

# Cheshire East

## Personal Details:

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**Organisation Name:** Over Alderley Parish Council (Representative of parish/town council)

## Comment text:

**Related subject:** Over Alderley Parish Council / Prestbury Ward

Over Alderley is a very quiet, rural parish which lies between Macclesfield and Alderley Edge and has a picturesque arcadian landscape of mature trees and hedgerows, woodland, pasture and parkland.

The main settlement is concentrated in a cluster of 20 houses on Festival Drive and Ashbrook Road with around 40 residents including children. Elsewhere development is scattered across the area in small clusters of houses and farms, large country mansions, a reading room and a parish church, St. Catherine's. The Parish extends over 893 hectares and has a population of around 380 (2021 census).

As a small rural parish, Over Alderley has limited community facilities. The Reading Room and church are the main centres for community activities and are highly valued and well used by local residents. The Reading Room services as a parish hall, holding regular events from fitness classes to dog training and the village fete, as well as special celebrations. Many local groups, including the Parish Council, Womens Institute and the Over Alderley Brass Band use the Reading Room on a regular basis. The church is thriving, attracting good numbers to the services, and hosts special events and exhibitions for the community. There is also a cinema club held at the church.

The local economy is largely connected to farming and there are also equestrian businesses, groundworks and stone and building supplies. A number of people work from home, including in the digital economy.

There are numerous listed buildings in the area and a couple of scheduled monuments, including a bowl barrow near Birtles Hall. There are also many

bridleways, footpaths and cycle routes in the Parish which provide much-needed green space for those in surrounding built up areas.

Over Alderley Parish Council is very active in representing the views of residents on a range of matters including planning applications, highway matters and other issues affecting the lives of residents. There is local support for activities of the Parish Council and when, on occasion, councillor vacancies arise new volunteers are readily available. The recent preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan was supported by residents and the main comment frequently received from residents was the importance of protecting the rural green belt environment that defines the parish identity.

The lack of some facilities within Over Alderley Parish, which doubles as a unique selling point to life in Over Alderley, requires residents to utilise those services in nearby locations. The children from Over Alderley typically attend primary school in Prestbury and secondary school in Macclesfield. This creates a sense of cohesion with the parish of Prestbury as social relationships develop between the parishes.

Over Alderley residents also use the shops, library, hair dressers/barbers, doctors surgery and sports facilities in Prestbury due to their close proximity and easy road links. The use of all these facilities, again, creates a sense of cohesion and alignment with Prestbury whilst still recognising the distinctiveness of the two communities.

Over recent months the three communities of Over Alderley, Prestbury and Mottram St. Andrew have come together to form a joint group to lobby for improved mobile phone signal in the area. Issues relating to poor broadband services and poor mobile phone signal are common to all three areas, therefore, this shared interest has brought the three communities together. Such action clearly demonstrates that effective governance can be delivered to these three parishes, as the Prestbury Ward, as there are fundamental shared interests and issues.

Mottram St. Andrew, although having its own distinct identity, shares many features with Over Alderley. The rural nature of the parish, with agricultural, equestrian and home working forming key parts of the economy, replicates that observed within Over Alderley. Both parishes offer allotments to residents and hold annual horticultural shows and village fetes. Again, these common features to both parishes allow effective governance of the Prestbury Ward as there is a general alignment of views and activities across the area.

Transport links between Over Alderley, Mottram St. Andrew and Prestbury are strong and easy to understand and navigate. Furthermore, the transport links support the notion that Over Alderley parish lies within the rural countryside between Alderley Edge and Macclesfield as this is the primary highway through the parish.

To the disappointment of Over Alderley Parish Council and residents of Over Alderley a recent planning permission has been granted for the development of a retirement complex in the south east of the parish at Heatherley Woods (part of the Alderley Park site). This development, by its own admission, is a, “Redevelopment of the site to provide a premium integrated retirement community (IRC), providing 139 private extra care apartments (for leasehold sale), with a wide range of associated community facilities, including health and wellbeing and care support services.” [Ref: Application 23/3619M, Planning Need Assessment, page 3].

This proposed development, whilst within the parish boundary, does not reflect the identity and aspirations of the residents of the rural community of Over Alderley. It forms a discrete development, lacking in transport links to the main parish of Over Alderley, which is likely to operate independently and not contribute to the existing social cohesion within Over Alderley Parish or Prestbury Ward. Transport links towards the south east (i.e. towards Alderley Park and Nether Alderley) from the main parish area are limited and uninviting demonstrating a lack of natural affiliation in a south easterly direction.

Over Alderley Parish Council has considered the data in the “CE Electoral Review: Electorate Forecasts Technical Report – Appendix 1 (V3, 25 Sept 2023)” document which sets out that the number of electors in existing Prestbury Ward (comprising Over Alderley, Mottram St. Andrew and Prestbury Parishes) falls within the acceptable 10% variance of the target average number. This, therefore, further supports that effective governance can be achieved for this Ward without under or over-burdening the Ward Councillor. It can be considered that the ‘slightly below’ the target average (although within the acceptable range) will allow the Ward Councillor to effectively support and represent all three communities to grow organically over future years without detrimentally harming the distinct identities of each parish or the rural environment of Over Alderley.

Over Alderley Parish Council has also considered the content of the “Cheshire East Electoral Review 2023-24: Warding Proposal Report (V4, 18 Feb 2024)” document. It is noted that Cheshire East Council is suggesting the removal of Over Alderley parish from the Prestbury Ward and adding it to a revised Chelford Ward. This is not supported by Over Alderley Parish Council or residents (several residents attended a Parish Council meeting to express opposition to this insensitive and inappropriate suggestion). The residents described the unique qualities of Over Alderley, including the rural environment and community, and explained that they consider their nearest local service centre to be Prestbury where they can easily access a range of facilities and services. Whilst Prestbury is a larger rural parish than Over Alderley, it is considered that there is greater affiliation between the two parishes than with other nearby parishes, including those within the current Chelford Ward. Transport links to the Chelford Ward are not direct or easy to navigate. Furthermore, all current parishes within the Prestbury Ward have a shared affiliation to Macclesfield as their nearest town giving another, higher level, shared sense of identity. This is not the case for parishes within the Chelford Ward who, in some cases, consider Knutsford as their nearest town, thereby, creating a division in outlook and an obstacle to effective governance.

Reports to the Community Governance Review carried out in 2023 (Ref: Cheshire East Council Community Governance Review Final Recommendations Assessment Report – Final Appendix 3) describe an affiliation between Adlington parish and Poynton, as their nearest town, therefore, there does not appear to be natural affiliation between Adlington parish and the Prestbury Ward. The suggested inclusion of Adlington parish within the Prestbury Ward would likely lead to ineffective governance and difficulties in representing the views of the Ward. It is interesting that the suggested change would also increase the elector number to in excess of the target average, therefore, adding additional burden to the Ward Councillor which would be further exacerbated by unexpected and/or rapid development and growth in the area. This suggestion, therefore, would appear to detrimentally impact residents of Over Alderley parish and Adlington parish who would likely all suffer from less effective representation by the Ward Councillor due to the misalignment of parish identities and cohesion.

In summary, it is the view of Over Alderley Parish Council that the Prestbury Ward should continue to represent the parishes of Over Alderley, Mottram St. Andrew and Prestbury parishes. These parishes, although individually distinct, share common aspirations which can be effectively represented by the Ward Councillor. Good transport links allow the three communities to share their facilities and services creating a wider, socially cohesive Ward which functions effectively.

**Attached Documents:**

*None attached*