

**EATON PARISH COUNCIL**  
**(In the authority of East Cheshire)**

**Clerk: Mrs. D. Waite, 8 Beechwood Drive, Eaton, Congleton, Cheshire  
CW12 2NQ. Tel. 01260 276385. E mail [eatonmaccclerk@aol.com](mailto:eatonmaccclerk@aol.com)**

**October, 2021**

**To all Consultees on the  
Community Governance Review**

**Dear Sir/Madam**

**Eaton Parish Council wishes to register its strong objection to the proposals put forward in the Community Governance Review (“CGR”) document.**

**Eaton is a small village at the southern edge of the Rural Ward of Gawsforth, and in accordance with approved policies within the CEBC Local Plan (“CELP”), emerging Site allocations and Development Policies Document (“SADPD”) Plan and through our own Neighbourhood Plan adopted in July 2021, look to retain this unique rural identity.**

**Eaton Parish Council accepts that boundaries and governance need to be reviewed and addressed from time to time to re-align with the ever-changing landscape, and has no objection to the stated aims of the CGR process.**

**Following discussions with Cheshire East Planning regarding CELP strategic sites LPS29 & LPS30 to the north of Congleton, large parts of which being within the Eaton Parish Council Boundary, it was accepted that these sites once completed are much closer to being functionally part of Congleton.**

**Homes built in the Buglawton area of Congleton on Malhamdale Road and Crompton Close accessed from the A54 (Buxton Road) can also be viewed as being functionally closer to Congleton, and it is correct that any review should take this into consideration.**

**Eaton Parish Council feel that the governance boundary should be reviewed and redrawn along these lines, and as such it would make sense for all homes to the south of Moss Lane and any future development within LPS29 on the western side of the A34, together with those in Malhamdale Road and Crompton Close to become part of the Congleton.**

### **HAVANNAH AND HAVANNAH LANE**

**Eaton has long established historical links with the ancient village of Havannah, and the Parish Council has represented the residents of Havannah on many issues over the years. Although Havannah is geographically located adjacent to the Buglawton area of Congleton, it has no obvious association with Congleton. Indeed, the residents of Havannah, with the support of the Parish Council, have always sought to retain their unique identity best demonstrated by ensuring that pedestrian access only is retained between Havannah and Buglawton and that vehicular access between the two is prevented.**

**Eaton Parish Council does not agree that the areas covered by Havannah and Havannah Lane should become part of Congleton. Historic links between Eaton and Havannah stretch back over 120 years, and although it is accepted that this area has changed in recent years this, on its own, does not justify the proposed expansion of Congleton Town. Eaton Parish Council understands this area extremely well with at least three current serving councilors either living there today or at some time in the past, resulting in many, many years intimate knowledge of this area.**

**The homes in this area are accessed from the A5365 to the north west, and it is very clear from a visual inspection of the area as opposed to simply viewing a map plan, that the topography of the area is quite different to the neighbouring Buglawton. Council provision of all services into this area, together with various utilities are provided from the A5365 on the north west side of the Dane Valley. If this is where the services are provided from, then it stands to reason that this is where any governance needs to come from. Future elected members representing proposed Ward 1 (North East) based on the southern side of the Dane Valley are likely to have a limited understanding of this area and little in common with the residents, leading to poorer representation, poorer governance and poorer outcomes all round. This makes no sense and runs counter to the stated aims of the CGR.**

**Eaton Parish Council is best placed to serve the interests of Havannah and Havannah Lane residents. We are of the view that the historic links between Eaton and Havannah dating back over 120 years should be maintained and that Congleton Town boundary should not be expanded into the area. A view which we feel is widely shared by the residents of Havannah.**

## **CONGLETON LINK ROAD**

**Eaton Parish Council strongly disagrees with the proposed governance boundary being drawn along the line of the Congleton Link Road. Specifically, the land north of Moss Lane, west of the A5365 and south of the Link Road, including the SBI of Cranberry Moss is vital to maintaining a Green Gap with Congleton and retaining the rural identity toward Eaton. Policy adopted in Eaton’s Neighbourhood Plan was endorsed by the Independent Examiner who commented as follows:**

***“The evidence tells me that Cheshire East Council has given consideration to the borough’s strategic housing needs and this has led to the allocation and development of strategic sites on the Eaton side of Congleton. In this context, I consider that further significant building in the remaining gap would be totally undesirable. To my mind, it will be important to maintain Eaton’s rural setting and the contrast provided by intervening open countryside.***

***I appreciate that the Congleton Bypass could be seen as a boundary to the physical extension of Congleton. However, this would be to extend development on the western side of the A536 by a considerable distance beyond the planned limits of Congleton and towards Eaton, markedly compromising the laudable objectives of the green gap policy in an area that includes Cranberry Moss and other natural landscape. In this instance, no modification of the policy is necessary in order to meet the Basic Conditions.<sup>1</sup>”***

**This position is upheld by the North Congleton Masterplan and the CELP, neither of which supports the redrawing of the governance boundary at the Congleton Link Road.**

**However, Maps 8a and 11 of the CGR propose redrawing the boundary to include this area as part of Congleton Town describing it as a ‘Proposed Expansion Area’. Eaton Parish Council strongly rejects this proposal. The CGR does not explain why Congleton should be expanded to include this area nor provide any supporting evidence other than to identify the new Link Road as a convenient boundary. Planning policies in the CELP (*inter-alia* Policy PG6 Open Countryside and Congleton Settlement Boundary), emerging SADPD (*inter-alia* Policy PG14 Local Green Gaps) and Neighbourhood Plan (Policy BNE2 Local Green Gaps) clearly seek to manage and protect this area from ‘expansion’. As far as planning policy is concerned, this land is in the Open Countryside and outside of the Congleton settlement boundary. Extending housing or employment development up to the Link Road over this area would be contrary to the countryside protection policies in the current CELP. This**

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<sup>1</sup> Report on Eaton Neighbourhood Plan 2020 – 2030 for Cheshire East, Andrew S Freeman (Independent Examiner), June 2020

area also includes Local Wildlife Site, Cranberry Moss and is within the Jodrell Bank consultation zone.

From a governance perspective and considering the actual number of council tax payers in this area, there are only a tiny number of residents who are in receipt of minimum provision of Council services. So, given that there is no Community Governance or Planning justifications for redrawing the boundary to include this area as part of Congleton, why is this identified as a 'Proposed Expansion Area' ?

Eaton Parish Council agrees that strategic sites and the areas of Buglawton identified should be reviewed, and it is right and proper that a Governance boundary review is conducted in this context. It is however entirely wrong for the review to simplistically conclude that the new boundary should be drawn at the Congleton Link Road because it happens to be convenient, when the existing analysis and evidence clearly does not support it. The CGR is a review of Community Governance to '*continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government*', it is not a means to opportunistically gain land for future speculative development or so called 'expansion'. Dozens of sites have been strategically allocated to the north of Congleton in the CELP, and also in the emerging SADPD for housing and employment. But detailed analysis in the SADPD, supported by the latest five-year land supply for housing<sup>2</sup> make it very clear from a housing perspective that there is no need to allocate any more sites.

## **THE FUTURE OF EATON PARISH COUNCIL**

The CGR recommends that due to the reduction in residents from the proposed boundary changes, Eaton Parish Council would cease to be a viable council and should therefore be merged with either Marton Parish or with North Rode Parish. Eaton Parish Council strongly rejects this proposal for the reasons set out concerning Havannah and the Link Road, and also the analysis included below.

In common with much of the rest of the CGR document there is no justification or evidence to support a merger with Marton or North Rode from a governance perspective. The only apparent justification for a merger being that we happen to be neighbours. This is entirely without merit, totally unacceptable to both Eaton Parish Council and the adjoining Parishes and is likely to create a democratic deficit leading to poorer governance for all concerned.

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[https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/council\\_information/media\\_hub/media\\_releases/council%27s-latest-land-supply-figure-gives-further-boost-to-home-seekers.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/media_hub/media_releases/council%27s-latest-land-supply-figure-gives-further-boost-to-home-seekers.aspx)

**Eaton and the other local rural parish councils each have their own unique issues to deal with and to suggest that residents' interests will be best served in this manner is nonsense. It is very clear that the governance issues faced by Eaton given its proximity to Congleton, the new Link Road and the sand quarry workings are entirely different to that of either Marton or North Rode.**

**Eaton Parish Council takes a very active role in all local issues with good evidence of consistent engagement from a variety of sources demonstrating high quality local representation on behalf of residents, most recently shown in the referendum and ultimate adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan earlier this year and implementation of traffic mitigation measures for the village ahead of the new Link Road opening. It should also be noted that Eaton Parish Council meets regularly (even virtually during Covid-19 lockdown), with minutes made available online and in the Congleton Chronicle. Eaton Parish has no co-opted members.**

**Based on the most recent 2021 electoral register for Eaton Parish, we have conducted the following analysis:**

	<b>Current Parish Boundary</b>	<b>Boundary Proposed by Eaton PC<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Boundary Proposed by CEBC CGR<sup>3</sup></b>
<b>Number of Electors</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Minimum Number of Electors required to be a viable parish<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>150</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Excess</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>% Excess</b>	<b>259%</b>	<b>116%</b>	<b>46%</b>

**1. Section 94(3) of the Local Government and Public Involvement Health Act 2007 states that if a parish has 150 or fewer local government electors, the review must recommend that the parish should not have a council. This table shows that this does not apply to Eaton Parish Council.**

**2. Eaton Parish Council proposes that Strategic Sites LPS 29 & LPS 30, Crompton Close and Malhamdale Road should be transferred to an expanded Congleton Town Council. Moss Lane, Havannah Lane and Havannah should remain part of a viable Eaton Parish Council.**

**3. CEBC CGR proposed boundary as per Map 8a and Map 11**

**The figure quoted in the CGR document of 192 residents within the proposed revised governance boundary for Eaton does not appear to be correct. Our analysis of the latest Electoral Register would indicate a figure of 219 residents within the proposed CEBC CGR boundary for Eaton, a figure which is 46% higher than the minimum requirement to form a Parish Council and already greater than that of either Marton or North Rode.**

**Eaton Parish Council proposes that any revised modifications to the governance boundary of Eaton Parish should ensure that all properties in Moss Lane, Havannah Lane and Havannah remain in a viable Parish serving the village of Eaton, Havannah and surrounding areas. Analysis in the table above shows that this would result in a total of 324 residents, which far exceeds the minimum requirement of 150 for a viable Parish council according to Section 94(3) of the Local Government and Public Involvement Health Act 2007.**

**To summarise, Eaton Parish is a small rural community which has had an active Parish Council for almost 120 years. Eaton must retain its own independent Parish Council to assist all residents of Eaton & Havannah in dealing with the real local issues such as Congleton Town urban expansion, management of the Eaton Neighbourhood Plan, ongoing mineral extraction (Sand Quarry), Highway issues, and many more that are particular to our area. To abolish or merge this council will sweep away longstanding historic links to the residents of Eaton and Havannah, and remove the effectiveness of the Parish Council to represent the local residents when dealing with local issues, thereby creating a democratic deficit and poorer representation for all residents.**

**In view of the above, Eaton Parish Council requests that the Governance review committee give serious consideration to the proposed alternative boundary changes put forward by Eaton Parish and set out in this document before the final boundary changes are adopted. Eaton Parish Council is presenting this alternative proposal in good faith on the basis that Cheshire East has said that it is *“anxious to hear the view of the public and interested bodies”* from Eaton and that *“Nothing is yet decided”*.**

**Notwithstanding, should the Governance review committee choose to ignore our analysis and boundary recommendations, then the case to abolish Eaton Parish Council is still not made. Even if the CGR proposals are adopted as they stand, then analysis in this paper reveals that a smaller Eaton Parish will still have more electors than either Marton or North Rode, and more than enough to comfortably meet the requirements of Section 94(3) of the Local Government and Public Involvement Health Act 2007. To paraphrase Leader of the Council, Sam Corcoran’s remarks in the News Release of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, - *There should certainly not be change for change’s sake*.**

**Yours faithfully**

**The Chair and Parish Council of Eaton**