

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Strategic Planning Board

Date of Meeting: 21st December 2011
Report of: Head of Strategic Planning and Housing
Subject/Title: Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2011
Portfolio Holders: Councillor David Brown

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings in the Annual Monitoring Report 2010/11. The Annual Monitoring Report shows the progress with the preparation of the Local Plan and reviews the Local Development Scheme and considers how the policies set out in the development plan were delivered during the period 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011.

2.0 Decision Request

- 2.1 That the Strategic Planning Board notes findings of the Annual Monitoring Report 2010/11 for information.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 This report was approved by Strategic Planning Board on 29th November 2011 however at that meeting it was requested that the presentation on the content of the Annual Monitoring report should be made at the subsequent meeting as there had been insufficient time for the presentation to be given.
- 3.2 Planning authorities are required to monitor the progress in the preparation of their Local Plan and the effectiveness of their planning policies.
- 3.3 Monitoring is very important in order to establish what is happening now, what may happen in the future and then compare these trends against existing policies and targets to determine whether any changes are necessary. It provides a crucial method for feedback within the process of policy making and implementation whilst also indentifying key challenges and opportunities enabling adjustments and revisions to be made as necessary through the Local Plan process.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications

6.1 The report contains statistical evidence on the performance of existing development plan policies which will be crucial in the formulation and process of policy making and implementation of the Local Plan.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 There will be no costs involved with the publication of the Annual Monitoring Report – it will be published on the Council's website only.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Council is required to submit an annual report, to the Secretary of State, containing prescribed information regarding:

- a) implementation of the Local Development Scheme and
- b) the extent to which the policies set out in Local Development Documents are being achieved is a statutory requirement imposed by s35 Planning & Compensation Act 2004.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 The Local Development Scheme is being revised to ensure that sufficient time is included in the timetable to enable members to give full consideration to the proposals to be included in the draft Local Plan. The Local Development Scheme sets out the risks associated with the preparation of the Local Plan.

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 This is the third Annual Monitoring Report for Cheshire East Council. Every local planning authority has to make an annual report to the Secretary of State containing information on the implementation of the Local Development Scheme and the extent to which the policies set out in local plans are being achieved. However the Government has advised that it intends to remove the requirement for local planning authorities to submit their annual monitoring report to the Government in future but it intends to retain the overall duty to monitor. A letter was sent to all authorities in March announcing the withdrawal of guidance on local plan monitoring and it is therefore a matter for each council to decide what to include in their monitoring reports.

10.2 The Executive Summary to the Annual Monitoring Report is set out in Appendix 1. It gives the extent of development and progress throughout the Borough highlighting the main conclusions from each of the chapters. The full report is available on the Council's web site:
http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/spatial_planning/local_development_framework/annual_monitoring_report.aspx

- 10.3 The current Local Development Scheme came into effect on 31st January 2011 and covers the period 2010-14, setting out the key milestones, identifying target dates for the various stages of each documents. In the last year the council have been continuing to put together the evidence base but also it has carried out extensive consultations on Core Strategy Issues and Options and Place Shaping. The key milestones set for 2010-11 have been met. A separate report will consider the revisions to the Local Development Scheme and review the timetable.
- 10.4 The national economic position is having an effect on development in Cheshire East in terms of the amount of new development for housing, employment, town centre and other shopping developments and also on the amount of mineral extraction.
- 10.5 Following the national trend, housing completions in Cheshire East have fallen again, down to 600 dwellings completed in the year. The number of affordable housing completions also fell, to 205 dwellings.
- 10.6 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 therefore, based on government advice contained in PPS3, have been discounted from the five years supply. Details on the government guidance and the discounting of sites are contained in Appendix 2 attached to this report. 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.
- 10.7 Employment floorspace completions were also down to around a quarter of the previous year's level while the loss of employment land, mainly to residential uses, has increased. However many of the town centres have seen a reduction in the number of vacancies while most of the new retail development has mainly taken the form of increase in floorspace of existing units, for example by adding mezzanine floors. The tourism sector has benefited from people holidaying in Britain with many of our attractions having had a record breaking year in terms of the number of visitors.

- 10.8 The natural environment and heritage assets continue to be well managed throughout the Borough and work continues on the management of climate change. While there has been a drop in demand for materials for the construction sector, standards of development/ energy efficiency is improving.
- 10.9 It is imperative that the Council continue this monitoring as monitoring provides a crucial method for feedback, highlighting where adjustments and revisions are necessary. The information forms evidence for the development of policies for the Local Plan process. With the withdrawal of the government requirement, it is up to each Council to decide what will be included in future annual reports. It is intended that this Council will continue to monitor on a more focussed list of indicators that link to either corporate performance measures or key planning policies.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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