



Chapter 1: Executive Summary

1.1 This is the fourth Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) produced by Cheshire East Council. Previous monitoring reports were produced to comply with Section 35 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This AMR responds to the Government's amended requirements as set out in Section 113 of the Localism Act 2011 and Section 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Local planning authorities are required to report on the implementation of the Local Development Scheme and the extent to which policies set out in the local development documents are being achieved. Local authorities may choose which targets and indicators to include in the report, as long as they align with relevant UK and EU legislation. The primary purpose of this report is to share the performance and achievements of the planning service with the local community.

Local Plan progress

1.2 In the last year the Council has continued to gather the evidence base and has carried out extensive consultation across the Borough to shape the emerging Local Plan, as follows:

- Place Shaping Consultation (July - September 2011)
- Rural Issues Consultation (October - November 2011)
- Minerals Issues Discussion Paper (March - April 2012)
- Various Town Strategy Consultations (March, April, May, September 2012)
- Revised Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (March - April 2012)
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update Call for Sites (March - April 2012)

1.3 Following consultation early in the year, Town Strategies were approved for the Neighbourhood Planning Vanguard towns of Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich and Sandbach. The Wilmslow Town Strategy was also approved. A further round of consultations has resulted in the production of draft Town Strategies for Crewe, Handforth, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Nantwich and Poynton.

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

- Town Strategies for Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich, Sandbach and Wilmslow
- Draft Town Strategies for Crewe, Handforth, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Nantwich and Poynton
- Rural Issues Summary Report
- Minerals Issues Discussion Paper
- Revised Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report
- Employment Land Review
- Local Development Scheme 2012-2014
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update
- Over Peover SPD
- Prestbury SPD



1.5 As proposed in the previous AMR, the Local Development Scheme was updated, and adopted in April 2012. Progress with the preparation of the Local Plan in 2011/12 has been made in accordance with the key milestones set out in the revised Local Development Scheme, (LDS) however consideration is currently being given to a revision of the current LDS which will be reported on in the next AMR.

Housing

1.6 Housing market conditions for 2011/12 are more optimistic than in recent years, with completions rising in Cheshire East for the first time in four years. Almost a quarter of completions were in Crewe and Macclesfield, with Key Service Centres receiving an 11% increase in their share of housing completions, indicating that opportunities to access new housing are spreading equitably across the borough. A significant proportion of completions were houses, and there has been an increase in the proportion of larger family homes. Affordable housing provision increased by 5% over the monitoring period. The number of empty homes has fallen again this year following action taken by the Council.

1.7 The Government requires all planning authorities to be able to demonstrate a five year supply of land available for new housing development. This requirement has taken on added importance with the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Cheshire East Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (March 2012) identifies 3.94 years supply of housing in the Borough. An update has recently been finalised, demonstrating that the Borough has a housing land supply in excess of five years.

Population

1.8 Statistics now available from the 2011 Census indicate that the population of Cheshire East has grown by 5.1% in the ten year period from 2001 (352,000) to 2011 (370,100). Mid-year estimates for 2012 show that the population of the Borough is expected to increase by 19,000 people to 2021, to a total of 389,700. At 5%, this represents a greater increase than that predicted for the North West (4%) but less than is expected for England overall (9%).

Economy

1.9 Although global economic uncertainty persists, signs of recovery are emerging. Prominent retailers and major companies have located and invested in Cheshire over the monitoring period. Gross employment floorspace completions are significantly higher than the previous year, representing an almost-threefold increase. The loss of land in existing employment use to other uses has increased over the monitoring period. Cheshire East maintains a high supply of employment land, much of which is allocated or committed for mixed use development, however, much of the supply is constituted by a small number of very large sites concentrated in a small number of settlements.

1.10 The town centres of Cheshire East are weathering the challenging economic conditions better than most: whilst the national shop vacancy rate increased over the monitoring period by 3.3%, Cheshire East saw only a 0.7% increase, with six centres



increasing the number of occupied units. There have been some new retail and office developments in town centres, including two superstores. There have also been new leisure developments including football pitches in Sandbach.

Tourism

1.11 The visitor economy in Cheshire East constitutes a very significant aspect of the overall economy of the Borough, being worth approximately £600 million, and attracting nearly 12 million visitors, each year. Through the implementation of the Visitor Economy Strategy; inclusion of policies in the emerging Local Plan; and several grant and accreditation schemes, Cheshire East is working in partnership to ensure that sector remains strong, and tourism-related employment continues to grow.

Minerals

1.12 Sand and gravel aggregate sales have increased in the Cheshire sub-region⁽¹⁾. In relation to the previous monitoring period, this represents a slight upturn in construction activity in the region. Sales of crushed rock have remained stable. The Cheshire sub-region is producing below its annual aggregate apportionment and landbanks have fallen since the last reporting year, with sand and gravel now below the 7 year national policy indicator.

1.13 The revised sub-regional apportionment figures, which set lower levels of aggregate supply for the Cheshire sub-region in the period up until 2020, are now split between Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester. Cheshire East is severely deficient in its sand and gravel landbank, although its crushed rock reserves exceed national targets. At silica sand sites, a landbank of at least 10 years is not being maintained at all sites as indicated in national policy, although an application is pending which indicates a demand for silica sand.

Waste

1.14 Household waste arisings in Cheshire East have decreased since the previous year. Recycling/composting rates have increased and now exceed Government targets due to the implementation of a revised collection scheme for recyclables. This reduces levels of residual waste sent to landfill. There have been no grants of planning permission for new waste management capacity in Cheshire East.

Environment & Climate Change

1.15 Conserving the natural environment and our built heritage continues to be of importance to Cheshire East Council. Two buildings, one listed at Grade I, were removed from the English Heritage At Risk Register during the monitoring period. The increase in Heritage Crime in the Borough is to be addressed through a new Heritage Crime Initiative and several other proposals.

1.16 A number of studies have been undertaken regarding green infrastructure in the Borough which will inform and be integrated into the Local Plan.

1 Cheshire Sub-Region includes the regions of Cheshire East and Cheshire West & Chester



1.17 Actions taken in Air Quality Management Areas are having a positive effect with improvements being seen at almost all monitoring areas.

1.18 Cheshire East Council has been working closely with Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Councils to promote renewable energy. A number of studies and handbooks have been produced to inform the Local Plan and to assist developers interested in low carbon sources of energy. Extended permitted development rights mean the majority of domestic renewable schemes no longer require planning consent, hence monitoring is unfeasible. No major schemes have been submitted in this monitoring year.