiable economic impacts include the impact arising from heritage and cultural organisations and sites' expenditure and their investment and employment of staff, which has a knock-on effect on the wider economy through the heritage and cultural sector's supply chain and through employees spending their own wages. It is possible to quantify such effects in terms of economic output and jobs generated. The council's 2024 study estimated that heritage and culture accounted for around £1.0 billion[160] (about 6%) of Cheshire East's economic output (GVA) and around 11,000 FTE jobs (about 7% of the borough's total employment. (These estimates include the knock-on as well as the direct effects.)

STEAM (visitor economy model) evidence

5.168 The 'STEAM' model produces estimates of the economic impact of tourism, using a variety of relevant data, such as visitor attraction numbers, visitor expenditure, the stock and occupancy of beds in tourist accommodation, accommodation tariffs, macroeconomic data on the performance of the national economy, transport use data and estimates of the size of multiplier effects (knock-on effects on the wider economy).[161] STEAM data was used, for example, to inform part of the economic analysis undertaken for the council's 2024 heritage and culture impact study.

5.169 STEAM model estimates are produced regularly for the council as part of an ongoing agreement with local partner organisations. The most recent STEAM estimates[162] indicate that, in 2024 the visitor economy accounted for:

- £1.122 billion of the borough's economic impact (up from £1.005 billion in 2023), with £841 million of this being the direct impact of tourism and the rest arising from indirect (or induced) effects on the wider economy[163]
- 10,500 FTE jobs (up from 10,000 in 2023) within the local economy, with 8,300 of these being within the tourism sector itself (an increase from 7,900 in 2023) and the rest arising from indirect (or induced) effects

5.170 The 2024 STEAM data put the number of visitors in 2024 at 14.3m (up from 13.3m in 2023) and the number of visitor days (visitor numbers weighted by the number of days spent in the borough) at 16.0m (against 15.0m for the previous year). Day visitors accounted for most of this (12.8m, or 90% of all visitors, as of 2024, and up from 89% in 2023).

[160] This figure is in 2022 prices.

[161] Further details are set out on the STEAM model supplier's website, at https://www.globaltourismsolutions.co.uk/steam-model

[162] Source: Cheshire East STEAM Report for 2013 to 2024, Global Tourism Solutions. Data released in January 2026.

[163] The STEAM figures cited here are in nominal (current) prices: that is, the 2023 figure is given in 2023 prices and the other (2024) figures are in 2024 prices. The 2023-24 therefore includes the impact of inflation.

Visitor accommodation capacity

5.171 In June 2026, VisitEngland published the results from its latest audit of visitor accommodation.[164] This was the first such audit since 2016. Analysis of the audit data by Marketing Cheshire indicates that, within Cheshire East, there were:

- 213 sites offering visitor accommodation (see Table 5.34), with hotels accounting for just over half (51.6%) of these, Bed and Breakfast accommodation for just over one-third (36.2%) and campsites for the rest (12.2%)
- just over 11,000 bedspaces, of which 86.8% were in hotels

Table 5.34: Visitor accommodation provision, Cheshire East, 2026

Property type	Properties/ sites	Number of rooms/ pitches (camping)	Bedspaces	Properties/ sites: % share	Number of rooms/ pitches (camping): % share	Bedspaces: % share
Bed and Breakfast/ Guest House	77	649	1,460	36.2%	11.8%	13.2%
Camping Ground	26	583	N/A	12.2%	10.6%	N/A
Hotel	110	4,251	9,564	51.6%	77.5%	86.8%
Total	213	5,483	11,024	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Major visitor attractions

5.172 VisitEngland's annual visitor attractions survey provides key information on the volumes of visitors to major attractions in Cheshire East. The response rate to the survey is commonly around 25% to 30% for the 5,000 to 6,000 attractions that are approached, but data from other sources is included for **some** of those attractions that do not respond to the survey. The latest survey results relate to 2024 and were published in 2025, alongside comparable results from the previous few years (2019 to 2023). [165] It should also be noted that the numbers reported for some attractions (including Tatton Park in the latest survey) are VisitEngland estimates, rather than exact numbers.

5.173 Among those 'paid' attractions (those charging an entry fee) in the North West, Tatton Park was the third most visited attraction in 2024 (Chester Zoo was first), while Lyme Park and Gardens ranked seventh, Quarry Bank Mill and Garden was ninth and Jodrell Bank 17th.

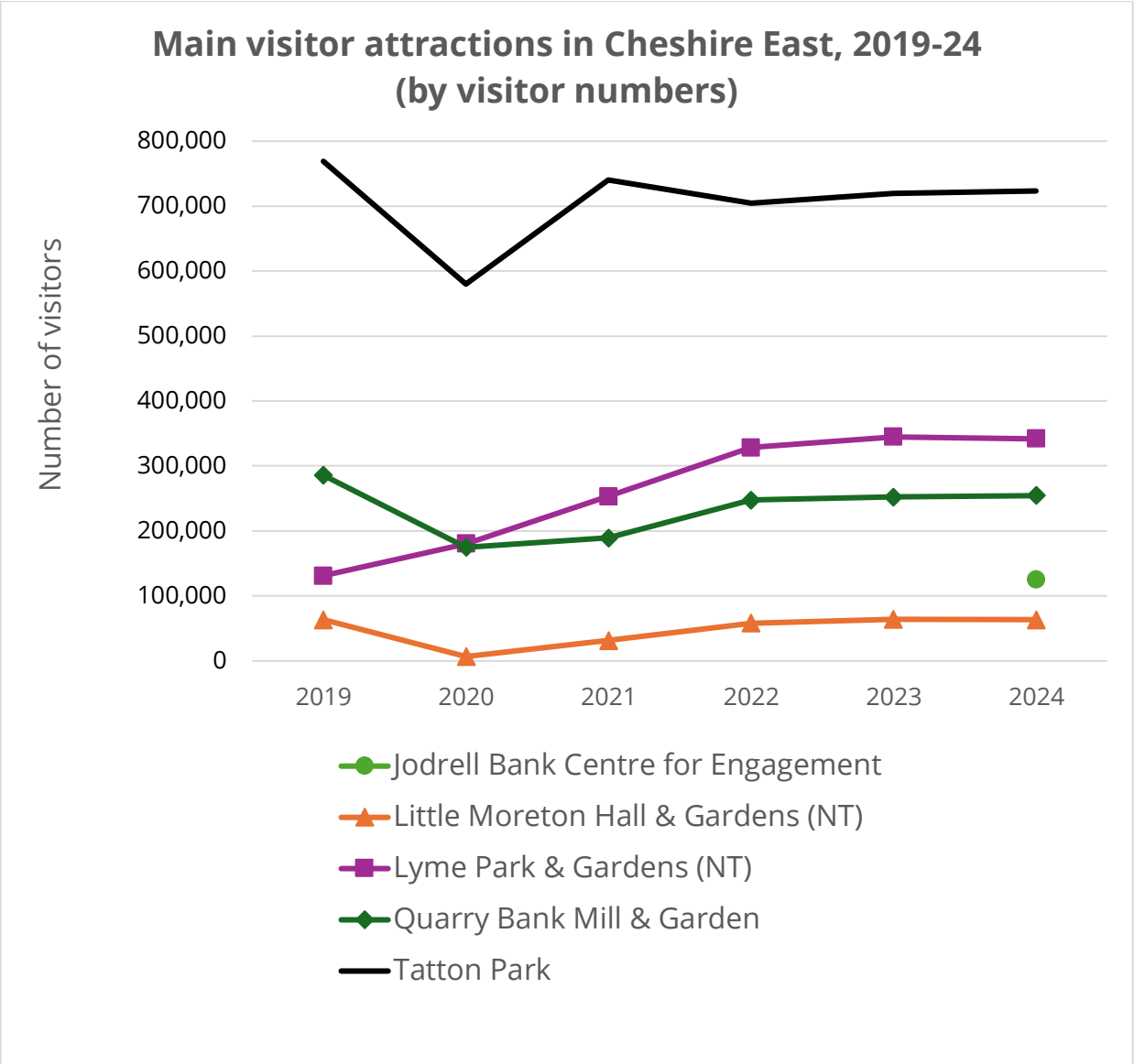
[164] England Accommodation Stock Audit, VisitEngland, June 2026: https://www.visitbritain.org/research-insights/england-accommodation-stock-audit

[165] 2024 Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions, VisitBritain and VisitEngland, June 2025: https://www.visitbritain.org/research-insights/england-visitor-attractions-latest

5.174 Figure 5.13 summarises the latest (2019 to 2024) data on Cheshire East's larger attractions (those with at least 50,000 visitors in 2024), namely the 4 attractions just listed (Tatton Park, Lyme Park and Gardens, Quarry Bank Mill and Garden, and Jodrell Bank) and Little Moreton Hall and Gardens.

5.175 The number of visitors to Tatton in 2024 (around 724,000) was up marginally (by less than 0.5%) on 2023, but still 6% below its 2019 level of 769,000 (and lower than in 2021). However, the latest Tatton figure is 25% higher than the low point (580,000) reached in 2020, the year most affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Figure 5.13: Main visitor attractions in Cheshire East, 2019-24



5.176 For Jodrell Bank, Cheshire East's UNESCO World Heritage Site, the dataset includes a figure only for 2024 (around 125,000), not for earlier years.[166]

[166] Given this, and the fact that dataset fails to categorise the 2024 Jodrell Bank figure as either 'An Estimate' or 'Exact', it may be one derived by VisitEngland from a separate source, not from actual survey.

5.177 Lyme Park and Gardens had around 342,000 visitors in 2024, which is a decrease of 1% on the 2023 figure, but still the second highest volume achieved during the 2019 to 2024 period. Notably, Lyme Park visitor numbers rose strongly in 2020, 2021 and 2022 (by 30% to 40% in each of those years). It may be that COVID-19 increased (the relative) attractiveness of visits to Lyme Park in 2020 and 2021.

5.178 Visitor numbers for Quarry Bank Mill and Garden (around 255,000 in 2024) were up a little (1%) on 2023 and have grown by 46% from the level they dropped to in 2020 (175,000), though they remain short of the level (286,000) seen in 2019. Again, it seems plausible that COVID-19 is part of the explanation for these changes.

5.179 Little Moreton Hall and Gardens saw visitor numbers decline marginally (by 1%) between 2023 and 2024, to around 63,000 (the same as in 2019). This contrasts sharply with the COVID-19 period, when visitor numbers were down sharply (to 7,000 in 2020 and 31,000 in 2021). Again, COVID-19 seems a likely part of the explanation for the post-2019 changes.

5.180 The survey data also cover 2 Cheshire East attractions that are smaller but still significant in scale (those with at least 10,000 but under 50,000 visitors in 2024): Hare Hill Gardens, and the Gauntlet Bird of Prey, Eagle and Vulture Park.

5.181 The Hare Hill Gardens visitor number (around 23,000 in 2024) is 11 times higher than in 2020, but still well below the level achieved in 2019 (34,000).

5.182 In 2022, 2023 and 2024, the Gauntlet Bird of Prey, Eagle and Vulture Park (one of the attractions reliant on estimated numbers, not exact figures) received a reported 26,000 to 27,000 visitors annually. This is only a fraction of the number reported in 2019 (240,000). However, no data for this attraction are available for other recent years, so it is not clear whether the 2019 figure is a reliable and representative guide to its pre-COVID-19 visitor numbers.

5.183 There were no 2024 survey data for Astbury Mere Country Park, a 'free' attraction which previous surveys have picked up. Historically, Astbury Mere has been one of the borough's most visited attractions: the 2023 survey dataset indicated that its visitor numbers stayed broadly in the same range (200,000 to 300,000 each year) during (and before) the 2019 to 2022 period, before increasing dramatically, to 406,000 in 2023. The relatively high number of visitors achieved by Astbury Mere in the COVID-19-affected year of 2021 (255,000, versus 212,000 in 2019) is perhaps none too surprising, given it is a purely open-air attraction, so COVID-19 probably increased its relative attractiveness to visitors while indoor locations were still out of bounds or perceived as unduly risky.

Agricultural activity

5.184 The most detailed information on agricultural activity at local level comes from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' (Defra) annual agricultural survey. The published data for some survey years (including 2025, 2024 and at 3 to 5 -year intervals before that) includes figures down to local authority level. However, it may be that some of the differences between the national picture and the estimates for

Cheshire East are to some extent a consequence of survey sampling error margins, which will be greater for smaller geographical areas (like individual authorities) than for England.

5.185 The latest Defra survey[167] indicates that the number of people employed as farm labour in Cheshire East (including farmers, their partners, managers and casual labour, as well as regular employees) fluctuated only slightly (staying in the 3,950 to 4,050 range) between 2010 and 2021, but with a dip to the survey series' lowest-recorded figure (around 3,850) in 2024 and a further drop, to around 3,700, in 2025.

5.186 The percentage decline in Cheshire East's farm labour between 2024 and 2025 (4.4%, as shown in Table 5.35) is higher than the average annual percentage decline recorded between any other 2 consecutive timepoints in this survey series (though the 2007 to 2010 period also saw a relatively fast rate of contraction: an average of 3.5% per annum). The same was true for England, with farm labour falling by 1.9% between 2024 and 2025, compared to a fall averaging 1.4% per annum during 2021-24, 1.6% per annum during 2007 to 2010 and slower declines or slight overall growth during 2010 to 2013, 2013 to 2016 and 2016 to 2021.

Table 5.35: Farm labour, 2007 to 2025

	Jobs, 2007	Jobs, 2024	Jobs, 2025	% change, 2007-25	% change, 2024-25
Cheshire East	4,495	3,858	3,688	-18.0%	-4.4%
England	308,140	284,797	279,493	-9.3%	-1.9%

5.187 The Defra figures for 2024 are broadly consistent with the figures from ONS' most recently-published Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) data, which comes from the BRES' 2024 survey. The 2024 BRES survey figures put employment (including self-employment) in the Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities sector (UK Standard Industrial Classification code 01) at 4,500 in Cheshire East (which equates to 2.1% of all employment in the borough).

5.188 In 2007, the area (number of hectares) of farmed land in Cheshire East was around 93,500ha, but has since fallen by an estimated 12.3% (see Table 5.36), with declines reported in 3 consecutive surveys (2016, 2021 and 2024) and a 7.0% decrease between 2021 and 2024 alone. However, the 2025 survey data indicate a modest reversal of the 2007 to 2024 change, with the area of farmed land expanding by 3.0% on the previous year, from a low point of 79,700ha in 2024 to 82,000ha in the following year. The total farmed area in England has also decreased over the long term, but at a somewhat slower rate than in Cheshire East: England's farmed area is now 3.7% below its 2007 level, though (as in Cheshire East) it increased (albeit by just 0.8%) between 2024 and 2025, to reach 8.9m ha.

[167] Defra June Survey of Agriculture. Data published by Defra in April 2026, at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june

Table 5.36: Farmed area, 2007 to 2025

	Area (ha), 2007	Area (ha), 2024	Area (ha), 2025	% change, 2007-25	% change, 2024-25
Cheshire East	93,500	79,700	82,000	-12.3%	3.0%
England	9,291,400	8,877,500	8,946,400	-3.7%	0.8%

5.189 Grassland makes up nearly three-quarters (74.7%) of the farmed land area in Cheshire East, but accounts for less than half (48.5%) of farmed land in England. Conversely, cereals (with a 10.9% share), other arable crops (8.4%) and fruit/ vegetables (less than 0.05%) cover much smaller proportions of the borough's farmed land than they do in England generally. Other forms of usage account for a somewhat smaller share of farmed land in Cheshire East (5.8%) than in England (12.3%).

5.190 The survey results suggest that, by 2025, the number of farm holdings in Cheshire East had fallen to 1,433, down 3.9% on the 2024 figure and 10.3% fewer than in 2010 (see Table 5.37). The 2025 survey is the third consecutive one in which the estimated number of holdings in Cheshire East has decreased. For England, the number of holdings also reached a new low point in 2025: around 99,900, or 5.3% fewer than in 2010.

Table 5.37: Farm holdings, 2007 to 2025

	Count, 2007	Count, 2024	Count, 2025	% change, 2007-25	% change, 2024-25
Cheshire East	1,598	1,491	1,433	-10.3%	-3.9%
England	105,449	102,261	99,872	-5.3%	-2.3%

6 Health, wellbeing and society

Strategy and policy background

6.1 One of the main commitments in the Cheshire East Plan 2025 to 2029[168] is to improve health and wellbeing. The Plan identifies several specific objectives relating to health, wellbeing and social inclusion. These include:

- reducing child, family and adult poverty
- improved health outcomes through a targeted approach that reduces health inequalities
- improved independence, quality of life, health and wellbeing through early intervention and prevention
- everyone feels safe and secure, difference is celebrated and abuse and exploitation not tolerated
- children and young people thrive and reach their potential with targeted support when and where they need it
- communities build their capacity, with support to access information, guidance and funding
- lasting solutions are delivered through strong and committed partnerships

6.2 The council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2023 to 2028 identifies health and social needs, how well these are being met and opportunities to inform decision-making. The JSNA work programme includes a range of reviews into specific health and wellbeing issues.[169]

6.3 Cheshire East's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy[170] sets out 4 broad outcomes: healthier places, starting well, mental wellbeing and ageing well.

6.4 The borough's Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) 2025 to 2028[171] considers current pharmaceutical services provision and how well this meets local residents' current and expected future needs, taking account of the latest ONS subnational population projections for different age groups in Cheshire East.

[168] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/council-and-democracy/corporate-plans/cheshire-east-plan-2025-29.pdf

[169] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/jsna

[170] 'The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the population of Cheshire East 2023-2028': https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/council-and-democracy/health-and-wellbeing-board/joint-health-wellbeing.pdf

[171] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/council-and-democracy/health-and-wellbeing-board/cheshire-east-pna-2025-2028-final.pdf

6.5 Health and wellbeing policy-making and strategy in the borough is also informed by the NHS long-term plan[172] and the Families First Partnership programme.[173]

6.6 The supply and demand for outdoor sports, such as football, cricket, and rugby, is assessed and managed through the council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPOSS), which is reviewed annually.

Deprivation

6.7 For the purposes of this report and the deprivation data it draws on, 'deprivation' refers to people's unmet needs, a lack of access to opportunities and resources which we might expect in our society. People can be considered to be in poverty if they lack the financial resources to meet their needs, whereas people can be regarded as deprived due to a lack of resources of all kinds, not just income.

6.8 In October 2025, the government released the latest (2025) IoD,[174] which were the first such indices to be produced since 2019. The 2025 IoD itself consists of 3 main indices: the IMD and 2 supplementary indices, the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), and the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI).

6.9 The IMD is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England and is the most widely used of the Indices of Deprivation. It consists of 7 different 'domains', some of which in turn are split into sub-domains. This reflects the fact that there any many different types of deprivation, which are interrelated and can have a cumulative impact, but which can also provide useful insight if analysed in isolation. These 7 domains cover:

- Income deprivation
- Employment deprivation
- Education, skills and training deprivation, which consists of 2 sub-domains: Children and young people (covering the educational performance of children and young people) and Adult skills
- Health deprivation and disability
- Barriers to housing and services, which estimates the accessibility of jobs and services (such as schools, shops and leisure facilities), both physically and financially, and which has 2 sub-domains: Geographical barriers, which measures the proximity of services, and Wider barriers, which covers issues such as housing affordability and broadband speed)
- Crime

[172] 'Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England', NHS England: https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-term-plan/

[173] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/families-first-partnership-programme

[174] English Indices of Deprivation 2025, MHCLG, October 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025

- Living environment deprivation, which consists of 2 sub-domains: Indoors deprivation (focusing on the quality and condition of local housing), and Outdoors deprivation, which measures the quality of the external environment, using data on air quality, noise pollution and road traffic accidents

6.10 The IoD ranks every LSOA in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 33,755 (least deprived area) across each domain, sub-domain, the combined IMD measure and both supplementary indices.

6.11 It is common to describe how relatively deprived a neighbourhood is by saying whether it falls among the most deprived 10%, 20% or 30% of small areas in England (although there is no definitive cut-off point at which an area is described as 'deprived'). It is only relative deprivation that the Indices measure. They do not measure absolute (quantified) deprivation and so cannot be used to assess, for example, whether one geographical area is, say, twice as deprived as another. However, the Indices can be used to compare the relative deprivation of different small areas, or of different larger areas (such as local authorities). They can also be used to assess relative deprivation in different domains and to see whether a particular geographical area is relatively deprived in terms of some domains but less so in terms of other domains.

6.12 Differences between the 2019 and 2025 Indices (not just the impact of some LSOA boundary changes following the 2021 Census results, but changes to the quality and choice of input data) mean that all comparisons between the 2019 and 2025 IoD results should be made with care. Consequently, changes in a particular LSOA's relative deprivation are best regarded as an updated assessment of deprivation in that location and not in themselves as proof that relative deprivation has 'improved' or 'worsened' in that LSOA over the 2019 to 2025 period.

Overall deprivation

6.13 Looking at the overall (IMD) deprivation data for Cheshire East from the IoD, 6 (2.5%) of Cheshire East's 244 LSOAs rank in the top (most deprived) 10% of the 2025 IMD. In contrast, in the 2019 IMD, only 4 of the (then) 234 Cheshire East LSOAs (1.7%) ranked in the top 10%.

6.14 21 (8.6%) of Cheshire East's 244 LSOAs rank in the top 20% of the 2025 IMD. This is higher than the number (18, or 7.7% of all the borough's LSOAs) that ranked in the top 20% of the 2019 IMD. However, none of these 21 (using ONS' LSOA based 2021 Rural Urban Classification[175]) are in rural areas of the borough.

6.15 Of the 6 LSOAs in the top 10% of the 2025 IMD, 5 are in Crewe and one (to the southeast of South Park) is in Macclesfield.

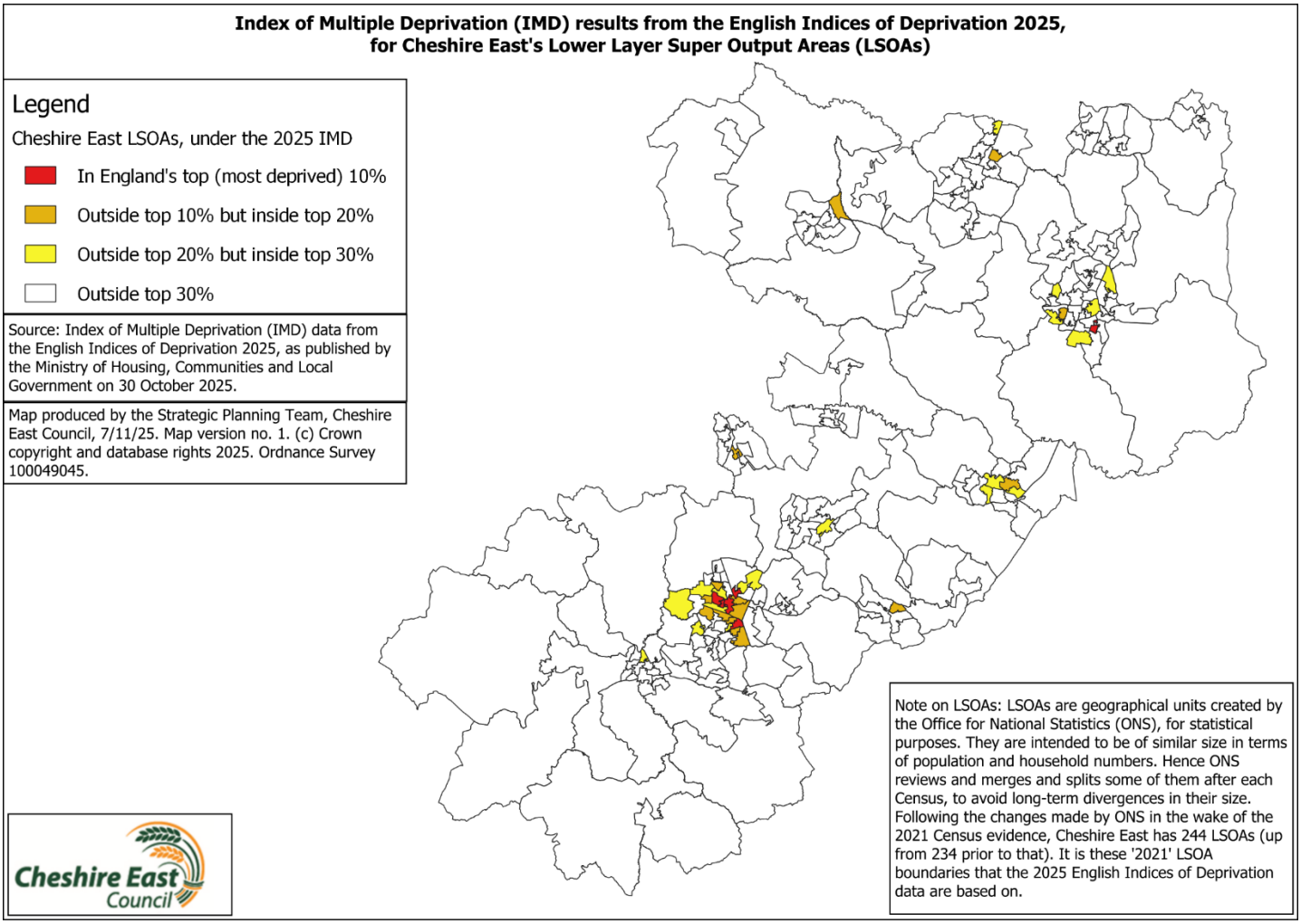
6.16 Of the 21 LSOAs in the top 20% of the 2025 IMD, 14 are in Crewe, 2 are in Macclesfield and the other 5 are in Alsager (covering the area around Moorhouse Avenue),

[175] LSOA based 2021 Rural Urban Classification for England and Wales, ONS, August 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/ruralurbanclassifications/2021ruralurbanclassification

Congleton (the Bromley Road area), Knutsford (the Shaw Heath/Longridge area), Middlewich (between Cledford Primary School and the A533) and Wilmslow (the Colshaw Farm area).

6.17 The map in Figure 6.1 shows the areas of Cheshire East ranked in the most deprived 10%, 20% and 30% of English LSOAs for overall (IMD) deprivation.

Figure 6.1: Overall (IMD) deprivation in Cheshire East, 2025



6.18 The council's 'Tartan Rug'[176] provides an overview of local health need across Cheshire East, and displays data across wards and neighbourhoods for a variety of indicators. This identifies correlations between the areas of deprivation in Figure 6.1 and the areas of Cheshire East that are more likely to have significant health inequalities, showing the link between living in an area of deprivation, and an individual's own health and wellbeing. It highlights clear pockets of poorer experience of health and wellbeing across areas of Crewe, Macclesfield and Handforth.[177]

[176] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/jsna/overviews-of-health-and-wellbeing

[177] Further evidence on health inequalities at neighbourhood level can be found in the MSOA level data available from the public health profiles on the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) 'Fingertips' web pages: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/

Deprivation domains

6.19 The following commentary assesses the IoD 2025 results for each individual deprivation domain in turn, and how these vary by settlement,[178] focusing in particular on whether individual Cheshire East LSOAs rank in the top 20%, and on which of those rank in the top 10%.

6.20 **Income:** There are some parts of Crewe and Macclesfield that fare worse on income deprivation than in the overall IMD, but for other areas of those towns the reverse is true. However, Crewe has fewer LSOAs in the top 20% (or top 10%) of the Income domain than in the equivalent range of the IMD, implying that income deprivation is (relatively speaking) less of a challenge in the town than some other types of deprivation. Apart from Crewe and Macclesfield, no towns have more than one LSOA in the top 20% of the Income domain.

6.21 **Employment:** There are some towns where employment deprivation is more severe than overall (IMD) deprivation: namely Alsager, Congleton and Macclesfield. However, applying the same criteria, whilst some parts of Crewe (notably in the north and west of the town) fare worse on employment deprivation than in the overall IMD, for other areas of Crewe the reverse is true, and the town has fewer (2 fewer) top 20% LSOAs in this domain than in the IMD.

6.22 **Education, skills and training:** There are 5 towns where Education, skills and training deprivation is more severe than overall (IMD) deprivation: namely Congleton, Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich and Sandbach. 22 (nearly half) of Crewe's 48 LSOAs are in the top 20% of this domain: significantly more than in the top 20% of the IMD (14) or in any other domain, and of those 22, 14 are in the top 10% of this domain.

6.23 **Health deprivation and disability:** there are some towns where Health deprivation and disability is more severe than overall (IMD) deprivation, namely Congleton, Handforth and Middlewich. The same is true of 2 areas that fall outside any towns, namely the LSOA covering the village of Weston (classed as 'rural' in ONS' LSOA-based 2021 Rural Urban Classification) and the one containing Styal (HM Prison Styal included) and the village of Morley. Macclesfield has 7 LSOAs in the top 20% of this domain (versus only 2 in the IMD top 20%), though none are in the top 10%. However, Crewe has slightly fewer LSOAs (12) in the top 20% of this domain than in the IMD top 20% (14).

6.24 **Crime:** there are 7 towns where crime is more severe than overall (IMD) deprivation: namely Alsager, Congleton, Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Sandbach and Wilmslow. Macclesfield has 8 LSOAs in the top 20% of this domain: significantly more than in the top 20% of the IMD (two). Crewe has many more (12) in the top 10% of this domain than in the top 10% of the IMD (5). Town centres tend to feature more commonly in

[178] The settlement-level IoD analysis excludes 4 of the 24 settlements in the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy (Audlem, Bunbury, Goostrey and Wrenbury), as the data is available only at (and above) LSOA level, and LSOA boundaries do not provide a reasonable fit with those 4 villages' actual areas.

the top 20% of this domain than for other domains. However, in Alsager, Knutsford and Wilmslow, the LSOAs in the top 20% of the Crime domain are all outside the town centre.

6.25 **Barriers to housing and services:** The locations of LSOAs in the top 10% or 20% of this domain are very different to those for other domains, as the data largely reflects variations in deprivation in the Geographical barriers sub-domain, which measures the proximity of jobs and services such as schools, shops and leisure facilities. This proximity tends to be a much greater issue in many villages and more rural, less densely populated areas, than it is within or near towns. (The other sub-domain, Wider barriers, has no Cheshire East LSOAs in its top 20%.)

6.26 **Living environment:** The locations of LSOAs in the top 10% or 20% of this domain are very different to those for other domains, as it records types of deprivation that affect some (though not all) larger urban areas but also some villages and more rural, less densely populated areas. Its 'Indoors' sub-domain' focuses on the quality and condition of local housing. Its 'Outdoors' sub-domain measures the quality of the external environment, using data on air quality, noise pollution and road traffic accidents. Areas where the housing stock is often of poorer quality, such as some of the inner parts of Crewe and Macclesfield and some rural areas, therefore feature prominently, as do some locations where a major road network affects the quality of the outdoor environment.

Deprivation in Crewe

6.27 Aside from the types of deprivation that are common in (though not all exclusive to) rural areas, Crewe accounts for most of the areas of significant deprivation in Cheshire East. It contains most of the LSOAs in the top 20% of the IMD (see Figure 6.2) and the top 20% of 3 domains (Income, Employment, and Education, skills and training), as well as over two-fifths of those LSOAs in the top 20% of the Health deprivation and disability domain and the Crime domain.

6.28 The IoD evidence suggests that Education, skills and training domain deprivation is more severe in Crewe than any other type of deprivation: this domain has far more Crewe LSOAs in its top 20% (22) than the others (each 16 or less) and 3 of these LSOAs (shaded brown in Figure 6.3) are in the top 1% of that domain. One of those 3 (Cheshire East 043A) is almost in the top 0.3% of that domain, ranking 104th out of England's 33,755 LSOA for Education, skills and training deprivation.

Figure 6.2: Overall (IMD) deprivation in Crewe, 2025

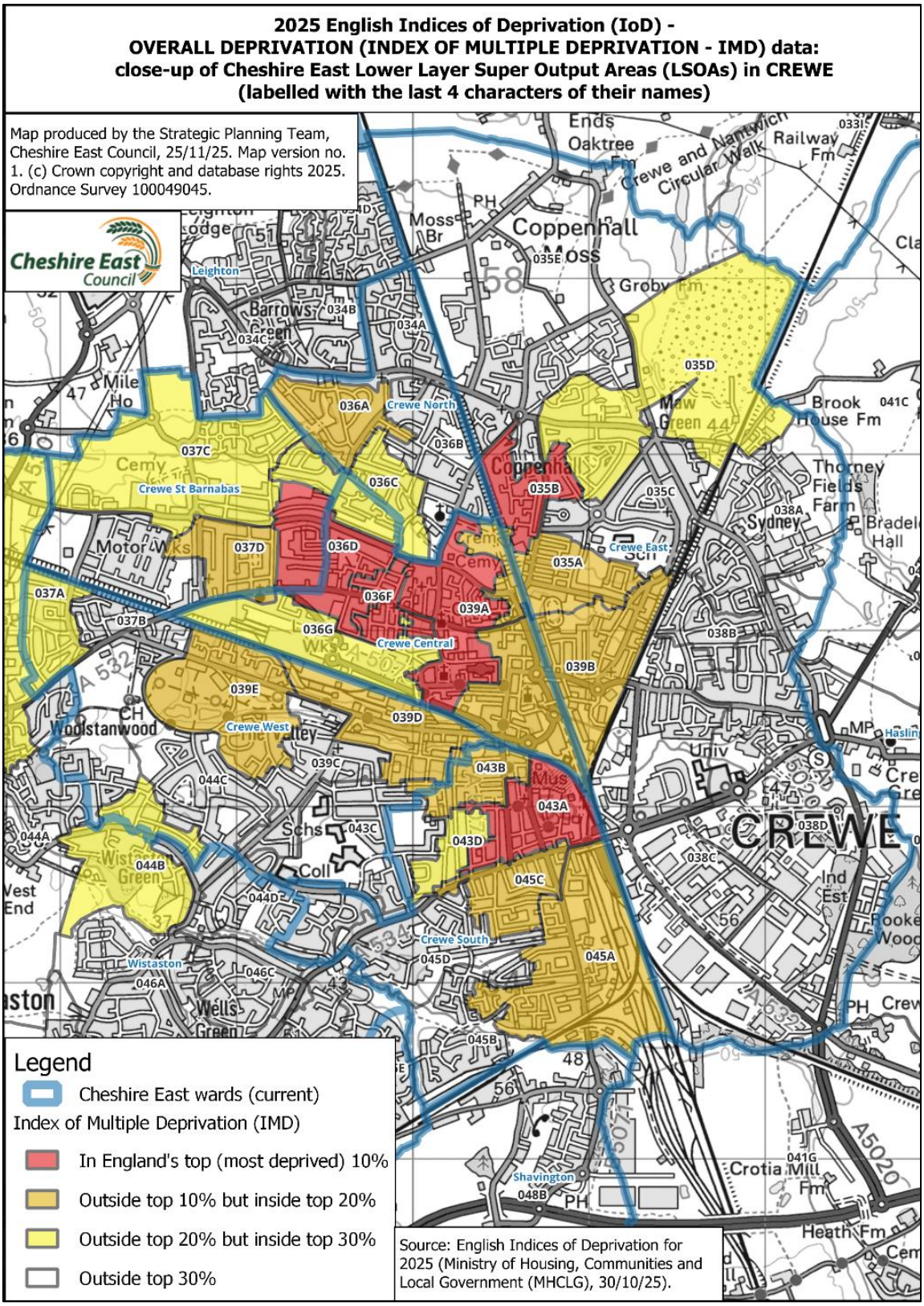
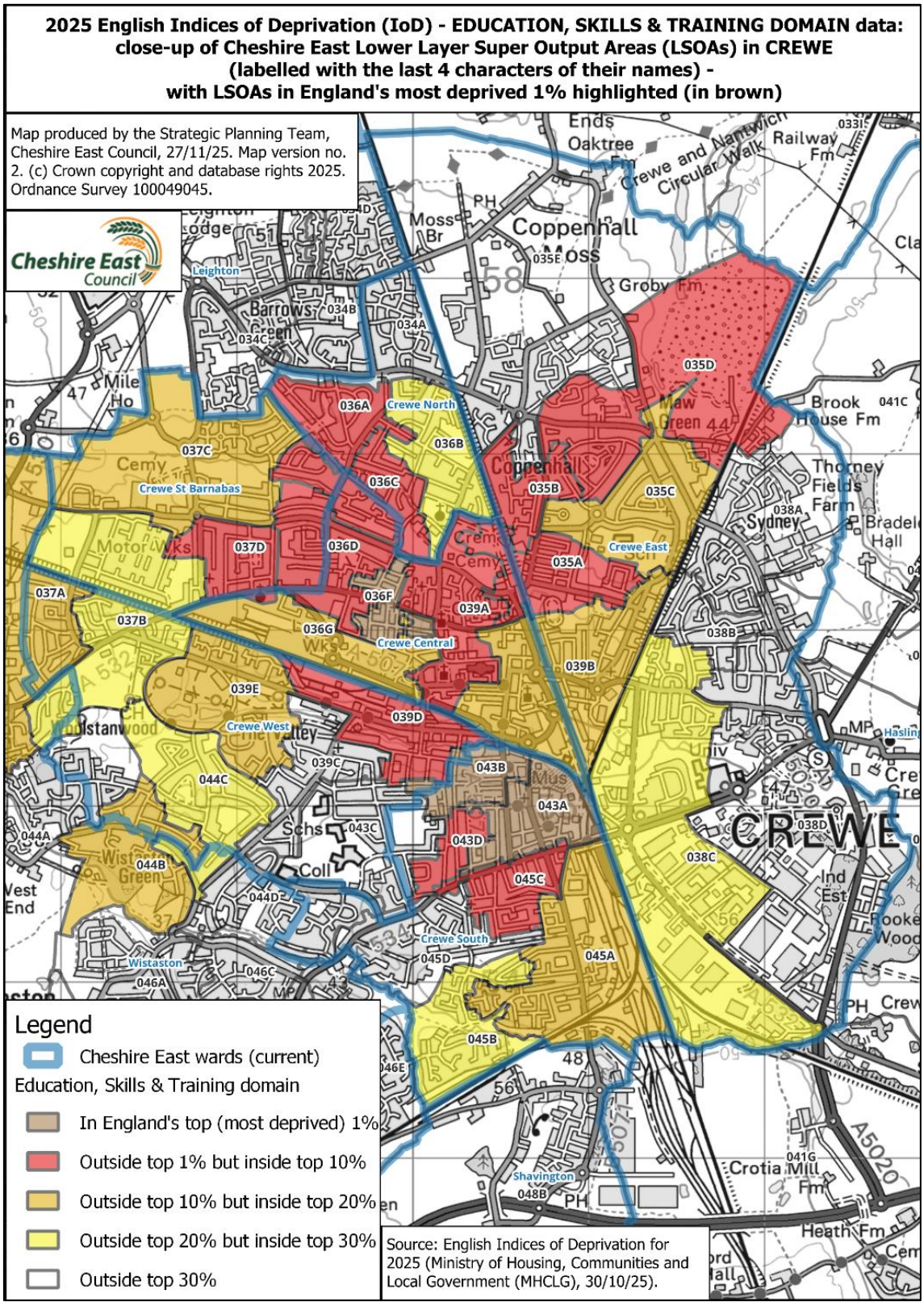

2025 English Indices of Deprivation (IoD) -
OVERALL DEPRIVATION (INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION - IMD) data:
close-up of Cheshire East Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in CREWE
(labelled with the last 4 characters of their names)
Map produced by the Strategic Planning Team, Cheshire East Council, 25/11/25. Map version no. 1. (c) Crown copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey 100049045.
Cheshire East Council
Legend
Cheshire East wards (current)
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
In England's top (most deprived) 10%
Outside top 10% but inside top 20%
Outside top 20% but inside top 30%
Outside top 30%
Source: English Indices of Deprivation for 2025 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), 30/10/25).
CREWE
Crewe North
Crewe St Barnabas
Crewe Central
Crewe East
Crewe West
Crewe South
Coppenhall
Leighton
Barrows Green
Woolstanwood
Wistaston
Wells Green
Shavington
Sydney
Moss Br
Oaktree
Groby Fm
Brook House Fm
Thorney Fields Farm
Crotia Mill Fm
Heath Fm
Railway Fm
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Figure 6.3: Education, skills and training domain deprivation in Crewe, 2025

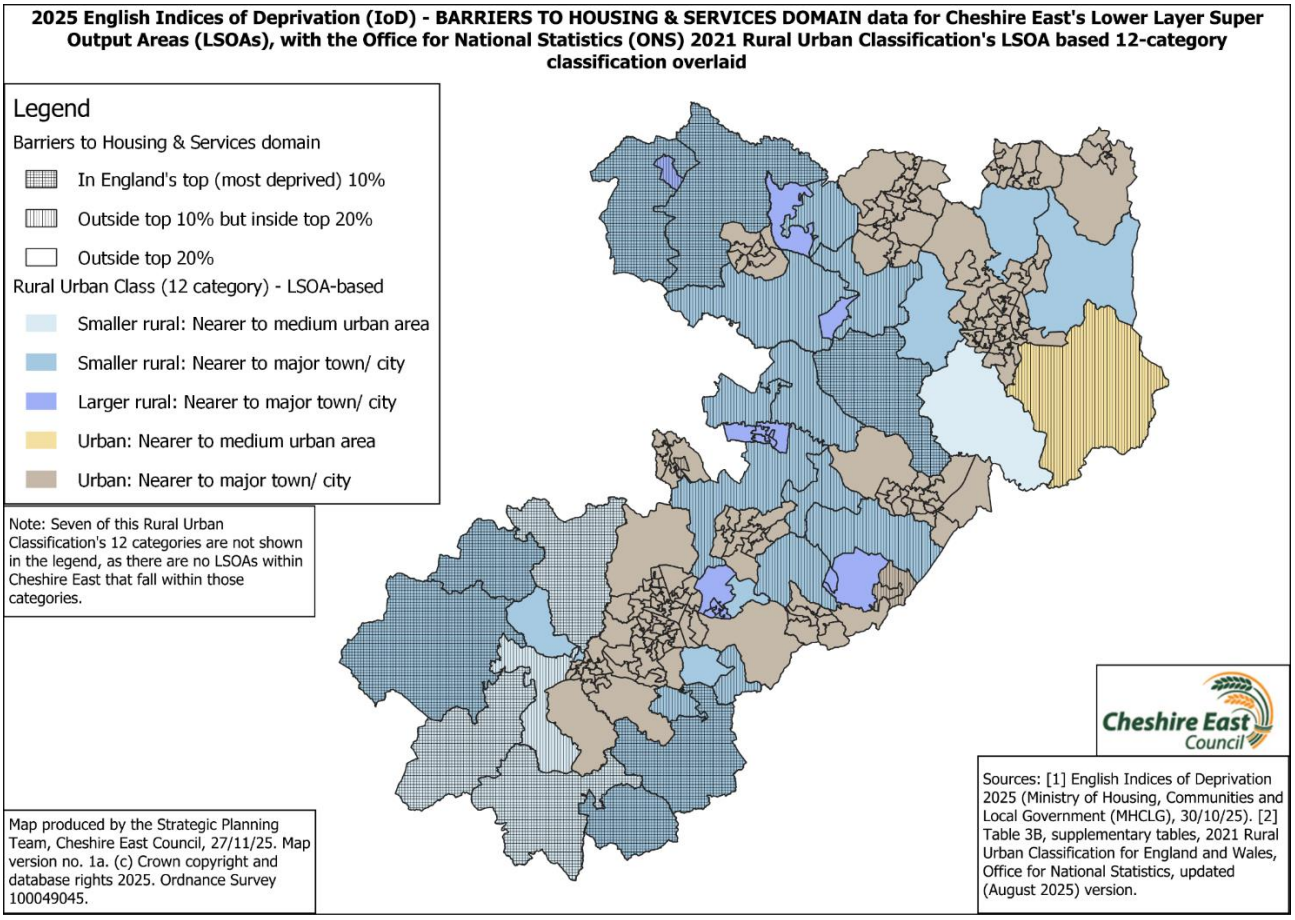


Deprivation in rural areas

6.29 Using ONS' latest (2021) LSOA based Rural Urban Classification,[179] 41 of Cheshire East's 244 LSOAs are 'rural' LSOAs. Over half (23) of these 41 rural areas feature in the top 20% of the Barriers to housing and services domain.

6.30 The map in Figure 6.4 shows how Barriers to housing and services domain deprivation varies by rural/ urban classification. The map displays ONS' most detailed (12-category) rural-urban classification, as this distinguishes between different rural areas in terms of their proximity to sizeable urban areas.

Figure 6.4: Barriers to housing and services deprivation, by rural/urban class, 2025



6.31 Breaking the Barriers to housing and services domain into its 2 respective sub-domains, 37 (90%) of the 41 rural LSOAs are in the top 20% of the Geographical barriers sub-domain, though (as implied earlier) none are in the top 20% of the other (Wider barriers) sub-domain. Whereas 90% of Cheshire East's 41 rural LSOAs are in the top 20% of the Geographical barriers sub-domain, only one-sixth (32) of its urban LSOAs fall into that category. This highlights the contrast between the borough's rural and urban areas in terms of proximity to jobs and to key services.

179 https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/ruralurbanclassifications/2021ruralurbanclassification

6.32 The Geographical barriers sub-domain statistics are derived from the Department for Transport (DfT) Connectivity Tool.[180] As would be expected, evidence taken directly from the Connectivity Tool itself (covered in Chapter 9 of this report) presents the same general picture of accessibility to services being much more limited in Cheshire East's rural areas than in its urban areas.

6.33 Besides the severe Education, skills and training domain deprivation in parts of Crewe, the (only) other Cheshire East LSOA to feature in the top 1% of any domain is the rural LSOA Cheshire East 051D, which has an even higher ranking (68th nationally) in the Barriers to housing and services domain, placing it almost in the top 0.2% of that domain. This latter result largely reflects the results from the Barriers to housing and services' Geographical barriers domain, which places that LSOA 61st nationally, or slightly within the top 0.2%. 051D spans the small settlements of Spurstow, Peckforton, Bickerton, Bulkeley and Faddiley.

6.34 Just over one-third (14) of the borough's 41 rural areas feature in the top 20% of the Living environment domain. Breaking that domain into its 2 respective sub-domains, 16 of the 41 rural LSOAs are in the top 20% of the Indoors sub-domain, but only 4 are in the top 20% of the other (Outdoors) sub-domain.

Health and disability

General health

6.35 This subsection of the report presents evidence on a range of key statistics that indicate levels of (and geographical variations in) the general health of the Cheshire East population. Census findings on general health, along with statistics on male and female life expectancy, are included as overall indicators of health. Data on the prevalence of overweight and obese children in Year 6 (age 10 to 11) is also included, as is evidence on mental health, wellbeing, loneliness and social isolation: coverage of these topics is crucial, given the importance of these challenges and the impact that local plan policies can potentially have in addressing them.

Census evidence on general health

6.36 Evidence from the Census[181] suggests that the general health of Cheshire East residents compares favourably (on average) to England. As of 2021, 49.8% of the borough's population reported their general health to be 'very good', against only 48.5% nationally. 4.7% described their general health as either 'bad' or 'very bad', whereas for England this proportion was a little higher, at 5.2% (see Table 6.1).

6.37 Based on the council's own rural-urban classification,[182] the proportion of residents with 'bad' or 'very bad' general health was higher in urban areas of the borough (5.2%) than in its rural areas (3.9%). Looking at individual settlements, only in Wrenbury

[180] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/connectivity-tool

[181] 2021 Census Table TS037 (General health), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[182] 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

(5.8%), Handforth (5.6%) and Crewe (5.5%) was this proportion above the England average.

Table 6.1: General health of population, 2021

	Very good	Good	Fair	Bad	Very bad	Bad or very bad
Cheshire East	49.8%	33.3%	12.1%	3.6%	1.1%	4.7%
England	48.5%	33.7%	12.7%	4.0%	1.2%	5.2%

6.38 In Alderley Edge (1.8%), Wrenbury (1.4%), Mobberley (1.3%) and Haslington (1.3%), people reporting 'very bad' health accounted for a larger share of the population than in England (the borough average was 1.1%). However, Alderley Edge and Mobberley are notably affluent parts of the borough and the above-average rates of 'very bad' general health there are likely to reflect local age structure, rather than unusually prevalent health issues for a given age group.

Life expectancy for males[183]

6.39 The latest data (for 2023 to 2025) shows that male life expectancy at birth in Cheshire East (80.4 years) remains significantly higher than the England average (79.7 years), continuing a longstanding trend.

6.40 However, significant internal inequalities exist within Cheshire East. The latest published small area data (for 2019 to 2023) shows that, out of the 52 MSOAs in Cheshire East, 7 (all concentrated in the Crewe and Macclesfield areas) have a significantly lower life expectancy than the England average: Macclesfield South and Lyme Green (73.0), Crewe Town and Victoria Avenue (73.2), Crewe North East (73.9), Crewe Mill Street and College (74.6), Crewe Coppenhall and Underwood (75.2), Crewe Gresty Road (76.3), and Central Macclesfield (77.5).[184]

6.41 Of the remaining MSOAs, 20 are similar to the England average, while 25 areas have a significantly higher life expectancy than England.

Life expectancy for females[185]

6.42 Historically, female life expectancy at birth has been significantly higher compared to England. However, the latest data (for 2023 to 2025) shows that female life expectancy in Cheshire East (83.8 years) is now statistically similar to England (83.5 years), marking the first time since 2005 to 2007 that it is no longer significantly higher.

[183] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 31 July 2026.

[184] The MSOA names used here (and for the subsections on female life expectancy and overweight/obese children) are ones adopted by the House of Commons Library (source: House of Commons Library MSOA Names, version 2.3 (February 2026): https://houseofcommonslibrary.github.io/msoanames/)

[185] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 31 July 2026.

6.43 Despite this, substantial inequalities remain across Cheshire East. The latest published small area data (for 2019 to 2023) shows that, out of the borough's 52 MSOAs, 8 (all concentrated in the Crewe and Macclesfield areas) have a significantly lower life expectancy than the England average. These are: Crewe Town and Victoria (76.7), Crewe North East (77.4), Macclesfield South and Lyme Green (78.9), Crewe Coppenhall and Underwood (79.0), Crewe Gresty Road (80.1), Macclesfield Bollinbrook (80.3), Crewe North West (80.3), and Wistaston Green (80.5).

6.44 Of the remaining MSOAs, 25 are similar to England average, while 19 areas have a significantly higher life expectancy than England.

Healthy life expectancy[186]

6.45 Whilst life expectancy provides a measure of length of life, healthy life expectancy (HLE) estimates the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health. For males, as of 2022 to 2024, Cheshire East had a higher HLE (64.5 years) than England (60.9 years), but recent trends indicate that HLE has fallen both nationally and locally. In addition, the latest available data at small area level (covering 2019 to 2023) highlights the stark differences seen in HLE across Cheshire East. This shows that 6 small areas (MSOAs) in Crewe, 4 in Macclesfield and 2 in Congleton had significantly lower male HLE than the England average, with males in those areas living between 1.5 and 7.2 years longer in poor health. The difference between the small areas in Cheshire East with the lowest and highest male HLE is even larger, at 18.1 years, showcasing the fact that significant inequality exists within the borough.

6.46 For females, as of 2022 to 2024, Cheshire East had a higher HLE (66.0 years) than England (61.3 years), but, as with male HLE, recent trends show HLE falling both nationally and locally. Furthermore, as with male HLE, the latest small area data (for 2019 to 2023) highlights the large variations in HLE across the borough. 7 MSOAs in Crewe, 2 in Macclesfield and one in Congleton had significantly lower female HLE than the England average, with females in those areas living between 1.6 and 7.9 years longer in poor health. As with male HLE, the gap between the small areas in Cheshire East with the lowest and highest female HLE is much greater still, at 18.6 years, highlighting the scale of inequality across the borough.

Life expectancy: overview

6.47 To summarise the key points from the preceding subsections on male/female overall life expectancy and HLE, along with the 'Population' chapter's evidence on past and projected demographic change for different age groups:

- current trajectories suggest that Cheshire East will have growing numbers of older residents who will spend more of their lives in poorer health
- the number of years of life people spend in good health currently varies significantly across Cheshire East

[186] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 27 October 2026.

Overweight or obese children (Year 6)[187]

6.48 The latest data (2022/23 to 2024/25) shows that almost one in three Year 6 children in Cheshire East (32.9%) are either overweight or obese. This remains significantly lower than the England average (36.2%), continuing the pattern seen over time.

6.49 Despite this positive overall picture, inequalities exist across Cheshire East. 7 of the borough's 52 MSOAs have levels of overweight and obesity that are significantly higher than the England average, all of which are in Crewe and its surrounding area. The specific areas are: Crewe Gresty Road (48.9%), Crewe Coppenhall and Underwood (46.9%), Crewe North East (46.8%), Crewe North West (45.6%), Crewe Town and Victoria Avenue (45.5%), Wistaston Green (45.2%), and Crewe Mill Street and College (42.1%).

6.50 An additional 23 MSOAs have similar rates to the England, with the remaining 22 areas having significantly lower rates of overweight and obesity.

Mental health, wellbeing, loneliness and social isolation

6.51 Promoting good mental health and wellbeing is a priority for Cheshire East. The children and young people's emotional and mental wellbeing JSNA[188] (produced in January 2024) highlights the fact that whilst many children and young people experience good mental health and wellbeing, there is evidence of growing need and demand across the borough.

6.52 More recent data and insights since the publication of this review suggests this is an ongoing challenge for children and young people,[189] and also for adults, with significantly higher rates of newly diagnosed depression, admissions for self-harm, and deaths by suicide, than the England average.[190] Access to green spaces, attractive public areas, and well-designed housing is associated with improved mental wellbeing, lower stress, and better social connections.[191]

6.53 Loneliness and social isolation has also been highlighted as a significant issue and factor contributing to both physical and mental wellbeing. From the data that was

[187] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 31 July 2026.

[188] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/jsna/mental-wellbeing/emotional-and-mental-wellbeing

[189] [1] Brown R and Moreton M (2026), A complementary local report to the Cheshire and Merseyside Early Mental Health System Review 'Seen, Heard, Supported? Young Voices, Local Services': Cheshire East: https://ymcasthelens.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Cheshire-East-Place-Report.pdf A Change and Integration Programme and YMCA St Helens collaboration. [2] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 21 October 2026.

[190] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 21 October 2026.

[191] 'The built environment and health: an evidence review', Glasgow Centre for Population Health Briefing Paper 11 (Concepts Series), November 2013: https://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/000/000/250/BP_11_-_Built_environment_and_health_-_updated_original.pdf?1700036397

available at the time of the Loneliness and Social Isolation JSNA,[192] it was evident that loneliness and social isolation affected a significant proportion of the population regardless of age. There was more reported loneliness in the younger population, but more older people live alone. The review's recommendations included a recommendation to make sure people can connect in person and digitally by:

- having affordable,accessible public transport so that people can access the services they need
- making sure people can connect to the internet or that they have the essential digital skills, and also communicating the risk and benefits of using social media, especially to the younger population
- acknowledging that not all people want to be online or use digital technology, and that others may be willing, but need extra support to do so
- ensuring children and young people have safe spaces to connect in
- creating neighbourhood environments that promote social connection, maintaining the quality of environments and green spaces, and sufficient places for interactions, for example seating areas
- involving local people in neighbourhood planning and policy

6.54 According to the latest Sports England data (for 2022/23 to 2023/24), an estimated 4.7% of the borough's adults report feeling lonely often or always. Although this is significantly lower than the England average (7%),[193] it nevertheless remains an important consideration for Cheshire East.

Disability

6.55 Disabled people make up similar shares of the population in both Cheshire East and England. At the time of the 2021 Census, residents who were disabled (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) accounted for 17.0% of Cheshire East's and 17.3% of England's population (see Table 6.2).[194]

Table 6.2: Population by disability status, 2021

	Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a lot	Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a little	Not disabled under the Equality Act
Cheshire East	6.9%	10.1%	83.0%
England	7.3%	10.0%	82.7%

[192] Loneliness and Social Isolation JSNA, Cheshire East Council, March 2026: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/jsna/mental-wellbeing/loneliness-and-social-isolation-jsna

[193] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 21 October 2026.

[194] 2021 Census Table TS038 (Disability), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

6.56 Breaking down the disabled population according to the impact ('a lot' or 'a little') of their disabilities on daily life, the proportion of residents with disabilities that limit their day-to-day activities 'a lot' was 6.9% for Cheshire East: again, this was close to the England average (7.3%).

6.57 In urban areas of Cheshire East, disabled people formed 19.1% of the population, compared to only 15.2% in rural areas (based on the council's own rural-urban classification).[195] This rural-urban gap may reflect a preference for disabled people to live in urban areas, where services tend to be closer and more readily accessible through public transport, as well as the concentration of deprivation in urban areas.

6.58 At settlement level, disabled residents' share of the total population was lowest (12.6%) in Prestbury (despite its relatively old age structure) and highest in Audlem (20.7%), Wrenbury (19.9%), Nantwich (19.1%) and Macclesfield (18.6%). The proportion of residents with a disability that limited day-to-day activities 'a lot' was highest in Audlem (9.0%), Wrenbury (9.0%), Handforth (8.1%) and Nantwich (7.9%) (in other settlements, the figure ranged from 5.0% to 7.6%).

Unpaid care

6.59 According to the 2021 Census results,[196] 9.1% of Cheshire East residents aged 5 and above provide unpaid care to relatives or other members of their community. This proportion is very similar to the England average (8.8%).

6.60 For around half of the borough's unpaid carers (4.9% of the population aged 5 and above), this support involves 19 hours or less a week, but for more than a quarter of them (2.5% of population aged 5 and above) the weekly figure is 50 hours or more. These proportions are relatively close to those for England (see Table 6.3).

6.61 Using the council's own rural-urban classification,[197] unpaid carers account for around 9% of the 5-and-above population in both urban and rural areas, but urban carers are slightly more likely to provide 20 or more hours of support than their rural counterparts are. At settlement level, the proportion of the 5-and-above population providing unpaid care varies from 7.6% in Alderley Edge, 8.0% in Wilmslow and 8.1% in Prestbury to more than 10% in Alsager (10.1%), Bunbury (10.6%), Haslington (10.6%), Audlem (10.7%), Wrenbury (10.8%) and Goostrey (11.6%, which is notably higher than in any of the other main settlements). The fact that some of the borough's most affluent settlements have the lowest rates of unpaid care may be in part an indication of their greater ability to afford paid care, rather than a lower proportion of residents needing care (paid or otherwise).

[195] 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

[196] 2021 Census TS039 (Provision of unpaid care), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[197] 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at Lower Layer Super Output Area level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

Table 6.3: Population (age 5 and above) providing unpaid care, 2021

	Provides no unpaid care	Provides unpaid care: 19 hours or less a week	Provides unpaid care: 20 to 49 hours a week	Provides unpaid care: 50 or more hours a week
Cheshire East	90.9%	4.9%	1.6%	2.5%
England	91.2%	4.3%	1.8%	2.6%

Healthcare service provision

6.62 The borough contains 2 major hospitals: Leighton (on the edge of Crewe) and Macclesfield District General Hospital. Congleton War Memorial Hospital and Knutsford and District Community Hospital are the other hospital sites within Cheshire East.[198]

6.63 As part of its analysis to inform the new local plan and to help review the existing settlement hierarchy, the council has recently updated its information on the provision of services and amenities within Cheshire East's settlements. This evidence indicates that all 12 of the borough's towns have at least one GP surgery, as do a few of the larger villages. The same is true of pharmacies and dental practices. Apart from Bollington, each town also has at least one optician, as do 2 villages. Table 6.4 lists the villages in which each of these healthcare facilities can be found.

Table 6.4: Availability of healthcare facilities in Cheshire East settlements

Service	Towns without this service	Villages with this service
Dental practice	None	Alderley Edge, Disley, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Prestbury
GP surgery	None	Alderley Edge, Audlem, Bunbury, Chelford, Disley, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Mobberley, Prestbury, Rode Heath, Scholar Green, Shavington and Wrenbury
Optician	Bollington	Alderley Edge, Holmes Chapel
Pharmacy	None	Alderley Edge, Audlem, Disley, Goostrey, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Mobberley, Prestbury, Shavington

Cultural activities and amenities

6.64 Health, wellbeing, education and quality of life (and economic prospects) in Cheshire East are enhanced by the rich and wide variety of cultural activities and amenities within the borough. As noted in this report's section on the cultural economy, in 2024

[198] Source: Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (https://www.mcht.nhs.uk/about-us) and East Cheshire NHS Trust (https://trust.eastcheshire.nhs.uk/) websites.

the council undertook a study[199] of the various impacts of heritage and culture on Cheshire East. The study included a compilation of the main heritage and cultural sites and premises in the borough, which are listed in Figure 6.5 below.

6.65 For the sake of brevity, the list in Figure 6.5 excludes places of worship and libraries, as well as buildings (such as many town or village halls, or schools) that are key heritage assets (because of their age, past history and design) but which are not visitor attractions or (usually) live performance venues. However, the council's latest evidence on the provision of services and amenities[200] indicates that, of all the settlements within the borough (excluding the Peak Park area):

- 83 had one or more places of worship
- 16 had fixed libraries, including the borough's 12 towns (Alsager, Bollington, Congleton, Crewe, Handforth, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow) and 4 larger villages (Alderley Edge, Disley, Holmes Chapel and Prestbury)

Table 6.5: Main cultural venues in Cheshire East as of 2024

Site/building/institution name and location	Category/categories
Anson Engine Museum, Poynton	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Battle of Nantwich (1644) site (near Nantwich)	Battlefield site
Bollington Discovery Centre	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Capesthorne Hall and Gardens (near Macclesfield)	Historic property and gardens
Cinemac Cinema, Macclesfield	Cinema
Clonter Opera Theatre (between Congleton and Holmes Chapel)	Theatre or concert hall
Congleton Museum	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Crewe Heritage Centre	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Curzon Cinema, Knutsford	Cinema
Daneside Theatre, Congleton	Theatre or concert hall
Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum (between Crewe and Alsager)	Heritage/visitor centre or museum

[199] 'The Impact of Heritage and Culture on Cheshire East', Cheshire East Council, August 2024.

[200] This information is taken from analysis undertaken by the council, to inform the new local plan and to help review the existing settlement hierarchy.

Site/building/institution name and location	Category/categories
Gawsworth Hall (between Congleton and Macclesfield)	Historic property and gardens Also, theatre or concert hall
Green Room Theatre, Wilmslow	Theatre or concert hall
Hack Green Secret Nuclear Bunker (near Nantwich)	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Hare Hill Gardens (between Prestbury and Alderley Edge)	Gardens
Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre (near Holmes Chapel)	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Knutsford Heritage Centre	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Knutsford Little Theatre	Theatre or concert hall
Little Moreton Hall and Gardens (between Congleton and Alsager)	Historic property and gardens
Lyceum Theatre, Crewe	Theatre or concert hall
Lyme Park and Gardens (between Bollington and Disley)	Historic property and gardens
MADS Theatre, Macclesfield	Theatre or concert hall
Mow Cop Castle (near Alsager)	Castle
Nantwich Museum	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Nantwich Players Theatre	Theatre or concert hall
ODEON Crewe	Cinema
Paradise Mill, Macclesfield	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Quarry Bank Mill and Garden (near Wilmslow)	Historic property and gardens
Rex Cinema, Wilmslow	Cinema
Rode Hall and Gardens (between Alsager and Congleton)	Historic property and gardens
Sandbach Crosses (Saxon stone crosses)	Historic monument
Silk Museum, Macclesfield	Heritage/visitor centre or museum
Tatton Park (near Knutsford)	Historic property and gardens

6.66 The list of live musical or theatrical performance venues in Figure 6.5 (those classed as 'Theatre or concert hall') is limited to those for which live performances constitute the **main** use of the premises. However, there are other venues within the borough

that are used in part for live musical or theatrical performances. For example, the Wilmslow Leisure Centre's Evans Theatre is the location for Wilmslow Symphony Orchestra's regular concerts, and the venues used by the Alderley Edge and Wilmslow Musical Theatre Company include Wilmslow Rugby Club. In that respect, some Cheshire East sports facilities arguably count, at least partially, as cultural assets.

6.67 As indicated in Figure 6.5 above, 6 of the borough's 12 town councils (Congleton, Crewe, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Nantwich and Wilmslow) have a theatre or cinema.[201]

6.68 Work is underway to further develop the borough's creative activities and amenities, not least in Crewe. In 2024, the council undertook an assessment of the town's cultural needs. The resulting report, which included a proposal for a Creative Hub in Crewe,[202] was followed by the council's Place Partnership application to Arts Council England (the application was successful and its proposals are now being delivered).

Sports facilities and physical activity

6.69 The supply and demand for outdoor sports such as football, cricket, and rugby, is assessed and managed through The PPOSS which, together with the Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator, is used to secure developer funding and site allocations from new housing developments. It is reviewed annually.

There are 18 leisure services sites in Cheshire East that are operated by Everybody Health & Leisure. These sites span 12 settlements, including 9 of the borough's 12 towns, as well as 3 of its larger villages (Alderley Park (near Alderley Edge), Holmes Chapel and Shavington).[203] They host a range of activities and facilities including pools, fitness suites and sports halls, with some (such as Sandbach) having a dual use through their links to schools. Another (not-for-profit) provider serves the small town of Bollington.[204] Following funding decisions made in 2025, Middlewich's leisure facility is now for school use only.[205] Handforth and Middlewich are the only towns with no leisure centres open to the general public. However, Wilmslow Leisure Centre is relatively close to Handforth.

6.70 The council's current leisure services contract with Everybody Health & Leisure expires in April 2029. In June 2026, the council's Cabinet approved the Leisure Estate Review (2029 Vision), to look at site usage, required capital investment, and local

[201] This evidence (on which settlements have a cinema or theatre) is also confirmed in separate Cheshire East Council analysis that was undertaken to inform the new local plan and to help review the existing settlement hierarchy.

[202] Creative Hub: Needs analysis towards Makers Fest and a Creative Hub for Crewe. Report produced by The Audience Agency for Cheshire East Council, June 2024.

[203] Sources: [1] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/leisure-culture-and-tourism/leisure-facilities [2] Everybody Health & Leisure 'Locations' page (accessed in July 2026): https://everybody.org.uk/locations/?_gl=1*1fux6q6*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTM4MDQ2OTgzNS4xNzg1ODQyMDc0*_ga_3Y947Y1X2Z*czE3ODU4NDIwNzMkbzEkZzAkdDE3ODU4NDIwNzMkajYwJGwwJGgxODcyNzMyNDkx

[204] Bollington Health & Leisure: https://bollingtonleisure.co.uk/

[205] Cheshire East Council statement on Middlewich Leisure Centre, March 2025: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/media_hub/media_releases/statement-re-middlewich-leisure-centre.aspx

health needs, to shape how services will be delivered and funded in the future.[206] The council is gathering evidence and will hold public consultations to finalise the future delivery model. The review, which will assess 14 of the leisure services sites, will seek to make sure that these sites remain affordable, well-used, and effective in improving residents' long-term health and wellbeing.

6.71 Responses from Sport England's Active Lives survey[207] provide an indication of the rates of participation in physical activity by children and adults, both locally and nationally. Because the responses from Cheshire East form a small proportion of the nationwide survey sample, they are less precise and should be treated with greater caution.

6.72 Nevertheless, the data suggest physical activity rates in Cheshire East are similar to the national average. According to the latest survey (covering the year ending in November 2025), 66.9% of Cheshire East adults (people aged 16 and above) reported being active for at least 150 minutes a week (against 64.6% in England) and only 22.1% were active for less than 30 minutes (compared to 24.7% for England). Equivalent figures from the previous 2 survey periods (2022/23 and 2023/24) also show Cheshire East slightly outperforming England on these measures, though the responses for some earlier years (2015/16 to 2021/22) place the borough a little below the national average.

6.73 For children (ages 5 to 16), the Cheshire East samples for the latest (2023/24 and 2024/25) academic years were not considered reliable enough for publication by Sport England. However, the results for the previous 3 years (2020/21 to 2022/23 inclusive) suggested between 41% and 52% of the borough's children were active for an average of 60 or more minutes a day (compared to 45% to 47% of children in England) and 27% to 33% were active for an average of less than 30 minutes a day (against 30% to 32% for England).

6.74 Physical activity levels were also explored during the council's large-sample lifestyle survey conducted in 2023 to 2024, which obtained responses from 2,591 residents. The survey found that around one-third (33%) of adults in Cheshire East achieve at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week.[208] This is considerably lower than the estimate reported in central government data (70%).[209] Physical inactivity is most common among older adults, people living with a long-term illness, those with lower educational attainment, and unemployed residents. Knutsford had the highest proportion of residents undertaking at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week (38.9%) and the lowest rate of inactivity (9.5%). In contrast,

[206] 'Work to begin on shaping future of leisure services in Cheshire East', Cheshire East Council, June 2026: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/media_hub/media_releases/work-to-begin-on-shaping-future-of-leisure-services-in-cheshire-east.aspx

[207] Active Lives Online tool, Active Lives Survey, Sport England: https://activelives.sportengland.org/ Data obtained in July 2026.

[208] Cheshire East Council Lifestyle Behaviours Research Report conducted by Social Engine, February 2024.

[209] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 27 October 2026.

Crewe had the lowest proportion undertaking moderate physical activity for at least 150 minutes a week (23.4%) and the highest rate of inactivity (24.2%).[210]

6.75 Clearly decisions on the types and locations of development can help to increase existing rates of physical activity, improve overall health, and reduce disparities within the borough. Evidence shows, for example, that walkable communities with safe pavements, cycle routes, and accessible green spaces, encourage exercise and can help reduce obesity, cardiovascular and respiratory disease.[211]

Further and higher education provision

6.76 There are no universities within the borough. However, it does have 2 sites offering higher education provision:

- Reaseheath College,[212] which is a further and higher educational provider of specialised (land-based) courses located on the edge of Nantwich, attracting students from a wide geographical area
- the Apollo Buckingham Health Science campus,[213] located in Crewe, which provides courses up to postgraduate level

6.77 Besides Reaseheath, 3 other sites offer further education provision: the Crewe campus of Cheshire College South & West,[214] Crewe Engineering & Design University Technical College (UTC),[215] and Macclesfield College.[216] All 3 are located in relatively central areas of their respective towns.

School-age education

6.78 Educational performance at Key Stage 2 (ages 10 to 11) and Key Stage 4 (GCSEs) remains slightly above the national average.

6.79 At Key Stage 2, the percentage of Cheshire East pupils meeting the expected standard for reading, writing and maths has risen in 3 consecutive years, from 61% in 2021/22, to 65% by 2024/25. In each year of that period, the Cheshire East rate exceeded the England average (63% in 2024/25) by 2 percentage points.[217]

[210] Cheshire East Council Lifestyle Behaviours Research Report conducted by Social Engine, February 2024. Note: Figures cited for Crewe and Knutsford do not sum to 100%, because they exclude the proportions of residents who were physically active, but for less than 150 minutes a week.

[211] 'Healthy High Streets: Good Place-Making in an Urban Setting', Public Health England and the Institute of Health Equity, January 2018: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5acf358240f0b617df3358a8/25.01.18_Healthy_High_Streets_Briefing_document_Final_version.pdf

[212] https://www.reaseheath.ac.uk/

[213] https://abhsc.co.uk/study-at-crewe-campus/

[214] https://www.ccsw.ac.uk/

[215] https://www.utccrewe.co.uk/

[216] https://macclesfield.ac.uk/

[217] 'Create your own tables' tool (https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables), Explore education statistics service, Department for Education. Figures obtained in August 2026.

6.80 At Key Stage 4, the Average Attainment 8 score[218] for Cheshire East in 2024/25 (47.1) was above the England average (46.1). On this measure, Cheshire East has consistently outperformed the national average in recent years (2018/19 to 2024/25 inclusive).[219]

6.81 The borough's average point score per A Level entry was 33.58 in 2024/25, which was similar to its averages for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 (33.48 and 33.62 respectively). However, in each of these years, the England average (36.09 for 2024/25 and 35.29 and 35.55 for 2022/23 and 2023/24 respectively) was higher.[220]

6.82 Educational performance also varies considerably across the borough, with education-related deprivation being particularly severe in parts of Crewe. Evidence on this is available from the 2025 IoD's Children and Young People sub-domain (part of the IoD's Education, Skills and Training domain), which is derived from data on pupil absence rates, Key Stage 2 attainment, Key Stage 4 attainment and higher education entry rates. Within this sub-domain, 15 (nearly one-third) of Crewe's 48 LSOAs rank among the most deprived 10% LSOAs in England. Consequently, Crewe accounts for three-fifths of the 25 Cheshire East LSOAs that rank among England's most deprived 10% for this sub-domain.[221]

Crime

6.83 In 2025/26 (the year ending March 2026), the overall crime rate was significantly lower in Cheshire East (at 61.0 crimes per 1,000 population) than in the Cheshire Police Force Area[222] (67.6) or England (83.4). As shown by the statistics in Table 6.6,[223] the

[218] Attainment 8 measures pupils' attainment across 8 qualifications, including maths, English, 3 qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measures and 3 further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or technical awards from the Department for Education approved list. For calculating the Attainment 8 score, English (if both English language and English literature are sat) is given a double weighting, as is maths. For more details, see 'Second accountability measures: 2025 guidance for maintained secondary schools, academies and free schools' (DfE guidance, October 2025): https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure/secondary-accountability-measures-2025-guidance-for-maintained-secondary-schools-academies-and-free-schools

[219] 'Create your own tables' tool (https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables), Explore education statistics service, Department for Education. Figures obtained in August 2026. Note: The figures quoted here relate to the geographical area where pupils lived, but alternative 2024/25 statistics based on school location (47.1 again for Cheshire East and 46.0 for England) are virtually the same.

[220] 'Create your own tables' tool (https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables), Explore education statistics service, Department for Education. Figures obtained in August 2026.

[221] English Indices of Deprivation 2025, MHCLG, October 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025

[222] This covers the local authorities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, and Warrington.

[223] Sources: [1] Cheshire Constabulary. [2] Table P3, 'Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables', year ending March 2026 edition, ONS, July 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables [3] Mid-year population estimates, ONS, NOMIS (following ONS' July 2025 statistical release of mid-year population estimates at and above local authority level): https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Notes: [1] Cheshire East crime counts obtained from Cheshire Constabulary and rates for Cheshire East calculated from that information and the ONS mid-year population estimates, as the ONS crime statistics do not include data

rates for specific types of crime were generally below (in some cases well below) the Cheshire Police Force Area and England averages. For 2 types of crime, however (burglary and possession of weapons), the rates were the same as the Cheshire Police Force Area average, but significantly lower than in England. Public order offences were the only category where the Cheshire East rate (7.3) exceeded the England average (6.8), though this rate was below that for the Cheshire Police Force Area (8.3).

6.84 Looking at changes in the volume of crimes compared to 2024/25, overall crime increased slightly in Cheshire East in 2025/26 (by just under 0.5%, rising from 25,570 to 25,693, and this followed a similarly small rise, of 0.4%, between 2023/24 and 2024/25). However, for some types of crime there was a substantial rise: the number of drug offences grew by 56%, possession of weapons offences rose by 30% and public order offences (the one category with a 2025/26 rate above the national average) increased by 9%.

Table 6.6: Levels and rates of crime, 2024/25 and 2025/26

Crime category	Crimes, Cheshire East, 2024/25	Crimes, Cheshire East, 2025/26	% change on previous year, Cheshire East, 2025/26	Rate (crimes per 1,000 population), Cheshire East, 2025/26	Rate (crimes per 1,000 population), Cheshire Police Force Area, 2025/26	Rate (crimes per 1,000 population), England, 2025/26
Violence against the person	11,465	11,264	-2%	26.7	30.2	31.4
Sexual offences	1,305	1,363	4%	3.2	3.6	3.5
Robbery	129	136	5%	0.3	0.4	1.4
Theft offences - all	6,094	5,510	-10%	13.1	13.9	26.3
of which:						
Burglary	998	899	-10%	2.1	2.1	3.7
Vehicle offences	771	722	-6%	1.7	1.9	5.1

below Police Force Area level. The Cheshire East rates were calculated by the council, using ONS' original estimate of the borough's mid-2024 population (421,300), to ensure consistency with ONS' approach in calculating the published rates for the Cheshire Police Force Area and England. [2] The crime figures relate to the year ending March.

Crime category	Crimes, Cheshire East, 2024/25	Crimes, Cheshire East, 2025/26	% change on previous year, Cheshire East, 2025/26	Rate (crimes per 1,000 population), Cheshire East, 2025/26	Rate (crimes per 1,000 population), Cheshire Police Force Area, 2025/26	Rate (crimes per 1,000 population), England, 2025/26
Other theft	4,325	3,889	-10%	9.2	9.9	17.5
Criminal damage and arson	1,882	1,843	-2%	4.4	4.8	7.2
Drug offences	912	1,419	56%	3.4	3.7	3.7
Possession of weapons offences	245	318	30%	0.8	0.8	1.0
Public order offences	2,832	3,091	9%	7.3	8.3	6.8
Miscellaneous crimes against society	706	749	6%	1.8	1.9	2.1
Total recorded crime	25,570	25,693	0%	61.0	67.6	83.4

6.85 The Crime domain data from the 2025 IoD provides a picture of variations in crime rates[224] between different parts of the borough. That evidence (covered briefly in the Deprivation subsection of this chapter) indicates that for several towns (Alsager, Congleton, Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Sandbach and Wilmslow), crime-related deprivation is more severe than overall (IMD) deprivation, with the most severely-affected areas generally being in town centres, but also a few urban neighbourhoods (LSOAs) beyond the town centre. As with deprivation generally, the IoD evidence points to crime-related deprivation being particularly concentrated in Crewe, which accounts for 12 of the 19 Cheshire East LSOAs that rank among the 10% most deprived LSOAs in England for IoD crime domain deprivation.[225]

[224] The IoD crime domain data is derived from an amalgamation of the rates (per 1,000 at risk population, or per 1,000 at risk properties) for various types of crime.

[225] English Indices of Deprivation 2025, MHCLG, October 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025

Quality of life and community cohesion

6.86 A general picture of the quality of life in Cheshire East can be gauged from the council's surveys of local residents, which include questions about people's satisfaction with their local area and about their views on community cohesion and safety. The most recent evidence (summarised in the rest of this subsection) comes from surveys undertaken in 2017, 2019 and 2023.[226]

6.87 In 2023, 76% of residents were satisfied with the local area as a place to live. Reported levels of satisfaction with 'the local area as a place to live' are less than they were in 2017 and 2019 and seem to be on a downward trend. Those in Middlewich (47% satisfied) and Crewe (57% satisfied) were less likely to be satisfied with their local area as a place to live compared to Cheshire East overall.

6.88 84% felt safe in their local area during the day and 60% felt safe there after dark. Reported levels of safety in the day and after dark are less than they were in 2017 and 2019 and seem to be on a downward trend. Those in Crewe were much less likely to state that they feel safe during the day (62%) and after dark (44%) compared to Cheshire East overall.

6.89 82% agreed that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together and 14% disagreed. Reported levels of agreement with 'different backgrounds getting on well together' are more than they were in 2017 and 2019 and seem to be on an upward trend. Crewe has shown a marked improvement in the percentage of people agreeing that that their local area is a place where different backgrounds get on well together since 2019 (84% in 2023, compared to 62% in 2019).

6.90 Evidence from other sources supports this picture of relatively strong communities. The Crewe JSNA,[227] along with work on an upcoming Macclesfield JSNA, highlights a real sense of community. Engagement work on the Moss Estate in Macclesfield has identified a strong sense of pride, community and belonging, with many families having lived in the area for generations.

[226] Residents Survey 2023, Shaping Our Future Survey 2023 and comparable surveys from 2017 and 2019. The findings cited here are taken from the council's Cheshire East Priorities Summary Report 2023, which was produced by the council's Research and Consultation Team. Note: The survey figures reported for individual towns relate to the actual urban extents of those towns, rather than (as with most of the other settlement-level data in this baseline evidence report) using groups of LSOAs or another statistical geography as a proxy for the actual settlement area.

[227] Crewe JSNA, Cheshire East Council, November 2024: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/jsna/healthier-places/crewe

7 Housing

Strategy and policy background

7.1 The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy sets out the council's plans for delivering good quality and affordable housing in locations that are environmentally sustainable and enable good access to jobs and key services.[228] The plan commits the council to delivering a minimum of 36,000 net new homes (an average of 1,800 per year) between 2010 and 2030.

7.2 The council's Interim Housing Strategy 2025 to 2028[229] lists 5 main priorities and outlines a series of interventions to achieve these. The priorities are:

- improving access to affordable housing
- meeting specialist housing needs
- preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
- improving housing standards
- enabling independent living

7.3 Plans for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping are also set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 to 2030.[230] The strategy's vision is to reduce homelessness through strong partnerships and shared experience. There are 4 commitments underpinning this vision:

- increasing homelessness prevention
- preventing rough sleeping
- improving access to accommodation
- enhancing partnerships

7.4 The Draft 2020 to 2024 Vulnerable and Older Persons' Housing Strategy[231] assesses the needs and key priorities for housing for older people and specific vulnerable groups (people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health conditions, cared-for children, care leavers and other young people, those affected by drug and alcohol abuse, victims of domestic abuse and the homeless).

7.5 Current and expected future needs for adult social care are set out in Cheshire East's Market Position Statement for Adult Social Care.[232]

[228] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/local-plan/local-plan-strategy-web-version-1.pdf
[229] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/housing/cheshire-east-council-interim-housing-strategy-2025-2028.pdf
[230] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/housing/cec-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-strategy-2026-2030.pdf
[231] https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecMinutes/documents/s78103/2%20Draft%20Strategy.pdf
[232] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-adults/working-in-partnership/market-position-statement-for-adults-social-care.aspx

Households and household composition

Number of households: past trends and current geographical distribution

7.6 The number of households in Cheshire East grew from 147,100 in 2001 to 159,400 by 2011 and 174,900 by 2021.[233] (As the Census remains the only regular source of data on trends in household numbers at local authority level, no historic figures are yet available beyond 2021.)

7.7 The increase of 27,700 households over the 2001 to 2021 period equates to cumulative growth over those 20 years of 18.8%, or an average of 0.9% a year (see Table 7.1). The average growth rate was slightly faster during 2011 to 2021 (0.9% a year) than for 2001 to 2011 (0.8%), which probably in part reflects the large volume of housing completions from the mid-2010s onwards. Whilst the 2001 to 2011 rate of growth equalled that for England, the 2011 to 2021 (0.9% a year) rate significantly exceeded the national average for that period (0.6%).

Table 7.1: Change in number of households, 2001 to 2021

Period	Absolute change, Cheshire East	Average change per year, Cheshire East	Total % change, Cheshire East	Average % change per year, Cheshire East	Average % change per year, England
2001-11	12,300	1,230	8.4%	0.8%	0.8%
2011-21	15,400	1,540	9.7%	0.9%	0.6%
2001-21	27,700	1,385	18.8%	0.9%	0.7%

7.8 Table 7.2a provides a breakdown of the number of households, at the time of the 2021 Census, for the main settlements (20 out of 24) that can be reasonably fitted to ONS LSOAs.[234] As it indicates, Crewe accounts for the largest share of Cheshire East's households (18.6%), followed by Macclesfield (14.0%), with Congleton, Wilmslow and Sandbach each making up between 5% and 8% of the total.

[233] 2021 Census Table TS041 (Number of Households), 2011 Census table QS113EW (Household composition: Households) and 2001 Census table KS020 (Household composition), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[234] 2021 Census Table TS003 (Household composition), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

Table 7.2a: Number and % share of households, by settlement, 2021

Area name	Total, 2021	Share (%) of borough total
Cheshire East	174,900	100.0%
Alderley Edge	2,400	1.4%
Alsager	5,900	3.4%
Bollington	3,700	2.1%
Chelford	700	0.4%
Congleton	13,700	7.8%
Crewe	32,400	18.6%
Disley	2,200	1.2%
Handforth	3,200	1.8%
Haslington	2,000	1.1%
Holmes Chapel	2,800	1.6%
Knutsford	5,900	3.4%
Macclesfield	24,500	14.0%
Middlewich	6,300	3.6%
Mobberley	1,300	0.8%
Nantwich	8,100	4.6%
Poynton	5,600	3.2%
Prestbury	1,500	0.8%
Sandbach	9,900	5.6%
Shavington	2,500	1.4%
Wilmslow	10,900	6.2%
Other settlements[235]	29,400	16.8%

7.9 For comparison, Table 7.2b shows the total number of households for the other 4 settlements that are within in the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy. The figures for these 4 settlements are presented separately to those for the other main 20 settlements, given that they are defined in terms of OAs, rather than LSOAs.

[235] 'Other settlements' means the areas of Cheshire East not covered by the 20 settlements listed in this table.

Table 7.2b: Number and % share of households (OA-based settlement areas), 2021

Area name	Total, 2021	Share (%) of borough total
Audlem	800	0.5%
Bunbury	500	0.3%
Goostrey	900	0.5%
Wrenbury	400	0.2%

Household composition

7.10 Household composition in the borough is broadly similar to that in England, according to the latest (2021 Census) data,[236] but with modest differences that reflect Cheshire East's older age structure. In Cheshire East, households with a single person aged 66 and above made up 14.2% of all households, against 12.8% for England (see Table 7.3). Households comprising of a family whose members are all[237] aged 66 and above account for 11.9% of households (against 9.2% in England).

Table 7.3: Household composition, 2021

Household type	Number of households, Cheshire East	% of households, Cheshire East	% of households, England
Single person aged 66 and above	24,800	14.2%	12.8%
Single person below age 66	28,300	16.2%	17.3%
Single family: all aged 66 and above	20,700	11.9%	9.2%
Single family (couple or lone parent): no dependent children	49,900	28.6%	27.3%
Single family (couple or lone parent): with dependent children	43,600	24.9%	25.8%
Single family: other	800	0.5%	0.8%
Other household types	6,600	3.8%	6.9%
Total (all household types)	174,900	100.0%	100.0%

Projections of future number of households

7.11 In 2015, the consultants ORS produced forecasts of household (and population) change up to 2030, to inform the local plan's assessment of housing need. Those ORS forecasts factor in the actual level of housing delivery (1,800 net new dwellings per

[236] 2021 Census Table TS003 (Household composition), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[237] It is highly likely that multi-member households where all the members are aged 66 and above consist in most cases of 2 people who are a couple, though other possibilities may exist.

annum) set out in the adopted 2010 to 2030 Local Plan Strategy. The ORS forecasts remained the most reliable indicator of future household and population change even after the ONS published its 2018-based SNPPs and household projections (in 2020). This largely reflects the fact that the SNPPs and ONS household projections generally do not consider any policy changes (such as economic and housing development policies) that have not yet occurred, nor those that have not yet had an impact on observed trends. Consequently, the ONS projections are not forecasts and do not attempt to predict future demographic change.

7.12 However, as the ORS forecasts go up to only 2030 and do not take account of any demographic evidence from the last decade (most notably the 2021 Census results), they are now considered less informative, particularly for new local plan purposes, than ONS' latest (2022-based) SNPPs (published in June 2025) and its latest household projections (published in October 2025).

7.13 The commentary that follows is therefore based on data from ONS' 2022-based household projections and more specifically from the particular 2022-based variant household projection that ONS advises people to use by default, the migrant category variant. [238]

7.14 The number of Cheshire East households is projected to grow by 58,700, from an estimated 177,300 (2022) to 236,100 (2047), as Table 7.4 shows. This equates to an increase of 33.1% (or an average of 1.2% a year), which significantly exceeds the growth rate projected for England (22.8% in total, or 0.8% a year). However, the number of households with dependent children is projected to decline, in contrast to the substantial growth projected in the number of households consisting of a single person (up 52.7%) and the number of other household types with no dependent children (up 42.0%). Table 7.5 shows how these projected changes would affect the proportions of households of each type (and the similarity of each type's 2022 and 2047 projected shares to the England average).

Table 7.4: Household composition (counts), 2022 to 2047

Household type(s)	2022	2047	Absolute change, 2022-47	% change, 2022-47	Average % change per year, 2022-47
Single person	54,600	83,400	28,800	52.7%	1.7%
Multi-person: one dependent child	20,800	19,600	-1,200	-5.7%	-0.2%
Multi-person: 2 dependent children	19,500	18,900	-600	-3.0%	-0.1%

[238] Household projections for England: 2022-based' statistical release, ONS, October 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/householdprojectionsforengland/2022based

Household type(s)	2022	2047	Absolute change, 2022-47	% change, 2022-47	Average % change per year, 2022-47
Multi-person: 3 or more dependent children	6,300	6,100	-200	-3.5%	-0.1%
Multi-person: other (no dependent children)	76,200	108,100	32,000	42.0%	1.4%
Total (all types), Cheshire East	177,300	236,100	58,700	33.1%	1.2%
Total (all types), England	23,540,800	28,899,300	5,358,500	22.8%	0.8%

Table 7.5: Household composition (% shares), 2022 to 2047

	Single person	Multi-person: one dependent child	Multi-person: 2 dependent children	Multi-person: 3 or more dependent children	Multi-person: other (no dependent children)
Cheshire East, 2022	30.8%	11.7%	11.0%	3.6%	42.9%
Cheshire East, 2047	35.3%	8.3%	8.0%	2.6%	45.8%
England, 2022	30.5%	12.3%	11.4%	4.7%	41.2%
England, 2047	35.6%	8.2%	7.7%	3.2%	45.3%

7.15 The borough's **household population** (the number of residents living in households, as opposed to communal establishments) is projected to increase by 23.3% over the whole 2022 to 2047 period, reaching 495,700 by 2047 (see Table 7.6). Again, this growth rate is somewhat greater than that projected for England (13.0%).

Table 7.6: Household population, 2022 to 2047

	2022	2047	Absolute change, 2022-47	% change, 2022-47
Cheshire East	402,200	495,700	93,500	23.3%
England	56,126,900	63,403,200	7,276,300	13.0%

7.16 The fact that the growth rate for households exceeds the growth rate for household population (not just in Cheshire East but in England too) is due to the projected decline over time in average household size. In Cheshire East, average household size is projected to drop from 2.27 in 2022 to 2.10 by 2047 (see Table 7.7). In England, it is projected to fall from 2.38 (2022) to 2.19 (2047). It is also notable that the borough's average household size was well below the England average as of 2022, with the projections suggesting that this gap (between Cheshire East and the national average) will not narrow (or widen) noticeably over the whole 2022 to 2047 period. (The 2022 figure of 2.27 for Cheshire East is very similar to the average household size figure, of 2.26, that was reported for the borough in the 2021 Census results.[239])

Table 7.7: Average household size, 2022 to 2047

	2022	2047	Absolute change, 2022-47
Cheshire East	2.27	2.10	-0.17
England	2.38	2.19	-0.19

7.17 Looking at how the 2022-based projections' 7 different variants compare, the projected growth in the number of Cheshire East households during 2022 to 2047 is lowest (22.3%) under the zero net migration variant and highest (39.5%) under the high international migration variant.[240]

[239] 2021 Census Table TS017 (Household size), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[240] The high international migration variant assumes higher levels of net international migration to England as a whole, but with the proportional distribution at local authority level remaining the same as under the migration category variant. The zero net migration variant (migration inflows matching migration outflows) shows the projected change based on zero net international migration and zero net migration between England and the rest of the UK.

Existing housing stock

Total stock and change over time

7.18 The latest annual dwelling stock statistics[241] put the number of dwellings in Cheshire East at 192,800 as of 2025, up from 169,700 in 2015 and 165,400 in 2010 (see Table 7.8 and Figure 7.1). Between 2010 and 2025, the borough's dwelling stock increased by an average of 1.0% a year. However, the rate of growth since the mid-2010s has been significantly faster than before and has substantially exceeded the England average. During 2015-25, it averaged 1.3% a year, compared to 0.9% for England.

Figure 7.1: Dwelling stock – index, 2010 to 2025



[241] Table 125 (Dwelling stock estimates by local authority district), MHCLG, May 2026: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants Notes: [1] Figures relate to the 31 March of each year. [2] Figures for Cheshire East available only for 2010 onwards.

Table 7.8: Dwelling stock, 2010 to 2025

	2010	2015	2025	Average % change per year, 2010-25	Average % change per year, 2010-15	Average % change per year, 2015-25
Cheshire East	165,400	169,700	192,800	1.0%	0.5%	1.3%
North West	3,132,100	3,198,800	3,466,400	0.7%	0.4%	0.8%
England	22,838,700	23,566,500	25,826,400	0.8%	0.6%	0.9%

Households and dwellings by tenure

7.19 A breakdown of the latest annual dwelling stock data by tenure[242] indicates that (as of 2025) 88.3% of Cheshire East's stock was private sector dwellings (owner occupied or privately rented), with nearly all the rest being operated by a private registered provider. Local authority housing (just 30 dwellings across the borough) and other public sector provision (around 70 dwellings) made up only 0.04% of Cheshire East's stock (see Figure 7.2). In England, the distribution of dwellings across different tenures is notably different, with local authority housing accounting for 6.1% of all stock and the shares attributable to the private sector (83.4%) and private registered providers (10.4%) correspondingly being lower than in Cheshire East.

7.20 The 2021 Census offers information on tenure that is a little more detailed.[243] It indicated that households in Cheshire East were significantly more likely to be owner occupiers (71.9% were) than those in England (61.3%), as Table 7.9 and Figure 7.3 show. Conversely, private renting is somewhat less prevalent in the borough (accounting for 15.5% of households) than in England (20.5%) and the same is true of social renting (11.6% of Cheshire East households, against 17.1% in England).

7.21 Households in rural parts of the borough were much more likely to own their homes (81.6% did so) than those in its urban areas (where only 65.9% did so). Conversely, private renting is much more prevalent in Cheshire East's urban areas (where 18.1% of households had this form of tenure as of 2021) than in its rural areas (only 11.2%). The same is true for social renting (done by 15.0% of urban households, but only 6.0% of rural ones).[244]

7.22 At settlement level, the proportion of households who owned their home ranged from 61.3% in Crewe and 63.1% in Handforth to 85.0% in Poynton and higher still in Mobberley (85.5%), Prestbury (86.4%) and Goostrey (87.2%). Social renting was most prevalent in Wrenbury (with 21.7% of its households coming under this form of

[242] Table 100 (Number of dwellings by tenure and district, England), MHCLG, May 2026: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants

[243] 2021 Census Table TS054 (Tenure), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[244] Figures based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

tenure), followed by Handforth (21.5%), Macclesfield (15.7%) and Crewe (15.2%). These geographical variations in tenure reflect to some extent the differing levels of affluence and deprivation in the borough's settlements: Crewe, Handforth and Macclesfield are among those locations with pockets of significant deprivation, and Wrenbury is one of the Cheshire East settlements with the highest rates of prevalence for disability, poor health, unemployment and low qualifications.

Figure 7.2: Dwelling stock by tenure (broad categories), 2025

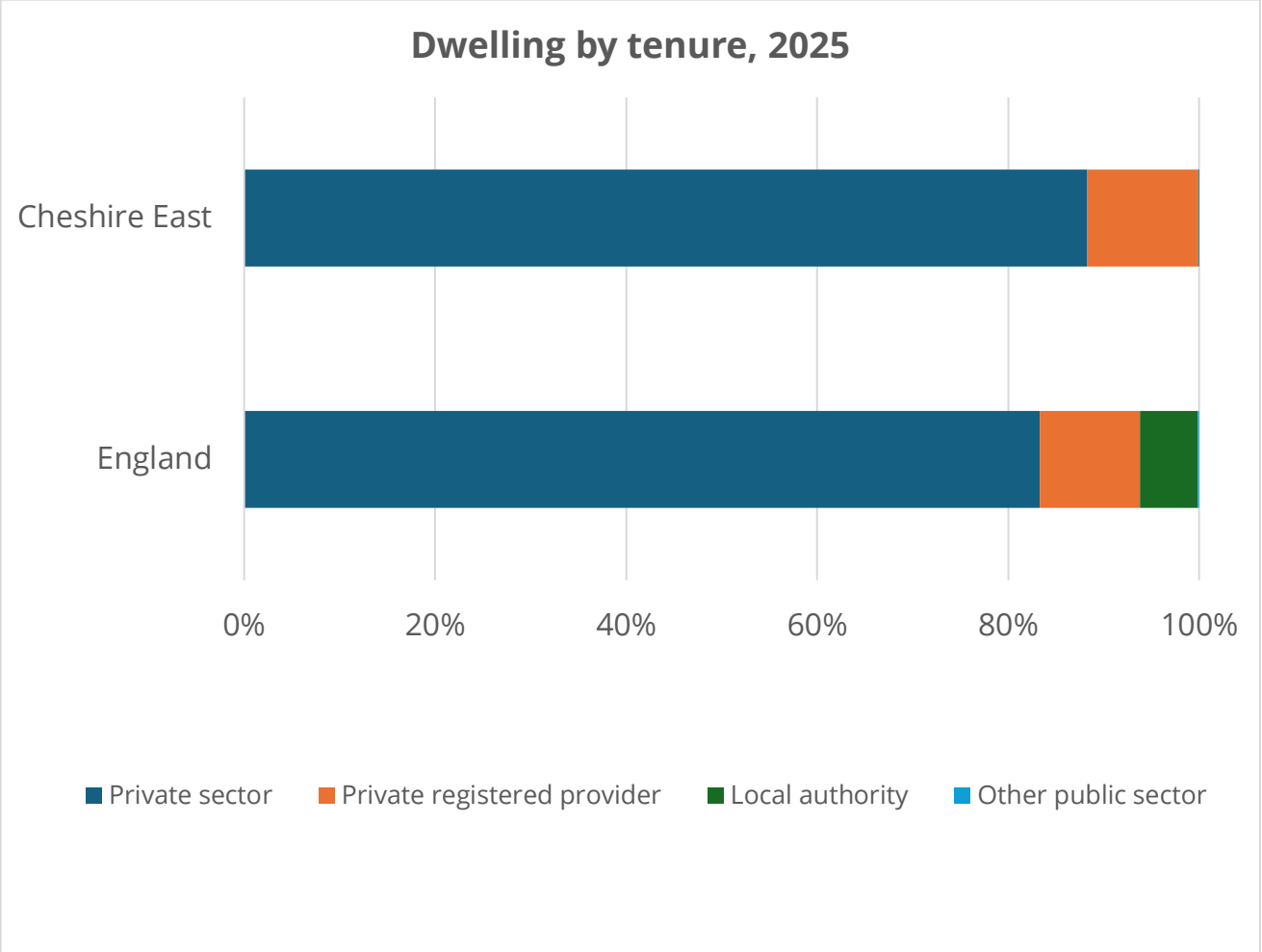
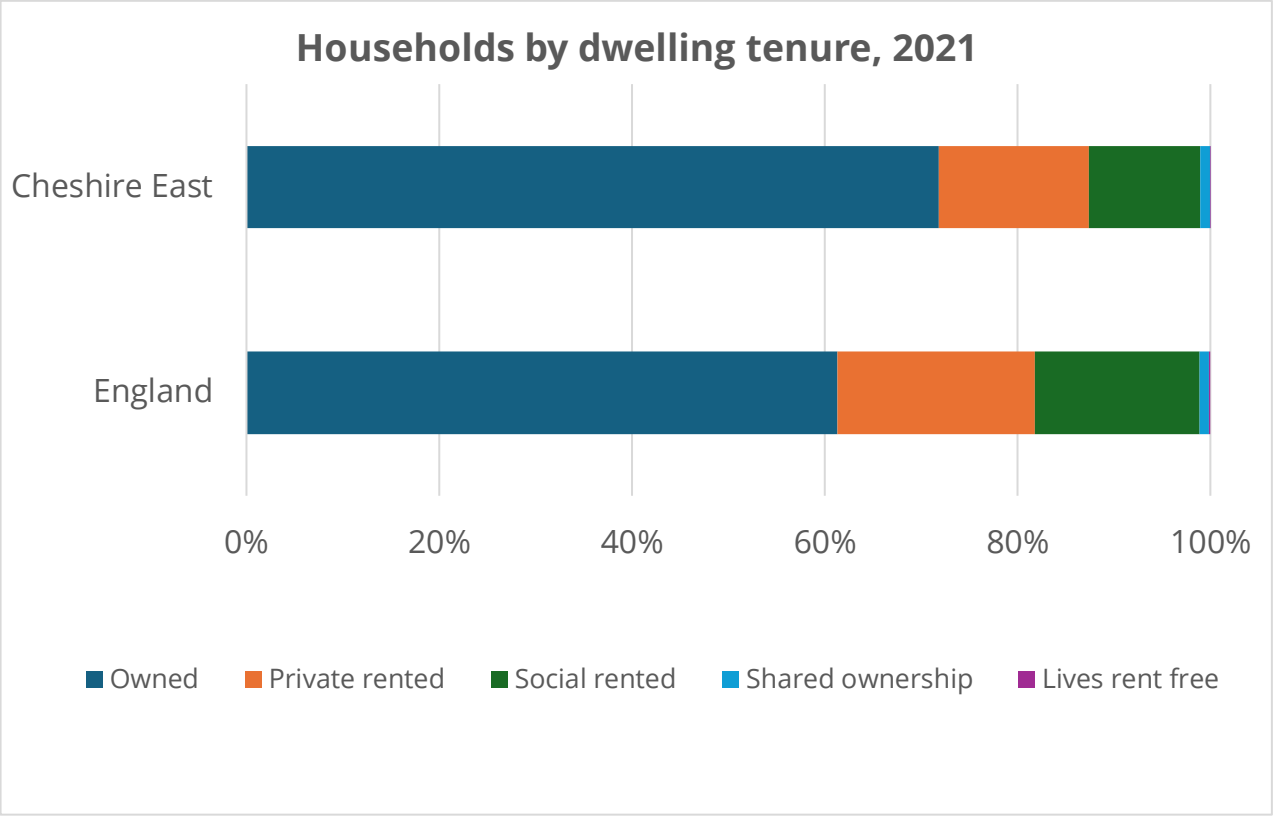


Table 7.9: Households by tenure (Census categories), 2021

	Owned	Private rented	Social rented	Shared ownership	Lives rent free
Cheshire East	71.9%	15.5%	11.6%	1.0%	< 0.05%
England	61.3%	20.5%	17.1%	1.0%	0.1%

Figure 7.3: Households by tenure (Census categories), 2021 (chart format)[245]



Households by dwelling type

7.23 Households in Cheshire East are much more likely to occupy a detached property (36.6% did, at the time of the 2021 Census) than those in England (22.9%), as shown in Table 7.10 and Figure 7.4. Conversely, they are around half as likely to live in a flat, maisonette or apartment (10.5% did) than English households in general (22.2%). These differences can be partly explained by Cheshire East's rural-urban composition and the absence of cities or very large towns where particularly high dwelling densities are necessary. For semi-detached properties (home to 32.5% of the borough's households), terraces (20.0%) and mobile or temporary structures (0.4%), however, the local proportions are relatively similar to the national averages.[246]

Table 7.10: Households by accommodation type, 2021

	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Flat, maisonette or apartment	Caravan or other mobile or temporary structure
Cheshire East	36.6%	32.5%	20.0%	10.5%	0.4%
England	22.9%	31.5%	23.0%	22.2%	0.4%

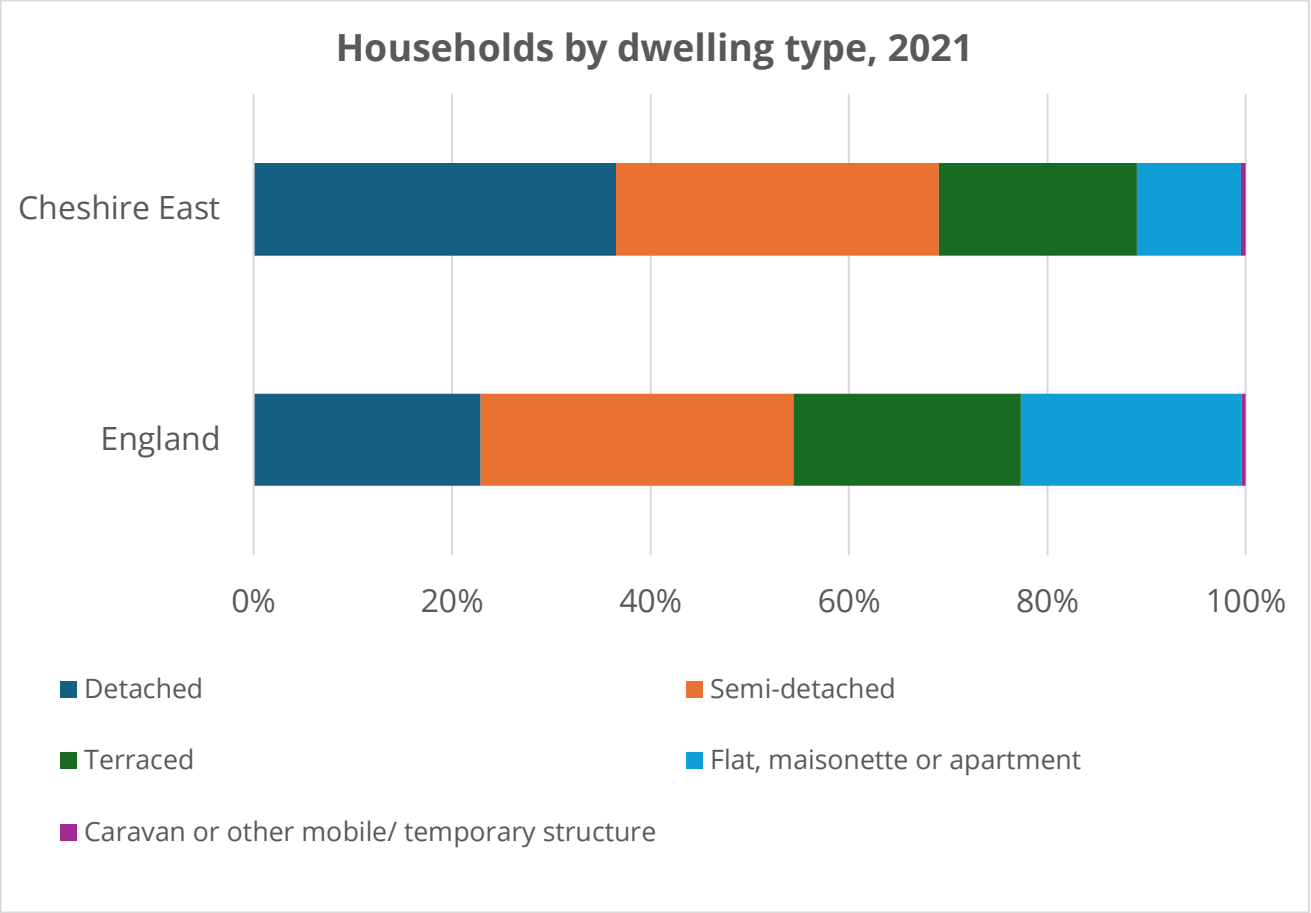
[245] The tenure categories reported on here are mutually exclusive, so the 'owned' and 'shared ownership' categories do not overlap.

[246] 2021 Census Table TS044 (Accommodation type), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

7.24 Households in Cheshire East's rural areas are much more likely to live in detached properties (52.7% did so as of 2021) than their urban counterparts (only 26.8% of whom did so). Conversely, semi-detached properties, terraces and flats are all far more common types of accommodation for urban households than for the households in the borough's rural areas.[247]

7.25 At settlement level, the proportion of households living in detached accommodation varied (as of 2021) from around two -thirds in Goostrey and Prestbury to less than one-quarter in Bollington, Crewe and Macclesfield. Shavington and Haslington had a much larger proportion of households living in semi-detached properties (around one-half) than any other settlement, but at the other extreme, this proportion was less than one in seven for Prestbury and less than one in six for Goostrey. The proportion in terraces was highest (between 20% and 35%) in Bollington, Crewe, Disley, Handforth, Macclesfield and Nantwich, but was under 10% in a few of the borough's smaller settlements (and lowest of all in Bunbury, at 6.4%). Accommodation in flats was most common in Alderley Edge, Handforth, Macclesfield and Nantwich, with between 15% and 25% of those settlements' households living in that type of accommodation (in contrast to less than 2% for Bunbury, Goostrey and Haslington).

Figure 7.4: Households by accommodation type, 2021 (chart format)

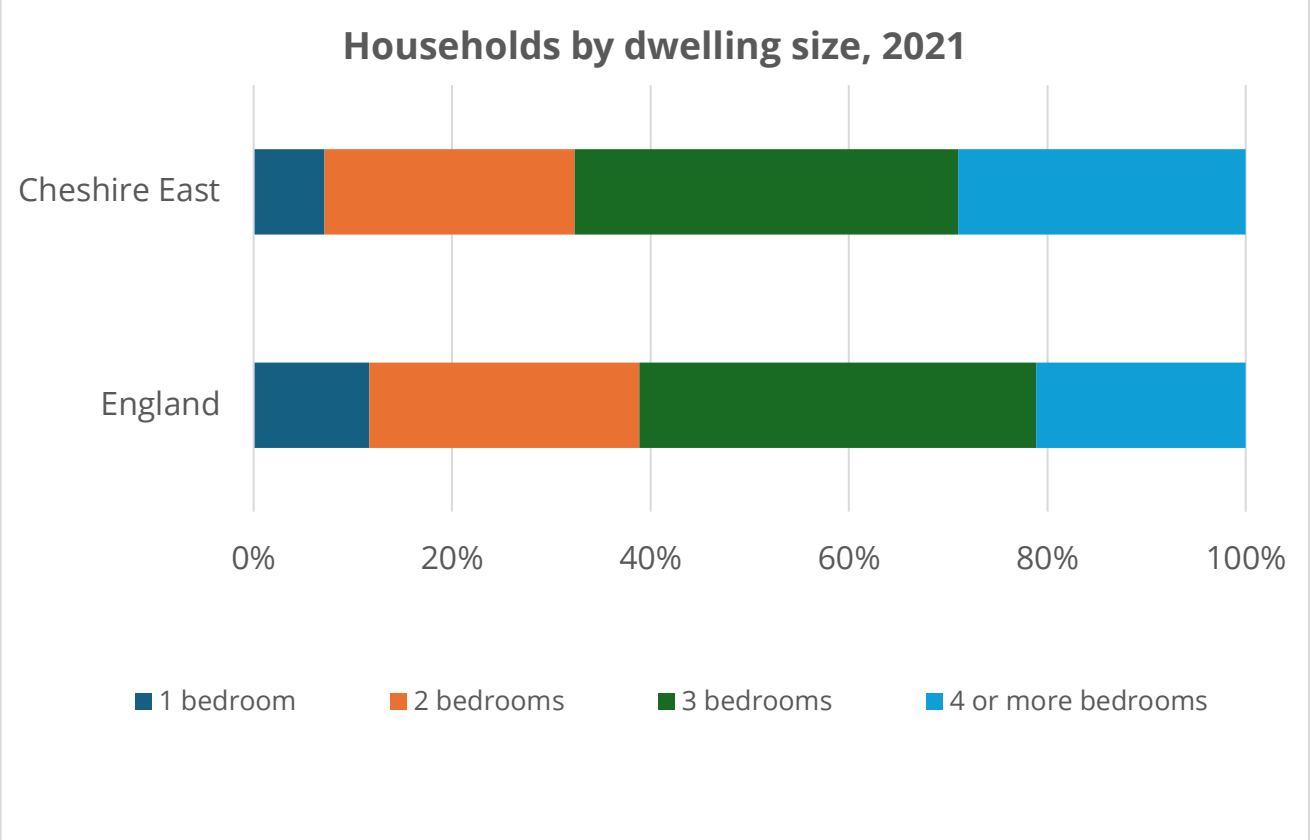


[247] Figures based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

Households by dwelling size

7.26 At the time of the 2021 Census, 29.0% of Cheshire East households had 4 or more bedrooms, 38.6% had 3, 25.2% had 2 and only 7.2% lived in accommodation with only one bedroom (see Figure 7.5). The borough's households tend to have more bedrooms available, on average, than those in England (for which the respective proportions are 21.1% with 4 or more bedrooms, 40.0% with 3, 27.3% with 2 and 11.6% with one).[248]

Figure 7.5: Households by size (number of bedrooms), Cheshire East and England, 2021



7.27 Looking at variations within the borough (Tables 7.11a and 7.11b), Cheshire East's rural households were far more likely to have 4 or more bedrooms (40.0% of them did so) than their urban counterparts (only 22.4%). Conversely, the proportions of Cheshire East rural households with one bedroom (4.1%) or 2 (19.5%) were each well below the borough-wide average.[249]

7.28 Table 7.11a also presents figures for the main settlements (20 out of 24) that can be reasonably fitted to ONS LSOAs. Table 7.11b shows the total population and age structure for the 4 settlements that are within the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy. The figures for these 4 settlements are tabulated separately to those for the other main 20 settlements, given that they are defined in terms of OAs, rather than LSOAs.

[248] 2021 Census Table TS050 (Number of bedrooms), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[249] Figures based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

7.29 As these 2 tables show, at settlement level the proportion of households with 4 or more bedrooms was 57.7% in Prestbury as of 2021, but under 50% in all other settlements and less than one-quarter in Bollington, Crewe, Handforth, Macclesfield, Nantwich and Shavington. The proportion with 3 bedrooms ranged from 23.1% (Chelford) to 47.8% (Shavington) and for 2 bedrooms, the proportion varied from 11.9% in Bunbury and 13.0% in Prestbury to 31.9% in Bollington. In no settlement did the percentage of households with one bedroom exceed 11% and in 4 settlements (Goostrey, Haslington, Prestbury and Shavington) it was below 4%.

Table 7.11a: Households by size (bedrooms), rural/urban areas and settlements, 2021

Area name	1 bedroom dwelling	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 or more bedrooms
England	11.6%	27.3%	40.0%	21.1%
Cheshire East, of which:	7.2%	25.2%	38.6%	29.0%
Rural areas	4.1%	19.5%	36.4%	40.0%
Urban areas	9.1%	28.6%	40.0%	22.4%
Alderley Edge	7.0%	24.8%	32.0%	36.2%
Alsager	7.5%	20.5%	40.9%	31.1%
Bollington	8.2%	31.9%	38.5%	21.4%
Chelford	8.0%	27.0%	23.1%	41.9%
Congleton	7.2%	25.7%	38.6%	28.5%
Crewe	7.7%	28.6%	45.6%	18.0%
Disley	5.6%	24.4%	37.4%	32.6%
Handforth	10.7%	29.8%	38.6%	20.8%
Haslington	3.5%	22.5%	43.5%	30.5%
Holmes Chapel	6.2%	17.7%	32.0%	44.1%
Knutsford	8.0%	20.4%	36.9%	34.8%
Macclesfield	11.0%	31.6%	36.1%	21.2%
Middlewich	5.8%	25.8%	39.5%	28.9%
Mobberley	4.4%	29.4%	34.5%	31.6%
Nantwich	9.5%	27.6%	38.4%	24.5%
Poynton	6.0%	15.7%	42.7%	35.6%
Prestbury	3.5%	13.0%	25.7%	57.7%

Area name	1 bedroom dwelling	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 or more bedrooms
Sandbach	6.0%	26.6%	40.0%	27.4%
Shavington	3.3%	26.6%	47.8%	22.3%
Wilmslow	7.6%	22.9%	30.5%	39.0%
Other settlements[250]	3.8%	19.0%	35.9%	41.3%

Table 7.11b: Households by size (bedrooms) (OA-based settlements), 2021

Area name	1 bedroom dwelling	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 or more bedrooms
Audlem	6.8%	26.2%	30.5%	36.5%
Bunbury	4.0%	11.9%	34.3%	49.8%
Goostrey	3.2%	25.0%	29.9%	41.9%
Wrenbury	9.3%	26.1%	34.6%	29.9%

Occupancy rates and overcrowding

Occupancy and overcrowding: bedrooms

7.30 The 2021 (and 2011) Census data include bedroom occupancy ratings.[251] These ratings indicate whether (in terms of bedroom provision) a household's accommodation is overcrowded, under-occupied or has the ideal amount of provision.

7.31 In 2021, 1.5% (2,700) of Cheshire East's households were living in accommodation with insufficient bedrooms for their needs (a negative score on the Census bedrooms occupancy rating, in other words). This was an improvement on the situation in 2011, when 2.0% (3,200) households fell into this category. As Figure 7.6 shows, the Cheshire East proportion also compares favourably to England (where 4.4% of households had a shortage of bedrooms, down slightly from 4.6% in 2011).

7.32 There was a decrease (from 2,900 in 2011 to 2,300 in 2021) in the number of Cheshire East households with a bedrooms occupancy rating of minus 1. However, the number of households with a rating of minus 2 or worse remained static (around 350 in both 2011 and 2021, which equates to 0.2% of the borough's households). Hence the Census evidence suggests there has been no discernible overall improvement for

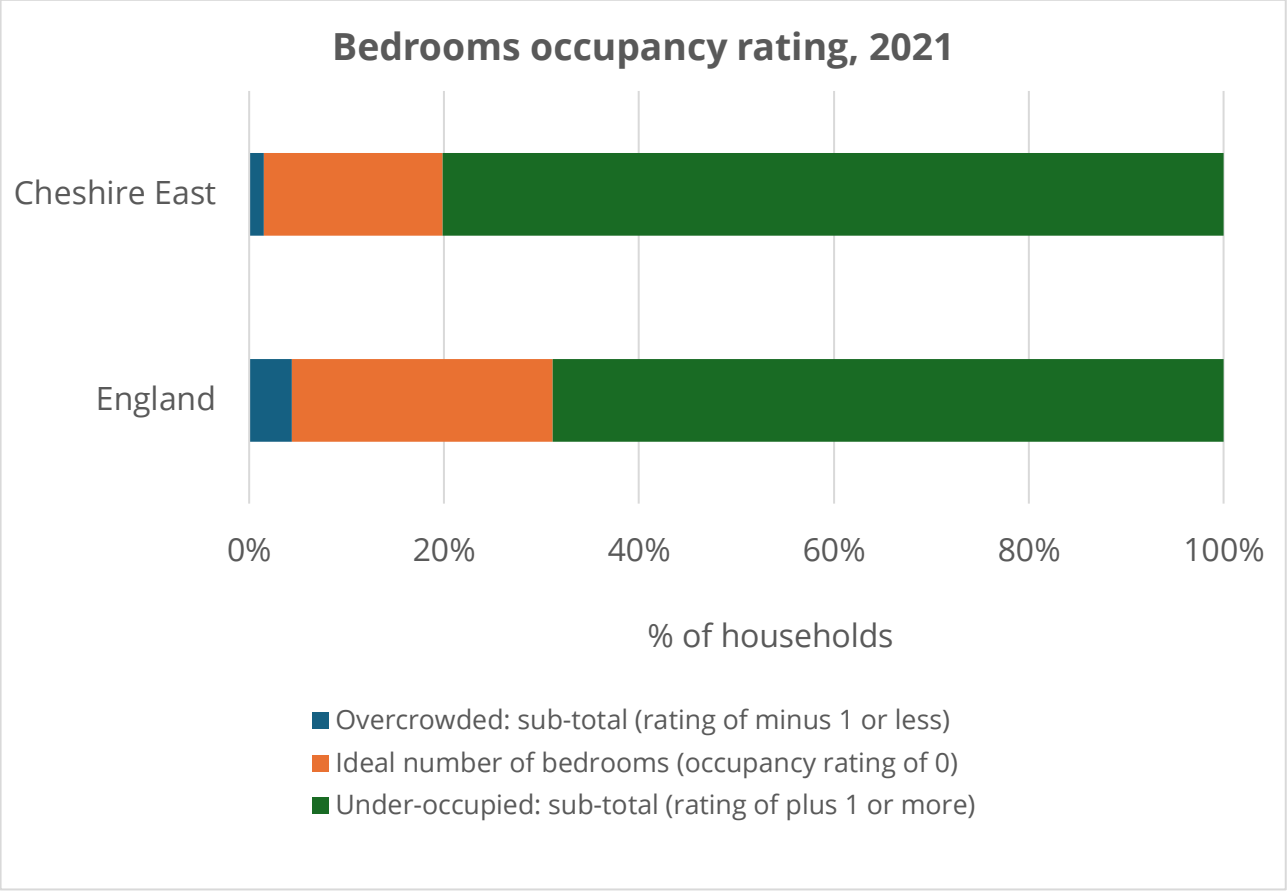
[250] 'Other settlements' means the areas of Cheshire East not covered by the 20 settlements listed in this table.
[251] 2021 Census Table TS052 (Occupancy rating for bedrooms) and 2011 Census Table QS412EW (Occupancy rating (bedrooms)), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

the borough's more severely overcrowded households, even though cases of less severe overcrowding have declined in number.

7.33 Overcrowding (based on the same bedrooms occupancy measure) was rather more common in the borough's urban areas (affecting 2.0% of households there) than in its rural areas (where the proportion was only 0.7%).[252] At settlement level, overcrowding is most prevalent in Crewe (affecting 3.4% of its households) and Handforth (2.6%). Macclesfield (1.7%) and Wrenbury (also 1.7%) were the only other settlements where the proportion exceeded the borough average.

7.34 Only 18.3% of Cheshire East households were living in accommodation with the ideal number of bedrooms (a score of zero on the bedrooms occupancy rating), which was below the England average of 26.8%. 80.2% of the borough's households were under-occupied (that is, a score of plus one or more on the bedrooms occupancy rating). This compares to an England average of 68.8%. Under-occupancy was much more prevalent among Cheshire East's rural households (87.5% of them falling within that group) than for their urban counterparts (75.7%). At settlement level, the proportion of households that were under-occupied (based on this particular rating) ranged from 72.5% in Crewe and 72.6% in Wrenbury to 92.4% in Prestbury.

Figure 7.6: Bedrooms occupancy rating, 2021



[252] Figures based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

7.35 There are likely to be many properties with rooms that could be used as a bedroom,[253] but which serve some alternative need that the household has: for example, for storing large equipment for disabled residents. Therefore, some of the households that appear in the Census bedroom occupancy rating statistics as 'under-occupying' their accommodation may in fact rely on all the potential 'bedrooms' within the property for meeting their household's basic needs, even if some of them are not slept in. Care should therefore be taken in using the 'under-occupancy' evidence from the Census bedrooms occupancy ratings to judge how many bedrooms (and in which parts of the borough) may genuinely be surplus to their household's requirements. However, the Census evidence does suggest nevertheless that there may be significant under-occupancy in Cheshire East, particularly in its rural and more affluent areas.

Occupancy and overcrowding: rooms generally

7.36 The 2021 Census data also include room occupancy ratings (though comparable data are not available from the 2011 Census). These indicate whether (in terms of the number of bedrooms **and** other rooms that are available) a household's accommodation is overcrowded, under-occupied or has the ideal amount of provision.[254]

7.37 In 2021, 2.5% (4,300) of Cheshire East's households were living in accommodation with insufficient rooms for their needs (a negative score on the Census rooms occupancy rating, in other words). This was well below the England average of 6.4% (see Figure 7.7).

7.38 Overcrowding was much more prevalent in the borough's urban areas (affecting 3.1% of households there) than in its rural areas (where the proportion was only 1.5%).[255] At settlement level, overcrowding was most common in Crewe (affecting 4.7% of its households) and Handforth (4.2%). In Wilmslow (3.0%), Macclesfield (2.8%) and Middlewich (2.8%), it also exceeded the borough average.

7.39 Only 14.7% of households were living in accommodation with the ideal number of bedrooms (a score of zero on the rooms occupancy rating), which was below the England average of 21.5%. 82.9% of Cheshire East's households and 72.0% of households across England were under-occupied on this measure. Under-occupancy was rather more common among Cheshire East's rural households (89.1% of them falling within that group) than in urban parts of the borough (79.1%). At settlement level, the proportion of households that were under-occupied (based on this

[253] According to the definitions accompanying the 2011 and 2021 Census data sets used for this analysis, "A bedroom is defined as any room that was intended to be used as a bedroom when the property was built, or any room that has been permanently converted for use as a bedroom. It also includes all rooms intended for use as a bedroom even if not being used as a bedroom at the time of the Census." This definition in turn determines the calculation of the bedroom occupancy ratings.

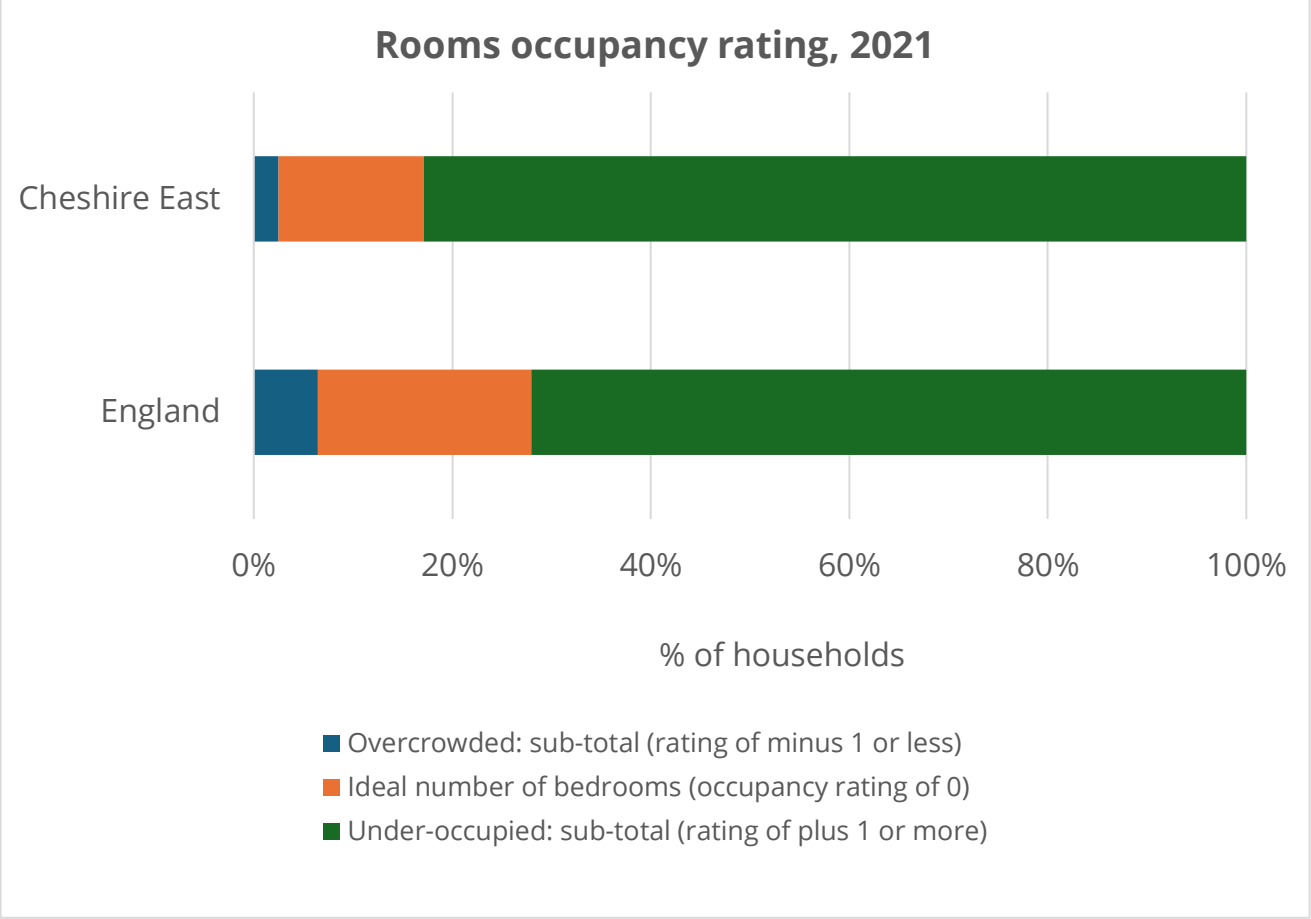
[254] 2021 Census Table TS053 (Occupancy rating for rooms), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[255] Figures based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

particular rating) ranged from 76.4% in Macclesfield and Wrenbury, and 76.5% in Crewe, to 93.2% in Prestbury.

7.40 As with the bedrooms occupancy rating statistics, the rooms occupancy data suggests evidence of some households significantly under-occupying their available accommodation, particularly in rural and more affluent locations of the borough. Once again, though, it is difficult to assess the 'true' degree of under-occupancy without knowing more about what use households put their 'spare' or 'surplus' rooms to and whether these uses relate to their basic needs.

Figure 7.7: Rooms occupancy rating, 2021



Second homes

7.41 At the time of the 2021 Census, 4.9% of Cheshire East's usual residents had a second address, which was slightly below the England average (5.4%). Most of this group (3.8% of the borough's residents) had a second address that was in the UK, but 1.1% had a second address outside the UK. The settlements with the highest proportion of residents with second addresses were Prestbury (8.5%) and Alderley Edge (7.7%), with Crewe (3.7%) at the opposite end of this scale.

7.42 Having 2 addresses does not necessarily indicate affluence, but the Census evidence[256] suggests some correlation between affluent areas and the propensity for a second home to be a holiday home.

7.43 Of those Cheshire East residents with a second address, 25.8% stated that the second address was a holiday home, which (unlike the other uses cited) could be interpreted as an indicator of the person's relative affluence. For England this 'holiday home' proportion was much lower, at 14.2%. At settlement level, the proportion putting their second address to 'holiday home' use was highest (between 41% and 53%) in Alderley Edge, Chelford, Disley, Goostrey, Mobberley and Prestbury, and lowest (below 18%) in Crewe (14.1%) and Shavington (12.4%).

7.44 However, an even larger proportion (36.8%) reported their second address as being one that belonged to another parent or guardian.

7.45 As for other uses:

- 9.5% said the second home was a partner's address
- around 8% said the second address served an employment-related purpose: 6.8% identified it as a separate address for use when working away from home and 1.2% cited an armed forces base address
- 4.2% had 2 addresses because they were students studying at a location away from their out-of-term home
- 15.8% cited another use (a use not specified in the published Census data)

Communal establishments

7.46 Census data[257] indicates that, as of 2021, of Cheshire East had 4,400 communal establishment residents. Of these people, the vast majority (around 4,150, or 94.3%) were permanent residents who were simply living in those establishments (as opposed living **and** working there): for example, people receiving care in a nursing home, school boarders or prison inmates. Of the 4,150 permanent residents, 56.2% (2,300) were aged 75 and above (against a proportion of only 25.1% for England). The other communal establishment residents in Cheshire East (around 250 people) consisted of staff or owners and their family members or partners, as well as people who were staying temporarily at the establishment and who had no usual UK address.

7.47 Most (around 3,000, or 68.3%) of the 4,400 communal establishment residents were living in a medical or care establishment. Most of this 3,000-strong sub-group were living in either a care home with nursing provided (around 1,900) or a care home without nursing (around 1,000).

[256] 2021 Census Tables TS056 (Second address indicator) and TS055 (Purpose of second address), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[257] 2021 Census Tables TS047 (Communal establishment residents by age and sex), and TS048 (Communal establishment management and type), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

7.48 Most of the remainder (those not living in a medical or care establishment) were either in an educational establishment (around 900, or 21.1% of communal establishment residents) or in a prison service institution (just over 250, or 6.0%). It is reasonable to conclude that the latter (prison service) numbers relate to the female prisoners in HM Prison Styal. No other type of establishment accounted for more than around 1% of the communal establishment population.

7.49 However, the communal establishment statistics from the 2021 Census should be treated with some considerable caution, given the impact of COVID-19, particularly on care home populations.

Homelessness

7.50 Homelessness covers households in a range of different statuses: those in insecure or temporary accommodation or at risk of losing a permanent home, as well as people sleeping outdoors. It includes all the following[258]:

- rough sleeping
- statutory homeless households in priority need in temporary accommodation such as hostels or Bed and Breakfast
- single homeless people living in supported housing or in a hostel
- 'hidden homeless': that is, 'sofa surfers' in insecure arrangements with friends or others
- households in fear of losing their home, or on the verge of losing their home

7.51 Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, local authorities have a duty to prevent and relieve homelessness. Prevention means positive action taken by the council or its partners to assist households who consider themselves to be at risk of homelessness. Relief means actions to secure accommodation for households that have already become homeless.[259]

7.52 As shown in Table 7.12, there were 1,884 homeless households in the borough as of the financial year 2024/25, of which 60.4% (1,138) were owed a Prevention duty and the remainder (746) a Relief duty.[260] As the table also indicates, the total number of cases owned a Prevention or Relief duty rose significantly in 2023/24 (by 8.6% from the previous year) and again in 2024/25 (up 8.3% on 2023/24).

[258] Source: Cheshire East Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/housing/cec-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-strategy-2021-2025.pdf

[259] Source: Cheshire East Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/housing/cec-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-strategy-2021-2025.pdf

[260] 'Statutory homelessness: Detailed local authority level tables' for financial years 2022/23 to 2024/25, Live tables on homelessness, MHCLG: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness Figures obtained in July 2026.

Table 7.12: Homelessness (number of households), 2022/23 to 2024/25

Homeless case: type(s)	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% change, 2022/23 to 2023/24	% change, 2022/23 to 2024/25
Prevention	940	1,137	1,138	21.0%	0.1%
Relief	662	603	746	-8.9%	23.7%
Total	1,602	1,740	1,884	8.6%	8.3%

Housing delivery against local plan provision

Overall delivery

7.53 The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy includes a requirement to deliver a minimum of 36,000 new homes over the plan period of 2010 to 2030, which is equivalent to an average of 1,800 dwellings per annum. By the 31 March 2026, 29,507 (net) dwellings had been completed, averaging 1,844 dwellings per annum for the 2010 to 2026 period. Further information about this can be found in the latest published housing completions and supply report, which includes the breakdown of completions by individual year (as shown in Table 7.13).[261]

Table 7.13: Housing completions, 2010 to 2026

Year	Number of completions
2010/11	659
2011/12	778
2012/13	614
2013/14	713
2014/15	1,236
2015/16	1,473
2016/17	1,762
2017/18	2,321
2018/19	3,062
2019/20	3,065
2020/21	2,376
2021/22	2,779
2022/23	2,345

[261] 'Housing completions and supply: base date 31 March 2026', Cheshire East Council: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/researchand-evidence/housing-monitoring-report/housing-supply-and-completions-2025-6.pdf

Year	Number of completions
2023/24	2,195
2024/25	2,045
2025/26	2,084
Total	29,507
Annual average (2010-2026)	1,844

7.54 Of these 29,507 dwellings, 8,886 were completed in the PTs of Crewe and Macclesfield (30%), 14,612 in the KSCs (50%), 2,959 in LSCs (10%) and 3,050 in the villages and rural areas (10%).[262]

7.55 The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and the SADPD also include a range of housing and strategic locations allocations across the plan area, which together make provision for 18,880 dwellings. Housing completions across these allocated sites were 9,007 dwellings as at the 31 March 2026, with a number of these sites now being fully completed. In addition, several allocated sites are now under construction or have full permission, with commitments on these sites amounting to 8,337 dwellings.

Housing Delivery Test

7.56 The Housing Delivery Test (HDT) was introduced in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2018) and is a percentage measurement of the number of homes required against the number of net homes delivered, over a rolling three-year period.

7.57 The number of homes needed is calculated based on the Local Plan Strategy adopted housing requirement until the plan is 5 years old. If at that point, the plan has been reviewed and found to need updating, the number of homes required is then subsequently based on the local housing need figure (calculated using central government's standard housing need formula).

7.58 The net number of homes delivered is sourced from the Housing Flows Reconciliation Form submitted to MHCLG over a rolling three-year period, with some adjustments made. The HDT result is published annually by MHCLG and has several implications for decision taking and housing land supply assessments, which are set out at NPPF (2026) Annex D, Policy S5(1)(j) and footnote 41.[263] These include:

[262] Figures based on the settlement boundary definitions set out in the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy ('Determining the Settlement Hierarchy', Cheshire East Council, November 2010: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/researchand-evidence/climate-change/en-ldf-settlementhierarchy.pdf)

[263] NPPF, MHCLG, August 2026: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a8334c03bd75b81e2329ac4/National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf

- where delivery falls below 95% of the requirement over the previous 3 years, the authority should prepare an action plan to assess the causes of under delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years
- where delivery falls below 85% of the requirement over the previous 3 years, the authority should include a buffer of 20% to their identified supply of specific deliverable sites in addition to the requirement for an action plan
- where delivery falls below 75% of the requirement over the previous 3 years, a presumption in favour of sustainable development applies in addition to the requirements for an action plan and 20% buffer

7.59 The HDT consequences apply the day following the annual publication of the HDT results, at which point they supersede previously published results. Until new HDT results are published, the previously published results are used.

7.60 The latest Housing Delivery Test: 2025 Measurement was published on 17 August 2026 and reports on the three-year period of 2022/23 to 2024/25. The results for Cheshire East[264] are shown in Table 7.14 below.

Table 7.14: Housing Delivery Test 2025 measurement

	Homes required	Homes delivered	HDT result
2022/23	1,070	2,335	
2023/24	1,014	2,158	
2024/25	977	2,015	
Total	3,061	6,508	213%

7.61 The result confirms:

- no action plan is required to address a deficit in housing delivery
- a 20% buffer is not applicable in terms of the calculation of the five-year housing land supply requirement
- the presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11d of the NPPF is not triggered based on the HDT result

Affordable housing

7.62 The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy identifies a requirement for 7,100 new affordable dwellings over the plan period 2010 to 2030, equivalent to 355 dwellings per annum. As shown in Table 7.15 below, 7,704 affordable dwellings were completed in the borough between 2010 and 2026, equivalent to 482 dwellings per annum.

[264] HDT completions data published by MCHLG through the HDT will marginally differ to completions data published by the council in its Housing Monitoring Update (HMU). The difference between the 2 published figures derives from the methodology applied to the counting of communal accommodation.

Table 7.15: Affordable housing completions, 2010 to 2026

Year	Number of affordable completions
2010/11	170
2011/12	214
2012/13	184
2013/14	131
2014/15	638
2015/16	448
2016/17	372
2017/18	655
2018/19	729
2019/20	706
2020/21	461
2021/22	688
2022/23	502
2023/24	646
2024/25	629
2025/26	531
TOTAL	7,704
Annual average (2010-2026)	482

Older persons specialist housing

7.63 The Cheshire East Residential Mix Assessment (2019)[265] identified an estimated need for specialist older persons housing of 12,435 dwellings over the plan period 2010 to 2030. All this need is already accounted for in the overall housing requirement of 36,000 new homes. However, the Residential Mix Assessment identified that not all the identified needs for older people will be delivered by specialist housing alone. Many people requiring specialist housing will choose to remain in their own homes with suitable assistance and/or adaptations. Between 2010 and 31 March 2026, there have been 856 net older person's and specialist completions, with a further 215 (net) bedspaces with planning permission.

[265] Opinion Research Services (for Cheshire East Council), June 2019: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/site-allocations-and-policies/sadpd-examination/documents/examination-library/ed49-residential-mix-study.pdf

7.64 It should be emphasised, though, that evidence on the need for older persons and other specialist housing (next subsection below) will be updated as part of other studies being undertaken to inform the new local plan and the council's housing/ social care service provision. Hence the baseline evidence report's coverage of housing need evidence is only part of the full picture and ought to be considered in conjunction with the emerging results from those other elements of the local plan and wider council work.

Other specialist housing

7.65 The Cheshire East Residential Mix Assessment (2019) [266] identified that, as of 2018, there were around 50,700 households living in Cheshire East with one or more persons with a limiting long-term illness or disability. This included around 16,100 households with health problems affected their housing needs, although most of these households (around 13,500) were already living in a suitable home. It was estimated that there were around 1,280 households needing to move to a more suitable home due to a disability or another long-term health problem. These households would represent an existing need for M4(2) housing,[267] however some of these households would be wheelchair users needing M4(3) housing.[268] A further 1,350 households needed adaptations to their current home. The evidence in this assessment supported the need for at least 30% of dwellings in housing developments complying with M4(2) Category 2 housing (accessible and adaptable dwellings) and at least 6% of all housing to meet M4(3) Category 3 requirements (wheelchair adaptable).

Housing market and housing need

Housing market areas

7.66 This report does not seek to analyse and define the geographical boundaries of the housing market areas covering Cheshire East, as it is envisaged that a separate study (the housing needs assessment being commissioned as part of the new local plan preparation) will investigate and present detailed, up-to-date evidence on that issue. However, as noted in earlier in this report (in the 'Population' chapter), Cheshire West and Chester, along with the southern parts of Greater Manchester, and to a lesser (but still significant extent) north Staffordshire, account for relatively high proportions of recent (2024 to 2025) migration flows into and out of Cheshire East. From this evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that there are significant housing market ties between these neighbouring areas and the adjacent settlements in Cheshire East.

[266] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/site-allocations-and-policies/sadpd-examination/documents/examination-library/ed49-residential-mix-study.pdf

[267] M4(2) housing refers to homes that meet Building Regulations Part M4(2): Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings. It is an enhanced accessibility standard for new homes, above the basic M4(1) standard but below the wheelchair-user M4(3) standard.

[268] M4(3) is the highest accessibility standard in Building Regulations Approved Document M and relates to Wheelchair User Dwellings. It applies only where required by planning policy or a planning condition.

House prices

7.67 Land Registry data[269] indicate that average house prices in Cheshire East have generally remained within a few percentage points of the England average over the last 31 years (1995 to 2026), ranging over that time from 10% below the national average to 15% above it. As of February 2026, the average price in Cheshire East was £293,100, or 0.8% above the figure for England (£290,900). However, since 1995, the Cheshire East average has stayed significantly (between 32% and 62%) above the North West average. As of February 2026, the gap between the borough average and the regional figure (£216,400) stood at 35%.

7.68 As shown in Table 7.16 and Figure 7.8 (annual house price inflation data) and Figure 7.9 (average house prices indexed so that 2006 equals 100), house price inflation in Cheshire East has broadly matched the regional and national rates over the 1995 to 2026 period. Looking at the latter half or so of these 31 years, house price inflation in England outpaced that in Cheshire East over the 2010 to 2017 period, but Cheshire East's house price inflation has generally exceeded that of England since then. For the 12 months ending in February 2026, though, house prices increased by the same proportion (1.1%) in both Cheshire East and England.

Table 7.16: Average house price and house price inflation, Feb 1995 to Feb 2026

Year	Cheshire East	North West	England	% change, Cheshire East	% change, North West	% change, England
1995	£56,900	£40,900	£50,100			
1996	£57,000	£40,100	£49,600	0.1%	-1.9%	-1.1%
1997	£57,700	£41,600	£53,100	1.3%	3.7%	7.0%
1998	£61,200	£42,700	£58,200	6.1%	2.6%	9.7%
1999	£67,100	£44,200	£61,900	9.6%	3.6%	6.3%
2000	£72,500	£47,400	£71,400	8.1%	7.4%	15.4%
2001	£80,300	£51,500	£79,500	10.7%	8.6%	11.4%
2002	£90,900	£57,300	£91,300	13.2%	11.2%	14.8%
2003	£114,300	£70,700	£115,000	25.8%	23.3%	25.9%
2004	£136,100	£90,200	£132,400	19.0%	27.6%	15.2%
2005	£157,100	£109,500	£149,700	15.5%	21.4%	13.1%
2006	£165,200	£122,500	£157,600	5.2%	11.9%	5.2%
2007	£176,200	£133,700	£172,200	6.6%	9.1%	9.3%

[269] UK House Price Index, HM Land Registry: http://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/explore Data obtained on 13 July 2026. Note: The figures quoted in this report relate to February of the year in question and the annual inflation figures are therefore based on percentage changes over the 12-month period ending in February.

Year	Cheshire East	North West	England	% change, Cheshire East	% change, North West	% change, England
2008	£188,000	£136,600	£179,400	6.7%	2.2%	4.2%
2009	£161,300	£118,100	£152,000	-14.2%	-13.5%	-15.3%
2010	£174,700	£123,900	£165,500	8.3%	4.8%	8.9%
2011	£168,800	£120,000	£164,100	-3.4%	-3.1%	-0.8%
2012	£165,400	£118,500	£164,400	-2.0%	-1.3%	0.2%
2013	£168,800	£118,300	£167,300	2.0%	-0.2%	1.7%
2014	£179,200	£122,300	£178,800	6.2%	3.4%	6.9%
2015	£187,300	£127,600	£192,100	4.5%	4.4%	7.4%
2016	£193,200	£133,100	£208,300	3.2%	4.3%	8.5%
2017	£198,200	£140,500	£219,700	2.6%	5.6%	5.5%
2018	£211,600	£146,600	£228,500	6.8%	4.3%	4.0%
2019	£215,900	£150,800	£230,800	2.0%	2.9%	1.0%
2020	£218,900	£153,300	£233,000	1.4%	1.7%	0.9%
2021	£240,800	£173,100	£251,300	10.0%	12.9%	7.9%
2022	£253,600	£187,100	£271,300	5.3%	8.0%	7.9%
2023	£270,400	£196,500	£283,900	6.6%	5.0%	4.7%
2024	£272,700	£196,300	£276,900	0.9%	-0.1%	-2.5%
2025	£290,000	£209,100	£287,800	6.3%	6.5%	3.9%
2026	£293,100	£216,400	£290,900	1.1%	3.5%	1.1%

7.69 Year-on-year fluctuations in the volume of residential property sales in Cheshire East have followed the same path as the North West and England (with, for example, a sharp fall at the time of the 2008 to 2009 financial crisis), as shown in Figure 7.10. The most probable explanation for the large upward spike shown for 2021 is the short-term impact of central government financial measures (particularly a temporary reduction in Stamp Duty) to stimulate activity in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.[270]

[270] The Stamp Duty threshold was raised from £125,000 to £500,000 on 8 July 2020 and not lowered again until the second half of 2021 (to £250,000 on 1 July and then to £125,000 on 1 October): https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-stamp-duty-land-tax

Figure 7.8: Annual house price inflation, 1995 to 2026 (chart format)

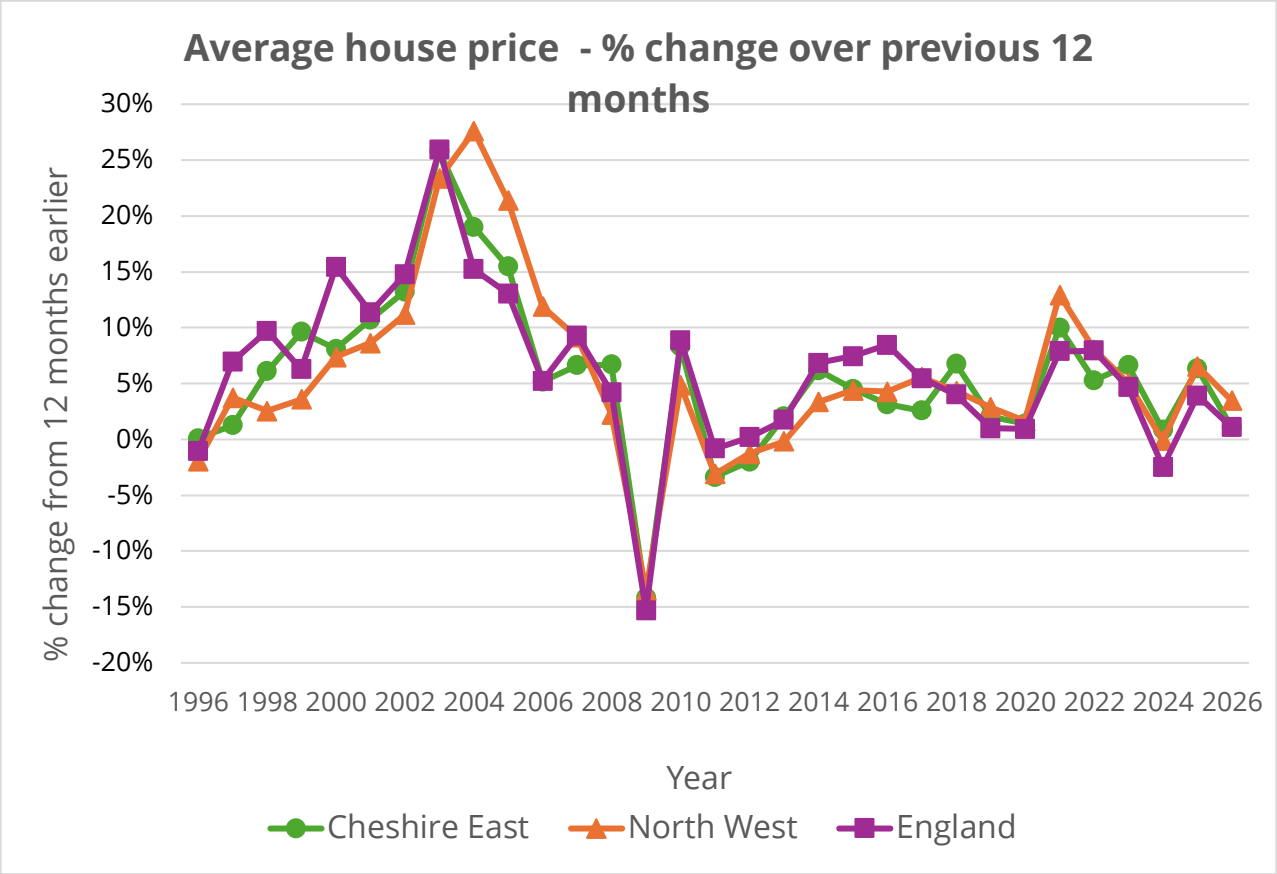


Figure 7.9: House price index (2006 = 100), 1995 to 2026

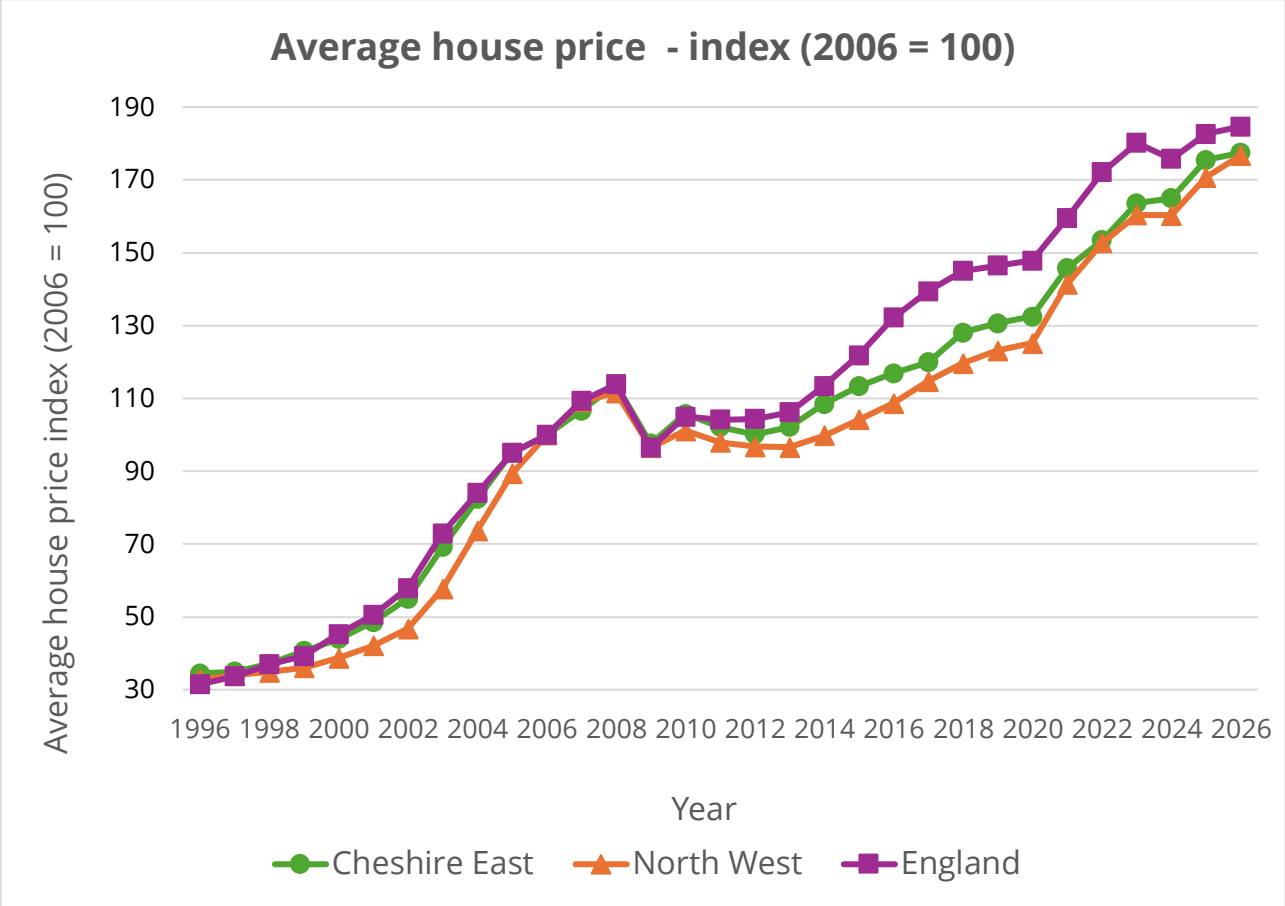
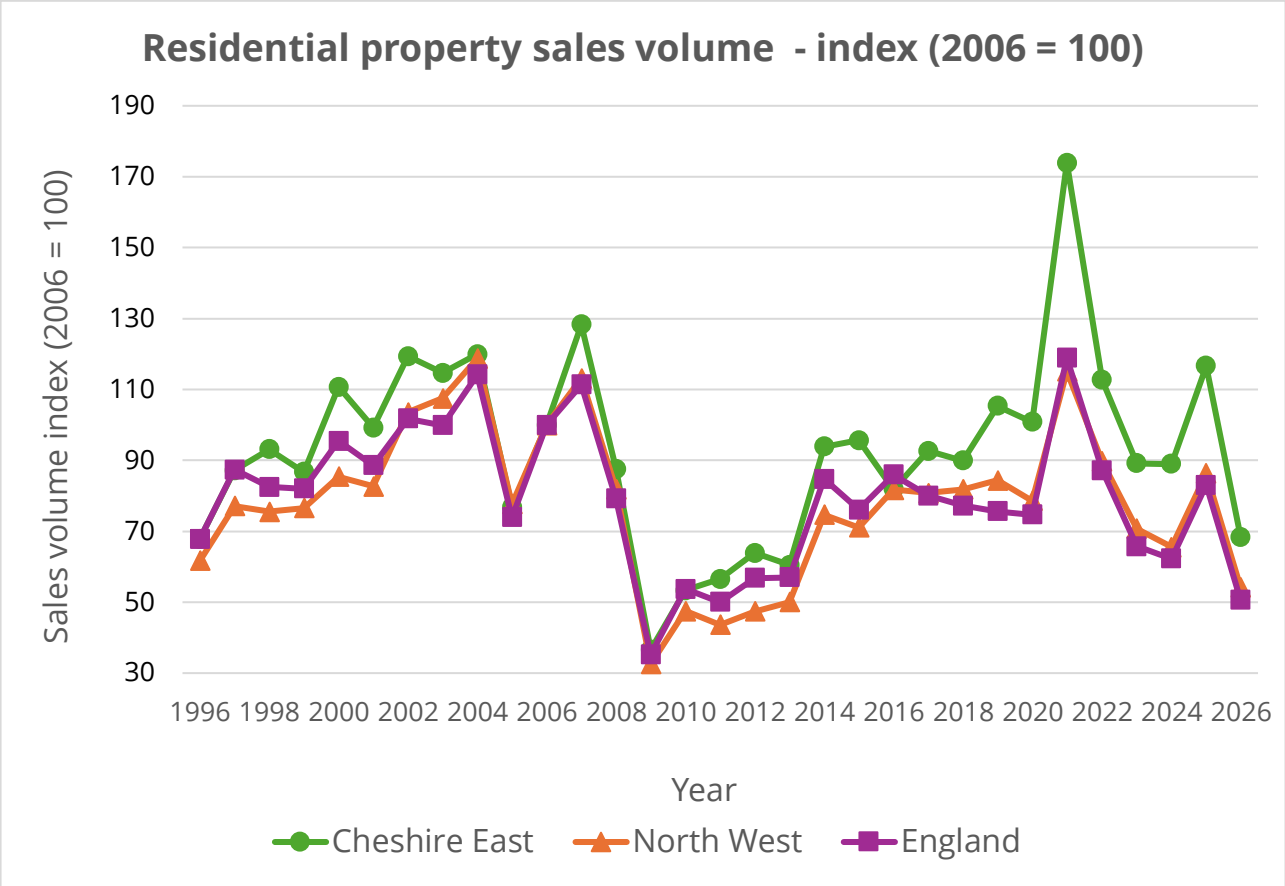


Figure 7.10: Residential property sales volumes index (2006 = 100), 1995 to 2026



7.70 At small area level, official (ONS published) aggregate[271] statistics on median and lower quartile house prices are available up to the year ending December 2022.[272] These statistics relate to the '2011' LSOAs created by ONS in the wake of the 2011 Census, rather than the latest ('2021') LSOAs informed by the 2021 Census evidence.

7.71 The data for the year ending December 2022 show that, whilst just over half of the Cheshire East 234 LSOAs had a median house price of £270,000 or less, there were 28 LSOAs for which the median was £500,000 or more. Those 28 areas consisted of 6 of Wilmslow's 14 LSOAs and 5 of Knutsford's 9 LSOAs, as well as 2 each in Alderley Edge, Poynton and Prestbury, one each in Macclesfield and Mobberley, and 9 LSOAs in other settlements.[273] As this indicates, house prices are particularly high in certain

[271] Land Registry 'Price Paid' data are publicly available for analysis at small area level, but these relate to individual property transactions, rather than being aggregated by the Registry into LSOA or other neighbourhood-level area statistics.

[272] HPSSA Datasets 46 and 48, 'House price statistics for small areas in England and Wales: year ending March 2023' statistical release, ONS, September 2023: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housepricestatisticsforsmallareas/yearendingmarch2023 Note: The source data also includes figures for the year ending March 2023, but for median prices only. For consistency, the analysis in this report is limited to the latest period (year ending December 2022) for which both median and lower quartile price data are available.

[273] 'Other settlements' includes the 4 settlements (Audlem, Bunbury, Goostrey and Wrenbury) that are in the LSCs tier of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy but for which LSOA boundaries do not offer a reasonable fit. The 9 'other settlements' LSOAs with median prices of £500,000 or more included the LSOA containing Bunbury and one of the 2 LSOAs containing Goostrey.

towns in the north of the borough (Knutsford, Poynton and Wilmslow), a number of larger villages (also in the north of the borough) and smaller settlements and more rural parts of Cheshire East.

7.72 The same data also show that, whilst just over half of Cheshire East's LSOAs had a lower quartile house price of £200,000 or less, there were 22 LSOAs for which the lower quartile price was £400,000 or more. Those 22 areas consisted of 5 LSOAs in Wilmslow, 4 in Knutsford, 3 in Poynton, 2 in Prestbury, one in Alderley Edge, and 7 in other settlements.[274] Again, this indicates that less affordable housing tends be concentrated in Knutsford, Poynton and Wilmslow, and in certain smaller settlements, with affordability (mostly) being more of an issue in the northern part of the borough than further south.

Housing affordability ratios

7.73 The affordability of housing is generally assessed by looking at the ratio of house price to earnings, or house price to household income. A common measure (and the one adopted by central government for use in its housing need standard formula) is the ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings. Being informed by workplace-based earnings, this measure provides a guide to the ability of people to afford to buy a home in the location where they work. However, it is also informative to consider ratios that are residence-based to obtain a sense of how affordable housing is for the existing residents of a particular location, regardless of whether they work locally or not. In addition, assessments of affordability must take account of the fact that 'average' measures do not capture the relative affordability of housing for people on lower earnings. This can be (and is most commonly) done by calculating the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings.

7.74 This section of the report therefore presents and interprets statistics on the following 4 affordability ratios (in the order listed): the workplace-based median measure, the workplace-based lower quartile measure, the residence-based median measure and the residence-based lower quartile measure.[275]

7.75 In Cheshire East, the ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings grew during the early 2000s, but has not followed any discernible upward or downward trend over the last 10 years or so (see Table 7.17 and Figure 7.11). Between 2003 and 2016, it remained between 6.0 and 7.5, but has since ranged between 7.5 and 9.5. The most recent figure (for 2025) is near the bottom of the latter range, at 7.60.

[274] The 7 'other settlements' LSOAs with lower quartile prices of £400,000 or more included the LSOA containing Bunbury and one of the two LSOAs containing Goostrey.

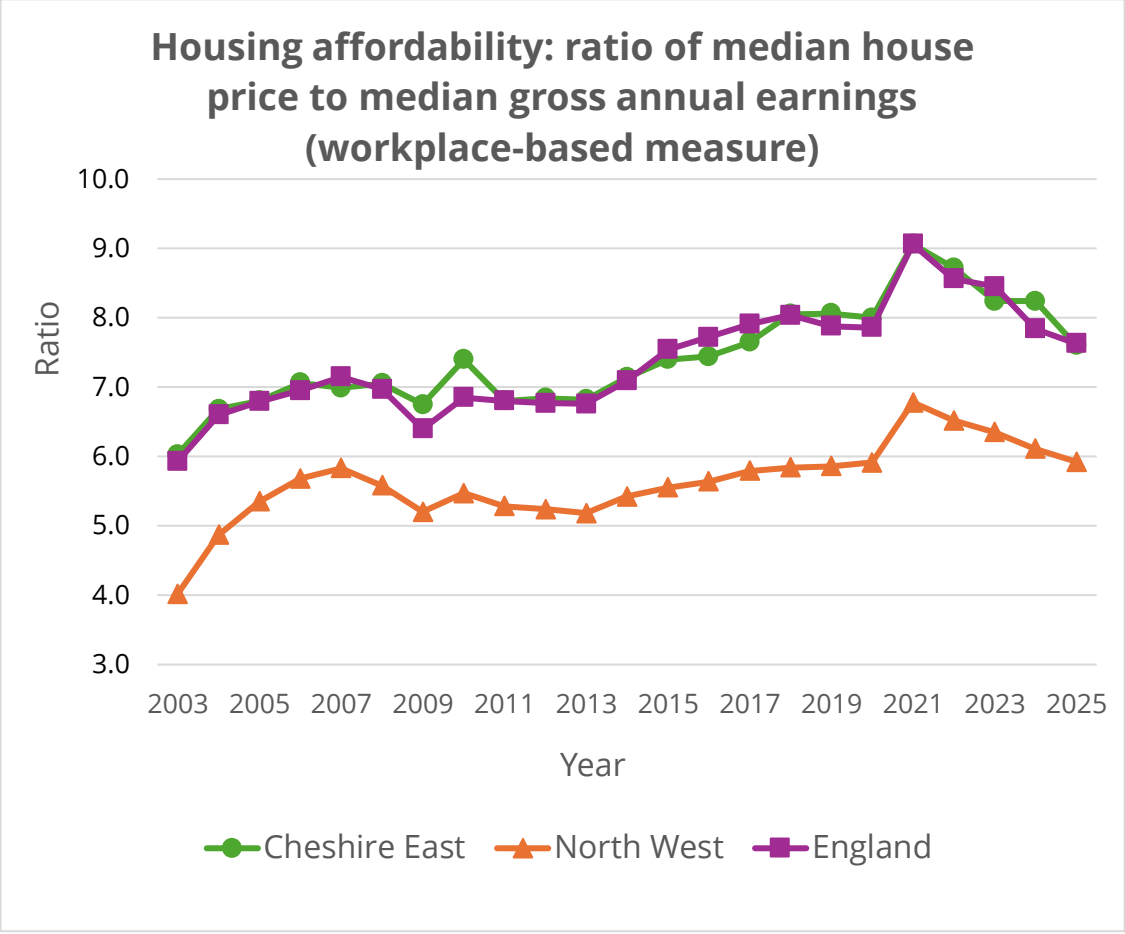
[275] Source: 'House price to workplace-based earnings ratio' and 'House price to residence-based earnings ratio' data sets published as part of the 'Housing affordability in England and Wales: 2025' statistical release, ONS, March 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales/latest

7.76 However, the underlying earnings data come from ONS' national ASHE and therefore survey sampling error margins are somewhat higher at local authority level, due to smaller sample sizes. Hence current affordability is better assessed by taking an average of the ratios over the last few years. Central government's housing need formula uses an average of the last 5 years of data (currently 2021 to 2025 inclusive), which puts the Cheshire East ratio at 8.37. This is close to (0.7% above) the England five-year average (8.31) but 32.0% above the North West figure (6.34).

Table 7.17: Ratio of median house price to median workplace-based earnings

	2003	2015	2020	2025	Five-year average (2021-25)
Cheshire East	6.03	7.40	8.00	7.60	8.37
North West	4.02	5.55	5.91	5.92	6.34
England	5.93	7.54	7.86	7.63	8.31

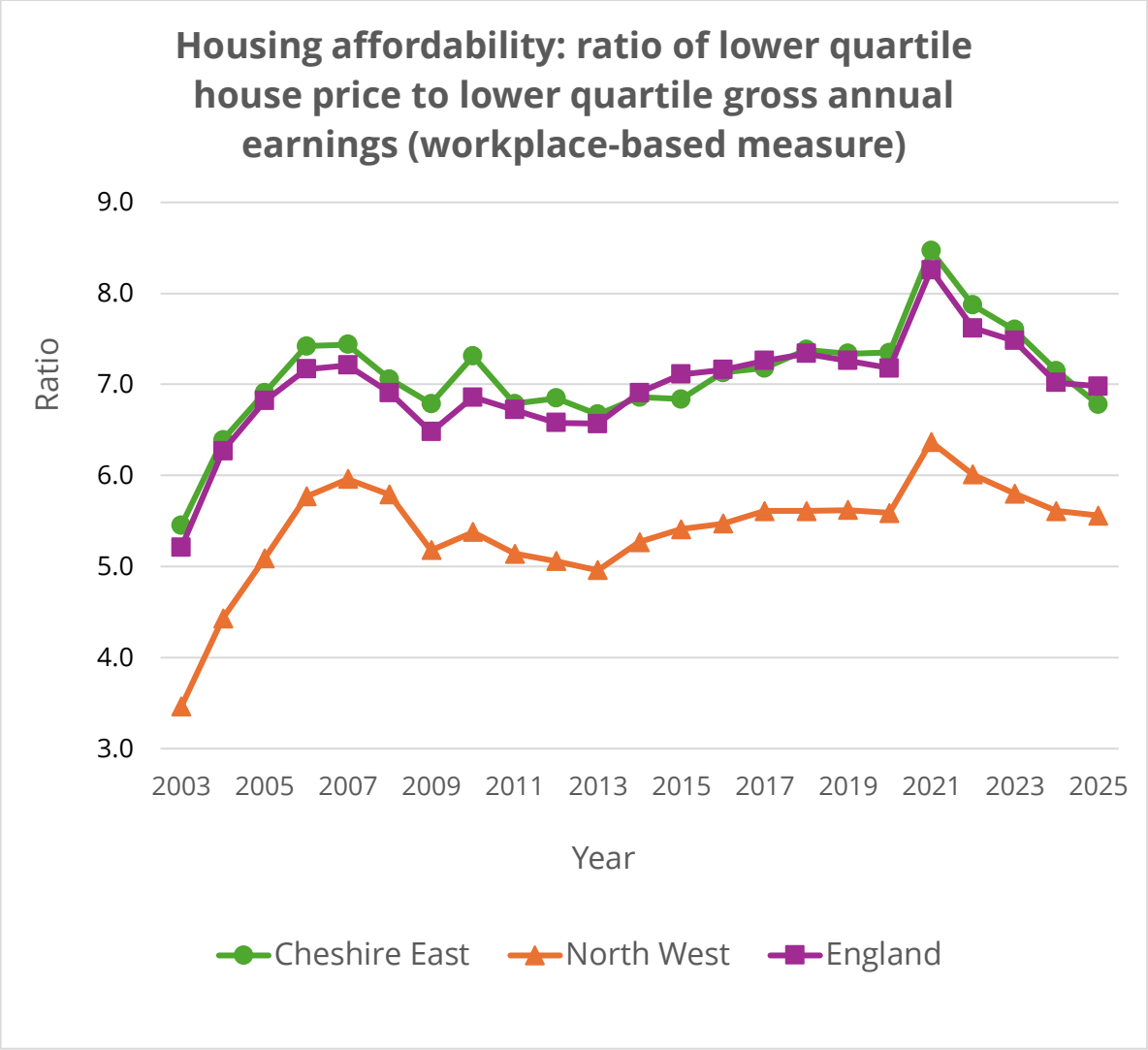
Figure 7.11: Housing affordability (median workplace-based earnings) ratio



7.77 For the workplace-based ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings (see Table 7.18 and Figure 7.12), the picture is a little different, with the Cheshire East ratio (with odd exceptions) having remained in the 7.0 to 8.0 range since 2016 and the current five-year average being 7.57. (In other words, for people

who work in Cheshire East and wish to live there, lower-priced housing is a little more affordable for people on lower earnings than the 'average' house is for people on average earnings.) As with the median-based workplace measure, the five-year average of 7.57 is close to (1.3% above) the equivalent England figure (7.47) but substantially (29.0%) greater than that for the North West (5.87).

Figure 7.12: Housing affordability (lower quartile workplace-based earnings) ratio



7.78 As set out in the section of this report covering earnings, residence-based earnings in Cheshire East are generally higher on average than workplace-based earnings. Consequently, the residence-based affordability ratios for the borough are a little lower than the workplace-based ratios, with the current residence-based five-year averages being 7.91 for median earners seeking median-price houses (against 8.37 on the workplace-based measure) and 7.40 for lower quartile earners seeking lower quartile-priced houses (versus 7.57 on the workplace-based measure).

Table 7.18: Ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile workplace-based earnings

	2003	2015	2020	2025	Five-year average (2021-25)
Cheshire East	5.45	6.84	7.35	6.78	7.57
North West	3.46	5.41	5.59	5.56	5.87
England	5.21	7.11	7.18	6.98	7.47

Housing need and land supply

Housing need

7.79 The NPPF requires planning authorities to follow central government's standard method for assessing local housing need.[276]

7.80 Under this standard method, baseline need is set equal to 0.8% of the local authority's existing housing stock, using the government's most recent dwelling stock data.

7.81 Where applicable, an adjustment is then applied, which takes account of housing affordability in the local area. As noted in this report's earlier section on housing affordability, the data used for this purpose is the latest five-year average for a workplace-based affordability ratio (more specifically, the ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings). No adjustment is applied where the ratio is 5 or below. However, for each percentage point by which a ratio exceeds 5, the starting (baseline) housing need figure is revised upwards by 0.95 of a percentage point. So, for example, a ratio of 6 (20% greater than 5) would result in the baseline being increased by 20 x 0.95, or 19%.

7.82 According to the latest dwelling stock statistics, published in May 2026, Cheshire East's stock totalled 192,819 dwellings as of 2025, so the baseline (0.8% of the stock) is therefore 1,543 (192,819 x 0.8%). As noted in this report's housing affordability subsection, the latest five-year average for the ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings (covering the years 2021 to 2025 inclusive) is 8.37, giving an affordability uplift of 0.95 x (8.37-5)/5, or 64%. Hence the current housing need figure for Cheshire East is 2,530 (1,543 x 1.64) homes per annum.[277]

[276] 'Housing and economic needs assessment', MHCLG: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments

[277] Data sources for these latest housing need formula input figures: [1] Table 125 (Dwelling stock estimates by local authority district), MHCLG, May 2026: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants [2] Table 5c from the 'House price to workplace-based earnings ratio' data set published as part of the 'Housing affordability in England and Wales: 2025' statistical release, Office for National Statistics (ONS), March 2026: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian

7.83 New housing affordability statistics are not due to be published until March 2027, and the subsequent set of new dwelling stock statistics are not due for publication until May 2027. Hence the standard formula estimate of the borough's housing need of 2,530 should remain valid[278] until March 2027.

Unmet need from neighbouring authorities

7.84 Any unmet housing need arising from neighbouring authorities would be identified through the preparation of local plans, supporting evidence on housing requirements and development capacity, and relevant strategic cross-boundary planning arrangements. No requests have been made to date for Cheshire East to meet the housing needs of neighbouring authorities.

Housing land supply

7.85 As at 31 March 2026, supply from sites with planning permission and allocations amounts to 13,313 dwellings. Further information about this can be found in the council's latest published housing completions and supply report.[279]

Five-year housing land supply

7.86 National planning policy requires councils to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of 5 years' worth of housing, assessed against their housing requirement in the development plan, or against their local housing need (calculated using the standard method) where the development plan is more than 5 years old. The council's latest published assessment of the 5-year housing land requirement and the supply of sites to meet it is found in the Cheshire East Housing Monitoring Update (base date 31 March 2025).[280] This identifies a deliverable five-year housing land supply of 3.3 years.

[278] Barring any government policy decisions to change the standard formula.

[279] 'Housing completions and supply: base date 31 March 2026': https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/researchand-evidence/housing-monitoring-report/housing-supply-and-completions-2025-6.pdf

[280] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/research_and_evidence/strategic_housing_land_assmnt/housing-land-supply.aspx

8 Environment

Strategy and policy background

8.1 Environmental considerations are a fundamental component of the planning system and are closely linked to the achievement of sustainable development. At the national level, the NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural environment, addressing climate change, reducing pollution, improving biodiversity, and supporting the transition to a low-carbon future. The planning system is expected to balance development needs with the conservation and enhancement of environmental assets, including landscapes, habitats, water resources, air quality and green infrastructure. Local plans therefore have an important role in shaping development patterns that minimise environmental impacts, improve resilience to climate change and flooding, and secure long-term environmental net gains.

8.2 The statutory framework for environmental protection has been strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, which introduced legally binding environmental targets, Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), and mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements for most new development. Together, these measures seek to halt biodiversity decline, improve ecological connectivity and support nature recovery at a landscape scale. Local planning authorities are expected to take account of this evolving policy context when preparing development plans, ensuring that environmental considerations are integrated across spatial strategy, site allocation and development management policies. Consequently, baseline evidence relating to biodiversity, landscape character, climate change, flood risk, air and water quality, green infrastructure and environmental designations forms a critical component of the evidence base supporting local plan preparation.

Climate change and environmental sustainability

8.3 Cheshire East has a commitment to becoming a carbon neutral authority by 2030 and a carbon neutral borough by 2045.[281] The council's borough-wide Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2025 to 2030 Priority Actions,[282] which were approved in 2024, set out how the council is going to begin the journey to 2045, the areas of focus, and the principles that will underpin council interventions. The council has also developed a climate emergency toolkit[283] to support Cheshire East town and parish councils' efforts to reduce their own carbon emissions.

[281] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment/carbon-neutral-council/carbon-neutral-by-2045.aspx

[282] https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s122352/Appendix%201%20CE%20Climate%20Action%20Plan.pdf

[283] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/environment/carbon-neutral/climatetoolkit-v3.pdf

8.4 The vision and aims in the Local Transport Plan Strategy[284] include an aspiration to "reduce the impact of transport on the environment in Cheshire East, managing the effect on climate change, air quality and biodiversity".

Green Belt, grey belt and safeguarded land

8.5 Green Belts have been defined around many of the country's largest cities and conurbations, to prevent urban sprawl extending outwards into the surrounding areas. In Cheshire East, there is more than 400 square kilometres of land designated as Green Belt in the north and south of the borough. This land is part of the Green Belts surrounding the Greater Manchester and Potteries conurbations. Figure 8.1 shows the areas of Green Belt within and beyond the borough.

8.6 As set out in national policy, the objective of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The 5 purposes of Green Belt are to:

a. check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

b. prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

c. assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

d. preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

e. assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

8.7 Since the adoption of the last local plan, national policy has introduced a new concept of grey belt land, which is defined as Green Belt land that does not contribute strongly to Green Belt purposes A, B or D (checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, preventing the merging of towns, or preserving the setting and special character of historic towns). It is important to note that under the government's definition, undeveloped (greenfield) Green Belt land is classed as grey belt where it meets these criteria.

8.8 As set out in national policy, the permanence of Green Belt is very important, and its boundaries should only be altered to enable the development of land around stations, or in exceptional circumstances. National policy also confirms that these exceptional circumstances include the inability to meet the identified needs for development in full without changing Green Belt boundaries, having examined all other reasonable alternatives first. In altering Green Belt boundaries, priority must be given to previously developed land in the Green Belt, then undeveloped grey belt, and then other Green Belt locations.

8.9 The current local plan maintained the general extent of the Green Belt, but did make alterations to the detailed Green Belt boundaries to identify enough land to meet the development needs to 2030 identified through the plan. It also identified areas of safeguarded land, which is land removed from the Green Belt to potentially assist in

[284] Local Plan Transport Strategy, Cheshire East Council, April 2026: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/public-transport/local-transport-plan/ltp-strategy.pdf

meeting longer-term development needs. Safeguarded land identified in the current local plan (and shown in Figure 8.1) comprises:

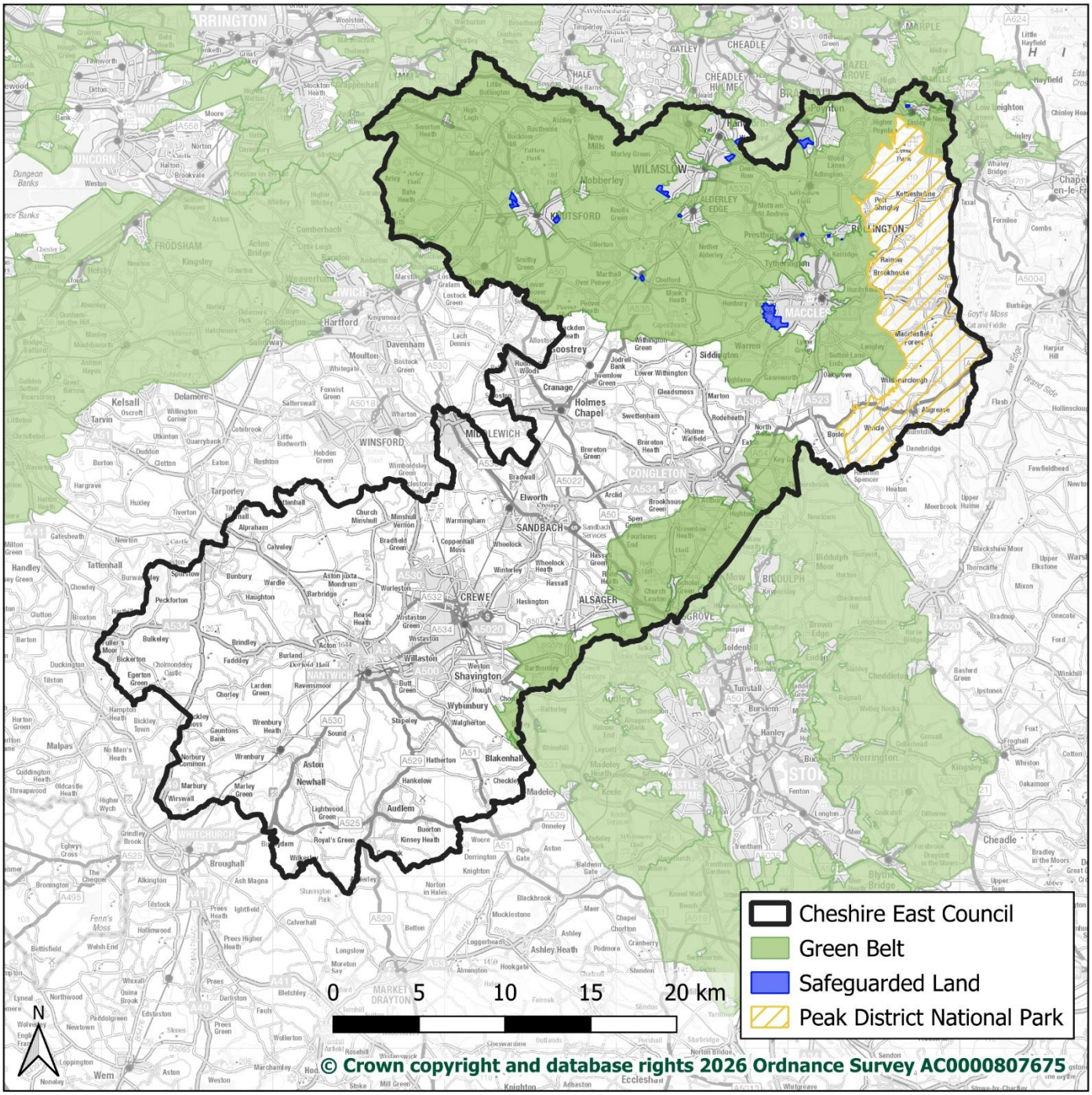
- LPS 19 'South West Macclesfield' (95.7 hectares)
- LPS 35 'North Cheshire Growth Village Extension' (14 hectares)
- LPS 39 'Land south of Tabley Road, Knutsford' (11 hectares)
- LPS 40 'Land north of Tabley Road, Knutsford' (11 hectares)
- LPS 41 'Land adjacent of Booths Hall, Knutsford' (8.7 hectares)
- LPS 52 'Woodford Aerodrome, Poynton' (22 hectares)
- LPS 58 'Land at Heathfield Farm, Wilmslow' (9 hectares)
- LPS 59 'Land at Upcast Lane/Cumber Lane, Wilmslow (15 hectares)
- ALD 1 'Land at Ryleys Farm, west of Sutton Road', Alderley Edge (2.32ha)
- BOL 1 'Land at Henshall Road', Bollington (1.48ha)
- BOL 2 'Land at Greenfield Road', Bollington (0.26ha)
- CFD 1 'Land off Knutsford Road', Chelford (0.58ha)
- CFD 2 'Land east of Chelford Railway Station', Chelford (4.63ha)
- DIS 1 'Land off Jacksons Edge Road', Disley (2.43ha)
- PRE 1 'Land south of Prestbury Lane', Prestbury (1.84ha)
- PRE 2 'Land off Heybridge Lane', Prestbury (0.94ha)

Strategic green gap

8.10 The area around Crewe lies beyond the Green Belts surrounding Greater Manchester and The Potteries. As Crewe has grown since the arrival of the railways in the 1830s, the loss of the gaps between Crewe, Nantwich and several other settlements has caused some settlements to merge into the Crewe urban area and very narrow gaps to remain in other cases.

8.11 There has been a long-term local 'green gap' policy that sets additional restrictions to development than the normal policy for the countryside and seeks to prevent settlements from merging, whilst protecting their separate identities and settings. The current policy seeks to protect the gaps between Crewe/Nantwich/Willaston/ Wistaston, Crewe/Shavington/Rope/Willaston, Crewe/Shavington/Basford/Weston, and Crewe/Haslington. In addition, there are several neighbourhood plans that include more local 'gap' policies.

Figure 8.1: Green Belt and safeguarded land areas in Cheshire East



Green spaces

8.12 Parks and green spaces are primarily planned through the Green Space Strategy, local plan policies, open space standards, and supporting strategies for parks, playing pitches and green infrastructure.

Natural environment

Landscape, waterways and ecology

8.13 Cheshire East's landscape is one of contrasts: between the extensive flat lowland plain and gently rolling farmland and distinctive sandstone ridge to the west of the

borough, and the rising Pennine foothills to the east. The landscape is characterised by glacial deposits, river valleys with wooded cloughs, natural features including mosses, heaths and meres, and several designated parkland estates.

8.14 Cheshire East also has a diverse range of flora and fauna, much of which require conservation due to threats to their numbers nationally. There are several species and habitats that are considered conservation priorities in Cheshire (in addition to England's priorities) and these are listed in Table 8.1.[285] However, as the Cheshire (Cheshire Wildlife Trust) area covers a much wider area than Cheshire East alone, including some marine habitats, not all of the flora and fauna listed in Table 8.1 are to be found within Cheshire East itself.

Table 8.1: Cheshire local biodiversity action plan (local priority) species and habitats

Category	Species/habitats
Birds	Barn owl, black necked grebe
Invertebrates	Club-tailed dragonfly, cuckoo bee, downy emerald, lesser silver water beetle, mining bee, ringlet, sand wasp, variable damselfly
Mammals	Atlantic grey seal, common pipistrelle (bat), whiskered bat, Brandt's bat, Daubenton's bat, Leisler's bat, Natterer's bat, serotine bat
Plants	Black poplar, bluebell, Isle of Man cabbage, ivy-leaved water-crowfoot, Mackay's horsetail, river water-crowfoot, rock sea-lavender
Habitats	Dry stone walls, gardens and allotments, limebeds, roadside verges, waxcap grasslands

8.15 The borough has many sites that are designated for their intrinsic environmental value. Table 8.2 presents statistics on these sites, broken down by site category.[286]

Table 8.2: Designated environmental sites, 2026

Type of designated site	Number of sites
Special area of conservation	2
Special protection area	1
Ramsar site	3
Site of special scientific interest (SSSI)	33
National park	1
National nature reserve	2

[285] https://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife/priority-species-and-habitats

[286] Source: Environmental Planning Team and Strategic Planning Team, Cheshire East Council.

Type of designated site	Number of sites
Local nature reserve	8
Local wildlife site	400
Local geological site	23

8.16 Rivers and canals form a major part of Cheshire East's environmental character, heritage and appeal as a location for outdoor recreation (the River Bollin, for example, is the central feature of Macclesfield Riverside Park).[287] The main rivers are the Bollin and Dean in the northeast of the borough, the Croco, Dane and Wheelock in the centre and southeast, and the Weaver in the southwest. Notable canals are the Shropshire Union, Macclesfield and Llangollen. However, there are issues with local river quality. As of 2022, ecological river quality in Cheshire East was assessed as being 3% good, 54% moderate, 33% poor and 10% bad. This was broadly the same as the figures for 2019 (3% good, 56% moderate, 32% poor and 9% bad). The 2019 result for chemical river quality was 100% fail (equivalent data from the 2022 assessment were not available at the time of writing).[288]

Green spaces

8.17 Cheshire East Council is the lead organisation in providing parks and green spaces in the borough. It owns and manages many of the parks and green spaces and secures developer contributions for new provision, mainly through housing developments. The council owns and manages 16 principal town parks (covering all 12 of the borough's towns), as well as 2 country parks at Brereton Heath (between Holmes Chapel and Congleton) and Tegg's Nose in Macclesfield. It also maintains several linear parks, such as the Biddulph Valley Way, the Gritstone Trail, Macclesfield Riverside Park, Merelake Way (on the edge of Alsager), Middlewood Way (from Macclesfield to Marple), the Salt Line, the Wheelock Rail Trail and several other Local Nature Reserves and SSSIs.[289] The Council's Green Space Strategy brings together all green space functions across the authority, including open space, countryside services, public rights of way, landscape and biodiversity, and forms part of the evidence base for the local plan. It also co-ordinates investment and delivery across the borough.

[287] https://www.bollinvalley.org.uk/countryside-sites/macclesfield-riverside-park.aspx

[288] Source: Environment Agency: https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/RiverBasinDistrict/12 Note: The statistics relate to the four operational catchments that are in Cheshire East: Bollin Dean Mersey Upper, Dane, Weaver Lower and Weaver Upper. These catchments cover parts of the Mersey Upper and Weaver Gowy management catchments within the North West river basic district.

[289] Sources: [1] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/leisure-culture-and-tourism/parks-and-gardens [2] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/leisure,_culture_and_tourism/ranger_service/countryside_sites/countryside_sites.aspx

8.18 The borough is well served by green spaces and parks. As noted under the strategy and policy background section above, they are primarily planned through the Green Space Strategy, local plan policies, open space standards, and supporting strategies for parks, playing pitches and green infrastructure. Management is delivered by Cheshire East Council alongside town and parish councils, community groups, landowners and other partners. Green Space provision throughout Cheshire East is documented and managed through the Open Spaces database and Green Spaces Strategy.

8.19 The council's latest evidence on the provision of services and amenities[290] indicates that, of all the settlements within the borough (excluding the Peak Park area), 65 have at least one play area.

Environmental and energy risks and challenges

Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions

8.20 There is overwhelming evidence of human economic activity and development having contributed, through rising levels and concentrations of greenhouse gases, to dramatic changes in the Earth's climate. The government's own overview of climate change notes that average surface temperatures on Earth have increased by around 1.3 to 1.4 degrees centigrade since the Industrial Revolution, with the 10 years from 2015 to 2024 being the warmest on record up to that point.[291] Major consequences include more frequent, more intensive, extreme weather events (such as heatwaves, storms and flooding), as well as rising sea levels. It is therefore important for national and local government to monitor greenhouse gas emissions, so that the main contributors to emissions can be identified, and policy responses developed.

8.21 At local authority level, the most recent evidence comes from the government's latest annual estimates of greenhouse gas emissions for local authorities and regions, which cover the period 2005 to 2024.[292] The published data contains separate estimates for carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, as well as the aggregated emissions from these 3 greenhouse gases collectively. These gases account for 98% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the UK. Emissions from each of the gases are weighted by their global warming potential (GWP), with the weighted figures being measured in carbon dioxide equivalent units (CO_2e). (The GWP for each gas is defined as its warming influence in relation to that of carbon dioxide over a 100-year period.)

[290] This information is taken from analysis undertaken by the council, in order to inform the new local plan and to help review the existing settlement hierarchy.

[291] 'Climate change explained', Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) (accessed following DESNZ's July 2025 page update): https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-explained

[292] 'UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, 2005 to 2024', DESNZ, June 2026: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-2005-to-2024 Note: The data at local authority level are much less robust than the figures at regional or national level. Most of the difficulties in allocating data to local authorities have little impact at regional level. Problems of interpretation, such as economic activity or transport taking place across boundaries, still exist but are less acute at the regional level than at the local authority level.

8.22 In interpreting these greenhouse gas statistics, it is important to bear in mind what they cover, what they exclude and how the emissions are allocated to specific regions and local authorities. Most of the emissions are allocated to sectors and locations according to the point where the emission occurred. The exceptions to this are the emissions related to energy supply and waste. Energy supply emissions (such as those from power stations and refineries) are allocated on an 'end-user' basis where emissions are distributed to sectors and locations based on where the 'end-use' of the energy occurred. Emissions from waste are distributed according to the proportion of waste arising in each local area (rather than according to the location of waste management facilities). Because of the approach taken in allocating emissions, emissions from the production of goods that are exported will be included, and emissions from the production of goods that are imported are excluded. The statistics also exclude emissions from aviation, shipping, military transport and exported fuels.

8.23 The narrative below summarises the evidence from these latest greenhouse gas emissions statistics, starting with the national picture and moving on to the results for Cheshire East.

8.24 In the UK (and in England), estimated total greenhouse gas emissions decreased by nearly half between 2005 and 2024. However, there have been some diversions from the long-term downward trend, with short-term increases in emissions occurring on occasions. The first of these was between 2009 and 2010: this was largely due to the 2008 to 2009 financial crash depressing economic activity and emissions, followed by the impact of exceptionally cold weather in 2010. The second was between 2011 and 2012: this can be largely explained by variations in temperature. The final occasion was between 2020 and 2021, with the introduction and then removal of COVID-19 restrictions being a key factor there, as well as variations in temperature. The pandemic, the 2008 to2009 crash and the periods of unusual or volatile weather will of course also be reflected to some extent in the emissions figures for Cheshire East. All UK local authorities saw their total emissions fall between 2005 and 2024, with reduced emissions from power stations and industrial combustion being the main contributors to that trend.

8.25 As shown in Table 8.3 and Figures 8.2 to 8.4, greenhouse gas emissions trends and composition (the mix of emissions sources) in Cheshire East is similar to the national average in many ways, but significantly different in many others.

8.26 Except for short-term increases in 2010 (2.4%), 2012 (3.7%) and 2021 (3.8%), Cheshire East's total emissions from all sectors have fallen every year from 2006 to 2024. Total emissions in 2024 (2.750 million tonnes of CO_2e) were 38.4% below their 2005 level (see Table 8.3). For England, the trend was similar: steadily downward, apart from temporary increases in overall emissions in 2010, 2012 and 2021 (see earlier commentary for an explanation of why those 3 years were outliers at national level). By 2024, total emissions across England were 46.4% lower than in 2005. By 2024, Cheshire East's total emissions per capita were 6.5 tonnes, down from 12.4 tonnes in 2005 (and from 6.8 tonnes in 2023). Over the same 19-year period, per capita

emissions also fell in England (from 10.1 tonnes to 4.7), but Cheshire East is still significantly above the national average.

8.27 As of 2024, the sectors contributing the most to greenhouse gas emissions in Cheshire East were transport (38.5% of all emissions) and agriculture (20.9%). In both cases, these percentage shares are high compared to the same sector's emission shares in England (transport 34.2% and agriculture 10.9%), as Figure 8.4 shows. Conversely, the proportions of Cheshire East emissions coming from the domestic sector (19.7%, versus 23.5% in England), industry (9.6%, versus 13.7% for England), commerce (6.5%), waste (4.1%) and the public sector (1.8%) are all low compared to the England average.[293]

Table 8.3: Greenhouse gas emission trends, 2005 to 2024

Year	Emissions (Mt CO2e), Cheshire East	% change on previous year, Cheshire East	% change on previous year, England	Index (2005 = 100), Cheshire East	Index (2005 = 100), England	Emissions per capita (tonnes of CO2e), Cheshire East	Emissions per capita (tonnes of CO2e), England
2005	4.465			100.0	100.0	12.4	10.1
2006	4.261	-4.6%	-0.7%	95.4	99.3	11.8	10.0
2007	4.194	-1.6%	-2.2%	93.9	97.1	11.5	9.7
2008	4.096	-2.3%	-2.8%	91.7	94.4	11.2	9.3
2009	3.869	-5.5%	-8.4%	86.7	86.5	10.5	8.5
2010	3.962	2.4%	2.6%	88.7	88.7	10.7	8.6
2011	3.732	-5.8%	-7.5%	83.6	82.0	10.1	7.9
2012	3.872	3.7%	4.1%	86.7	85.4	10.4	8.2
2013	3.860	-0.3%	-2.4%	86.4	83.4	10.3	7.9
2014	3.584	-7.2%	-8.0%	80.3	76.7	9.5	7.2
2015	3.471	-3.1%	-3.5%	77.7	74.0	9.2	6.9
2016	3.335	-3.9%	-5.9%	74.7	69.6	8.7	6.4
2017	3.287	-1.4%	-2.6%	73.6	67.8	8.6	6.2
2018	3.253	-1.0%	-1.3%	72.8	66.9	8.4	6.1
2019	3.120	-4.1%	-3.8%	69.9	64.3	8.0	5.8
2020	2.934	-6.0%	-8.7%	65.7	58.7	7.5	5.3

[293] The Cheshire East shares reported here sum to 101.1%, because the other emission sector, land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF), makes an offsetting contribution that equates to the net absorption of 1.1% of the emissions from the other sectors.

Year	Emissions (Mt CO2e), Cheshire East	% change on previous year, Cheshire East	% change on previous year, England	Index (2005 = 100), Cheshire East	Index (2005 = 100), England	Emissions per capita (tonnes of CO2e), Cheshire East	Emissions per capita (tonnes of CO2e), England
2021	3.044	3.8%	4.1%	68.2	61.2	7.6	5.5
2022	2.889	-5.1%	-6.2%	64.7	57.4	7.1	5.1
2023	2.819	-2.4%	-4.8%	63.1	54.6	6.8	4.8
2024	2.750	-2.5%	-1.9%	61.6	53.6	6.5	4.7

8.28 In 2024, the borough's total domestic emissions were 540,700 tonnes, down 49.5% on 2005 (but 0.2% higher than in 2023). This percentage fall was slightly less than that achieved by England (50.9%). Cheshire East's domestic emissions per capita have also fallen during this time (from 3.0 tonnes in 2005, to 1.3 by 2024), but exceed the England average (1.1 tonnes).

8.29 The borough's emissions from industry fell by 63.8% during 2005 to 2024, to reach 263,000 tonnes, and were 8.8% lower than in 2023. The 2005 to 2024 fall is slightly less in percentage terms than that seen for England (64.5%).

8.30 Emissions from the commercial sector fell by 62.9% during 2005 to 2024, to reach 179,500 tonnes (and were 7.6% lower than in 2023). For England, the percentage decline between 2005 and 2024 was greater still, at 65.8%.

8.31 Emissions from the public sector fell by 58.9% during 2005 to 2024, to reach 49,500 tonnes, but were 2.8% higher than in 2023. England saw a proportionately larger decrease (60.4%) over the 2005-24 period.

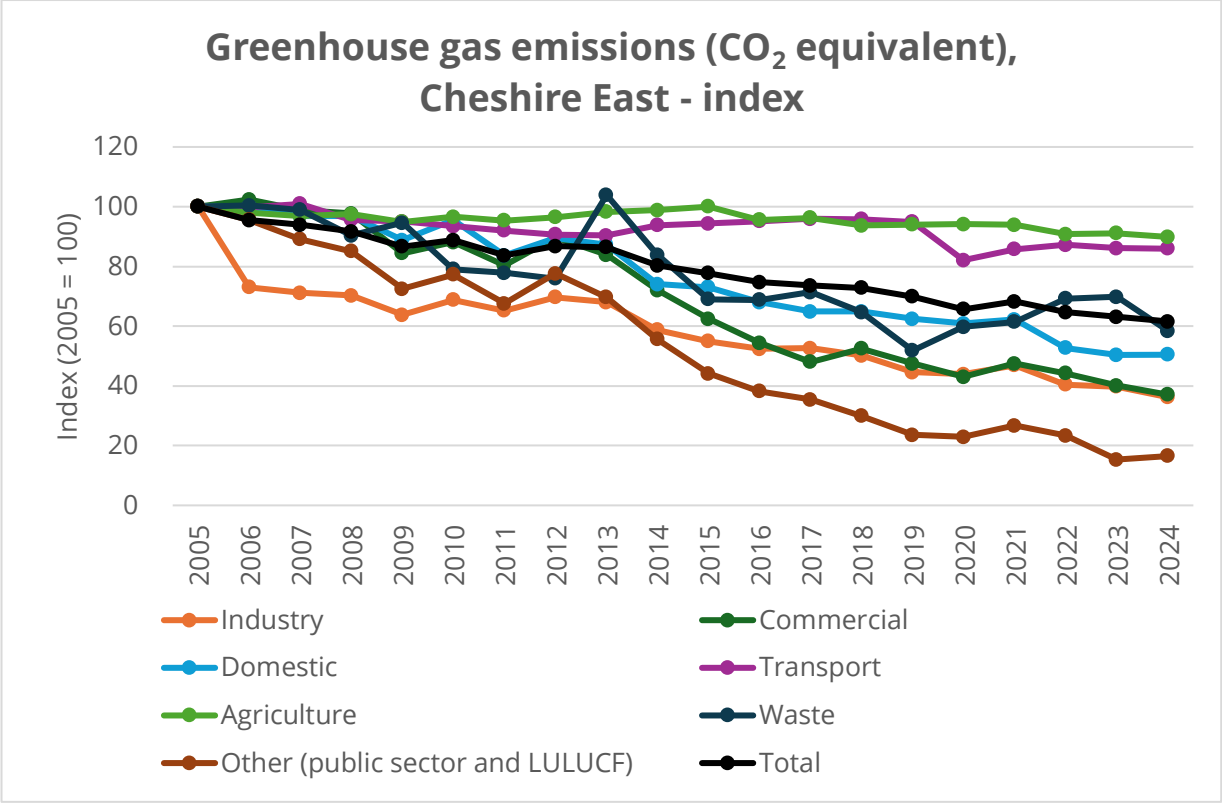
8.32 Except for one year (2007), emissions from transport followed a downward trend from 2006 to 2013, but then increased in 4 successive years (2014 to 2017 inclusive). In 2018 and 2019, emissions levels in this sector declined slightly, but then dropped by 13.5% in 2020 alone (probably in large part a consequence of the COVID-19 restrictions in place for much of the year). This was more than twice the size of the next largest year-on-year decline seen during 2005 to 2023 (a 5.3% fall in 2008, which may reflect the impact of the recession that occurred that year). Transport emissions then grew by 4.5% in 2021 (the fastest year-on-year increase reported over the whole 2005 to 2024 period), followed by a modest increase in 2022 (1.7%) that was more or less cancelled out by falls in 2023 (1.3%) and 2024 (0.1%). As a result, even by 2024, transport emissions (at 1,059,600 tonnes) were only 14.0% lower than in 2005: a relatively small long-term contraction when compared to the percentage changes reported for most of the other major emissions sectors. This broadly mirrors the picture for transport emissions in England, where emissions declined (with some short-term upward shifts) by 19.7% between 2005 and 2024.

8.33 Agriculture is the other major source of emissions for which the long-term decline is relatively modest. In 2024, emissions from this sector (573,800 tonnes) were only 10.1% lower than in 2005 and have followed no consistent long-term trend over that period (though they did fall in the latest reported year, 2024, by 1.4%). England also saw no clear trend over the 2005 to 2024 period and its emissions from agriculture in 2024 were only 16.1% less than in 2005.

8.34 Emissions from the waste sector were (as of 2024) 41.6% below their 2005 level, but have followed no long-term pattern, with year-on-year changes in emissions levels frequently alternating between growth and decline, with year-on-year changes sometimes being relatively volatile. In 2024, the sector's emissions stood at 113,500 tonnes, down 16.3% on the previous year. Waste sector emissions in England also fluctuated up and down somewhat during 2005 to 2024, but are now 42.9% below their 2005 level.

8.35 Emissions relating to LULUCF, the other component of non-domestic emissions, are negative for some geographical areas, including Cheshire East, where they have varied over the 2005 to 2024 period from minus 2,100 tonnes (the 2005 figure) to minus 30,000 tonnes (the reported figure for both 2023 and 2024). For England, net LULUCF emissions over the 2005 2024 period have been negative since 2008 and are currently minus 1,107,900 tonnes.

Figure 8.2: Greenhouse gas emissions by sector – index (2005 = 100), Cheshire East



8.36 Looking at the subset of CO_2 emissions over which local authorities are considered to have direct influence, Cheshire East saw a reduction of 44.2% over the 2005 to 2024 period, from 2,932,500 tonnes (2005) to 1,635,700 (2024). Broken down by category,

the latter figure comprises 240,300 tonnes (14.7% of the total) from industry, 173,500 tonnes (10.6%) from the commercial sector, 48,100 (2.9%) from the public sector, 521,800 (31.9%) from the domestic sector, 597,100 (36.5%) from transport, 54,000 (3.3%) from agriculture and 800 (around 0.1%) from waste.

Figure 8.3: Greenhouse gas emissions by sector – index (2005 = 100), England

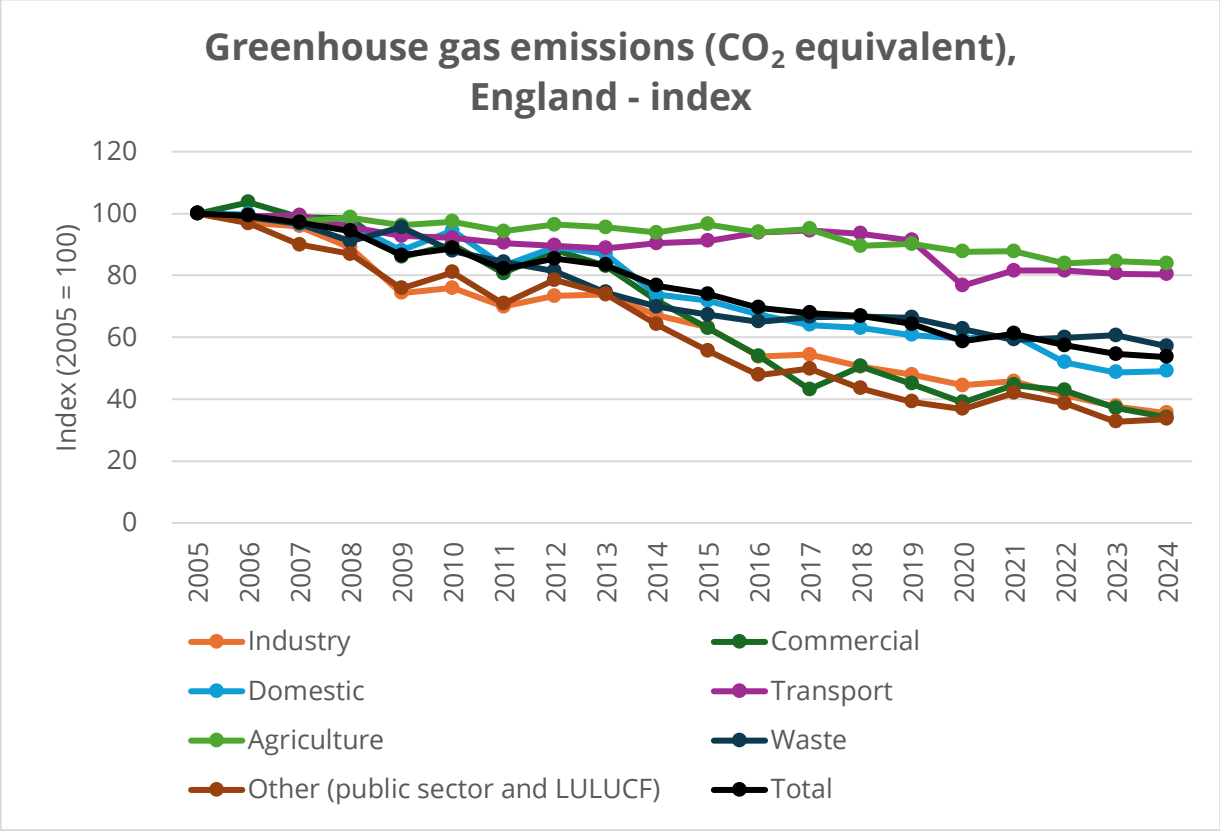
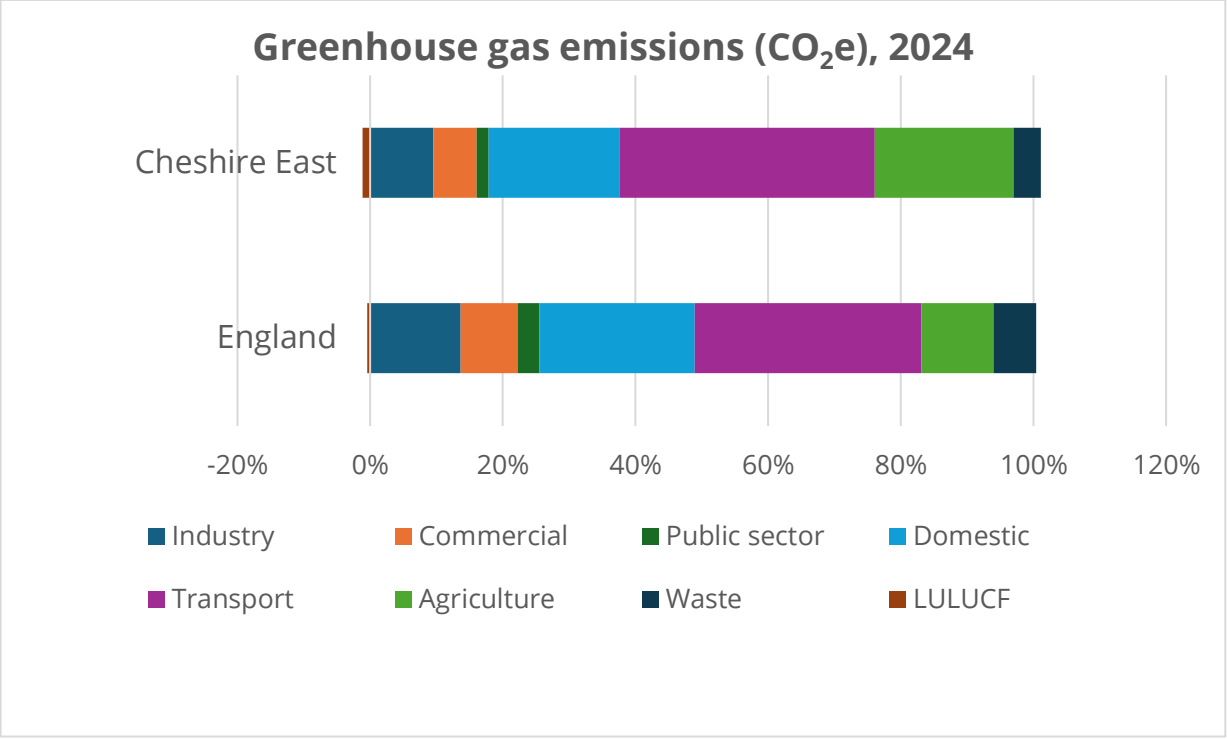


Figure 8.4: Greenhouse gas emissions by sector (% shares), 2024



Energy sources, usage and affordability

8.37 Data on business premises' and other non-residential properties' energy use is limited, at least at local authority level, but a substantial amount of official data are available on domestic energy use and heating systems. The following sections therefore focus on households' sources of energy for heating and their levels of energy consumption.

Household heating systems

8.38 The 2011 and 2021 Census data provide information on households' heating systems and the extent to which these are still fossil fuel-based or powered by renewable energy.[294] The Census evidence indicates that gas is still by far the most common form of central heating, both in Cheshire East and England. In 2021, 76.9% of the borough's households relied solely on mains gas and a further 1.7% solely on tank or bottled gas, giving a total of 78.6% (down a little from gas' 81.2% share back in 2011). This is similar to the picture for England, where 75.0% of households used gas only (74.0% mains and 1.0% tank or bottled gas).

8.39 The next most common source within Cheshire East was 2 or more types of central heating (9.1% of households were in this category), though only a very small proportion of these (0.5% of all the borough's households) said that renewable energy was one of the types of central heating they used. Again, these proportions mirror those at national (England) level (9.0% and 0.5% respectively). It is also notable that the propensity to rely on multiple types of central heating has increased significantly since 2011 (when it accounted for only 4.0% of Cheshire East's and 4.1% of England's households).

8.40 5.6% of Cheshire East households depended solely on electric central heating (the same proportion as in 2011), which is lower than the England average (8.7% in 2021 and only fractionally less in 2011, at 8.3%).

8.41 However, having (only) oil central heating was more common in Cheshire East (4.3% of whose households fell within that category as of 2021) than in England (3.2%). Dependence on oil has decreased a little since 2011, both in Cheshire East (5.2% of whose households used it for central heating at that time) and England (3.8% of households as of 2011).

8.42 Other forms of central heating had relatively few users, both in Cheshire East and nationally. In 2021, only 0.4% of Cheshire East households (and the same proportion in England) relied solely on renewable energy for central heating and 0.3% depended solely on a district or communal heat network (0.9% in England). 0.4% used only wood or another type of solid fuel, down from 0.8% in 2011 (this proportion also fell in England, from 0.7% to 0.3%).

8.43 A key concern from the 2021 Census evidence, both locally and nationally, is the lack of take-up of renewable energy (with only around 1% of households relying on

[294] 2021 Census Table TS046 (Central heating) and 2011 Census Table QS415EW (Central heating), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

renewables for part or all of their central heating), the relatively small decreases in reliance on non-renewables and the continued dependence (by around three-quarters of households) on gas. This modest rate of transition to renewables is not commensurate with the scale of the threat posed by the climate emergency.

Household energy use

8.44 Domestic energy use in Cheshire East is above the national average. As of 2024, annual mean domestic electricity consumption per meter was 3,600 kWh, or 6.0% above the England average (3,400 kWh). In the same year, the borough's annual mean domestic gas consumption per meter was 12,100 kWh, or 6.2% higher than the England figure (11,400 kWh). However, domestic energy consumption per meter, both in Cheshire East and nationally, has declined significantly over the last decade or so, as shown by the data in Tables 8.4 and 8.5.[295]

Table 8.4: Mean domestic electricity consumption per meter, 2014 to 2024

	Mean (kWh), 2014	Mean (kWh), 2019	Mean (kWh), 2024	% change, 2014-24	% change, 2014-19	% change, 2019-24
Cheshire East	4,300	3,800	3,600	-16.8%	-9.9%	-7.6%
England	4,000	3,700	3,400	-15.3%	-7.8%	-8.2%

Table 8.5: Mean gas electricity consumption per meter, 2014 to 2024

	Mean (kWh), 2014	Mean (kWh), 2019	Mean (kWh), 2024	% change, 2014-24	% change, 2014-19	% change, 2019-24
Cheshire East	15,000	14,700	12,100	-19.4%	-1.9%	-17.8%
England	13,400	13,500	11,400	-15.1%	0.9%	-15.8%

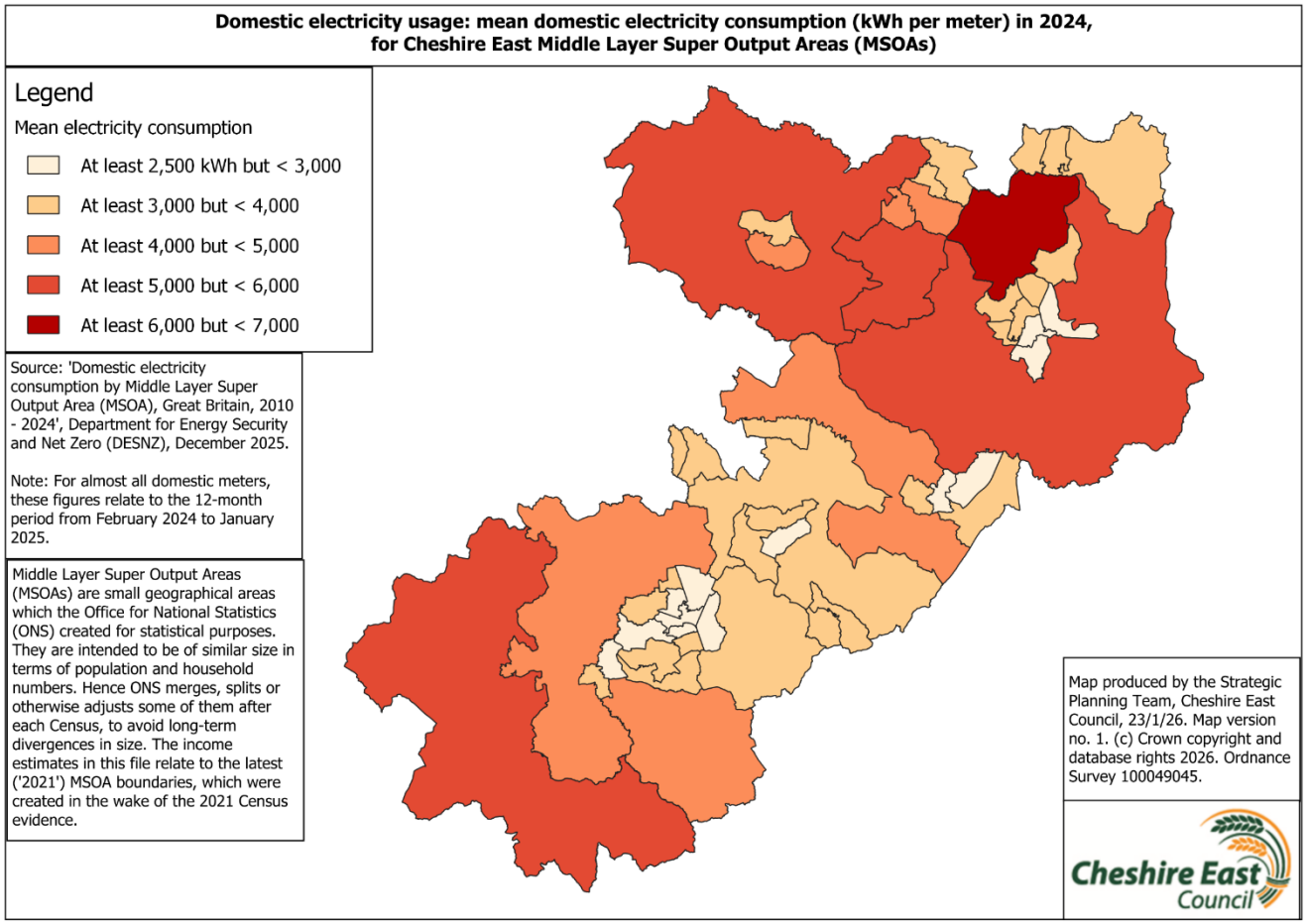
8.45 Domestic energy use varies significantly across the borough, as indicated by the available data, at MSOA level, on domestic electricity and gas consumption.[296]

[295] Sources: [1] 'Subnational electricity consumption, Great Britain, 2005-2024', 'Regional and local authority electricity consumption statistics' release, DESNZ, December 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-and-local-authority-electricity-consumption-statistics [2] 'Subnational gas consumption, Great Britain, 2005-2024', 'Regional and local authority gas consumption statistics' release, DESNZ, December 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-and-local-authority-gas-consumption-statistics

[296] Sources: [1] 'Domestic electricity consumption by MSOA, Great Britain, 2010-2024', DESNZ, December 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/lower-and-middle-super-output-areas-electricity-consumption [2] 'Domestic gas consumption by MSOA, Great Britain, 2010-2024', DESNZ, December 2025: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/lower-and-middle-super-output-areas-gas-consumption

8.46 At MSOA level, mean annual domestic electricity consumption per meter varied (as of 2024) from 2,500 kWh a year in the MSOA Cheshire East 038 (part of eastern and southeastern Crewe) to 6,900 kWh in the MSOA Cheshire East 011, which covers Prestbury, Mottram St Andrew and Adlington (see Figure 8.5). The latter figure was significantly greater than those for any of the borough's other MSOAs (the rest were all below 5,700 kWh).

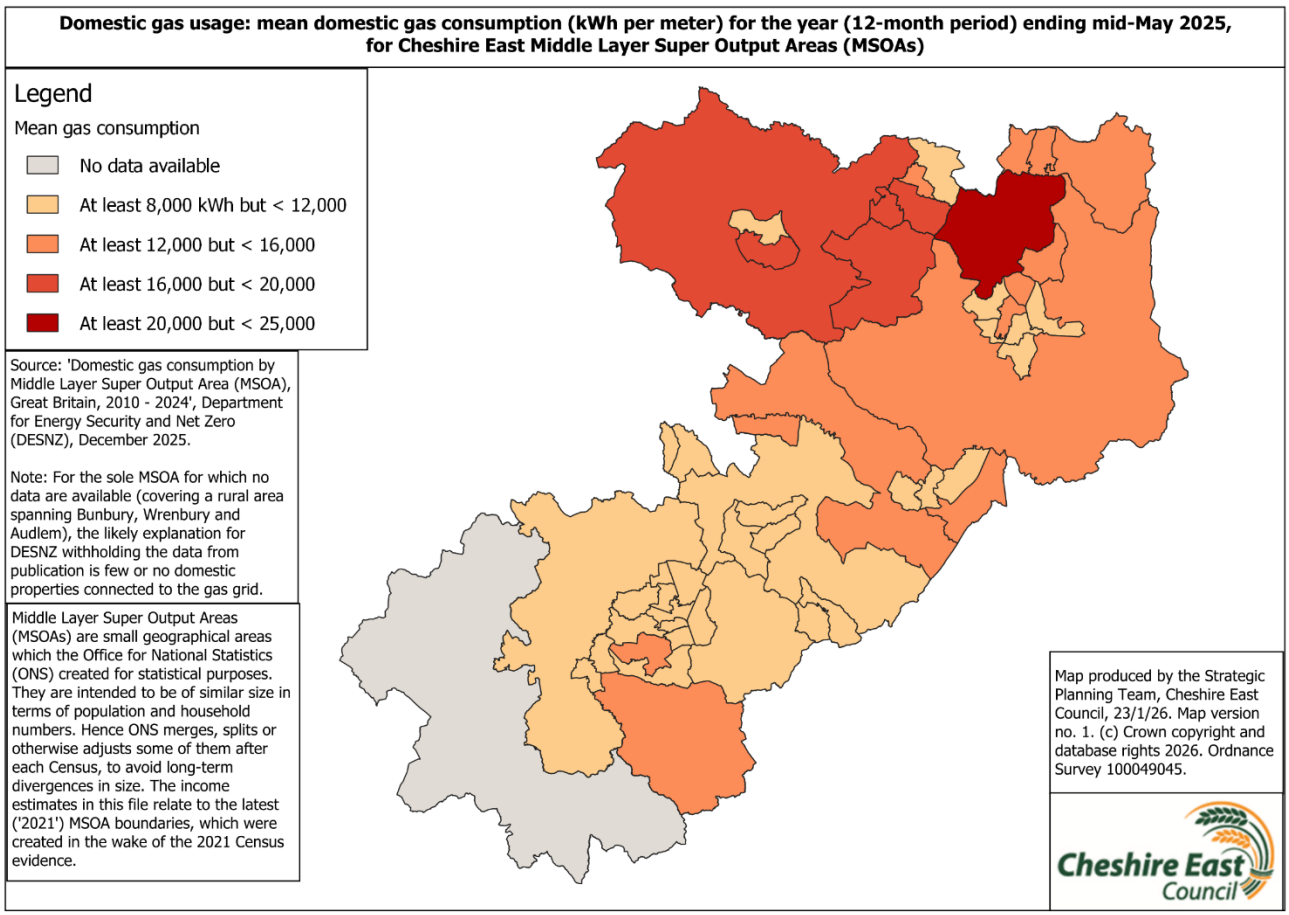
Figure 8.5: Domestic electricity consumption by Cheshire East sub-area (MSOA), 2024



8.47 Mean annual domestic gas consumption per meter (again as of 2024) was lowest (between 8,000 kWh and 9,500 kWh) in a largely rural MSOA[297] where other heating systems (most obviously oil) are likely to be more prevalent, and in 4 MSOAs that span much of Crewe (see Figure 8.6). The highest average was (as for electricity consumption) in the MSOA Cheshire East 011 (24,300 kWh). The average for Cheshire East 006 (19,400 kWh), which spans Wilmslow town centre and adjacent suburban areas like Pownall Park, was also notably higher than in the rest of the borough. In all other MSOAs, the average was below 17,700 kWh.

[297] This 'largely rural' MSOA, Cheshire East 052, stretches from Warmingham and Church Minshull in the north, across to Worleston and Burland to the west and Sound to the south, but it also includes sizeable areas on the edges of the Crewe and Nantwich conurbations: a substantial minority of Leighton parish's urban development, as well as the new Kingsley Fields housing development that lies (just) within Nantwich Town Council.

Figure 8.6: Domestic gas consumption by Cheshire East sub-area (MSOA), 2024



Fuel poverty

8.48 According to the latest data[298] for the LILEE measure of fuel poverty,[299] 8.5% of Cheshire East's households were in fuel poverty in 2024, which is below the proportions for the North West (10.2%) and England (9.9%). At small area level, however, LILEE fuel poverty rates vary significantly. The proportion is highest (between 22% and 26%) in 5 of Cheshire East's LSOAs (each covering some of the more central neighbourhoods in Crewe), compared to less than 20% (and in several cases as low as 2% or 3%) in the borough's other 239 LSOAs.

Flood risk

8.49 Given the link between climate change and extreme weather, along with Cheshire East's extensive network of rivers, canals and other bodies of water, flooding is a significant risk and challenge for the borough. The UK experienced record-breaking rainfall in 2023, with Cheshire East seeing a 49% increase between April 2023 and March 2024. In early 2025, sustained heavy rainfall led to the collapse of the

[298] 'Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2026 (2024 data)' data tables, DESNZ, May 2026: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics

[299] The LILEE (Low Income Low Energy Efficiency) indicator considers a household to be fuel poor if it is living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G as determined by the most up-to-date Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Rating (FPEER) Methodology, and its disposable income (income after housing costs and energy needs) would be below the poverty line.

Bridgewater Canal embankment in Little Bollington, resulting in the closure of several pedestrian and cycling routes.[300]

8.50 The council's latest (2024) flood risk assessment[301] identifies the main areas at risk of flooding from rivers and associated watercourses (rivers or brooks). These areas and their watercourses are:

- Bollington (River Dean)
- Church Minshull (River Weaver)
- Congleton (River Dane)
- Crewe (River Wheelock)
- Little Bollington (River Bollin and Birkin Brook)
- Nantwich (River Weaver)
- Poynton (Poynton Brook)
- Wybunbury (Wybunbury Brook)

Air quality

8.51 Since 1997, UK local authorities have been reviewing and assessing air quality in their area, to try and make sure that national air quality objectives (designed to protect public health and the environment) are achieved by the relevant deadlines. In locations where it appears the objectives are not likely to be achieved, the local authority must declare an AQMA. AQMAs can vary in size from an individual street to a much wider area.[302]

8.52 In 2023, Cheshire East had 12 AQMAs. However, in January 2025, 11 of these were revoked, following sustained improvements in the concentration of nitrogen dioxide, and the remaining AQMA was revoked at the end of that year. Consequently, there are currently no AQMAs in the borough.[303] Nevertheless, there are some ongoing issues with air quality issues at Junction 17 and Junctions 19 to 21 of the M6, as noted in the 'Capacity issues and planned investment' section of Chapter 9 of this report.

Minerals

8.53 The geology underlying the borough is diverse and contains a range of mineral resources including clay, peat, coal, hydrocarbons (oil and gas), salt, sandstone and sand, as shown in Figure 8.7.

[300] Page 19, Local Transport Plan Strategy, Cheshire East Council, April 2026: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/local_transport_plan/local_transport_plan.aspx

[301] Cheshire East Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Final Report, JBA Consulting, January 2024: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/researchand-evidence/strategic-flood-assessment/cheshire-east-strategic-flood-risk-assessment.pdf

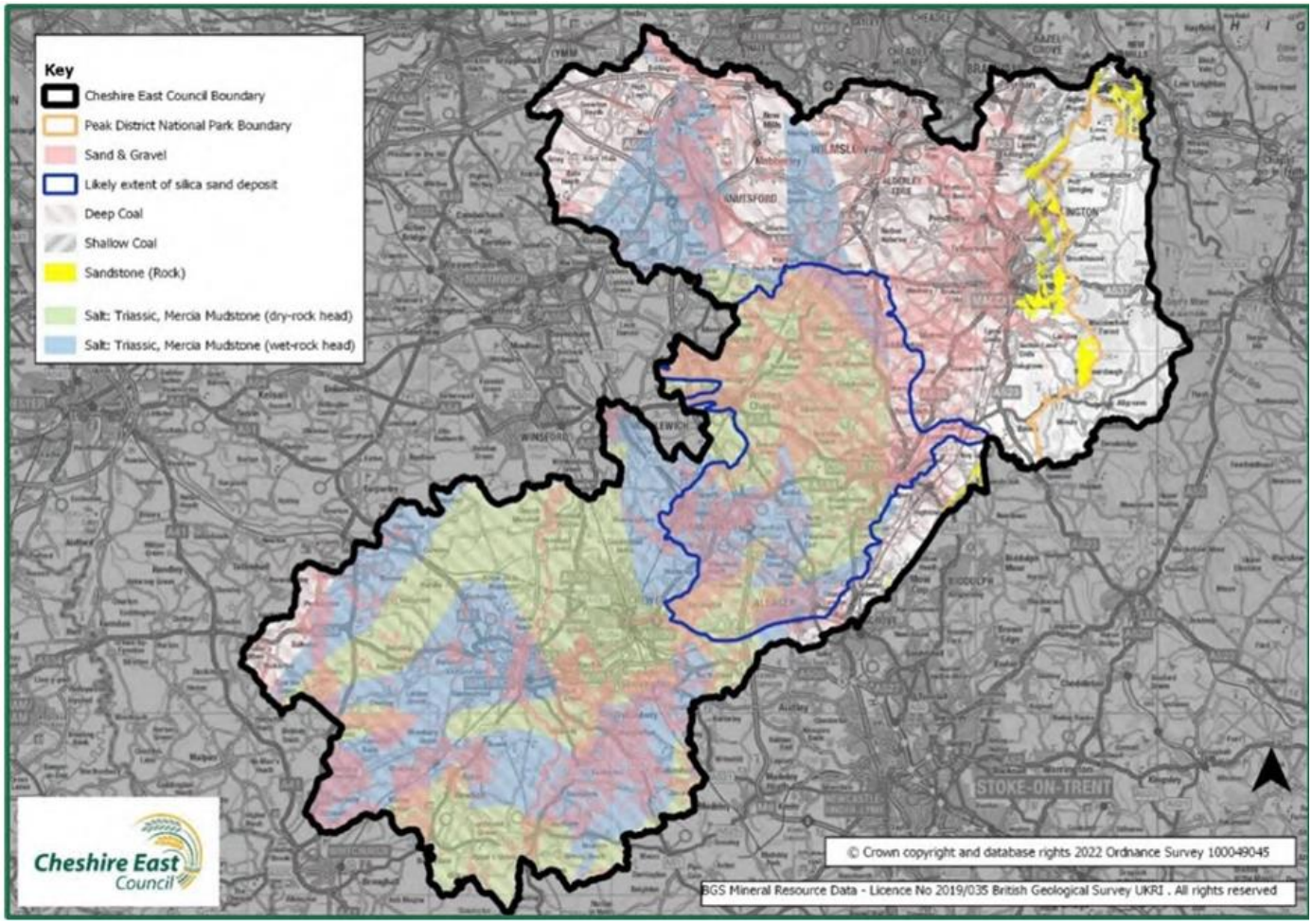
[302] AQMAs page, UK AIR website: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/

[303] Page 19, Local Transport Plan Strategy, Cheshire East Council, April 2026: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/local_transport_plan/local_transport_plan.aspx

8.54 Several mineral resources within Cheshire East have limited future potential. Clay resources are present but are not considered likely to be economically viable. Peat occurs in several locations, but national policy prevents the allocation of new extraction sites. Coal resources remain beneath much of the borough but are largely deep underground, there are no active coal workings, and national policy opposes new coal extraction. Previous oil and gas exploration licences have expired, and national policy supports limiting future fossil fuel development.

8.55 Salt is one of the borough's most important mineral resources. Cheshire accounts for around 85% of UK salt production, with brine extraction taking place beneath Cheshire East and processing centred at Middlewich. Salt is identified as a critical mineral and is essential to the chemical, pharmaceutical and food industries. The local plan will therefore need to ensure a sufficient long-term supply. Former salt caverns also provide nationally important gas storage facilities and may have future potential for hydrogen and carbon storage technologies.

Figure 8.7: Cheshire East mineral resource overview (map)



8.56 The borough's silica sand resource is nationally significant, providing almost 44% of England's production in 2018. 4 operational sand quarries remain in the borough, with an estimated reserve of 12.29 million tonnes. National policy requires at least 10

years of reserves at silica sand sites, or 15 years where significant capital investment is required.

Current minerals and permitted reserves

Permitted mineral extraction sites

8.57 At the end of 2025 there were 18 permitted mineral extraction sites within Cheshire East. The 18 permitted sites comprise the following mineral types: peat (2 sites), salt (brine) (one site), silica (industrial sand) (5 sites), construction sand (one site), and sandstone (9 sites). Table 8.6 shows the permitted mineral sites in Cheshire East and provides a commentary on site status and planning permission.

Table 8.6: Permitted mineral sites in Cheshire East

Site name	Mineral type	Commentary
White Moss Quarry, near Alsager	Peat	The site has an extant planning permission that allows peat extraction to 2028. The site was assumed to be inactive in 2025.
Lindow Moss, near Wilmslow[304]	Peat	The commercial extraction of peat cessation is linked to a planning permission for a small housing development which was permitted. This means that peat extraction can only take place if it is required for restoration purposes, that is, rewetting of the peat bogs.
Warmingham Brinefield, near Middlewich	Salt (brine)	The brinefields were active for the extraction of salt by controlled solution brine mining in 2025.
Arclid Quarry, Arclid, near Sandbach	Silica (industrial) sand	Mainly industrial sand with small quantities of construction sand. The site was active in 2025.
Bent Farm Quarry, Congleton	Silica (industrial) sand	Mainly industrial sand with small quantities of construction sand. The site was active in 2025.
Eaton Hall Quarry	Silica (industrial) sand	Mainly industrial sand with small quantities of construction sand. The site was active in 2025.

[304] The Section 106 agreement on the housing permission (15/0016M) says in Schedule 1 that there shall be no commencement of development on the housing site until they have commenced development on the restoration permission. Additionally, condition 1 of the permission on the peat site says that there shall be no further peat extraction within the application site other than where required for the implementation of the Restoration Scheme.

Site name	Mineral type	Commentary
Rudheath Lodge Quarry, near Allostock	Silica (industrial) sand	Mainly industrial sand with small quantities of construction sand. The site was active in 2025.
Somerford Farm Quarry, Somerford	Silica (industrial) sand	Mainly industrial sand with small quantities of construction sand. The site did not commence during 2025.
White Moss Quarry, near Alsager	Construction sand	Due to the poor sand quality this site is excluded from the overall sand reserves in the borough. The site was assumed to be inactive during 2025.
Bridestone Quarry, Congleton	Sandstone	Building/dimension/ornamental stone. The site was active in 2025.
Bridge Quarry, Kerridge, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building/dimension/ornamental stone. The site was active in 2025.
Endon Quarry, Kerridge, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building stone and aggregate. The site was active in 2025.
Marksend Quarry, Kerridge, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building stone and aggregate. The site was active in 2025.
Gawsworth and Rough Hey Quarry, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Aggregate. The sites were inactive in 2025.
Lee Hills (also known as Croker Farm Quarry) Macclesfield	Sandstone	Aggregate. The site was assumed to be inactive in 2025.
Ralph Henshaw Rainow, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building stone and aggregate. The site was active in 2025.
Sycamore Quarry Kerridge, Macclesfield	Sandstone	Building stone and aggregate. The site was active in 2025.

Mineral reserves, supply and demand

8.58 The Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA) provides an assessment of the demand for and supply of aggregates within Cheshire East. Aggregates include sand and crushed rock. The LAA contains 3 main elements and is updated annually:

- a forecast of demand for aggregates
- an analysis of supply options
- an assessment of the balance between supply and demand

8.59 It concludes by highlighting whether there is currently a shortage or surplus of supply in the minerals planning authority (MPA) area and, if a shortage, how this is being addressed.

8.60 The geology of Cheshire East provides for the following primary aggregate resources:

- sand and gravel (fluvial, glacial, glacial-fluvial and aeolian (wind-blown) sediments)
- carboniferous sandstones of the Millstone Grit Group

Aggregate sand

8.61 Annual sales from Cheshire East have continued to fall steadily from historic levels recorded in 2014. The landbank position on 31 December 2024, based on a 10-year sales average and the preferred annual provision rate of between 4.6 and 5.8 years, is below national policy requirements. There is an estimated aggregate reserve of 1.61 million tonnes at the end of 2024. This reflects wider regional trends of declining reserves and increasing reliance on imported aggregates.

8.62 The assessment of the balance between supply and demand, as shown in the latest 2025 LAA (2024 data),[305] indicates that there is a shortfall in permitted reserves of sand and gravel to meet the annual provision rate up to 2044 of about 5.3 million tonnes.

8.63 It is envisaged that the new local plan will allocate specific site allocations for sand and gravel extraction, which, if they were granted planning permission, would address the identified shortfall in permitted reserves and would maintain production capacity to meet the annual provision rate.

Crushed rock aggregate

8.64 For crushed rock supply, the assessment of the balance between supply and demand indicates that there is a significant shortfall in permitted crushed rock reserves within the Cheshire sub-region[306] to meet the annual provision rate to 2044. Whilst the borough does have a small, permitted sandstone reserve (estimated at 4.84 million tonnes), the stone is used for supplying the local building stone market rather than crushed rock market. Cheshire East and the Cheshire sub-region rely on 100% imported crushed rock. The new local plan will need to demonstrate cooperation between MPAs, utilising, where appropriate, statements of common ground that the continuation of this existing crushed rock supply position is possible and acceptable from the relevant source MPA areas. The council intends to include an appropriate crushed rock policy in the new local plan, which supports the potential to replace

[305] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/spatial-planning/researchand-evidence/minerals-and-waste/laa-2025-2024-data-final.pdf

[306] The Cheshire sub-regional area comprises Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council.

imported crushed rock with locally generated supplies, should there be suitable interest from the aggregates industry and market to deliver this during the plan period.

Future minerals requirements

8.65 The latest LAA 2025 (2024 data) indicates a shortfall in the demand and supply of aggregate sand of 5.29 million tonnes between 2025 and 2044. For crushed rock aggregate, the shortfall in demand and supply for the Cheshire sub-region is 44.68 million tonnes between 2025 and 2044. The council will continue to plan for the demand and supply of its industrial minerals, silica sand and salt (controlled solution brine mining) in accordance with NPPF requirements.

Waste

8.66 The NPPF identifies waste reduction as an important element of sustainable development and climate change mitigation, and the National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW) requires waste planning authorities to move waste up the waste hierarchy, provide an appropriate range of waste management facilities, and support sustainable communities through effective waste management.

8.67 To inform the new Local Plan, Cheshire East commissioned a Waste Needs Assessment (WNA) in 2023. The assessment examined current and future waste arisings, existing waste management capacity, potential capacity gaps, and the ability of facilities both within and outside the borough to meet future needs.

Waste streams and current waste management facilities

8.68 The 2023 WNA considered the following waste streams:

- local authority collected waste (municipal/household)
- commercial and industrial
- construction, demolition and excavation
- hazardous
- low level radioactive
- agricultural
- wastewater

8.69 The 2023 WNA found that over 1.2 million tonnes of waste arose in the Cheshire East plan area in 2021, comprising the following principal waste streams: local authority collected waste (LACW) 203,488 tonnes (17%), commercial, demolition and excavation waste (CDEW) 579,569 tonnes (58%), commercial and industrial waste (C and I) 246,604 tonnes (21%), and hazardous waste (Haz) 50,883 tonnes (4%).

8.70 The 2023 WNA concluded that there is sufficient existing capacity within Cheshire East to manage recycling and composting, inert recovery and hazardous waste up to 2041. It also found that no additional provision is required for low-level radioactive waste, agricultural waste or wastewater during this period.

8.71 The main issue identified was a future shortfall in residual waste management capacity, particularly for LACW and C and I waste that cannot be recycled. Earlier assumptions that some of this need could be met through landfill capacity at Kinderton Lodge are no longer valid because the site no longer benefits from planning permission. However, the assessment indicates that remaining capacity elsewhere in the North West may be sufficient to accommodate future needs. A shortfall was also identified in 'other recovery' capacity, which may potentially be met through facilities elsewhere in the region, including energy-from-waste plants. Further discussions with neighbouring authorities will be required as the plan progresses.

Likely future waste needs

8.72 Despite the capacity issues identified in the 2023 WNA, the priority remains to move waste higher up the waste hierarchy by increasing recycling, composting and other recovery methods, helping to reduce residual waste in line with government expectations. New waste management facilities that support these objectives, such as recycling, composting and anaerobic digestion facilities, should therefore continue to be supported. An updated WNA will be prepared to extend forecasts to at least 2045 and reassess future capacity requirements.

9 Transport and infrastructure

Strategy and policy background

9.1 Transport and infrastructure are central to the delivery of sustainable growth and the creation of prosperous, well-connected communities. National planning policy requires local plans to support patterns of development that make the most effective use of existing and planned infrastructure, reduce the need to travel, and maximise opportunities for active travel and public transport use. The NPPF emphasises that significant development should be focused on locations that are, or can be made, sustainable through limiting the need for travel and offering genuine transport choices. It also requires planning policies to promote sustainable transport, improve accessibility, facilitate economic growth, and make sure that development contributes to the provision of infrastructure needed to support communities and businesses.

9.2 The transport and infrastructure agenda is increasingly linked to wider objectives relating to climate change, health and productivity. National policy promotes a shift towards walking, cycling and public transport, while supporting the delivery of strategic transport networks, digital infrastructure, energy infrastructure and utilities necessary to accommodate future growth. Local plans are expected to be informed by an understanding of existing infrastructure capacity, constraints and investment programmes, and to identify the infrastructure required to support proposed development. This includes transport networks, highways, public transport services, broadband and telecommunications, utilities, education, health facilities and green infrastructure.

Local Transport Plan

9.3 The Local Transport Plan Strategy[307] vision is "to provide a well-connected, safe and sustainable transport network, accessible to all, that supports a healthy, prosperous Cheshire East". The strategy identifies 4 underlying aims:

- growing the economy: to support Cheshire East's economy by providing a resilient, connected and accessible network that supports education, housing, business development and employment opportunities
- improving the wellbeing of our community: to improve health, wellbeing and inclusion in Cheshire East by supporting people to get to where they need to safely
- reducing environmental impacts: to reduce the impact of transport on the environment in Cheshire East, managing the effect on climate change, air quality and biodiversity

[307] Local Plan Transport Strategy, Cheshire East Council, April 2026: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/public-transport/local-transport-plan/ltp-strategy.pdf

- improving connections for all: to provide transport choices for all who travel in and around Cheshire East and provide attractive alternatives to private cars

Current transport service provision and networks

Road network

9.4 The M6 runs along the western side of the borough, connecting the area to Staffordshire, Birmingham and the rest of the West Midlands conurbation, Lancashire, Cumbria and Scotland. Stretching across the northwestern part of Cheshire East, the M56 provides access to Greater Manchester, Merseyside and north Wales. Most of Cheshire East's towns are within a few miles of one of these motorways.

9.5 The motorway and A road network collectively provide good connectivity between each of the Cheshire East towns and to major towns and cities in neighbouring local authorities, including Chester, Winsford, Northwich, Warrington, Buxton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, Whitchurch and Wrexham. However, the rural, sparsely populated character and topography of the eastern fringe (east of Congleton and Macclesfield) and the southwest area of the borough (west and south of Nantwich) inevitably impact on the length of journeys into the Peak District or Shropshire.

Rail services

9.6 As shown in Figure 9.1, the borough contains a total of 22 railway stations, covering all but 2 of its towns and several of its larger villages. Its most strategically important station, Crewe, is at the junction of 6 main railway lines. Crewe provides access to the West Coast Main Line (London to Scotland) and TransPennine services. There are direct services from Crewe to Britain's major cities, including Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Birmingham, London, Cardiff, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

9.7 Crewe is also Cheshire East's busiest railway station, with 3.4 million entries and exits (and 1.4 million interchanges) in the year ending March 2025. Macclesfield and Wilmslow (with 1.5 and 1.2 million entries and exits respectively, in 2024/25) also serve large volumes of travellers[308] and both lie on a direct line to London. Knutsford, with around 0.4 million entries and exits in 2024/25, is next largest.

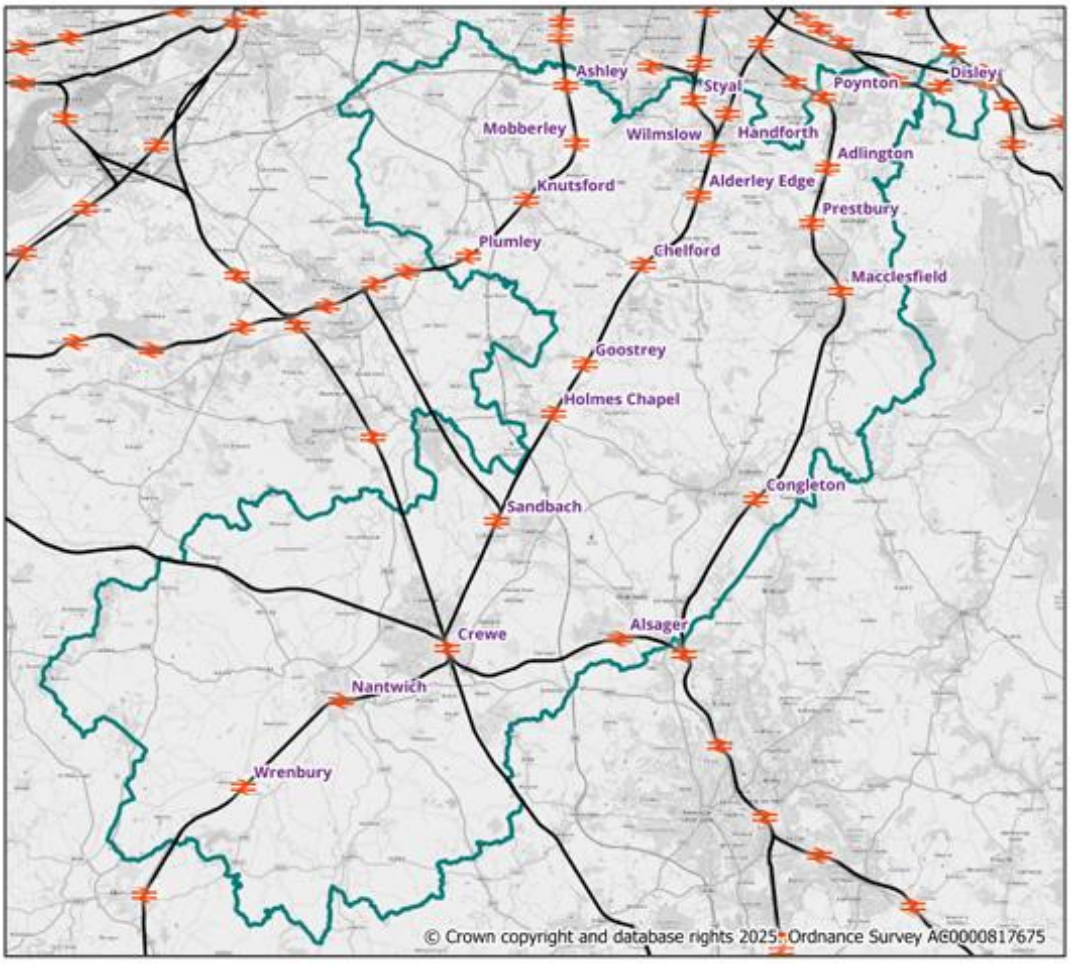
9.8 However, the towns of Middlewich and Bollington have no railway station. As for smaller settlements, whilst those in the north of the borough are relatively well provided for, Wrenbury is the only village in the southern half of Cheshire East with a station.

9.9 Rail connectivity between some of the borough's major settlements also has some constraints. Knutsford (on the Chester to Manchester line) and has no direct

[308] Table 1410 (Passenger entries, exits and interchanges by station, Great Britain, annual data, April 2024 to March 2025), 'Estimate of station usage' statistical release, Office of Rail and Road, December 2025: https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage

connection to any other Cheshire East towns. Disley (on the Buxton to Manchester line) has no direct connection to any other station in Cheshire East.

Figure 9.1: Rail network in Cheshire East



9.10 In addition, the accessibility of local railway stations can be an issue, even for residents in some of the settlements with a station. Some stations, for example in Sandbach, are on the edge of the settlement and are consequently a relatively long walk or a bus journey away from the town centre. Access for disabled residents is also a challenge in some locations: access to platforms at many Cheshire East stations is possible only by steps (no ramp or lift).

Bus services

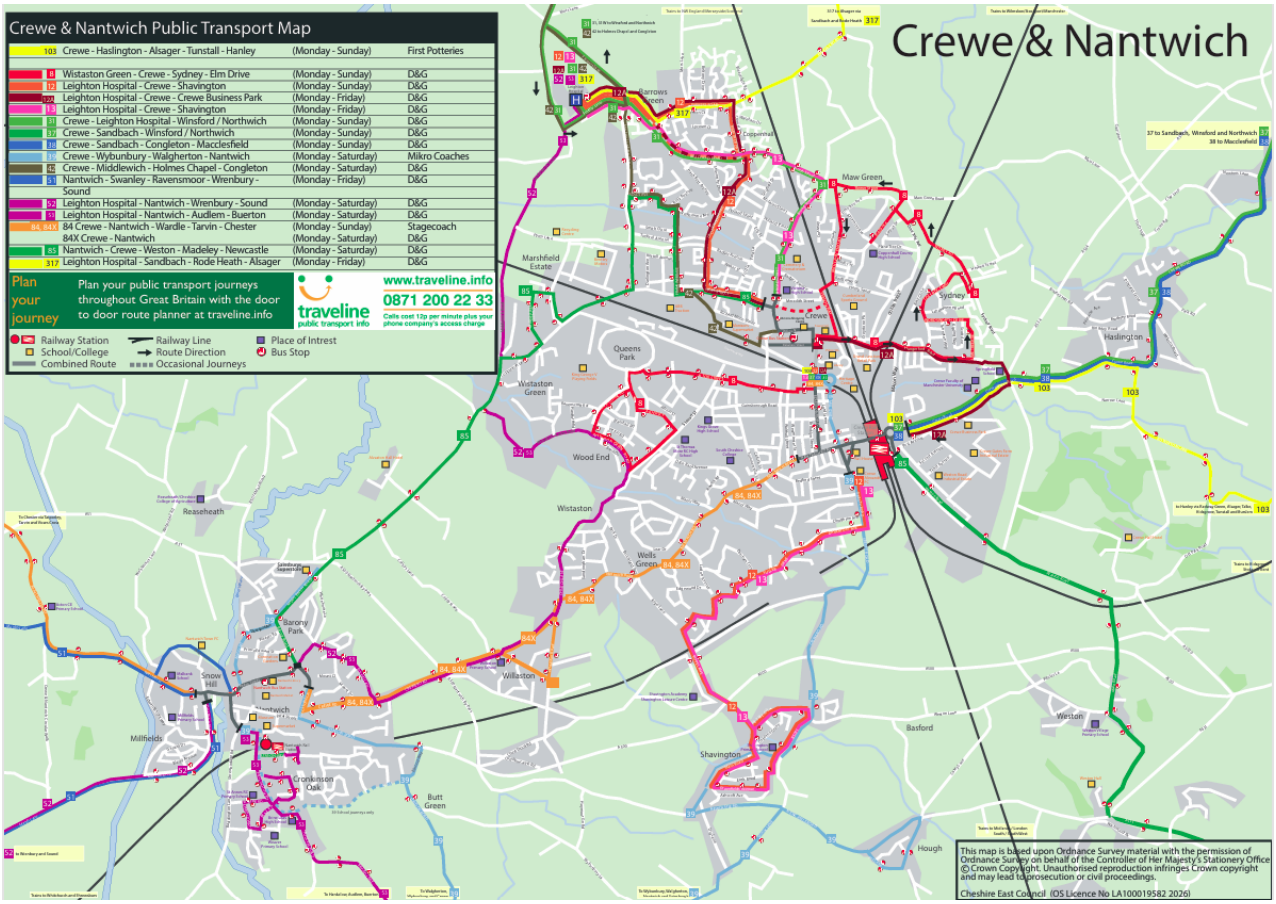
9.11 Regular bus routes serve all the borough's towns and enable direct travel between individual towns and most of the other main settlements within a few miles' radius. There are direct routes to Leighton Hospital from the surrounding towns of Crewe, Nantwich, Sandbach, Middlewich and even from Alsager and Congleton. In addition, these bus routes provide direct connections between some of Cheshire East's settlements to towns in neighbouring authorities (for example, linking Poynton to Stockport, Crewe and Alsager to Stoke-on-Trent, and Macclesfield to Buxton.) Figures

9.2 to 9.7[309] show the routes currently covered by these local bus services. Bus service provision at weekends has recently (in 2024) undergone a series of improvements. In Crewe, the relocation and redevelopment of the bus station has helped to make public transport within the town more accessible.

9.12 85% of Cheshire East residents can reach a town by bus within 40 minutes during weekday morning peak travel times. Following the weekend service changes in 2024, 54% can do likewise on Sundays.

9.13 Nevertheless, there is a lack of direct connectivity between some towns and (some of) their closer neighbours. In particular, there are no direct bus routes from Congleton or Middlewich to Knutsford.

Figure 9.2: Bus network in Cheshire East: Crewe and Nantwich area



[309] Bus route maps, Cheshire East Council (page images accessed in August 2026): https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public-transport/bus-and-rail-maps

Figure 9.3: Bus network in Cheshire East: Alsager, Congleton and Sandbach area

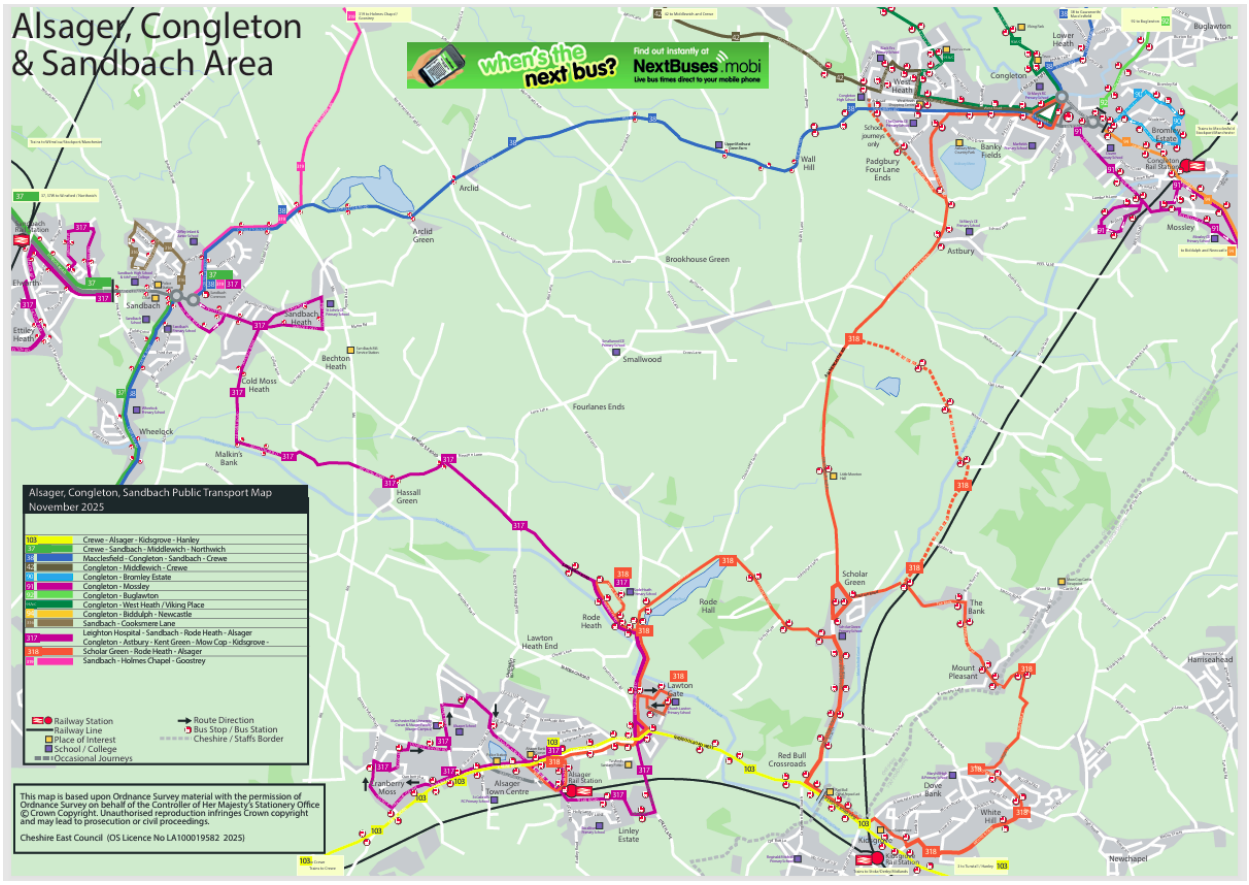


Figure 9.4: Bus network in Cheshire East: Macclesfield area

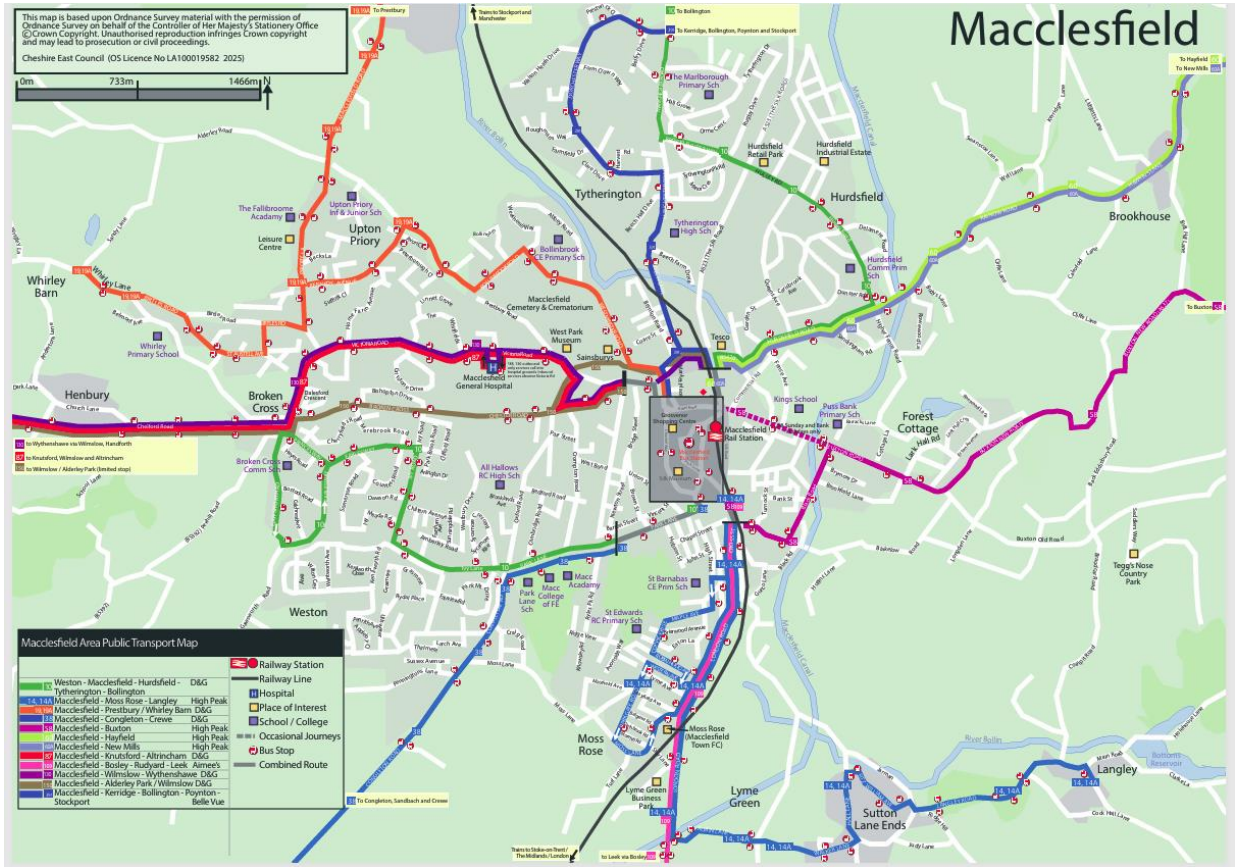


Figure 9.5: Bus network in Cheshire East: Middlewich area

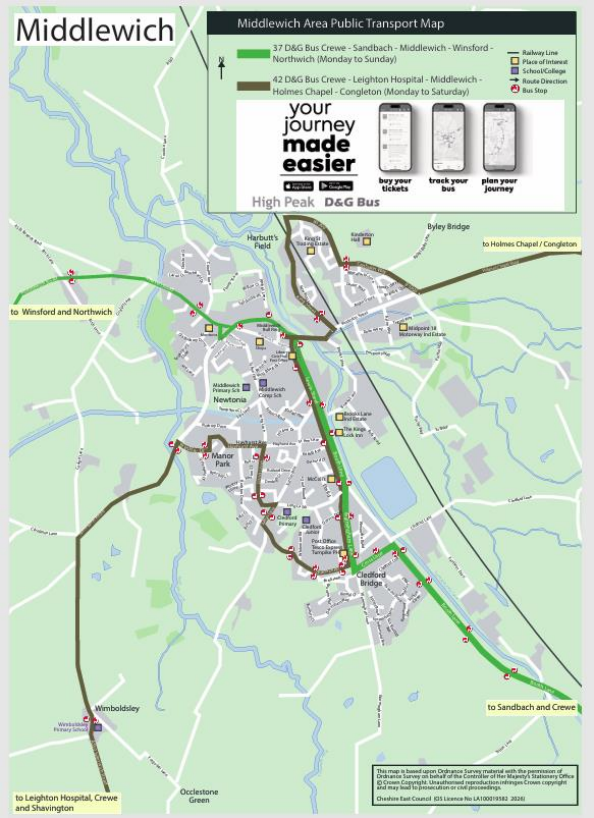


Figure 9.6: Bus network in Cheshire East: Poynton area

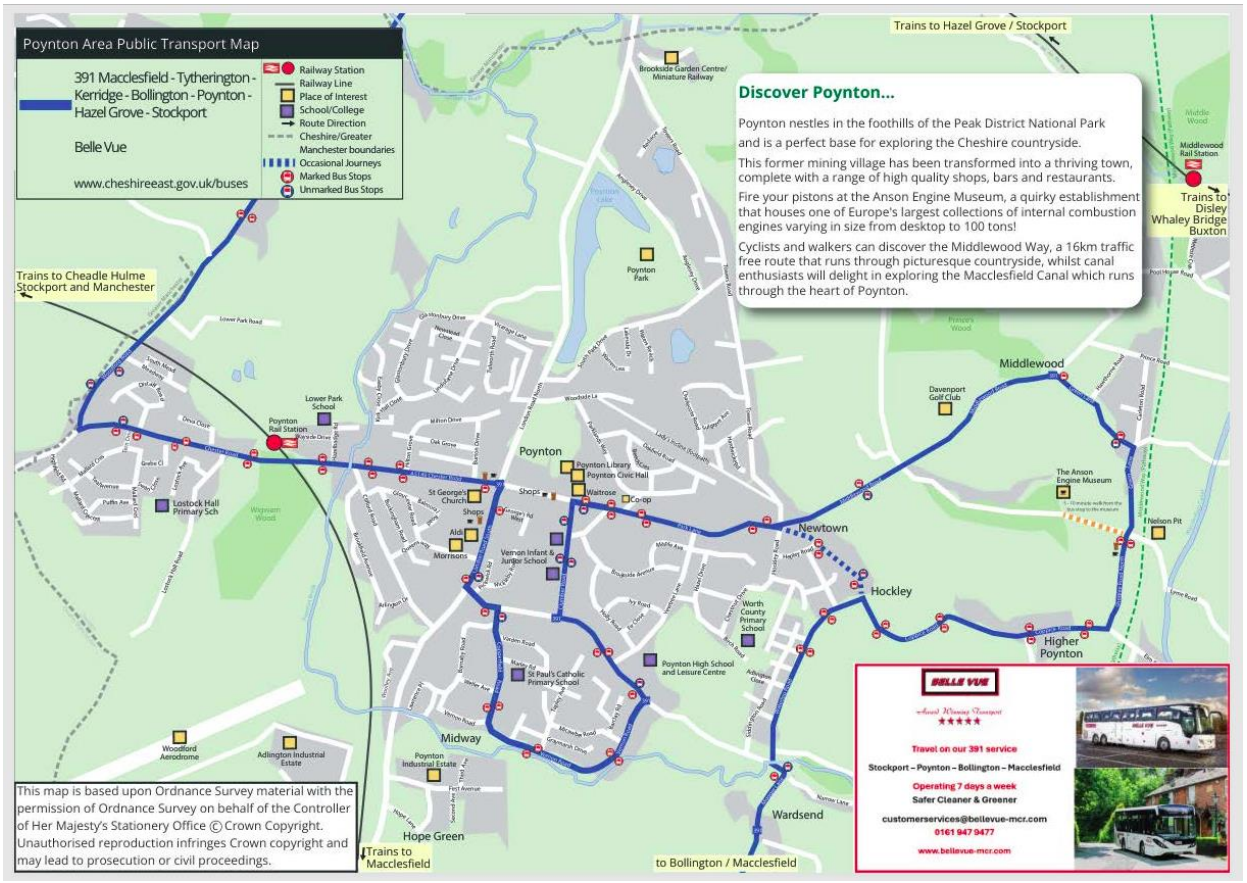
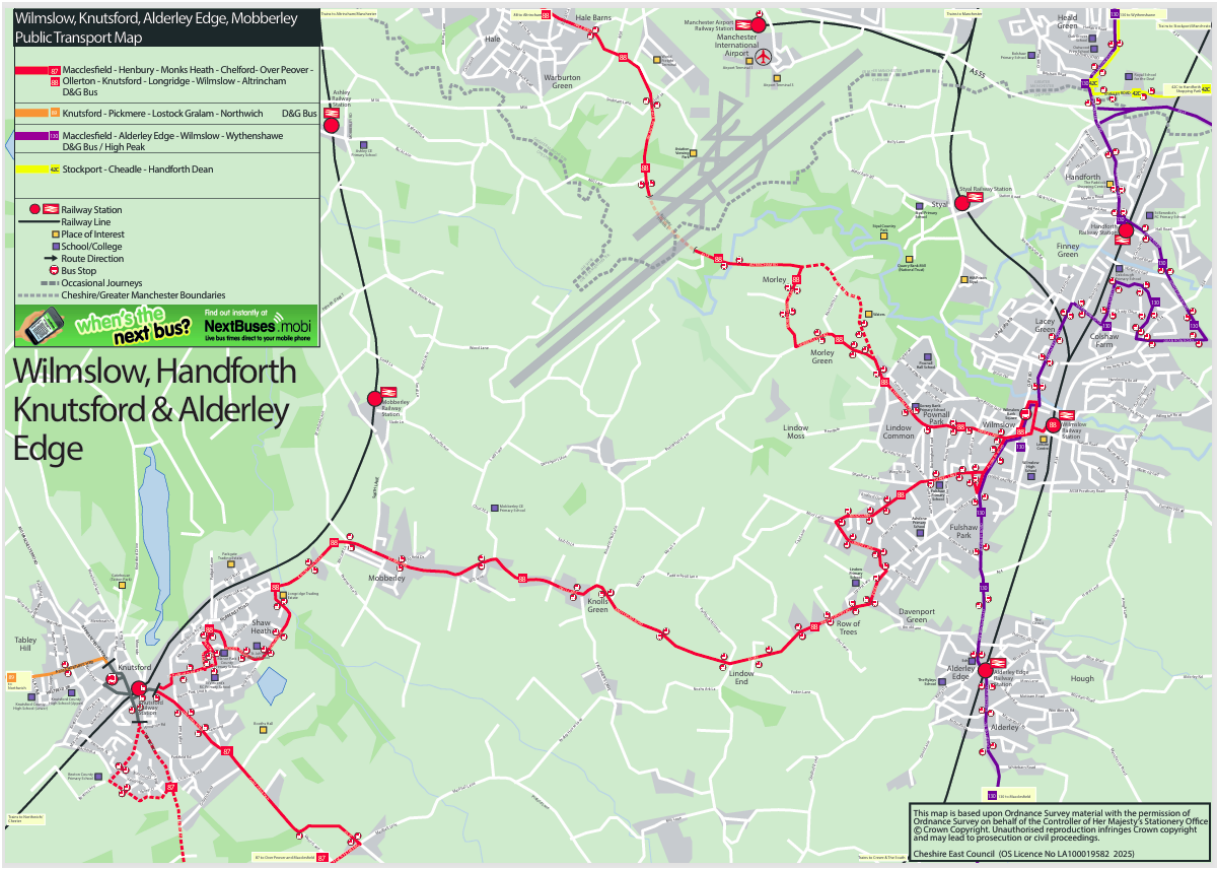


Figure 9.7: Bus network in Cheshire East: Wilmslow and Knutsford area



Air transport

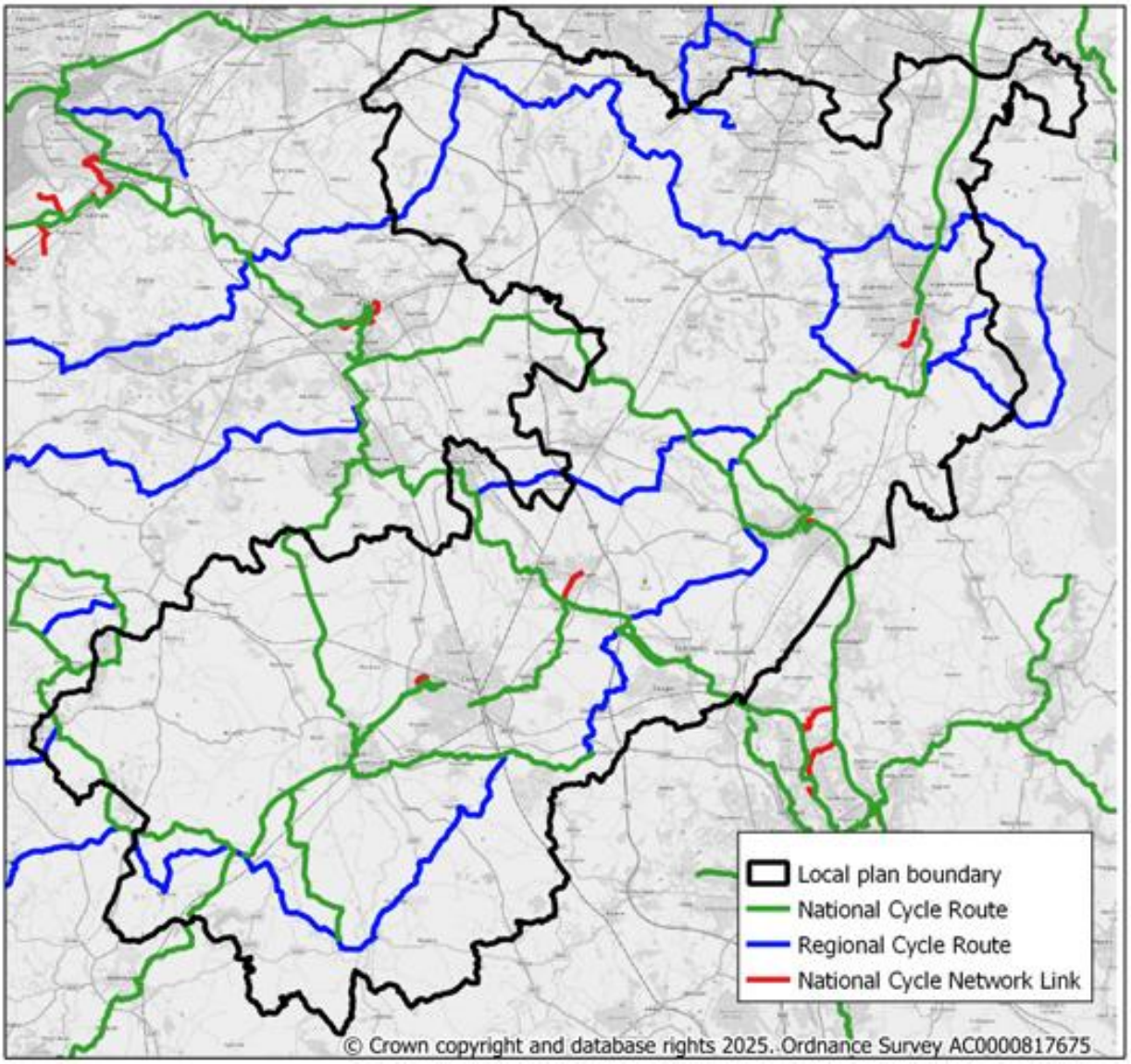
9.14 Air travel is also relatively accessible, with Manchester Airport located on the edge of the borough (see Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3 of this report). The motorway network provides access to airports in Liverpool and Birmingham.

Cycle routes

9.15 Figure 9.8 shows the extent of the national and regional cycle network across Cheshire East.[310] As the map shows, several of the borough's towns are linked by these routes, but some gaps exist. For example, Alsager, Knutsford and Wilmslow are bypassed altogether and there is no continuous route across Crewe.

[310] Sources: [1] https://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/national-cycle-network/ [2] Cycle routes on the Cheshire East Council internal GIS mapping system. Data collected in February 2026.

Figure 9.8: Cycle routes (national and regional) across Cheshire East



Travel methods and patterns

Car/van ownership

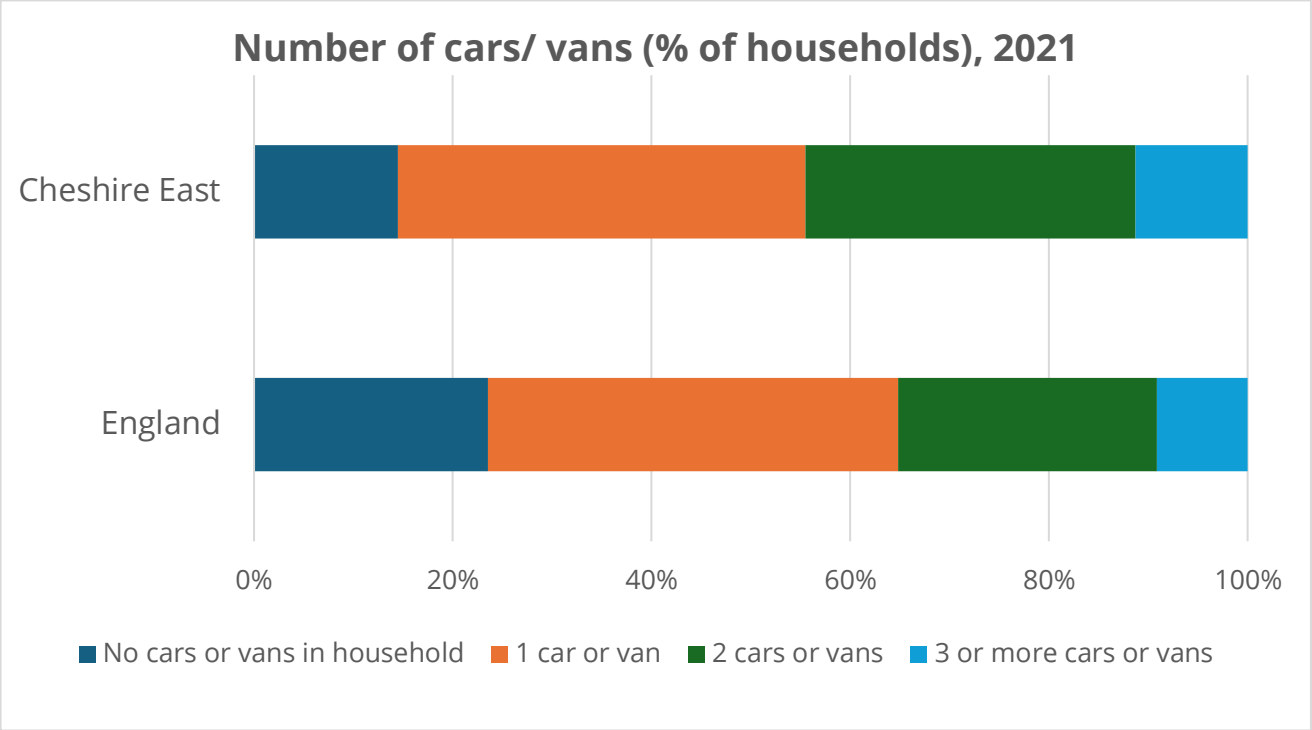
9.16 The 2021 Census results indicate a slight increase (since 2011) in the number of cars or vans that households have, both nationally (in England as a whole) and in Cheshire East.[311] In 2021, the proportion of Cheshire East households with no car or van access was 14.5% (down from 16.1% in 2011) and the proportion with one car/van decreased very marginally (from 41.1% to 41.0%). However, 33.3% reported having 2 cars/vans

[311] The 2021 Census question was "In total, how many cars or vans are owned, or available for use, by members of this household?" The references in this report to phrases like car/van 'access' or 'having' a car/van are intended as catch-all terms to cover ownership **and** all the other forms of access that the Census question refers to.

(up slightly from 32.8% in 2011) and the percentage with 3 or more cars/ vans rose from 10.0% to 11.3%.[312]

9.17 Car/van access remains more prevalent in Cheshire East than in England (see Figure 9.9). In England, 23.5% of households had no available car/van (down from 25.8% in 2011) and only 9.1% had 3 or more (though this was an increase from 7.4% in 2011).

Figure 9.9: Car/van access (% of households), Cheshire East and England, 2021



9.18 Unsurprisingly, car/van access was rather more common in Cheshire East's rural areas (see Table 9.1a),[313] where only 7.2% of households had no such access (against 19.0% in urban areas) and 16.0% had 3 or more cars/vans (compared to only 8.4% for urban areas).

9.19 In keeping with this, the 9 settlements with the highest proportions of households lacking car/van access (more than 12%) were all towns, with this proportion exceeding 20% in Crewe and Handforth. At the other end of the spectrum, the proportion was below 8% in Prestbury (6.5%), Goostrey (6.8%) and Mobberley (6.9%). Conversely, Prestbury was the only settlement where more than one-sixth of households had 3 or more cars/vans available (the Prestbury figure was 21.1%). Prestbury and Bunbury ranked highest of all settlements for the proportion of households with access to 2 or more cars/vans (61.3% and 58.7% respectively, compared to less than 40% in Crewe, Handforth, Macclesfield and Nantwich).

[312] 2021 Census Table TS045 (Car or van availability) and 2011 Census Table QS416EW (Car or van availability), NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

[313] Figures based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

9.20 Table 9.1a includes the car/van access statistics for the main settlements (20 out of 24) that can be reasonably fitted to ONS LSOAs. Table 9.1b shows the equivalent figures for the other 4 settlements that are within the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy. The figures for these 4 settlements are presented separately to those for the other main 20 settlements, given that they are defined in terms of OAs, rather than LSOAs.

Table 9.1a: Car/van access (% of households), 2021

Area name	% (of households) with no cars or vans	% with 1 car or van	% with 2 cars or vans	% with 3 or more cars or vans
England	23.5%	41.3%	26.1%	9.1%
Cheshire East, of which:	14.5%	41.0%	33.3%	11.3%
Rural areas	7.2%	36.6%	40.3%	16.0%
Urban areas	19.0%	43.6%	29.0%	8.4%
Alderley Edge	12.0%	42.8%	32.6%	12.6%
Alsager	12.9%	40.2%	35.8%	11.1%
Bollington	10.1%	45.9%	34.6%	9.4%
Chelford	9.8%	37.1%	40.8%	12.3%
Congleton	13.7%	41.3%	34.1%	11.0%
Crewe	23.0%	43.6%	25.6%	7.9%
Disley	10.3%	41.1%	36.5%	12.1%
Handforth	20.9%	44.0%	27.7%	7.4%
Haslington	9.5%	40.6%	36.0%	14.0%
Holmes Chapel	10.2%	39.7%	38.7%	11.4%
Knutsford	14.7%	40.3%	35.5%	9.5%
Macclesfield	19.6%	44.3%	28.1%	8.0%
Middlewich	12.3%	39.5%	36.2%	12.0%
Mobberley	6.9%	38.5%	38.8%	15.8%
Nantwich	18.1%	44.8%	29.2%	7.8%
Poynton	10.5%	39.4%	39.2%	10.9%
Prestbury	6.5%	32.2%	40.2%	21.1%
Sandbach	12.4%	42.2%	35.2%	10.2%

Area name	% (of households) with no cars or vans	% with 1 car or van	% with 2 cars or vans	% with 3 or more cars or vans
Shavington	9.4%	43.5%	36.2%	10.9%
Wilmslow	11.8%	42.1%	35.8%	10.3%
Other settlements[314]	6.0%	33.7%	41.0%	19.3%

Table 9.1b: Car/van access (% of households) (OA-based settlement areas), 2021

Area name	% (of households) with no cars or vans	% with 1 car or van	% with 2 cars or vans	% with 3 or more cars or vans
Audlem	8.1%	44.0%	36.1%	11.7%
Bunbury	8.5%	32.8%	42.6%	16.0%
Goostrey	6.8%	39.2%	39.4%	14.6%
Wrenbury	10.0%	41.8%	34.6%	13.6%

9.21 The geographical variations in car/van access reflect differences in rurality, affluence and to some extent public transport provision. Higher rates of access to cars/vans tend to occur in settlements that are more rural (where alternative transport options are likely to be more limited), or relatively affluent, or both. Lack of such access is relatively common in urban locations, particularly larger settlements that have deprived areas.

9.22 The COVID-19 lockdown, and the resulting restrictions on and risks of using public transport, affected households' available means of travel in early 2021 (when the last Census took place), making many of them more dependent on private vehicles. However, whilst COVID-19 would account for increased **use** of cars/vans, it does not seem such a plausible explanation for the growth in car/van **access** between 2011 and 2021 (particularly as the lockdown conditions would have limited the potential for producing or buying/selling vehicles). Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the increase in car/van access predated COVID-19 and that (consequently) it is part of a longer-term trend, rather a short-term change. This is a significant concern, given the critical need to address climate change, air pollution and traffic congestion, through increased use of more environmentally sustainable forms of transport.

Vehicle usage

9.23 Whilst data on levels and trends in access to cars and vans gives an indication of the potential for households to travel by road in their own private vehicles, it does not necessarily reflect levels of actual vehicle usage and so does not provide a measure of

[314] 'Other settlements' means the areas of Cheshire East not covered by the 20 settlements listed in this table.

road traffic volumes, congestion or road traffic-related greenhouse gas emissions. It is therefore important to consider data on vehicle miles as well.

9.24 According to the latest annual DfT road traffic statistics,[315] the total number of motor vehicle miles travelled on Great Britain's[316] roads rose to a new peak, of 342.6 billion miles, in 2025. This was up 1.9% on 2024 and 1.2% above the previous, pre-COVID-19 peak reached in 2019. Cars and taxis accounted for 262.4 billion miles (76.6%) of the 2025 total: (with goods vehicles, buses, coaches and motorcycles making up the rest). The cars and taxis sub-total was up 2.5% on 2024, though marginally (0.2%) short of its previous (2019) peak.

9.25 In Cheshire East, the picture as of 2025 was similar, but with motor vehicle traffic volumes even higher still compared to past years (see Figure 9.10). Total vehicle miles (3.107 billion) were 4.2% up from 2024 and 3.5% above their last (2019) peak.

9.26 As in Great Britain, around three-quarters of vehicle miles through Cheshire East (75.8%) were driven in cars and taxis, according to the DfT. The cars and taxis subtotal of 2.354 billion vehicle miles represented an increase of 5.3% on 2024 and, again, was greater (by 1.5%) than its previous high (reached in 2019).

9.27 Both nationally and locally, the DfT vehicle miles data point to a continuing, long-term upward trend in road traffic: one that is curbed only (temporarily) by severe socioeconomic shocks like COVID-19. As such, the evidence raises major questions as to how a substantive, permanent shift to more sustainable forms of transport can be successfully achieved.

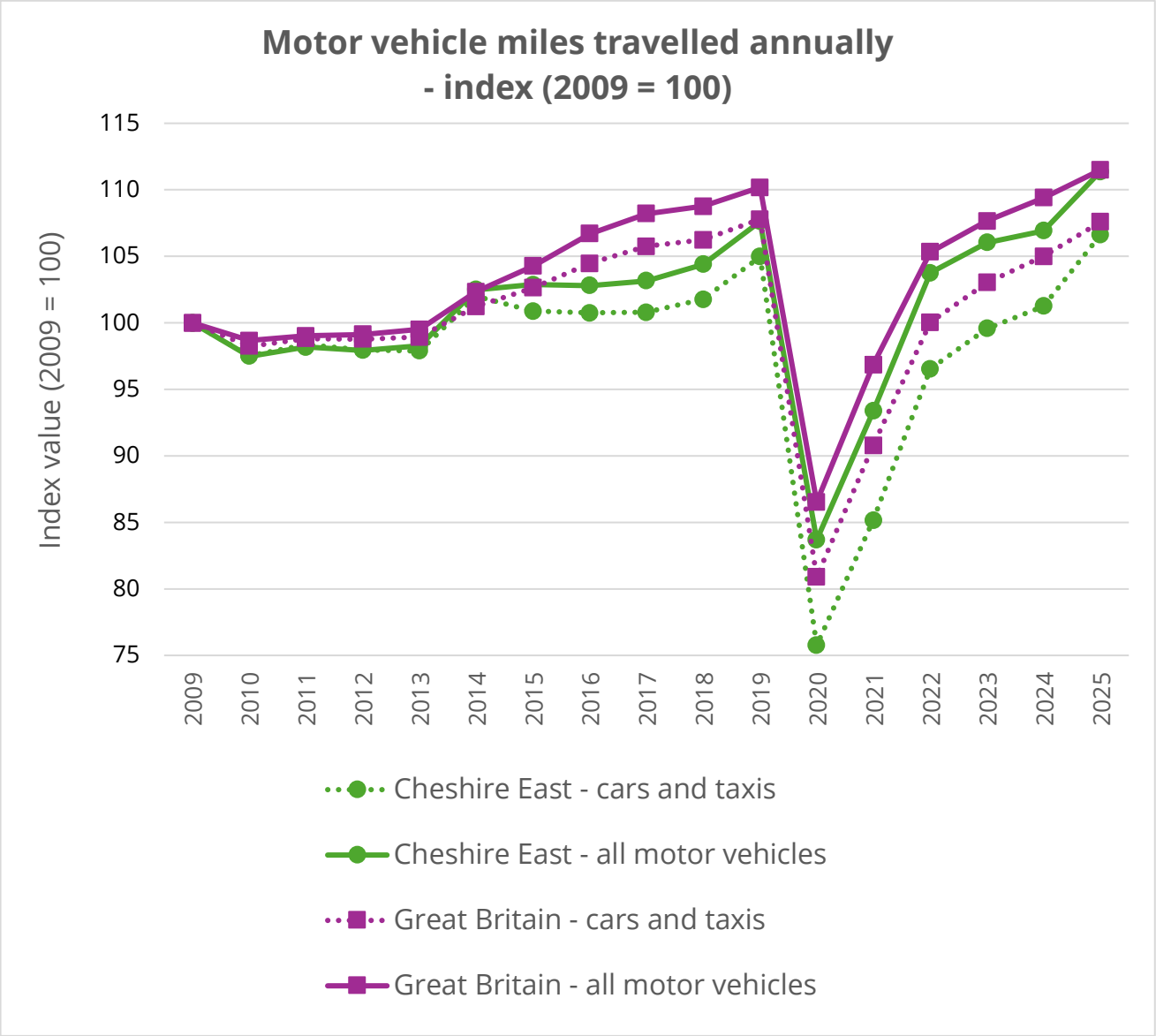
9.28 Central government data also indicate that road traffic accounts for a higher share of greenhouse gas emissions in Cheshire East (34.5%, as of 2024) than in England (32.6%).[317] However, this difference from the national share is likely to reflect a number of factors, such as the nature of the borough's road network (and the use of its motorway sections for journeys that begin or end well outside Cheshire East), as well as the availability of alternative transport methods, the characteristics or lifestyles of the local resident population and factors (like local industrial composition) that impact on volumes of emissions from other sectors.

[315] DfT traffic counts data (obtained on 21 July 2026 from https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk). Notes: [1] Traffic figures at the regional and national level are robust and are reported as accredited official statistics. However, DfT's traffic estimates for individual road links and small areas are less robust, as they are not always based on up-to-date counts made at these locations. [2] Pre-2009 figures not available for Cheshire East.

[316] Figures for Great Britain used for contrasting Cheshire East with the national average, as comparable data on car and taxi road traffic were more readily available for Britain than for England.

[317] 'UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, 2005 to 2024', DESNZ, June 2026: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-2005-to-2024 Note: The data at local authority level are much less robust than the figures at regional or national level.

Figure 9.10: Vehicle miles travelled, Cheshire East and Great Britain, 2009 to 2025



Electric vehicle take-up

9.29 As of the second quarter of 2022, the borough had a plug-in vehicle registration rate of 2.11%, which was slightly below the UK average (2.39%). However, the council expects electric vehicle ownership to rise from its current total (8,000) to nearly 100,000 by 2030.[318]

Travel to work methods and distances

9.30 The last 2 Censuses provide the latest detailed information on the methods and distances that people travel to their workplace[319]. Because of the impact of the

[318] Page 19, Local Transport Plan Strategy, Cheshire East Council, April 2026: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/local_transport_plan/local_transport_plan.aspx

[319] Sources: [1] 2021 Census Tables TS061 (Method used to travel to work) and TS058 (Distance travelled to work), ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk [2] Table QS701EW (Method of travel to work), 2011 Census, ONS, NOMIS: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk Note: Method and distance travelled to work figures from

COVID-19 lockdown on workplace locations and commuting journeys at the time of the 2021 Census, the differences between the 2011 and 2021 results should not be interpreted as an indication of long-term changes or trends. Nevertheless, presenting some of the results from both Censuses alongside each other does provide some valuable context. There is also some (though limited) post-Census evidence on travel patterns, which this baseline evidence report also cites below.

Method of travel to work (Census evidence)

9.31 Just over one-third (35.2%) of employed residents worked mainly at or from home, which was higher than the proportion of workers across England who did so (31.5%). As there was a COVID-19 lockdown at the time of the Census, people's work locations and options for commuting were dramatically affected and the high proportions who reported working from home will reflect this. Although not comparable with the 2021 statistics because of COVID-19, it is worth noting that the 2011 Census reported only 7.4% of employed Cheshire East residents (and 5.4% of workers across England) working mainly at or from home. It is likely that COVID-19 accounts for most of the increased propensity for homeworking, but it is not possible to separate its impact from that of other factors.

9.32 Nearly half (48.5%) travelled to work by driving a car or van (above the England average of 44.5%). Although not comparable with the 2021 data, it should be noted that these proportions were much higher in 2011 (68.5% for Cheshire East and 57.0% for England). A further 3.9% (also 3.9% for England) were a passenger in a car or van. The equivalent (but not comparable) figures from the 2011 Census were slightly higher (Cheshire East 5.1% and England 5.0%).

9.33 7.2% walked to work, making that by far the most common method of environmentally sustainable travel. For England, the proportion who walked to work was very similar (7.6%). The equivalent (but not comparable) figures from the 2011 Census were slightly higher (Cheshire East 9.9% and England 10.7%).

9.34 1.8% travelled by bicycle (as did 2.1% in England). Again, the equivalent (but not comparable) figures from the 2011 Census were slightly higher (Cheshire East 2.6% and England 3.0%).

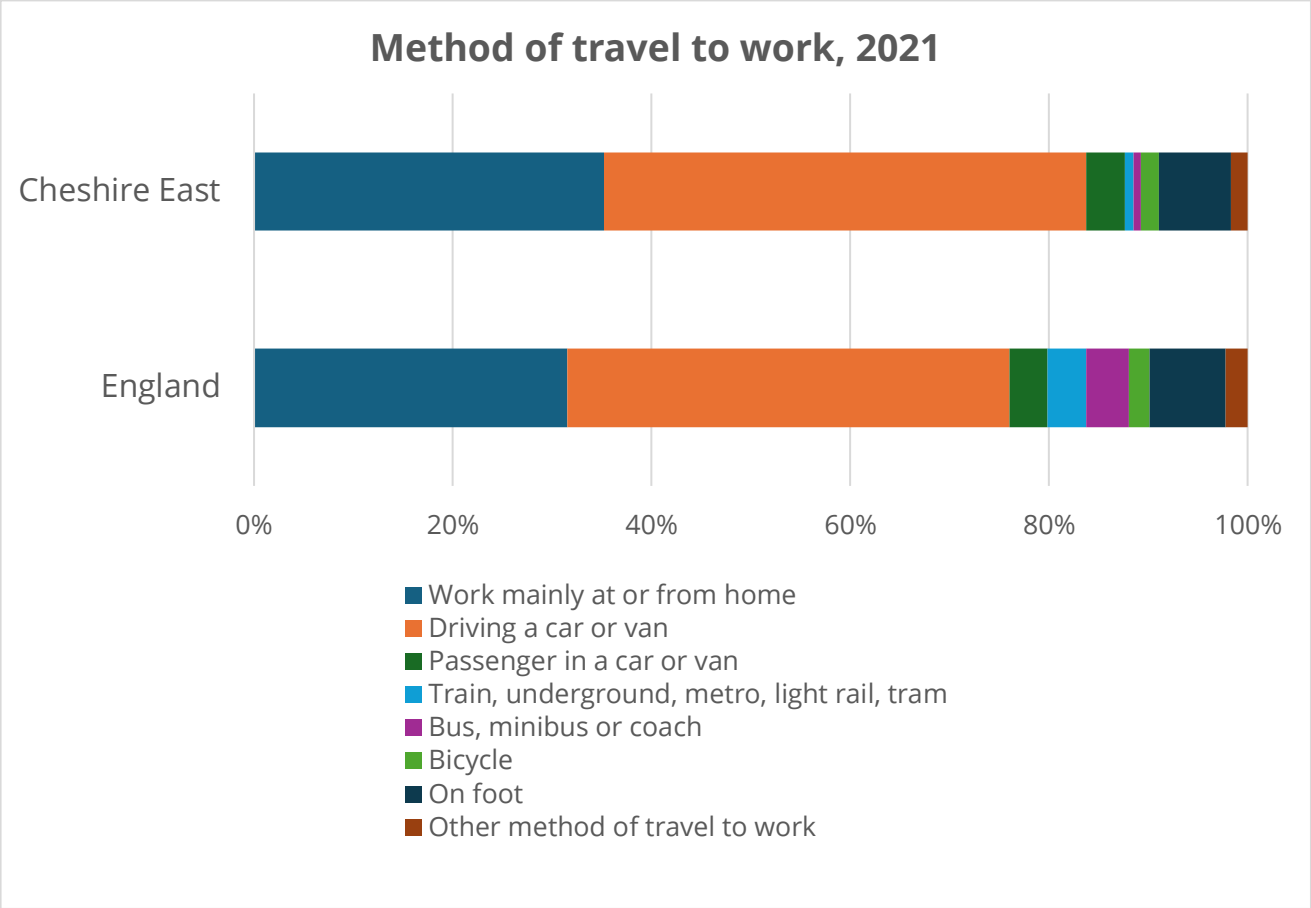
9.35 No other method of travel was used by more than 1% of Cheshire East's employed residents in 2021. Only 0.8% travelled by train and only 0.7% by bus, minibus or coach. The equivalent (but not comparable) figures from the 2011 Census were higher (train 2.9%, bus/minibus/coach 1.8%). The propensity to use public transport was higher in England (train 2.0%, bus/minibus/coach 4.3%), but again much lower than in 2011 (train 5.3%, bus/minibus/coach 7.5%). The very low proportions travelling by these methods in 2021 are likely to reflect to a large degree the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions and related government guidance on use of public transport during

the 2021 Census relate to all those aged 16 and above who were in employment, whereas the figures from the 2011 Census relate only to employed people aged 16 to 74.

the early 2021 lockdown and are therefore not a useful guide to long-term trends in commuters' use of public transport.

9.36 In summary, as Figure 9.11 shows, use of public transport is notably less common in Cheshire East than it is at national level, whereas the reverse is true for driving a car or van, and for homeworking.

Figure 9.11: Method of travel to work, 2021 – detailed categories



9.37 Homeworking was much more prevalent among those Cheshire East employed residents living in rural areas (42.2% of them worked from home) than among their urban counterparts (30.9%). Not surprisingly, the proportion travelling to work on foot was significantly greater (9.6%) for rural residents than urban ones (3.5%), as was cycling (2.4% versus 1.0%). Travelling as a car or van passenger was also somewhat more commonplace for urban residents (4.7% did so) than among those living in rural areas (2.6%). However, rural and urban residents were almost equally likely to reach work by driving a car or van (with the proportions being 48.4% and 48.6% respectively).[320]

9.38 At settlement level, the proportion working from home varied from over 50% in Prestbury (55.9%), Goostrey (52.9%) and Alderley Edge (51.1%) to only 20.6% in Crewe and 27.7% in Wrenbury. These geographical variations are likely to reflect the differences in the occupations held by residents of each settlement, as well as the

[320] Figures based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

varying degrees to which the COVID-19 lockdown affected available travel options in each location.

9.39 The proportion who drove a car or van to work was greatest (exceeding 55%) in Alsager, Haslington, Shavington and Wrenbury, and it seems likely that this is in part a consequence of those settlements generally having a relative scarcity of jobs,[321] with the result that residents are more likely to seek work at sites further away and that walking or cycling to work may not be viable.[322] However, access to public transport was of course severely constrained (and advised against) due to the COVID-19 outlook at the time of the Census (and Shavington and Haslington do not in any case have a railway station). Conversely, less than 40% of the employed residents of Alderley Edge, Goostrey, Knutsford, Prestbury and Wilmslow drove a car or van to work in 2021 (5 settlements that all have railway stations, although the proportions commuting by train from those settlements were, like in all of the borough's other main settlements, below 2.5%).

9.40 The proportion travelling to work as a car or van passenger was far higher in Crewe (7.4%) than in any other settlement (Macclesfield and Wrenbury being next highest, at 3.9%). This is probably in large part as a result of its high population density, meaning drivers and would-be passengers living in closer proximity and shared journeys involving shorter diversions and greater convenience for the driver.

9.41 Employed Crewe residents were also much more likely to travel to work by bicycle (4.6% did so) than their counterparts in other settlements (where, in each case, the proportion fell below 2%).

9.42 Not surprisingly, the list of settlements where travel on foot was most common consisted of towns, rather than smaller settlements where housing and employment locations may be more dispersed and job opportunities more limited. This proportion was highest (over 8%) in Macclesfield (12.0%), Crewe (10.8%), Nantwich (9.2%) and Handforth (8.3%). Notably the town with the lowest proportion of employed residents who walk to work (4.0%) was Alsager, one of the settlements where (as noted earlier) there is a relative shortage of jobs.

[321] Data not available on the number of jobs located in Wrenbury, as the village is defined (for the purposes of this report's settlement-level analysis) in terms of ONS OAs and small area jobs data from ONS' BRES is not available at OA level.

[322] Alsager had just over 6,000 employed residents at the time of the Census, while Haslington and Shavington had between 2,000 and 3,000 each. However, data from ONS' 2021 BRES indicate that the estimated number of jobs located in these 3 settlements (Alsager 3,500, Haslington 900, Shavington 900) were much lower than the numbers of employed residents reported by the 2021 Census. Hence, even allowing for the differences between the Census and the BRES in terms of time period (the BRES figures relate to September 2021, when there was no lockdown) and data accuracy and the types of jobs covered, it is reasonable to conclude that those settlements had a relative shortage of jobs. The jobs density evidence cited elsewhere in this report points to those 3 settlements' still having a relative jobs shortage as of 2024. By contrast, Alderley Edge (where the proportion driving a car or van to work was lowest) had less than 2,500 employed residents as of 2021, but (according to the 2021 BRES) hosted 4,000 jobs.

9.43 Despite many of the borough's larger settlements having a railway station, the proportion travelling to work by train was no higher than 2.4% in any settlement. The highest proportion for bus/minibus/coach travel was smaller still (1.5%).

9.44 Tables 9.2a and 9.2b provide a breakdown of the travel method statistics by travel method, though using broader categories than some of those cited in the above narrative. Table 9.2a covers the main settlements (20 out of 24) that can be reasonably fitted to ONS LSOAs. Table 9.2b shows the equivalent figures for the other 4 settlements that are within in the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy. The figures for these 4 settlements are presented separately to those for the other main 20 settlements, given that they are defined in terms of OAs, rather than LSOAs.

Table 9.2a: Method of travel to work, 2021

Area name	% working mainly at or from home	% driving a car or van	% travelling as a passenger in a car or van	% using sustainable method (public transport, bicycle or foot)	% using other method of travel to work
England	31.5%	44.5%	3.9%	17.9%	2.2%
Cheshire East, of which:	35.2%	48.5%	3.9%	10.7%	1.7%
Rural areas	42.2%	48.4%	2.6%	5.6%	1.3%
Urban areas	30.9%	48.6%	4.7%	13.9%	1.9%
Alderley Edge	51.1%	35.1%	2.4%	9.7%	1.7%
Alsager	33.5%	55.5%	3.1%	6.4%	1.5%
Bollington	40.8%	47.3%	2.5%	8.0%	1.4%
Chelford	49.9%	41.8%	2.4%	5.0%	0.9%
Congleton	32.4%	53.1%	3.5%	9.5%	1.5%
Crewe	20.6%	51.5%	7.4%	17.8%	2.6%
Disley	40.5%	48.0%	1.9%	8.6%	1.0%
Handforth	37.0%	44.5%	3.7%	12.7%	2.2%
Haslington	33.7%	55.2%	3.1%	7.2%	0.8%
Holmes Chapel	46.1%	42.7%	2.1%	8.0%	1.1%
Knutsford	46.3%	39.7%	2.9%	10.1%	1.0%
Macclesfield	33.1%	46.1%	3.9%	15.1%	1.8%

Area name	% working mainly at or from home	% driving a car or van	% travelling as a passenger in a car or van	% using sustainable method (public transport, bicycle or foot)	% using other method of travel to work
Middlewich	32.2%	55.0%	3.5%	8.1%	1.2%
Mobberley	45.6%	45.5%	2.7%	5.1%	1.1%
Nantwich	33.2%	48.8%	3.6%	12.8%	1.5%
Poynton	43.1%	44.3%	2.3%	9.2%	1.1%
Prestbury	55.9%	36.5%	1.7%	4.7%	1.1%
Sandbach	36.3%	51.5%	2.7%	8.1%	1.4%
Shavington	31.0%	58.5%	3.1%	6.1%	1.3%
Wilmslow	48.7%	39.1%	2.5%	8.1%	1.6%
Other settlements [323]	42.6%	48.9%	2.6%	4.6%	1.2%

Table 9.2b: Method of travel to work (OA-based settlement areas), 2021

Area name	% working mainly at or from home	% driving a car or van	% travelling as a passenger in a car or van	% using sustainable method (public transport, bicycle or foot)	% using other method of travel to work
Audlem	38.7%	50.0%	2.8%	7.3%	1.2%
Bunbury	46.9%	44.3%	3.3%	4.2%	1.3%
Goostrey	52.9%	39.1%	1.4%	5.7%	1.0%
Wrenbury	27.7%	56.9%	3.9%	10.4%	1.1%

9.45 Given the recent improvements in IT (many of them accelerated by the impact of COVID-19), it is likely that many people who began working mainly from home during the COVID-19 lockdowns will continue to do so. Therefore, whilst the proportion of employed people who work from home may have declined since 2021 and may fall further, it seems doubtful that it will return to the low levels reported back in 2011.

[323] 'Other settlements' means the areas of Cheshire East not covered by the 20 settlements listed in this table.

Distance travelled to work (Census evidence)

9.46 In addition to the 35.2% of Cheshire East's employed residents who were working mainly at or from home at the time of the 2021 Census, a further 11.7% reported working mainly at an offshore installation, in no fixed place, or outside the UK. Hence nearly half (46.9%) did not undertake a regular commuting journey to a single workplace in the UK (for England as a whole, the proportion was similar, at 46.0%).

9.47 The distance travelled by the other 53.1% of Cheshire East's employed residents breaks down as follows:

- 21.4% had a journey of less than 5km (11.5% travelled less than 2km and 9.8% travelled at least 2km but less than 5km)
- 21.5% travelled at least 5km but less than 20km
- 10.3% travelled at least 20km

9.48 For England, the proportions were similar, but with a slightly greater propensity for shorter journeys (23.6% travelled less than 5km, 22.2% had a journey of at least 5km but less than 20km, and for 8.3% the distance was 20km or more).

9.49 Not surprisingly, workers living in urban areas of the borough were far more likely to travel less than 5km (27.0% of them did) than their rural counterparts (only 12.4% of whom fell into that category).[324]

9.50 At settlement level, those most likely to travel less than 5km to work were the employed residents of Crewe (40.7% of whom did so) and Macclesfield (31.5%). In no other settlements did this proportion exceed 25.0% (though Shavington matched that proportion). At the other end of the spectrum, there were 4 settlements (Audlem, Bunbury, Chelford and Goostrey) where only around 7% of employed residents had a journey of less than 5km. Alsager (9.9%) was the only town where this proportion fell below 12.5%. Conversely, the proportion of employed residents travelling 20km or more to work ranged from over 15% in the small settlements of Bunbury (15.4%) and Chelford (15.1%) to only 7.2% in Handforth.

9.51 Clearly the geographical differences in distance travelled reflect rurality and population density, and the fact that the residents of smaller settlements and rural areas tend to have fewer (and perhaps less varied and less suitable) employment opportunities within short travel distances. It also reflects differences in the abundance or (in Alsager's case) shortage of jobs within larger settlements, and (in Handforth's case) the relative proximity of large urban conurbations hosting a large and varied range of employment.

Travel patterns (post-Census evidence)

9.52 The latest post-Census data (for 2022/23) suggests that the proportion of Cheshire East adults (age 16 and above) travelling on foot at least 3 days a week (14.5%) is

[324] Figures based on the 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

significantly below the England average (18.6%).[325] Clearly this adds to the Census evidence on Cheshire East's residents' relative dependence on cars/vans and environmentally unsustainable means of travel, as well as highlighting the challenge of encouraging higher rates of physical activity across the borough.

Connectivity to key services

9.53 The DfT's Connectivity Tool[326] provides a national measure of how easily people can access key destinations, including healthcare, education, shopping, leisure and employment, by walking, cycling, public transport and car. The tool generates a connectivity score for locations across England and Wales and is intended to help assess the sustainability of places and identify areas where transport improvements may be required. This subsection of the baseline evidence report provides an overview of the key evidence available from the Connectivity Tool, starting with a general overview and then focusing on access to specific types of services.

9.54 As would be expected, within Cheshire East there is a pronounced contrast in the levels of connectivity between the larger settlements and the more rural areas.

9.55 Higher levels of connectivity are concentrated in Crewe, Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Handforth, Alderley Edge, Congleton, Sandbach and Nantwich, where residents generally benefit from a combination of rail services, frequent bus routes and proximity to a wide range of services. These locations typically achieve stronger connectivity scores because multiple services can be reached within shorter travel times by sustainable modes.

9.56 Lower levels of connectivity are generally found in the borough's rural villages and dispersed countryside settlements, particularly in parts of south and east Cheshire East. In these areas, access to employment, secondary schools, healthcare facilities and retail centres is more dependent on private car travel because public transport provision is less frequent and destinations are more dispersed. This is consistent with the way the Connectivity Tool measures accessibility to everyday services.

9.57 As noted in Chapter 6 of this report, the IoD Geographical barriers sub-domain statistics indicate that the vast majority of Cheshire East's rural areas are relatively deprived in terms of their proximity to jobs and key services, with 90% of them (but only one-sixth of the borough's urban areas) ranking among England's most deprived 20%. This sub-domain's statistics are derived from DfT Connectivity Tool data, which explains the level of alignment between the main findings from that IoD sub-domain and those obtained directly from the Connectivity Tool.

[325] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 21 October 2026. Note: Figures relate to walks of 10 minutes or more on at least 12 days out of the previous 28.

[326] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/connectivity-tool

Access to employment

9.58 Crewe and Wilmslow are the borough's strongest employment-access locations due to their concentration of jobs and strategic rail connections. Crewe's role on the West Coast Main Line and Wilmslow's links to Manchester and the wider Greater Manchester conurbation improve access to a broad range of employment opportunities. Areas around these centres therefore tend to perform more strongly in the Connectivity Tool's workplace accessibility metrics.

Access to education

9.59 Most residents in the PTs have relatively good access to primary and secondary schools. However, some rural communities experience longer travel distances to secondary education and further education facilities, increasing reliance on school transport and private vehicles. Under the Connectivity Tool methodology, this results in lower education accessibility scores than those found in the urban centres.

Access to healthcare

9.60 The principal healthcare centres, including Leighton Hospital (Crewe), Macclesfield District General Hospital and major GP clusters within the towns, provide good accessibility for urban populations. Accessibility declines in more remote villages where fewer healthcare services are available locally and public transport connections can be limited, particularly outside peak periods.

Shopping and town centre services

9.61 The borough's main retail and service centres, particularly Crewe, Macclesfield, Congleton, Sandbach, Wilmslow and Nantwich, function as hubs for shopping, banking, leisure and community facilities. Connectivity Tool evidence suggests that locations close to these centres are more sustainably connected to everyday needs than peripheral rural areas, where residents often travel further to access higher-order services.

Public transport connectivity

9.62 Cheshire East benefits from nationally significant transport infrastructure, as indicated earlier in this chapter:

- the West Coast Main Line serves Crewe, providing direct links to Manchester, Birmingham, London, Liverpool and Scotland
- Macclesfield and Wilmslow have strong rail connections to Greater Manchester and the North West
- major road connections are provided by the M6 and M56, supporting regional accessibility
- Manchester Airport, located on the edge of (and partly within) the borough, provides international connectivity

9.63 Despite these strategic assets, local public transport coverage is uneven across the borough. As a result, the Connectivity Tool highlights the distinction between well-

connected urban areas and rural locations where sustainable travel options are more limited.

Key local plan evidence messages

9.64 The DfT Connectivity Tool supports several important planning conclusions for Cheshire East:[327]

- most towns are relatively well connected to key services, particularly Crewe, Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Nantwich, Sandbach and Congleton
- rural areas often have significantly lower connectivity scores, reflecting longer travel times to jobs, healthcare, education and retail facilities
- sustainable growth is likely to be most easily accommodated in locations with existing high connectivity, where services and public transport are already available
- transport investment, improved bus services, active travel routes and enhanced local facilities are likely to be necessary to support development in less connected settlements

9.65 This provides a useful evidence base for settlement hierarchy assessment and spatial strategy development within the new Cheshire East local plan.

Current infrastructure provision

9.66 A short overview of infrastructure provision is set out in this section of the report. Further detail will be set out in the local plan Infrastructure Issues and Context Report.

9.67 Inevitably, even a short overview of transport infrastructure involves some description of transport networks: the two cannot be summarised in isolation. Consequently, the commentary on transport infrastructure (next subsection) includes a small degree of repetition of the content from this chapter's earlier 'Current transport service provision and networks' and 'Connectivity to key services' sections (for example, in describing motorway routes). However, that aside, the earlier section and the next subsection complement each other, by providing additional information that is not replicated elsewhere in the chapter.

9.68 For similar reasons, the brief narrative on health and education infrastructure (a later subsection) unavoidably overlaps a little with the commentary on hospitals and further/higher education providers in the 'Health, wellbeing and society' chapter and (given hospitals' role as major local employers) in the 'Economy' chapter.

[327] Other important transport connectivity issues (besides those raised by the Connectivity Tool analysis), such as journey times for emergency travel to and from the borough's main hospitals, are covered within a later ('Capacity issues and planned investment') section of this chapter.

Transport

9.69 Manchester Airport is located at the northern edge of the borough, with part of its operational area, including its runway 2, being within Cheshire East. It is the third largest airport in the UK (and the largest outside of London), handling 32.1 million passengers in 2025. It connects the north of England to the world, with more than 50 airlines operating to around 200 destinations, with international connectivity across Europe and to long-haul destinations in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and North America. It also handles around 95,000 tonnes of cargo per year (import and export freight and mail), playing an important role in connecting the regional economy to the global marketplace.

9.70 The M6 motorway runs along a north-south route through Cheshire, providing connections to Staffordshire, Birmingham, the North West and Scotland. The M56 runs along an east to west line at the northern end of the borough, providing links to Manchester, Manchester Airport, Merseyside and North Wales. The 2 motorways are connected by the A556. These roads all form part of the national Strategic Road Network.

9.71 The local road network consists of 2,707km of roads across the borough. This includes key routes such as the A34, A500, A523, A51, A530 and A534, as well as other secondary A roads, B roads and unclassified roads.

9.72 There is an extensive rail network within the borough, including the Crewe to Derby Line, Crewe to Manchester line, Mid Cheshire line, Middlewich branch, North Wales Coast Line, Shrewsbury and Crewe Line, Stafford to Manchester line, Styal line and the West Coast Main Line. There are 22 stations on the network (Crewe, Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Handforth, Knutsford, Congleton, Sandbach, Alderley Edge, Holmes Chapel, Nantwich, Poynton, Disley, Alsager, Prestbury, Chelford, Goostrey, Adlington, Styal, Mobberley, Plumley, Wrenbury, and Ashley). The busiest stations are Crewe, Macclesfield and Wilmslow.[328] These 3 busiest stations all have direct services to London Euston.

9.73 The local bus network consists of 37 combined bus services, with around 2.9 million passenger journeys being made annually. These routes include urban bus routes, inter-urban (between towns) and some rural routes. However, bus usage remains significantly lower than pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels and services remain limited outside of urban areas and during off peak times (evenings and weekends). There is also a demand-responsive service available in rural areas.

9.74 There are also 2,204km of footways, an extensive public rights of way network and more than 600km of national or regional cycle network routes.

[328] As noted in the earlier 'Rail services' subsection of this report (which includes full data source details), the number of passenger entries and exits from Crewe, Macclesfield and Wilmslow stations for the year ending March 2025 were 3.4 million, 1.5 million and 1.2 million respectively.

Health

9.75 There are currently 36 GP practices located across Cheshire East.[329] The hospitals in the borough that provide public (as opposed to purely private) healthcare services are Leighton Hospital (Crewe), Macclesfield District General Hospital, Congleton War Memorial Hospital, and Knutsford and District Community Hospital. There is accident and emergency provision at Leighton Hospital and Macclesfield District General.

Education

9.76 There are 123 primary schools and 20 secondary schools in Cheshire East, with combined net capacities of 32,713 pupils and 23,826 pupils respectively. There are 16 schools providing specialist provision (within mainstream education), 6 special schools, 1 SEND unit within mainstream education, and 12 schools with enhanced mainstream provision.

9.77 There are several further and higher education providers in Cheshire East. These include sixth forms in secondary schools. As noted in a little more detail in the 'Health, wellbeing and society' chapter of this report,[330] they also include 5 colleges/higher education institutes: Cheshire College - South & West (located in Crewe), Crewe Engineering & Design University Technical College (UTC) (also in Crewe), Macclesfield College, Reaseheath College (a provider of specialised land-based courses, located just outside Nantwich), and Apollo Buckingham Health Science Campus (in Crewe).

Utilities

9.78 Electricity transmission is provided through a variety of overhead lines, underground cables, and electrical substations. The North West gas distribution network had a total demand of around 61.3 terrawatt hours (TWh) in 2024 (having declined from around 63 to -64 TWh in 2018/19). Peak demand remains substantial at over 450 gigawatt hours (GWh) per day.[331]

9.79 Within the region, around 93% of water supplies come from river or reservoir sources, with only 7% from groundwater sources. Unlike other parts of the country, the North West is not classified as seriously water stressed. However, there is a recognised and growing water supply deficit in the Strategic Resource Zone that requires interventions to make sure that water is used more efficiently and effectively.

9.80 Broadband availability across the borough is generally good. The latest (January 2026) data[332] indicate that, of all the residential premises in the borough, 97.3% have access

[329] Public health profiles 2026, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/ © Crown copyright 2026. Accessed 27 October 2026. Notes: [1] Some practices consist of multiple sites. [2] Mergers and other changes to GP practices will affect the number of practices over time. [3] The figure of 36 includes one practice that is located in Cheshire East, but that has historically aligned itself with a primary care network in another local authority (Cheshire West and Chester).

[330] In the 'Further and higher education provision' section.

[331] A gigawatt is a billion watts, and a terawatt is a trillion (a million million) watts.

[332] 'Connected Nations update: Spring 2026'. Ofcom: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/coverage-and-speeds/connected-nations-update-spring-2026 Note: Figures relate to January 2026.

to superfast broadband (30 megabits per second or more), 84.7% have access to gigabit-capable broadband and 80% have access to full fibre. However, these proportions are lower than for England, for which the figures are 98.2%, 89.5% and 82% respectively. As would be expected, availability is substantially better in urban areas of the borough (99.1% for superfast broadband and 89.1% for gigabit-capable broadband) than in Cheshire East's rural areas (89.0% for superfast broadband and 63.7% for gigabit-capable broadband).[333]

9.81 Looking at all Cheshire East premises (commercial properties included) in the borough, the availability figures (96.9% for superfast broadband, 83.7% for gigabit-capable and 79.2% for full fibre) are lower than for residential premises, indicating that access is generally better for residential properties than commercial ones. The data show that this difference between residential and commercial access is also apparent at national (England) level.

Capacity issues and planned investment

Transport

9.82 Manchester Airport presently handles around 32.1 million passengers annually (as noted earlier), and its terminals currently have capacity for around 38 million. Planned investments, including in public transport, would enable the airport to eventually handle around 50 million passengers per year.

9.83 The Strategic Road Network currently has identified issues with journey time delay and reliability, noise and air quality at M6 J17 (Junction 17) and M6 J19 to J21, with peak period congestion issues at M6 J16 and M56 J7 to the M60. There are no significant improvement schemes currently identified in the DfT's investment strategy, but National Highways is currently undertaking live study work at M6 J17 to consider the issues.

9.84 The local road network experiences peak time congestion, particularly in and around the main towns and on key routes. Further detailed highway modelling work is being carried out to understand these issues further. Future investments include delivery of the Middlewich Eastern Bypass, and several smaller active travel and highway corridor improvements including pinch points and junction improvements. In addition, the council aspires to improve the A500 corridor (south of Crewe) and connections to Crewe railway station: it is investigating alternative options for securing this investment, following the DfT's October 2026 decision not to provide government funding for scheme.[334]

[333] OA based 2021 Rural Urban Classification for England and Wales, ONS, August 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/ruralurbanclassifications/2021ruralurbanclassification

[334] https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/media_hub/media_releases/cheshire-east-council-responds-to-department-for-transport-decision-on-a500-scheme.aspx

9.85 There is also a need to ensure adequate travel times for essential journeys. In particular, it is important to maintain effective journey times for emergency trips to and from the borough's 2 main NHS hospitals, Leighton and Macclesfield District General.

9.86 Whilst the rail network is extensive, the sharing of lines between long distance and local/regional services means that there is often limited or no capacity to increase service frequencies at many of the borough's stations. The Crewe Hub investment programme, which is coordinated by the council, aims to improve capacity at Crewe Station, improve the rail infrastructure, passenger facilities, accessibility and access to the station. There are also potential future improvements through Northern Powerhouse Rail connections and a new Midlands-North West rail link, proposals for which are emerging following the cancellation of the High Speed 2 (HS2) project though the borough.

9.87 The council's Bus Service Improvement Plan aims to expand the bus network, improve integration with rail services, increase service frequencies, reduce emissions and increase passenger usage and satisfaction.

Health

9.88 The 36 GP practices fall within 9 different primary care networks, which each cater for a registered population of between 30,000 and 50,000 people. There is a standard GP practice floorspace requirement of 120 square metres per 1,750 patients. Based on this measure, the Eaglebridge (Crewe), Macclesfield, Nantwich and rural, and 'SMASH' (Sandbach, Middlewich, Alsager, Scholar Green and Haslington) networks have some further capacity, but there is no further capacity at present in the 'CHAW' (Chelford, Handforth, Alderley Edge and Wilmslow), 'CHOC' (Congleton and Holmes Chapel), 'GHR' (Grosvenor, Hungerford and Rope Green)[335], Knutsford, and Middlewood/'BDP' (Bollington, Disley and Poynton) networks.

9.89 Leighton Hospital (Crewe) is currently constrained and there are shortfalls in capacity and suitability. A brand-new hospital is being delivered under the government's New Hospitals Programme, representing an investment of well over £1 billion, and it is expected to open during 2032/33. This will support long-term population growth and improved healthcare outcomes.

9.90 Macclesfield District General Hospital also experiences significant demand pressures and currently has no significant surplus acute capacity. The East Cheshire NHS Trust has secured £5 million NHS England capital funding to improve urgent and emergency care infrastructure.

Education

9.91 The basis for both primary and secondary school pupil forecasts is the October school census data, which provides the number on the roll. The Council uses pupil yield modelling to estimate the number of additional school-aged children generated

[335] This primary care network covers part of the Crewe area.

by new residential development. Where developments generate demand beyond existing capacity, mitigation may include school expansions, financial contributions, or the provision of additional school sites. For developments of significant scale, new school provision may be required.

9.92 Across Cheshire East, there is a mixed picture in relation to school capacity and future expansion potential. In several areas, recent expansions have already been completed to mitigate the impact of housing growth, including at schools in Alsager, Congleton, Nantwich, Sandbach, Shavington, and Wilmslow. Some schools have been identified as having potential future surplus capacity or opportunities for additional expansion, but this is often dependent on further feasibility work, site constraints because of a survey, and mitigation measures. In several cases, expansion opportunities are constrained by factors such as outdoor space standards, listed buildings, access arrangements, the topography of the site and existing site/ground conditions.

9.93 Potential future issues identified include:

- limited remaining expansion capacity within existing school estates
- the need for additional land for new school sites or satellite provision
- increased pressure from planned housing growth
- building condition and infrastructure constraints
- the requirement for mitigation measures, including synthetic sports pitches and reconfigured teaching accommodation

9.94 The council assesses education demand through established primary and secondary planning areas, which reflect local geography, travel patterns, and patterns of school provision. Cheshire East currently operates across 29 primary planning areas and 12 secondary planning areas.

9.95 Each year, Cheshire East Council must submit forecasts to the Department for Education (DfE) showing how many school places are likely to be needed in the future. This covers primary, secondary and SEND provision. This process is known as the School Capacity (SCAP) return, with the most recent return submitted in July 2025 and signed off by the DfE in December 2025.[336] The SCAP return found that:[337]

- of the 29 primary planning areas, 5 are indicating a shortfall in places either immediately or within the next 5 years
- areas with many surplus places include Crewe, Macclesfield, and Middlewich, along with some smaller rural locations
- several secondary planning areas for years 7 to 11 indicate a shortfall in the next 7 years

[336] https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD250&ID=250&sch=doc
[337] https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s127542/CandFBriefingInformation.pdf

9.96 Although the shortfalls for the secondary planning areas for years 7 to 13 appear higher than the overall totals for years 7 to 11, a small number of schools admit more into their sixth form than the official net capacity figures allow for. However, as pupils utilise the same spaces as all the other year groups this doesn't seem to impact greatly on a school's capacity.

9.97 Recent school organisation proposals and updates include:

- Kingsbourne Primary Academy, a 210-place primary school built on part of a housing development in Nantwich, which opened to reception-age children in September 2026[338]
- a proposal to construct a new 210-place primary school, including the infrastructure potential to increase the capacity to 420 places, and a 30-place nursery, at Basford East, with a proposed opening date of September 2028[339]
- a proposal to construct a new one form entry[340] primary school and a SEND school on the Giantswood development on the edge of Congleton, however there is no date for the anticipated opening
- a proposal for an 'all-through' school[341] at Handforth Garden Village is in the early stages
- a proposal for a new 140 place SEND school/provision at the council's former Westfields office in Sandbach, which is anticipated to open in September 2028
- a 20-place SEND unit, which is proposed at Shavington Primary School, through conversion of the current 12-place resource provision[342]

9.98 Additionally, there have been several expansions to primaries, secondaries, SEND provision, and SEND schools across the borough over the last 7 to 8 years to provide additional places and necessary infrastructure to support the additional pupils.

9.99 At present, in relation to SEND, the council intends to create additional places by expanding existing schools and creating new provision in the borough.

Utilities

9.100 There is constrained capacity throughout the mid Cheshire electricity network area at all voltage levels without surplus capacity. A key issue is the need to modernise and refurbish existing networks including underground cables, overhead lines and substations.

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338 https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school_organisation/kingsley-fields-%E2%80%93-free-school-presumption.aspx

339 https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/media_hub/media_releases/proposal-to-progress-with-new-primary-school-approved-by-cheshire-east-council.aspx A reserved matters application (reference number 26/0279/RES) has been submitted for the proposed school.

340 'One form entry' means a single class per school year.

341 Defined by the DfE as a school covering the full compulsory school age range within a single establishment, spanning both primary and secondary years (typically ages 4 or 5 to 16 or 18).

342 https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=89393&Opt=0

9.101 National Grid Electricity Transmission's future provision will focus on upgrading and expanding existing infrastructure, including overhead lines, cables and substations, as part of wider national programmes such as the Great Grid Upgrade. SP Energy Networks is progressing work to identify where improvements are needed, with initial focus on areas including Holmes Chapel, Knutsford, Sandbach and Crewe, with significantly increased investment expected in the forthcoming 2028 to 2033 programme to expand network capacity and support the transition to a net zero, electrified system.

9.102 Demand for gas in the North West is expected to remain relatively stable in the short term, before declining steadily from the late 2020s onwards. Peak demand is also forecast to decline from the current levels of around 460 GWh (gigawatt hours) per day to around 418 GWh per day by 2034.

9.103 The latest Water Resources Management Plan includes measures to address a water supply deficit, including water reduction/efficiency measures, demand management for water users (including non-households), drought management and addressing leaks.

9.104 There continues to be investment in pipelines supplying water from Lake Vyrnwy (in mid Wales), via the Vyrnwy Aqueduct, to ensure resilient supplies for Cheshire. Investment is also planned to reduce spills from storm overflows and improve river quality. Future planned investments include demonstrating resilience to a 1 in 500-year drought by 2039, investment in water treatment works, delivery of additional water from borehole supplies across Cheshire, and a reduction in the activation of storm overflows.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary (including abbreviations used in this report)

Note: to avoid repetition, this glossary excludes some terms that are used only once in the report and defined (for example, in a footnote) at the point where they appear.

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
Accommodation type	See 'Dwelling type'.
(Housing) affordability ratio	A measurement of how affordable housing in a particular location is, in relation to the earnings or household income levels of local residents or local workers. It is most commonly calculated as the ratio of the median house price to median earnings (or median income).
Affordable housing	Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/ or is for essential local workers), and which complies with one or more of the following definitions: social rent, other affordable housing for rent, discounted market sales housing, other affordable routes to home ownership, military affordable housing.
Aggregates	Minerals used primarily to support the construction industry, including soft sand, sand and gravel, and crushed rock.
Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)	UK local authorities have been reviewing and assessing air quality in their area, in order to try and ensure that national air quality objectives (designed to protect public health and the environment) are achieved by the relevant deadlines. In locations where it appears the objectives are not likely to be achieved, the local authority has to declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). AQMAs can vary in size from an individual street to a much wider area.
Annual Population Survey (APS)	UK household survey undertaken by the Office for National Statistics. The survey covers a diverse range of topics, including personal characteristics, labour market status, work characteristics, education and health.
Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)	Annual earnings survey undertaken by the Office for National Statistics. The ASHE is the main official source of data on earnings at local authority level.

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
Bedroom	For the purposes of the Census statistics in this report, a bedroom means any room that was intended to be used as a bedroom when the property was built, or any room that has been permanently converted for use as a bedroom. It also includes all rooms intended for use as a bedroom even if not being used as a bedroom at the time of the Census. Bedsits and studio flats are counted as having one bedroom.
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	An approach to development that requires a project to leave biodiversity in a measurably better state than before it was built, typically by creating, enhancing or restoring habitats so that there is at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity value. It is a legal requirement for most new developments under the Environment Act 2021.
Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)	Annual survey of businesses undertaken by the Office for National Statistics. The BRES is the main official source of data on total employment and employment by industry at and below local authority level.
Census	The UK Census is a count of people and households, which gathers information that can be used to set policies and estimate the resources required to provide services for the population. The UK Census is usually undertaken every ten years. The last one was undertaken in 2021, and the next one is planned for 2031.
Claimant rate (for benefits)	The proportion of people in a particular age group who are claiming a particular benefit, such as Universal Credit.
Communal establishment	An establishment providing managed residential accommodation. 'Managed' in this context means full-time or part-time supervision of the accommodation. For example, sheltered accommodation units, and all accommodation provided solely for students (during term-time).
Confidence intervals	Confidence intervals are commonly used as indicators of the extent to which an estimate, based on a survey sample, may differ from the true population value. The larger the confidence interval, the less precise the estimate is.
Congleton Market Quarter (CMQ)	
Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH)	A common measure of consumer price inflation, and the one that ONS considers to be the most comprehensive.

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19)	The pandemic of 2020-21 that resulted in restrictions on social and economic activity.
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)	
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	
Department for Transport (DfT)	
Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)	
Dependent child	Any person aged 0 to 15 in a household (whether or not in a family) or a person aged 16 to 18 in full-time education and living in a family with their parent(s) or grandparent(s). The definition does not include any people aged 16 to 18 who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household.
Development	Defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning act as "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". Most forms of development require planning permission.
Dwelling	Residential property in which a single household lives.
Dwelling type (or 'Accommodation type')	The type of property in which a household lives: for example, detached, semi-detached, terrace, flat.
Economic activity rate	The proportion of people in a particular age group who are economically active: that is, who are either in employment or unemployed (available for and actively seeking work).
Economically active population (or 'Labour supply')	The number of people who are economically active: that is, in employment or unemployed and therefore supplying or offering to supply their labour. Labour can of course be supplied by local residents or by people who live outside the geographical area in question. However, for the purposes of this report, the focus is the local labour supply only: that is, the labour supplied by residents of the geographical area in question (generally Cheshire East or a sub-area of the borough).
Employment (or 'Jobs')	The number of (filled) jobs located in a particular geographical area which are undertaken by employees or self-employed

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
	people, members of HM Forces or Government-supported trainees. This includes jobs undertaken by casual staff, people on fixed term contracts and other non-permanent staff. (This is different from the number of employed people who work in the local area, because an employed person can have 2 or more jobs and, conversely, 2 people can share the same job.)
Employment land	Land identified for development for: offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions: • the research and development of products or processes • any industrial process, being a use, which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit • general industrial • storage and distribution uses as defined by use classes E(g)(i), E(g)(ii), E(g)(iii), B2 and B8. It does not include land for retail development.
Employment rate	The proportion of people in a particular age group who are in employment.
Enterprise	An overall business, made up of all the individual sites or workplaces. It is defined as the smallest combination of legal units (generally based on VAT and/ or PAYE records) that has a certain degree of autonomy within an enterprise group.
Equivalisation	The process of accounting for the fact that households with many members are likely to need a higher income to achieve the same standard of living as households with fewer members. Equivalisation considers the number of people living in the household and their ages, acknowledging that while a household with 2 people will need more money to sustain the same living standards as one with a single person, the two-person household is unlikely to need double the income.
Forecast	A prediction of what is likely to happen in the future. Forecasts not only consider past trends and relationships, but also take account of (a) the impact that projects, policies or initiatives may have in the future and (b) local knowledge, such as information about the capacity of the local area to accommodate future change. As such, a forecast is different to a projection.
Global Warming Potential (GWP)	Measure of a greenhouse gas' global warming influence in relation to that of carbon dioxide, over a 100-year period.

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
Green Belt	Designation for land around certain cities and large built-up areas, which aims to keep this land permanently open or largely undeveloped. The purposes of the Green Belt are to: • check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas • prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another • assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment • preserve the setting and special character of historic towns • assist urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. Green Belts are defined in a local planning authority's development plan.
Grey Belt	Land in the Green Belt that does not strongly contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another, or preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.
Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI)	The main measure of income for which official statistics are published down to local authority level. GDHI is the amount of money that households have available for spending or saving after they have paid direct and indirect taxes and received any direct benefits.
Gross Value Added (GVA)	A measure of economic output. It measures the combined contribution to a geographical area's economy from individual industries and the individual employers within those industries. Unlike Gross Domestic Product (GDP), GVA can be estimated for individual industries at subnational level (for example, regional or local authority level). GVA is equal to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) plus subsidies on products less taxes on products.
Healthy life expectancy (HLE)	The average number of years a person can expect to live in good health.
Homeless	Households or individuals in insecure or temporary accommodation or at risk of losing a permanent home, as well as people sleeping outdoors.
Household composition (or 'Household type')	A classification of households according to the relationships between the household members. Households consisting of one family and no other usual residents are usually classified according to the type of family and the number of dependent children. Other households are usually classified by the

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
	number of people, the number of dependent children, or whether the household consists only of students or only of older people (aged 66 and over).
Household size	The number of usual residents in the household.
Household type	See 'Household composition'.
Housing Delivery Test (HDT)	A central government measurement of the number of homes required (by an English local authority) against the number of net homes delivered, over a rolling three-year period.
Hybrid working	A working pattern under which employees work part of the time from home and part of the time at an employer's premises.
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	A composite index that is made up of 7 deprivation domains from the English Indices of Deprivation (most recently updated in 2025). The domains are: Income deprivation, Employment deprivation, Health deprivation and disability, Education, skills and training deprivation, Barriers to housing and services, Crime, and Living environment deprivation. The IMD and its constituent domains are based on deprivation at Lower layer Super Output Area (LSOA) level (see separate LSOA definition). The previous 5 (2004, 2007, 2010, 2015 and 2019) English Indices of Deprivation and their IMDs were compiled in broadly the same way.
(English) Indices of Deprivation (IoD)	A set of indices of deprivation that form the main evidence on deprivation within England at neighbourhood level. The indices are the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD: see separate definition above), the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI).
Internal migration	Migration flows within the UK.
International migration	Migration flows between the UK and a foreign country.
International Territorial Levels (ITLs)	A classification, developed for statistical purposes, of the UK's countries, regions and local areas. The ITLs align with international standards, enabling comparability internationally. Within the UK, there are 3 ITL tiers: ITL 1, ITL2 and ITL3. The North West is classified as an ITL 1 area (as are the other 8 English regions, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) and Cheshire East is classified as an ITL 3 area.
Jobs	See 'Employment'.

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
Jobs density	The number of jobs in a geographical area divided by that area's resident population aged 16-64 (a close approximation to the age group that is old enough to work but below State Pension Age). For example, a job density of 1.0 would mean that there is one job for every resident aged 16-64. The total number of jobs is a workplace-based measure and comprises employee jobs, the self-employed, government-supported trainees and HM Forces. High job densities generally indicate that demand for labour exceeds local supply (though the labour supply within a particular geographical area, and hence the size of any local labour supply shortfall or surplus, depends on the size of the economically active population, which is a product of both the local population's age structure and the local economic activity rates for different age groups). Any shortfall (local labour supply not meeting demand) may be met by inward commuting. Conversely, many of those living in areas with a low jobs density may (depending on local economic activity rates and the resulting local labour supply) have to commute to work in other areas.
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	The council's assessment of identifies health and social needs, how well these are being met and opportunities to inform decision-making. The JSNA work programme includes a range of reviews into specific health and wellbeing issues.
Key service centres (KSCs)	The second highest tier in Cheshire East's settlement hierarchy, covering large settlements with a wide range of services and strong transport links. The key service centres are currently Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow.
Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)	One of the main sectors or sources for which UK greenhouse gas emissions statistics are reported.
Landbank (in relation to minerals)	Quantity of mineral remaining to be worked at sites with planning permission. Usually expressed as the number of years permitted reserves that will last at an indicated level of supply or given rate of extraction.
Local Aggregate Assessment	An assessment by local authorities of the demand for and supply of aggregates.
(Cheshire East) Local Economy Forecasting Model (LEFM)	Economic model hosted and operated by Cheshire East Council, but developed and supplied by the economics consultants Cambridge Econometrics.

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs)	These are place-based plans that identify priorities and opportunities for protecting, restoring and enhancing nature, helping to guide action and investment to recover biodiversity and create a more connected ecological network across an area. They were introduced through the Environment Act 2021.
Local Plan Strategy (LPS)	The Local Plan Strategy 2010-30 sets out strategic priorities for the development of the Cheshire East local plan area, along with planning policies and proposals to make sure that new development addresses the economic, environmental and social needs of the area. It was adopted on 27 July 2017.
Local service centres (LSCs)	The third highest tier in Cheshire East's settlement hierarchy, covering smaller towns/ villages meeting most day to day needs locally. The local service centres are currently Alderley Edge, Audlem, Bollington, Bunbury, Chelford, Disley, Goostrey, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Mobberley, Prestbury, Shavington and Wrenbury.
Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) measure of fuel poverty	According to DESNZ's 'Sub-regional Fuel Poverty in England, 2026 report (2024 data)' (published in May 2026), the LILEE indicator considers a household to be fuel poor if it is living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G as determined by the most up-to-date Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Rating (FPEER) Methodology, and its disposable income (income after housing costs and energy needs) would be below the poverty line.
Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA)	Small geographical areas that are of similar size in terms of population. LSOAs were created by the Office for National Statistics in the early 2000s, for statistical purposes. LSOA boundaries align with those of local authorities, but do not necessarily match ward or parish boundaries. Originally there were 231 LSOAs in Cheshire East, but this was increased to 234 following 2011 Census evidence about recent population change, which resulted in some of the borough's LSOAs being subdivided. For the same reason, some LSOAs were split or merged in the wake of the 2021 Census evidence, bringing the total number in Cheshire East to 244. LSOAs, Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) and Output Areas (OAs) collectively form a three-tier geographical hierarchy: each MSOA consists of a few whole LSOAs and each LSOA in turn consists of a few whole OAs.
Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA)	Small geographical areas that are of similar size in terms of population. MSOAs were created by the Office for National

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
	Statistics in the early 2000s, for statistical purposes. MSOA boundaries align with those of local authorities, but do not necessarily match ward or parish boundaries. Originally there were 51 MSOAs in Cheshire East, but this was increased to 52 following 2021 Census evidence about recent population change, which resulted in one of the borough's MSOAs being subdivided. MSOAs, Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and Output Areas (OAs) collectively form a three-tier geographical hierarchy: each MSOA consists of a few whole LSOAs and each LSOA in turn consists of a few whole OAs.
Mineral Planning Authority (MPA)	
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)	
National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG)	A national database of land and property addresses.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	The framework that sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW)	
Nominal (or 'current price') (in relation to monetary statistics)	Monetary figures that do not exclude the effect of inflation. For example, economic output figures for 2013-23 that are expressed in nominal terms show the change in the value of economic activity (the prices times the volume of goods and services) over that time. In contrast, 'real' (or 'constant price') economic output figures do exclude the effect of inflation and therefore show the change over time in the volume (but not the value) of economic activity. Similarly, real earnings figures adjust for changes over time (due to inflation) in consumers' cost of living, whereas nominal earnings figures do not.
NOMIS	Website service provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), from which many sets of published ONS data on population, society and the labour market (at national, regional and local levels) can be readily accessed and downloaded in a customised format.
Occupancy ratings (for bedrooms or rooms more generally)	Occupancy ratings (published as part of the Office for National Statistics' Census data) provide a measure of whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded or under occupied. There are 2 measures of occupancy rating, one

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
	based on the total number of rooms in a household's accommodation, and one based only on the number of bedrooms. The ages of the household members and their relationships to each other are used to derive the number of rooms/ bedrooms they require, based on a standard formula. The number of rooms/ bedrooms required is subtracted from the number of rooms/ bedrooms in the household's accommodation to obtain the occupancy rating. For example, an occupancy rating of -1 implies that a household has one fewer room/ bedroom than required, whereas +2 implies that they have 2 more rooms/ bedrooms than the standard requirement.
Office for National Statistics (ONS)	The UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and its recognised national statistical institute. ONS is responsible for collecting and publishing statistics related to the economy, population and society at national, regional and local levels. It also conducts the census in England and Wales every 10 years.
Opinion Research Services (ORS)	Consultants who assessed housing need as part of the current (2010-30) Cheshire East local plan work, including the 2015 Housing Development Study. ORS produced the population and housing forecasts that informed the adopted plan.
Other settlements and rural areas (OSRA)	The lowest tier in Cheshire East's current settlement hierarchy, covering smaller settlements with limited services and facilities and very small settlements or dispersed development with minimal services or accessibility.
Output Area	Small geographical areas that are of similar size in terms of population. OAs were created by the Office for National Statistics in the early 2000s, for statistical purposes. OA boundaries align with those of local authorities, but do not necessarily match ward or parish boundaries. Originally there were 1,215 OAs in Cheshire East, but this was increased to 1,245 following 2011 Census evidence about recent population change, which resulted in some of the borough's OA boundaries being redrawn. For the same reason, further changes were made to OAs in the wake of the 2021 Census evidence, bringing the total number in Cheshire East to 1,298. OAs, Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) collectively form a three-tier geographical hierarchy: each MSOA consists of a few whole LSOAs and each LSOA in turn consists of a few whole OAs.

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
Playing Pitch Strategy (PPOSS)	The council's strategy for assessing and managing the supply and demand for outdoor sports within the borough.
Principal towns (PTs)	The highest tier in Cheshire East's settlement hierarchy, covering the largest, most accessible centres providing significant employment, retail, and services. The principal towns are Crewe and Macclesfield.
Primary (land-won) aggregates	Naturally occurring sand, gravel and crushed rock used for construction purposes.
Projection	An estimate of future change which assumes that past trends and past relationships will continue, and projects these forward into the future. Unlike forecasts, projections do not take account of (a) the impact that projects, policies or initiatives may have in the future or (b) local knowledge, such as information about the capacity of the local area to accommodate future change.
Ramsar sites	Sites included on The Convention on Wetlands' List of Wetlands of International Importance.
Real (or 'constant price') (in relation to monetary statistics)	Monetary figures exclude the effect of inflation. For example, economic output figures for 2013-23 that are expressed in real terms show the change in the volume of economic activity over that time. In contrast, 'nominal' (or 'current price') economic output figures include the effect of inflation and therefore show the change over time in the value (the prices times the volume of goods and services) of economic activity. Similarly, real earnings figures adjust for changes over time (due to inflation) in consumers' cost of living, whereas nominal earnings figures do not.
Residence-based statistics	Residence-based statistics are statistics (for example, earnings data) relating to people who live but do not necessarily work in the geographical area in question, whereas workplace-based statistics relate to people who work but do not necessarily live in that geographical area.
Rural Urban Classification 2021	The latest official (Office for National Statistics) classification of England and Wales' small areas as 'rural' or 'urban' (and into related sub-categories).
Safeguarded land	Land that has previously been removed from the Green Belt that may be required to meet longer-term development needs.
Settlement hierarchy	The classification system developed by Cheshire East Council for identifying the roles and interrelationships of its various

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
	towns and smaller settlements, for example in terms of population size, services and facilities, transport links and employment provision.
Site of special scientific interest (SSSI)	Sites notified for their flora, fauna or geological, physiographical or geomorphological features (in England, these sites are notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD)	The second part of the current (2010-30) Cheshire East local plan. The SADPD provides detailed planning policies and land allocations in line with the overall approach set out in the Local Plan Strategy (LPS). It was adopted on 22 December 2022.
Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)	Development strategy for Cheshire and Warrington.
Special educational needs and disability (SEND)	A child or young person has special educational needs and disabilities (commonly shortened to 'SEND') if they have a learning difficulty and/ or a disability that means they need special health and education support.
(UK) Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities 2007 (SIC2007)	The official (Office for National Statistics) industrial classification system used for categorising most of the industry-specific economic and business data published in recent years. ONS has published an updated classification (SIC2026), but SIC2026-based statistics are not widely available so far. For consistency, and to enable comprehensive analysis of different industries, this report's analysis of different industries presents only statistics that are SIC2007-based.
Standard Occupational Classifications for 2010 and 2020 (SOC2010, SOC2020)	The official (Office for National Statistics) classification system and the one used for categorising most of the occupation-specific labour market data published in recent years. SOC2020 has replaced SOC2010 as the Office for National Statistics' latest occupational classification for the UK, but the council's Local Economy Forecasting Model (LEFM) occupational categories are still SOC2010-based.
STEAM	A visitor economy model, developed and operated by the company Global Tourism Solutions, which produces estimates of the economic impact of tourism for local areas.
Strategic Green Gap	A local policy designation that seeks to provide long-term protection against coalescence of settlements, protecting their setting and individual characters and maintaining the existing settlement pattern.

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
Strategic Resource Zone	A large-scale area over which water resources are planned, managed, and shared to meet long-term supply needs.
Subnational population projection(s) (SNPP(s))	The projections published by the Office for National Statistics (usually every 2 to 3 years) of future population change, down to local authority level.
Survey sampling error	The extent to which an estimate, based on a survey sample, may differ from the true population value. Confidence intervals are commonly used as indicators of this extent. The larger the confidence interval, the less precise the estimate is.
Unemployment count	All people aged 16 and above without a job who are (a) available and actively looking for work or (b) waiting to start a job they had already obtained. This is the official UK definition, and it is consistent with the internationally agreed definition recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This definition of unemployment is different from the claimant count, which records those people who are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or out of work and claiming Universal Credit, or (following policy changes in the wake of COVID-19) who are in work but have a low income. The unemployment count (using this ILO-consistent definition) may therefore differ significantly from the claimant count.
Unemployment rate	The unemployment count expressed as a percentage of the economically active population (defined separately in this glossary) that is aged 16 and above.
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (UNESCO)	
Use classes	Specification of types of uses of buildings based upon the use class order (see Appendix 4 for a detailed list of these classes).
Usual residence/resident	A person's place of usual residence is generally the address in the UK at which they spend the majority of time. For most people this means their permanent or family home. For the purposes of the 2021 Census, students and schoolchildren in full-time education studying away from the family home were counted as usually resident at their term-time address. However, Armed forces personnel were counted as usually resident at their permanent or family home even if the majority of their time was spent at their working address.

Term	Definition (if applicable) and further notes
Waste Needs Assessment (WNA)	The council's assessment of its waste management needs.
Workplace-based statistics	Workplace-based statistics are statistics (for example, earnings data) relating to people who work but do not necessarily live in the geographical area in question, whereas residence-based statistics relate to people who live but do not necessarily work in that geographical area.

Appendix 2: Industry definitions used in the council's economic model (LEFM)

Note: SIC2007 is the UK Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities 2007 (https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/ukstandardindustrialclassificationofeconomicactivities/uksic2007). At the time of writing, a transition from SIC2007 to an updated structure (SIC2026) is underway, but the data from key economic publications and other economic data sources (such as the council's LEFM) currently remains SIC2007-based.

Broad industries (12 categories)

SIC2007 code(s)	Industry
01 to 03	Agriculture, forestry and fishing
05 to 09	Mining and quarrying
10 to 33	Manufacturing
35 to 39	Utilities
41 to 43	Construction
45 to 47	Wholesale and retail
49 to 53	Transport and storage
55 to 56	Accommodation and food and drink services
58 to 63	Information and communication
64 to 82	Financial, professional and business support services
84 to 88	Public, education and care services[343]
90 to 96	Culture, sport and other services

Detailed industries (45 categories)

SIC2007 code(s)	Industry	Range of activities covered (where not apparent from the industry description)
01 to 03	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	
05 to 09	Mining and quarrying	
10 to 12	Food and drink	
13 to 15	Textiles, clothing and leather (manufacturing of)	

[343] This covers public administration, defence, education, health and social work.

SIC2007 code(s)	Industry	Range of activities covered (where not apparent from the industry description)
16 to 17	Wood and paper (manufacturing of)	
18	Printing and reproduction of recorded media	
19	Coke and petroleum (manufacturing of)	
20	Chemicals (manufacturing of)	
21	Pharmaceuticals (manufacturing of)	
22 to 23	Rubber, plastics and non-metallic mineral products (manufacturing of)	
24 to 25	Metals and metal products (manufacturing of)	
26	Computer and electronic products (manufacturing of)	
27	Electrical equipment (manufacturing of)	
28	Machinery (manufacturing of)	
29	Motor vehicle manufacturing	
30	Other transport equipment manufacturing	Manufacture of ships, boats, trains/rolling stock, aircraft, military fighting vehicles, motorcycles, bikes and other transport equipment not elsewhere classified
31 to 33	Other manufacturing	Manufacture of furniture, jewellery, musical instruments, sports goods, toys, games, medical/dental instruments, other manufacturing not elsewhere classified, and the repair/ installation of machinery/ equipment
35	Electricity and gas	
36 to 39	Water, sewerage, waste and remediation	
41 to 43	Construction	
45	Motor vehicle trade	

SIC2007 code(s)	Industry	Range of activities covered (where not apparent from the industry description)
46	Wholesale	
47	Retail	
49	Land transport	
50	Water transport	
51	Air transport	
52 to 53	Warehousing, logistics and postal services	
55	Accommodation	
56	Pubs, restaurants and other food and drink services	
58 to 60	Media	
61 to 63	Telecoms and computing services	
64 to 66	Financial services	
68	Real estate	
69	Legal and accounting services	
70	Head offices and management consultancy	
71	Architectural and engineering services	
72 to 75	Other professional services	Research and development, advertising, market research, design, photography, translation/interpretation, environmental consulting, quantity surveying, other professional services not elsewhere classified, vets
77 to 82	Business support services	Renting/leasing of vehicles/ machinery/goods/ intellectual property, recruitment agencies, travel agencies, security/investigation services, cleaning/building maintenance services, landscape services, office administration, call centres, exhibition/conference

SIC2007 code(s)	Industry	Range of activities covered (where not apparent from the industry description)
		organisers, collection agencies, other business support services not elsewhere classified
84	Public administration and defence	
85	Education	
86	Health	
87 to 88	Social work and residential care	
90 to 91	Arts and cultural services	
92 to 93	Sports and recreation	
94 to 96	Other services	Activities of membership organisations (for example, trade unions), repair of personal/household goods, dry cleaning, hairdressing, undertakers, other personal services not elsewhere classified

Appendix 3: Occupational categories (SOC-based)

Note: SOC2010 is the Standard Occupational Classification 2010 (https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/standardoccupationalclassificationsoc/soc2010). SOC2020 (https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/standardoccupationalclassificationsoc/soc2020) has replaced SOC2010 as the ONS' current occupational classification for the UK, but the council's LEFM occupational categories are still SOC2010-based.

SOC 1-digit (Major Group) code	SOC2010 Major Group name	SOC2020 Major Group name (where different to SOC2010)
1	Managers, directors and senior officials	
2	Professional occupations	
3	Associate professional and technical occupations	Associate professional occupations
4	Administrative and secretarial occupations	
5	Skilled trades occupations	
6	Caring, leisure and other service occupations	
7	Sales and customer service occupations	
8	Process plant and machine operatives	
9	Elementary occupations	

Appendix 4: Building use classes

Note: This classification relates to the Use Classes Order in England (from 1 August 2021), following implementation of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020, and further amendments to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

Class	Use type(s)
B2	General industrial
B8	Storage or distribution (includes open air storage)
C1	Hotels (for example hotels, boarding and guest houses (excludes hostels))
C2	Residential institutions (for example care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres)
C2A	Secure residential institutions
C3	Dwellinghouses: C3(a) single or family household, C3(b) up to 6 people living together as a single household and receiving care, for example supported housing schemes, C3(c) group of up to 6 people living together as a single household
C4	Small houses in multiple occupation (between 3 and 6 unrelated individuals who share basic amenities such as a kitchen or bathroom)
E	Commercial, business and service: Ea shops or retail uses, Eb restaurants and cafes, Eci financial services, Ecii professional services (not medical), Eciii service appropriate in a commercial, business or service locality, Ed indoor sport, recreation or fitness centre (no firearms), Ee medical or health services, Ef creche, day nurseries and day centres (excluding residential), Egi offices, Egii research and development, Egiii industrial process appropriate in a residential area
F1	Learning and non-residential institutions: F1a provision of school and education facilities, F1b art galleries, F1c museums, F1d libraries, F1e public or exhibition halls, F1f places of worship or religious instruction, F1g law courts
F2	Local community: F2a shops selling mostly essential goods which are less than 280 square metres (sqm) in size and are not within 1,000m of another such use, F2b hall or meeting place for a local community, F2c areas for outdoor sport (no motorised vehicles or firearms), F2d indoor or outdoor swimming pools and ice rinks
Sui generis	Other types: for example, theatres, hostels, scrap yards, petrol filling stations, car showrooms, laundrettes, taxi businesses, amusement centres, betting shops, public houses

Appendix 5: Maps of rural/urban areas (ONS LSOA- and MSOA-based)

Source: 2021 Rural Urban Classification for England and Wales, ONS, August 2025: https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/ruralurbanclassifications/2021ruralurbanclassification

Note: For an equivalent map of ONS' OA-based rural-urban classification, see Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3.

Figure A5.1: ONS LSOA-based rural/urban areas, with settlements and Peak Park area

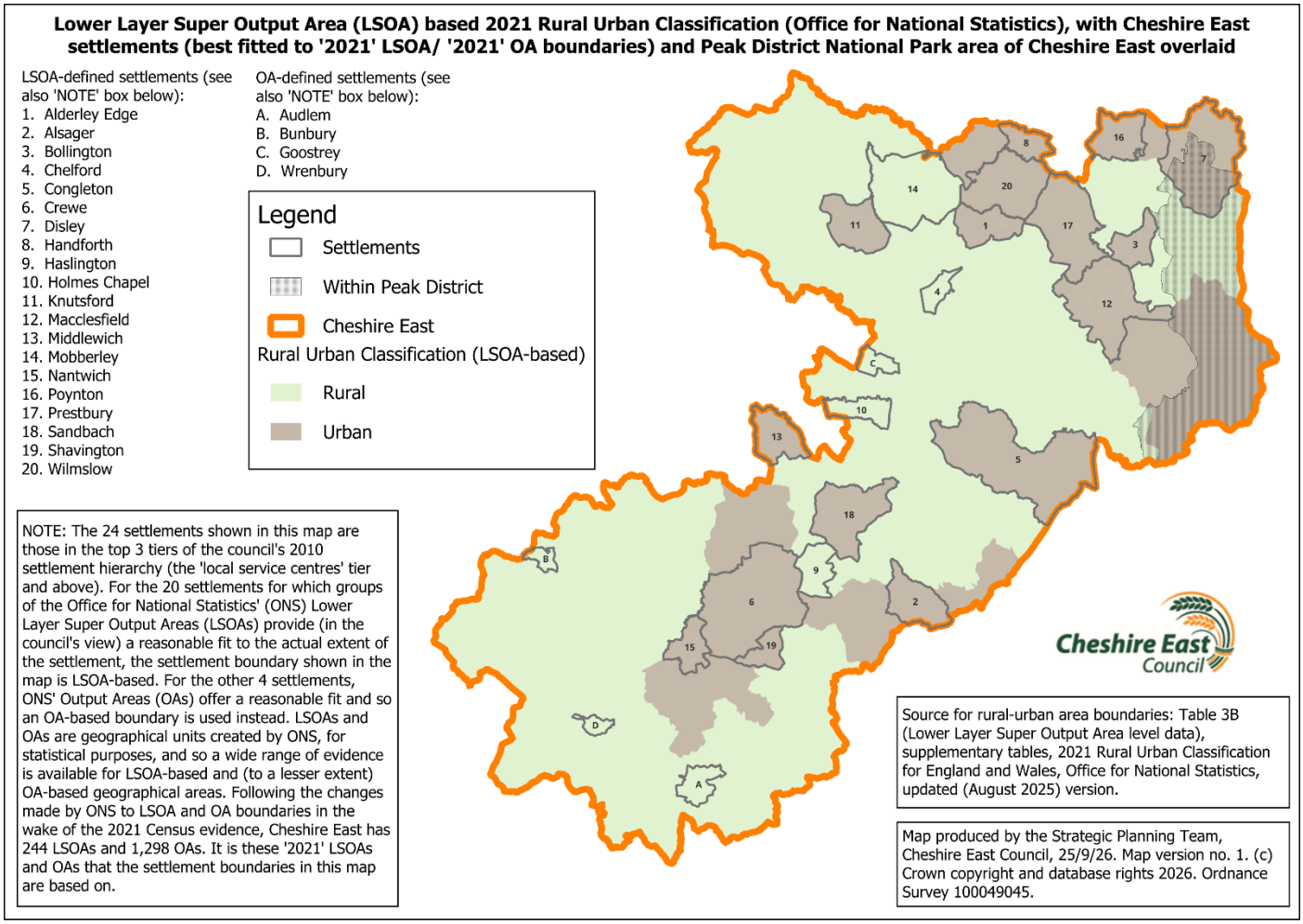


Figure A5.2: ONS MSOA-based rural/urban areas, with settlements and Peak Park area

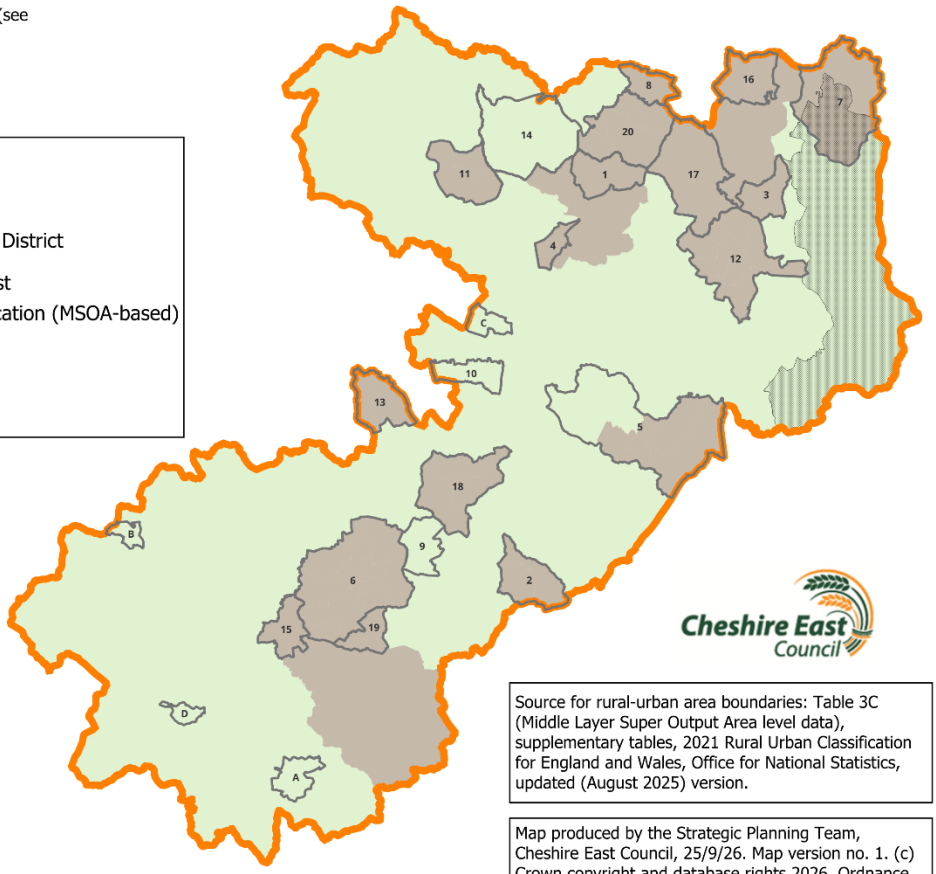
Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) based 2021 Rural Urban Classification (Office for National Statistics), with Cheshire East settlements (best fitted to '2021' LSOA/ '2021' OA boundaries) and Peak District National Park area of Cheshire East overlaid

LSOA-defined settlements (see also 'NOTE' box below):
1. Alderley Edge
2. Alsager
3. Bollington
4. Chelford
5. Congleton
6. Crewe
7. Disley
8. Handforth
9. Haslington
10. Holmes Chapel
11. Knutsford
12. Macclesfield
13. Middlewich
14. Mobberley
15. Nantwich
16. Poynton
17. Prestbury
18. Sandbach
19. Shavington
20. Wilmslow

OA-defined settlements (see also 'NOTE' box below):
A. Audlem
B. Bunbury
C. Goostrey
D. Wrenbury

Legend
- Settlements
- Within Peak District
- Cheshire East

Rural Urban Classification (MSOA-based)
- Rural
- Urban



NOTE: The 24 settlements shown in this map are those in the top 3 tiers of the council's 2010 settlement hierarchy (the 'local service centres' tier and above). For the 20 settlements for which groups of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) provide (in the council's view) a reasonable fit to the actual extent of the settlement, the settlement boundary shown in the map is LSOA-based. For the other 4 settlements, ONS' Output Areas (OAs) offer a reasonable fit and so an OA-based boundary is used instead. LSOAs and OAs are geographical units created by ONS, for statistical purposes, and so a wide range of evidence is available for LSOA-based and (to a lesser extent) OA-based geographical areas. Following the changes made by ONS to LSOA and OA boundaries in the wake of the 2021 Census evidence, Cheshire East has 244 LSOAs and 1,298 OAs. It is these '2021' LSOAs and OAs that the settlement boundaries in this map are based on.

Cheshire East Council

Source for rural-urban area boundaries: Table 3C (Middle Layer Super Output Area level data), supplementary tables, 2021 Rural Urban Classification for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics, updated (August 2025) version.

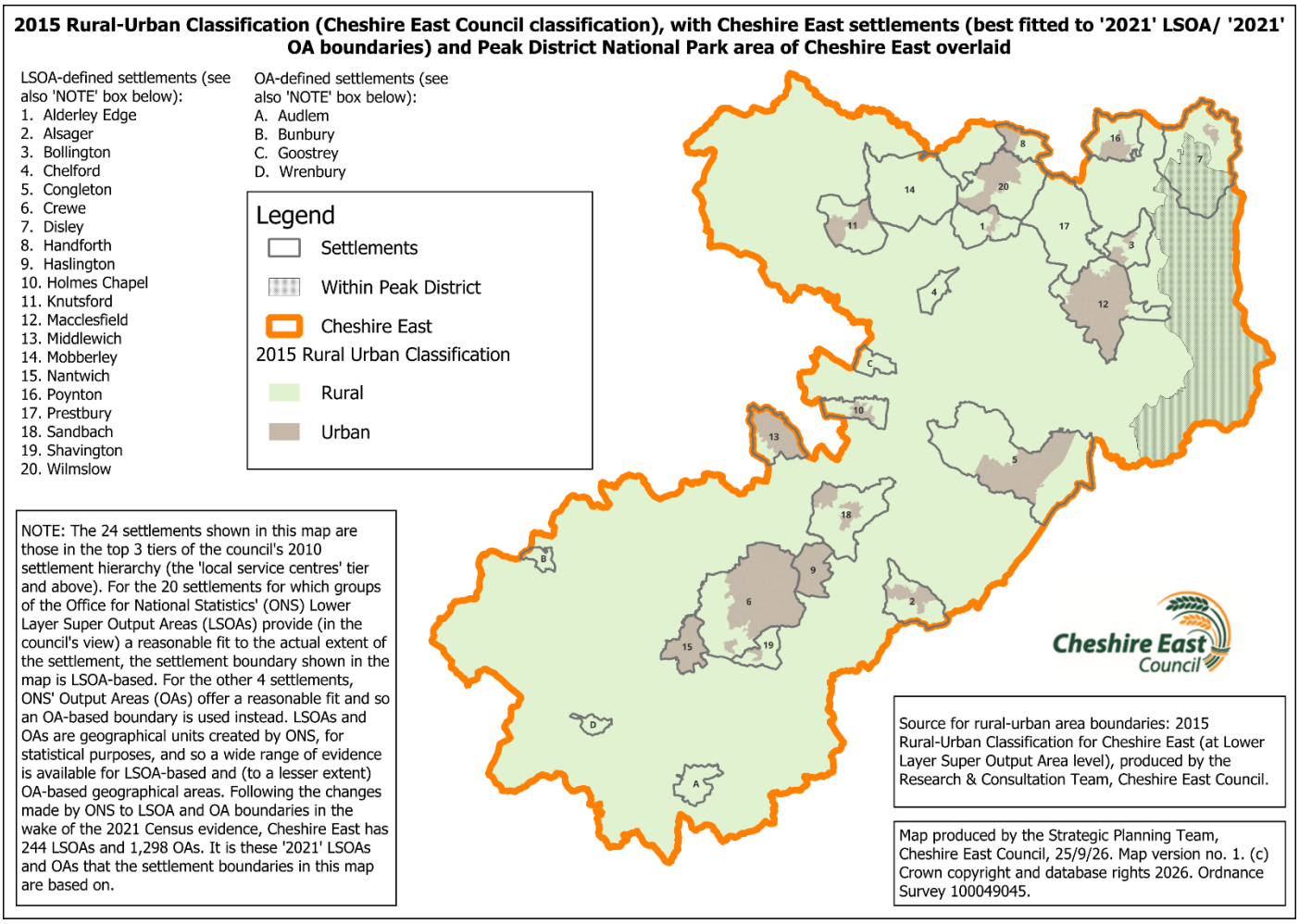
Map produced by the Strategic Planning Team, Cheshire East Council, 25/9/26. Map version no. 1. (c) Crown copyright and database rights 2026. Ordnance Survey 100049045.

Appendix 6: Map of rural/urban areas under council's 2015 classification

Source: 2015 Rural-Urban Classification for Cheshire East (at LSOA level), produced by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council.

Note: As set out in Chapter 2, the council's 2015 classification was used for (but only for) the rural/urban analysis of 2021 Census data. The rest of the rural/urban analysis in the report, which was undertaken more recently, is based on ONS' 2021 classification system.

Figure A6.1: Rural/urban areas under the council's 2015 classification



Appendix 7: Main settlement definitions used in this report

This appendix shows which of ONS' current (2021) LSOAs and OAs are assigned to each of the borough's 24 main settlements, under the council's updated settlement definitions. It is these definitions on which most of the settlement-level analysis[344] in this report is based.

The appendix consists of separate tables for the 20 settlements defined in LSOA terms (Table A7.1) and for the 4 settlements defined in OA terms (Table A7.2).

Table A7.1: LSOA based settlement definitions (covering 20 of the 24 main settlements)

Settlement	Names of the Cheshire East 2021 LSOAs assigned to this settlement[345]
Alderley Edge	012A, 012B, 012C
Alsager	040A, 040B, 040C, 040D, 042A, 042B, 042C
Bollington	013A, 013B, 013C, 013D, 013E
Chelford	012E
Congleton	022D, 026A, 026B, 026C, 026D, 027A, 027B, 027C, 027D, 028A, 028B, 028C, 028D, 029A, 029B, 029C, 029D
Crewe	034A, 034B, 034C, 034D, 035A, 035B, 035C, 035D, 035E, 036A, 036B, 036C, 036D, 036F, 036G, 037A, 037B, 037C, 037D, 038A, 038B, 038C, 038D, 039A, 039B, 039C, 039D, 039E, 043A, 043B, 043C, 043D, 044A, 044B, 044C, 044D, 045A, 045B, 045C, 045D, 046A, 046B, 046C, 046D, 046E, 046F, 048D, 048E
Disley	001A, 001B, 001C
Handforth	004B, 004C, 004D, 004E
Haslington	041B, 041C, 041E
Holmes Chapel	023A, 023B, 023C, 023D
Knutsford	009A, 009B, 009C, 009D, 010A, 010B, 010C, 010D, 010E
Macclesfield	014A, 014B, 014C, 014D, 015A, 015B, 015C, 015D, 015E, 016B, 016C, 016D, 016E, 016F, 016G, 017A, 017B, 017C, 017D, 017E, 018A, 018B, 018C, 018D, 018E, 018F, 018G, 019A, 019B, 019C, 019D, 021A, 021B, 021C, 021D
Middlewich	024A, 024B, 024C, 024D, 025A, 025B, 025C, 025D, 025E

[344] These definitions are used throughout the report, except where stated otherwise.

[345] For ease of reading, this table gives only the 4-digit suffixes on the end of the relevant LSOA's name, as all LSOA names begin with the name of the local authority they are in: for example, 'Cheshire East 012A'.

Settlement	Names of the Cheshire East 2021 LSOAs assigned to this settlement[345]
Mobberley	007D, 007E
Nantwich	047A, 047B, 047C, 047D, 047E, 050A, 050C, 050D, 050E, 050F, 053A, 053B
Poynton	002A, 002B, 002C, 002D, 002E, 003A, 003C, 003D, 003F
Prestbury	011A, 011B
Sandbach	030A, 030B, 030C, 030D, 031A, 031B, 031D, 031E, 031F, 032A, 032B, 032C, 032D
Shavington	048A, 048B, 048C
Wilmslow	004A, 004F, 005A, 005B, 005C, 005D, 006A, 006B, 006C, 006D, 008A, 008B, 008C, 008D
Other settlements[346]	001D, 007A, 007C, 007F, 007G, 011C, 012D, 020A, 020C, 020D, 020E, 020F, 022B, 022C, 022E, 033B, 033C, 033D, 033E, 033F, 033G, 033H, 033I, 041D, 041F, 041G, 041H, 051A, 051B, 051C, 051D, 051E, 052A, 052B, 052C, 052D, 052E, 053C, 053E, 053F

Table A7.2: OA based settlement definitions (covering 4 of the 24 main settlements)

Settlement	Codes of the Cheshire East 2021 OAs assigned to this settlement
Audlem	E00093090, E00093091, E00093092, E00093093, E00093095
Bunbury	E00093137, E00093138, E00093140, E00093141
Goostrey	E00092905, E00092906, E00092907, E00092909, E00092910, E00092911, E00092912
Wrenbury	E00093423, E00093424

[346] 'Other settlements' means the areas of Cheshire East not covered by the 20 settlements listed in Table A7.1. It therefore covers all the Cheshire East LSOAs not assigned to those 20 settlements, including the LSOAs containing the (OA based) definitions of Audlem, Bunbury. Goostrey and Wrenbury in Table A7.2.