

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council



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Response of the Somerford Parish Council

1. Executive Summary

Cheshire East Borough Council (CEBC), as the principal authority, has embarked upon a Community Governance Review of its area and in so doing has made draft recommendations which include abolishing the parish of Somerford and merging the major part of the parish into the neighbouring parish of Congleton Town, with the residual part merging with the parishes of Hulme Walfield & Somerford Booths. This document sets out the response of the Somerford Parish Council to these recommendations.

Section 3 sets out the specific draft recommendations made by CEBC relating to the abolition of Somerford as a parish with the observations of Somerford Parish Council appended to each extract from the principal document. It is noted that the principal document provides little or no evidence or justification for the abolition other than administrative convenience.

Section 4 sets out the view of the Somerford Parish Council which amounts to a total rejection of the draft recommendations and a detailed argument for retention of the parish on the grounds that it is a well-run parish which has the support of its residents. It acknowledges some key aims of a community governance review as set out in the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance document and demonstrates how these have been met and exceeded by the Somerford Parish Council.

Section 5 deals with the evidence of support the parish has from its residents and its Member of Parliament, detailing the methodology of measuring that support. It is noted that the measurement is not simply gauged by counting numbers but is more potently demonstrated by the narrative of what lies behind the support. It is clear that the residents of Somerford have a great love for the parish in which they live by choice and the parish council is fortunate to have their respect also.

Section 6 puts forward a proposal, notably ignored from the pre-consultation survey, to consider redrawing the boundary along the A54 Holmes Chapel Road to correct what some see as an anomaly which has been growing over many years and which has resulted in residents along that road not being sure in which parish they live and next-door neighbours living in different parishes.

Section 7 also addresses a boundary issue which has arisen as a result of development of farmland, with neighbouring estates being in different parishes and suggesting a parish boundary following the line of a road rather than a long-since removed hedge. Again, this was raised in the pre-consultation survey but ignored by the authors of the current principal document.

Section 8 draws the conclusion that the only acceptable and justifiable outcome is that the parish of Somerford will continue to thrive until the next Community Governance Review and beyond as an independent, Gold Award, parish.

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2. Introduction

The Somerford Parish Council are submitting this response following direct engagement with its parishioners as detailed in this Introduction and in Section 5 below.

This engagement has been undertaken in three different formats, namely:

- We have written to each of the addresses recorded on the Royal Mail Postcode Finder website (<https://www.royalmail.com/find-a-postcode>) as being within the parish of Somerford with an explanation of the Cheshire East Borough Council (CEBC) Community Governance Review (CGR) draft recommendations together with the views of the parish council and enclosing a Response Form for return by hand or by post. This letter also signposts recipients to the relevant page of the parish council website.
- We have posted the letter and Response Form referred to at 1 above on the parish council website and enabled completion and submission of the Response Form online.
- We have visited each one of the addresses to which the letter has been posted on at least one occasion to explain, discuss and request support for a petition opposing the proposal contained in the CEBC CGR with regard to the parish of Somerford.

In the letter mailed to Somerford residents and posted online, we have signposted both the CEBC CGR website and consultation and encouraged participation in both that consultation and the consultation conducted by the parish council.

We have also, within that letter, signposted the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guidance document regarding CGRs.

We have emphasised in our communications with residents the importance of ensuring that community governance arrangements continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.

We also informed residents that the parish council engaged with CEBC in a pre-consultation survey which was launched on 28 October 2019, and which invited anyone interested in the review to provide a response. We told them that the CEBC had completely ignored our two suggestions made in that pre-consultation survey, and consequently the draft recommendations as developed for the formal 12-week consultation contained no reference to those responses.

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3. The Cheshire East Borough Council Community Governance Review Draft Recommendations – Congleton area – with observations

The relevant section of the document at page 104 of Appendix B starts with a summary of the current governance arrangements for Congleton Town Council and then states:

“The parish of Congleton has expanded and is due to expand further to the north, into the present parishes of Eaton, Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, and Somerford, and it is proposed that these areas should be transferred to the parish of Congleton.”

This is an inaccurate and thus misleading statement which suggests a biased approach by CEBC. The parish of Congleton has NOT expanded but an impression is created that the areas in question are already part of Congleton Town and thus the CGR recommendation does nothing more than regularise this position.

The document then goes on to state at page 105:

“Local Plan Strategy site LPS 26 is a major new housing development which is partly within Somerford, but which is adjacent to the existing urban development in Congleton and is a consequence of that town’s expansion. There is also a significant existing housing overspill from Congleton into Somerford. Moving these areas into the parish of Congleton would reflect these expansions and would bring all of LPS 26 and the existing housing overspill within Congleton. Map 8a (“Congleton”) and Map 34 (“Somerford”) in Appendix 5 show the extent of the area that would be transferred (the orange shaded “potential expansion area” within the parish of Somerford).”

In fact the majority of LPS 26 is within Somerford with only a relatively small area, principally the Turnstone Grange (Miller Homes) & Blossom Gate (Seddon’s) developments, being in Congleton. None of the developments within LPS 26, referred to as “the existing housing overspill”, cross a parish boundary; each one is either entirely within Somerford (Loachbrook, Somerford Grove, Blackfirs Park, Somerford Reach, Radnor Green and others yet to be named) or in Congleton (Turnstone Grange and Blossom Gate). Later in this response a recommendation is made for the Turnstone Grange development to be moved into the parish of Somerford by redrawing the boundary line to follow Back Lane rather than following a hedge-line at the rear of the estate.

The document continues:

“The proposed northern boundary of the parish of Congleton is shown in Map 8a (“Congleton”) in Appendix 5. Much of this boundary will follow the Congleton Link Road (CLR), and attempts have been made to use clearly identifiable physical boundaries (including existing roads and the River Dane) for the remainder.”

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It is significant that the proposed boundary follows the CLR until it reaches that part of Somerford at which the only large residential development north of the CLR is to be located, and it then reverts to the traditional boundary of the River Dane. The CEBC Local Plan originally stated that no development north of the CLR would be allowed but that assurance became compromised, requiring an urgent amendment to the Local Plan.

CEBC adopts the new CLR as a convenient “identifiable physical boundary” until it becomes inconvenient whereupon it reverts to the traditional boundary of the River Dane. Consequently, this encloses a further future development area currently wholly within the parish of Somerford.

The document goes on to discuss the proposed warding of the newly enlarged parish of Congleton by stating:

“Ward 4 (provisional name South West): polling districts CNW2 and CNW3, the part of Eaton Parish west of A536 that is recommended for transfer to Congleton and the parts of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths and Somerford parishes that are recommended for transfer to Congleton.”

“Likewise the Borough Council is proposing a slightly enlarged town council, to reflect both the increase in the electoral size and to support a warding arrangement of five parish wards with an allocation of councillors to wards that will be fair and equitable to the electors of the different wards.

A town council of 22 seats for the enlarged council would reflect the Cheshire East average for a parish of this size.

The proposed governance arrangements for the enlarged parish, with a council of 22 seats, are as follows:

[Ward] 4 (South West?) 5 councillors – 5,791 electors – 1,158.2 electors per councillor.”

The proposal considerably reduces the representation currently enjoyed by Somerford electors.

Elsewhere in the document it is indicated that, as of 2018, Somerford has 7 councillors for 713 electors, equalling 1 councillor per 101.9 electors.

Even assuming a doubling of electors in Somerford by 2025, the ratio would still only be 1 councillor per 204 electors.

Moreover, the 7 councillors of Somerford equal 100% of the vote in the parish whereas the proposed 5 councillors in the new South West ward would command less than 23% of the voting capacity in the whole of Congleton parish with 22 councillors.

With 5 councillors for 5,791 electors, that is 1 councillor per 1,158.2 electors, Somerford residents would be in the minority and would struggle to be heard in the Ward let alone in the full Congleton Town Council.

Somerford parish is dealt with individually at page 112, stating:

The current governance arrangements are as follows:

Councillor no. 7 - Electors (2018) 713 - Ratio of electors per councillor (2018) 101.9

The proposed boundary change with the parish of Congleton will reduce the electorate of Somerford to 107 electors (2025). At this level, the parish cannot be viable as a separate parish.

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The Borough Council is anxious to hear the views of the public and interested bodies on the merger of the remainder of Somerford parish with the parish of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths.

Reference should be made to the section on Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths for the implications of such a merger with that parish. In that section it is suggested that a parish council of seven seats would be appropriate to represent the 387 electors of the merged parish (2025 electorate). This would mean a ratio of 55.3 electors per councillor."

It is significant that the document, when considering Somerford in isolation, begins with a presumption that it is reduced to an electorate of 107 and as such no-longer viable. At no time does it consider the parish in its current form with over 600 dwellings and approximately 1300 electors. Further it does not address the pre-consultation representations made by the parish council nor does it acknowledge the core values set out in the LGBCE Guidance on *community cohesion (para.96); a wider choice of governance at the most local level (para.97); a trend in the creation, rather than the abolition, of parishes (para.117); abolition not being undertaken unless clearly justified (para. 119); reflection of community identity and interests (Para.117)*. Whilst it is acknowledged that these are values which the Review will be obliged to weigh heavily in the balance following the Consultation, it would have been expected that the draft proposals should at least have acknowledged these principals and assured the voting public that such considerations were vital to the outcome of the process.

However, rather than considering issues which might not accord with their intended direction of travel, the document in this section only considers the parish in its divided format. The boundary between Somerford and Somerford Booths is the course of the River Dane which has no public vehicular crossing point between Chelford Road, Somerford and the A535 at Holmes Chapel thus there would be no crossing point between the conjoined parishes. The CEBC Draft response has overlooked the essential element of "strong communication links" between conjoined parishes. The Somerford Parish Council concur with the view of the Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths Parish Council that there is no community cohesion or physical affinity between the two parishes.

It is the view of the Somerford Parish Council that, were the issue to become relevant, a merger with Brereton Parish would be more appropriate. It will be noted that elsewhere in this response a proposal is advanced to redraw the boundary line between Somerford and Brereton which currently meanders along the A54 Holmes Chapel Road, resulting in some properties on that road being in Somerford whilst others, in some instances next-door neighbours, are in Brereton.

However, we have already received a clear indication that the residents in this locality will express an overriding wish to maintain the status quo of living in Somerford.

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4. Submission of the Somerford Parish Council

The Somerford Parish Council is unanimously opposed to the draft recommendations contained in the CEBC document as they relate to the parish.

We resolved from an early stage to both inform our parishioners of the importance of the Review and to encourage them to engage with the process at all levels.

The parish council approach was much influenced by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance document concerning boundary reviews which, amongst other things, makes it clear that:

- (i) *any review should consider the information it has received in the form of **expressions of local opinion** on the matters considered by the review, **representations made by local people and other interested persons**, and also use its own knowledge of the local area.*
- (ii) *a recommendation to **abolish** or establish a **parish council**, may negatively impact on **community cohesion**, either within the proposed parish area, or in the wider community within which it would be located, **and therefore should not be made.***
- (iii) *the Government **expects to see a trend in the creation, rather than the abolition, of parishes.***
- (iv) ***the abolition of parishes should not be undertaken unless clearly justified.** Any decision a principal council may make on whether to abolish a parish should not be taken lightly.*
- (v) *in future, **principal councils** will wish to consider the sort of principles identified in the document in arriving at their decisions on whether or not to abolish a parish council. In doing so, they **will be aware that decisions about** community governance arrangements, including decisions for **the abolition of a parish council, may attract a challenge by way of judicial review.***
- (vi) *The 2006 white paper underlined the Government's commitment to **parish councils** as an established and **valued form of neighbourhood democracy** with an important role to play in both rural, and increasingly urban, areas.*

The draft proposals for Somerford make no reference to local opinion, community cohesion or neighbourhood democracy and do not claim any justification beyond administrative convenience. The proposals appear to be based on the newly created physical boundary imposed by the CLR. It argues that all areas within the CLR should transfer to Congleton Town. However, it belies that argument by including an area of Somerford which extends beyond the CLR to include an area which is predominantly rural, but which includes a site designated for residential development in the amended local plan. The result of this is to impose the proposed extended boundary of Congleton Town between what would be the rural "residue" of Somerford and the parish with which it is proposed to be merged. The remaining boundary line is the River Dane with no crossing point within the conjoined parishes.

The parish council were encouraged by CEBC to raise any relevant boundary issues at an early stage and two such issues were raised. These are dealt with in detail in the following sections, however, it is of concern that they are not even acknowledged as having been made by those who were responsible for the draft recommendations. The enlargement of the parish of Congleton Town and administrative convenience appears to have been uppermost in the thoughts and intents behind the recommendation to divide Somerford into two parts.

The document does not give any indication of any single factor which might be considered as an advantage of merger of Somerford with its larger neighbour. Somerford Parish Council understands that

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difficulty since it appears that there are none. On the other hand, there are numerous disadvantages, some of which we expand on here:

The loss of sense of place. Somerford residents have for many years been proud of the rural parish in which they live. Because of this they have fought many battles to maintain what they see as their rural idyll. Initially they opposed the development originally named Loachbrook Farm by the developers but now known as Loachbrook Meadow and they were supported in this by CEBC who refused planning permission and even went so far as to pursue a Judicial Review of the planning inspector's decision to overturn their refusal which they lost. Thereafter the parish council strongly opposed the application to develop what is now Blackfirs Park and Somerford Reach estates, going so far as to support a Judicial Review of the CEBC refusal to grant Village Green status to the surrounding verges, proceedings which again CEBC lost. It opposed the building of the Congleton Link Road and proposed alternative strategies which would have protected many acres of valuable farmland and surrounding countryside, a battle which was lost when the government were persuaded to contribute a major share of the cost of the project.

Since then, the parish council has accepted that development of parts of the parish was inevitably and have worked to try to ensure that all the development, both roads and residential, has had the least possible impact on all residents. It has liaised with road builders, developers, house builders and the like to both minimise inconvenience and ensure that all parties carry out their obligations in every respect.

Loss of Community Cohesion and Identity. It became obvious to Somerford Parish Council that those residents who moved into the newly built homes in the parish did so out of a desire to not merely live "in the area" but that they specifically wanted to live "in Somerford". They were buying more than a new house; they were buying into a rural location with a rural mentality. A community which had the greatest regard and respect for nature, the environment, green fields and open spaces. Many residents of these new houses are Somerford residents of long-standing. They were born and brought up in Somerford and wished to remain in the area, or they were those living in large, older, houses who wished to move into a new home because it suited their needs.

The parish council has encouraged residents from these newly developed areas to participate in Somerford life and, indeed, the parish council currently has three of its seven members who live in these new areas and who are fully engaged with the running of the parish for the benefit of the whole community.

Loss of Neighbourhood Democracy. As noted above, Somerford Parish Council has seven councillors to represent its fast-growing population. Some ten years ago we were a community of approximately 150 dwellings, we are now at about 650 dwellings and still growing fast. In the next 5 – 10 years that number will grow to over 1000 dwellings based on current outline planning. Despite this growth, the 7 councillors still provide residents with approximately a 1 to 200 representation. Even with a substantial increase of that population in the parish, the ratio will still be far less than the draft recommendations propose if the merger with Congleton were to come about.

Loss of Financial Acumen. The Somerford Parish Council current precept is £40K annually. There are no current proposals to increase that figure. As the number of dwellings increases, the individual household burden to service that precept is expected to fall quite significantly. However, a move into Congleton Town would almost certainly involve an increase in the precept per residential property, the current situation being:

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Congleton	60.73	70.85	80.97	91.09	111.33	131.57	151.82	182.18
Somerford	43.54	50.80	58.05	65.31	79.82	94.34	108.85	130.62

It is not just a question of individual costs increasing, the issue is where that money is spent.

Currently the whole of the £40K collected from Somerford residents is spent in Somerford and how it is spent is decided by Somerford residents. If the CEBC proposal is successful, the £40K would be handed to the 22 councillors of Congleton Town to administer and would be spent throughout that enlarged parish, with most of it, doubtless, spent in the town centre to maintain its assets and to satisfy the demands of the bulk of its population, with the residents of Somerford seeing very little of it spent in their locality.

Loss of potential for future achievements of the parish council. Somerford is no longer the sleepy, rural by-water it was 10 years ago. It has matured alongside the growth forced upon it and consequently become intensely pro-active whilst keeping pace with the aspirations of its residents. Arguably, most significant of its achievements is that Somerford Parish Council has proved its worth on the national stage by becoming a **Gold Award** parish council. Earlier this year it was able to issue the following press release:

“Somerford Parish Council is very pleased and proud to announce that they have once again been awarded **Quality Gold** under the **Local Council Award Scheme**. We were first awarded Quality Gold in August 2016 under this most prestigious scheme and at that time we were one of only three holders in Cheshire – **to date there are still only five Cheshire parishes which hold the award and just fifty parishes in the whole of England**. The Quality Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development. In announcing this award, we pay tribute to the hard work and commitment over the last 12 years of our then clerk, Julie Mason, who was recently appointed as Clerk to the Bollington Town Council, and welcome our new Clerk, Carlton Evans, who will be working hard to maintain the excellent standards for which Somerford Parish has become known.”

Cheshire East Borough Council has been singularly silent in its response to this news until now. Their response now being – **Abolish it!**

Of significance to its residents has been this sample list of achievements over the last 5 years:

- Persuaded the RSPB to donate 10 acres of prime agricultural land, worth at least £7M in development value, to the parish thus saving the land from the certainty of housing development.
- Raised over £150,000 in sponsorship and donations to create the Rhead’s Meadows Nature Park on that land.
- Improved the footpath link between Rhead’s Meadows and the Back Lane Village Green Playing Fields.
- Agreed with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust a 99-year lease on Blackfirs Wood with the intention of retaining and improving it as a valuable local resource.
- Secured s.106 funding for improvements to the wildlife ponds at Blackfirs Wood.
- Committed to invest £10K over the next 2 years to improve the visitor experience at Blackfirs Wood.

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- Worked with the CEBC and their main contractors, Graham, to ensure that the design features of the Congleton Link Road wherever possible benefit residents and to ensure the construction phase impacts upon them as little as possible
- Working with all the major housebuilders in the parish (Bovis, Anwyl, Barratt David Wilson, Bellway) to ensure that their developments are completed in accordance with plans and conditions.
- Persistent lobbying of Cheshire East Highways (CEH) to secure improvements on local roads and footways.
- Persisted in the face of CEBC resistance to secure a 40-mph speed limit on much of Holmes Chapel Road (A54) and placing a speed indicator/recording sign on that road.
- Persuaded CEH (i) to extend the 40-mph speed limit to cover the whole of Blackfirs Lane and much of Chelford Road; (ii) to improve the design of the junction of those two roads to reduce speed; and (iii) to extend the pavement at the Back Lane roundabout to avoid pedestrians having to cross 3 roads rather than one.
- The provision of dog bins throughout the parish.

Somerford Neighbourhood Plan 2015 - 2030

Somerford Parish Council was one of the first parish councils in Cheshire East to have made a Neighbourhood Plan and the Borough Council were intimately involved with its development and preparation for adoption. That plan now forms part of the statutory development plan for the area together with the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy.

The process was commenced by Somerford Parish Council in November 2014 by the appointment of a Steering Group, supported by Cheshire East Borough Council and the parish council but independent of them, which first met in December 2014. An application was made to Cheshire East for Somerford to be designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area – the area applied for being the same as the area covered by Somerford Parish. This neighbourhood area was designated by Cheshire East on 20th July 2015.

The plan was developed over the next two years and made following a referendum held on the 15th February 2018 when 151 votes were cast in favour of a Yes against 19 cast in favour of a No from an electorate of 579, representing a turn-out of 29.53%

The Executive Summary of the Plan states *“The purpose of the plan and the policies it embodies is to inform and control planning decisions in Somerford so that it can be kept as an identifiable attractive rural village community while still contributing to the wider geographical community as it is required to do by the Localism Act of 2011 which defines the role and powers of neighbourhood plans. The main aims of the plan are: **to deliver sustainable housing development over the plan period while retaining the rural character of the area**; to promote sustainable business that fit into the rural economy without significant environmental impact; to reduce the need for travel by car; to make travel in Somerford as safe as possible for all users; **to retain the rural character of Somerford** ; to develop Somerford as a thriving community; and **to ensure development is well designed and reflects the heritage and the distinctive character setting of the village.**”*

The Plan sets out the following **Vision, Aims and Objectives**, stating

“After consultations with residents a number of issues were identified and from these a set of aims were written to try to address these issues.

Our Vision:

Somerford should be kept as an identifiable attractive rural village community which enjoys the peace associated with being part of the countryside while still contributing to the wider

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geographical community. The character of Somerford must be maintained in order that its rural and agricultural surroundings remain an attractive place to live, work in and visit.

The aims were identified as follows:

- *To deliver sustainable housing development over the plan period while retaining the rural character of the area with its open countryside and ensuring it continues to be an attractive place to live.*
- *To promote sustainable businesses that fit into the rural economy without significant environmental impact.*
- *To reduce the need for travel by car and shorten the length and duration of journeys and to make travel in Somerford as safe as possible for all users.*
- *To retain the rural character of Somerford by preserving our attractive landscape, environment and green spaces and ensuring the Parish remains distinct and separate from Congleton, with high quality agriculture land preserved, nature conservation supported, and its land used efficiently.*
- *To develop Somerford as a thriving community, meeting the needs of the community while maintaining the character and vitality of the village.*
- *To ensure development is well designed and reflects the heritage and the distinctive character setting of the village.*

It is ironic that, just 2 years later the Council which approved these Visions, Aims and Objectives now propose that the parish should be abolished.

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5. Evidence of the support for the Somerford Parish Council submission

The parish council was most concerned that the CEBC Consultation would only be conducted online and would thus disenfranchise a significant section of the residents of the parish, many of whom will not be able or would be unwilling to engage with an online process. It was particularly noticed that the CGR Sub-Committee, which was tasked with drafting the recommendations for consideration of the full council, favoured a postal system which would have reached all residents. It was apparent that there was a disconnect between this sub-committee and the officers of the Council. This proposal was overturned by the full council following strong opposition from the council's officers, principally on grounds of cost. It was disappointing that a once in 15/20-year process should be devalued on this basis. It was therefore decided by the Somerford Parish Council that we would consult with the residents directly in several differing ways, as set out in the Introduction to this Response, namely:

- A letter to each recorded residential address in the parish with a paper response form.
- A dedicated page on the parish council website with online response facility.
- A target of visiting every home in the parish at least once during the consultation period to explain the process and ascertain individual views.

The results of this multi-faceted consultation have demonstrated the overwhelming support Somerford residents give to the rejection of the draft recommendations of the report insofar as they relate to the parish of Somerford.

We set out the statistical results of these consultations within the appendices to this document which demonstrate the unity of purpose, thought and intent shared within the parish. A resounding vote of confidence for the parish council from its electorate.

We are grateful to our Member of Parliament, Fiona Bruce, for her continued support through the process and to those other supporters who have written and spoken of their concern regarding the CEBC proposal and their wish for this proud and hardworking parish to continue intact and independent.

Having considered the LGBCE guidelines and the strength of opinion expressed by the residents of the parish of Somerford, CEBC must acknowledge that the residents of Somerford are totally opposed to the draft recommendations and overwhelmingly in support of the retention of the parish within its existing boundaries, subject only to the expressions of those residents of Brereton and Congleton who have indicated a wish to be conjoined with Somerford.

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6. Proposal to redraw boundary between Somerford and Brereton

A proposal that the review body should consider re-drawing the boundary line between the parish of Somerford and the parish of Brereton so that the 64 dwellings presently located within the parish of Brereton which front onto, or which directly and solely connect via side roads with, the A54 Holmes Chapel Road, a road solely within the parish of Somerford, be re-located within the parish of Somerford.

The background to the proposal: The parish boundary between Somerford and Brereton joins the A54 Holmes Chapel Road at a point close to Keeper's Cottage and broadly follows the south-western side of that road until it reaches Davenport. The boundary line meanders along this south- western side with the result that many houses on that side of the road are in Brereton parish whilst others are in Somerford parish.

The postal addresses of all those properties is Somerford and many of the residents believe they live in Somerford, engaging with Somerford Parish Council from time to time. The confusion is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that members of the Brereton Parish Council met with representatives of the Somerford Parish Council to ask that the properly located Somerford Parish boundary sign close to Davenport Chapel be removed because many of their parishioners thought they lived in Somerford. The request was not agreed, rather a suggestion was made that the boundary should be redrawn at the first appropriate opportunity.

The parish council, encouraged by CEBC to raise any relevant boundary issues at an early stage, made this proposal during the pre-consultation survey stage of the review. Regrettably CEBC saw fit to totally ignore it.

Since it was submitted, we have been able to write to all, and visit many, of the residents of Brereton to inform them of our proposition, to seek their views and to assure them that it would only be included in this response document if a majority of those voting supported the change.

Details of the consultation response are included in Appendix 2 hereto.

It is the case that a significant majority of those voting have indicated support for the proposition as will be seen in the appendix.

The proposal is therefore now re-submitted in the hope and expectation that it will be considered as an appropriate matter for the review.

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7. Proposal to redraw boundary between Somerford and Congleton Town

A proposal that the review body should consider re-drawing the boundary line between the parish of Somerford and the parish of Congleton Town so that it follows the line of Back Lane with the result that all those properties constructed and under construction on the Miller Homes development site adjacent to Back Lane known as Turnstone Grange are moved into the parish of Somerford.

The background to the proposal: Turnstone Grange is one of the residential development sites within LPS26 of the amended Local Plan. It is wholly contained within the parish of Congleton. An adjoining site, also located within LPS26, to be developed under the name Astbury Park, previously known as Radnor Green, is currently subject to a reserved matters application by Stewart Milne Homes, is wholly within the parish of Somerford. These two sites were divided simply by a hedge through former farmland along which the parish boundary was drawn. It is submitted that these sites, from a public perception point of view, will be largely indistinguishable one from the other. Astbury Park is much the larger of the two developments.

Turnstone Grange has been promoted by Miller Homes since inception as being: *“Located in the aspirational parish of Somerford, Turnstone Grange is a new development of 2, 3- and 4-bedroom homes featuring our most popular house type designs.”* On that basis, many of the residents will be under the impression that they have purchased a property and live in Somerford.

It is submitted that the boundary line redrawn to follow Back Lane, which runs along the front of the Turnstone Grange estate, would be a much clearer and natural division between the respective parishes and enable the residents of Turnstone Grange and Astbury Park to relate to one another more easily and together to share their rural aspirations.

The parish council, encouraged by CEBC to raise any relevant boundary issues at an early stage, made this proposal during the pre-consultation survey stage of the review. Regrettably CEBC saw fit to totally ignore it.

Since it was submitted, we have been able to write to the residents of Turnstone Grange to inform them of our proposition but at the same time to assure them that it would only be included in this response document if a majority of those voting supported the move. It is therefore now re-submitted in the hope that it will be considered as an appropriate matter for the review.

Details of the consultation response are included in Appendix 3 hereto. It is the case that a majority of those voting have indicated support for the proposition as will be seen in the appendix.

The proposal is therefore now re-submitted in the hope and expectation that it will be considered as an appropriate matter for the review

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

8. Conclusion

Somerford Parish Council do not have any issues with the parish of Congleton. They are our respected neighbours and our relationship and interaction is good. The rural parish pays the town parish for various services, including, for instance, a dog bin emptying service. We expect to continue our good relationship for many years to come. However, the very clear message from the residents to the CEBC is

“We are different and we want to stay that way.”

We are able to focus on a relatively small part of Cheshire East Borough for the benefit of the residents who reside within it and those on our immediate borders at no cost to Cheshire East and with only a relatively small cost to its residents.

Please recognise this, as does our Member of Parliament, and leave well alone.

The statistical evidence, full details of which are available for scrutiny, proves that an overwhelming majority of those Somerford residents who expressed an opinion on the proposal by Cheshire East Borough Council in the Community Governance Review to abolish the parish of Somerford and move part of the parish into Congleton Town were opposed to the proposal and expressed a wish to remain as a separate parish with its own parish council.

The principal considerations as set out in the LGBCE Guidelines document were a recurring theme throughout the written responses received, both on paper and online, and the conversations held on doorsteps and at “polling tents” set up by parish councillors. It was clear that loss of a community voice was a major consideration along with loss of identity and community spirit. The voting electorate expressed much satisfaction with the work, representation and achievements of the parish council in recent years and wished to retain that level of democracy.

The fact that the parish has its own Neighbourhood Plan and its parish council is the proud holder of the Local Council Award Scheme Quality Gold should persuade the Cheshire East Borough Council that the area is well run and meeting the expectations and aspirations of its residents and that there is no justification for the abolition of the parish.

We believe that we have incontrovertibly demonstrated that **sense of place, community cohesion, shared identity, neighbourhood democracy** and **common purpose** are all alive and well and living in Somerford. To follow through with the proposal to abolish Somerford Parish would not just negatively impact upon these values but would destroy them for no benefit and should not be confirmed.

It is also submitted that, given the indication given by the residents of both Brereton and Congleton who would be affected by the respective proposals for those two parishes, consideration should be given, separately, to both those propositions.



Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

Appendix 1:

Copies of the documentation posted to all known addresses within Somerford Parish with statistical results.

1. LETTER TO RESIDENTS



Somerford Parish Council

A village in the heart of the Cheshire countryside

SAVE OUR SOMERFORD

You may have seen our Spring Newsletter with the somewhat emotive headline of **SOMERFORD PARISH IS TO BE ABOLISHED and you, your family and your home are moving to Congleton Town if Cheshire East Borough Council get their way!**but it was true and accurate and now is your chance to fight back!

The proposal

Cheshire East Borough Council (CEBC) has opened its consultation on its proposals for their changes to the town and parish boundaries which include the abolition of Somerford with a major part of it moving into Congleton Town and the little that is left being merged with various parts of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths to form a new parish. The consultation document can be viewed here: <https://surveys.cheshireeast.gov.uk/s/CGReview2/>

The justification

The principal justification for abolition of the parish is the Congleton Link Road which CEBC says forms a physical boundary separating the "rural area" from the new "town area". Despite this, CEBC proposes to move part of Somerford which is "outside" the Link Road into Congleton Town, thus undermining their own argument! Why would they do this, you may ask. Could it be that the area in question is the only area approved for substantial residential development "outside" the Link Road? As they said in "All the President's Men" - Follow the money!

The Cheshire East consultation

The CEBC consultation is being conducted solely "online". This means that all those who cannot or do not use IT systems will not have their voices heard. Several CE councillors wanted a paper-based survey to ensure that all had an equal chance of having a say but this was voted down.

Your opinion matters

However, CEBC **MUST** take into account the views and wishes of residents, and if enough of you vote to keep Somerford as an independent parish, then your wishes should prevail. The most important consideration is local opinion – but you must make your opinion known for it to be considered. Many people who have moved into Somerford say they did so because they wanted to live in a small community such as Somerford as opposed to a larger town. Therefore, in order to ensure that every resident has a voice, the parish council propose to consult you directly by:

1. Asking you to complete the attached response sheet **online** or **on paper**; and
2. Visiting every household during October to ask **YOU** to sign a petition headed **Save Our Somerford**.

Further information

We have kept this summary brief but realise that many of you will want more information and facts. These are set out in the following pages for those who wish to delve deeper. They cover such topics as:

1. What exactly is proposed by CEBC?
2. What does the parish council think should happen?
3. What are the pros. and cons of the change?
4. What has the parish council done for us?
5. Are there any other factors to consider?
6. Where can I get more information?

What should I do now?

If you want to help **Save Our Somerford**, please visit the parish council website at <https://www.somerfordparishcouncil.co.uk/> and complete the response sheet online or fill in the paper version enclosed and return to:

The Clerk, Somerford Parish Council, 1 Overton Meadow, Smallwood, CW11 2UP

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

2. RESPONSE FORM SUPPLIED WITH LETTER



Somerford Parish Council

A village in the heart of the Cheshire countryside

SAVE OUR SOMERFORD

RESIDENT RESPONSE TO CHESHIRE EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW
– PROPOSAL FOR BOUNDARY CHANGES IN SOMERFORD

Proposal: Cheshire East propose the abolition of the parish of Somerford and

- 1. to move all that part of the parish lying inside the Congleton Link Road (CLR) together with an area to the north of the CLR into the town of Congleton.**

A: Do you agree or disagree with proposal 1? - tick appropriate box below

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither for nor against	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------	--------------------------	----------	--------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

B: Please give your reasons for this view:

- 2. to merge the remainder of the parish with the parish of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths.**

B: Do you agree or disagree with proposal 2? - tick appropriate box below

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither for nor against	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------	--------------------------	----------	--------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------

B: Please give your reasons for this view:

If you have any other comments or views or proposals, please state them here:

Please complete and insert last two letters of postcode

Name					
Address				CW12 4	<input type="text"/>
Email					

Following completion - please return this form to:

The Clerk, Somerford Parish Council, 1 Overton Meadow, Smallwood, CW11 2UP

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

3. FURTHER INFORMATION DOCUMENT SENT WITH LETTER



Somerford Parish Council

A village in the heart of the Cheshire countryside

SAVE OUR SOMERFORD

FURTHER INFORMATION PROVIDED BY SOMERFORD PARISH COUNCIL

1. What exactly is proposed by CEBC?

The CEBC Community Governance Review Draft Recommendations covering the whole Borough can be viewed here: <https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s84154/Draft%20Proposals%20-%20Final%20Publication%20Version%20March%202021%20with%2020321%20amends%20V2.pdf>

The part of the document dealing with the Congleton area, including Somerford, can be viewed at pages 104 – 112 incl.

At page 104 it states: *The parish of Congleton has expanded and is due to expand further to the north, into the present parishes of Eaton, Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths and Somerford, and it is proposed that these areas should be transferred to the parish of Congleton.* (Comment: This is factually inaccurate; the parish of Congleton has NOT expanded and it will only expand into adjoining parishes if residents do not vote against it.)

It further states, at page 105: *Local Plan Strategy site LPS 26 is a major new housing development which is partly within Somerford, but which is adjacent to the existing urban development in Congleton and is a consequence of that town's expansion. There is also a significant existing housing overspill from Congleton into Somerford. Moving these areas into the parish of Congleton would reflect these expansions and would bring all of LPS 26 and the existing housing overspill within Congleton. Map 8a ("Congleton") and Map 34 ("Somerford") in Appendix 5 show the extent of the area that would be transferred (the orange shaded "potential expansion area" within the parish of Somerford).* (Comment: LPS26 is almost entirely in the parish of Somerford, only a very small area, principally the Turnstone Grange & Seddon developments, being in Congleton. It should be noted)

It goes on to state: *The proposed northern boundary of the parish of Congleton is shown in Map 8a ("Congleton") in Appendix 5. Much of this boundary will follow the Congleton Link Road (CLR), and attempts have been made to use clearly identifiable physical boundaries (including existing roads and the River Dane) for the remainder.* (Comment: It is significant that the boundary follows the CLR until it reaches that part of Somerford at which the only large residential development north of the CLR is to be located and it then reverts to the traditional boundary of the River Dane. It might be remembered that CEBC Local Plan originally stated that no development north of the CLR would be allowed. That promise was then broken, requiring an urgent amendment to the Local Plan.)

The proposal is for 5 new "wards" to be created in the enlarged Congleton Town as opposed to the existing two ward system. Somerford would be placed in Ward 4, provisionally named South West, with 5 councillors for 5,791 electors (equalling 1 councillor per 1158.2 electors at 2025 figures) out of a total of 22 councillors. The document indicates that, as at 2018, Somerford has 7 councillors for 713 electors, equalling 1 councillor per 101.9 electors. (Comment: Even assuming a doubling of electors in Somerford by 2025, the ratio would still only be 1 councillor per 204 electors. Further the 7 councillors of Somerford equal 100% of the vote in the parish whereas 5 councillors in the new South West ward would command less than 23% of the voting capacity in Congleton.)

The section dealing with Somerford alone is at page 112 and states:

Somerford

The current governance arrangements are as follows:

Councillor no. 7 - Electors (2018) 713 - Ratio of electors per councillor (2018) 101.9

The proposed boundary change with the parish of Congleton will reduce the electorate of Somerford to 107 electors (2025). At this level, the parish cannot be viable as a separate parish.

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

The Borough Council is anxious to hear the views of the public and interested bodies on the merger of the remainder of Somerford parish with the parish of Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths.

Reference should be made to the section on Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths for the implications of such a merger with that parish. In that section it is suggested that a parish council of seven seats would be appropriate to represent the 387 electors of the merged parish (2025 electorate). This would mean a ratio of 55.3 electors per councillor. (Comment: The boundary between Somerford and Somerford Booths is the line of the River Dane Somerford with no crossing point within the conjoined parishes. Those who reside in that part of the parish which is not proposed to be moved into Congleton Town might wish make representations to the effect that a merger with Brereton or Swettenham would be preferred. However, we would hope that they would express an overriding wish to maintain the status quo of living in Somerford.)

2. What does the parish council propose should happen?

The Somerford Parish Council is unanimously opposed to the proposals and hope to persuade their parishioners to overwhelmingly state their preference to remain as an independent parish represented by elected members of the community.

The principal guidance document concerning boundary reviews makes it clear that:

- (vii) the review should consider the information it has received in the form of **expressions of local opinion** on the matters considered by the review, **representations made by local people and other interested persons**, and also **use its own knowledge of the local area.***
- (viii) **a recommendation to abolish or establish a parish council, may negatively impact on community cohesion, either within the proposed parish area, or in the wider community within which it would be located, and therefore should not be made.***
- (ix) the Government **expects to see a trend in the creation, rather than the abolition, of parishes.***
- (x) **the abolition of parishes should not be undertaken unless clearly justified.** Any decision a principal council may make on whether to abolish a parish should not be taken lightly.*
- (xi) In future, principal councils will wish to consider the sort of principles identified above in arriving at their decisions on whether or not to abolish a parish council. In doing so, they will be aware that decisions about community governance arrangements, including decisions for the abolition of a parish council, may attract a challenge by way of judicial review.*
- (xii) The 2006 white paper underlined the Government's commitment to parish councils as an established and valued form of neighbourhood democracy with an important role to play in both rural, and increasingly urban, areas.*

The draft proposals make no reference whatsoever to local opinion, community cohesion, neighbourhood democracy and do not claim any justification beyond administrative convenience. The proposal appears to be based solely on the basis of the newly created physical boundary created by the CLR. It argues that all areas within the CLR should transfer to Congleton Town. However, it belies that argument by including

an area of Somerford which extends beyond the CLR to include an area which is predominantly rural but which includes a site which the amended local plan designated for residential development. The result of this is to impose the proposed extended boundary of Congleton Town between the rural "rump" of Somerford and the parish with which it is proposed to be merged. This can best be seen on the map below. The boundary line which remains is the River Dane with no crossing point within the conjoined parishes.

Indeed, the parish council were encouraged by CEBC to raise any relevant boundary issues at an early stage and two such issues were raised. These were:

- (i) A proposal that the review body should consider the 64 dwellings presently located within the parish of Brereton which front or which directly and solely connect with the A54 Holmes Chapel Road, a road solely within the parish of Somerford, via side roads off the A54, be re-located within the parish of Somerford. This proposal was wholly ignored within the officer's report. In order to support this proposition, it is intended to write to the occupiers of the residences affected to ask whether they would support the re-drawing of the boundary to give effect to that view.*
- (ii) A proposal that all those properties presently under construction on a site adjacent to Back Lane known as Turnstone Grange being developed by Miller Homes should be moved into the parish of Somerford on the basis that the development was immediately adjacent to the Radnor Green development currently subject to a reserved matters application by Stewart Milne Ltd., which development is wholly within the parish of Somerford and the two developments will be largely indistinguishable one from the other. Further, the site has been promoted since*

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

inception as being “Located in the aspirational parish of Somerford, Turnstone Grange is a new development of 2, 3- and 4-bedroom homes featuring our most popular housetype designs.” Again, this proposal was wholly ignored within the officer’s report. In order to support this proposition, it is intended to write to the occupiers of the residences affected and to the developer/builder to ask whether they would support the re-drawing of the boundary to give effect to that view.

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed move into Congleton Town?

We have yet to identify any advantages which are meaningful in any way. The majority of the services provided to the residents of Cheshire East are provided by the Borough Council. This will not change. It is true that the residents of Somerford rely on the Town for the provision of privately provided services, such as shops, schools, health centres and the like but again, that would not change. Certainly the residents of Congleton would benefit from the merger since the parish precept paid by Somerford residents would go directly into the coffers of Congleton Town Council and could help to finance the town’s infrastructure and services. But whereas 100% of what is currently paid by Somerford residents is spent in Somerford, how much of that money would be spent in Somerford by Congleton Town Council?

Some of the disadvantages have already been mentioned – reduced representation, loss of identity and community cohesion, loss of sense of place – as Miller Homes put it, Somerford residents are “located in an aspirational parish”. Oh, and did we mention the extra cost to Somerford residents of a move into Congleton Town? An increase of over 28% - for what? See the current figures below:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Congleton	60.73	70.85	80.97	91.09	111.33	131.57	151.82	182.18
Somerford	43.54	50.80	58.05	65.31	79.82	94.34	108.85	130.62

4. What has the parish council achieved over the last 5 years?

- Persuaded the RSPB to donate 10 acres of prime agricultural land, worth at least £7M in development value, to the parish thus saving the land from the certainty of housing development.
- Raised over £150,000 in sponsorship and donations to create the Rhead’s Meadows Nature Park on that land.
- Agreed with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust a 99-year lease on Blackfirs Wood with the intention of retaining and improving it as a valuable local resource.
- Secured s.106 funding for improvements to the wildlife ponds at Blackfirs Wood.
- Committed to invest £10K over the next 2 years to improve the visitor experience at Blackfirs Wood.
- Worked with the CEBC and their main contractors, Graham, to ensure that the design features of the Congleton Link Road wherever possible benefit residents and to ensure the construction phase impacts upon them as little as possible
- Working with all the major housebuilders in the parish (Bovis, Anwyl, Barratt David Wilson, Bellway) to ensure that their developments are completed in accordance with plans and conditions.
- Persistent lobbying of Cheshire East Highways (CEH) to secure improvements on local roads.
- Persisted in the face of CEBC resistance to secure a 40-mph speed limit on much of Holmes Chapel Road (A54) and placing a speed indicator/recording sign on that road.
- Persuaded CEH (i) to extend the 40-mph speed limit to cover the whole of Blackfirs Lane and much of Chelford Road; (ii) to improve the design of the junction of those two roads to reduce speed; and (iii) to extend the pavement at the Back Lane roundabout to avoid pedestrians having to cross 3 roads rather than one.

5. Are there any other factors to consider?

Somerford Parish Council has proved its worth on the national stage. Earlier this year it was able to issue the following press release:

“**Somerford Parish Council** is very pleased and proud to announce that they have once again been awarded **Quality Gold** under the **Local Council Award Scheme**. We were first awarded Quality Gold in August 2016 under this most prestigious scheme and at that time we were one of only three holders in Cheshire – **to date there are still only five Cheshire parishes which hold the award and just fifty parishes in the whole of England**. The Quality Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development. In announcing this award, we pay tribute to the hard work and commitment over the last 12 years of our then clerk, Julie Mason, who was recently appointed as Clerk to the Bollington Town Council, and welcome our new Clerk, Carlton Evans, who will be working hard to maintain the excellent standards for which Somerford Parish has become known.”

The response of Cheshire East Borough Council? – Abolish it!

6. Where can I get more information?

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England published a Guidance on community governance reviews to principal councils in March 2010 which can be viewed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8312/1527635.pdf

- CEBC must have mislaid their copy!

Two parish councils (Britwell and Wexham Court) sought a Judicial Review of a decision by their unitary authority, Slough Borough Council, to abolish them both. The justification put forward by Slough was concern at the way both councils had been run over a number of years. The detailed law report makes for interesting reading for those so minded and can be read here: <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2019/998.html>

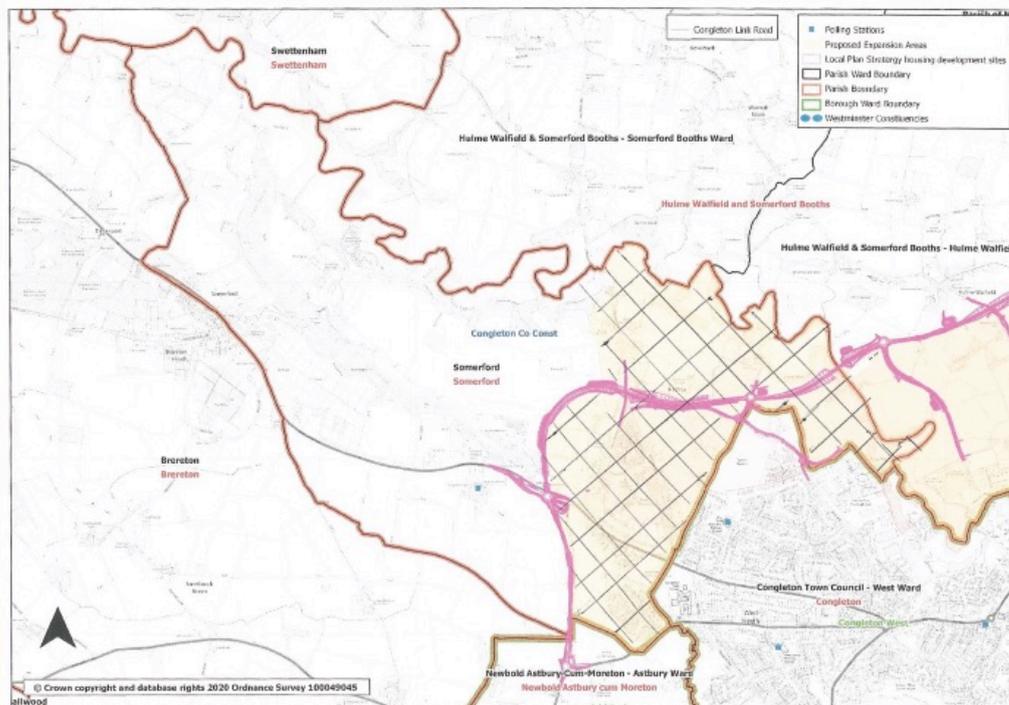
Summary of the view of the parish council

The parish of Somerford engenders a strong sense of community identity and cohesion and the best way to demonstrate this is for residents to not only respond to any consultation process held by the principal authority but also by responding to requests for support from the parish council and by organising their own neighbourhood petitions, perhaps on an estate basis, in support of remaining within the parish of Somerford. It will be a strong argument to demonstrate that it is not only those who have lived in the parish for many years who wish to retain their identity, but that those who have moved into newly developed parts of the parish in recent years share that identity.

As regards the proposed merger of the remaining part of Somerford with Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths parishes, it seems to us that it would be far more logical to merge it into Brereton Parish since many of the houses along the west side of Holmes Chapel Road are already within that parish and the CE Ward Councillor covers both areas. (See paragraph 2(i) above.)

Maps

The map below shows that part of Somerford proposed by Cheshire East to be moved into Congleton Town shaded in a buff colour and cross-hatched. The shaded area to the right (east) is that part of Hulme Walfield & Somerford Booths (HW&SB) also proposed to be moved into Congleton Town. The unshaded area to the left (west) of the cross-hatched area is that part of Somerford proposed to be moved into HW&SB. The current northern parish boundary line running from bottom right (south east) of the map diagonally to the top left (north west) follows the line of the River Dane.



Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

4. RESULTS OF POSTAL AND ONLINE RESPONSES TO CEBC CGR PROPOSALS FOR SOMERFORD

TOTALS OF SUMMARY OF POSTAL AND ONLINE RESPONSES FROM SOMERFORD RESIDENTS									
Area from which votes cast	Move part of Somerford into Congleton					Move residual part of Somerford into Hulme Walfield & Somerford Booths			
	Agrees with DR proposal	Disagree with DR proposal	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Total votes		Agrees with DR proposal	Disagree with DR proposal	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Total votes
Blackfirs Lane		13		13			12	1	13
Blackfirs Park		60		60			58	2	60
Somerford Reach		46	1	47		2	45		47
Chelford Road		15		15			14	1	15
Loachbrook Meadows		76	1	77			73	4	77
Somerford Grove		46		46		2	41	3	46
Holmes Chapel Road		8		8			8		8
Somerford Hall Drive		1		1			1		1
Miscellaneous		3		3			3		3
Late additions		3		3			3		3
Grand totals		278	2	280		4	264	12	280
%age		99.29%	0.71%	100%		1.43%	94.29%	4.28%	100%

5. RESULTS OF PETITION OPPOSING CEBC CGR PROPOSALS FOR SOMERFORD

Signatories signed under the heading:

"I, the undersigned, oppose the proposal to abolish the Parish of Somerford and merge the bulk of the parish into Congleton Town. I consider that the parish is well represented by the current parish council which should be retained in its present format."

Area visited	Postcode CW12 4	No of signatures Collected
Blackfirs Lane	QG/QQ	28
Blackfirs Park	ZA/ZB/ZD/ZE/ZF/ZG	71
Somerford Reach	ZH/ZJ/ZL/ZP	36
Chelford Road	QD/RA	35
Holmes Chapel Road	QB	20
Loachbrook Meadow	SQ/UG/QZ/SF/BF/DE/SJ/QF	142
Somerford Grove	YD/YN/YQ/YU	58
Somerford Hall Drive	SL	16
Miscellaneous others	Various	18
Totals		424

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

Appendix 2:

Copies of the documentation posted to those residents of Brereton who live on, or immediately adjacent to, the A54 Holmes Chapel Road with resident survey results.

1. LETTER TO RESIDENTS



Dear Brereton Parishioner

Community Governance Review

You may be aware that Cheshire East Borough Council are currently conducting a review of all the 135 towns and parishes within Cheshire East which will include considering the parish boundaries.

Brereton and Somerford are two of these parishes and they share a common boundary which, as you will see from the map overleaf, meanders along the south-western side of the Holmes Chapel Road. The road itself is deemed to be in Somerford, as are all the properties to the north-east of the road. However, those properties along the south-western boundary are divided, some being in Somerford whilst others are in Brereton. Previous discussions have indicated that many of the residents in this area believe they live in Somerford – indeed, their postal address is Somerford.

To provide some examples of the confusing situation we have at present, numbers 303 – 319 Holmes Chapel Road are in Somerford whilst neighbouring properties 1-3 Gorse Cottages and Warren House are in Brereton. Likewise, numbers 1 & 2 Woodpecker Close are in Somerford whilst numbers 3-12 Woodpecker Close are in Brereton.

Somerford Parish Council consider that it would be preferable for all the properties along this section of Holmes Chapel Road to be in Somerford. Since one of the purposes of a Community Governance Review (CGR) is to consider whether any parish boundaries should be moved to help create clearer and stronger community ties, Somerford Parish Council has resolved to make a formal proposal to the CGR that **“the boundary line along the Holmes Chapel Road should be moved so that all those properties which either front directly onto that road or which directly and solely connect with the Holmes Chapel Road via side roads be located in the parish of Somerford”** if, but only if, this has the support of those residents who would be directly affected by the proposal.

A full list of properties along this section of road is set out on the reverse of the enclosed Response Form, showing those properties which are in Brereton and those in Somerford. The properties which are currently in Brereton would, if the proposal were agreed and adopted, be in Somerford and yours may be one of those properties.

Somerford Parish Council would very much like for the Brereton residents to support this proposal, but it will only be submitted by the parish council for consideration in the Community Governance Review **if a majority of those who vote indicate a wish to move.**

For further information about Community Governance Reviews, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has published a comprehensive guidance document which can be viewed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8312/1527635.pdf

This guidance makes it clear that, when any such proposal is put forward, the majority view of those who vote should be sufficient to persuade the principal council, in this case Cheshire East, to give effect to the wishes of that majority and make the necessary adjustments to the boundaries.

In order to establish the wishes of the residents, we would ask you to respond to our consultation by completing the voting form attached. We would hope to be able to visit all the Brereton properties in the next 3 – 4 weeks to ask that you consider signing a petition to give effect to the proposal and you can either hand the response form to us when we visit or post it to the address shown on the form.

If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact the Clerk to the Somerford Parish Council – clerk@somerfordparishcouncil.co.uk or ask the parish councillor when they call.

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

The map below shows the current parish boundary lines in blue and the roads in yellow. Holmes Chapel Road runs from the north-west corner of the map in a south-easterly direction. You will see that the blue boundary line on the western edge of Somerford follows the line of the Holmes Chapel Road quite closely in the area of your property.



The larger scale map below shows the boundary line runs through some properties but in front of others. This map has been used by Cheshire East to determine that the properties in question are located within the parish of Breton. (Apologies for the poor quality of this map.)



Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

2. RESPONSE FORM SUPPLIED WITH LETTER



**BRERETON RESIDENT RESPONSE TO CHESHIRE EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW
PROPOSAL FOR BOUNDARY CHANGE BETWEEN BRERETON PARISH AND
SOMERFORD PARISH ALONG A54 HOLMES CHAPEL ROAD**

Proposal: That the boundary line between the parishes of Brereton and Somerford which runs adjacent to the A54 Holmes Chapel Road between Keeper's Nook and Davenport Chapel be moved so that all those properties currently in the parish of Brereton, listed overleaf, be located in the parish of Somerford.

A: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal? Tick the appropriate box

AGREE		DISAGREE		Neither agree nor disagree	
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B: Please give your reasons for this view (optional)

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If you have any other comments, views or proposals

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Please complete and insert last two letters of postcode

Name 1						
Address				CW12 4		
Email						

Name 2						
Address				CW12 4		
Email						

Please return the completed form:

The Clerk, Somerford Parish Council, 1 Overton Meadow, Smallwood, CW11 2UP

OR HAND THE FORM TO US WHEN WE CALL IN THE NEXT 3- 4 WEEKS

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council



List of properties on or adjacent to Holmes Chapel Road in Brereton Parish		
Number count	Address Holmes Chapel Road unless otherwise stated	Post Code CW12
1-3	Stoneycroft, Bilberry Cottage, Oakmere,	4SW
4-6	Woodlands Farm, Moss Cottage, Tree Cottage	4SW
7 & 8	Sorrel Lodge, Farrier's Nook	4SP
9-16	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 9 Shakerley Place	4AU
17-19	1, 2, 3 Gorse Cottages	4SP
20-26	1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 & 11 Broomfields	4SG
27-35	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, & 12 Woodpecker Place	4AX
36-40	1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 Jay Close	4AR
41-44	Warren House, Ivy House, Woodview & 329	4SP
45-55	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6A, 6B, 7, 8 & 9 Rowan Place	4UY
56-59	Trenance, Hatherlow, Holmlea & The Rowans,	4SP
60-63	Roslyn, 1 & 2 Somerford View & Lyndale	4SP
64-68	1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 Lyndale Grove	4YW
List of properties on south-west side of Holmes Chapel Road in Somerford Parish		
Number count	Address Holmes Chapel Road unless otherwise stated	Post Code CW12
1 & 2	303 & 305 Holmes Chapel Road	4SP
3 & 4	1 & 2 Woodpecker Place	4AX
5 - 11	307, 309, 311, 313, 315, 317 & 319 Holmes Chapel Road	4SP

Survey result

44 residents of the addresses included on the list above headed “**List of properties on or adjacent to Holmes Chapel Road in Brereton Parish**” expressed a view on the proposition:

“That the boundary line between the parishes of Brereton and Somerford which runs adjacent to the A54 Holmes Chapel Road between Keeper’s Nook and Davenport Chapel be moved so that all those properties currently in the parish of Brereton, listed overleaf, be located in the parish of Somerford.”

25 (56.8%) agreed with the proposal.

18 (40.9%) disagreed.

1 (2.3%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

Appendix 3:

Copies of the documentation posted to all known addresses on the Turnstone Grange development, Back Lane, Congleton with resident survey results.

1. LETTER TO RESIDENTS



Dear Congleton Town resident Community Governance Review

You may be aware that Cheshire East Borough Council are conducting a review of the 135 town and parish boundaries within Cheshire East. Congleton and Somerford are two of these parishes and the boundary between them is close to your property. This boundary does not follow any identifying feature, such as a road or river, it merely follows a hedge line between two fields.

The Turnstone Grange estate is on the Congleton Town side of the boundary, whilst the field to the north of Turnstone Grange (due to be developed by Stewart Milne Homes as Radnor Green), lies in the parish of Somerford. Maps showing the boundary line and Turnstone Grange estate are printed on the reverse of this sheet.

You may have seen the Miller Homes announcement regarding Turnstone Grange published in The Chronicle and elsewhere, which made it clear that they believed the development to be in Somerford – see rear of the Response Form.

Somerford Parish Council propose that the boundary line to be moved so that it includes the whole Turnstone Grange estate and we would hope that you would agree. This would mean that both the Radnor Green and Turnstone Grange estates will become part of Somerford Parish. However, unless a majority of Turnstone Grange residents who vote indicate a wish to move, then the proposal would **not** be put forward for consideration.

When considering the proposal, the majority view of those who vote should be sufficient to persuade Cheshire East to give effect to the wishes of that majority and make the necessary adjustments to the boundaries.

In order to establish the wishes of the residents, we would ask you to respond to our consultation by completing the voting form attached. We would hope to be able to visit all the properties in the next 3 – 4 weeks to ask that you consider signing a petition to give effect to the proposal and you can either hand the response form to us when we visit or post it to the address shown on the form.

What are the advantages of a move for you? Increased representation, improved sense of identity and community cohesion, greater sense of place – as Miller Homes put it, Somerford residents are “located in an aspirational parish”. Oh, and did we mention the reduced cost to you of a move into Somerford? A decrease in your Council Tax - the current parish precept figures reduce by about 28% - see below:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Congleton	60.73	70.85	80.97	91.09	111.33	131.57	151.82	182.18
Somerford	43.54	50.80	58.05	65.31	79.82	94.34	108.85	130.62

If you want to know more about the Community Governance Review process, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has published a comprehensive guidance document which can be viewed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8312/1527635.pdf

If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact the Clerk to the Somerford Parish Council or ask the parish councillor when they call.

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

The map below shows the Congleton/Somerford boundary line in blue, with Somerford “wrapped around” Congleton which is the prominence in the centre and south of the blue line. Turnstone Grange lies in the centre of the map, south of that boundary line but north of Back Lane.



The map below shows Turnstone Grange in Congleton, the northern and eastern boundaries of which follows the parish boundary. The area to the north and east marked “Future Development” is the Radnor Green estate which is in Somerford.



Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council

2. RESPONSE FORM SUPPLIED WITH LETTER



**CONGLETON TOWN RESIDENT RESPONSE TO CHESHIRE EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW
PROPOSAL FOR BOUNDARY CHANGE BETWEEN TURNSTONE GRANGE AND
RADNOR GREEN ESTATES**

Proposal: That the boundary line between the parishes of Congleton Town and Somerford which runs between Turnstone Grange and Radnor Green estates be moved so that all those properties currently in the parish of Congleton, listed overleaf, be located in the parish of Somerford.

A: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal? Tick the appropriate box:

AGREE	<input type="checkbox"/>	DISAGREE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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B: Please give your reasons for this view (optional):

If you have any other comments, views or proposals, please state:

Please complete and insert last two letters of postcode (two spaces for different residents)

Name 1				
Address			CW12 4	
Email				

Name 2				
Address			CW12 4	
Email				

Please return the completed form:

The Clerk, Somerford Parish Council, 1 Overton Meadow, Smallwood, CW11 2UP

OR HAND THE FORM TO US WHEN WE CALL IN THE NEXT 3- 4 WEEKS

Cheshire East Community Governance Review - Part Two

Response of the Somerford Parish Council



List of properties on Miller Homes Turnstone Grange development		
Number count	Address	Post Code CW12
1 – 5	1, 3, 5, 7 & 9 Ormiston Way	4DD
6 - 16	2, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 & 26 Ormiston Way	4DF
17 - 25	Apartments 1 – 9, 94 Ormiston Way	4DF
26 - 38	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23 & 25 Turner Drive	4JT
39 - 47	Apartments 1 – 9, 27 Turner Drive	4JT
48- 55	2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 & 16 Turner Drive	4NZ
56 - 58	3, 5 & 7 Burgess Place	4PJ

Extracts from Miller Homes promotion published in The Chronicle, Thursday 7th November 2019:

Local House Hunters Invited to an Exclusive Look at **New Somerford Development Turnstone Grange, Miller Homes' latest development on Back Lane, Somerford**, is set to spark public interest on 9th November with the opening of their new sales centre. This will give local house hunters and interested parties the chance to exclusively speak with Development Sales Managers and be the first to reserve on this exciting development.

The development in Somerford is duly named Turnstone Grange after the locally famed Turnstone bird.

The new Somerford community will include 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom homes, and are all to be designed in Miller Home's signature modernistic style, suiting every type of house hunter. The sales centre opening day is anticipated to be a hit with the public, as the luxury development is situated in an opportunistic and **aspirational part of Somerford**.

Bringing a plethora of new homes to the area, the Miller Homes development is a welcomed project that will benefit all aspects of the community. The stylish homes on offer couple traditional and contemporary together and are designed and situated for both convenience and rural appeal.



Survey result

All of those expressing a view (100%) indicated agreement with the proposal.