

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## REPORT TO: STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	6 December 2012
<b>Report of:</b>	Strategic Planning & Housing Manager
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Cheshire East Local Plan – Draft Development Strategy & Policy Principles
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor David Brown

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### 1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report considers the next stage of the Cheshire East Local Plan. The Council has undertaken a strategic 'Issues & Options' consultation and over the past year has embarked on an intensive programme of place shaping and neighbourhood planning to provide a 'bottom up' perspective on future growth and development. The Development Strategy and its sister document the Policy Principles now pull these elements together.
- 1.2 This presents a 'jobs led' strategy for growth and prosperous communities. They represent the last stage in the consultation process before a final (submission) version of the Core strategy is prepared in the summer of 2013.

### 2.0 Decision Requested

- To note the process of plan making, evidence and the report of Consultation of the Cheshire East Issues & Options that has informed the current stage of the Local Plan
- To consider the report of Consultation of the Town Strategies (Appendix 2)
- To Consider the Analysis of Consultation of The Town strategies and Completed Town Strategies (Appendices 3 & 4))
- That Cabinet is recommended to approve for consultation the attached Cheshire East Development Strategy (Appendix 5)
- That Cabinet is recommended to approve for consultation the attached Cheshire East Policy Principles Document (Appendix 6)
- That Cabinet is recommended to resolve that the Cheshire East Development Strategy be used as a material consideration for Development Management purposes with immediate effect.

### 3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure that progress is made with the preparation of the Cheshire East Local Plan.

### 4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All Wards

## **5.0 Local Ward Members**

5.1 All Ward Members

## **6.0 Policy Implications including - Carbon reduction & Health**

6.1 **Health:** The Local Plan can make an important contribution to the health and well being of the Borough. The plan will consider the new infrastructure requirements of the area – both existing and arising from new developments. This enables health provision to be made in the right places to serve future generations.

6.2 In addition the plan can help build healthier communities through the design of new villages and neighbourhoods. Provision of green infrastructure in particular can assist in promoting more active lifestyles – as well as contributing towards better mental health.

6.3 **Carbon reduction.** The Local Plan is a means of promoting more sustainable patterns of development – which in turn can reduce carbon dependency. The Policy Principles document also contain draft policies dealing with renewable energy. Cheshire East has a variety of opportunities for new renewable energy, including geothermal heating.

## **7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Director of Finance and Business Services)**

7.1 The preparation of the Local Plan is a time consuming and costly process. To speed up its production a temporary virement of £175,000 was approved at Mid Year Review to supplement the Strategic Planning's base budget. In addition one-off grant funding has also supplemented the base budget in 2012-13. The failure to produce a local plan in a timely way would cost the Council in terms of potentially expensive appeals and lost CIL revenue.

7.2 The Development Strategy proposes that a series of strategic sites be developed across the Borough. As a major land owner the Council has a land interest in several of these. Those wholly or partly owned by the Council include: Leighton West, Crewe, Central Crewe, South West Macclesfield, South Macclesfield, Macclesfield Town Centre & the new settlement east of Handforth. These sites should be considered for development on their planning merits alone. However should any allocation be confirmed, the value of the land and benefit to the public would rise accordingly.

## **8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

8.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to prepare Local Development Frameworks, now known as Local Plans. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the procedures to be followed in the preparation of such plans.

8.2 The Development Strategy has been prepared under Regulation 18 which requires Local Planning Authorities to engage with the community and

businesses regarding the preparation of the Local Plan. Whilst the preparation of the Development Strategy itself is not a statutory requirement it is nevertheless an important part of the Local Plan process and the results of the consultation will inform the preparation of the formal submission Core Strategy next year. It will enable the Council to demonstrate to the Inspector who conducts the public examination into the Core Strategy that extensive consultation has been undertaken and that all reasonable alternative strategies have been considered; these considerations form part of the tests of soundness that the Inspector will apply.

8.3 The preparation of the plan is guided by the National Planning Policy Framework – and other related advice. The implications of this are considered within the strategy and in the remainder of this report.

8.4 The Localism Act 2011 imposes on local planning authorities, in preparing local plans, a duty to co-operate with neighbouring authorities and other parties on strategic issues of common interest.

## **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 **Local Plan Examination** Following the publication and its final consultation, the Core Strategy will be submitted for examination. The key test of examination is one of ‘soundness’. For a plan to be considered sound, it must be:

- Positively prepared
- Justified
- Effective
- Consistent with National Policy

Failure at examination has serious negative consequences for any Local Authority. By preparing and consulting on a draft Development Strategy, the Council is reducing the risk of this outcome.

9.2 **Planning Applications & Appeals.** Currently Cheshire East does not enjoy a five year supply of housing land – and some of its development plan policies are starting to become out of step with national policy. Consequently the Council is experiencing a large number of planning applications for housing on sites that are not allocated in the development plan. Some of these are subject to appeal and or legal challenge.

9.3 An up to date Local plan will not only provide new policies that are fully compliant with the NPPF but it will also identify a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. Consequently completion of the local plan will greatly assist the processing and determination of planning applications in the Borough.

## **10.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **Plan Making in Cheshire East**

10.1 The Development Strategy sets out the Council’s essential thinking about the future shape and growth of Cheshire East. The Strategy is one of Growth to create prosperous communities – with the provision of new employment areas and transport infrastructure being fundamental to its whole approach.

- 10.2 In the autumn of 2010 the Council published strategic 'Issues and Options' which considered different potential approaches to growth and development at a Borough-wide, high level. One of the consequences of this work was the realisation that understanding of Cheshire East as a unified 'place' was still evolving. As a large County Borough, created in 2009 the area neither represented the historic County of Cheshire nor the District Boroughs which had become familiar since 1974.
- 10.3 Accordingly, the Council has invested considerable effort into 'Place Shaping' at a level which is meaningful to most people in the Borough, particularly with the production of Town Strategies for each of the largest towns in Cheshire East. These were prepared according to neighbourhood planning principles and followed the award of government funding as a neighbourhood planning 'front runner'. The Development Strategy and Policy principles now brings together the findings of these strategies, the earlier issues and options and the research and evidence base, to create a coherent plan for the future of the Borough.

### **Delivering Wider Economic Growth**

- 10.4 Delivering economic growth in Cheshire East remains central to the future prosperity of the Borough and increasingly important to the future sustainability of the Council. The Local Plan is an essential building block necessary to deliver an overall vision for economic growth.
- 10.5 The Local Plan is part of a much wider approach to developing the economy which is being led by the Leader and Cabinet to:
- Build stronger relationships with our existing businesses and investors to stimulate growth, build new enterprises and deliver jobs;
  - Build stronger relationships with local communities to support the local economy and create entrepreneurial towns and villages;
  - Directly promote employment and housing growth through development of Council assets and land to deliver jobs and new homes;
  - Focus education and skills investment to deliver a skilled workforce for the future and create opportunities for young people to build links with local businesses to encourage them to stay in Cheshire East;
  - Build new partnerships with developers and funding bodies to create new models of investment to stimulate growth;
  - Build a strong partnership with Government and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to bring investment in sites, infrastructure and influence a national economic growth strategy to recognise the significance of Cheshire East and the wider sub-region;
  - Maximise the impact that the Council can have on the local economy through directing our spending power locally, developing a local supply chain; generating employment opportunities for local people and ensuring the economic impact of major policy decisions is understood – we need to place the economy the heart of our corporate plan.

10.6 The Local Plan sets out the land uses required to deliver growth, as the spatial interpretation of the vision. The principles set out in the draft Development Strategy reflect this wider vision for economic growth.

## **Consultation & Evidence**

10.7 The Localism Act 2011 provided legislation for the abolition of regional plans. The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the Northwest Region was adopted in 2008 and looked ahead to the year 2021. Despite the government's best intentions the Northwest RSS has yet to be abolished – and along with other regional plans its revocation is currently the subject of strategic environmental assessment. Consequently the Regional Strategy remains part of the development plan for the time being. This means that the Cheshire East Local plan must accord broadly with the provisions of the RSS at least until 2021.

10.8 The Issues & Options Stage of the Local Plan set out high level choices for the scale and location of future growth in Cheshire East. This suggested options ranging between 1150 homes / 350 jobs per year through to 1600 homes / 950 jobs each year. Different options for the pattern of growth were also set out – with development either being concentrated in the south of the Borough and the main towns – or to a more even spread, including the option of Green belt adjustment in the north. A rural variant with greater dispersal of growth was also consulted on. Overall the option for higher growth received the greatest support, although comments were made in favour of all proposals.

10.9 The Council has produced Town Strategies for each of the eleven largest towns in Cheshire East. These were prepared in conjunction with the relevant town or Parish Council (apart from unparished Crewe & Macclesfield) and frequently also involved existing town partnerships or similar bodies. The model for these documents was provided by the neighbourhood planning 'Front Runner' project, funded by the CLG. The first phase of strategies were subject to consultation earlier this year, with the final six strategies consulted on during September.

10.10 The Town Strategies for Alsager, Middlewich, Congleton and Sandbach (in part) have now been signed off by the respective town councils. The Report of Consultation on these and the remaining documents are attached as Appendices 2 & 3, with links to the completed strategies in Appendix 4. The Town Strategies are intended to inform the Cheshire East Local Plan; consequently the Development Strategy endeavours to reflect the approved documents and consultation responses as far as is possible.

10.11 The Development Strategy is also supported by a strong evidence base. Key studies and areas of work within this include:

- Strategic Housing Market area assessment
- Strategic Housing Land availability assessment
- Employment Land review
- Open Space & Green Infrastructure assessments
- Renewable Energy Assessments
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Landscape Character assessment
- Transportation Studies

These are or will be published on the Council's web site

## Duty to Co-operate

- 10.12 Under the Localism Act 2011 the Council is under a duty to cooperate with public authorities and infrastructure providers over the preparation of development plans. This provision was intended to ensure that after the RSS was abolished, there remained a means by which strategic planning issues can be properly addressed. Such issues are defined as larger than local issues that can not be dealt with by one local planning authority alone and can include, for example, the provision of major retail, leisure, industrial and other economic development across a travel to work area, the provision of significant new housing across a housing market area or the provision of infrastructure for transport, waste treatment, energy generation and water supply / quality.
- 10.13 In most instances the Duty to Cooperate relates to ensuring effective cross border working and cooperation with neighbouring authorities but can be wider than this and relate to other regional or national organisations, as well as other Councils beyond immediately neighbouring authorities. Issues around minerals and waste tend to involve the latter circumstances, especially as Cheshire East contains silica sand, a limited national resource. As a recently introduced requirement Councils are still coming to terms with how the Duty should best operate locally. However, recent evidence suggests that the Planning Inspectorate are taking this legal requirement seriously both when deciding if the duty has been met and if the issues identified have been appropriately addressed through the Local Plan.
- 10.14 Discussions have been held and remain ongoing with all neighbouring local Authorities. Those areas which are of most pertinent to the consideration of the Development Strategy are the interfaces across the Greater Manchester boundary in the north and the impact of growth proposals in Crewe and Alsager on regeneration in the Potteries.
- 10.15 In the north of the Borough there are two relatively large developments proposed on either side of the boundary – at Woodford (in Stockport) and at Handforth East. These are both new and largely self contained communities and raise similar issues in terms of the relationship with adjacent settlements. It is considered that the two can be viewed as complimentary and their impacts can properly be accommodated with suitable mitigation, the scope of which may need to extend across the Cheshire / Greater Manchester boundary.
- 10.16 Similarly the proposed SEMMS road also cuts across the northern border – but as route safeguarded in previous plans this road is likely to move into its implementation and construction phase early on in the plan period. Within the City of Manchester major developments are proposed for the airport; which will underline its role as a regional transport and employment hub. Development here, combined with SEMMS, reinforces part of the case for additional housing at Handforth. Elsewhere however there remains a case for selective employment in the north of Cheshire – and the scale and nature of employment development at the airport is considered to be a sufficiently different offer to ensure the two will be complementary. Overall there is a need to ensure that development within Cheshire does not undermine strategic objectives within Greater Manchester and visa versa – and we believe the Development Strategy strikes a suitable balance in this regard.

- 10.17 In relation to Crewe and Congleton, there has long been a concern from the North Staffordshire Authorities that development in the south of Cheshire will undermine regeneration in the Potteries conurbation. Whilst the two areas are relatively close geographically, they remain culturally and regionally distinct. Crewe, in common with the rest of Cheshire is very much part of the North west of England and via its rail links has connections further afield than just its Staffordshire neighbours. Historically cross border commuting has been relatively limited – especially compared with the flows between Greater Manchester and Cheshire. Consequently there is a real sense in which development in Crewe serves its own distinctive role with the Cheshire & Warrington Sub region and provides a different offer to that in locations such as Stoke-on-Trent
- 10.18 Equally both Crewe and Congleton have their own case for growth and development , based on their own unique circumstances and requirements. In Congleton the need to boost employment provides the driver; in Crewe it is the wider regeneration of the town based on its rail connectivity which is the key. In both cases the proposals in the Development Strategy should be viewed as complementary and not contradictory to the needs of Staffordshire.
- 10.19 With regard to Cheshire West cross border issues are based mainly around the relationship of Winsford and Middlewich. The latest proposals from Cheshire West suggest that Winsford will become a centre of both housing and employment growth. This raises the issue of connectivity to the M6 at Junction 18 – a route that currently passes directly via Middlewich Town Centre. However there is also a related issue of cooperation in the planning for Middlewich where the Borough Boundary is drawn very tightly around the town and land within Cheshire West may be required to meet certain objectives of the Town Strategy. Accordingly there is an opportunity to consider these issues in tandem.
- 10.20 The need now is to take forward the cross border issues which have been identified to date and to look in more detail at how these can be addressed as part of the plan preparation process. Ultimately, if agreement can not be reached on a policy outcome following a joint working process, then this will need to be resolved through the examination process based on the evidence.

## **11.0 STRATEGY & POLICY**

### **The Context for the Plan**

- 11.1 Cheshire East is one of the most successful economies outside of the south-east of England and a highly desirable place to live and work. The Borough has a strong industrial heritage from the rail engineering in Crewe to silk manufacturing in Macclesfield. Cheshire East retains today an entrepreneurial business base which has shown resilience during the recent recession.
- 11.2 Like everywhere across the UK, manufacturing employment is reducing but in Cheshire East we still have a higher presence of manufacturing than the NW or the UK, reflecting the strong industrial heritage and the growing number of local manufacturing businesses some of whom are expanding at a rapid rate. High-skill sectors such as Pharmaceuticals, Automotive, R&D also have a strong presence. Cheshire East accounts for 5.6% of the North-west's total

employment, but made up 36.9% of the region's scientific Research & Development jobs.

- 11.3 There are many factors which underpin the economic success of the area, including the connectivity into major infrastructure. Cheshire East lies at the heart of the Country's major road and rail network, connecting the north west into the Midlands and South East, with Crewe to London journey times of 1 hr 40mins by rail. The rich and diverse natural environment and close proximity to the Peak District and major cities make Cheshire East a very desirable place to raise a family. There are low levels of crime and a strong education offer.
- 11.4 Cheshire East is made up of a number of very distinctive market towns that provide a vital economic and social hub for rural communities and many towns are currently facing the same challenges in terms of vacancies on the high street and the threat of internet and out of town shopping.
- 11.5 This is one reason why the Council cannot be complacent about the future of our economy. In an increasingly competitive global economic environment Cheshire East must compete strongly to retain our economic success and continue to build new enterprises that are able to compete in a global market place.
- 11.6 To do this over the next twenty years there is a need to invest strongly in our infrastructure network. We need to make it easier to get from place to place within Cheshire East, but importantly ensure Cheshire East is better connected to other economic centres such as Manchester and the South East. This means building new roads, ensuring we have high speed broadband, improving rail stations and taking advantage of new national infrastructure such as High Speed2.
- 11.7 The Borough must also have a supply of new, high quality employment sites that take advantage of the infrastructure network. This means identifying more land for development, but linking new sites with appropriate infrastructure to ensure the creation of jobs.
- 11.8 The Council must protect, invest and reinvigorate our market towns through a town centre first policy and create the rich and diverse retail and social offer that can continue to be at the heart of community life.
- 11.9 We must protect as much of our natural environment as possible, and where new development is necessary we will 'swap' green belt allocations to limit the impact of new building and safeguard the best of the Cheshire countryside.

### **Overall Spatial Strategy**

- 11.10 Cheshire East is a great place to live and work; but it will only remain that way if changes and evolves to meet the needs of future generations. That change needs to be managed so that it reinforces the advantages the area already possesses – and not work against them.
- 11.11 The Development Strategy maps out the jobs, homes, commerce, infrastructure and community facilities that the area will need in the future. The Council is

committed to a jobs-led growth strategy that places the prosperity of our citizens at the heart of everything we are seeking to achieve

11.12 This is in many ways a federal plan – recognising the distinctive character of different parts of the Borough and acknowledging that there is no single county town that dominates the area. The core principles are:

- Concentrate development in the two largest towns of Crewe & Macclesfield. Development that is necessary to support the regeneration of Crewe & Revitalisation of Macclesfield
- Development of the medium sized towns - Key Service Centres – linked to their distinctive needs and characteristics. Those in the north of the central belt of the Borough will carry proportionately a greater part of development.
- Key Service Centres in the north of the Borough will accommodate correspondingly less development, recognising green belt constraints.
- Up to three new settlements are planned – at Handforth, Crewe Hall and Barthomley; these will provide jobs and homes in a planned environment with good infrastructure, rather than loading onto the periphery existing constrained settlements
- Significant new employment areas will be delivered to underpin our strategy – at Basford in Crewe, Radway Green / J16 near Alsager, J17 at Sandbach, Middlewich, North Congleton, South Macclesfield and at Wardle. Existing key employers will be supported to grow and develop.

11.13 Connectivity is the key to achieving this growth, maximising the benefits of Crewe as a national rail hub and exploiting the potential of Wilmslow and Macclesfield Stations. Substantial new road infrastructure will be required to open up the east of Cheshire and connect the M6 with main settlements and surrounding major roads.

11.14 The strategy also adopts a ‘town centre’ first approach to retailing and commercial development, supporting but changing the way town centres perform and function.

11.15 Aside from areas allocated for necessary development the unique character and distinctiveness of the Cheshire countryside will be protected and enhanced. A new Green Belt is proposed to separate the historic town of Nantwich from Crewe – and a new ‘Strategic Open Gap’ policy will preserve undeveloped areas between Crewe, Sandbach, Middlewich and adjoining areas. Fresh Landscape Character policies will apply across the Borough and the periphery of the Peak District National Park will be protected.

## **Jobs & Employment**

11.16 Jobs and prosperity are at the heart of the Development Strategy. Accordingly the strategy seeks to promote the right conditions for job growth – by boosting the delivery of existing major employment sites, improving connectivity and

identifying new areas for future investment and expansion. The starting point for this is an assessment of current employment land and assets.

- 11.17 The Employment Land Review 2012 considers the demand for and supply of employment land in Cheshire East between 2009 and 2030. The review considers all employment land uses that fall within Use Classes B1 (offices, research and development and light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution). It shows that Cheshire East is a key economic driver for the North West region. The local economy provides 6.4% of the North West's economic output and contains 7.5% of its businesses.
- 11.18 The Employment Land Review forecasts that there is a need to provide between 277.8 ha and 323.7 ha of land for employment purposes between 2009 and 2030 across the whole Borough based on current or past trends. This equates to between 13.2 ha and 15.4 ha per year.
- 11.19 A review of the sites currently considered to be part of the supply of land for employment development indicates that 272.4 ha of land from the existing employment land supply should be retained for employment in the future.
- 11.20 A review of current areas in use for employment areas shows that although the vast majority of these are still likely to be in use for employment purposes by 2030, a number may have ceased to serve a useful economic function and be better used for other purposes
- 11.21 The Employment Land Review therefore provides a baseline from which to build. In order to ensure the future prosperity of the area and to assist in the national growth agenda it is proposed that further employment land be identified in key locations, to provide further economic opportunities. Some of these will be phased to later in the Plan period to give the best opportunity for existing sites to grow.

## **Transport & Connectivity**

- 11.22 Improved Connectivity forms a vital part of the development strategy – and goes hand in hand with new development opportunities. Better transport is both a driver for economic growth – but new development is also a means of securing new infrastructure. The Strategy highlights the role that Crewe Station can play in leading the regeneration of the whole town; this position could also be greatly enhanced by the advent of HS2. The fast rail links to Manchester and London are also key advantages of Macclesfield and Wilmslow Town Centres.
- 11.23 New Road infrastructure is also promoted and protected via the strategy – the dualling of the A500 is critical to future growth in Crewe as are improvements to junctions 16 & 17 of the M6. A new northern link road is proposed around Congleton to both relieve existing congestion and also open up new land, especially for employment development. This in turn will facilitate links into Macclesfield – where a southern and south-western link road is planned, connected to new development. To cement linkages with Greater Manchester and the new SEMMS route a Woodford-Poynton relief road is proposed

## **Housing growth**

- 11.24 The provision of housing in any development plan reflects a combination of evidence and policy. The various strands of evidence may point towards a particular figure or range of housing to be provided; the application of policy then may suppress or elevate that figure according to the desired objective in mind.
- 11.25 In Cheshire East there are a number of factors that influence the scale and location of future housing. In terms of overall quantum, whilst the RSS remains part of the Development Plan, the housing totals to 2021 need to have regard to the policies of the Regional Plan. The Housing Provision figure within the RSS is 1150 homes pa. Alongside this, the NPPF advises that Local plans need to meet the full, objectively assessed housing needs for their area. In addition there is also the ongoing requirement to identify a five year 'deliverable' supply of housing – and a further ten years worth of 'developable' sites or broad locations for housing.
- 11.26 In terms of evidence, the starting point is demographic information. The Council commissioned a range of forecasts to be produced using POPGROUP software based on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicative estimates for 2010. This led to ten demographic scenarios being considered in total. It produced a wide range of outputs for growth from the narrow view of providing for the likely needs of the existing population only (i.e. natural change) to a wider view based on providing for continued economic prosperity.
- 11.27 The Natural Change forecast estimated that the population would grow by around 2,500 people over 20 years, needing 495 homes pa, but with a reduction of 11,900 people in the Borough's labour supply.. At the other extreme, the 2010 based sub-national population projections estimated that the population would grow by 47,800 people, requiring a need for an additional 1,600 dwellings per annum which would increase the labour supply by 12,100 people by 2030.
- 11.28 Whilst it might be tempting to simply follow the natural growth option, Cheshire East is not an island with sealed borders; indeed evidence from the 2011 census suggests a highly mobile population with considerable movement of people in and out of the Borough. Equally projections at the opposite end of the scale also tend to over simplify the picture. Accordingly a more moderated projection is to be preferred – suggesting a population increase of 33,600 people needing 1350 homes pa is a better estimate for the future.
- 11.29 Demographic information is however only part of the evidence The Strategic Housing Market Assessment confirms that Cheshire East indicates an annual shortfall of 2,753 open market dwellings and a net requirement for 1,243 affordable homes each year. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (Update 31st March 2011), considered suitable sites for housing could potentially provide a total of 31,880 dwellings over the next 15 years, of which about 7,000 homes would be on brownfield sites with a further 3,700 on sites that are a mix of brownfield and greenfield.
- 11.30 Therefore the demographic and housing market evidence currently available to the Council all suggest that there is an ongoing need to provide additional housing in Cheshire east. This reflective of population growth, changes in household size and composition, family breakdown and other societal changes

plus patterns of migration within the UK (and beyond). Set against these 'elevating' factors are matters which serve to constrain supply; these include green belt, infrastructure limitations, highway capacity and environmental designations. Having factored these issues together it is proposed to gradually increase housing provision from its current RSS annual total of 1150 dwellings through to an average annual provision of 1500 homes pa after 2020.

Period	2010 - 2015	2016-2020	2021-2025	2026-2030	Total
Annual average	1150	1250	1500	1500	1350
Totals	5,750	6,250	7,500	7,500	27,000

11.31 The proposed increase in housing provision over the plan period is reflective of the NPPF advice to “boost significantly” the supply of housing land and yet also recognises the low rates of building at present and the likely timelines in getting some new allocations up and running.

### **Five Year Supply of Housing Land**

11.32 The NPPF requires that Council's identify a five year supply of 'deliverable' supply of housing land, plus a 5% 'buffer'. The strategic sites in the Development Strategy have been chosen so that they will meet the housing needs of the area over the whole plan period – but they have also been selected so that there are sufficient sites that will improve housing supply with immediate effect. This will significantly improve the range of sites available – and ensure that a pipeline of supply is now in place.

11.33 Based on the range of sites selected, the Council can now demonstrate that a five year supply of housing land (plus buffer) has now been identified. . It is proposed that this be documented in a separate housing supply paper

### **Town Centres**

11.34 The Strategy adopts a 'town centre first' approach that supports the revitalisation of the principal town centres. In particular Crewe and Macclesfield Town centres are identified as major points for growth. In Crewe this is complimented by regeneration based on the railway station – as a further 'hub' of growth

### **GREEN BELT & COUNTRYSIDE**

11.35 As well as promoting new growth and development the strategy also seeks to protect and enhance the best of the Cheshire Countryside. The Council recognises that some development has to take place within the green belt in both the north and the south of the Borough. This is necessary in the exceptional circumstances of achieving sustainable development over a period of several decades. However review also allows for the potential for new green belt to be explored. An ongoing issue since the creation of Crewe as a railway town in the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been its relationship with Nantwich – the ancient major settlement in the south of Cheshire whose origins date back to the roman era. It has long been the policy of successive Councils to protect the character of this historic town; we now propose that this is done through the medium of green belt.

## The Case for Green Belt Review

11.36 The key characteristic of green belt is their permanence and openness; they are intended to be a long term policy for the protection of countryside linked to an adjoining town or conurbation. The NPPF maintains the five purposes of including land in the green belt. These are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

It also emphasises that green belt boundaries should only be altered in 'exceptional circumstances' and via the means of a local plan review.

11.37 Given that the Cheshire East Local Plan is a new planning strategy for a 'new' borough, it is timely and appropriate to consider whether any review of green belt boundaries should take place. Such a review is not automatic; indeed the need to maintain green belt in the long term and the exceptional circumstances necessary for any changes, ensure that the presumption is therefore one of no review and no change.

11.38 In the North of Cheshire East greenbelt forms part of the protective band that encircles the conurbation of Greater Manchester. Green belt in this locality has persisted for several decades – with selected boundaries last altered in the 1980's. The Northwest RSS reinforced the role of green belt and indicated that there should be no review of green belt in Cheshire until after 2011. Currently in the north of the Borough there are only two relatively small areas of 'safeguarded land' – open land not washed over by green belt but reserved for future development needs. Accordingly aside from recycling land within the urban area there is very limited opportunity for new development in north Cheshire; the use of brownfield sites will continue to provide some sites – but they will be inevitably limited in terms of scale and location – with the majority of land being confined to the larger town of Macclesfield.

11.39 Against this context of long established, tightly drawn boundaries plus limited safeguarded land – and at a time of preparing a new plan which looks ahead across a wide area to the 2030's –it is timely now to embark on a green belt review. Consequently the Council has assessed both locally and strategically the ongoing need for green belt in the north of the Borough.

11.40 There is no doubt that the fundamental rationale for green belt in north Cheshire remains; the need to provide open land around Greater Manchester and prevent adjacent towns merging is as strong as ever. Equally, despite the huge strides taken in recent years, there is also a continued need for regeneration in certain parts of the conurbation. These are all factors that therefore weigh heavily in favour of maintaining a strong green belt policy.

11.41 Where the issue of green belt becomes more pressing however is at the local level – particularly in terms of the sustainability of existing towns. Existing safeguarded land is confined to Handforth & Wilmslow and extends to just 22 Ha. In Macclesfield (a town over 50,000 population) there is no safeguarded land at

all – and the same is true of Knutsford & Poynton. Hence there is no land that can be earmarked for new developments, should the need arise in the coming years. This creates a stark choice in these towns – either manage for the next 20-30 years within the confines of existing urban boundaries (essentially maintaining them for a period of well over half a century) – or to consider amending the green belt.

- 11.42 Before the latter course is adopted thought should first be given to whether needs can be met in towns beyond the green belt. In the case of North Cheshire, the Green Belt extends southwards beyond Macclesfield and Chelford – and includes all of the north west of the Borough around Knutsford. The next Key Service Centres that could accommodate some of this additional growth are Sandbach, Congleton & Middlewich. Whilst to some degree these areas can accommodate proportionately more development, there is no sense in which building in these towns can reasonably be considered to support the sustainability of large discrete settlements sometimes ten or fifteen miles to the north.
- 11.43 In addition to this thought must also be given as to whether Greater Manchester itself can accommodate future development needs. For the most part across south Manchester green belt boundaries are also drawn very tightly – and it is necessary to travel within the M60 or further north and eastwards before sizeable brownfield development opportunities present themselves. There are two notable exceptions to this; Manchester Airport is currently the focus of considerable additional development, centred on its enterprise zone. This of itself however can be considered a driver for more growth in the north of Cheshire. Equally the demise of another aerodrome – at Woodford - also provides development opportunities close to Wilmslow and Poynton. Neither of these sites are entirely free of their own green belt issues – and whilst they can accommodate some ‘footloose’ development that might seek a north Cheshire location, they do not address issues within the north Cheshire Towns themselves.
- 11.44 The fundamental purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. As well as balancing the principal social, economic and environmental factors, the phrase also implies there will be ‘development’ – that is building and growth are part and parcel of sustainability. As has been discussed above, there is very limited opportunity for new development in the vicinity of Macclesfield, Knutsford, Poynton, Handforth & Wilmslow. For the most part, any new school, business, housing or community facility – all things normally considered necessary to sustain a town – must either be built as an ‘exception’ to the green belt or not at all. This cannot be considered a sensible or responsible approach to take for another two decades or so. Accordingly if sustainable development is to be achieved in these towns it follows, that an adjustment of green belt must be considered. This, combined with the timing of a wholly new plan, is considered to be the exceptional circumstances that would warrant green belt review.
- 11.45 Accordingly the Development Strategy proposes limited alteration of green belt boundaries to accommodate sufficient development and safeguarded land to ensure the future sustainability of the northern towns.

## **New Settlement**

- 11.46 If the need for Green Belt alteration is accepted in the north of Cheshire, the next consideration is how and where the boundaries should be amended. In particular there is a need to secure the most sustainable approach to that development. The NPPF suggests that a good means of achieving sustainable development is through new settlements with self contained facilities and properly planned infrastructure. This contrasts with loading development on to restricted locations with constrained infrastructure.
- 11.47 Consequently the Development strategy proposes that a proportion of development in the northern green belt towns be consolidated into a single, sustainable settlement – to be located near Handforth. Sometimes termed a ‘green belt swap’ this concept seeks to minimise the impact on the green belt – whilst still locating development sufficiently close to support and sustain nearby towns.

### **South Cheshire Green Belt**

- 11.48 Green Belt also occurs in the south east of Cheshire close to the Staffordshire border. This green belt forms part of the wider band that surrounds the various towns and settlements of the Staffordshire Potteries.
- 11.49 The Green belt issue that arises in the south east of the Borough is quite different from that in the north and is entirely focussed in its significance and consequences. In terms of Cheshire east Crewe is the primary focus for regeneration and economic growth. The all Change for Crewe programme cogently makes the case for the comprehensive revitalisation of the town.
- 11.50 Regeneration and growth in Crewe is dependent on good communications. First and foremost this means the town’s role as a national rail hub (a role that could be significantly enhanced by HS2). However improved road communications are also vital to the town’s success. Currently Crewe is connected to the M6 by the A500; whilst this road is dual carriageway for much of its length the pivotal 2.25 miles closest to the M6 is only single carriageway. This section is already heavily congested; if Crewe is to be developed further the dualling of the A500 is considered to be a vital infrastructure improvement.
- 11.51 This therefore rises the question as to how this improvement is to be secured. In this regard there are two central factors – land and finance. The land surrounding the road is owned by the Duchy of Lancaster – as such it cannot be acquired by compulsion, only by agreement. Secondly, and more critically, is the matter of funding. Crewe itself already has substantial infrastructure needs – a legacy of its rapid expansion as a 19<sup>th</sup> century railway town. Consequently developments in and around Crewe itself are likely to be fully committed in supporting upgrades to the town’s internal infrastructure & communications – its most unlikely that the dualling of the A500 can be funded in this way.
- 11.52 Accordingly this then leads to the whether development in the A500 corridor itself could provide the means of delivering the necessary road improvement wholly or in part. The route of the road runs roughly three quarters of a mile south of the current Green Belt Boundary (defined by the Crewe – Alsager Railway). Adjustment of the green belt in this locality would be unlikely to impinge on the

wider integrity of the green belt surrounding the Potteries. However it could greatly assist in securing key infrastructure in a way that development elsewhere would not. Consequently there is a case for exceptionally considering development in the specific circumstances of the A500 corridor.

## **Nantwich green belt**

- 11.53 The final element of new green belt policy within the Development strategy is the proposal to create a new green belt around the historic town of Nantwich. Nantwich dates at least from the Roman era when it was known for its salt production and the town continued to prosper as a centre for the salt trade through the middle ages and into the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. As such it remained the pre-eminent settlement in South Cheshire for much of this time.
- 11.54 This situation was fundamentally changed by the construction of the Grand Junction railway to the east in 1837 – which in turn spawned the completely new town of Crewe. Since then Crewe has grown apace so that it is now approximately 6 or 7 times larger than its ancient neighbour.
- 11.55 Successive Councils have sought to preserve the different identity of each town – and maintain an area of open land between them. This has led to the popular ‘Green Gap’ policy within the Crewe & Nantwich Local Plan. However with the expansion of Crewe in recent years there remains continued pressure on the narrow gap that now separates the two towns. This pressure looks set to continue into the future – especially as Crewe continues to be the pre-eminent economic growth point in the south of Cheshire.
- 11.56 This inevitably leads to questions as to whether the green gap is the right policy to deal with the planning challenges of the coming years – and whether that alone is sufficient to stem the slow erosion of openness between the two towns. In such circumstances it is therefore appropriate to consider creating a new Green Belt as the long term answer to an issue that has been steadily brewing for the past 150 years.
- 11.57 The NPPF advises that new green belts should be created only exceptionally – and usually when it is associated with major development proposals. Councils need to:
- demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate;
  - set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary;
  - show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development;
  - demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with Local Plans for adjoining areas; and
  - show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the Framework
- 11.58 Since the green gap policy was first drawn up, circumstances have changed considerably. Crewe now finds itself as the largest town in a County Borough of 370,000 people; it has been identified as a key driver for growth in the Cheshire & Warrington sub region – a position that will only be intensified if HS2 is

confirmed. After years of discussion major new employment sites at Basford are now on the cusp of commencement. Considerable new development is also planned for other areas on the periphery of town. At the same time planning applications continue to be made for major residential development within the green gap – indicating that it lacks credibility as a planning policy in the minds of strategic land buyers and development interests.

- 11.59 The separation of Crewe & Nantwich by green belt will allow each town to grow in parallel and at a pace commensurate with its particular scale and identity. Sufficient space would need to be provided to the north and south of Nantwich to ensure there was sufficient space to grow in future years. Equally Crewe retains capacity to grow and develop in other directions. Accordingly, if drawn up correctly, the green belt would reinforce the sustainable development of each town.
- 11.60 In terms of the green belt objectives, the new green belt would clearly meet at least three of the five stated objectives – namely to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. To reinforce this latter point, the green belt could be extended to protect the historic battlefield site north west of the town – the setting for civil war conflict in 1644. Overall it is expected that the green belt would be relatively small – extending to perhaps 1000 Ha. Green Belts of this size are already established – for example the designation separating the towns of Swadlincote and Burton on Trent extends to a mere 700 Ha.
- 11.61 If the Green Belt policy was confirmed within the Local plan Core strategy, detailed boundaries would need to be established within the subsequent site allocations document.

### **Strategic Open Gap**

- 11.62 In addition to this two further new countryside policies are proposed. To reduce the risk of Crewe, Sandbach, Middlewich and related villages merging into an uncoordinated conurbation, it is proposed to designate new areas of 'strategic open gap' that will ensure their remains openness around these towns. This will replace existing 'green gap' policy.
- 11.63 It is a core planning principle within the NPPF that people should be empowered to shape their surroundings and enhance and improve places where they live. The Framework also recognises the varying roles and character of different areas – and recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the Countryside. In all the principle of sustainable development is the 'DNA' running through the planning system.
- 11.64 One of the key results of the consultations so far is the local support for policies that retain the distinct character of individual settlements – and in the Crewe area for the policy of 'Green gap' that helps maintain this objective. Around Crewe there are particular issues with the spread of development around the town – and this is also matched by areas further to the north. Between Sandbach and Middlewich the development of the large brownfield site at the Albion works erodes the sense of separation between the two communities. Likewise there is a

similar risk of gradual erosion of countryside north of Crewe in the arc between Leighton Sandbach and Haslington.

- 11.65 It would not only contradict clear local sentiment, but also the principles of sustainable development if a gradual merging of these areas took place. Accordingly it is proposed that 'Strategic Open Gap' be identified to cover key areas of land in these localities. This will underline and reinforce the sensitivity of these areas, complimenting normal countryside policies. The site allocations document and proposals map will set out the detailed boundaries of the land concerned.
- 11.66 Elsewhere Cheshire East is proud to encompass part of the second most visited national park in the world – the Peak District National Park. To ensure that this national designation is given the best possible protection along its border, a new 'buffer zone' is proposed that will safeguard the amenity and visual character of the national park itself.

## 12 STRATEGIC SITES

- 12.1 The Development strategy is supported by the identification of land for development. This falls into several categories:
- Strategic site – where the boundaries of the site are clearly defined
  - Strategic locations – where the broad locality is known – but where further work may be necessary to specifically identify the appropriate site boundaries
  - Areas of Search. This applies to the need to identify development land well into the future. It may be most appropriate to bring forward detailed proposals through the Site Allocations document or possibly an area action plan.
  - Corridors of interest. Where new road proposals are under consideration but a formalised protected line has not yet been identified the Strategy refers to 'Corridors of Interest' to describe the swathe of land where the road is likely to be located.
- 12.2 The strategic Sites are located for the most part within the Principal towns or the Key Service Centres. It is these towns that have the infrastructure and facilities that are best able to support new jobs, homes and other development. These larger towns have also been the subject of the recent 'Town strategies' each prepared according to neighbourhood planning principles. Consequently the vast majority of strategic sites have already been the subject of consultation as part of the Town Strategies.
- 12.3 Where a town Strategy has already been approved by the relevant town council the Development strategy wherever possible reflects the preferred sites or options set out in that strategy. However, in some cases the consultation process has also thrown up new sites for consideration; accordingly there are a small number of sites that have not previously been the subject of consultation.

### Strategic Sites in Crewe

Preferred Strategic Sites	Proposed Uses	Commentary
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1	Crewe Town Centre	Primarily retail, leisure and commercial uses including offices, restaurants, cafes and bars. Also in the region of 200 homes including student accommodation	The town centre is an important focus for regeneration to improve the range of retail units and to introduce leisure, cultural and residential development to improve its vitality, in accordance with the 'Town Centre First' objective.
2	Crewe West/Dunwoody Way	700 homes and / or appropriate employment uses.	Currently partly occupied by Bombardier, this brownfield inner urban site represents an opportunity for redevelopment for a variety of uses
3	Basford East	45ha of employment land to provide about 4000 jobs, 1,000 homes, a new local centre including a GP surgery, a primary school, new retail and a community venue.	A longstanding allocation for employment development, this is a high priority in the draft Crewe Town Strategy and the All Change for Crewe prospectus. A mix of uses is necessary to produce a viable development – but the fundamental objective remains the creation of a high quality employment area
4	Basford West	35 ha of employment land to provide 2,000 jobs, 300 new homes, a new local centre, hotel and significant green open space/woodland areas	Also a longstanding allocation for employment development, this is a high priority in the draft Crewe Town Strategy and the All Change for Crewe prospectus. A mix of uses is necessary to produce a viable development – but once again the mix is subordinate to creating a business environment suitable for manufacturing and distribution
5	Leighton West	5 ha of employment land, space for extension of Leighton Hospital, 750 new homes including affordable homes and key worker housing for employees at Leighton Hospital, new local centre including and community centre, country park and other open space, new bus interchange and road improvements. Potential for geothermal district heating scheme.	A greenfield site which provides an opportunity for a mix of uses and provides land for the expansion of Leighton Hospital. A sustainable location on the edge of town close to the Bentley works, Crewe's largest employer. Development will need to support key improvements at Leighton Hospital
6	The Triangle	300 new homes, open space and new pedestrian and cycle links	A greenfield site, outside the green gap and close to the villages of Shavington and Wybunbury. It is largely surrounded by existing residential properties.

7	East Shavington	300 new homes, local centre including retail, community facilities, open space and new pedestrian and cycle links	A greenfield site, outside the green gap and on the eastern edge of Shavington with good public transport and close to the Basford employment sites. It is proposed this be phased to give priority to the delivery of the nearby Basford sites
8	Crewe Rail Exchange Zone	Improvements to Crewe Railway Station and its surroundings, 53 new homes and 5000 sq m retail development in Mill Street, expansion of existing sports and leisure hub at Crewe Alexandra Football Club and new office/commercial development in Macon Way.	The area is characterised by a variety of uses, including traditional employment activities along Macon Way, but is generally noted to be underutilised and a poorly presented entry point to the town for rail passengers and those accessing Crewe by car from the M6 junctions 16 and 17. This area provides the opportunity to create a high quality gateway into Crewe, including a new entrance to the station, new bus interchange and redevelopment of the surrounding areas. Improvements in the linkages between the station and the town centre is a key objective.

### Strategic Sites in Macclesfield

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	Commentary
9	Macclesfield Town Centre	Primarily retail, commercial and leisure development, about 400 new homes and improved pedestrian and cycle links with the rest of the town.	There are redevelopment opportunities within the town centre for a variety of uses including retail and residential development in accordance with the 'Town Centre First' objective
10	South Macclesfield Development Area	5ha of employment land, retail development (convenience goods), new link road, 900 new homes, green infrastructure and open space, improved pedestrian and cycle links.	This is a long standing allocation for employment use that has not come forward. The introduction of higher value uses will produce a viable scheme that will deliver the necessary infrastructure
11	Land between Congleton	10 ha of employment land, new South West link road, local centre including retail,	A large greenfield allocation of a scale to deliver the new link road and other infrastructure requirements. It

	Road and Chelford Road	primary school, secondary school, community facilities, between 750 and 1500 new dwellings, significant new open space, additional land reserved for development beyond 2030.	would involve the redrawing of the Green Belt boundary. Although the entire area is not required it is important to ensure that, over the long term, space remains for future growth.
12	Land off Fence Avenue	300 new homes, open space, new pedestrian and cycle links.	A sustainable site close to Macclesfield Town Centre and Rail Station. It would involve a redrawing of the Green Belt boundary. The full site extends to around 14ha, however all of the land would only become available if there was a future consolidation or relocation of the school facilities.

## Alsager

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	Commentary
13	Twyfords	450 new homes, retention of existing offices, new open spaces and improved pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre, railway station, Excalibur Industrial Estate and Talke Road. Potential for specialist older persons accommodation, additional employment development, local retail facilities and community facilities.	A substantial brownfield site to the east of Alsager with opportunities to provide a wide range of uses including residential and employment
14	Former Manchester Metropolitan University Campus	400 new homes, together with sports and leisure hub, open space and improved pedestrian and cycle links. Potential also for older persons accommodation, local retail facilities and community facilities	A brownfield site on the west of the town which is available for redevelopment following the consolidation of MMU South Cheshire Campus at Crewe
15	Radway Green	10 ha of employment land, open space and improvements to pedestrian and cycle links	An extension and redevelopment of a well established employment site to the west of Crewe

## Congleton

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	commentary
16	Back Lane and Radnor Park	10 ha of employment land, local retail, 500 new homes, new primary school, open space and recreation facilities dependent on and to be served by new Congleton Northern Link Road. New pedestrian and cycle links. Additional land for development beyond 2030 to cater for about a further 500 homes.	The extension of the existing Radnor Park industrial estate to allow for the expansion and relocation of existing businesses together with residential development and recreation facilities associated with the Northern Link Road
17	Congleton Business Park Extension	10 ha of land for employment/commercial use, 400 homes including affordable housing, new local centre including primary school, open space, new pedestrian and cycle links, dependent on and to be served by proposed Congleton Northern Link Road. Additional land for development beyond 2030 for a further 500 homes.	The extension of the Congleton Business Park together with residential development associated with the Congleton Northern Link Road
18	Giantswood Lane to Manchester Road	650 new homes, new primary school, local retail facilities, open space dependent on and to be served by proposed Congleton Northern Link Road. New pedestrian and cycle links. Additional land for development beyond 2030.	New residential community associated with the proposed Congleton Northern Link Road
19	Manchester Road to Macclesfield Road	500 new homes including affordable houses, new primary school, local retail facilities, open space dependent on and to be served by new Congleton Northern Link Road.  New pedestrian and cycle links.	New residential community associated with the proposed Congleton Northern Link Road

## Knutsford

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	commentary
20	Parkgate Extension	6 ha of employment land subject to site access improvements. Improved pedestrian and cycle links. Additional land (11 ha) to be safeguarded for future development beyond 2030.	This site is located to the north and east of Parkgate Trading Estate. The site is predominantly greenfield and covers an area of around 20ha. Outside the green belt.

21	North West Knutsford	5 ha of employment land, 350 new homes, new primary school, open space, local retail facility. Additional land to be safeguarded for employment and housing development beyond 2030.	Sustainable urban extension to the town which would require an alteration to the Green Belt boundary. There is an area of Protected Open Space to the south of this site which is to be removed from the Green Belt and protected for open space and sports uses.
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## Middlewich

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	commentary
22	Brooks Lane	400 new homes (although this would be reduced to 200-300 new homes if a marina is provided as part of the development), local retail facility, improvements to canalside environment and improved accessibility to town centre for pedestrians and cyclists	An existing industrial area close to the town centre which is proposed for comprehensive redevelopment
23	Glebe Farm	500 new homes together with open space and improved pedestrian and cycle links. The development would be expected to provide some funding towards the completion of the Middlewich Eastern Link Road.	A greenfield site to the south of the town, development associated with the completion of the Middlewich Eastern Link Road
24	Midpoint 18 extension	Up to 70 ha of employment land. The release of this site would be expected to occur only after the completion of Midpoint 18 Phase 3 for which outline planning permission has been granted. The development of Midpoint 18 Phase 3 is itself dependent upon the completion of the Middlewich Eastern Link Road. The allocation of this site may also provide a additional financial contribution towards the Link Road.	An extension to the Midpoint 18 employment area, to be developed towards and beyond the end of the Plan period

## Nantwich

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	Commentary
25	Kingsley Fields	2-3 ha of employment land, 1000 new homes, local centre including local retail, and community facilities. A new primary school or a financial contribution for education provision would be required. Substantial open space to be provided including an extension of the Riverside Park between Reaseheath College and the Town Centre. Improved pedestrian and cycleways including links to the Connect 2 Greenway route. The development would include a new road link to Waterlode, the realignment of the A51 through the site and would assist in funding improvements at the Burford Cross Roads.	A greenfield site which provides the opportunity for a sustainable extension to the town delivering community infrastructure, including open space, road improvements and pedestrian and cycle links
26	Snow Hill	Regeneration for a mix of uses including offices, leisure/hotel, retail, 60 new homes, community facilities and parking. The existing swimming pool to be retained. The design of the scheme will provide for strong pedestrian and linkages between the site and the town centre. Open space to be provided including an extension of the Riverside Park.	A brownfield site close to centre which offers the opportunity for regeneration of this part
27	Stapeley Water Gardens	2ha of employment land including a new garden centre, 250 new homes including affordable homes, open space and improved pedestrian and cycle links.	A mix of greenfield and brownfield part of which already has planning permission for a mix of housing and employment.

## Sandbach

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	Commentary
28	Land adjacent to Junction 17 of M6, south east of Congleton Road	20ha Business Park, hotel, 700 new homes, retention/strengthening of Wildlife Corridor, allotments, new local centre including primary school, open space, improved pedestrian and cycle links. Development of the site will be dependent on the prior delivery of improvements to Junction 17 of the M6.	A greenfield site which provides the opportunity for a high quality business park together with residential development
29	Former	16,000 sq m of employment	This former factory site has

	Albion Chemicals	floorspace, 375 new homes, local retail, restaurant, leisure and open space	recently been cleared and now comprises a hardcore surface. The former sports ground was predominantly undeveloped but does include the Grade II listed, Yew Tree Farm House, which dates from the 16th century, with 19th century additions. A largely brownfield site in a rural location which would accommodate a mix of development .
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## Wilmslow

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	Commentary
30	Adlington Road	225 new homes, open space, new pedestrian and cycle links	A largely greenfield site outside the Green Belt and safeguarded for future development in the Macclesfield Local Plan which would provide a sustainable location for new housing
31	Land at Royal London	2 ha of employment land to create around 1000 jobs, hotel, 75 new homes, open space, new pedestrian and cycle links. Land to the west of Alderley Road would be safeguarded for future development	This is a greenfield site, with a currently developable area of around 12.5ha to the east of Royal London's office campus. It would represent an extension of the existing Royal London office complex for employment and housing. It would involve an alteration to the Green Belt boundary.

## Wardle

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	Commentary
32	Wardle Employment Improvement Area	This is an existing employment site in the countryside focused around the Wardle Industrial Estate where there is scope for intensification of employment and ancillary uses within the area.	An existing employment area in the open countryside which would benefit from intensification and environmental improvements.

## New Settlement: Handforth East

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	commentary
33	Handforth East	A new sustainable settlement comprising 5ha of new employment land, 1800 homes, local centre with retail, community facilities, new secondary and primary schools and leisure facilities, country park, open space and sports pitches, new pedestrian and cycle links, particularly to Handforth Railway Station, and protection and enhancement of the setting of Handforth Hall. Additional land would be safeguarded for further development (500 homes) beyond 2030.	This is an area of largely unused land in the Green Belt to the east of the A34 Handforth By-Pass which is proposed for a new sustainable settlement with self contained facilities and properly planned infrastructure. It would accommodate a significant proportion of development needs in the north of the Borough without a major impact upon Handforth itself.

### New Settlement: South East Crewe

Preferred Strategic Sites		Proposed Uses	Commentary
34	South East Crewe	<p>New sustainable settlements comprising two new villages and three associated new employment areas.</p> <p>Village A at Crewe Hall/ Stowford would deliver 1000 new dwellings, new local centre with retail, primary school and leisure facilities, network of open spaces, sports pitches, pedestrian and cycle links and substantial improvements to the local road network.</p> <p>Village B at Barthomley would also deliver 1000 new dwellings, new local centre with retail, primary school and leisure facilities, network of open spaces, sports pitches, pedestrian and cycle links and substantial improvements to the local road network.</p> <p>Three new employment areas are proposed:</p> <p>1 To the east of Junction 16 of the M6 comprising the extension of the existing service area and a further 3 ha of employment land linked to improvement of Junction 16.</p>	Sustainable new settlements which will provide jobs and homes in a planned environment. It will provide significant new infrastructure including the dualling of the A500 which is essential to secure the proper regeneration of Crewe. The redrawing of this part of the North Cheshire Green Belt will be required.

	<p>2. To the south of Radway Green and east of the M6 Motorway, phased delivery 25 ha of employment land, complementary to the existing BAe Radway Green employment site.</p> <p>3 To the west of Junction 16 of the M6. Phased delivery of 25ha of employment land expected to continue beyond the plan period. Commencement of development not expected to start until developments on Employment Area 1 and 2 have been completed;</p> <p>All development would be expected to contribute towards road infrastructure improvements in the area, including the Crewe Green Link Road, A500 link capacity improvements, A5020 Weston Road junction and Crewe Green Junction 16 of the M6. All developments would also be expected to Incorporate Green Infrastructure, including: the creation of wildlife habitats and the retention of important hedgerows and trees.</p>	
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## Alternative Sites

12.4 The Council considered a variety of alternative sites as part of the Town Strategy work – and also as a result of the consultation process, these are listed in Appendix E of the Development Strategy Document, together with the reasons for the approach the Council has taken.

### 13.1 POLICY PRINCIPLES

13.1 The Development Strategy is accompanied by an Emerging Policy Principles Document. This expands on many of the concepts set out in the Strategy – but also provides additional guidance. The Focus of these policies is to provide a clear framework for the determination of planning applications.

13.2 The Council has a number of tools that it can bring together to ensure the delivery of its strategic ambitions. The authority to manage and control development through the planning application process is very powerful, if used correctly and creatively it can enhance and add value to the development process. Conversely if employed clumsily or if development is uncoordinated then the economy and environment may be harmed. Consequently the Policy Principles are designed to ensure that all planning decisions, big and small are aligned with the overall objectives of the Council.

13.3 The main policy areas considered are:

- Enterprise & Growth
- Stronger Communities
- Sustainable Environment
- Connectivity

Within each section the document sets out the key strategic policies that will guide development in future.

13.4 Policies of particular note include:

- **Policy CO2: Enabling business growth through transport infrastructure**, which sets out the transport infrastructure that we will be looking to provide to support growth during the plan period.
- **Policy SC2: Health and Well-being**, which looks to ensure that community facilities are protected and that developments provide appropriate infrastructure to support communities well-being.
- **Policy EG5: Promoting a town centre first approach to retail and commerce**, which looks to support the development of retail and commerce within the designated town centres, and to retain and enhance the Borough's markets.
- **Policy EG4: Tourism**, which looks to protect the unique features of Cheshire East that attract visitors whilst also promoting appropriate attractions and facilities to support these visitors during their visit.
- **Policy EG2: Rural Economy**, this looks to provide opportunities for local rural employment development that supports the vitality of rural settlements and to support sustainable farming and food production.
- **Policy SE2: Efficient use of Land**, which looks for windfall development to consider existing landscape and townscape character in determining the character and density of development and to use brownfield sites first.

## 15.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report are listed in the Appendices to the Development Strategy and Policy Principles Documents

These can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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**Appendices:**

**Appendix 1            Hyperlink to Issues & Options report of Consultation**

**Appendix 2            Town Strategies Reports of Consultation**

**Appendix 3            Analysis of Town Strategy Consultation**

**Appendix 4            Hyperlinks to Completed Town strategies**

**Appendix 5            The Cheshire East Development Strategy**

**Appendix 6            The Cheshire East Policy Principles**

## **APPENDIX 1 ISSUES & OPTIONS – REPORT OF CONSULTATION**

**The Report of Consultation & related documents can be viewed via this link:**

[http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/planning/spatial\\_planning/cheshire\\_east\\_local\\_plan/local\\_plan\\_consultations/issues\\_and\\_options.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/spatial_planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/local_plan_consultations/issues_and_options.aspx)

**APPENDIX 2**

**TOWN STRATEGIES REPORTS OF CONSULTATION**

## **APPENDIX 3 – TOWN STRATEGIES – ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION**

NB All comments received can be viewed on the Council's website:

[http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/planning/spatial\\_planning/cheshire\\_east\\_local\\_plan.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/spatial_planning/cheshire_east_local_plan.aspx)

## **APPENDIX 4 – TOWN STRATEGIES – COMPLETED STRATEGIES APPROVED BY THE RESPECTIVE TOWN COUNCIL**

### **ALSAGER**

[http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment and planning/planning/spatial planning/cheshire east local plan/local plan consultations/town strategies/alsager town strategy.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment%20and%20planning/planning/spatial%20planning/cheshire%20east%20local%20plan/local%20plan%20consultations/town%20strategies/alsager%20town%20strategy.aspx)

### **CONGLETON**

[http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment and planning/planning/spatial planning/cheshire east local plan/local plan consultations/town strategies/congleton town strategy.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment%20and%20planning/planning/spatial%20planning/cheshire%20east%20local%20plan/local%20plan%20consultations/town%20strategies/congleton%20town%20strategy.aspx)

### **MIDDLEWICH**

[http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment and planning/planning/spatial planning/cheshire east local plan/local plan consultations/town strategies/middlewich town strategy.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment%20and%20planning/planning/spatial%20planning/cheshire%20east%20local%20plan/local%20plan%20consultations/town%20strategies/middlewich%20town%20strategy.aspx)

### **SANDBACH**

[http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment and planning/planning/spatial planning/cheshire east local plan/local plan consultations/town strategies/sandbach town strategy.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment%20and%20planning/planning/spatial%20planning/cheshire%20east%20local%20plan/local%20plan%20consultations/town%20strategies/sandbach%20town%20strategy.aspx)

### **WILMSLOW**

<http://www.wilmslow-tc.org.uk/news.php?template=2&id=622>

**APPENDIX 5**

**THE CHESHIRE EAST DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**APPENDIX 6**

**THE CHESHIRE EAST POLICY PRINCIPLES**

