

MINUTES OF ROWTON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING
MONDAY 18th May 2026 at 7.15pm
held at Rowton Methodist Church, Moor Lane, Rowton

Present: Councillors Cllr Melanie Fildes (Chair)
 Cllr Paul Shannon
 Cllr Michael Smythe
 Cllr Glenys Harrison
 Cllr Robert Scott
 Clerk Pippa Johnson

Cllr Mark Williams Ward Councillor

8 Members of the public

1 Election of a Chairperson

Cllr Smythe proposed Cllr Fildes, Cllr Scott seconded. There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED 26/008 Unanimously Cllr Fildes is Chair for the 2026/2027 year, Cllr Fildes signed the acceptance of office.

2 Election of a Vice Chairperson

Cllr Smythe proposed Cllr Shannon, Cllr Scott seconded. There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED 26/008 Unanimously Cllr Shannon is Vice Chair for the 2026/2027 year, Cllr Shannon signed the acceptance of office.

3 Apologies

Cllr Howard Hopwood - Holiday

4 Declaration of Interest

No declarations were made

5 Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 11th May 2026 and 2nd March 2026

RESOLVED 26/009 The minutes were approved as a true and correct record by the Council.

6 Public Participation

Cllr Mark Williams spoke regarding planning application 25/03444 (Moor Lane). He advised that the following reports were still outstanding: Highways, Battlefield Trust, Flooding and Surface Water Run Off. He has spoken to the planning officer in charge of the application who has indicated that they are more than happy to liaise with the Parish Council directly. Cllr Williams has asked for the application to be 'called in' should the planning officer be

mindful for approval, however this is not guaranteed as the application was originally made in 2025.

Members of the public also raised concerns in relation to the planning application in relation to the impact of the Battlefield site, drainage issues, lack of existing infrastructure and sewerage. A member of the public stated that the lack of infrastructure and sewerage has been raised previously and that they would send any information that they had to the clerk and she would pass this onto the planning officer.

Cllr Williams also said that he was aware of planning application 26/01188, however, as this fell within the Parish of Christleton, Rowton Parish Council did not have the ability to request a 'call in'.

7 Planning

- a) The Clerk informed the Council that currently the only two applications on the planning register are the two discussed in items b and c
- b) **RESOLVED 26/010** the Council approved the comments with regards to the planning application 25/03444/OUT on Moor Lane (see Appendix 1) they also approved to request that the Ward Cllr call in the planning application.
- c) **RESOLVED 26/011** The Council approved the comments submitted in relation to planning application 26/01188/OUT (see Appendix 2)

8 NDP

RESOLVED 26/012 The Parish Council wish to complete an NDP and will begin the process to compile the document.

9 Finance

- a) There were no payments made from the last meeting
- b) There was no clerk reimbursement
- c) Cllr Shannon confirmed that the bank balance was currently £17091.17 having received the precept of £9970
- d) The cash book is under preparation and will be reviewed at the next meeting once the clerk has access to the bank account.
- e) **RESOLVED 26/013** the following regular payments are approved:
 - Clerk Salary as indicated by the payroll company
 - NI/Income Tax as indicated by the payroll company
 - Pension Contributions as indicated by the payroll company
 - Clerk Mobile Phone
 - SLCC
 - CHALC
 - Microsoft 365 annual subscription
 - Information Commissioner
 - Chairs allowance £150
 - Payroll company as per their invoice
 - Website hosting £170.00
 - Zurich Insurance as per the three year agreement

- f) **RESOLVED 26/014** The Council approves the payment of £75.89 for Invoice for contribution to CGBA Consultancy Fees re Presentations to CWaC

10 Annual Governance and Accountability Return

- a) The Internal Auditor returned the Audit to the Clerk and made the following comments,
“There are unaccounted for unauthorised debit card payments in the cash book on 28th February 2026 which total £183.80. The minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 2nd March evidence that the Council is aware of the payments and is actively seeking clarification from the bank. The results of the information should be recorded clearly in a future meeting”
The Council can report that Natwest took accountability for their actions which led to unauthorised payments. This was a bank error and was not the fault of the Council, Councillors or Clerk/RFO.
“The Governing documents are easily accessible on the Council’s Website and I am pleased to note that the Council has moved to a secure government email and web system”
The Council thanks the internal auditor for her work.
RESOLVED 26/015 The Council approved the Annual Internal Audit Report.
- b) **RESOLVED 26/016** The Council approved and signed the Certificate of Exemption (gross expenditure is below £25k) and confirm the Parish Council’s exemption from the Limited Assurance Review.
- c) **RESOLVED 26/017** The Council Approved and Signed section 1 of the AGAR
- d) **RESOLVED 26/018** The Council Approved and Signed section 2 of the AGAR
- e) The Council notes the Period of Notice and Public Rights starts on 3rd June 2026 and finishes 14th July 2026.

11 Policies

RESOLVED 26/019 The following policies are approved

- a) Standing Orders
b) Financial Regulations
c) Code of Conduct
d) Member/Officer Protocol
e) GDPR
f) Risk Assessment – subject to the amendment of the PC’s laptop which is an Acer Aspire.

12 Register of Interests

There were no updates to the Register of Interests

13 General Correspondence

Cllr Smythe noted that he would be resigning following this meeting, the Council thanked Cllr Smythe for all his hard work and dedication to the Parish Council and for him taking on the Chair’s role last year.

14 Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting is Monday 13th July 2026 7pm at Rowton Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 9pm

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 1

SUPPLEMENTAL PLANNING OBJECTION - Rowton Parish Council objects to the Planning Application 25/03444/OUT for a development of 49 dwellings on Moor Lane, Rowton Key concerns: 1. Health Concerns due to Transport-related air pollution arising from the location of the proposed development site • The development site adjacent to the A41 road is an area of severe air pollution from road transport due to very high traffic load (cars and large lorries - many international and travelling to and from Ireland via Holyhead). NO₂ levels and PM_{2.5} particulates are above the safe limit for the placement of residential dwellings adjacent to this road. PM 2.5 particulates cause ill-health such as asthma, heart disease, neurodegenerative diseases e.g. dementia and cognitive decline; reproductive and developmental harm; diabetes, kidney disease and gastrointestinal issues. • No further development of residential properties should be considered along the A41 corridor while air quality conditions present a severe impact on health and useful life, particularly for the young and elderly. 2. Loss of productive Greenbelt land. 3. Loss of designated Rowton village Green Gap space • This location is a designated green space on boundary of Rowton with Waverton village, purposely nominated to preserve the unique and separate identities of these distinct historic Cheshire villages, and to prevent urban sprawl in a rural location. • No evidence has been provided by the developer, by CWAC, or from local residents for any demand in Rowton for the mix or number of properties proposed in this application and therefore, use of this green belt land for this development would appear an unwise use of this precious land that provides: o A rural vista and environment for Rowton residents who purposely chose to live in a rural location, and for pleasure users (walkers, cyclists, tourists, canal users e.g. anglers, runners, canoeists and canal boat users etc) o A large natural soakaway for water run-off o Maintenance of a designated Green Gap 4. Inappropriate Proposed Development • Development is too large for the size of Rowton. This will result in a 27% increase in dwellings in this small village (180 to 229 properties), irreparably changing the village, and overloading services (see 8.). • No demonstrated demand from the village for dwellings of this number or style. • Inappropriate house style (modern Georgian) for the location; inconsistent with both the historic dwellings on Moor Lane, and the modern (1967-75) estates of Croft Close & St Georges Crescent. • Closing this green gap will diminish the uniqueness of each village. The history of Rowton as part of the ecclesiastical Parish of Christleton has been as a hamlet of farms in a sparsely populated community. (Originally known as Rough Christleton, and conflated to Rowton.) Rowton was never part of the Grosvenor Estate, as Waverton has been, which has its own distinct "house-style" (red brick, mullioned windows and

red paint, signage). • The development will urbanise and merge these distinct rural villages and extend the sprawl of Chester along the A41.

5. Speculative application that has not followed the planning process • This application did not follow the defined CWAC planning application communication process to impacted parties in Rowton. This land was not submitted as part of the 2025 call by CWAC to developers to register proposed land for residential purposes, and is not contributing to the Local Plan. • Most egregious to Rowton residents, is that the CWAC planning process was not followed for this development. The planning application was NOT notified to Rowton Parish Council, or to directly impacted residents/neighbours on Moor Lane. The location of the application was listed in the CWAC planning system as a “Chester” development when it went live. This caused significant upset and frustration of residents, undermining confidence and trust in the robustness of the CWAC planning process. Furthermore, notice of this planning application did not fulfil the need for a publicly accessible notice for any local residents when it was placed on an entry gate to the land where there is no adjacent public footpath.

6. No documented demand for this development in Green Belt • No evidence has been provided by the developer, by CWAC, or from local residents for any demand in Rowton for the mix or number of properties proposed in this application and therefore, use of this green belt land for this development is an unwise use of this precious land that provides:

- o A rural vista and environment for Rowton residents who purposely chose to live in a rural setting, and for pleasure users (walkers, cyclists, visitors)
- o A large natural soakaway for water run-off
- o Maintenance of a designated Green Gap
- o Preserves and protects part of, and maintains the contiguous extent of, the battlefield site of the Battle of Rowton Moor
- o Prevents merger of historically distinct villages.

7. Increased Traffic Congestion within Rowton

- Increased traffic congestion from up to 100 extra cars (assuming 2 per dwelling), plus many additional service and delivery vehicles on a daily basis, accessing Moor Lane and Eggbridge Lane, and the ensuing traffic flow issues related to the junctions of these two roads with the A41 at peak times. A41 traffic is already highly congested and slow moving at the start/end of the working day and at school opening/closing times, with cars and freight traffic (bound for Holyhead), compounded by additional drop-off and collection traffic for the 6 schools in close proximity to Rowton (Saughton Primary School, Abbeygate College, Abbeygate Primary School, Waverton Primary School, Christleton Primary School, Christleton High School) that access the A41 from 6 consecutive road junctions in close proximity between Saughton and Christleton.

8. Cyclist and Pedestrian safety concerns from increased traffic • Concern for Rowton school children (from Waverton Primary and Christleton High schools) and adult pedestrian and cyclists, with the significantly increased traffic flow on Moor Lane and connected roads from this development, either exiting:

- o RIGHT on to Moor Lane and from there onto Eggbridge or Common Lane, to pass either Waverton Primary School or head towards the congested A41
- o Or, LEFT along the major part of Moor Lane, to turn right, across the traffic, on to the congested A41

9. Moor Lane sewage capacity, existing problems and subsidence • Moor Lane has had numerous incidents of foul sewage overflow in recent years. This has caused multiple incidents of significant and costly damage to properties in Moor Lane, impeded traffic flow during remediation work, and caused upset and frustration with

Moor Lane residents. This is regularly cited as an issue for planning applications raised in this vicinity. The current situation cannot accommodate the waste of an additional 49 properties flowing into the sewers. In places the road has subsided. 10. Road Safety concerns from excess road surface water issues • Surface water drainage on Moor Lane is insufficient, and it regularly floods where it joins the A41, leading to difficult driving conditions (braking distance, car driveability) at a very challenging and busy junction. The proposed development will remove land that acts as a natural soakaway, and the new roads and buildings on the site will further exacerbate the surface water problem along Moor Lane and at this junction, resulting in more frequent and serious flooding and potential for increased accidents (skidding etc).

11. Development site is on the historic battlefield of Rowton Moor • The Battle of Rowton Moor was a pivotal turning point in the English Civil War, directly leading to removal of Charles I as King of England. The main battle on the afternoon of September 24, 1645 was bounded by land between Rowton Hall in the North West and Saughton Lane in the South East, and on the land either side of Moor Lane as far as the canal (including the proposed development site) and the fields/moor land on the Rowton Hall Hotel side of the A41, and along the A41 to the grounds of the Cheshire Cat public on the north side of the A41 and fields to the south (Source: British Military Historian Nick Lipscombe – “The English Civil War – An Atlas and concise history of the wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638-51”, Map 110 and supporting narrative, Osprey Publishing). Residents of Moor Lane continue to find musket balls and other detritus of the historic battle day in their gardens. Preservation of this landscape is vital to the substance of these historic villages and local history.

12. Increased demand on creaking local infrastructure • In addition to frequent and severe sewage overflow issues, and frequent power cuts in Rowton, there is little spare capacity in local schools for more children.

13. Precedence for refusal of planning permission in this area • Planning application, 6/8842 for the development of land at Moorfields adjacent to the current application was refused by the Borough Council, and on appeal, for reasons that remain relevant today. An earlier application in 1974 was also refused. In conclusion, Rowton Parish Council is one of the 7 founding villages of the Chester Green Belt Alliance. We encourage the Borough Council to focus its planning resources on the promotion of urban regeneration, brownfield development and place making within its existing urban areas so as to protect local valuable greenbelt. This includes:

1. Promoting new housing in areas of highest need and regeneration which are close to existing employment areas
2. Updating the brownfield land register to maximise development on suitable, mainly urban brownfield sites
3. Rejecting speculative and premature applications (e.g. Application 25/03444/OUT) on greenbelt to the east of Chester, which prejudice the outcome of the local plan.

This approach is to discourage speculative solely profit-motivated planning applications from developers that:

- Seek to bypass development of the Local Plan
- Result in unrestricted urban sprawl and removal of countryside
- Damage our rural communities in greenbelt and open countryside
- Damage the historic setting of Chester
- Stretch highways and other infrastructure already operating beyond capacity
- Expose schoolchildren to even more unacceptable accident injury rates and air pollution

Appendix 2

Rowton Parish Council Objection to the proposed development on Rowton Bridge Road, 26/01188/OUT 1. Village Boundary Green Gap The field of this proposed development is a designated green space gap on the boundary of Rowton village with Christleton village, purposely chosen to preserve the unique and separate identities of these historic Cheshire villages, and to prevent urban sprawl in a rural location. Building a housing estate here will urbanise these rural villages and extend the sprawl of Chester along the A41.

2. Mature field biodiversity destruction and deterioration of Rowton vistas The development site was until recently an overgrown field with mature hedgerows and trees, of rich biodiversity from years of being untouched. From Rowton it appeared as a rural undeveloped landscape fulfilling the "Green Gap" role perfectly. However, recently the ancient hedgerows on Rowton Bridge Lane were removed and large mature trees alongside the A41 boundary were severely cut down to under a metre in height and not pollarded as might have been expected by a tree management specialist. Trunk debris was left in the field, and there is concern that flora and fauna, and potential heritage artefacts of historical value, may have been destroyed during more than a week of activity, in this previously undisturbed field.

3. Proposed housing density is too high The high density of dwellings proposed for this site are a concern for a rural location, and not consistent with the Christleton Neighbourhood plan. As a canal side location in a leafy green area, the site is going to have the appearance of an inner city high density housing estate devoid of greenness; changing the views from Rowton and the A41 (now that the mature boundary trees have been severely reduced in height); changing the canal side views for canal users, and pedestrians/cyclists who use the canal pathway for enjoyment and relaxation, from a rural to urban view; and further increasing transport-related air pollution along the A41. See item 7 below for safety concerns related to increased vehicles, road transport issues, and impact on pedestrians and cyclists.

4. Preservation of the Battlefield site of the historic Battle of Rowton Moor 1645 At the time of the English Civil War the parcel of land in this application was owned by Ralph Goulbourne, Yeoman Farmer of Christleton, and was within the battlefield site of the Battle of Rowton Moor. The decisive battle of Rowton Moor was a momentous event in the history of England and sealed the future fate of King Charles I. Rowton village name derives from its historical purpose as the rough or farm land of ecclesiastical parish of Christleton. This proposed development site is where Royalist troops were driven back by Parliamentarians towards the City Walls, as the battle turned against them. Heritage battlefield sites of important historic significance should be preserved for future generations, adults and children alike, to have the immersive experience of the land as it was to remain in touch with their history, instead of the alternatives - a battle sign on a lamp post on a busy major arterial road in an urban area as they pass through in a car, or from old grainy photographs of how the land had been preserved for previous generations.

5. Preservation of the Shropshire Union Canal segment The Shropshire Union Canal, together with the Battle of Rowton Moor battlefield, are the two significant heritage assets in this locale. Preservation of the green vista and open aspects of these heritage assets in their original settings is important to preserve the historic nature of these villages, and to ensure future generations maintain strong links with the

heritage of this country. Urbanisation of the canal will undermine the history and obscure their original purpose as the arterial water highways of this country. It may also reduce the pull and enjoyment of visitors, impact tourism for example at the canalside Netherwood Campsite, hotels and Airbnb in Christleton, canal boat owners and waterway holidaymakers.

6. Health Concerns due to Transport-related air pollution arising from the challenging location of the proposed development site The proposed development site adjacent to the A41 road is an area of severe air pollution from road transport due to very high traffic load (cars and large lorries - many international and travelling to and from Ireland via Holyhead). NO₂ levels and PM_{2.5} particulates are above the safe limit for the placement of residential dwellings adjacent to the road. PM_{2.5} particulates cause chronic ill-health from disease such as asthma, heart disease, neurodegeneration e.g. dementia and cognitive decline; reproductive and developmental harm; diabetes, kidney disease and gastrointestinal issues. No further development of residential properties should be considered along the A41 corridor while air quality conditions present a severe impact on health and useful life, particularly for the young and elderly.

7. Severe safety concerns for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers arising from the challenging location of the proposed development site The new development if approved will substantially increase the potential for serious accidents, with possible injuries or even fatalities, on Rowton Bridge Road or at the junction with the A41.

7.1 A brief description of the road layout and environment (see Appendix) Rowton Bridge Road, from the A41 to the humpbacked Rowton Bridge into Christleton is only about 100m long. It is a steady climb all the way up. The entrance to the proposed new estate will be just about 40-45 m from the A41 and only 50-55m from the apex of the bridge. On the opposite side of the road to the proposed development, and a few metres further uphill towards the bridge from the proposed estate entrance, is the driveway to a private dwelling. Currently there is no footpath on the east side of the road to the bridge. On the west side the footpath does not extend the full distance from the A41 to Rowton Bridge. The new development plans indicate that the path would be extended from the A41 to the top of the bridge and an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing put across the proposed estate entrance. However, despite increased pedestrian footfall expected, the pathway over Rowton bridge will remain very narrow and suitable for single file pedestrians only, and there is little to no ongoing pathway from the bridge along Rowton Bridge Lane until Plough Lane (and Christleton High School) is reached (See diagram below of Access Plan). The speed limit on the A41 is 40 mph at the junction with Rowton Bridge Road, while the speed limit on Rowton Bridge Road is 20 mph. Christleton is a busy village with circa 1400 pupils attending the high school and around 220 attending the primary school. The bridge provides access to the village and the schools from the A41. As such this road is always busy around school opening and closing times, and during rush hour. The route is also used as a rat run between the A41 and the A51, and especially when there are hold ups on the A41 due to road works etc. Over the years there have been many road traffic accidents in and around the junction with the A41 and on the short stretch of Rowton Bridge Road from the A41 to the bridge.

7.2 Safety Risks with Proposed Development

1. Risks of collisions from cars turning out of the proposed estate The proposed development will have 29 houses which will mean numerous additional

cars and delivery vehicles turning on and off the short distance of Rowton Bridge Road to the bridge from the proposed estate. As detailed above the distances between the estate entrance and bridge and A41 are very short. Cars turning right out of the estate will be in particular danger from collisions with cars turning up the hill from the A41 or those coming off the bridge.

2. Risk in icy conditions Last year a car coming from the bridge and down toward the A41 lost control and veered to the right across the road and footpath and into the hedge on the boundary of the proposed estate. The Government website states that the stopping distance at 20 mph is 12 metres. This is in dry conditions and on level ground. In icy conditions it is stated that stopping distances can be up to 10 times the standard, which would make the distance over 100 m, i.e. the length of the road and onto the busy A41. Clearly as the road proceeds steeply downhill from the bridge the stopping distance could be even greater.

3. Risk from delivery vehicles and lorries Rowton Bridge Road is narrow and the bridge is unsuitable (weight constraints and narrowness) for lorries or public transport. If the proposed site is approved there will inevitably be many construction vehicles accessing the site from the A41 and will increase the probability of an accident during that time. The proposed development when complete will create additional long -erm traffic from delivery vehicles.

4. Safety of school children, cyclists and pedestrians. Placing the new development on the A41 side of Rowton Bridge will inevitably increase the number of people needing to cross the bridge. Especially school children - sons and daughters of the residents of the new development. Plans for the proposed development indicate that there will be a footpath from the back of the estate onto the canal tow path – HOWEVER this will not mitigate the need for pedestrians and children walking or cycling to school needing to cross the bridge to get into Christleton. The bridge is very narrow and with a blind summit. Children on bikes living on the development estate, and in Rowton, will be at increased risk on their journeys to and from school, particularly in shorter daylight hours of winter, when they have to come down the hill and then turn across the traffic into the estate, or face traffic emerging from the estate. Cyclists and pedestrians using this road will also be put at higher risk of accident due to the increased frequency of traffic from service and delivery vehicles and the cars of residents of the estate.

5. Build-up of traffic on the road to the bridge from the A41. Lights control the flow of traffic across the bridge. There are already often occasions at busy times when the traffic builds up along Rowton Bridge Road on either side of the bridge and some times as far as the A41 (see photo in Appendix). Clearly having an uncontrolled junction (estate entrance) part way down Rowton Bridge Road will only exacerbate the problem.

Appendix Photograph - Rowton Bridge Lane traffic queue in both directions, from Rowton Bridge towards the A41 – APRIL 2026
Photograph of proposed development site from Rowton across A41 – MAY 2026
Proposed Access Plan to new development on Rowton Bridge Road
Proposed Plan
Layout Overview of new development on Rowton Bridge Road