

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Media Release



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CHESTER COMMUNITY INVITED TO HELP SHAPE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The 'community power' of a Chester neighbourhood is being harnessed under new rights giving local people more influence to shape development in their area.

More than 300 residents attended last week's Huntington and Great Boughton Community Forum to hear updates on the Saighton Camp development.

Cheshire West and Chester Council is now building on this enthusiasm for local planning issues by inviting residents to become involved in creating a 'Neighbourhood Plan'.

Part of the Government's Localism Bill, Neighbourhood Plans are a vision for an area created by the community and all planning applications must take them into account.

The authority is one of 17 nationwide selected to trial the new powers, which are designed to give local people a strong voice in deciding the look and feel of developments.

The Council is working with Parish Councils across the borough to develop Neighbourhood Plans - and Huntington and Great Boughton could emerge as one of the first.

The Community Forum, which was attended by Councillors and MP Stephen Mosley, heard from Saighton Camp developer CEG which gained approval for 375 houses on appeal after their planning application was rejected by the Council.

The company's representatives gave updates on the development, including the works underway on the A55 'Sainsbury's' roundabout, and responded to residents' questions.

Concerns were raised about the possibility of 500 further homes being built in the future. CEG responded to say that no application had been submitted and assured residents that any plans would be subject to full public consultation.

Alistair Jeffs, the Council's Head of Service for Policy, Performance and Partnership, thanked residents for their interest and explained how a Neighbourhood Plan would give them influence over future planning applications.

Local Councillor Mark Williams said: "I am delighted that so many residents took the opportunity to attend this meeting – the turnout was fantastic.

"We are keen to build upon this community involvement to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, which can be seen as a real practical example of Localism at work.

"It will give local people the opportunity to outline their priorities, from determining the location of shops, offices and schools, to setting standards of design for new housing.

"These are exciting new rights for communities, giving them real power over planning applications and the future development of their neighbourhood."

Local residents are being invited to find out more about developing a Neighbourhood Plan at a joint public meeting of the two local parish councils, Great Boughton and Huntington on September 19.

Story Note: Neighbourhood Plans will be prepared by 'qualifying bodies', which are Parish/Town Councils and Neighbourhood Forums in non-parished areas. The preparation involves a four stage process:

- (i) Drafting of order/plan (with input from the local people and organisations)
- (ii) Local examination by an appointed examiner
- (iii) Referendum based upon same eligibility criteria as local elections
- (iv) If majority in favour, then the local authority must bring order into effect or adopt the plan. Adopted plans then become part of the statutory 'development plan'.

-Ends-