



Chapter 1: Executive Summary

1.1 This is the third Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) produced by Cheshire East Council in compliance with the requirements of Section 35 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. However the Government has announced that it intends to remove the requirement to produce an annual report although it intends to retain the overall duty to monitor. In the future there will be greater flexibility for the Council to decide how it monitors the effectiveness of the development plan and its planning function.

1.2 Through the Localism Act 2011, the Government refers to the statutory development plan as "the Local Plan". To reflect this, it is proposed that in future the Cheshire East Local Development Framework will be renamed the "Cheshire East Local Plan".

Local Development Scheme

1.3 In the last year the Council has been continuing to put together the evidence base and has been carrying out extensive consultations across the Borough to help advise the preparation of the Local Plan. There have been two consultations: one on the Issues and Options for the overall development strategy and the second one on Place Shaping, looking at the concerns and aspirations of local communities.

1.4 The towns of Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich and Sandbach have been selected by the Department of Communities and Local Government as Neighbourhood Planning Vanguard. These towns will act as pilots in working collaboratively with Cheshire East in preparing a vision and strategy for each town to be incorporated in the Local Plan.

1.5 The following documents/evidence have been published/completed:

- Interim Planning Policy on the Release of Housing Land
- Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing
- Town Centre Retail Capacity Study
- Market Town Benchmarking: Measuring the performance of town centres
- Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Green Space Strategy
- Renewable Energy Study
- Waste Needs Assessment

1.6 Progress with the preparation of the Local Plan in 2010/11 has been made in accordance with the key milestones set out in the 2010-14 Local Development Scheme. In order to ensure that there is sufficient time for Members and key stakeholders to help develop the plan, in the spirit of localism, and to consider the implications of changes in national and regional policy for preparation of the Local Plan, it is proposed to review the timetable for the Local Development Scheme. This will be presented in a separate report.

Housing

1.7 The down turn in the economy has continued to have an input on house building. There has been a further reduction in the number of housing completions during the monitoring period, however house builders are showing some interest with a number of new sites started during the year. Almost half the completions were in Crewe and and



Macclesfield and a fifth of the total were built in villages/rural areas. The completions were for a mix of house types and sizes however development has on average been at a lower density than previous years.

1.8 The reduction in housing completions has also led to a reduction in the number of affordable houses completed this year. However the number of empty homes has fallen again this year following action taken by the Council. The Council is preparing a local housing strategy which will consider its vision and priorities for meeting the housing needs of local residents.

1.9 The Government requires all planning authorities to be able to demonstrate a five year supply of land available for new housing development. The most recently published Cheshire East Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment identified a 4.58 years supply of housing in the Borough as at March 2010. The SHLAA is currently being reviewed and a provisional housing land supply of 4.06 years (as at March 2011) has been identified. In February 2011, the Council adopted an Interim Planning Policy on the Release of Housing Land in order to help address the shortfall in housing land supply. As a consequence of the Interim Policy, a number of planning applications were approved in 2011, subject to the completion of legal agreements, for housing development on sites on the edge of Crewe. Whilst these sites will contribute towards the five year supply for the Borough, the ongoing downturn in the housing market has meant that many sites within the Borough with planning permission for housing are now considered unlikely to be developed in the next five years and have therefore been discounted from the five years supply. The shortfall in housing land supply has also led to the submission of a number of speculative planning applications for housing on greenfield sites on the edge of other towns in the Borough.

1.10 The Borough continues to have pockets of deprivation with five areas being within the 10% most deprived and 23 in the 25% most deprived in England. However it also has an increased number of areas within the least deprived areas.

Economy

1.11 The present uncertain global economic climate continues to have an impact on economic development in Cheshire East. Employment floorspace completions were down to around a quarter of the previous year's level, and the loss of land from employment use to other uses (often residential), whilst remaining low, increased significantly. Cheshire East maintains a good supply of employment land, much of which is allocated or committed for mixed use development; however, much of the supply is located on a small number of very large sites concentrated in a small number of settlements.

1.12 Despite the difficulties in the national economy Cheshire East has experienced an overall reduction in the number of vacant retail units though some town centres have seen increases in their vacancies. There have been some new retail developments, however these have mainly been through the increase of floorspace in existing units. There have also been some new leisure developments with two new gyms being completed.



1.13 Cheshire East's Visitor Economy Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2011 and launched in February 2011. Although the economy is going through a difficult period, many of Cheshire East's attractions and festivals have had a record breaking year. Jodrell Bank has completed its £3m project and has been short listed for World Heritage Status.

Minerals and Waste

1.14 Aggregate production continues to decline primarily as a result of a reduced construction activity due to the current economic climate. The Cheshire sub-region is producing below its annual aggregate apportionment and landbanks have fallen since the last reporting year, with sand and gravel now below the 7 year national indicator. At silica sand sites, a 10 year landbank is not being maintained at all sites although an application has come forward indicating demand for silica sand.

1.15 Revised sub-regional apportionment figures are now available, with lower levels of aggregate supply being set for Cheshire in the period up until 2020. The sand and gravel apportionment figure is to be split between Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester in the future.

1.16 Figures on 2010/11 figures on municipal waste will be included when available.

1.17 An application received to extend the operational lifespan (and subsequent restoration) of one of the borough's non-hazardous landfill sites indicates that trends in the overall reduction of municipal waste arisings and increased levels of recycling have slowed the expected rate at which landfill sites are reaching capacity.

Environment

1.18 Cheshire East remains committed to the management and protection of both the built and natural environment as shown by the fact that there have been no significant changes to report in terms of Listed Buildings and effect of planning applications on the natural environment. The number of renewable energy approvals and completions has gone up but the schemes have been of low energy production. It must be remembered that many renewable schemes however do not require planning consent.