

## Response to the Bollington Neighbourhood Plan

The Mersey Forest Team welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Bollington Neighbourhood Plan update.

Cheshire East is a core Partner in the Mersey Forest. The Mersey Forest is one of England's Community Forests established in 1991 with the vision to "get more from trees" to help make Merseyside and Cheshire one of the best places in the country to live.

The Forest works with partners, communities and landowners across rural and urban areas, to plant trees and woodlands, improve their management and complement other habitats. This will increase woodland cover to 20% of the area. It will revitalise a woodland culture and bring economic and social benefits through the transformed environment.

The Mersey Forest Plan is a long term and strategic guide to the work of the Forest and its partners. It is recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework as a material consideration in preparing development plans and deciding planning applications.

[The Mersey Forest Plan web version single new.pdf \(merseyforest.org.uk\)](#)

Bollington sits within the Mersey Forest boundary, therefore it is recommended that Bollington Neighbourhood Plan makes reference to the Mersey Forest Plan, drawing particular attention to policies related to objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan:

**Policy 2 Empowering communities:** We will encourage all to participate in the planning, enhancement and enjoyment of The Mersey Forest and, through their commitment to it, to play a part in its long-term stewardship and ownership.

**Policy 13 Wildlife, biodiversity, and ecosystems:** We will ensure that the natural regeneration, planting and management of trees, woodlands and associated habitats has a positive impact on biodiversity, complementing other important habitats. Ecological networks will be maintained, enhanced, repaired and created to allow species to move. In some instances, for example where a site has a statutory designation or is a Local Wildlife Site for a different habitat, planting is likely to be inappropriate.

**Policy 14 Climate change:** We will safeguard, plant and manage trees and woodlands for their role in climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience – such as providing urban cooling, carbon storage, flood alleviation and water management, helping wildlife adapt, low carbon fuels and products, sustainable travel routes, and outdoor recreation opportunities. We will design, plant and manage them to increase their resilience to potential climate change impacts, such as changing pests and diseases.

**Policy 17 Health and wellbeing:** We will promote the health and wellbeing benefits of trees and woodlands, for individual health as well as the wider wellbeing of our communities. We will make use of the maturing woodland resource to support the five ways to wellbeing. We will work with health professionals to maximise the use of woodlands, from increased day to day use, through to General Practitioner referrals.

**Policy 20 Culture, heritage, and landscape:** We will work towards a new culture around trees and woodlands, and their usefulness to society. This will include engaging communities by integrating landscape, heritage, and the arts into the design, planting and management of trees and woodlands.

The Mersey Forest Plan is currently being refreshed with input from partners, including Cheshire East Council, with the aim to update policies to facilitate the continued support for tree planting and nature recovery across the Mersey Forest area. Increasing canopy cover to mitigate effects of climate change through tree and woodland planting is crucial for future-proofing urban settlements. We are currently working to produce an updated policies map that will set refreshed tree cover targets across the Mersey Forest area.

The Mersey Forest Team can assist with advising on tree planting scheme designs and delivery. The Mersey Forest has a number of delivery programmes to facilitate tree planting and habitat establishment, such as Trees for Climate and Northern Forest. The Forest can also support delivery through Section 106 agreements or Community Infrastructure Levies where it can be shown that our funds provide additionality in terms of the delivery of The Mersey Forest Plan. This will support Bollington's objective to preserve Open Spaces, retain the extent of the Green Belt and enhance valued wildlife habitats with native species.

We would welcome a meeting with those working on the Bollington Neighbourhood Plan for further discussions.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

On behalf of The Mersey Forest

Yours sincerely,

Planning Officer