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Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Agenda

Date:	**Tuesday, 26th October, 2010**
Time:	**10.00 am**
Venue:	**Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ**

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest/Whipping Declarations**

   To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests in any item on the agenda

3. **Public Speaking Time/ Open Session**

   A total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to make a statement(s) on any matter that falls within the remit of the Committee.

   Individual members of the public may speak for up to 5 minutes, but the Chairman will decide how the period of time allocated for public speaking will be apportioned, where there are a number of speakers

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 1 - 6)

   To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2010 as a correct record.

For any apologies or requests for further information, or to give notice of a question to be asked by a member of the public

Contact: Katie Smith
Tel: 01270 686465
E-Mail: katie.smith@cheshireeast.gov.uk

5. **Verge Maintenance** (Pages 7 - 12)

To give consideration to a presentation on verge maintenance.

6. **Review of Towns and Villages** (Pages 13 - 28)

To give consideration to the draft final report of the Task and Finish Group's recent Review of Towns and Villages.

7. **Visitor Economy Strategy for Cheshire East** (Pages 29 - 68)

To give consideration to the Visitor Economy Strategy.

8. **Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing** (Pages 69 - 100)

To give consideration to the draft Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing

9. **Future Housing Provision in Cheshire East** (Pages 101 - 116)

To give consideration to the future housing provisions in Cheshire East

10. **Forward Plan** (Pages 117 - 118)

To give consideration to the extracts of the forward plan which fall within the remit of the Committee.

11. **Work Programme** (Pages 119 - 126)

To give consideration to the work programme

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 14th September, 2010 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor G M Walton (Chairman)
Councillor A Martin (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors S Davies, H Davenport, R Fletcher, L Gilbert, M Hollins, T Jackson, M Parsons, M Simon, C Thorley and J Weatherill

In Attendance

Councillor R Menlove

Officers

A Fisher, R Kidd, R Skipp, P Sherratt, C Simpson and G Mallin

Apologies

None

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

None

23 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/ OPEN SESSION

A representative of Congleton Town Council attended the meeting to speak in respect of the Clear Way Forward Policy.

24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25 STRATEGIC HOUSING - AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION

The Committee received a presentation on Strategic Housing, which outlined the work undertaken for the Audit Commission inspection including a peer review and self assessment. It was noted that a Housing Strategy was being developed to take the vision and priorities for housing forward. Members agreed that the

Strategy would be considered by the Committee in November prior to it being submitted to Cabinet for approval.

The presentation also outlined the Interim Affordable Housing Planning Statement. There were currently three different planning policies for Cheshire East, which created inconsistencies relating to affordable housing requirements and rural exception sites. The interim statement would:

- Address the above issues
- Provide updated guidance on affordable housing provisions
- Provide consistent policy approach for planning applications
- Address issues surroundings development economics and viability of providing affordable housing

The key elements of the statement and adoption process were outlined to Members. It was agreed that the Committee would give consideration to the Statement at its meeting scheduled to be held on 23 November 2010.

RESOLVED

That the Committee give consideration to the Housing Strategy and Interim Affordable Housing Planning Statement at its meeting scheduled to be held on 23 November 2010.

26 WASTE COLLECTION METHODS

The Committee gave consideration to a report outlining the route optimisation and service harmonisation project that is part of the complete transformation of the waste and recycling services provided by Cheshire East. The report outlined various service options available; however option two would be taken forward by the authority. Members welcomed the report and noted that the next step in the project would be for the technical consultants to produce a tactical round design for all services.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted

27 PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (LDF) AND AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Committee gave consideration to a report setting out the current arrangements for developing and finally approving the LDF documents, and described proposed amendments to the constitution to streamline the process.

RESOLVED-

(a) That the current arrangements for approving the LDF be noted;

(b) That the consultation process within the Council to take this matter forward, as described at Section 9.2 of the Cabinet report, be noted and commenced;

(c) That it be noted that subject to the outcome of the consultation process, Cabinet be invited to make recommendations to full Council regarding the alternative arrangements described in the table at Appendix 2;

(d) That it be noted that recommendations to full Council will need to address any authority required for the Borough Solicitor to make any necessary and consequential amendments to the Constitution including additions to the terms of reference of Strategic Planning Board.

28 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Committee considered a report relating to a number of reports that formed part of the Cheshire East Local Development Framework (LDF), these included:

- Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – which set out the Council's consultation process and procedures that the Council intended to follow.
- Alsager Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – which complemented policies adopted within the Congleton Local Plan to provide additional guidance in connection with the planning of new development within Alsager Town Centre
- Smallwood Village Design Statement (SPD) - the purpose of which was to manage change in buildings and landscape in the parish of Smallwood.
- Cheshire East Local List of Historic Buildings and its supporting SPD, which had been prepared in response to guidance in Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) and identified buildings considered to be of local historic or architectural interest. A number of changes had been made to the list following consultation.

The report had been considered by the Strategic Planning Board and the comments of that committee were set out in section 10 of the report.

RESOLVED –

That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Council adopt the Statement of Community Involvement, Alsager Town Centre SPD, the Smallwood Village Design Statement SPD, the Local List of Historic Buildings and its accompanying SPD.

29 TOTAL TRANSPORT TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Committee gave consideration to an update on the work undertaken on the Total Transport Transformation project, and the conclusions from the review of the Integrated Transport Unit transitional Shared Service.

Members received a short presentation outlining the background to the review, stakeholder consultation, findings, policy review, the options examined and the current status and next steps.

Following consideration of the options available, Members concluded that ending the shared service and taking direct management control would be the best way to meet future needs. It was therefore agreed that the joint Committee, at its meeting scheduled to be held on 17 September 2010, should be recommended to re-integrate the transport function within Cheshire East, cease the current shared arrangements from April 2011 and conduct a further review of potential shared arrangements.

Members requested that the possibility of being able to use a bus pass system for taxis in rural areas should be investigated.

It was noted that there would be a full Member briefing on the Integrated Transport Unit on 29 September 2010 and that with regard to the Local Transport Plan, due to budget cuts, Members would need to consider priorities for the future.

RESOLVED

1. That the joint Committee, at its meeting scheduled to be held on 17 September 2010, be recommended to re-integrate the transport function within Cheshire East, cease the current shared arrangements from April 2011 and conduct a further review of potential shared arrangements.
2. That the possibilities of being able to use a bus pass system for taxis in rural areas should be investigated.

30 HIGHWAY POLICY OVERVIEW

The Committee received a report highlighting that the Highways Service had a number of policies, inherited from Cheshire County Council as predecessor Highway Authority, which governed the provision of highway maintenance activities within the Authority. It would be necessary to review these policies to take account of legislative changes, best practice and technological advances to ensure all policies were robust and workable and deliver best value on behalf of the Authority, whilst embracing the requirement to provide a safe, accessible highway network. The Committee gave consideration to the proposed timetable for the review of the existing policies and agreed that it would give consideration to the following policies prior to them being submitted to the Portfolio Holder/Cabinet for approval:

Grass Cutting	Highway Lighting
Hedge and Tree maintenance	Obstructions on the Highway
Highway Weed Control	Highway Sponsorship
Highway Drainage/Gully Emptying	Traffic Sign Management
Winter Service	Repair to Private Streets
Speed Management Strategy	Memorials on the Highway
Highway Defects – S58	Pedestrian Crossings
Highway Structural Maintenance	Highway Sweeping
Maintenance of Road Markings, Studs, Guardrails and Barriers	

RESOLVED

That, when appropriate, the above polices be considered at special meetings of the Committee.

31 **TRAFFIC CALMING POLICY**

Consideration was given to the draft Traffic Calming Policy prior to it being submitted to Cabinet for approval. It was highlighted to Members that the Borough Council did not currently have a policy on the installation, maintenance or removal of traffic calming schemes within the highway.

In summary road humps speed cushions and other features had been installed on the Boroughs road network for both accident reduction and environmental reasons. Due to a variety of concerns, including those expressed by the public and emergency services, coupled with network condition and budget issues, the continuing need for a particular scheme should be reviewed when highway maintenance works are programmed. The review would determine whether the traffic calming features are retained or removed.

Members made the following comments on the draft policy:

- When deciding whether or not to remove road humps, local knowledge should be taken into consideration.
- SID's appeared to work well and should be taken into consideration.
- Equally effective alternative methods to humps should be pursued.
- If road humps are to be removed a suitable alternative should be considered.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet be recommended to approve the policy subject to consideration being given to comments highlighted above.

32 **CLEAR WAY FORWARD POLICY**

Consideration was given to the Clear Way Forward Policy prior to it being submitted to Cabinet for approval. It was noted that the use of A-Boards throughout the Borough had steadily increased over the past few years. A-Boards were therefore now causing problems to pedestrians, the visually impaired and wheelchair users. A-Boards were also having adverse effect on the Borough's streets and shops.

Following detailed consideration of the Policy, Members made the following comments:

- The fourth bullet point in paragraph 8.2 should be reworded as there may be some instances when it would acceptable to have the display of goods in Conservation Areas.
- Paragraph 8.3 should be amended to include Town/Parish Councils.
- The Borough Council should be encouraging businesses and therefore take a pragmatic approach to this Policy.

- That queries relating to A-Boards should be dealt with by the Town Centre Manager and not the Planning Department.

RESOLVED

That subject to the comments highlighted above the Committee:

1. Endorse the current practice of the removal by the Council of fly posters and signs attached to street furniture without reference to the party who placed them.
2. Recommend that charges be introduced to licence the displays of goods on the highway that are remote from the business in respect of the initial application, a renewal fee and where the Council is the owner of the subsoil, a fee per square metre used, as detailed in the report.
3. Recommend that the Portfolio Holder for Environment be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Guidelines that are considered necessary in the light of experience as the Guidelines are implemented.

33 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the work programme. It was agreed that the work programme should be amended to include the highways polices outlined in minute 30 - Highway Policy Overview.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be amended to include the items highlighted in minute 30.

34 FORWARD PLAN EXTRACTS

Consideration was given to the extracts of the forward plan which fall within the remit of the committee.

RESOLVED

That the extracts be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 1.25 pm

Councillor G M Walton (Chairman)

Cheshire East Council

Verge Maintenance

Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee - October 2010

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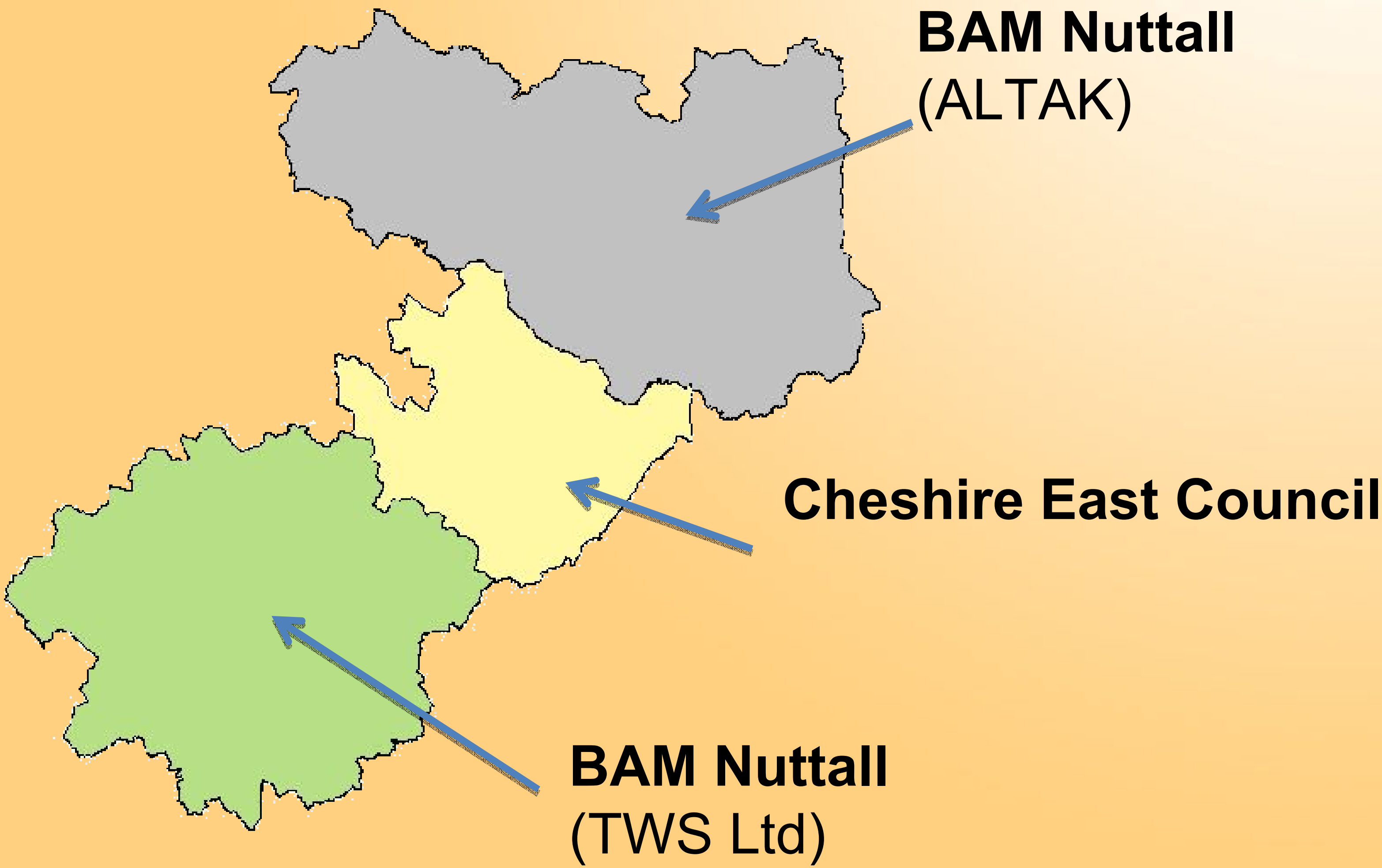
Agenda Item 5

Current Arrangement



What we cut and when?

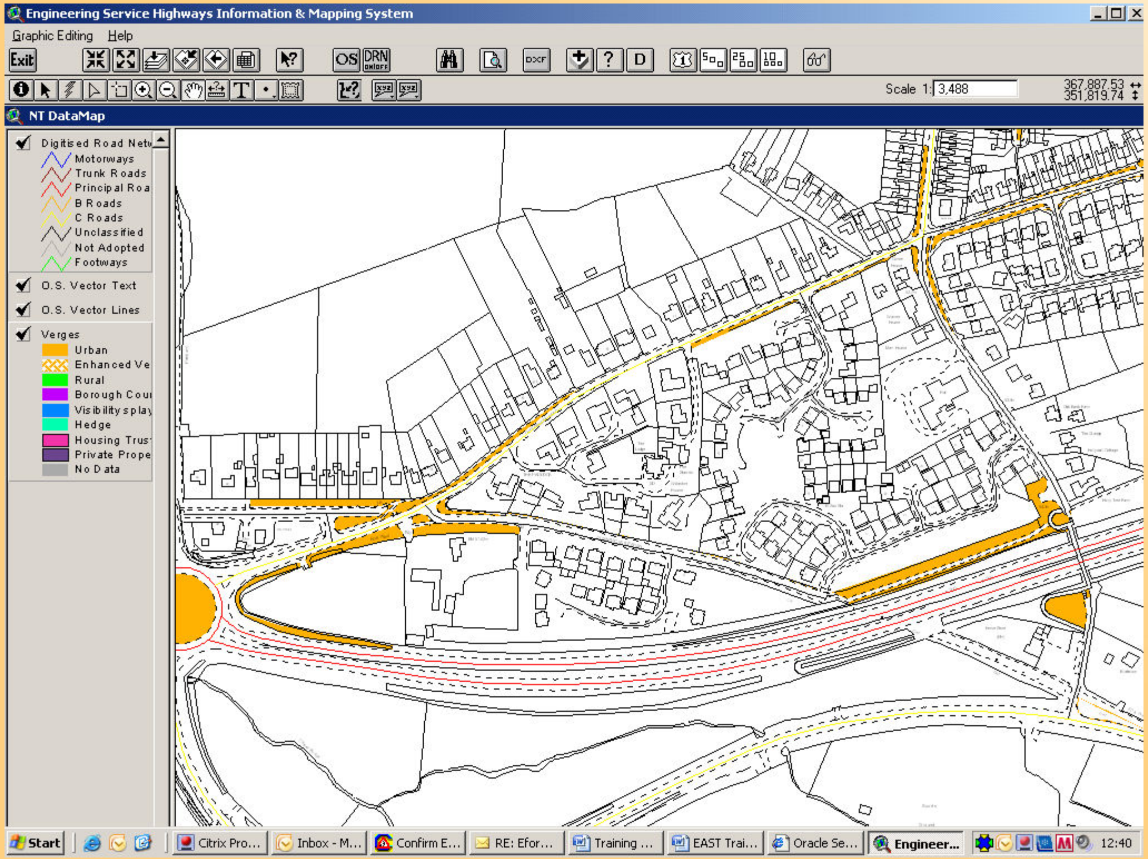
Rural Grass cutting:

•1.2m Swathe cut along the length of mainly rural roads, including visibility splays outside urban speed limits.
•Works are completed on client instruction – generally twice / year.
•Works completed mainly for safety reason, visibility and encroachment of adjacent carriageways / footways.

Urban Grass Cutting:
•Includes most areas of grass inside the urban boundaries, adjacent to footways / roundabouts…. But not open spaces, parks, play grounds etc.
•Areas cut as often as required to maintain grass height within specified contractual limits - >12mm <75mm.

Asset Management

Good picture of extent of grassed areas – updated regularly, which reflects payment.



How much do we do? At what cost?

- Total annual budget £820,000
- Annual swathe cut – 4,342KM (416,000sm visibility)
- Urban cutting – 172 HA (up to 16 cuts / year)

SUMMARY

•BAM Nuttall and CEC working to agreed contractual obligations. Inspections invariably confirm the output specification is met.

•Former CBC introduced fortnightly cuts throughout growing season; generally a higher frequency.

•Same Team Leadership in “Congleton area” for both grass cutting and litter picking – easier co-ordination.

•In “Macclesfield/C&N areas” BAMN arrange both gulley emptying and grass cutting – easier co-ordination.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environment and prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting:	26 October 2010
Report of:	Task and Finish Group
Subject/Title:	Review of Towns and Villages

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 To give consideration to the draft final report of the Task and Finish Group on its review of Towns and Villages.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the attached report and recommendations be endorsed and submitted to the Cabinet Member for Environment for approval.

3.0 Wards Affected

4.1 Wards covering the following towns and villages will be affected:

Alderley, Alsager, Audlum, Bollington, Congleton, Crewe, Disley, Haslington, Handforth, Holmes Chapel, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Prestbury, Sandbach, Tytherington and Wilmslow.

6.0 Policy Implications

6.1 There are no implications associated with the attached report, however there may be implications resulting from subsequent decisions made by the Portfolio Holder.

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs

7.1 There are no implications associated with the attached report, however there may be implications resulting from subsequent decisions made by the Portfolio Holder.

8.0 Financial Implications 2010/11 and beyond

8.1 There are no implications associated with the attached report, however there may be implications resulting from subsequent decisions made by the Portfolio Holder.

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 There are no implications associated with the attached report, however there may be implications resulting from subsequent decisions made by the Portfolio Holder.

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 There are no risk management issues associated with the attached report, however there may be implications resulting from subsequent decisions made by the Portfolio Holder.

11.0 Background and Options

11.1.1 At the request of the Cabinet Member for Environment, at its meeting held on 8 June 2010, the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to rank the towns and villages within Cheshire East, by criteria suggested by the Portfolio Holder.

11.1.2 The report and recommendations of that Task and Finish Group are now attached for consideration.

13.0 ***Access to Information***

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

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Review of Towns and Villages within Cheshire East – July/August 2010
Draft Report of the Car Parking Task and Finish Group

Contents

Car Parking Task and Finish Group Membership

Councillor G Walton – Chairman
Councillor B Dykes
Councillor R Fletcher
Councillor G Merry
Councillor C Thorley

Introduction

At the request of the Cabinet Member for Environment, at its meeting held on 8 June 2010, the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to rank the towns and villages within Cheshire East, by criteria suggested by the Portfolio Holder and report back by October 2010.

The Task and Finish Group considered socio economic factors and other factors such as facilities, retail, hospitality, business and travel for each of the towns and villages through a series of site visits, marked these out of 10 against a set criteria (Appendix A) and then formulated this information into a table.

When ranking the towns and villages, Members took into account issues such as weather conditions and school holidays when carrying out the visits.

Agreed Terms of Reference

To rank towns and villages by criteria, to ensure that, if parking charges are reviewed sometime in the future, comparable towns and villages are treated equally and a reasonable tariff is created. It was agreed that Members would not be making recommendations to the Portfolio Holder on parking charges.

Methodology

24 June 2010	Members met to agree the questionnaires to be completed by them when visiting towns and villages and then went onto visit Congleton, Alsager and Nantwich.Councillor Thwaite attended the visit to Congleton.
7 July 2010	Members visited Audlem
12 July 2010	Members visited Handforth, Wilmslow, Alderley Edge, Knutsford and Holmes Chapel.
28 July 2010	Members visited Sandbach, Crewe and Middlewich
6 August 2010	Members visited Macclesfield, Tytherington and Prestbury
12 August 2010	Members visited Disley, Poynton and Bollington. Councillor Davenport attended the visit to Disley and Councillor West attended the visit to Poynton.
24 August 2010	Members met to discuss their findings from the visits and produced a table of rankings.
6 September 2010	Members met to agree the rankings and discuss the final report.
21 September 2010	Members met to approve the draft final report for submission to the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.
26 October 2010	Draft final report submitted to the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for comment/approval
	Draft report submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Evidence and Findings

Members visited each of the towns and villages in Cheshire East, which had Council owned car parks, to gain an understanding of the population, facilities, railway provisions, CCTV provisions, retail, food and drink provision, evening economy, ease of access to the centre, public transport provisions and parking availability and usage.

Each of the issues highlighted above were marked out of 10 and added together giving a possible total of 100. The Group then agreed the following formula to rank the towns and villages from A to E and incorporated this information into a table attached at Appendix B.

Score	Rank
81 - 100	A
71 - 80	B
51 - 70	C
41 - 50	D
0 - 40	E

Alderley Edge

The population of Alderley Edge is 4710. There are adequate facilities for the size of the village with a central railway station and a frequent bus service. There is currently a by-pass under construction which is expected to reduce traffic considerably. It is hoped that this will improve access to the centre.

The Group felt there was a good retail mix with plenty of food and drink provision and a good evening economy due to the number of bars and restaurants. There are 3 CCTV cameras to cover the village.

There are 5 Borough Council run car parks offering a total of 181 spaces. The group visited Alderley Edge and found the long stay car parks to be around 25% full. However, these were not in the centre of the village. There is a central short stay car park which was very well used and appeared to work well. There is also a free car park which was around 25% full; this car park is in poor condition and was not clearly sign posted.

Alsager

Alsager is a small town in the south east of the Borough with a population of 12440. There are reasonable facilities for the size of the town and whilst there is a railway station, it is neither on a main line nor close to the town centre. There is however, a frequent bus service and the town is easy to access.

The Group felt that there is a reasonable retail mix with good food and drink provisions and a limited evening economy. There are 6 CCTV cameras to cover the town.

There are 4 Borough Council run car parks offering 403 spaces, which are currently free to use, one of which is too far out of the town to be used by shoppers (Fannys Croft). Fairview car park was around 60% full, however this increased during school opening and closing times.

It was noted that there was a car park close to the Council's depot which required further investigation as to who owned it. This car park is in poor condition and has poor access.

Audlem

Audlem is a small village with a population of 1940. There are limited facilities for the village as it does not have a railway station and the bus service is limited. It is not easy to access.

The Group felt that there were limited retail facilities but the food and drink provisions were good for the size of the village. There are no CCTV cameras.

There is 1 Borough Council run car park offering 59 spaces, which is free to use and in good condition and central to the village. Members agreed that due to size of the village and car park, it would not be viable to charge for car parking in the foreseeable future.

Bollington

The population of Bollington is 7400. There are average facilities in the town and it is easy to access. Bollington does not have a railway station although the bus service is frequent.

The Group felt that that Bollington has below average retail facilities for its size, however it is close to the facilities in Macclesfield. There are good food and drink provisions and a good evening economy. There are no CCTV cameras.

There is 1 main Borough Council run car park in Bollington offering 71 free spaces which is well used. There is also a civic centre car park and several car parks catering for the open space facilities such as the Middlewood Way and Adlington Road Recreation Ground. All the car parks were in good condition.

Congleton

To assist Members in their deliberations Councillor A Thwaite attended the tour of Congleton.

Congleton is a large market town with a population of 26530. Whilst it has good facilities, the railway is out of town with an irregular service, despite it being on a main line. Having said this, there is a good bus service and on the whole, the town is easy to access.

The Group felt that Congleton has a good retail mix with good food and drink provisions and an average evening economy. Planning permission has recently been approved for the redevelopment of the Bridestone area which will increase the town's attractiveness. There are currently 8 CCTV cameras to cover the town.

There are 14 Borough Council run car parks in Congleton providing a total of 799 spaces. The charging system in the car parks appeared to be working well and the car parks were in good condition.

Crewe

With a population of 50600, Crewe is the largest town in Cheshire East. Crewe is the primary shopping centre in the south of the Borough and there are excellent facilities, including a well positioned railway which allows access to the West Coast main line. Additionally, there is a good bus service but this could be improved to make access to the town centre easier.

The group felt that Crewe had excellent retail facilities and good food and drink provision. Having said this, there was feeling that the evening economy could be improved. There are 48 CCTV cameras to cover the town.

There are 32 Borough Council run car parks in Crewe offering 2643 spaces. It was noted that some of those car parks were currently free to use and that due to the size of them it would not be feasible to charge for them in the future. Members also agreed that a maximum stay of 20 minutes was not long enough and the possibility of increasing this should be investigated.

With regard to Thomas Street car park, Members noted that the car park was virtually empty. It was highlighted to the group that parking charges had recently been introduced and that this had caused displacement. Members agreed that the charging policy for this car park should be reviewed.

Disley

To assist Members in their deliberations, Councillor H Davenport attended the tour of Disley.

The population of Disley is 4210 and whilst there are limited facilities, the railway station is well positioned. There is a good bus service and the centre of Disley is reasonably easy to access.

The Group felt that there were limited retail facilities with good food and drink provisions and a limited evening economy. There are 3 CCTV cameras and Members agreed that additional CCTV cameras were required around the railway station to encourage more people to use the car park and facilities.

There are 2 Borough run car parks offering 60 free spaces. It was noted that the parking restrictions are not being enforced by the Borough Council and therefore people are parking beyond the maximum waiting time.

With regard to the conveniently located Community Centre car park, Members agreed that this needed remarking. Indeed, Councillor H Davenport suggested that the possibility of introducing parking charges should be investigated.

There is also a car park privately owned by the Rams Head Public House, which members of the public are currently permitted to use, however, this on occasions, was causing problems for the proprietor. Members agreed that a number of options should be investigated including the possibility of the Borough Council purchasing part of the car park, the proprietor introducing parking charges or the Borough Council managing the car park on behalf of the proprietor.

Haslington

The population of Haslington is 6670; there are limited facilities and although it does not have a railway station and there is a good bus service which makes it reasonably easy to access. There are no CCTV cameras.

The retail facilities in Haslington are limited along with food and drink provisions and the evening economy.

There is 1 free Borough Council run car park offering 15 spaces, which is in good condition. Due to the size of the village and car park, Members agreed that it would not be viable to introduce parking charges in the future.

Handforth

Handforth is a suburban area on the northern edge of Cheshire East with a population of 8014. There are average facilities, a well positioned railway station and a good bus service. It is easy to access.

There are adequate retail and food and drink provisions and a limited evening economy. There are 3 CCTV cameras to cover the area.

There are 2 Borough Council run car parks offering 102 spaces. There are also two privately owned car parks which require marking if they are to be used by the public. Members agreed that, if required, the possibility of them being managed by the Borough Council should be investigated. It was also agreed that the car park at the Paddock required managing and one of the car parks required maintenance work.

Holmes Chapel

Holmes Chapel has a population of 5780; there is an average provision of facilities; a good railway station/service and is easy to access.

There are adequate retail and food and drink provisions and a limited evening economy. There are 3 CCTV cameras.

There are 2 Borough run car parks offering 47 free car parking spaces, which are well marked and appear to work well. Due to the size of the car parks, Members agreed that it would not be viable to introduce parking charges in the foreseeable future. However the car parks did require managing.

Knutsford

Lying in the north east of the Borough some 19km to the south west of Manchester and 18km north west of Macclesfield, Knutsford has a population of 12650. It is easy to access with excellent facilities. There is a good railway station/service and a good bus service.

There are excellent retail facilities, food and drink provisions and evening economy. There are 14 CCTV cameras to cover the town.

There are 6 Borough Council run car parks, which are all well marked and work well. Members agreed that Booths car park, which is owned by the supermarket and managed by the Borough Council, is an excellent example of joint working.

Macclesfield

With a population of 50470, Macclesfield is the second largest town in Cheshire East. Easy to access, it has good facilities, an excellent railway station/service and an excellent bus service.

There are good retail facilities, excellent food and drink provisions and evening economy. There are 78 CCTV cameras.

There are 19 Borough Council run car parks, which are well maintained and work well. There are proposals for the redevelopment of the town centre for some time in the future.

Middlewich

A market town with a population of 13450, Middlewich, whilst being easy to access has a limited provision of facilities. For instance, although there is no railway station, there is a bus service. There are 5 CCTV cameras.

The Group felt that there were adequate retail and food and drink provision with a limited evening economy. There are 5 CCTV cameras.

There are 3 car parks in Middlewich offering 133 free car parking spaces. Members noted that one of the car parks was not well used and agreed that if parking charges were to be introduced. Tesco car park would also need to be taken into consideration albeit there is an approved scheme to increase the size of the Tesco store which may have an effect on the parking availability. However the Group felt that it would not be viable to charge for parking in the foreseeable future.

Nantwich

The population of Nantwich is 14100. A thriving service centre, Nantwich has an excellent provision of facilities; with a good railway station/service and bus service. The town centre is easy to access.

The group felt that there is excellent retail, food and drink provision and evening economy. There are 15 CCTV cameras

There are 10 car parks in Nantwich offering 750 spaces, the car parks were well used and well maintained.

Poynton

To assist Members in their deliberation Councillor R West attended the tour of Poynton.

Poynton, with a population of 14360, is in the north eastern corner of the Borough. There are above average facilities with a good railway station/service and a good bus service. The centre is easy to access.

The group felt that there are adequate retail, food and drink provisions and evening economy. There are 6 CCTV cameras.

There is one Borough Council run car park in Poynton currently offering 204 free short stay spaces. This car park is slightly unusual in that it is also shared between a doctors, Waitrose supermarket, Church and residential home. The car park is in good condition and is well used. Members agreed that if parking charges were to be considered the legal rights of the above agencies would need to be investigated and addressed.

Prestbury

Prestbury has a population of 3290 and has a limited provision of facilities; it has a well positioned railway station and a bus service. Prestbury is reasonably easy to access.

The group felt that there is limited retail provision with good food and drink provisions and evening economy. There are no CCTV cameras.

There are two car parks in Prestbury offering 122 free parking spaces; the car parks were well maintained, reasonably well used and in convenient locations.

Sandbach

Sandbach is a market town with a population of 17840. It has a limited provision of facilities, a railway station which is out of the town centre and a good bus service. The town is easy to access. There are 5 CCTV cameras.

There is an average provision of retail facilities, good food and drink provisions and a good evening economy.

There are 8 car parks offering 487 free parking spaces. Members agreed that while there were generally ample parking spaces there were problems on market day due to the market being held on the Scotch Common car park. It was also agreed that Scotch Common required a maximum waiting time of 2 hours.

Tytherington

The Group agreed that as Tytherington was not a town or village and it did not have a Council owned car park, it should not be included within this review.

Wilmslow

Easy to access, Wilmslow has a population of 30020. It has a good provision of facilities, an excellent railway station/line and good bus service. There are 62 CCTV cameras.

The Group felt that it has excellent retail facilities; food and drink provisions and evening economy.

There are 8 Borough run car parks offering 1239 spaces. The Group visited Wilmslow on a wet day and found most of the car parks to be well used. However the car park on Spring Street was virtually empty apart from the sections managed by Emersons which were in a disgusting state and Members agreed that action should be taken to address this issue.

Recommendations

1. That the rankings of towns and villages identified at Appendix B be approved.
2. That when car parking is reviewed in the future, consideration be given to the following observations:

    - That the parking charges on Thomas Street car park in Crewe be reviewed.
    - That the parking restrictions in Disley be enforced on a regular basis.
    - That the possibility of charging for parking in Disley be investigated.
    - That a solution to the parking problems on the Rams Head public house car park be sought.
    - That the possibility of the Borough Council managing the privately owned car parks in Handforth be investigated.
    - That the car park at the Paddock in Handforth have a maximum waiting time, which must be enforced.
    - That due to the size of the car parks Audlem, Haslington, Holmes Chapel and Middlewich, parking charges should not be implemented.
    - That the working arrangements for the Booths supermarket car park in Knutsford be used as an example of good practice.
    - That the legal issues regarding the car park in Poynton be investigated.
    - That action be taken to increase the usage and cleanliness of Spring Street car park in Wilmslow.

Evidence Received/Background Information

- Information on the Borough owned car parks including number of spaces and current tariffs
- Information on the number and location of CCTV within the Borough
- Information on the current employment levels

- Information on the population of towns and villages within the Borough
- Economic information for the towns and villages.

Appendix A

Criteria for Towns and Villages

Socio – Economic

Population
Unemployment levels
Urban/rural

Facilities

Local secondary schools
Cultural
Library
Leisure Centres
Youth centres
Railway station/main line
CCTV

Hospitality

Trade
Restaurant numbers/fast food outlets
Night time economy

Travel

Public transport
Personal transport
Traffic flows

The group also considered issues such as whether or not the town/village was a tourist destination, dormitory town or market town.

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TOWN	POPULATION	UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS as at Oct 09 (%)	FACILITIES	RAILWAY	CCTV	RETAIL	FOOD AND DRINK PROVISION	NIGHT TIME ECONOMY	EASE OF ACCESS	PUBLIC TRANSPORT	NUMBER OF SPACES ON CHESHIRE EAST CAR PARKS	TOTAL	RANK
CREWE	(50600) 10	5	10	10	(48) 6	10	8	6	5	9	(2643) 10	86	A
MACCLESFIELD	(50470) 10	3.5	8	10	(78) 10	8	10	8	8	9	(2166) 9	90	A
WILMSLOW	(30020) 6	2.5	7	10	(62) 8	9	10	8	9	8	(1239) 6	81	A
NANTWICH	(14100) 2	2.6	9	8	(15) 5	9	10	8	9	8	(750) 4	72	B
KNUTSFORD	(12650) 2	2.7	10	8	(14) 5	9	10	9	8	8	(635) 4	73	B
CONGLETON	(26350) 5	3.2	7	7	(8) 3	7	8	6	7	7	(799) 4	61	C
SANDBACH	(17840) 3	3.1	5	7	(5) 3	6	8	7	9	8	(487) 3	59	C
POYNTON	(14360) 2	2	7	8	(6) 3	6	7	6	7	7	(204) 2	55	C
ALDERLEY	(4710) 1	1.4	6	8	(3) 2	6	7	8	8	7	(181) 2	55	C
MIDDLEWICH	(13450) 2	3.1	5	0	(5) 3	6	7	3	5	4	(133) 2	37	D
ALSAGER	(12440) 2	2.6	5	7	(6) 3	5	7	3	8	7	(403) 3	50	D
HANDFORTH	(8014) 1	3.5	5	8	(3) 2	6	6	4	8	8	(102) 1	49	D
BOLLINGTON	(7400) 1	3.5	6	0	(0) 0	4	6	8	7	4	(71) 1	37	D
HOLMES CHAPEL	(5780) 1	1.3	5	8	(3) 2	5	7	4	8	6	(47) 1	47	D
DISLEY	(4210) 1	2.1	4	7	(3) 2	4	6	4	6	7	(60) 1	42	D
PRESTBURY	(3290) 1	1.1	4	7	(0) 0	3	7	7	5	7	(122) 2	42	D
HASLINGTON	(6670) 1	1.8	2	0	(0) 0	3	2	2	8	4	(15) 1	23	E
AUDLEM	(1940) 0	1.7	2	0	(0) 0	4	7	6	7	4	(59) 1	31	E

The above criteria have been scored out of 10

The population, number of CCTV cameras and number of carparking spaces for each town are quoted in brackets.

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 26th October 2010
Report of: Strategic Director - Places
Subject/Title: Visitor Economy Strategy for Cheshire East
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jamie Macrae

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 Following a report to Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 8 June 2010, the visitor economy strategy for Cheshire East has completed a consultation period. The Visitor Economy Strategy and framework sets the context within which the Council will deliver services and work with partners to maximise the benefits of the area's visitor economy. The visitor economy is an important economic sector and the strategy sits alongside the draft Economic Development Strategy. This report updates on progress with a view to completing the drafting of the Strategy and its adoption by Cheshire East Council.

2.0 Decision Requested

2.1 Members are asked to endorse the Visitor Economy Strategy for Cheshire East for adoption by the Council as a framework to deliver services and agree policy relating to the Visitor economy.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 Following consultation and consideration by the Visitor Economy forum, a draft strategy has been developed that takes into account relevant consultation responses. In order to adopt the visitor economy strategy the broad milestones are:

Aug –Oct 2010	Alignment with both the sub-regional visitor economy strategic framework and Cheshire East strategies. Redraft following consultation period.
Oct 2010	Consultation responses and Draft Strategy to Environment & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.
January 2011	Adoption of the Strategy

3.2 This timescale has enabled it to run in parallel with the development of the draft Cheshire East Economic Development Strategy and Local transport plan as well as ‘2020: Meeting the Challenge’, the sub-regional framework for the visitor economy in Cheshire and Warrington. Although timescales are not fully aligned this has still allowed greater coordination of related policy development.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 All.

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 All.

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change
- Health

6.1 The visitor economy strategy may inform the development of several other strategies including those for Climate Change and Health. A healthy, competitive and high performing economy will contribute to the health and well being of the population of Cheshire East. This can help shape the scale and location of employment opportunities and encourage accessibility. The nature of the economy in future will determine the extent to which Cheshire East as a whole is able to reduce its carbon emissions particularly in relation to more sustainable travel patterns.

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

7.1 None.

8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

8.1 All costs associated with the development of the visitor economy strategy will be constrained within existing budgets.

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

9.1 The development of a visitor economy strategy is not a statutory function. However, the strategy relates to one economic sector that will be informed by a Local Economic Assessment (LEA). The Council is under a statutory duty to carry out an LEA.

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 The risk of not developing a visitor economy strategy is that other related strategies are prepared in a policy vacuum without the relevant economic objectives, priorities and direction and that the Council does not have a framework to realise the opportunity to influence the economic benefits of the visitor economy through its actions.

11.0 Consultation

11.1 The visitor economy strategy is intended to support an overall vision to maximise its contribution to the economy, employment and quality of life of Cheshire East.

11.2 A Sub-Regional Strategy for Cheshire & Warrington has been drafted and the strategy takes this work into account. The strategy recognises that partnership working is at the core of delivery, including close working with business clusters, attention to cross-boundary opportunities and cooperation and the establishment of a Visitor Economy Forum as a sub-group of the LSP Learning & Skills and Economic Development Thematic group.

11.3 The strategy identifies priorities for Cheshire East Council and its partners in seeking to maximise the contribution of the visitor economy. This includes building on geographic and thematic brands, supporting key projects to enhance the tourism product, promoting events, improving visitor information services and ensuring that Visitor Economy needs and opportunities are taken into account as part of regeneration projects and decisions relating to planning, transport, public realm, events, culture and countryside/greenspace.

11.4 The strategy document sets out a cross-cutting framework within which the Council intends to operate up to 2015, whether in its own activity, in partnership or in the context of regional/sub-regional priorities. The framework is prepared within a wider context, taking into account existing regional and sub-regional visitor economy strategies. Delivery in the context of this framework will also be in partnership with business clusters, related organisations and Visit Chester and Cheshire, the sub-regional tourism board. The updated strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

11.5 Cheshire East Council received 26 submissions in response to the consultation process as. The draft strategy was presented at a number of meetings of tourism business clusters as well as two LAP meetings and a sustainable towns meeting. Most respondents completed a short questionnaire and Appendix 2 summarises the comments. .As this is a high level strategic document, not all comments, particularly those relating to a single venue or topic, could be incorporated unless they helped illustrate a wider point. Many helpful comments were received and taken on board. This particularly related to the changing strategic landscape, the period covered by the strategy and the scope of its ambition. The development of the strategy has also influenced and been influenced by the sub-regional strategy with which it is aligned.

12.0 Progress to date

Delivery against the strategy priorities and action framework has not waited upon completion of the strategy consultation. The visitor economy team is already delivering key programmes and projects in line with the strategy. These include the Cheshire Peak District brand development, business cluster development with a large hotel group and Cheshire Peaks & Plains tourism association, event support such as the Nantwich Food and Drink Festival and co-promotion with Manchester of the Elizabeth Gaskell bicentenary, web development such as the 'ivisit' guides for market towns across Cheshire East, PR support such as BBC Countryfile feature on East Cheshire and input to regeneration projects such as sustainable towns network and Macclesfield economic masterplan. In addition Recession recovery projects have been developed to enable town and area-based promotional groupings to develop small scale tourism campaigns and a 'welcoming visitors' training and development programme has been launched. Finally new funding has been attracted through VCC to support rural businesses to improve accommodation standards and through support for attractions and events.

13.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

13.1 N/A

14.0 *Access to Information*

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

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Cheshire East Council
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Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy

October 2010

Cheshire East Council

Executive Summary

The visitor economy is an important contributor to businesses and communities in Cheshire East, generating over £653m per annum to the local economy.

To build on this success and generate further wealth, Cheshire East Council will:

- Help to increase visitor numbers and improve the overall customer experience.
- Build on our historic linkages and location, historic towns, waterways & Canals and Cheshire's Peak District to develop the distinctive 'brands' and offers across Cheshire East and the wider sub-region, through coordinated marketing activity.
- Support the development of key projects to enhance the tourism product.
- Promote and develop events throughout the year which celebrate the distinctive strengths and character of Cheshire East, contributing to its economy.
- Make it easier for visitors to plan and book their trip, and to find the information they need to make the most of their stay, developing new approaches to visitor information provision.
- Recognise the value of the day visitor market to the visitor economy while also encouraging more staying visitors.
- Support the development of tourism infrastructure, an improved environment and a focus on customer service to ensure a quality visitor experience.
- Work with partners to encourage and facilitate business sector development in areas such as food, equestrian, accommodation, attractions development, skills training and visitor welcome.
- Ensure that Visitor Economy needs and opportunities are taken into account as part of regeneration projects and decisions relating to planning, transport, public realm, events, culture and countryside/greenspace.

The outcome targets we seek to achieve are:

Develop a visitor economy with a value of £818m by 2015

Increase jobs directly related to the visitor economy by around 1271 over the same period

Increase visitor numbers to Tatton to 1m by 2015

Increase the number of businesses achieving quality accreditation.

Introduction

The visitor economy relates to the activity of all visitors within a destination, whether tourists or not. It embraces all the elements that make for a successful and sustainable destination, including the things that attract people to the place, such as the natural environment, our heritage and culture, leisure facilities, food, gardens, events and scenery. It relates to the infrastructure that helps to reinforce and shape the distinctiveness of the area and make it an easy place to visit; the quality of design, transport, parking, interpretation, public spaces and amenities. It is also served by the hotels and pubs, restaurants, theatres and galleries, and the day-to-day services that make a place welcoming and safe.

The visitor economy generates economic and social activity for visitors and residents alike. It not only supports jobs and economic well being, but it helps to support facilities and amenities for local communities, encourages residents to stay and spend leisure time in the local area and helps to build distinctive communities, thus increasing local pride and self-confidence. It also enhances the image of an area, turning a location into a commodity, thereby attracting commercial investment from outside the tourism industry by demonstrating to potential investors that the area is good to locate in. It provides a source of income for the natural and built heritage, providing an economic driver for regeneration and new uses for buildings or land.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategic document is to set the context within which Cheshire East Council will support the visitor economy to 2015 and beyond. This document sets out the strategic framework within which the Council intends to operate, whether in its own activity, in partnership or in the context of regional/sub-regional priorities. The Council intends to work closely with its partners through a visitor economy forum, which is part of the borough wide approach to a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Delivery in the context of this framework will be in partnership with local business clusters as well as any related sub-regional organisations and structures. The strategy has also helped to inform and be informed by the wider Visitor Economy strategic framework for the sub-region.

Vision for the Cheshire East Visitor Economy

The overall vision for our visitor economy is to maximise its contribution to the economy, employment and quality of life of Cheshire East.

The strategy must focus on quality of product and experience, while be flexible enough to respond to changes in the market, including recessionary impacts. In summary the strategic framework will focus on the following objectives:

- Improving the quality of products and services, helping to deliver increased productivity and better performance for businesses;
- Identifying and celebrating the distinctive offers of Cheshire East, taking advantage of the best the area and its surrounds have to offer.
- Improving the skills of the workforce and the attractiveness of our sector as an employer;
- Enhancing the experience for visitors through improving our public realm, while protecting and enhancing the historic, built and natural environment;
- Supporting and encouraging key projects
- Supporting and encouraging a programme of sustainable events & festivals
- Making it easier for visitors to plan and book their trip, and to find the information they need to make the most of their stay.
- Considering visitor needs in decision making
- Improving customer service and the visitor experience.
- Encourage the development of accessible and environmentally sustainable tourism products/services.

Facts and Figures

Cheshire East's visitor economy is worth £653 million to the local economy, with almost 17 million visits to the area during 2008 accounting for around 40% of the sub-region's visitors. Tatton Park is the most visited attraction, delivering an annual net output to the local economy of at least £8.8m. The area's visitor economy employs over 10,000 people, with accommodation, food & drink and shopping employing the highest numbers. Day visitors account for 84% of tourism visits, serviced accommodation 7%, while staying visitors visiting friends and relatives accounts for almost 8%. Staying visits generate an average of £36 per head, while day visits account for £23 per head.

The Context

Cheshire East's visitor economy

Cheshire's visitor economy is worth £1,779m (STEAM, 2008), with Cheshire East contributing £653m (37%) of this. The area of Cheshire East has a number of landmark visitor attractions, including Tatton Park, which is the largest 'paid for' heritage attraction in the North West, and Jodrell Bank, which is highlighted as a sub-regional signature project. Apart from the Local authorities, a number of organisations are either involved in the strategic delivery of the visitor economy function or are significant stakeholders. These include Visit Chester and Cheshire (VCC), the sub-regional tourism board, tourism business clusters such as Cheshire Peaks and Plains Tourism Association (CPPTA) and the South Cheshire Tourism Network (SCTN) and stakeholders such as the National Trust, Historic Houses Association, Peak District National Park and British Waterways to name a few. There are also a number of key thematic partnerships represented in Cheshire East including Cheshire's Gardens and Industrial heritage interests.

Apart from destinations and attractions, visitors expect an attractive environment, and facilities including toilets, cafés, shops, clear signs, maps and other information, good public transport, safe roads and easy parking. The importance of good design, whether of individual buildings, of master plans, or of public spaces should not be underestimated; nor should the quality of natural and historic landscapes, a sense of 'wilderness', arts provision and heritage. Along with parks, countryside, rural rights of way and many other less tangible qualities of 'experience', these all contribute to the areas distinctiveness for both resident and visitor. They all make a key contribution by Cheshire East in supporting the visitor economy. It is therefore important in developing a new Council that the needs of the 'visitor economy' are embedded in the plans and delivery of all relevant services as well as having a strategic capacity for development, promotion, business support and partnership working.

Strategic context

Tourism strategies have been in place for the North West and for Cheshire and Warrington for a number of years. Meanwhile at national level a strategy for England was published in 2010 that focuses on how Visit England will market its countryside and rural escapes, its culture and heritage, its contemporary cities and its events and festivals. The changing organisational and funding framework will necessitate a reshaping of the priorities previously identified, so in parallel, a strategic framework for Cheshire & Warrington was published in September 2010 that has revised targets and outlined the themes and approaches that can help deliver the aspirations for the period to 2020. The updated vision for Cheshire and Warrington, '2020: time to meet the challenge', states:

"We will become known as THE destination that offers customers a consistently warm and genuine welcome and experience along with excellent service - and for being 'best in league' at everything that we do."

It goes on to identify four objectives:

- Grow Cheshire's share of visitor markets
- Create places and spaces for great experiences
- Connect our visitors with our experiences
- Make it happen through champions and networks

Other partner strategies that are being updated at present include the Peak District National Park Sustainable Tourism Strategy. Wherever possible, Cheshire East Council has tried to take the opportunity in 2010 to align some of this strategic thinking in preparing its visitor economy strategy. However, this has all been done against the background of rapidly changing organisational and funding arrangements.

In addition, there are new duties on Local authorities in relation to the prosperity and economy of their area. The Local Economic Assessment will provide Cheshire East Council and stakeholders with an understanding of how economic conditions and forces shape places at a range of spatial levels. Assembling an evidence base will help develop priority areas for action. The visitor economy is an important definable sector of Cheshire East's economy.

Cheshire East's Sustainable Communities Strategy 'Ambition for all' has an emphasis on working with partners to ensure that Cheshire East continues to prosper for the benefit of all residents, businesses and visitors. The role of Local Area Partnerships in influencing local priorities and the involvement of business clusters, associations and Chambers are all of importance in this context. The Sustainable Communities Strategy objectives include having a strong, sustainable economy in which our visitor economy will maximise its contribution to economic wellbeing, employment and quality of life. Other policies and strategies of Cheshire East Council have a significant bearing on the success of the Visitor Economy, including the Economic Development Strategy, Local Transport Plan, Local Development Framework, Climate Change Policies and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Clearly this is a two way process and Visitor Economy requirements or opportunities also need to influence such strategic thinking and inform their emerging priorities. Finally, Cheshire East Council has a significant role in service delivery, including culture/heritage and visitor information as well as running Tatton Park, one of the region's major strategic visitor attractions.

Partnership and organisation

The visitor economy of both the North West and the sub-region has been fortunate over the last few years to benefit from public funding support. Close partnership working between Cheshire East Council and Visit Chester and Cheshire (VCC) has delivered significant benefits to the visitor economy at both strategic and local level. However, with changes in the economic climate there is still a need for a corporate commitment to the quality of its visitor economy offer from Cheshire East Council and a commitment to working through a partnership approach that involves both public and private sector, in order to succeed. We also need to align visitor activity with economic regeneration and the quality of life of our residents in order to deliver the quality destination that is vital.

Cheshire East will continue to work with strategic partners at both sub-regional and local level, building on our business clusters and exploring opportunities to facilitate new ones where of value. Clusters may be sector, theme or destination led.

It is recognised that there are differing perspectives and priorities for local authorities and for tourism businesses – different responsibilities too. Local authorities need to deliver jobs and services for their communities and take care of places, spaces and a strategic overview. Businesses need to run profitable customer-focused enterprises and have to make decisions fast, responding to market forces. However, both share values on quality and customer service and a need for a strong economy, providing a base to create effective local and sub-regional partnerships.

New and evolving sub-regional arrangements will provide a further opportunity to promote the assets of Cheshire East and ensure strategic links across both the sub-region and the rest of the region. Associate membership of AGMA (Association of Greater Manchester Authorities) and cross-boundary working with the Peak District National Park Authorities and other adjoining interests provide further opportunities for strategic partnerships.

At a more local level, business clusters operate effectively to represent the interests of specific geographical or thematic groupings. For example, Cheshire Peaks and Plains Tourism Association is well-established having been in existence for about 25 years and currently having just over 100 members, including attractions, hotels, B&B's, restaurants, pubs

and shops and is broadly aligned with the brand area of Cheshire's Peak District. Another tourism cluster exists in South Cheshire, while others are related to thematic groupings such as Gardens, provide a promotional focus for particular market towns or represent business types such as a large hotel and attraction cluster.

Within Cheshire East, the Visitor Economy Forum will be the main opportunity for partnership working with key stakeholders, in addition to the ongoing relationships, which will be essential to delivering all aspects of the strategy. The forum currently includes Cheshire East Council, VCC, Peak District National Park, National Trust, South Cheshire Tourism Network and Cheshire Peaks & Plains Tourism Association. The importance of the Peak District to the North Eastern part of the Borough emphasises the value of partnership working with the National Park Authority and the equivalent destination management organisation. The National Trust on the other hand is not only a strategic partner, but has significant land, buildings and properties across the Borough. The forum will continue to evolve, taking account of issues, opportunities and priorities, including the need for cross-border cooperation north, south, east and west.

Internally within Cheshire East Council, the linkages with Economic Development, Planning, Health and Well-Being and the Partnerships Team will continue to develop. Delivery mechanisms cannot relate solely on Cheshire East Council but will be through a partnership approach, bringing together expertise and resources to help deliver the priorities outlined in the strategy.

Markets, assets and brands

Cheshire East is well endowed with gardens, market towns, waterways & canals, events and other attractions. Some of these, for example, formed the central platform for the Cheshire Year of Gardens (CYOG) campaign. Of the 'Gardens of Distinction' a significant number are within the area and so the Gardens of Distinction brand and associated markets are of particular interest to Cheshire East. The area will also benefit from the development of Jodrell Bank, a signature project that could eventually see a major development of the science centre and visitor attraction. Tatton Park is already one of the largest visitor attractions in Cheshire and further opportunities for realising this asset are being developed. Numerous smaller attractions, many closely linked with elements distinctive to their locality, also help to underpin the visitor economy of the area. In addition the area is well served by transport connections with the National Motorway network, mainline rail links and Manchester International Airport 'on the doorstep'.

Cheshire East is also well positioned to access markets close to hand, particularly from other parts of Cheshire, Manchester or the Potteries, and with excellent road or rail links from other parts of the Country. The highest proportion of visitors to Cheshire & Warrington are on a day trip, particularly as Cheshire also represents the countryside on the

Cheshire East Council

doorstep of people living in the urban centres such as Manchester. Day trip visitors are very welcome although overnight visitors spend more per head. Day visitors do nevertheless spend money in the local economy and sustain the infrastructure of attractions, restaurants and shops that are essential elements in attracting overnight visitors.

There needs to be a continued focus on getting the most from the day visitor economy in the area, something that affects both residents and 'tourists'. That is why we need to get our visitors to stay longer. It means, for example, giving reasons for day visitors to dwell longer or stay on into the evening, and encouraging conference delegates to stay an extra night or two, or to return to enjoy Cheshire at their leisure. We need to attract more high-spending 'Cosmopolitans', whether day visitors or staying visitors, focusing predominantly on pre and post family couples and women. At the same time the area needs to continue attracting families or the 'traditionalist' visitor that tends to have an older age profile and be attracted by gardens, heritage, countryside and the food offer. In addition to day visitors there are important markets for international or domestic staying visitors, including the very important 'visiting friends and relatives' (VFR) market and also for disabled visitors, often travelling with family or a carer.

To meet their high standards and expectations, we need to both promote and improve the quality and choice of retail and food & drink, expand events & festivals and to develop the cultural offer. While there needs to be a focus on areas that can add most value there is also a need to consider the vitality of the local cultural offer such as museums, heritage centres, theatres and smaller events that are also important in this regard, especially if they relate to the character and distinctiveness of a place.

Cheshire East's approach will involve a focus on its events, its attractive towns and villages, its countryside and gardens, and its heritage. We need to continue to encourage those important day-trippers whilst raising the profile of the sub-region as a short breaks destination. Much of Cheshire East offers a countryside experience, perfect for recharging the batteries after a busy week at work. This can be promoted through a series of thematic brands including equestrian tourism ('Hoof Cheshire'), gardens ('Gardens of Distinction'), waterways, walking, cycling and outdoor activities. The emerging geographic brand of 'Cheshire's Peak District' provides a strong offer for both the cosmopolitan and traditionalist markets, (supported by research undertaken at the end of 2008), particularly when allied with the area's visitor attraction offer. Working with VCC we must also ensure the sub-region wins its share of the legacy opportunities of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games by focusing on a select number of high profile cultural events that compete on the national stage and realising opportunities presented by training camps.

Cheshire East is well placed in respect to its gardens and heritage assets such as its churches, towns and historic houses but also its textile, canals and rail heritage. Areas such as 'Cheshire's Peak District', towns including Knutsford, Macclesfield or Bollington, its rural landscape and villages as well as events such as the RHS Show, Tatton Park Biennial, Food shows or the Textile Festival are all important to the character and image of Cheshire East. It is an area with a definable landscape character with a good range of attractions (e.g. historic houses, museums, National Trust properties, canals, Churches and gardens), high profile images (e.g. Tatton Park, Lyme Park, Little Moreton & Jodrell Bank), a high quality of accommodation from farmhouses to hotels and close links to adjoining areas of the Peak District, Manchester and Midlands. It is already in a strong position to raise its position within the region and sub-region by making the best of its existing assets.

Cheshire's Peak District

Research undertaken at the end of 2008 indicated that many consumers had an understanding of Cheshire's Peak District, highlighting that the 'offer' had many of the Peak District's attributes but with more historic houses nearby, gentle countryside, many gardens to visit and opportunity to visit industrial heritage sites as well. This provides a focus that includes promotion in the sub-regional visitor guide, bespoke post-arrival print, and web-based promotion through www.cheshirepeakdistrict.com. Discovercheshirepeakdistrict.com and Discoverthegritstonetrail.com will promote the area's outdoor activities and links to its other attractions through map-based itinerary building tools. This provides Cheshire's only geographic brand other than Chester, giving a focus to developing business through association with the brand. Promotion as part of the wider Peak District brand is also vital to exploiting the potential market to the benefit of the area both as a 'gateway' to the Peak District and as a defined Cheshire experience.

Cheshire East Council

There is a significant and relatively affluent day visitor market close at hand, with the presence of the large conurbations of Manchester, Liverpool and Staffordshire as well as Cheshire's own population. In addition, the urban attractors of Liverpool, Manchester and Chester generate a significant number of staying visitors 'on the doorstep'. There is therefore an opportunity through relatively local marketing to exploit the 'visiting friends and relatives' market, attract secondary visits and grow our own loyal visitor base to underpin the attractions economy through day visits.

Research indicates one of the main challenges is that most people do not identify Cheshire as a destination, and that it does not have a very distinctive brand character in people's minds. This perhaps leads us to an approach where specific attractions, places and events and how they are packaged, linked or presented has a more important focus than the broader offer. This can be supported by the use of brands that have resonance with visitors through place, theme or interest. A number of strategic brands relevant to Cheshire East have already been developed for the sub-region through campaigns related to gardens, local food, events, equestrian and Cheshire's Peak District. Waterways, textiles (e.g. Silk) and heritage themes offer further potential in the future.

Gardens of Distinction

Cheshire's Gardens of Distinction is a continuation programme from 'Cheshire's Year of Gardens'08'. It includes a number of programmes to market the gardens offer across Cheshire, promote and develop the RHS Show Tatton Park and assist with business development.

Around 25 gardens are included with many of them being in Cheshire East, including seven of the top ten featured gardens. Cheshire East's gardens, many of them associated with Historic Houses and attractions are therefore an important resource for the visitor economy. Analysis of the Year of Gardens campaign indicated a net visitor increase equivalent 277,400 visitors and a net economic impact of £12.2m.

Business tourism is also an important facet of the local visitor economy and there is a continuing need to add value by focusing on high yield markets, improved service standards and support in developing the market for business outside of Manchester or Chester. There is some evidence of growth potential in business tourism in Cheshire East, including both conference and meetings markets, for which there is a strong product range from stately homes to conference hotels. Further work may therefore be required to develop and promote distinctive offers within Cheshire East.

Of course attracting the interest of visitors and providing the product that matches their needs are only two of the components of a successful visitor economy. Getting visitors to and between the tourism assets is another vital component. The visitor economy alone will not bring about investment in transport infrastructure or services but it can be an important dimension in developing a case for investment. The rural location of many of our main visitor attractions creates significant issues regarding car use vs public transport. The protection and enhancement of connectivity, such as between Airports and Cheshire East, between mainline rail and local rail or bus transport, between towns and rural attractions, are important to visitors and the local community alike and should be considered as part of the Local Transport Plan.

Appendix 2 provides a summary of available research.

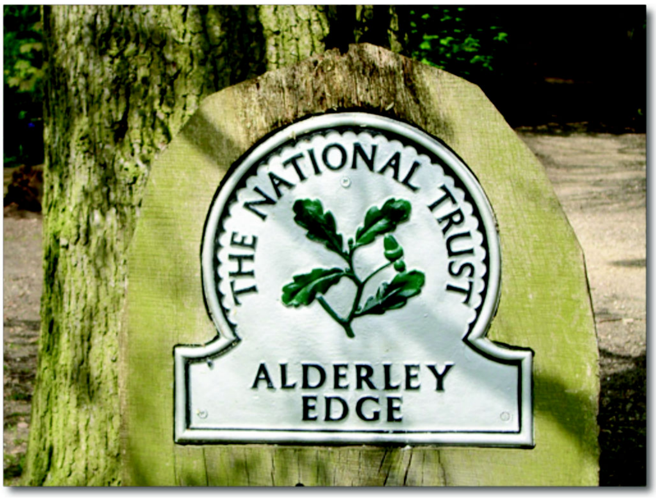
Moving Forward

Where do we go from here?

To attract visitors we need to support and reinforce the quality of experience and product in the area's attractions, focusing on developing the full potential of the higher profile assets such as Jodrell Bank, Lyme Park and Tatton Park, while continuing to work with the many other attractions that are scattered across the area such as Clonter Opera, Rode Hall, Macclesfield Silk or Little Moreton Hall.

Maintenance and development of key attractions is of strategic importance to the visitor economy of Cheshire East. Tatton Park comes under the direct management of Cheshire East Council, while others will require close working links with organisations such as the National Trust (e.g. Quarry Bank, Lyme Park, Little Moreton Hall) or private owners (e.g. Arley, Capesthorne, Gawsworth, Clonter and Cholmondeley). At a time of economic slowdown, 'anchor institutions' are important for the local cultural and visitor economy in creating a high quality of place with potential to support the resilience of the local economy during a difficult economic period.

Protection and enhancement of our natural assets, including Alderley Edge, the Gritstone Trail, Tegg's Nose, Sandstone Ridge, Meres and Mosses and the distinctive character of the Peak District National Park, is also a fundamental requirement in defining the quality of experience that visitors seek. The features of these landscapes, the historic estates and farmland and their juxtaposition with associated villages, canals, attractions and market towns are a distinct element of the character of Cheshire East and are therefore an economic as well as environmental asset. Helping to develop Cheshire's countryside experience is most effectively done in Cheshire East through a combination of geographic brands where they exist, the use of thematic brands to reinforce the experience, a focus on quality and coordination with strategic developments such as the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Close working with business clusters, market towns or major property owners such as The National Trust or private estates will also be important.



There should be continued support for the 'Cheshire's Gardens of Distinction' brand as our gardens are already a major visitor attraction. They are something that is distinctive about Cheshire East's contribution to the region, particularly in their association with historic houses and their use as spectacular and distinctive backdrops for arts/culture, festivals and events.

Targeted investment in a number of key projects, attractions and brands will significantly change the image and positioning of Cheshire East in the market place, delivering real benefits to the local economy. Meanwhile 'packaging' for niche markets can help exploit the value of other Cheshire East assets such as Churches, textile heritage or waterways and canals.

Web and digital media need to be effectively used to support and communicate the development of brands and product, adding value to (or in some cases replacing) more traditional communications media. This can lead to cost-effective targeted communication and new opportunities to develop the visitor experience and their access to products.

We should review how and who is providing information and the effectiveness of this, including value for money. Alongside exploring technology and innovative ways of delivering information it is recognised there will be occasions and locations when information delivered by a person is what the visitor requires. That means exploring how we can collaborate better on delivering joined-up information, whether provided through an information centre, a shop, a visitor attraction, accommodation or at arrival points such as airports or train stations. We need all our residents and businesses to value our visitors and know about their area, to ensure our visitors get a consistently warm welcome with the right information.

Investment to create the additional accommodation that will allow us to welcome more overnight leisure visitors across Cheshire East throughout the year will require us to focus on destinations and locations with the potential for more and for different types of bed spaces. The emphasis will be on accommodation that fits with our target markets, responding to what today's customers want and underlining our reputation for distinctive, high quality experiences. This includes self-catering options and independent niche hotels.

Our waterways and rights of way networks need to be recognised as important tourism assets as they are established as important features of our countryside, allowing visitors to explore Cheshire East's hidden gems in a unique way. Demand for both continues to be strong. For example, boating has increased by an average of 2.6% every year over the last 15 years and is expected to continue to grow over the next 10 years, while recent investment of £2.7m in marina development will further encourage canal tourism within Cheshire East. Meanwhile the draft Rights of Way improvement Plan for Cheshire East acknowledges that promoting leisure routes supports local rural businesses.

Events & Festivals

Events held within Cheshire East help animate places and give reasons for return visits, so increasing the value of the visitor economy as well as benefiting communities. These events range from nationally strategic events including the RHS Show, Tatton Park Biennial and the Cholmondeley Pageant of Power through to local events & festivals that help to reinforce the character of a particular area, these include Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival, Knutsford May Day, Holly Holy Day in Nantwich, Barnaby Festival in Macclesfield, Carnivals at Crewe and Congleton, The Poynton Show, The County Show or the area's many arts, literary and food festivals. Other events help to support tourism brands such as the Bollington Walking Festival and 'Cheshire's Peak District' the many Bluebell Walks and 'Gardens of Distinction' or food festivals and 'Taste Cheshire'.

Our arts, events and festivals programme needs focus, to promote and develop signature events that will raise the profile of the wider offer in Cheshire East and draw specific attention to assets such as gardens or market towns. We can also encourage 'packaging' of other events to ensure they can benefit from an increased profile, are associated with strong themes, gain mutual benefit from clustering with accommodation and other businesses and take advantage of sharing resources. This is especially through cross-marketing opportunities and encouraging greater coordination in timing and organisation to improve impact. There are parallel opportunities to grow 'organic' locally distinctive events and to attract new strategic events. However, a subvention policy may be required to effectively exploit or stimulate the strategic events market and mechanisms to allow active support are necessary to drive improvement in more local initiatives.

The potential of Cheshire East's towns and villages needs to be harnessed through consideration of visitor economy issues within targeted regeneration in Crewe, Macclesfield and Cheshire East's Market Towns. Effective place marketing is required to make effective use of their distinctive characteristics and local promotional business clusters can help to deliver this. This needs to be achieved through prioritisation, accepting that the needs and opportunities of each place are different and based on whether there is a significant potential gain to the visitor economy. The spatial priorities outlined in its broader Economic Development Strategy of Crewe, Macclesfield and Market Towns are directly relevant to the visitor economy sector, with an additional focus on Cheshire's Peak District, the Tatton/Knutsford/Jodrell hub, the South Cheshire rural area around Nantwich and the canal corridors in respect to business development opportunities related to the market or their assets.

Market Towns

East Cheshire is home to 15 of the sub-region's 21 market towns and large villages. From Alderley Edge in the north to Audlem in the south, market towns are one of the things that give East Cheshire its special character. Some, such as Nantwich or Knutsford, are already of significant established value to the visitor economy while others such as Congleton or Middlewich have potential to do so. Many of these towns have a distinctive heritage related to their rural hinterland, their connections to rail, road or canal and industries such as salt, silk or engineering. Promotion of these towns is being developed through i-visitor guides (www.cheshiremarkettowns.co.uk) where visitors can access a host of information that will inform there decision making of what to do and where to go. The i-visitor guides such as www.ivisitnantwich.co.uk will not only promote the towns themselves, but the attractions of the surrounding area, thus benefiting jobs and prosperity for the community.

The role of events and festivals, a distinctive retail offer, built heritage, food and drink, quality accommodation, arts & culture, business tourism and proximity of assets such as attractions or waterways will be key variables.

Because of the geography of Cheshire East, business tourism is a different offer to other parts of the sub-region. Proximity to the Manchester city region, the nature of the business mix and its location, the rural nature of much of the Borough and the scattered nature of tourism assets may necessitate a separate focus on business tourism, a clustering approach, development of bespoke products and/or focus on specific business or associated markets. However, the visitor economy is not divorced from normal business and so attention needs to be given to existing plans and partnerships to ensure the visitor economy is firmly rooted in what is already happening uninhibited by sector boundaries. We should support those places that bring together partnerships and projects that are committed to quality and which can deliver for our target audiences.

Cheshire East Council

'Telling the story' will be central to joining the various themes and opportunities. Matching reasons to visit with clear target markets will enable a clear focus to be developed that links quality of experience and the visitor offer. In many cases it is about adding value through linking existing assets and resources rather than creating new. Transforming the experience of visitors depends not only on getting the attractions and accommodation right, but through quality visitor information delivered where and when visitors need it, supporting the development of customer service skills across the area and taking an integrated approach to issues such as transport, signage, planning and licensing. The quality of the public realm, transport, the natural environment, rights of way, cultural activities and the built heritage are the foundations of a destination's distinctiveness of place and its authenticity.

Managing, enhancing and sustaining these to the highest standards will ensure that the region can offer high-quality and distinctive experiences to visitors.

Working together will be the key to delivery. Developing partnerships between public and private sectors will be essential if the true potential of the Cheshire East visitor economy is to be realised. Encouraging and supporting private sector investment must be at the heart of future approaches. The work of the Visitor Economy Forum, partnership delivery through the tourism board and the development of effective business clusters are also essential to its success. Working together will also help us to assess delivery, celebrate success and to benchmark achievements.

Cheshire East Visitor Economy: Spatial priorities & Strategic Brands

Economic spatial priorities: Crewe, Macclesfield, Market towns (Sustainable towns and rural areas).

Additional Visitor Economy potential business growth areas: Tatton/Knutsford/Jodrell, Nantwich & rural area, Canal corridors, Cheshire Peak District.

Sub-regional Destination brands: Tatton Park, Jodrell Bank, Cheshire's Peak district.

Key campaign brands 2010: Gardens of Distinction, Cheshire Peak District, Taste Cheshire, Hoof Cheshire, Eventful escapes, Heritage/Historic properties.

Cheshire East Visitor Economy: Key market segment

Short breaks to Cheshire - 2 hr catchment high spending Cosmopolitans and Traditionals building on current markets and converting days to stays.

Family market - from higher spend target segments of Cosmopolitans and Traditional as a new support market for days and stays. This will pre-school year round and 5-12 year olds in school holidays.

Visiting friends and relatives - segments as above.

Day visitors - segments as above.

Cheshire East Council

How do we do it?

Delivering visitor economy outcomes do not belong to one organisation or one Local Authority service. We need to align visitor activity with economic regeneration and the quality of life of our residents in order to deliver the quality destination that is vital. It therefore requires a corporate commitment to the quality of its visitor economy offer from Cheshire East Council and working through a partnership approach that involves both public and private sector, in order to succeed.

Opportunities can be explored to generate new sources of funding and to secure private sector investment. For example, additional investment support is currently available through 'Gardens of Distinction' marketing (European Regional Development Fund), two projects under the Rural Development Programme For England (RDPE); Tourism Connect, improving accommodation standards and Tourism Vitality, for attractions and events and through the Council's own 'Recession Recovery' projects.

The commitment to working together through partnerships is explicit within Cheshire East. However the geography of the area dictates that, while partnership working across Cheshire & Warrington is important, we also need to work with neighbouring destinations such as Manchester, the Peak District, Staffordshire moorlands and North Shropshire as the visitor does not recognise political boundaries in the search for a quality destination. Working together must also extend to a joined up approach to the relationship of tourism to heritage, sport, arts, culture and the creative industries.

Jodrell and Tatton

A new Discovery Centre is being planned for the University of Manchester's Jodrell Bank. The project, which they hope will be phase 1 of a larger development a 'Planet Pavilion', new café, exhibition/events, space a 'Galaxy maze' and extension of the arboretum. Jodrell Bank already has a high profile with visitors and the proposed developments are aimed at growing the visiting audience. Nearby, Tatton Park is investigating the potential of growing the family market with a new attraction that would help to boost visitor numbers from 800,000 to 1 million. Combined or separately, investment at these attractions would significantly boost the overall contribution to the local economy. Their proximity to each other and the wider offer in the immediate locality have the potential to create a tourism 'hot spot'.

Cheshire East Council, through delivery of services related to planning, transport, regeneration and public realm can support and facilitate appropriate private sector investment in the visitor economy as well as sustaining existing levels of business. There is therefore a need to consider visitor economy needs and opportunities as part of policy and decision making within the Council's wider service delivery to the benefit of the economy, jobs and the resident community.

The approach to working together should be about making best use of resources to 'join the dots' and to add value together to what could be achieved separately.

Cheshire East Council

Key Priorities

The following priorities have been identified for the period up to 2015:

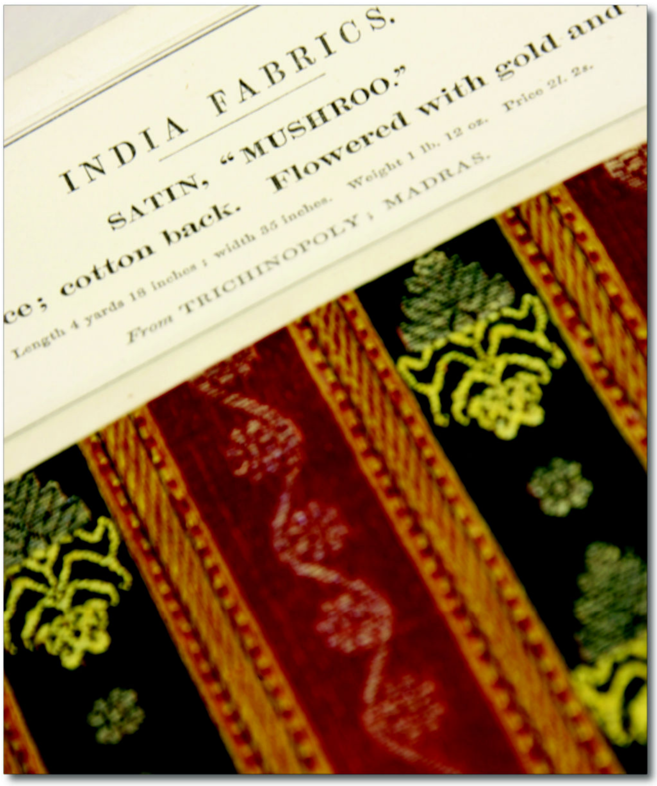
- A Visitor Economy Forum for Cheshire East linked to the Local Strategic Partnership, Economic Development, Learning and Skills sub-group.
- Completion of Tatton Visioning leading to product development.
- Continued support for Jodrell Bank redevelopment and other key investment projects.
- Encourage investment in quality tourism product and services in Cheshire East to the benefit of jobs and economic growth.
- Development of and support for an events strategy at sub-regional and Cheshire East levels to maximise the potential benefits of strategic events to the visitor economy and of local cultural activity to the distinctiveness of the area, especially in the lead up to the 2012 Games.
- Development of approaches to transform the experience of visitors through quality visitor information, supporting the development of customer service and other sector skills and seeking an integrated approach to issues such as transport, signage, planning and licensing.
- Development of a sub-regional focus on business tourism through a clustering approach, close working with businesses, development of bespoke products and/or focus on specific business or association markets taking account of the specific needs of Cheshire East.
- Continuation of ICT and digital developments to enhance the offer and assist communication, including a coordinated and integrated approach to 'i-visitor guide' and 'Discover...' web platforms.
- Continued support for 'Cheshire's Gardens of Distinction' as gardens are already a major visitor attraction and a high proportion are within Cheshire East.
- Adoption and development of Cheshire's Peak District and related thematic brands to communicate and reinforce the countryside experience
- Promotion of access to our countryside and of our waterways networks in coordination with strategic developments through such as the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Local Area Partnerships, links with market towns and associated strategic plans.
- Development of partnership working and delivery through a visitor economy forum, cluster working and 'hub' offices at Tatton Park and Reaseheath encourage and facilitate development of the Visitor Economy.
- Review of visitor information provision and testing of new approaches
- Incorporation of visitor economy issues and opportunities within regeneration projects such as Crewe Vision, Middlewich Town Wharf and Macclesfield Economic Master Plan within targeted regeneration around a 'sustainable towns' agenda, for Market Towns, exploitation of heritage assets and through effective place marketing.
- Ensure that Visitor Economy needs and opportunities are taken into account as part of decisions relating to matters such as planning, transport, public realm, events, culture and countryside/greenspace.

Cheshire East Council

Measuring success

It is essential to the success of any strategy that effective research and intelligence is available to review success and to inform future decisions. This is most effectively delivered sub-regionally, but the distinctive requirements of Cheshire East must be identified and built in to future research and monitoring plans. There also needs to be good communication between Visit Chester and Cheshire and the Local authority's own research capacity to ensure effective targeting of resources. Further research may be required in order to assist decisions about market potential and development opportunities as well as provision of benchmarking data.

At present there are few effective measures other than STEAM data to monitor the visitor economy and few measures that are relevant to sectoral support in Cheshire East (e.g. hotel data), though it is hoped that the Local Economic assessment may provide a means of supporting a robust evidence base in the future. However, this is not a unique issue across the region and it requires both a strategic level of support and the effective cooperation of local business. The direction and speed to be followed in achieving the Visitor Economy priorities will be guided through the Visitor Economy Forum, which will also inform Cheshire East's contribution to the annually reviewed Destination Management Plan for Cheshire and Warrington. To work effectively the forum will need access to good market research and monitoring of key indicators. New indicators may have to be considered in order to target resources effectively.



The key outcome targets we seek to achieve by 2015 are:

- **Develop a visitor economy with a value of £818m by 2015**
- **Increase jobs directly related to the visitor economy by around 1271 over the same period**
- **Increase visitor numbers to Tatton to 1m by 2015**
- **Increase the number of businesses achieving quality accreditation.**

Conclusion

The Visitor Economy Strategy is a strategically important component of the Council's economic development priorities. It is an important contributor to the economy of Cheshire East, contributing to local quality of life, and has a positive impact on decisions over business location and individual choices over where to live and work. The strategic framework outlines some of the issues and priorities that the Council must consider and resource, the opportunities to align the needs of residents and visitors and a model for partnership working to help realise the potential of visitor economy in Cheshire East.

Appendix 1: Strategic framework summary

Create the new experience

Telling our stories

- Incorporate tourism branding into all relevant interpretation, promotion and place marketing.
- Prioritise support for projects that support and reinforce key brands and themes.
- Encourage businesses to celebrate their stories and adopt the relevant tourism branding.
- Use web and digital media to extend the reach of brands, messages and new product offers.
- Develop a visitor welcome training and support programme.
- Create immediate impact at major gateways.

Transforming the experience

- Review and develop visitor information services that match visitor needs.
- Create more opportunities to spend.
- Exploit the potential of food, drink and local products to enhance the experience.
- Foster high growth, high quality businesses.
- Build visitor needs into decision making on public realm, access, transport, planning, town centre management and other such matters.
- Demonstrate commitment to taking care of a high quality environment.

b). Creating the offer

Attracting visitors

- Support a marketing strategy to focus on specific markets making best use of geographic or thematic brands with the objective of growing visitor income.
- Support investment in attractions and assets, with priority development of key projects.
- Develop & support key geographic / thematic brands.
- Identify and celebrate the distinctive visitor offer of our countryside, towns, villages harnessing potential to add value to the visitor economy.
- Develop and promote an events programme that supports brands/themes raises profile and quality and helps to extend the season.
- Focus on business tourism.
- Build on Cheshire East's image, profile and local pride.

Working together

- Work in partnership with Visit Chester and Cheshire and others to deliver improvements in the Visitor Economy of Cheshire East.
- Work with partners on advocacy, influence, insight, market growth and development and to monitor progress.
- Recognise the role of local authorities in creating quality places for residents and visitors & help to create an environment that encourages entrepreneurs and developers.
- Work with tourism business clusters to help make most effective use of resources and business engagement.
- Ensure that the delivery of the strategy is monitored and success communicated.

Create the new experience

Telling our stories

Incorporate tourism branding into all relevant interpretation, promotion and place marketing.	Communicate and liaise with all relevant partners, including within Cheshire East Council, to ensure tourism branding is appropriately and consistently incorporated.
Prioritise support for projects that support and reinforce key brands and themes.	Identify, assess and support key projects eg Jodrell Bank, Tatton Park and opportunities stemming from areas such as market towns, regeneration priorities or externally funded programmes (eg ERDF or RDPE).
Encourage businesses to celebrate their stories and adopt the relevant tourism branding.	Work with recognised tourism businesses to provide relevant brand guidelines and support as well as encouraging businesses to work in partnership to identify or exploit PR opportunities.
Use web and digital media to extend the reach of brands, messages and new product offers.	In partnership with stakeholders seek develop online and digital resources to support and communicate brands and product, provide cost-effective targeted communication and new opportunities to develop the visitor experience and their access to products. In conjunction with VCC ensure that i-visitorguides and 'Discover' sites are maintained, developed, integrated and supported.
Develop a visitor welcome training and support programme.	Through VCC seek to develop and roll out a 'Cheshire Welcome' training and support programme.
Create immediate impact at major gateways.	Identify key gateways and in partnership with stakeholders seek to improve relevant visitor economy messaging/branding.

Creating the new experience		**Creating the offer**
Telling our stories	**Transforming the experience**	**Attracting visitors**
Working together		

Create the new experience

Transforming the experience

Review and develop visitor information services that match visitor needs.	With support from VCC, review visitor information services including the opportunity to develop or pilot new approaches to developing sustainable and transferable solutions and implement necessary change.
Create more opportunities to spend.	Work with tourism clusters to encourage them to package opportunities (eg accommodation working with attractions and retail) and identify through VCC support for business tourism packages.
Exploit the potential of food, drink and local products to enhance the experience.	Support and seek to extend 'Taste Cheshire. Work with partners to encourage use of local/regional produce and develop the consumer focus through events or visitor attraction/accommodation food offerings.
Foster high growth, high quality businesses.	Through Economic Development strategies and support, planning, transport etc, encourage relevant visitor economy businesses with growth potential. Encourage and support take-up of RDPE funding to 2013: Tourism Connect aims to improve accommodation standards and Tourism Vitality offers grants towards improving tourist attractions and events.
Build visitor needs into decision making on public realm, access, transport, planning, town centre management and other such matters.	Identify and ensure visitor economy needs/opportunities are represented within projects (eg sustainable towns, Crewe Vision, Macclesfield Town, Middlewich, LTP etc) and delivery plans.
Demonstrate commitment to taking care of a high quality environment.	Recognise the value of quality green space, rights of way, countryside environment hertiage, town centres and public realm to the visitor economy through relevant strategies, projects and plans.

b). Creating the offer

Attracting visitors

Support a marketing strategy to focus on specific markets making best use of geographic or thematic brands with the objective of growing visitor income.	Help collate available research and identify markets relevant to key brands and themes. With VCC and businesses, develop promotional and marketing strategies to effectively exploit these markets and encourage product development that supports or fills gaps in the market.
Support investment in attractions and assets, including priority development of key projects .	Encourage and support relevant investment opportunities in attractions and tourism assets and ensure VE objectives are part of forward planning for key projects (eg Tatton Park, Jodrell Bank).
Develop & support key geographic/thematic brands.	Support the development and application of key brands of particular relevance to Cheshire East; Cheshire's Peak District, Gardens of Distinction and Taste Cheshire as well as supporting thematic activity around heritage, waterways, market towns or other emerging areas, providing assistance to business clusters as appropriate.
Identify and celebrate the distinctive visitor offer of our countryside, towns and villages, harnessing potential to add value to the visitor economy.	Promote and cross-promote the assets of towns and countryside areas of value to the visitor economy, seek opportunities for positive PR, encourage areas of potential and add value through the development of geographic or thematic brands where relevant.
Develop, encourage and promote an events & festivals programme that supports brands/themes raises profile and quality and helps to extend the season.	Promote and support the development of strategic events to achieve quality, sustainability and a good visitor experience. Help to identify and nurture new and innovative events in Cheshire East that have visitor economy potential, particularly where of sub-regional or above value. Tourism Vitality offers grants towards improving tourist attractions and events in the area (RDPE funding until 2013).
Focuses on business tourism.	Work with VCC to devise and implement a business tourism strategy relevant to the markets and assets of Cheshire East to maximise business and corporate spend.
Build on Cheshire East's image, profile and local pride.	Manage, sustain and enhance public realm and services used by visitors to the highest standards possible to achieve a high quality distinctive offer that benefits visitors and residents alike. Encourage projects that promote community pride and engagement in place and environment. Take opportunities to raise the profile of and promote a positive image of Cheshire East.

Working together

Work in partnership with Visit Chester and Cheshire to deliver improvements in the Visitor Economy of Cheshire East.	Develop visitor economy delivery 'hub's' at Tatton Park and Reaseheath to combine resource and effort for shared objectives in line with the Cheshire East Visitor Economy Framework, and work together in a strategic partnership.
Work with partners on advocacy, influence, insight, market growth and development and to monitor progress.	Develop a strategic approach and partnership working through the Visitor Economy Forum as well as sub-regional or cross-boundary bodies.
Recognise the role of local authorities in creating quality places for residents and visitors & help to create an environment that encourages entrepreneurs and developers.	Ensure the visitor economy interests are incorporating in the Council's relevant strategies and delivery plans, with particular regard to Economic development, Transport, Planning, Health and Wellbeing and Customer services.
Work with tourism business clusters to help make most effective use of resources and business engagement.	Encourage and support tourism business clusters to deliver added value and as routes to improving product quality, promotion, communication and stakeholder engagement.
Ensure that the delivery of the strategy is monitored and success communicated.	Encourage sharing of visitor economy research capacity and data, build monitoring mechanisms into activities undertaken and work with partners/stakeholders to develop effective routes to identify and promote success.

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Creating the new experience

Creating the offer

Telling our stories

Transforming the experience

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Cheshire East Council

Appendix 2: Cheshire East summary of available research

Volume and Value – Visitor Economy Overview

- The Cheshire visitor economy is worth £1.78bn with east Cheshire contributing £653m. (STEAM 2008).
- The Cheshire visitor economy is worth £1.78bn with east Cheshire contributing £653m. (STEAM 2008).
- It is estimated that east Cheshire had 16.7m visitors in 2008. (STEAM 2008).
- In terms of tourism employment as a % of the population, Cheshire East is slightly below the Northwest average of 3.2%, at 2.9%. (TEAM Analysis, 2009)
- Cheshire accounts for 8% of the region's accommodation establishments.
- East Cheshire accounts for more tourists (40%) than any other part of the sub-region. (STEAM 2008).
- Known Bed stock in east Cheshire: 8104, which equates to 35% of the sub-regional total.
- The two biggest sectors in terms of expenditure are food & drink and shopping, accounting for 39% of all expenditure in east Cheshire. This is an increase of 1.5% from 2007 to 2008. (STEAM 2008)
- The three biggest sectors in terms of employment are food & drink, accommodation and shopping, accounting for 64% of all visitor economy employment in east Cheshire. Overall there was a 4% increase visitor economy employment from 2007 to 2008. (STEAM 2008)
- Visitors staying in paid for accommodation within east Cheshire accounted for 5% of the total visitor numbers, with the vast majority of visitors (91%) being day visitors. (STEAM 2008)
- Day visitors accounted for 67% of all tourism spend in east Cheshire during 2008. (STEAM 2008)

Image and Perceptions (data supplied from NW Stay and Day Visitor Survey, 2008)

- Rural Cheshire has stronger appeal to 'independent' market segments – especially traditionals and cosmopolitans.
- Rural Cheshire has relatively low appeal among other rural destinations with only 33% considering rural Cheshire as a short-break destination.

Staying and Day Visitors (Destination Report, TEAM, 2009)

- Spend by both day (£36) and staying (£23) visitors in Cheshire (outside Chester) was slightly below the NW average.
- Cheshire's largest markets (both days and staying) are **Cosmopolitans** and **High Streets** – this is in line with the region. Among staying visitors it is attracting higher than average proportions of **Traditionals.**
- The **age** profile of staying visitors to Cheshire is broadly similar to that of the region but skewed slightly to 55+ visitors, and less to 16 – 34s.
- Staying visitors to rural Cheshire are more likely to be 55+, with no children at home.
- Other important staying visitor markets are the Northwest and the West Midlands. The East Midlands and East of England are also important for rural Cheshire
- Staying trips to rural Cheshire is 2 nights.
- Average length of stay is lower than the regional average – with significantly lower proportions staying 4+ nights.

Cheshire East Council

Business Tourism (VCC Figures 2010)

- £3.7m of business tourism delegate economic benefit was secured by Visit Chester & Cheshire during the 2009/2010 financial year. Forecasts for 2010/2011 shows show that over £2million in delegate economic benefit has already been secured. This is forecast to increase as the year progresses.

Useful Consumer Insights – East Cheshire

MOSIAC profiling consumer datasets supplied by VCC show a number of clear conclusions with regards to which our current target markets are. These are Production Managers, Innate Conservatives and Yesterdays Captains.

Gardens Insights from the 2008 Evaluation from the onsite survey

- The majority of respondents (54%) were from Cheshire. However, festivals were also successful in attracting audiences from further a field, with 29% coming from elsewhere in the North West and 16% travelling from elsewhere in the UK.
- **Attitudes to Cheshire** - Overseas respondents were most likely to indicate "good food‟ as a priority for a day out; they were also most likely to „appreciate beauty and craftsmanship‟ and were the most likely group to indicate that they were interested in using public transport for leisure purposes.
- Respondents based Elsewhere in the UK were the least likely to indicate that Cheshire was famous for its gardens‟ and that it had „a clear image‟. Also, along with other domestic visitors they had a lower interest in using public transport.
- Cheshire Residents were most likely to agree that the area was, losing its gloss‟ (CGOD Marketing Research, Nov 08).

Textile Festival Evaluation (September 2009)

- The main reason for visiting was to attend the event (41%) followed by those visiting the area/attraction already (36%).
- The majority were day visitors (57%), with a quarter staying overnight.

Cheshire Peak District (QA Research - February 2009)

- 39% of consumers have visited/heard of Cheshire's Peak District (consumer base 497)
- When compared against the Peak District the 'offer' was viewed as very similar in many ways, key differences being: - historic houses to visit, gentle countryside, many gardens to visit, opportunity to visit lots of industrial heritage
- 98% of stakeholders could place the area on a map, although nearly two thirds thought it was bigger an area than it is

East Cheshire Attractions

- The total footfall at attractions in east Cheshire during 2007 was 1.6 million visitors.
- The largest attraction within east Cheshire was Tatton Park, with 808,000 visits during 2007/08.
- The annual economic output of Tatton Park is £21.5m gross; £8.8m net. (SQW 2006)

Appendix 2 Summary of Consultation responses

<u>Executive Summary, Purpose & Vision - Pages 2 - 4</u>

1. **Does the vision on how the future of the Visitor Economy within Cheshire East will look set the right level of ambition? (E.g. are the targets realistic and challenging?)**

- There are many other attractions which contribute to the visitor economy which are not mentioned.
- The vision should look to retain potential tourism from residents of Cheshire, and understand, and try to fill the gaps in the offering to tourists.
- It omits important detail, such as theatres, music and other cultural events, both professional and amateur
- When identifying areas within Cheshire East the canal system should be considered as a major attraction.
- Written before the demise of the NWDA. How will this affect the feasibility of reaching the targets?
- Welcome the recognition that the public realm improvements are given in the developing the VE.
- Welcome the vision that Cheshire East will SUPPORT and encourage a programme of sustainable events and festivals.
- Look at developing environmentally sustainable tourism products/services, including, for example, Peak Connections. This would reinforce the strategic intent of protecting and enhancing the environment. It might be appropriate to state an intention to encourage awareness among visitors who, in turn, really value the environment and actively contribute to environmental sustainability – in a way that they can be ‘proud’?
- The National Trust is supportive of the levels of growth that are aimed for and will contribute to their achievement with an ambitious programme of growth at several of our own sites. We also support the ambition to grow visitor numbers at Tatton and further develop the offer so that it continues to contribute significantly to the region’s economy and help to ensure a sustainable future for the estate.
- Welcome the recognition that the end goal is not just economic, but also that a strong visitor economy will improve quality of life for local people. An attractive, accessible and inspiring environment with interesting cultural opportunities is just as beneficial to residents as to visitors.
- The 2% increase in value seems to be a low target and not even in line with predictions for inflation, which if the strategy was implemented, would be quite disappointing - even given the present economic climate. We feel that it is difficult to justify such a large investment of time and money for such a poor return when resources are at a premium. The total value of tourism to the UK is set to rise by more than 60% to £188b over the next decade, says an independent report commissioned by VisitBritain. Research from Deloitte and Oxford Economics forecasts that the favourable exchange rate, the lure of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games and the appeal of our world-renowned attractions, should ensure the sector grows at an above-average 3.5% per annum between now and 2020.

- P2 mentions a Cheshire East visitor economy worth of over £600m, p4 & 5 includes reference to £653m.
- The vision and targets have been developed alongside the Visitor Economy Framework for Cheshire & Warrington so are realistic and challenging within the bigger picture. We need to highlight the importance of the VE which nationally contributes £115 billion to our economy every year. There is great potential for business tourism and Cheshire East now have a mapped out strategy to enhance this offer. We need to look at activities and themes for the programme alongside the venues.
- Visit Chester & Cheshire's response to the projected growth of 2% is that it would be reasonable to say that a growth rate between 2% and 5% during an economic recovery and possible double dip recession over the time period give in the CEC VEF, is challenging for East Cheshire and would perhaps suggest extending your target date from 2012 to 2015. The VCC VEF predicts a growth for the Cheshire & Warrington area at around/over 5% by 2020.
- RDPE should go in your action plan for delivery over the next 3 years as an activity to achieve your goals. When you are developing the action plan we can build in the outputs and detail

<u>Vision - Page 4</u>

2. **Does it highlight the correct objectives and act as a strong call for action?**

- All references to the Regional Economic Strategy should be deleted following the Government's announcement that they are to be abolished.
- To deliver a quality visitor experience – the whole customer journey needs to be mapped out and needs to look at working with retailers, taxi drivers, bus drivers, street scene attendants, alongside the more recognized accommodation and attractions sector.
- Those businesses/attractions on the periphery of the area must raise their profile within surrounding counties. For example, accommodation providers in Crewe and Alsager have overnight stays from visitors going to Alton Towers in particular.
- It omits culture as a fundamental component of the objectives, in terms of events and facilities.
- The canals and the buildings alongside are of great historical interest and this could be highlighted as more people are choosing to spend their leisure time and holidays in the UK.
- It doesn't really say what we are moving from to what standards we will be or who will be responsible for the movement from A to B. In Congleton we are really struggling to get premises accredited. They don't want to spend the money, but without accreditation they can't be recommended by the TIC or appear on CEBC web information. A Call for Action with lines (page 5) visitors expect an attractive environment and facilities like public toilets...etc ... while all very worthy, in another part of Cheshire East these are being seen as discretionary services which may be closed in two years. On one hand

Cheshire East is saying this is important for the visitor economy but then on the other that they will close them down!

- As Cheshire East's heritage attractions and historic environment are fundamental to its ability to attract visitors, suggest that 'historic environment' is added to the reference to built and natural environment in bullet point four.
- The objectives should provoke a strong call to action which is needed as the private sector will play an important and growing role in our visitor economy. One of our biggest challenges is to create a robust, clear and defined local agenda that matches the ambition and vision of the private sector and makes Chester and Cheshire a great place to invest and do business.

Markets, Assets & Brands - Pages 7 - 10

3. **Are the key themes/brands highlighted under markets, assets and brands the correct themes/brands?**

- The document underplays the areas waterways/canals strength, and its association with the author Tom Rolt.
- It is anticipated the £2.7m development will encourage canal tourism within Cheshire and the region as a whole. There are now a record 32,000 boats on British canals and rivers. Demand for boating has increased by an average of 2.6% every year over the last 15 years and is expected to continue to grow over the next 10 years.
- More could be made of the railway and canal heritage offer and how this could be developed
- There is an opportunity to develop activity sports holidays.
- Very little information is included about the types of accommodation on offer and the need for and potential for developing visitor accommodation.
- The Biennial demonstrates the potential for economic impact delivered by the arts and artistic endeavour. It should continue to be treated like an economic 'jewel' and in so doing it should become more ambitious particularly in breaking down the boundaries between public art and performing arts as well as seeking a dramatic step increase in the scale of participatory projects. Also, the potential to use the arts to 'draw attention' to other 'gardens of distinction' and the Cheshire Peak District is a relatively unexplored idea in the framework.
- Under events, need to include the Nantwich Jazz Festival at Easter, the International Cheese Show and Nantwich Show in July, the Food & Drink Festival in September or the Words & Music Festival in October.
- Pleased to see the recognition of parks, countryside, rights of way as visitor attractions and thematic brands and the ROWIP within the document.
- I'm not sure if the use of the word 'lazy' is quite right. Most of the activities listed in the thematic brands involve activities. 'Lazy' perhaps has negative connotations – are there alternative phrases that could be used such as 'relaxed outdoors activities' etc?
- There is a over emphasis on a small number of attractions and their development.

- Completely missing are: Nantwich Show / International Cheese Show, Nantwich Jazz & Folk Festival, Nantwich Players Theatre, Nantwich Food Festival, Nantwich Holly Holy Day, Nantwich Classic Car event, Crewe Railway Heritage Centre, Crewe Lyceum Theatre
- As Hoof Cheshire has now been secured, equestrian should be included as it becomes better known.
- Cheshire East struggles with an identity, and more could be made of the canals and meres.
- More co-ordination, as this year the Folk and Boat, Congleton Food and Drink Festival and the Barnaby Festival all happened on the same weekend and are all organised and promoted by the individual towns in isolation of each other.
- No mention of Embracing the Games and using that as a pull for tourism except as an add on at the end on the priorities?
- There is a very big difference between "Cheshire's Peak District" and "The Peak District & Derbyshire" - the first implies ownership of a geographical part of the area, whilst the second acknowledges that the Peak District is one unique place with its own identity and then tags a second (slipstream) destination onto it for obvious benefits. However, if Cheshire continues to promote it the other way round this will result in fragmentation, duplication and market confusion. I think Cheshire DMP's will struggle to fund solus "fragment" Peak District campaigns in future , because they really don't fit with VE's or the Government's picture of tourism destination management vision. Our current thinking could be to move to style of "Peak District & Beyond" on our attack marketing (to embrace the wider area) if Cheshire dropped its tags and threw their funding in with us.
- Cheshire is both blessed and challenged by the geography of its surroundings. On the one hand it has to compete with major destinations such as Manchester and Liverpool, the Peak District and Lake District – and can often seem to exist in their shadow. On the other hand, the proximity of urban centres to Cheshire presents an opportunity to penetrate relatively untapped markets, for example South Manchester and Staffordshire. Getting the branding and the marketing right is key - finding a distinctive image for Cheshire East destinations that will motivate visits. But also having the right products and constantly improving what is on offer for our key segments.
- It would be useful in the final version of the document to outline more clearly what the key themes and brands will be (e.g. through a diagram) as the text is quite dense in this section and it is not easy to see what are proposed as brands and what is a general acknowledgement of assets and approaches. E.g. is 'lazy outdoors' proposed as a theme or just an observation? Clarity on how such themes and brands might work and support each other would also be useful. For example, is 'Knutsford' proposed as a brand and if so, how will it be supported by other brands, such as 'Tatton' and themes such as food?
- It would also be helpful to share a clear understanding of the key audiences and market segments that such themes and brandings are targeting so that the organisations can better buy in to it.
- Support the focus on heritage assets and gardens because these are genuinely distinctive Cheshire features that have been proven to have a broad appeal and encourage out-of-season and repeat visits. It is clear,

though, that wider recognition of Cheshire's character is behind that of its competitors such as Yorkshire or Derbyshire.

- Continual improvement of the offer through new and innovative programmes and attractions will help to grow even further Cheshire's reputation for heritage, gardens and the outdoors. The National Trust, for example, is looking to add to its appeal with the newly acquired Norcliffe garden within the Quarry Bank Mill estate, as well as the new children's play area at Lyme Park and new ways of bringing Little Moreton Hall to life for visitors.
- There is a lot of emphasis on themes but not really the inclusion of places. We feel the Market Town feature box on p 13 (Moving Forward) would be better placed in this section.
- More could be made of our excellent country towns and pubs, where good quality food is served, Beer festivals are increasing in popularity and are a good product to help grow the visitor economy - attracting staying visitors and converting 'days' to 'stays'.
- While Macclesfield and its silk heritage are referred to on page 12 and 15, it is felt that reference should also be included here – as the development of Macclesfield in terms of tourism is a vital component in the successful promotion of Cheshire's Peak District, it appears to have been omitted. Macclesfield town redevelopment should also be referred to, as this could have a major impact on the infrastructure.
- Waterways - a real asset to this area, but underplayed in the strategy.
- Market segments –It would be clearer if this section was separate to the themes and brands.
- As Macclesfield is the major town in Cheshire's Peak District, work is needed to develop a tourism interest and theme in Macclesfield. Efforts similar to that used to develop, what until recently was an unrecognised but most valuable asset, Cheshire's Peak District, could result in a totally different impression of Macclesfield in terms of its contribution to the VE.
- Cheshire's Peak District has to be **THE** brand/theme for Cheshire East in terms of tourism. It is Cheshire East's equivalent to Chester in terms of attack brand for the future and encompasses the majority of the key themes and brands identified in the document!
- Marketing is key to attracting more or longer staying visitors. No matter how good our offering, if people don't know it's there, or don't recognise it as relevant to them, they won't come. The council (along with VCC) has an important role here in co-ordinating the approach of organisations which are linked either geographically or thematically and providing support for small establishments.
- The publication of any useful research would be appreciated.
- There is considerable prominence given to Tatton Park and Jodrell Bank, which is understandable given their substantial individual contributions to the visitor economy, but to achieve even more they need the support of the rest of the area's attractions.
- It is necessary to recognise the wide variety of visitor experiences within the area. The report makes almost no reference to the extensive museum and heritage provision and the contribution it makes to the visitor economy, for example its part in the success of the textile festival.
- Few people will come to Cheshire East specially to visit, say, Congleton Museum, but those who come to Tatton Park or Jodrell Bank may stay longer and spend more if they know that other attractions are available to them.
- In the past the significant daytrip recreation and tourism potential of the Pennine fringe area of the former Macclesfield Borough has not been fully

exploited. The area offers wonderful scenery, stunning views, industrial archaeological interest, the Macclesfield canal, the Macclesfield Forest and "Cheshire's Matterhorn" at Shutlingslow and is both a gateway to the wider Peak District as well as having potential as a destination in its own right.

- The conference market is important for the Bollington area. There are two major hotels which have regular conferences – the Hollin Hall Hotel and the Shrigley Hall Hotel. In addition Savio House, a Catholic run retreat on the outskirts of Bollington, is the location of plans to develop a heritage skills training and environmental studies centre (to be called the Ingersley Centre), with enhanced accommodation and facilities.
- Macclesfield Silk Museum not highlighted and Macclesfield's link with silk not explored.
- Crewe Rail Heritage Centre receives no mention at all (SHAME)
- Villages such as Prestbury are not the subject of any initiatives
- The key themes and brands do have synergy with the wider Cheshire and Warrington framework. We must make sure we work with neighbouring border towns and cities as they also have a part to play in creating a clear vision and meeting the challenges.

<u>Moving Forward - Pages 11 - 14</u>

4. **Does the Strategy framework make a strong enough case for developing the Visitor Economy in Cheshire East?**

- Overlooks some key elements to the detriment of South Cheshire.
- There is an abundance of interesting buildings and thriving pubs along the canal system, many of which have been restored and are of great interest, as well as being of a high standard.
- What about the Nantwich Show?
- I wouldn't like to see reliance on the web take over from TIC's which provide an incredible service.
- Where do you need a Government Grant for parallel opportunities to grow organic locally distinctive events? Does this include market towns, or is this a Tatton development?
- We need to develop the visitor economy, but it doesn't build any confidence that Cheshire East will contribute much. It reads to me like a case for others to do more to help their areas.
- Useful to highlight what the potential for long-term growth would be. For example, if this strategy was followed, what could the contribution to local GVA and quality of life be by 2015 – 2020?
- The potential of the Visitor Economy in Cheshire East has to be greater than a 2% growth and therefore the strategy should reflect this. For so long the Visitor Economy in Cheshire East has had little attention in terms of pro-active promotion or investment. A re-balance of VCC's approach will undoubtedly give a better return. Active promotion of the "Cheshire Peak District" as an attack brand for the Cheshire East Visitor Economy has to give significant growth for the Visitor Economy. Research carried out recently, has demonstrated that Cheshire's Peak District is a recognisable brand of value and is very relevant in the big picture of the Visitor Economy.
- Bollington has a large arts and music based festival every four years (The Bollington Festival), an annual weekend transport extravaganza in the

autumn and is introducing a week long Walking Festival in October 2010. Financial and marketing support for our festivals would be greatly appreciated.
- The strategic framework calls for better place marketing and we feel that Bollington could benefit greatly from this
- Where do we go from here on page 11 is not fully explained.
- App 1 – Demonstrate commitment – should say, an unequivocal commitment to protect natural assets, including the countryside for its own sake, and to operate within environmental limits.
- The Market Towns box does not mention Macclesfield.
- If CEC means what it says it should be doing a lot more in working with train operating companies to open up previously used railway stations such as Middlewich, and improving the service at Prestbury.
- We need to make sure that the action plan is flexible and responds to opportunities and changes that meet the visitor economy in the future.

Strategic Framework - Pages 17 - 21

5. **Do you think that the strategy action plan is correct? If not, what changes would you suggest?**

- Implementing the strategy is the critical part and requires backing from the right resources and involvement of the local communities and organisations.
- While the measures of success can be easily determined by increased visitor numbers at Tatton and Jodrell Bank how will success be determined for the towns and villages?
- Potential tourism related activities should be flagged up wherever the local authority capture point is, from enquiries regarding business rates to booking of C.E facilities and every assistance given to enable businesses to maximise their impact and effectiveness.
- Needs much more focus on working with specific development projects and already successful events and activities.
- There are numerous small independent businesses that rely on tourism & collectively work long hours to achieve their goals and in many cases just to survive. They provide much needed employment and their contribution must not go un-noticed.
- Is it right to prioritise funds to Tatton and Jodrell and secondly to Little Moreton Hall and other gems? Be careful of language as often CEC Councillors use the word a ‘jewel in our crown’ and ‘hidden gem’ – so if you are using these words in a strategy document and linking it in with what should get funding then there’s a need to tighten up on language
- It would be helpful to ensure that an environmental sustainability strand is clearly identified, highlighting the contribution that the visitor economy makes to the ‘low carbon’ ambitions of the North West and Cheshire East. For example, there is a lot that the visitor economy can do to improve sustainable transport links, local food sourcing and energy efficiency/renewables. The National Trust is particularly active on this issue, sourcing local produce for its cafes, developing a hydro scheme at Quarry Bank Mill and taking a range of measures to improve the energy efficiency of its buildings.
- On branding, it is not clear how a ‘consistently incorporated’ approach to branding would work and how this delivers the previously noted need to go

with the strongest brands – which is probably not ‘Cheshire East’. Would National Trust attractions, for example, be expected to apply another brand as a result of this strategy?

- The action plan is not directly related to the priorities. Already the implementation of the strategy is behind schedule; your stated aim is to have it in place by September 2010, but it will not go to council until October. If your targets are to be achieved in less than two years a more detailed action plan with a clearly defined owner for each task and target completion date is essential and urgent.
- Explain what Macclesfield Futures involves and what Crewe Vision includes.
- The action plan has been written ahead of the action plan for the wider Cheshire and Warrington area so should be flexible in the light of ideas and challenges arising from that.

Key Priorities - Pages 14 - 15

6. **Do you agree with our key priorities? If not, what alternatives do you feel should be included?**

- The concept of the traditional 'TIC' may have to change and that alternative outlets and ways of providing the service may have to be considered
- The day-to-day participatory arts infrastructure is an essential part of many, particularly residents' lives across Cheshire East. This infrastructure requires relatively little investment to remain healthy and supportive of these specific economic outcomes. The 2012 Games represent a real opportunity to draw these ideas together, to crystallise the Cheshire East offer and branding in the eyes of the visiting and internal visitor. Sensible investment now could reap considerable rewards later on.
- In addition to Nantwich Players, Cheshire East boasts many of the most successful theatres in the Cheshire Theatre Guild as well as the Lyceum at Crewe and Clonter Opera. Any opportunity to encourage participation in Arts events should surely be more actively encouraged in the document.
- Promote Access to Attractions by Public Transport / Rail through our Community Rail Partnerships
- Upgrade key links of our Canal Towpath network in Partnership with British Waterways
- Review the provision of road signage to our key visitor attractions
- More focus on market towns, and physical investment in natural assets such as the comprehensive footpath network around Alsager.
- Nantwich is totally omitted, as is Crewe. South Cheshire needs its own sub-section, without which the plan will be incomplete, unsatisfactory and will not maximise the benefits.
- What about funding in this difficult economic climate?
- The lead up to the 2012 games reads like an add on. The Strategy work needs to last well beyond 2012 otherwise as soon as one strategy has been approved all the effort will go into the next strategy rather than delivering!
- A joined up approach on signage, licensing and transport is welcomed
- Concerned about the 3rd from last priority could be interpretated as getting rid of TICs. These provide a very valuable service.
- Will there be incentives to encourage businesses to achieve quality accreditation as some have decided that they can't afford it.
- As part of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Forum actions, there needs to be an acknowledgement that the Forum will have to be responsive to the political changes that are taking place, including the loss of NWDA, changing levels of tourism investment and structures (such as tourism boards) and the general devolution of power to the local level. Throughout this period of change the Forum and others in the sector need to proactively advocate solutions which work to improve the visitor economy in Cheshire East.
- Under the Gardens of Distinction priority, we would argue that that this needs to extend beyond branding to encompass the development of a distinctive and high quality offer, which would include product and facility development, new forms of income generation from gardens (e.g. seasonal events) and developing their appeal to wider audiences.

- We support the action to promote access to the countryside. This should include finding new ways of making access more attractive to more people – e.g. through a better family offer (such as adventure and sport) and integrating access to the countryside with the other destination brands (e.g. historic parks or towns).
- It would be helpful to identify which organisation has lead responsibility for each of the priorities.
- Quality should be emphasised - in terms of accommodation, attractions and all visitor related products – including country inns and pubs. Quality should be included in The Vision and in The Priorities
- Good transport is important, both locally and at the North West regional level. It's included in the strategy but not in the priorities. In east Cheshire, communications/ transport is good north to south, but not so east to west and in some rural areas.
- The priorities need prioritising.
- The strategy calls for targeted investment in a number of key projects and we would like to request that Bollington is considered as a focus for one of those investments – possibly in the Clarence Mill/ Bollington Recreation Ground area.
- Look at how to take new approaches to the provision of visitor information. It will be vital to develop new partnerships to radically take this forward. To deliver a quality visitor experience, the whole customer journey needs to be mapped out and this strategy sets the scene for this. It needs to look at working with retailers, taxi drivers, bus drivers, street scene attendants alongside the more recognized accommodation and attractions sector.
- The waterways and walking themes are very important and ones to develop, perhaps linked to events.

<u>Full Document</u>

7. **Is there anything that you feel the strategy has omitted?**

- It needs to be broadened to include more, The Lyceum Theatre in Crewe and Knutsford Civic Hall are good examples.
- Culture, theatres, music, arts
- What will happen now the NWDA is no more?
- History e.g. civil war, Romans, Normans
- How can local businesses access help?
- Unsure the strategy really recognises the work going on in individual towns to really promote themselves
- How will Cheshire East cope with the significant loss of public funding both at a regional and a local level? For example, many of the flagship projects identified in the Framework have relied on the promise of NWDA funding, including the Visitor Attractions Fund and the Heritage Tourism Fund, both of which will no longer be available.

- What will the future support structures look like with the loss of NWDA and its core funding of VCC? Throughout the document there are proposed actions but no clear indication of how or by whom they will be delivered.
- There appears to be no interest in or inclusion of disabled visitors. There are between 9 - 11 million registered disabled people in the UK, who if travelling would do so with a carer.
- Green tourism, sustainability and the environment: quality accreditation for green tourism businesses – east Cheshire has the potential to score very well in this respect and this should be integrated into the strategy
- All regional strategies are revoked as of now

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	26th October 2010
Report of:	Strategic Director - Places
Subject/Title:	Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing
Portfolio Holder:	Cllrs David Brown/Jamie Macrae

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 This report considers the Council's policy position to the provision of affordable housing and the results of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and proposes the introduction of an Interim Planning Statement to be used in considering planning applications for housing development pending the adoption of a policy for Cheshire East in the LDF Core Strategy. This report was considered and approved by Cabinet on 20th September 2010.

2.0 Decision Requested

2.1 That the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee endorses the Cabinet approval of the draft Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing (as appended to this report) for consultation purposes, and its agreement that it be treated as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications pending the adoption of the finalised document in such a format as may be appropriate following the consultation process.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 To ensure that the Council has up to date planning guidance on affordable housing pending the adoption of a new Council wide policy in the Local Development Framework.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 All wards

5.0 **Local Ward Members**

5,1 All members

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change
- Health

6.1 The Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing provides guidance on the delivery of policies on affordable housing. New housing is required to achieve high levels of energy efficiency and provide healthy living conditions.

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

7.1 There are no operational financial implications of this statement as any change in officer time in negotiating schemes and S106 agreements will be managed within existing budgets.

7.2 Paragraph 2.13 of the Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing recognises that the requirements will result in a cost to the developer. This in turn will impact on the value of any land that the Council sells for housing.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

8.1 There will be requirement for officer time in negotiating and preparing the S106 agreements. This will be managed within existing staffing resources.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 The 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment has demonstrated the continuing high level of demand for affordable housing throughout the Borough that warrants an increase in the target for the amount of affordable housing to be provided on development sites. Without the introduction of the Interim Housing Policy on Affordable Housing, a lower level of affordable housing would be provided.

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 The Council has inherited three different planning policies for affordable housing in the Local Plans of the predecessor district authorities. The Crewe and Nantwich and Congleton Borough Local Plans both seek a minimum target of 30% affordable housing on allocated and windfall sites. The Macclesfield Borough Local Plan requires a minimum of 25%. Differences exist in the threshold at which the affordable housing requirement is applied. The Macclesfield Local Plan does not contain a rural exceptions policy whereas the other two Local Plans do, albeit with slightly different wording.

10.2 The three current Local Plans recognise that there may be instances when the level of affordable housing provided on individual sites might be influenced by economic viability issues. However, over the past 12 to 18 months, there has been an increasing number of occasions when developers have sought to provide a significantly lower level of affordable housing on sites due to viability issues which have been brought into sharper focus due to the down turn in the UK housing market. There is a lack of a clear framework for evaluating viability issues for individual planning applications.

10.3 An Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing has been produced therefore to address these issues and is set out in Appendix 1. The planning statement is intended to provide updated guidance on affordable housing provision, with particular reference to the determination of planning applications where there is an affordable housing requirement and to ensure consistency of approach in negotiating the provision of affordable housing. The Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing also addresses the increasing number of issues surrounding development economics and the viability of providing affordable housing.

This report was considered and approved by Cabinet on 20th September 2010.

11.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

11.1 None

12.0 Access to Information

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

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APPENDIX 1

INTERIM PLANNING STATEMENT: AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Cheshire East Council

SEPTEMBER 2010 **SPATIAL PLANNING SERVICE**

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The document relates to the provision of all forms of affordable housing by developers on housing sites within the Borough. As such it sets out the Council's definition of affordable housing and specific site requirements, as well as providing guidance on development considerations and means of securing their provision. It also sets out the Council's requirements for achieving mixed and balanced communities including the housing needs of specific groups.

1.2 This Interim Planning Statement (IPS) has been produced within the framework of the three adopted Local Plans for the former District authorities of Crewe and Nantwich, Congleton and Macclesfield, the Council's Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment (SHMA) and government guidance as expressed in national planning guidance and policy statements. It is also consistent with the Council's Corporate Objectives and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

1.3 The production of the IPS has been necessary because of changes to Government guidance since the Local Plans were adopted and sets out how that guidance will be applied pending the production of the Cheshire East Local Development Framework Core Strategy. It also reflects up to date housing need information for the Borough contained in the 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The IPS also addresses the increasing number of issues surrounding development economics and the viability of providing affordable housing.

Creating Balanced and Mixed Communities

1.4 A community's need for an appropriate balance and mix of housing including the provision of affordable housing is recognised at national level as a material consideration in determining planning applications for housing development. Government policy is to create sustainable communities that offer a wide range of housing and are socially inclusive.

1.5 Although the Borough has a stock of good quality housing with relatively low vacancy rates, in many areas there is an imbalance in the type and tenure of available housing. There is a need to ensure that future housing development in Cheshire East helps to support economic growth by providing for a range of income groups. This includes housing for economically active households seeking open market dwellings; households requiring affordable housing (both social rented and increased diversity of options through intermediate tenure). Such an approach will help to maintain long-term community sustainability and enhance the quality of life for local residents

1.6 The 2010 SHMA demonstrates strongest aspirations for traditional houses (three bedrooms in particular) from groups most likely to be economically active. It identifies a need to stimulate the housing market at all levels to ensure an adequate supply to accommodate a range of household types and income levels. Evidence suggests that across Cheshire East there is considerable market imbalance, with demand exceeding supply. Preferences are predominantly for houses (76.9%), followed by bungalows (15.4%) and flats (7.8%). Aspirations are therefore traditional and a key challenge is to reconcile this with development opportunities and site density requirements.

1.7 In addition the SHMA identifies that, based on CLG modelling, there is a net shortfall of 1,243 affordable homes each year across the District for the five year period 2009/10 to 2013/14. On this basis there is both a clearly identified need for more affordable housing, but there will not be sufficient supply side opportunities through which this can be addressed. It is therefore important that the Council establish an affordable housing target within its LDF policies that secures a proper balance between the provision of affordable and market housing, reflecting the needs in Cheshire East.

1.8 In order to address these deficiencies and needs, the Council will expect that all sites for new housing developments contribute to the creation of balanced and mixed communities. Mixed and balanced communities are those which provide a mix of tenures, dwelling types and sizes appropriate to the needs of the local community. This is recognised at national, regional and local level as being important to achieving social diversity and avoids creating concentrations of deprivation. The extent to which a site can contribute towards achieving this mix will be dependent on the size of the site and other factors such as site characteristics, site suitability and economics of provision - on larger sites there will clearly be greater scope to provide a range of different house types and tenures.

1.9 Whilst it is expected that general market housing will continue to make a significant contribution to meeting future housing needs, the Council gives priority to addressing other forms of housing to ensure that the Borough's housing needs are properly met. The IPS seeks to address principally those other forms of housing - affordable housing, low-cost market housing, special needs housing etc. – which are required to create properly balanced and mixed communities.

The Borough's Need for Affordable Housing

1.10 The 2010 SHMAA shows that In terms of relative affordability, Cheshire East is ranked the 8th least affordable District in the North West. The SHMAA found a high level of need for affordable housing in the

Borough with an estimated annual requirement of 1243 additional affordable homes per year.

1.11 The main need for affordable housing provision is for social rented accommodation but the SHMAA identifies that 35% of households in need would consider intermediate tenures

1.12 Analysis suggests that around 54.2% of annual affordable requirement is likely to be satisfied through existing supply and an element of newbuild (which varies by the former districts: in the former Crewe and Nantwich 60.3% of requirement is likely to be satisfied, Congleton 58.2% and Macclesfield 46.9%).

1.13 Analysis of affordable housing requirements suggests that a range of affordable dwellings are required, in particular two and three bedroom general needs properties to address the needs of families. It is important that particular care is taken to ensure that properties are built to reflect the demand from families and in the interests of long-term community sustainability.

Background/ National Policy

1.14 Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing (issued in 2006 and amended in 2010) states the national policy context for affordable housing.

1.15 Paragraph 29 of PPS3 states what should be included in Local Development Documents with regard to targets and specific details for the amount, type, size etc of affordable housing and these documents must be based on robust, shared evidence base, through a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

1.16 Paragraph 30 goes on state the advice for affordable housing in rural communities, mentioning local authorities adopting a positive and pro – active approach which is informed by evidence, with clear targets for the delivery of rural affordable housing. Where viable and practical, LPA's should consider allocating and releasing sites solely for affordable housing, including using a Rural Exception Site Policy. These small sites should only be used for affordable housing in perpetuity and the policy should seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.

1.17 Local policy is provided by the adopted Local Plans of the three former District Authorities as expanded on below. It should be noted that all three Local Plans and the Congleton Supplementary Planning Document 6 predated the publication of PPS3 in 2006.

Crewe and Nantwich Borough Local Plan

1.18 Policy RES 7 of the Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan (2005) sets a target of a maximum of **30%** affordable housing on allocated housing sites and on windfall sites. In relation to windfall sites, the threshold for application of the policy is sites of 25 units or more or greater than 1.0 hectares in size. However in settlements of less than 3,000 population or less a lower threshold of 5 units is applied and exceptionally, where there is a proven need, the threshold is sites of more than 1 unit.

1.19 The Policy states that, in determining whether a site is suitable for an element of affordable housing, the local planning authority will take into account:

- Whether the existing affordable housing stock meets the identified need
- The proximity of the site to local facilities and public transport
- The targets in the plan derived from the 2005 Housing Needs Survey
- The suitability of the site for housing and
- Economics of provision

1.20 This policy was modified by the former Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council in November 2005 to increase the affordable housing target to 35% and to lower the threshold to sites of 15 units or more or greater than 0.5 hectares in size. This reflected the findings and recommendations of the 2005 Housing Needs Survey for the former Borough of Crewe and Nantwich. The policy is therefore a material consideration, when dealing with planning applications. The modified policy could not, however, be saved by the Secretary of State under the Direction issued in February 2008.

Congleton Borough Local Plan and SPD 6

1.21 Policy H13 of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005) states that the Council will negotiate the provision of an appropriate element of affordable housing on allocated sites and on unidentified housing sites of 1 hectare or more or comprising 25 or more dwelling units. The scale and nature of provision will be determined by local need, site characteristics, general location, site suitability, economics of provision, proximity to local services and facilities and other planning objectives.

1.22 Policy H13 is supported by the Supplementary Planning Document No.6 'Affordable Housing and Mixed Communities', which was adopted by Congleton Borough Council on 27th April 2006. On all sites which have been allocated for new housing in the Local Plan, the SPD states that the Borough Council will negotiate for the provision of a specific percentage of the total dwelling provision to be affordable homes. The desired target percentage for affordable housing for all allocated site is a minimum **o**f **30%,** in accordance with the recommendation of the 2004 Housing Need Survey.

1.23 The SPD also states that the Planning Authority will negotiate for the provision of an appropriate element of the total dwelling provision to be for affordable housing on all unidentified 'windfall' sites of 0.5 hectare or 15 dwellings or more. The exact level of provision will be determined by local need, site characteristics, general location, site suitability, economics of provision, proximity to local services and facilities, and other planning objectives. However, the general minimum proportion of affordable housing for any site will normally be 30%.

1.24 On allocated sites and windfall sites which are subject to an affordable housing requirement, there is also a requirement for 25% of dwellings to be 'low cost market housing'.

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan

1.25 Policy H8 and its supporting Reason set out and explain the position with regard to affordable housing requirements. Generally the policy provides that in developments of 25 or more dwellings, or on residential sites of 1 hectare or more, irrespective of the number of dwellings, the Council will negotiate for the provision of **25%** of the dwellings as affordable housing.

1.26 Policy H8 also states that in settlements in rural areas with a population of 3,000 or fewer, the council will negotiate for a proportion of affordable housing to be provided on every housing proposal, where justified by reference to an assessment of housing needs and the available supply of land for housing.

1.27 The policy states that in determining the level of affordable housing on specific sites, site suitability, economics of provision, the need to achieve a successful housing development and site size will be taken into account

2. DELIVERING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Definition of Affordable Housing

2.1 The government has defined affordable housing in Planning Policy Statement PPS3 '*Housing'* in November 2006 (revised 2010) as follows:

"It should meet the needs of households who are unable to access or afford market housing. It should be available at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Its supply should include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

It can be:

- social rented (owned and managed by councils or registered social landlords); or
- intermediate housing (available at prices and rents above those of social rent, but below market levels)."

Acceptable Forms of Affordable Housing

2.2 As indicated above affordable housing may take the form of social rented or intermediate housing. Intermediate housing includes shared ownership schemes, discounted housing for sale and intermediate rent. Details of each of the main types are given below, although the Council will consider any other means of achieving affordable housing appropriate to the development:

Social Rented Housing

2.3 This refers to the provision of rented accommodation which is provided at levels no higher than the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) target rents. The Council will normally require all social rented housing to be developed and managed by RSLs (Registered Social Landlords) as these organisations have as their prime objective the provision of social housing and are regulated by the HCA. Where an RSL is involved there are normally no reasons for the Council to impose legal restrictions on allocation, future occupation etc, other than those required to restrict eligibility on rural schemes (see Section 5). Consideration will, however, also be given to other suitable providers of social rented housing undertaken in partnership with the HCA, but in such cases legal restrictions on eligibility and rental levels will be necessary (see Section 5). The local authority will require, in the first instance, 75% nomination rights to all social rented properties and 50% on subsequent lettings. In order to ensure a balanced community is achieved, a local lettings policy may also be applied as stipulated within the Cheshire Homechoice service.

New Build Homebuy (Shared Ownership)

2.4 New Build Homebuy is a way of helping households to buy a share in their own home even though they cannot afford the full market value. The household purchases a share usually between 25 – 75% and pays rent on the remaining proportion to the managing Registered Social Landlord (RSL). Additional shares can be purchased which will enable a resident to increase their equity share in the property. In 2009 the Government introduced new legislation whereby most of the rural parts of Cheshire East Council became 'Designated Protected Areas' whereby new affordable shared ownership dwellings in these areas would be subject to requirement that owners are either not able to acquire more than 80% equity in a property or if they acquire 100% equity, it has to be sold back to the RSL to retain as affordable housing in perpetuity.. The Council normally expect all schemes to be developed and managed by a RSL although consideration will be given to other suitable providers. In such cases legal restrictions on eligibility and rental levels will be necessary (see Section 5).

Discounted Housing For Sale

2.5 This refers to the provision of subsidised low-cost market accommodation through a re-sale covenant scheme. The principle is that the accommodation is available at a fixed discount below the open market value to households in need. The level of discount will be that which is required to achieve the maximum selling price determined by the Council for those in need locally who cannot afford to buy on the open market.

2.6 The individual circumstances of each case and the area will be taken into consideration and will need to be negotiated with the Council prior to the determination of the relevant planning application. Evidence has shown that in order to achieve an affordable price, the level of discount will normally be required to be a minimum of 30% and up to 50% of the market price. The discount applies on initial and all subsequent re-sales thus ensuring that the accommodation is retained as affordable. Further information on the operation of re-sale covenant schemes is available on request. Discounted housing for sale will normally be provided by a private developer, in which case it should be subject to a satisfactory arrangement to ensure that the benefit of below market price housing is available in perpetuity to future occupants

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2.7 The Council will consider other forms of discounting housing for sale that meets its affordable housing objectives.

Intermediate Rent

2.8 This is housing that is a step between social rented and renting at full market value. Intermediate rents are lower than full market rents but higher than social rents.

Eligibility Requirements

2.9 The underlying criteria for eligibility to affordable housing is that households must be in unsuitable housing and unable to afford to rent or buy on the open market. This is the Council's definition of housing need for affordable housing.

2.10 If an RSL is to manage the affordable housing, either for rent or sale, then the Council is satisfied that this will be sufficient to control both eligibility and future occupancy.

2.11 If affordable housing is developed by other housing providers the Council will require arrangements in place to ensure that any accommodation is available to those in housing need, as defined by the Council. Priority will also be required to be given to persons with a direct connection to the location of the scheme – location being defined as the catchment area for the property as agreed with the Council. In this respect direct connection would be defined as currently living in the location, having a first line relative currently living in the location (having been there over 5 years), or currently in employment in the location.

2.12 In the case of rural exceptions site schemes further occupancy criteria, generally as set out below, will need to be followed, in addition to the main housing need requirement. The details of such criteria will be the subject of discussion with the relevant Parish Council (See Section 7)

rCriteria for Rural Exceptions Sites

- Occupancy will generally be restricted to a person resident or working in the relevant locality, or who has other strong links with the relevant locality.
- The locality to which the occupancy criteria are to be applied will need to be agreed with the Council prior to determination of the relevant planning application. Generally this is taken as the Parish or adjoining Parishes.
- To ensure an adequate supply of occupiers in the future, the Council will expect there to be a "cascade" approach to the locality issue appropriate to the type of tenure. Thus, first priority is to be given to those satisfying the occupancy criteria in relation to the geographical area immediately surrounding the application site, widening in agreed geographical stages.

Financial Requirements

House Prices and Rent Levels

2.13 **Social Rented and Intermediate Rented Accommodation -** where an RSL is involved rental levels will be set at an affordable level by the RSL itself. For social rented accommodation provided by other providers this must be in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency and the rental levels will also need to be clarified with the Council to ensure they are set at an affordable level. For intermediate rental schemes, rents are typically at no more than 80% of market levels. In all cases a Section 106 Agreement will be required to ensure that rental levels remain affordable

2.14 **New Build Homebuy (Shared Ownership) -** where an RSL is involved the rental element will be set at an affordable level by the RSL itself but will need to be clarified with the Council. For shared ownership provided by other providers this must be in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency and the rental element will also need to be clarified with the Council to ensure they are set at an affordable level. In such cases a Section 106 Agreement will be required. As indicated in Para 2.4 above, in most of the rural areas of the Borough, the Government has applied restrictions on the amount of equity that an owner is able to acquire. The house price of each property will be based on the open market value prevailing at the time of marketing the property as agreed with the Council, less a discount off open market value.

2.15 **Discounted Housing for Sale** - the house price of each property will be based on the open market value prevailing at the time of marketing the property as agreed with the Council, less the appropriate discount to achieve the agreed maximum selling price based on evidence contained in the SHMA and as updated annually by the Council's Housing Section. A Section 106 Agreement will be required to ensure that the level of discount remains in force for all initial and subsequent re-sales.

Resourcing an Affordable Housing Scheme

2.16 The Council recognises that requiring developers to develop or to allow parts of their site to be used for non-market affordable housing will result in a cost to the developer. Developers should assume that no social housing grant is available to support the provision of affordable housing. Therefore, in order to offset these costs developers will be expected to take the requirement for affordable housing into account when negotiating land value with site owners.

2.17 Where an RSL is to be involved the developer will be required to subsidise the cost of providing the housing either through the provision of land or the building of the accommodation or through a financial contribution such as to enable the property to be sold or rented at an affordable level without the need for social housing grant. In such cases, the number of units and the developer's contribution will normally be expected to reflect the total cost of the required affordable housing minus the capital element that can be serviced through the rents.

2.18 Where funding is provided towards a scheme by the Homes and Communities Agency, there must be evidence that the grant is adding value over and above that which would be obtained without the funding.

Use of Financial or Other Contributions in-lieu

2.19 As a rule, the Council would prefer to see affordable housing provided on-site. This is in line with Government guidance to encourage the development of sustainable and balanced communities. However, there may be physical or other circumstances where an on-site provision would not be practical or desirable. Such circumstances might include where:

- the provision of the affordable housing elsewhere in the locality would provide a better mix of housing types
- management of the affordable dwellings on site would not be feasible
- it would be more appropriate to bring back existing vacant housing into use as affordable units
- the constraints of the site prevent the provision of the size and type of affordable housing required in the area

2.20 In such exceptional cases and entirely at the Council's discretion, developers may, in lieu of such provision, provide off-site affordable housing, or offer financial or other contributions towards the provision of affordable housing on an alternative site.

2.21 Where a financial contribution is offered, the amount of such contribution will normally be expected to reflect the cost necessary to facilitate an equivalent amount of affordable housing as would have been provided on-site. The amount of any contribution will need to be agreed with the Council. Where off-site provision is made by the developer or as a result of any financial contribution, this should be in a location elsewhere within the Borough where there is an identified need.

How to Achieve Affordable Housing

2.22 The policy requirement to provide affordable housing places an onus on the developer and/or landowner of a site to consider its provision prior to the sale or acquisition of a site.

2.23 To be accepted by the Council as affordable housing it must accord with the Council's definition of affordable housing as set out in this IPS, be of a suitable type and size, be on a suitable site and be subject to adequate arrangements to ensure its provision and continued occupancy by appropriate households. The IPS sets out precisely what those requirements are and all developers are expected to adhere to them.

2.24 Where a site meets the criteria for affordable housing as set out in the IPS, the Council will produce a Housing Needs Statement (HNS) for the site based upon current information. The HNS will set out the affordable housing needs of the area and the Council's requirements for the site in terms of the most appropriate mix of affordable house types and advise on the most appropriate means of securing their provision. Developers are therefore advised to approach the Council and seek early involvement of an RSL prior to submission of a planning application to enable negotiations to be entered into at an early stage.

2.25 Achieving affordable housing will require liaison between the developer and the relevant Sections of the Council. Depending on the nature of the housing it may also be appropriate to involve any third party responsible for managing the scheme and the Homes and Communities Agency in discussions. The agreed provision will then be secured through the use of planning obligations attached to the approved scheme.

2.26 In respect of rural exceptions schemes, the Council will require that a local housing needs survey is carried out before submitting a planning application in order to determine the extent of any need.

3. SPECIFIC SITE REQUIREMENTS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Allocated Sites

3.1 On all sites which have been allocated for new housing in any of the Congleton, Crewe and Nantwich and Macclesfield Local Plans, the Council will negotiate for the provision of a specific percentage of the total dwelling provision to be affordable homes. The desired target percentage for affordable housing for all allocated site will be a **minimum of 30%**, in accordance with the recommendations of the 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment. This percentage relates to the provision of both social rented and/or intermediate housing, as appropriate. Normally the |Council would expect a ratio of 65/35 between social rented and intermediate housing. In addition, the Council will require the provision of an element of the market housing to be unsubsidised low-cost market housing (see para. 3.13).

Windfall Sites - Settlements of 3,000 Population or More

3.2 Planning Policy Statement 3 ‘Housing’ states that the minimum site-size threshold above which affordable housing is to be sought should be 15 dwellings or more. The Council will therefore negotiate for the provision of an appropriate element of the total dwelling provision to be for affordable housing on all unidentified ‘windfall’ sites of 15 dwellings or more or than 0.4 hectare in size.

3.3 The exact level of provision will be determined by local need, site characteristics, general location, site suitability, economics of provision, proximity to local services and facilities, and other planning objectives. However, the general minimum proportion of affordable housing for any site will normally be 30%, in accordance with the recommendation of the 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment. This proportion relates to the provision of both social rented and/or intermediate housing, as appropriate. In addition, the Council will require the provision of an element of the market housing to be unsubsidised low-cost market housing (see para. 3.13). Where a scheme is for 100% affordable housing, an RSL should be involved in managing a proportion of the units in order to achieve a mix of tenures.

3.4 On sites below the size threshold the provision of affordable housing will not be a material consideration in determining the application, but developers are invited to consider making provision for an element of such housing as part of the overall scheme. In particular, the Council may seek the provision of an element of unsubsidised low-cost market housing in some areas to overcome deficiencies in this sector of the market.

3.5 In applying the size threshold, site areas will normally be measured to the natural, physical perimeters of the site. It will not be acceptable for developers to divide a site into smaller components in order to take the site below the threshold.

Windfall Sites - Settlements of less than 3,000 Population

3.6 Planning Policy Statement 3 ‘Housing’ states that local authorities may wish to set lower minimum thresholds in rural areas where viable and practical this approach is supported by the 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment, subject to substantiating evidence.

3.7 Monitoring has shown that in settlements of less than 3,000 population the majority of new housing has been delivered on sites of less than 15 dwellings. The Council will therefore negotiate for the provision of an appropriate element of the total dwelling provision to be for affordable housing on all unidentified ‘windfall’ sites of 0.2 hectares or 3 dwellings or more in all settlements in the rural areas with a population of less than 3,000 population. The exact level of provision will be determined by local need, site characteristics, general location, site suitability, economics of provision, proximity to local services and facilities, and other planning objectives. However, the general minimum proportion for any site will normally be 30%. This proportion includes the provision of social rented and/or intermediate housing as appropriate. In addition, the Council may seek the provision of an element unsubsidised low-cost market housing (see para. 3.13).

3.8 On small sites the Council may agree that a payment in lieu of on-site provision is more appropriate to enable the affordable housing needs of the area to be met through provision elsewhere in the area or by other means, such as rehabilitation of empty properties. On sites below the size threshold the provision of affordable housing will not be a material consideration in determining the application, but developers are invited to consider making provision for an element of such housing as part of the overall scheme. In particular, the Council may seek the provision of an element of unsubsidised low-cost market housing in some areas to overcome deficiencies in this sector of the market.

3.9 In applying the size threshold, site areas will normally be measured to the natural, physical perimeters of the site. It will not be acceptable for applicants to divide a site into smaller components in order to take the site below the threshold.

Rural Exceptions Sites

3.10 Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing' advises Local Planning Authorities to consider releasing sites solely for affordable housing in rural areas where planning permission for housing development would not normally be allowed. The Congleton and Crewe and Nantwich Local Plans both contain policies for these 'rural exception sites'. Such sites must be close to existing or proposed services and facilities. Proposals must be for small schemes appropriate to the locality and consist in their entirety of subsidised housing that will be retained in perpetuity for rent, shared ownership or in partnership with a RSL. In all such cases they must be supported by an up-to-date survey identifying the need for such provision within the local community. The Council's Rural Housing Enabler can give advice on the methodology for the survey which should normally be carried out either by, or in association with, the Parish Council. Unless the survey indicates a need for such provision, planning permission will not be granted. Section 7 of this statement gives further information on how Parish Councils can assist in the delivery of affordable homes to meet the needs of their communities.

3.11 As the release of such sites will be an exception to normal planning policy, the location, scale, layout, density, access and design of any proposed scheme will be critical in determining whether it is acceptable. The 'Rural Exceptions' policy does not apply to proposals for individual homes in the rural areas not forming part of an overall affordable housing scheme, and consequently such proposals must accord with normal planning policies for the area**.**

Retirement Housing Schemes

3.12 Recently some innovative models of private sector housing for older people have been developed, including retirement and extra care villages. These schemes are characterised by the availability of varying degrees of care, 24 hour staffing and ancillary facilities. The Council recognises that such models can contribute to meeting affordable and special needs housing, thus the Council will seek an affordable housing contribution from these schemes in accordance with paragraph 3.2 above.

Low-Cost Market Housing Provided without Subsidy

3.13 Low-cost market housing provided without subsidy cannot be regarded as affordable housing. However, it does have an important role to play in meeting the needs of households with income levels just adequate to access the open market. Because of the nature of the housing stock in the Borough there is a shortage of housing at the lower end of the market range. The Council will therefore normally require any new housing development of 10 dwellings or more to provide an element of its market housing units as unsubsidised low-cost market housing. Generally, and in addition to the requirement for affordable housing, the Council will look for a **minimum of 25%** of the total housing units on such sites to be unsubsidised low-cost market housing, although the nature of the site, economic considerations, the level of affordable housing provision, its location and nearby provision will be taken into consideration in determining the exact level of provision.

3.14 To be acceptable, unsubsidised low-cost market housing must be designed in an appropriate manner to be able to be more affordable than most general market housing in the area by virtue of its size, accommodation and amenities. The level of house prices for low-cost market housing for sale will be set by the developer but should be competitively priced to attract those who cannot afford existing housing in the locality. Usually this implies housing priced in the lower quartile of house prices for the area averaged over the most recent 12 months. The Council will also normally require all such housing to meet the dwelling type and size preferences set out for affordable housing property in para. 4.5

3.15 Such forms of housing are usually provided by a private developer and are not subject to any eligibility or tenure controls by the Council, although there may be controls on the type of property and a requirement to ensure that the property is made available at an initial sale price in the lower quartile of house prices for the area.

4. DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Location

4.1 All affordable housing accommodation should be located on sites which are sustainable and contribute to the creation of mixed urban and rural communities. Wherever feasible and practicable, priority should be given to the use of previously developed (brownfield) sites in sustainable locations and to the reuse and conversion of existing buildings, particularly buildings which are of architectural or historic interest. All proposals will be required to accord with the policies of the adopted Local Plan in respect of their location.

Dwelling Types

4.2 The provision of affordable housing must be appropriate in size and type to meet the needs of specific households identified by the local authority as part of its strategic assessment of housing need. Wherever possible any affordable housing scheme should incorporate a range and mix of affordable house types although it is recognised that in smaller schemes the range and mix will be more limited.

4.3 The 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicates that in terms of affordable housing tenure, there is a requirement for both affordable homes for rent and intermediate housing options. a tenure target that matches the stated preferences of the target households of 35% intermediate and 65% social rented is considered appropriate to maximise the benefits of financially efficient intermediate housing options.

4.4 Where there is an identified need, affordable housing may also include other forms of dwelling types, such as communal flats, bungalows and sheltered accommodation, which are suitable for accommodating households with special needs e.g. elderly, physically disabled or those with learning disabilities.

4.5 In terms of property size and type, the requirements identified indicate a range of needs with some variation across the Borough. The appropriate mix of affordable housing should therefore be considered for each specific location. Overall, the 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicates that affordable needs are for the additional supply to be

- 14% for older persons comprising one or two bedroom units
- 50% one or two bedroom properties for general needs. Note that these figures combine the data for one bedroom (20%) and two bedroom (30%) as the long-term sustainability of

small units should be carefully considered against the needs and demand.

- 23% three-bedroom and
- 13% four bedroom or larger.

4.6 With regard to the type of properties, in order to achieve mixed and tenure-blind developments, it is desirable that the affordable homes match the types being provided for the open market. The identified property preferences (house 42.3%, flat 38.7% and bungalow 19%), indicate that a range of types is appropriate.

Design and Layout

4.7 The Borough Council recognises that dwellings are more likely to be affordable in comparative terms if the development in which they are comprised is at a relatively high density. On sites well served by public transport or close to the town centre, higher densities of development are particularly appropriate.

4.8 The design of new housing developments should ensure that affordable homes are integrated with open-market homes to promote social inclusion and should not be segregated in discrete or peripheral areas. Affordable homes should therefore be ‘pepper potted’ within the development. The external design, comprising elevation, detail and materials, should be compatible with open market homes on the development in question thus achieving full visual integration.

4.9 Affordable homes should be constructed in accordance with the standards proposed to be adopted by the Homes and Communities Agency and should achieve at least Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes (2007). The design and construction of affordable housing should also take into account forthcoming changes to the Building Regulations which will result in higher build standards particularly in respect of ventilation and the conservation of fuel and power.

Phasing

4.10 In order to ensure the proper integration of affordable housing with open market housing, particularly on larger schemes, conditions and/or legal agreements attached to a planning permission will require that the delivery of affordable units will be phased to ensure that they are delivered periodically throughout the construction period, but in any event not later than the sale or let of 50 % of the open market homes.

5. AGREEMENTS FOR SECURING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

General

5.1 The Council will require any provision of affordable housing and/or any control of occupancy in accordance with this SPD to be secured by means of planning obligations pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

5.2 The Agreement will cover the number, type and size of units; their availability; need and affordability; price control and agreed tenure. In some instances it will address issues of periodic viability reviews where a reduced or nil element of affordable housing has been agreed.

5.3 Where any element of affordable housing is to be comprised in a larger development which also includes market housing, the Council will expect that the affordable housing element will be available and ready for occupation before 50% of the market housing is sold or let. The Council will therefore require the Agreement to contain an obligation restricting the developer from allowing the sale or letting of an appropriate proportion of the market housing until the affordable housing element is built and ready for occupation.

5.4 In all cases where an RSL is to be involved in the provision of any element of affordable housing, then the Council will require that the Agreement contains an obligation that such housing is transferred to and managed by an RSL and that it should only be used for the purposes of providing housing accommodation to meet the objectives of an RSL as set out in the Housing Act 1996.

Need and Affordability

5.5 The Council regards the involvement of an RSL in any element of affordable housing as a sufficient guarantee of need and affordability without any additional control. In all other cases of affordable housing, the Council will require the Agreement to contain an obligation to make the affordable housing available to those in housing need and at less than the market price or rent in perpetuity, so far as the law allows, in accordance with the guidance set out in this Policy Statement

Tenure

5.6 The Council will require the Agreement to contain obligations appropriate to each tenure. Thus, where a development contains an element of affordable housing that is to be available for rent, the Council will require the Agreement to contain an obligation that any such housing is to be managed by an RSL or other agreed landlord.

5.7 Where a development contains an element of affordable housing that is to be available for sale or shared ownership, then the Council will require the Agreement to contain adequate principles of a scheme that has already been approved in advance by the Council or alternatively the Agreement may reserve the Council's right to approve a specific scheme prior to implementation.

Dwelling Types and Size

5.8 If the relevant planning application is in outline only, then the Council will require that the Agreement must stipulate the number, type, tenure and size of all affordable housing units.

5.9 If the relevant planning application is a detailed application, then the Council will require that the Agreement contains an obligation that the affordable dwellings are to be built in accordance with the details comprised in the approved application as regards number, type, design, tenure and size of each dwelling.

Price and Rent Control

5.10 Where a development contains an element of affordable housing that is to be available for sale, the Council will require that the Agreement sets out the formula to be applied to achieve the desired level of discount in perpetuity. Where a development contains an element of affordable housing that is to be available for intermediate rent, the Council will require that the Agreement sets out the provisions and safeguards to achieve an affordable rent in perpetuity.

Rural Exception Sites

5.11 In addition to the above requirements, the Council will require the Agreement to contain obligations which adequately reflect the occupancy criteria and the locality criteria referred to in para. 2.9

Use of Financial or Other Contributions

5.12 Where developers offer financial or other contributions towards the provision of affordable housing on an alternative site in the locality, and it is agreed by the Council that this is an acceptable means of providing affordable housing, the Borough Council will expect the Agreement to contain obligations relating to the provision of such contribution

6. VIABILITY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION

6.1 National Planning Policy as set out in PPS3 ‘Housing’ requires Local Planning Authorities to set economically viable targets for affordable housing. Consequently the targets set out in the Statement have been independently tested for economic viability through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and are appropriate for use in current market conditions.

6.2 Nevertheless, as made clear in Section 3 of this Statement, the viability of individual schemes will be a material consideration in deciding planning applications. Since 2008 there has been significant downturn in the housing market and particularly on brownfield sites where costs of redevelopment are proportionally higher than greenfield sites. Developers have sought and continue to seek to negotiate a lower (or in some cases nil) provision of affordable housing on the basis that the Council’s normal requirements would render redevelopment unviable. It is important therefore that a clear methodology for testing the viability of specific development proposals is established.

6.3 Accordingly the Council will require applicants, who are suggesting that exceptional financial circumstances exist to the extent that the Council’s requirements for affordable housing cannot be achieved, shall provide a robust development appraisal and appropriate supporting evidence with their application when submitted.

6.4 Prior to submission the Council will expect that applicants’ development appraisals shall have been independently verified by an external valuation expert. The costs of this independent verification shall be borne by the applicant. The external valuation expert to be used shall be previously agreed by the Council.

6.5 The minimum level of information that should be included in such a development appraisal is set out in Appendix 1 of this statement.

6.6 Where it is accepted by the Council that a development is not sufficiently viable to provide the requisite level of affordable housing, and where the development is in all other respects acceptable, it may consider requiring the applicant to enter into a legal agreement which effectively defers developer contributions during the period of development. More detail on this approach is contained in the Home and Communities Agency Good Practice Note on Investment and Planning Obligations (July2009), however the broad principles are explained below.

6.7 In these circumstances subject to the developer agreeing to initially provide the proportion (if any) of the affordable housing that the development appraisal indicated was viable, a further payment in lieu of the remaining affordable housing would become payable if and when there was an increase in the achieved sale values of the dwellings compared to the values assumed in the development appraisal. The calculation of further payments would be at agreed periods during the life of the development. This mechanism would only apply once development had commenced.

7. RURAL EXCEPTIONS

7.1 Generally planning policies do not allow for new housing development in the open countryside outside of villages with settlement boundary lines. However in certain circumstances planning permission may be granted for small schemes of affordable housing where;

- The site adjoins the settlement boundary of a village or is within a village with no settlement boundary
- There is an identified need for affordable housing in that village or locality
- All the proposed housing is affordable, for people with a local connection and will remain affordable in perpetuity
- The development is in accordance with other local plan policies

7.2 The Council considers that the development of affordable housing in rural areas is best achieved in partnership with Parish Councils and local communities. For that reason the Council has appointed a Rural Housing Enabler who will provide Parish Councils with independent advice, support and information in developing a local affordable housing scheme.

Identifying Local Housing Needs

7.3 The first stage will be a rigorous assessment of local housing needs by means of a survey of all households in the Parish. The Rural Housing Enabler will advise on the detailed wording of the survey form, however a model form is attached at Appendix 2 of this Statement.

7.4 The survey will provide evidence of the level of need based on the number of households living in unsuitable accommodation or living with relations. It will give an idea of the potential number and type of dwellings that may be required and any specialist requirements (i.e disabled adaptations).

7.5 The Rural Housing Enabler, in conjunction with the Parish Council, will then undertake an analysis of the survey results.

Site Assessment

7.6 Subject to a need being identified, the next stage will be to identify a suitable site. The Parish Council would be expected to play an important role in site identification having an in depth local knowledge, although it will be important to involve the Council's Planning Officers to ensure that sites are suitable in terms of landscape impact, access, flood risk, nature conservation etc.

7.7 Priority will be given to sites within or on the edge of villages with a reasonable level of services and public transport. Clearly it is crucial that the landowner of any identified site is supportive of it being developed for affordable housing. Rural exception sites work because of the low values of the sites concerned. For this reason the inclusion of open market dwellings to subsidise the overall scheme is unacceptable and landowners should be made aware of this at the outset.

Development Partners

7.8 Normally a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) will be identified to lead the development process and to provide long term management of the resultant scheme. The RSL will undertake detailed site investigations, negotiate with the landowner to acquire the site and apply for planning permission. In designing the scheme prior to submitting a planning application, the RSL will be expected to work closely with the Parish Council and Council Planning Officers to achieve a suitable design and layout. The exact number and type of dwellings will necessarily depend upon the nature of the site and the level of identified need, however these types of development should be small scale and integrate well into the existing village scene.

7.9 A local consultation event will normally be held to allow local people the opportunity to comment on the plans before a formal planning application is submitted.

Implementation

7.10 Once planning permission has been granted the site may be developed and the dwellings built will be let to local people. In most cases the dwellings will be sold to an RSL which will then allocate or sell the properties to local people in housing need. The planning permission will be subject to a legal agreement that ensures that the dwellings will remain affordable to meet local needs in perpetuity. The legal agreement will also restrict occupancy of the dwellings to people who either live in the area or have strong local connection. In those cases where shared ownership housing is provided, it is likely that there will be restrictions on 'staircasing' (i.e. the level of equity in a property that the owner is able to secure) as explained in Para 2.4 of this document.

7.11 In the rare event that a property cannot be let to a person who either lives locally or has strong local connections, the legal agreement will include a cascade mechanism to ensure that an affordable dwelling is not left empty. In these circumstances a property may be let to a person who lives in a neighbouring parish or failing that other people on the Council's Housing Register. (See Para 2.9 above)

APPENDIX 1

VIABILITY OF DELIVERY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Council will expect an ‘open book’ type of approach by the developer when considering evidence supplied about viability. The following gives an indication of the type of information that will be required from the developer in order for an assessment of viability to be carried out. All information supplied should be independently verified at the developer’s cost by experts previously agreed by the Council.

REVENUES

- Gross Internal floor area of the properties
- The anticipated total sales value of the market housing.
- The anticipated value of the 30% affordable housing provision
- Affordable Housing Grant

COSTS

- Marketing and sales costs associated with the sales of the dwellings.
- Site acquisition costs including legal costs, stamp duty, fees etc.
- Build costs
- Preliminaries indicating what are included.
- Fees e.g. architect, quantity surveyor etc
- Planning and building control costs
- Site infrastructure to include site roadways, landscaping, boundary treatment etc
- Costs of finance including interest rate and term

- Other Section 106 costs such as external highways works, public open space, community benefits or infrastructure etc.

- Abnormal costs (i.e. not known at time of site acquisition)

- Developer's profit margin.

- Contingencies

APPENDIX 2

MODEL HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY FORM FOR RURAL EXCEPTIONS SCHEMES

(In course of preparation and to be included in consultation document)

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	26 October 2010
Report of:	Strategic Director - Places
Subject/Title:	Future Housing Provision Cheshire East
Portfolio Holder:	Cllrs David Brown/Jamie Macrae

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 This report:

- considers the requirement for the Council to maintain a five year supply of deliverable housing land and the position at 1 April 2010 in Cheshire East;
- considers the appropriate figure for the housing requirement for Cheshire East following the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy, in the interim pending the adoption of the Local Development Framework;
- proposes the introduction of an Interim Planning Policy to manage the release of land for housing development pending the allocation of land within the Local Development Framework and that consultation should be carried out on the draft policy.

2.0 Decision Requested

2.1 That Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee endorses the Cabinet recommendation to:

1. approve the housing requirement figure for a minimum of 1150 net additional dwellings to be delivered annually, to be used pending the adoption of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy;

2. note the Council's five year land supply at 1 April 2010;

3. approve the Interim Planning Policy on the Release of Housing Land for consultation purposes and agree that it be used in the determination of planning applications pending its adoption.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 To ensure that the Council has appropriate planning policies in place to guide the release of additional housing land to ensure the availability of five years supply of deliverable housing land in a manner that will not prejudice the preparation of the Local Development Framework.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 All wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change

6.1 The proposed interim policy will seek to focus new development in the principal town of Crewe where there are a good range of jobs, shops and services and a high standard of accessibility by means of travel other than the car. The policy also encourages the redevelopment of previously developed land within settlements for mixed uses including housing. New housing will be required to be energy efficient.

- Health

6.2 New housing developments will be required to include affordable housing which will be available for people in housing need, providing them with improved healthier living conditions. Sites will also be required to provide open space.

7.0 Financial Implications 2010/11 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

7.1 Consultation on the policy will be carried out within the current year's Spatial Planning Section's budget. The implementation of the policy will not require any additional staffing or financial resources.

7.2 The policy will require developers to contribute to strategic and local highway improvements, affordable housing, open space and community infrastructure required to serve the development through legal agreements.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

8.1 Planning Policy 3 Housing sets out a requirement for local planning authorities to maintain a five year supply of deliverable housing land. The inability of the Council to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land carries a high risk that land owners/developers will submit speculative planning applications for their development on sites outside settlement boundaries. Such applications would have to be determined through the planning process in the usual way. In the case of refusal of planning permission, appeals may be upheld on the grounds that there is not a 5 years housing land supply.

8.2 The Interim Planning Policy would be a material consideration in determining planning applications for new housing development. Whilst it would carry only limited weight until adopted following consultation, it will provide a clear policy position for the local planning authority and planning inspectors considering appeals on applications for housing development outside Local Plan settlement boundaries.

8.3 Consultation would be carried out with the Strategic Planning Board and the Environment Scrutiny Committee. Widespread consultation would be carried out with town and parish councils, stakeholders, the local community and the Housing Market Partnership in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 As the Council is unable to demonstrate that it has a five year land supply of deliverable housing sites, there is high risk of planning appeals for housing development being upheld on greenfield sites outside settlement boundaries which may prejudice the preparation of the Local Development Framework and affect the Council's ability to objectively determine the most appropriate strategy and sites for future housing development.

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 The Government's planning policies for housing are set out in Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing (PPS3), the latest edition of which was published in June 2010. The PPS has to be taken into account in the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework and in the determination of planning applications which involve new housing development.

10.3 Paragraph 10 of PPS3 sets out the housing policy objectives that provide the context for planning for housing through development plans and planning decisions. It states that the specific outcomes that the planning system should deliver are:

- High quality housing that is well designed and built to a high standard.
- A mix of housing both market and affordable, particularly in terms of tenure and price, to support a wide variety of households in all areas, both urban and rural.
- A sufficient quantity of housing taking into account need and demand and seeking to improve choice.
- Housing developments in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.
- A flexible and responsive supply of land – managed in a way that makes efficient and effective use of land, including the re-use of previously – developed land, where appropriate.

10.4 Clearly one of the Government's priorities is for the planning system to deliver an adequate supply of suitable land available for housing development. In terms of the longer term delivery of housing, through its Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Site Allocations documents, the Council has to identify broad locations and specific sites that will enable the continuous delivery of sufficient housing for at least a fifteen year period.

10.5 Previously the overall level of housing that the Council would have to deliver over that fifteen year period would have been as set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy. However, as Members will be aware, the Government revoked regional Spatial Strategies on 6th July this year leaving individual Planning Authorities responsible for establishing the appropriate level of local housing provision for their area. In doing so, the Government has said that local planning authorities 'should continue to collect and use reliable information to justify their housing supply policies and defend them during the LDF examination process. They should do this in line with current policy in PPS3'[1]

10.6 The Council is at a relatively early stage in the production of its Core Strategy which will identify the level of new housing development that should take place in the Borough up to 2030. In accordance with Government advice, the level of new housing development upon which the Council decides must be based on robust evidence and be defensible at public examination.

10.7 Stakeholder consultation is planned for the Issues and Strategic Options for the Core Strategy during October and November 2010. One of the key strategic options will be to consider the appropriate level of housing growth for the Borough and it is proposed that the consultation document should include a range of options for housing growth. These options would take into account the findings from the Council's Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment and the projections for population and employment growth.

10.8 In the shorter term, PPS3 requires the Council to ensure that a continuous five years supply of deliverable housing sites is maintained. To be considered deliverable, sites should:

- be available now
- offer a suitable location for development which would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities
- have a reasonable prospect of delivering houses within five years.

Generally to be considered deliverable within five years, sites should have the benefit of planning permission or should be allocated in a Local Plan or should be specific, unallocated brownfield sites within settlement boundaries that have the potential to make a significant contribution to housing land supply in the five year period.

The Annual Housing Requirement

10.9 The accepted methodology for determining the total five year supply requirement has been based on figures from the Regional Spatial Strategy. As the Regional Spatial Strategy has been revoked, it will now be for each individual Authority to decide its own housing requirement. The Regional Spatial Strategy housing requirement figure for Cheshire East of a minimum of 1150 net new dwellings per annum reflects the level of house building in the Borough that was being delivered in the ten years up to April 2010.

10.10 In considering the appropriate figure to set in the short- term, Members will be mindful of the current downturn in the housing market. Net housing completions during 2009-10 was 634, which was less than the previous year. Completions since April 2010 continue to be low and are likely to be around 700 for the year. However, there is considerable interest in housing development in Cheshire East and numbers should rise in the future as the housing market improves. The Council's ambitious plans for growth should give further encouragement to development.

[1] Letter from DCLG to all Chief Planning Officers dated 6/7/10

10.11 A separate report to Cabinet on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy considers options for the future housing requirement to be set in the Local Development Framework. These have been developed in the context of delivering the Council's ambitions for growth and look at the implications of increasing the requirement from 1150 to 1350 or 1600 dwellings per annum. The LDF will include a Borough wide development strategy with site allocations, policies and an infrastructure to secure the delivery of the housing and necessary infrastructure.

10.12 If the housing requirement were increased immediately this would require the release of a number of additional housing sites ahead of the adoption of the Core Strategy. There is a risk that the Council would not be able to secure the full infrastructure levy from these sites that would be expected once new LDF policies are in place.

10.13 **It is recommended therefore that until the future housing requirement has been agreed through the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, the housing requirement for Cheshire East should be set at a minimum of 1150 net additional dwellings per annum.**

Five Year Housing Land Supply

10.14 The Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring 2009 report calculated the Council's five year supply of housing land at 1 April 2009 as 5.14 years, based on the RSS figure. Since then a full review of potential sites has been carried out in parallel with the preparation of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for the whole of Cheshire East. The latest assessment indicates a supply of 4.58 years at 1 April 2010.

10.15 The failure to be able to demonstrate a five year supply of available housing land has implications for the Council. PPS3 states that "where local planning authorities cannot demonstrate an up to date five year supply of deliverable sites .... they should consider favourably planning applications for housing, having regard to the policies in this PPS".

10.16 The inability of the Council to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land carries a high risk that land owners/developers will submit speculative planning applications for their development outside settlement boundaries. Such applications would have to be determined through the planning process in the usual way. In the case of refusal of planning permission, appeals may be upheld on the grounds that there is not a 5 years housing land supply. Nevertheless whilst there is less than a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites, there is a high degree of risk that planning permission may be granted on appeal for housing on greenfield sites outside settlement boundaries in conflict with the policies of the three Local Plans. Such decisions would also prejudice the preparation of the Local Development Framework and affect the Council's ability to objectively determine the most appropriate strategy and sites for future housing development.

Interim Policy to Mange the Release of Housing Land

10.17 **Given the current housing supply position and the timescale for the adoption of the Council's Core Strategy and Site Allocations documents, it is recommended that it would be advisable for the Council to put in place an Interim Planning Policy which will be used in the determination of planning applications for sites which do not form part of its identified supply of deliverable housing sites. A draft Interim Policy Statement is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.**

10.18 The Interim Planning Policy would be considered as a material consideration in determining planning applications and appeals. In order for the Interim Planning Policy to carry adequate weight, it will be necessary for it to be subject to public consultation prior to final adoption.

11.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

11.1 The statutory development plan for Cheshire East consists of the saved policies from the Local Plans of the three former authorities. Work is progressing with the preparation of the Cheshire East Local Development Framework which will determine the new development strategy for the Borough and allocate housing land to meet the needs of the Borough for the next 15 – 20 years. This Interim Planning Policy sets out the Council's policy to control the release of land for housing development to ensure that there is sufficient land available in the short term until the Local Development Framework is adopted.

12.0 Access to Information

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

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APPENDIX 1

Cheshire East Council

Draft Interim Planning Policy on the Release of Housing Land

Draft October 2010

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document sets out the Council's policy approach to maintaining a five year supply of deliverable housing land to be used as an interim measure pending the adoption of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

1.2 Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing' requires local planning authorities to monitor and mange the release of housing land to ensure that there is a five years supply of deliverable sites. This includes sites with planning permission, sites allocated for residential development in the Local Plan and identified redevelopment sites within settlement boundaries.

1.3 Until the Local Development Framework is adopted, the development plan policies for Cheshire East relevant to the consideration of proposals for residential development are the saved policies of the Crewe and Nantwich, Congleton and Macclesfield Local Plans. The revised timetable for the adoption of the Core Strategy indicates a date for adoption of late 2012.

1.4 The purpose of this Interim Planning Statement is to set out a policy to manage the release of additional land for residential development through the consideration of planning applications, to maintain a five year supply, as an interim measure pending the adoption of the Core Strategy, in a manner that would not prejudice the consideration of alternative options for the development strategy for the Local Development Framework.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) was published in 2006 (and amended in 2010) and sets out the national planning policy framework for delivering the Government's housing objectives.

2.2 Paragraph 10 of PPS3 sets out the housing policy objectives that provide the context for planning for housing through development plans and planning decisions. It states that the specific outcomes that the planning system should deliver are:

- High quality housing that is well-designed and built to a high standard.
- A mix of housing, both market and affordable, particularly in terms of tenure and price, to support a wide variety of households in all areas, both urban and rural.
- A sufficient quantity of housing taking into account need and demand and seeking to improve choice.
- Housing developments in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.

- A flexible, responsive supply of land – managed in a way that makes efficient and effective use of land, including re-use of previously-developed land, where appropriate.

2.3 Paragraph 60 explains the steps local authorities are required to take to maintain a flexible, responsive supply of land. The supply of deliverable sites should be monitored on an annual basis through the Annual Monitoring Report. If a five year deliverable supply is not likely to be available, consideration should then be given to the arrangements necessary to maintain an adequate supply of deliverable sites.

2.4 In circumstances where the Local Planning Authority does not manage the supply of housing land and cannot demonstrate an up-to-date five years supply of deliverable sites, paragraph 71 requires that they should consider favourably planning applications for housing, having regard to the policies in PPS3 including the considerations in paragraph 69.

2.5 If the local authority cannot demonstrate that it has a deliverable five years supply, this means that the Local Planning Authority should give favourable consideration to planning applications for housing development on sites outside of settlement boundaries. Providing that developers can demonstrate that they meet the requirements of paragraph 69 of PPS3 (which relate to the quality of development, mix of housing in the scheme, environmental sustainability and meeting housing need without undermining the spatial vision for the area), it is will be difficult for a Local Planning Authority to refuse such applications.

2.6 This leaves the Local Planning Authority having to deal with planning applications without reference to a planned approach to the development of the communities of the Borough. PPS3 states that the authority cannot argue that the release of any particular site is premature and should be considered through the Local Development Framework process. Examples from other local authorities demonstrate that in considering appeals in these circumstances, inspectors have frequently allowed developments, because of the lack of a five year housing land supply. There have been cases of such development being allowed in Green Belt locations.

The Annual Housing Requirement

2.7 The accepted methodology for determining the total five year supply requirement has been based on figures from the Regional Spatial Strategy. As the Regional Spatial Strategy has been revoked, it will now be for each individual Authority to decide its own housing requirement. The Regional Spatial Strategy housing requirement figure for Cheshire East of a minimum of 1150 net new dwellings per annum reflects the level of house building in the Borough that was being delivered in the ten years up to April 2010.

2.8 In considering the appropriate figure to set in the short- term, Members will be mindful of the current downturn in the housing market. Net housing completions during 2009-10 was 634, which was less than the previous year. Completions since April 2010 continue to be low and are likely to be around 700 for the year. However, there is considerable interest in housing development in Cheshire East and numbers should rise in the future as the housing market improves. The Council's ambitious plans for growth should give further encouragement to development.

2.9 A separate report to Cabinet on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy considers options for the future housing requirement to be set in the Local Development Framework. These have been developed in the context of delivering the Council's ambitions for growth and look at the implications of increasing the requirement from 1150 to 1350 or 1600 dwellings per annum. The LDF will include a Borough wide development strategy with site allocations, policies and an infrastructure to secure the delivery of the housing and necessary infrastructure.

2.10 If the housing requirement were increased immediately this would require the release of a number of additional housing sites ahead of the adoption of the Core Strategy. There is a risk that the Council would not be able to secure the full infrastructure levy from these sites that would be expected once new LDF policies are in place .

2.11 **It is therefore proposed to continue to use the Regional Spatial Strategy figure of a minimum of 1150 net additional houses per annum until it is reviewed formally through the Local Development Framework.**

Managing the Five Year Housing Land Supply

2.12 The Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring 2009 report calculated the Council's five year supply of housing land at 1 April 2009 as 5.14 years, based on the RSS figure. Since then a full review of potential sites has been carried out in parallel with the preparation of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for the whole of Cheshire East. The latest assessment indicates a supply of 4.58 years at 1 April 2010.

2.13 The failure to be able to demonstrate a five year supply of available housing land has implications for the Council. PPS3 states that "where local planning authorities cannot demonstrate an up to date five year supply of deliverable sites .... they should consider favourably planning applications for housing, having regard to the policies in this PPS".

2.14 The inability of the Council to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land carries a high risk that land owners/developers will submit speculative planning applications for their development outside settlement boundaries. Such applications would have to be determined through the planning process in the usual way. In the case of refusal of planning permission, appeals may be upheld on the grounds that there is not a 5 years housing land supply. Nevertheless whilst there is less than a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites, there is a high degree of risk that planning permission may be granted on appeal for housing on greenfield sites outside settlement boundaries in conflict with the policies of the three Local Plans. Such decisions would also prejudice the preparation of the Local Development Framework and affect the Council's ability to objectively determine the most appropriate strategy and sites for future housing development.

Interim Policy to Mange the Release of Housing Land

2.15 The Interim Planning Policy on the Release of Housing Land has been drawn up in the context of the work that has been undertaken on developing the Crewe Vision to promote the growth and prosperity of Crewe as a town of sub-regional importance. The development of Crewe will be fundamental to the development strategy for the Borough. Development in Crewe will support sustainability objectives as Crewe has a good range of jobs, shops and services and a high standard of accessibility by means of travel other than the car.

2.16 The development proposals envisaged for Crewe will require significant investment in the strategic highway network around Crewe, in particular the Crewe Green Link Road and the Barthomley Link Road, to improve accessibility to Junction 16 of the M6. In addition, improvements to the local highway network in Crewe and public transport and cycling provision will be required to facilitate new housing development on the outskirts of Crewe. The Council is currently considering options for securing funding of the necessary strategic and local transport improvements. Once the funding arrangements have been approved by the Council, any new housing developments that impact on the highway network in and around Crewe will be required to make contributions towards both strategic and local transport improvements

2.17 The Interim Planning Policy will facilitate the release of a limited number of housing sites on the edge of Crewe outside the green gap. Developers of these sites will have to demonstrate that the site can be delivered within five years of the grant of permission and as there are little or no redevelopment costs associated with these greenfield sites, they will be required to deliver high quality, well designed developments with a minimum of 35% affordable housing in accordance with the Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing as well as contributions to improve the strategic and local transport networks in accordance with the forthcoming Transport Contributions Levy. In addition, open space and/ or community benefits will be required to meet the needs of future residents in accordance with the saved Local Plan policies.

2.18 The Interim Planning Policy will also enable housing to be brought forward as part of mixed use redevelopment schemes within settlements to support the development of the site for employment, town centres and or other uses, in accordance with the relevant Local Plan policies. Subject to economic viability assessment, a minimum of 30% of the housing should be affordable in accordance with the Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing.

2.19 Consultation on the draft interim policy will be carried out for six weeks during November – December 2010 with town and parish councils, the Housing Market Partnership, stakeholders and the local community.

2.20 It is proposed that the policy should be used in the consideration of planning applications with immediate effect and will be considered as a material consideration, although it is recognised that it will not carry significant weight until it is adopted by the Council following consultation.

Draft Interim Planning Policy on the Release of Housing Land

When it is demonstrated through the Annual Monitoring Report that there is not a five year supply of housing land as defined by PPS3, subject to other saved policies of the relevant Local Plan being satisfied, residential development will be permitted in the following locations:

1. Adjacent to the settlement boundary of Crewe provided that the site:
   - is well related to the built framework of the settlement;
   - is not within the Green Gap;
   - is not within an allocated employment area; and
   - is capable of being fully developed within five years of the granting of outline planning permission.

2. As part of mixed developments in town centres and regeneration areas to support the provision of employment, town centre and community uses.

Housing developments on greenfield sites will be required to deliver:

- a minimum of 35% affordable housing in accordance with the Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing;
- Open Space and / or community facilities in accordance with the relevant saved Local Plan policy;
- Improvements to the strategic and local highway network, public transport, and pedestrian and cycle routes; and
- A high quality designed development to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 or higher and Building for Life Silver standard or higher.

Subject to the assessment of the economic viability of the scheme, housing development on mixed use redevelopment sites will be expected to deliver:

- a minimum of 30% affordable housing in accordance with the Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing;
- Employment, town centre and / or community uses within the site; and
- A high quality design to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 or higher and Building for Life Silver standard.

Justification

1. PPS3 states that the Council is required to demonstrate that there is a five year supply of deliverable housing land. Pending the adoption of the Cheshire East Local Development Framework Core Strategy it is likely that there will be insufficient deliverable housing land within the settlement boundaries identified in the three Local Plans of the former

local authorities. The Interim Planning Policy on the Release of Housing Land has been introduced as an interim measure to facilitate the release of additional sites on the edge of Crewe and to encourage the redevelopment of sites within town centres and elsewhere for mixed uses including housing development.

2. Crewe is a principal town and will continue to be a focus for future housing development in the Borough as envisaged in the Crewe Vision. Although the overall amount and direction for growth has yet to be determined, it is considered that there is scope for sufficient housing development to be brought forward adjacent to the Local Plan settlement boundary of Crewe (not including the village of Shavington) to meet the short term need for housing land in the Borough in a way that would not prejudice the preparation of the Local Development Framework.

3. Sites that are approved under this interim policy should be capable of being built out within five years of the grant of outline planning permission under average market conditions. For sites that will require a longer period for development, permission will only be granted for the first phase of the site.

4. The development of any greenfield sites adjacent to the settlement boundaries will be considered as exceptional development and will be required to be of a high design standard and deliver 35% of the development as affordable housing in accordance with the Interim Affordable Housing Policy. They will also be required to contribute towards the improvements to the strategic and local transport networks and public transport in and around Crewe.

5. It is recognised that there are a number of areas within town centres and older employment areas throughout the towns of the Borough that may have the potential for regeneration. This policy aims to encourage mixed use schemes to come forward which include housing development to support the redevelopment of the site for a range of employment and other uses.

6. Many older areas are designated as conservation areas and include listed buildings. Any scheme should seek to retain and convert existing buildings in these areas. Particular care will be needed with the design of new developments to ensure that they are appropriate to the character of the area.

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Key Decision	Decisions to be Taken	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	How to make representation to the decision made
CE10/11-52 Homeless Strategy	To adopt the strategy.	Cabinet Member for Prosperity	14 Sep 2010	Until 13 August, with residents, and wide range of partners including Police, Probation, health, mental health, drug and alcohol services, Connexions, CAB, benefits and housing associations.	John Nicholson, Strategic Director Places
CE10/11-54 Interim Affordable Housing Statement	Approval of draft interim policies on housing supply including a draft interim policy to ensure an adequate supply of housing land, and an interim policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance on affordable housing.	Cabinet	20 Sep 2010	Four week consultation period - through the Strategic Housing Market Partnership, by a Focus Group, and on line.	John Nicholson, Strategic Director Places
CE10/11-57 Local Transport Plan	To approve the local transport plan strategy following public consultation.	Cabinet	20 Dec 2010	With Parish Councils, transport and environmental groups, neighbouring authorities, bus and train operators, Local Area /Partnership meetings.	John Nicholson, Strategic Director Places

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	26 October 2010
Report of:	Borough Solicitor
Subject/Title:	Work Programme update

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 To review items in the 2010/2011 Work Programme and to determine whether or not any additional items need to be included.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Committee note the work programme.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 It is good practice to agree and review the Work Programme to enable effective management of the Committee's business.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications including

6.1 Not known at this stage.

7.0 Financial Implications 2010/11 and beyond

7.1 Not known at this stage.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 None.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 There are no identifiable risks.

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 Since the last meeting of the Committee, The Chairman has met with the Portfolio Holder for Environment to discuss the work programme and future issues for the Committee.

10.2 The monitoring Officer has issued advice to Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the Membership of Task and Finish Groups for those occasions when Members do not wish to set up a task and finish Group on a proportional basis as follows:

10.3 The constitution currently requires that Task and Finish are organised on a proportional basis, but this has proved difficult with such small numbers (they usually consist of 5 or 6 members).

10.4 If the constitutional requirement for proportionality were removed, there is still a statutory requirement. By virtue of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Schedule 1, advisory committees are subject to the proportionality rules contained in the act. Unlike the constitutional requirement, however, the Act permits proportionality to be dispensed with, provided that the scrutiny committee so decides on a ‘nem con’ vote. Removing the requirement in the constitution would therefore provide greater flexibility.

10.5 In effect this means that if members are mindful to set up a Task and Finsih group on a non proportionate basis, this can only be done by a ‘nem con’ vote ie a vote without objection, otherwise the Task and Finish Group must be set up on a proportional basis

10.6 In reviewing the work programme, Members must pay close attention to the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

10.7 Members must also have regard to the general criteria which should be applied to all potential items when considering whether any Scrutiny activity is appropriate. Matters should be assessed against the following criteria:

- Does the issue fall within a corporate priority
- Is the issue of key interest to the public
- Does the matter relate to a poor or declining performing service for which there is no obvious explanation
- Is there a pattern of budgetary overspends
- Is it a matter raised by external audit management letters and or audit reports?
- Is there a high level of dissatisfaction with the service

If during the assessment process any of the following emerge, then the topic should be rejected:

- The topic is already being addressed elsewhere
- The matter is subjudice
- Scrutiny cannot add value or is unlikely to be able to conclude an investigation within the specified timescale

11 *Access to Information*

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

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Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Work Programme – October 2010

Issue	Description/Comments	Suggested by	Portfolio Holder	Corporate Priority	Current Position	Date
Visitor Economy Strategy	Members gave consideration to the draft strategy on 8 June 2010 and requested to receive the final draft prior to it being submitted to Cabinet for approval	Committee	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	On target	26 October 2010
Grass verges and hedges	The Committee gave consideration to street cleansing as it scored low in the place survey. Arising from this members felt that the Borough's grass verges and hedges were overgrown	Committee	Menlove	Enhancing our Cheshire East Environment	On target	26 October 2010
Affordable Housing Policy – interim draft statement	To consider the interim statement prior to it being considered by the Strategic Planning Board	Committee	Macrae	To grow and develop a sustainable Cheshire east	On target	26 October 2010
Future Housing Provisions	To give consideration to the Policy prior to it being considered by Cabinet	Portfolio Holder	Macrae/Brown	To grow and develop a sustainable Cheshire east	On target (new item)	26 October 2010
Macclesfield Economic Master Plan	To receive an update on the proposals.	Portfolio Holder	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	On target	23 November 2010

Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Work Programme – October 2010

Development Management Transformation Project and Member Group	To receive an update on the review of the computer systems, processes and culture.	Chairmen's Group	Macrae	Being an excellent Council and working with others	On target	23 November 2010
Future Development of Employment land at Parkgate, Knutsford	To receive an update on the future development of employment land at Parkgate, Knutsford	Chairman/Portfolio Holder	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	This will be dealt with through a Member briefing on 29 September.	Delete from work programme
Sustainable Towns Strategy (Snowhill)	To receive regular updates on the redevelopment of areas within the borough	Portfolio Holder	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	This will be dealt with through a Member briefing on 29 September.	Delete from work programme
Economic Development Strategy	Members gave consideration to the draft strategy on 8 June 2010 and requested to receive the final draft prior to it being submitted to Cabinet for approval	Committee	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	Delayed	8 February 2011
Review of towns and villages	<u>Car Parking Task and Finish Group</u> Tour of Towns and Villages	Portfolio Holder	Menlove	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	On going	26 October 2010

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Possible Items to Monitor or consider at future Meetings

Carbon Reduction Commitment – May/June 2011 - Cllr Menlove
Highway Assessment Management Plan and Network Management – Cllr Macrae
Crewe Crematorium – Cllr Menlove
Updates on Highway Maintenance Term Contract Review (Cabinet Panel)
Budget
Highway Policies – Cllr Menlove
Performance Management – Cllr Brown
Housing Strategy – Cllr Macrae
Interim Housing Numbers – Cllr Macrae – November/December
Street naming and Numbering – Cllr Menlove
Waste Collection and Route Optimisation and Transfer Points – Cllr Menlove
LTP – Cllr Macrae

Dates of Future Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Meetings

23 Nov 2010, 21 December 2010, 25 Jan 2011, 8 Feb 2011, 22 March 2011, 26 April 2011.

Dates of Future Cabinet Meetings

15 Nov 2010, 6 Dec 2010, 20 Dec 2010, 17 Jan 2011, 14 Feb 2011, 14 March 2011, 11 April 2011.

Dates of Future Council Meetings

Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Work Programme – October 2010

16 December 2010, 24 February 2011, 21 April 2011, 18 May 2011