

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Portfolio Holder for Strategic Communities

Date of Meeting:	1 st November, 2013
Report of:	Head of Strategic and Economic Planning
Subject/Title:	Cheshire East Local Plan-Pre-Submission Core Strategy
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor David Brown

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 Following the Strategic Planning Board's recommendation to approve a Draft Development Strategy at its meeting of the 6th December, 2012 and the subsequent second phase of consultations on additional potential site allocations agreed at its meeting on 1st May, 2013, this report seeks approval for the next stage in the production of a *Core Strategy* for Cheshire East.
- 1.2 This involves approving a *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* for a final round of consultation, prior to submission to the Secretary of State for formal examination in 2014.
- 1.3 It should be noted that a provisional list of development sites, together with the consultation responses to the Development Strategy, were considered at a meeting of the Strategic Planning Board on the 26th September, 2013. This provided a useful opportunity for public comment and debate on the emerging *Core Strategy*.

2.0 Decision Requested

- To endorse the evidence base which has informed the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*;
- To endorse the Officer responses to the consultations on the *Shaping our Future* documents published in January and May, 2013;
- To approve the attached *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* for public consultation (**Appendix A**), including any tabled minor amendments; and
- To resolve that the Cheshire East *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* be given weight as a material consideration for Development Management purposes with immediate effect.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure that progress is made with the preparation of the Cheshire East Local Plan, it is important to progress the plan-making process to submission of a *Core*

Strategy, which will be examined by an independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

- 3.2 The Council has made considerable progress in the production of a Local Plan, having prepared a significant amount of background evidence and research, but in the absence of a plan-led approach, the planning authority is becoming increasingly vulnerable to speculative planning applications for major housing and employment sites. The finalisation of an adopted *Core Strategy* is therefore of the utmost priority in determining a sustainable development strategy framework for the Borough, following which more detailed work can commence on the *Site Allocations and Development Policies* and *Waste Development Plan Documents*.
- 3.3 Paragraph 216 of the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* states that, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:
- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
 - the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
 - the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the *NPPF* (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 3.4 In view of the level of consultation already afforded to the plan-making process, together with the degree of consistency with national planning guidance, it is appropriate to attach enhanced weight to the *Pre- Submission Core Strategy* in the decision-making process.
- 3.5 The Strategic Planning Board has already given due consideration to the public consultation responses received in respect of the *Shaping Our Future* documents and these have been taken into account in finalising the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. This will demonstrate that whilst the development strategy and policy principles have been subject to a lengthy public engagement process, the Council has had the opportunity to consider all representations in shaping the emerging plan proposals

Wards Affected

4.1 All Wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 All Ward Members

6.0 Policy Implications including - Carbon reduction & Health

6.1 **Health:** The Local Plan can make an important contribution to the health and well being of the Borough. The spatial planning framework will consider the new infrastructure requirements of the area, both existing and arising from new

developments. This enables health provision to be made in the right places to serve future generations.

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

6.3 **Carbon reduction:** The Local Plan is a means of promoting more sustainable patterns of development, which in turn can reduce the Borough's carbon footprint. Moreover, the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* document contains policies dealing with renewable energy, of which Cheshire East has a variety of opportunities (eg, geothermal heating).

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

7.1 The preparation of the Local Plan is a time consuming and costly process; accordingly additional resources have been identified in the 2013/14 budget to support its preparation. The costs associated with a further round of consultation, if agreed, can be met within existing budget funds. Otherwise, this report does not raise any additional direct finance issues.

8.0 Legal Implications

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

8.2 The extensive work undertaken on preparing a Draft Development Strategy was to meet the statutory requirements of *Regulation 18* which in effect requires Local Planning Authorities to engage with the community and businesses regarding the preparation of the Local Plan. It is therefore an important part of the Local Plan process and the results of the various consultation exercises have informed and added value to the preparation of the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. Following a further round of consultation, a submission document will be published to allow final representations to be made on the 'soundness' of the plan (*Regulation 19*), prior to it being submitted to the Secretary of State for formal examination under *Regulation 22*.

8.3 The Council should be able to demonstrate to the Inspector who conducts the public examination into the *Core Strategy* that extensive consultation has been undertaken and that all reasonable alternative strategies have been considered; these considerations will form part of the 'tests of soundness' that the Inspector will apply.

8.4 The preparation of the plan is guided by the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* and other related advice. The implications of this have been fully assessed both in responding to consultations and preparing the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*.

8.5 Section 110 of the *Localism Act 2011* imposes a duty on local planning authorities to co-operate with neighbouring authorities and other parties on strategic issues of common interest in preparing local plans. This is becoming an increasingly important issue in the examination process. It should be noted that if the Inspector is not satisfied that the duty to co-operate has been fulfilled, the plan will fail, irrespective of its 'soundness' (see paragraph 9.1).

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 **Local Plan Examination-** Following its publication, the emerging *Core Strategy* will be submitted for formal examination. The key test at examination is one of 'soundness'. For a plan to be considered sound, it must be:

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

9.2 Failure at examination has serious negative consequences for any Local Planning Authority and the proper planning of its area. However, by preparing and consulting on a Draft Development Strategy and *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* and by undertaking a significant degree of evidence-based studies and background research, including sustainability appraisals at each key stage, it is considered that the Council has significantly reduced the risk of this outcome.

9.3 **Planning Applications and Appeals-** The Council needs to be able to demonstrate the availability of a five-year supply of housing land, which is a key requirement of the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*. The Council is experiencing a large number of planning applications for housing on sites that are not allocated in the development plan; some of these are currently subject to appeal and/or legal challenge.

9.4 Members will be aware that some strategic sites, which meet clearly defined parameters, are being granted planning permission and are making important contributions to the 5-year housing land supply. An up-to-date local plan will not only provide new policies that are fully compliant with the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, but will also identify, through a housing trajectory, a continuing five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Consequently, completion of the local plan will greatly assist the processing and determination of planning applications in the Borough.

10.0 Background and Context

National Guidance

10.1 In the absence of a *Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West*, which together with the 'saved' policies of the *Cheshire Structure Plan*, was revoked on 20th May, 2013, the statutory framework for preparing a local plan for Cheshire East is contained in the *National Planning Policy Framework (2012)*, the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)*, the *Planning Act 2008*, the *Localism Act 2011* and associated Regulations.

10.2 At the present time, there is no adopted planning policy framework in Cheshire East with the only point of reference being 'saved' policies from previously adopted local plans for the former Boroughs of Crewe and Nantwich, Congleton and Macclesfield and the Minerals and Waste Local Plans adopted by the former Cheshire County Council.

Plan Making in Cheshire East

10.3 During the initial consultative stage of the plan-making process in the autumn of 2010, the Council published an *Issues and Options* paper which considered different potential approaches to growth and development at a Borough-wide level. One of the consequences of this work was the realisation that an understanding of Cheshire East as a unified 'place' was still evolving. As a large County Borough, created via local government re-organisation in 2009, the area neither represented the historic County of Cheshire nor the individual Boroughs which had been in existence since the last major re-organisation in 1974.

10.4 Accordingly, the Council invested considerable effort into a *Place Shaping* consultation exercise in the summer of 2011 at a level which was more meaningful to the Borough's residents. This provided a valuable platform for the subsequent production of *Town Strategies* for each of the larger settlements in Cheshire East in 2012. These were prepared according to neighbourhood planning principles and followed the award of government funding as a neighbourhood planning 'front runner'. The *Shaping our Future: Development Strategy and Policy Principles* documents prepared for consultation in early 2013 brought together the findings of these strategies, as well as the findings of the earlier *Issues and Options* paper and research and evidence base, to create a coherent plan for the future of the Borough.

10.5 The *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* therefore sets out the Council's approach to shaping the sustainable growth of Cheshire East and seeks to encapsulate the findings of all of this background work to provide a clear steer to guide future development in the Borough up to 2030. The strategy focuses on growth to create prosperous communities with the provision of new housing, employment areas and transport infrastructure being fundamental to its approach.

Delivering Wider Economic Growth

10.6 It is recognised that there are three strands of sustainability, namely economic, environmental and social and these are all equally important and mutually dependent and delivering economic growth in Cheshire East remains a central tenet to the future prosperity of the Borough and is increasingly important to the future sustainability of the Council. The Local Plan is an essential building block necessary to deliver an overall vision for economic growth.

10.7 The economy is at the heart of the Council's Corporate Plan, its principal objectives being to:

- Build stronger relationships with existing businesses and investors to stimulate growth, build new enterprises and deliver jobs;
- Build stronger relationships with local communities to support the local economy and create entrepreneurial towns and villages;

- Directly promote employment and housing growth through development of Council assets and land to deliver jobs and new homes;
- Focus education and skills investment to deliver a skilled workforce for the future and create opportunities for young people to build links with local businesses to encourage them to stay in Cheshire East;
- Build new partnerships with developers and funding bodies to create new models of investment to stimulate growth;
- Build a strong partnership with Government and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to bring investment in sites, infrastructure and influence a national economic growth strategy to recognise the significance of Cheshire East and the wider sub-region; and
- Maximise the impact that the Council can have on the local economy through directing our spending power locally, developing a local supply chain; generating employment opportunities for local people and ensuring the economic impact of major policy decisions is understood.

10.8 The Local Plan sets out the land uses required to deliver growth, as the spatial interpretation of the vision. It is considered that the key principles set out in the *Pre –Submission Core Strategy* reflect this wider vision for economic growth, whilst achieving the key principle of building sustainable communities.

Sustainable Community Strategy

10.9 The Local Plan will also deliver the place shaping aspects and objectives of *Ambition for All - A Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)* approved by the Council in July, 2010.

10.10 The community strategy sets out how, over the next 15 years, the *Partnership for Action for Cheshire East (PACE)* will ensure that Cheshire East continues to prosper. The activities outlined in the strategy are intended to improve the quality of life of all the people of Cheshire East and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development through action to improve economic, social and environmental well-being across the area. The strategy provides a high-level vision for Cheshire East centred around seven priorities for action, which are:

- Nurturing strong communities, including the delivery of services as locally as possible and ensuring that communities feel safe;
- Creating conditions for business growth, including making the most of our tourism, heritage and natural assets and ensuring there is a range of available high quality employment sites and premises in all parts of Cheshire East with good transport links, to attract new and expanding businesses;
- Unlocking the potential of our towns; this focuses firstly on the regeneration of Crewe including the redevelopment of the town centre and the provision of new homes and jobs. Secondly, on the revitalisation of Macclesfield, including improving the quality and choice of shops and services in the town centre and progressing the development of South Macclesfield; and thirdly, on retaining the vitality and viability of our market towns to ensure that they continue to deliver essential services, retail, leisure and employment opportunities;

- Supporting our children and young people;
- Ensuring a sustainable future by providing affordable and appropriate housing to meet future needs, by promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, by ensuring that all major developments are located with good access to local amenities, cycle and walking routes, by developing a green infrastructure plan to safeguard, manage and enhance our green assets, giving priority to the redevelopment of our vacant brownfield sites and by recognising the importance of mineral extraction to the local economy;
- Preparing for an increasingly older population including the provision of an adequate supply of suitable extra care housing; and
- Driving out the causes of poor health including investment in green infrastructure to encourage active and healthy lifestyle choices.

The *Ambition for All - A Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)* may be viewed using the following link:-

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/community_and_living/pace_strategic_partnerships/sustainable_community_strategy.aspx

11.0 The Evidence Base

- 11.1 The *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* is supported by a strong evidence base. The studies and areas of work that have informed the strategy include:-

POPULATION AND HOUSING

11.2 Population Projections and Forecasts (September, 2013)

- 11.2.1 A new paper has been prepared which supersedes the previous background paper on population projections and forecasts published in January, 2013. The previous set of forecasts have been revised to take account of a number of key datasets produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Department for Communities and Local Government, that have been released over recent months. These include 2011 Census tables, mid-year population estimates revised in light of the 2011 Census and interim 2011-based sub-national population and household projections.
- 11.2.2 The previous set of forecasts was based on the indicative mid-2010 population estimates produced by ONS. These were the most up to date estimates available at the time. In light of the 2011 Census results, ONS revised all mid-year population estimates for 2002 to 2010. ONS had underestimated the population in Cheshire East and the previous indicative mid-2010 population estimates (365,700) were around 3,400 lower than the revised mid-2010 population estimates (369,100).

- 11.2.3 Determining how much new housing should be provided and where it should be located is an important element of the Local Plan. The new paper provides background information on the work done to date, on the revised population projections and forecasts. Some of these projections also incorporate information from past economic trends and baseline projections of expected future economic growth.
- 11.2.4 It needs to be acknowledged at the outset that forecasting is not an exact science and it will not result in a definitive 'right' answer. For example, the forecasts and projections outlined below are based on a judgement of what is **most likely** to occur under a specific scenario, but it is of course possible for actual outcomes to differ from what was predicted. There can be a number of reasons for this such as limitations with the forecasting / projection method or limitations with the availability of the input data and the uncertainty about when and how past trends might change.
- 11.2.5 The NPPF requires Local Plans to identify sufficient land to meet the full, objectively assessed need for housing. This must, therefore, as a minimum, be met by the amount of land that is identified for housing in the Local Plan. Understanding the housing requirement involves considering a range of relevant information and making a judgement about the weight that should be given to each of these elements. This will determine the extent by which the baseline assessed need is exceeded. Ultimately, it will result in a figure which feels right for the Borough taking account of wider policy aspirations and constraints. This explains why it is an area of planning policy that can be much debated during a Local Plan's preparation and approval process.
- 11.2.6 The elements which have been considered in the Cheshire East Housing Requirement identified in the Core Strategy include the following:
- The outputs from a variety of population projections and forecasts;
 - Past economic trends and baseline projections of expected future economic growth (particularly growth in employment and economic output);
 - The context provided by past housing policy and levels of housing completion;
 - The conclusions from relevant studies such as the *Strategic Housing Market Assessment* and the *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment*, including the current housing supply situation; and
 - The influence of wider policy considerations such as national planning guidance, the Council's economic aspirations, the regeneration aspirations of neighbouring authorities, environmental capacity including impact on the Green Belt and countryside, the capacity of current infrastructure and any other significant constraints on growth.
- 11.2.7 There is a wide range in the outputs from the fourteen scenarios that were modelled, depending on whether a narrow view is taken that provides for the likely needs of the existing population only, or a wider view is taken that allows for continued economic growth in the area and takes account of underlying demographic trends. The national trend of an ageing population is particularly marked in Cheshire East, with all the scenarios forecasting a

significant increase in older people during the Plan period. Hence, a higher level of housing growth is needed than would otherwise be required if the population were not ageing.

- 11.2.8 A number of the forecasts tested provide useful baseline information about the local population and how it may change in the future. The Natural Change Forecast for example indicates that the existing population is forecast to grow by 2,500 people over the Plan period, requiring around 7,200 new dwellings, but that the labour supply would fall by around 3,600 people over the same period. However, when recent migration data for Cheshire East is factored in, it is forecast that the population will increase by around 14,800 and require around 16,900 dwellings over the Plan period. This is forecast to provide a modest increase of 1,800 people in the overall labour supply to 2030, insufficient to meet the growth aspirations of the Council for its area. The Nil Net Migration Forecast indicates that migration has an underlying impact on the age structure in Cheshire East by making the population age at a faster rate than would be the case through natural change, with labour supply forecast to fall by some 11,800 people over the Plan period. The Zero Jobs Growth Forecast indicates that a population change of more than 13,700 people and dwelling change of more than 16,500 dwellings is required for the Plan period for there to be any increase forecast for job change in the Borough.
- 11.2.9 The draft National Planning Practice Guidance makes it clear for the first time in Government guidance that:
- ‘Household projections published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) should provide the starting point estimate of overall housing need’*
- 11.2.10 The Interim 2011-based sub-national projections represent the most recent CLG household projections. These indicate that the Council should be planning to provide for a population increase to 2030 of around 41,100, a net housing increase of 1,180 dwellings, an increase in labour supply of 16,400 people, and an increase of around 13,900 jobs. The Council modelled five dwelling led forecasts using local information on births, deaths, migration and household formation rates. These provided for an average net increase per annum of 1,150, 1,250, 1,350, 1,600 and 1,800 dwellings for the Plan period. The closest match to the CLG household projections forecast that providing an average of 1,350 dwellings per annum or 27,000 dwellings over the Plan period would provide for a population increase of around 39,800 people, a labour supply increase of around 16,400 people and an increase of around 13,900 jobs to 2030.
- 11.2.11 The Council also modelled four economic lead forecasts using its own economic forecasting model. These provided for a 0.2%, 0.4%, 0.7% and 1.2% growth in jobs over the Plan period. The 0.4% growth scenario provided the closest match to the CLG household projections, which would provide for a population increase of around 40,500 people, a net average increase of 1,365 dwellings per annum or around 27,300 overall, a labour supply increase of around 17,300 people and an increase of around 14,800 jobs to 2030.

11.2.12 The above suggests that the medium growth strategy of providing around an additional 1,350 dwellings per annum, identified in the Council's Issues and Options Paper, would best match the most recent household projections for Cheshire East.

11.2.13 It should be noted that the outputs from modelling work represent only one of the elements that have been considered by the Council in determining the level of housing growth shown in the Local Plan and considered appropriate for Cheshire East until 2030. Hence, the implications for the environment and existing infrastructure of providing for higher levels of housing and jobs than the medium growth strategy need to be carefully considered if development is to be sustainable in the longer term.

11.3 South Cheshire Sub-Regional Study (July, 2010)

11.3.1 In July, 2010, in conjunction with adjoining local authorities in the North West, Cheshire East published a Draft Sub-Regional Strategy entitled *Unleashing the Potential*. In respect of housing, the vision was to provide a housing offer that supported the creation of balanced, sustainable communities and the regeneration of the sub-region's most deprived neighbourhoods. This involved effective lobbying, partnership working and community engagement, to create a sub-region where all residents could achieve independent living in good quality, affordable homes that are appropriate to their needs.

11.3.2 The strategy's key objectives were:

- To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development;
- To make best use of the sub-region's existing housing stock;
- To meet the housing and accommodation-related support needs of the sub-region's most vulnerable residents;
- To increase the supply of market housing to support continued economic growth and regeneration and to meet local housing needs; and
- To provide new housing opportunities close to areas of concentrated economic development to maximise the opportunity for people to live close to their place of employment and reduce travel to work.

11.3.3 Specific programmes included:

- Deliver the Growth Points in West Cheshire and Mid - Mersey; and
- Increase opportunity and choice for people to live in rural areas, improving access to affordable housing by developing local solutions to housing shortages in rural areas, giving rural communities the opportunity to identify their own housing needs; and ensuring strategic plans set rural targets for affordable housing provision.

11.3.4 The *South Cheshire Sub-Regional Study* may be viewed using the following link:-

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/spatial_planning/research_and_evidence/south_cheshire_study.aspx

11.4 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) - Update (July, 2013)

11.4.1 A *Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)* was originally produced by specialist consultants on behalf of Cheshire East Council in 2010 and was carried out in accordance with the '*Strategic Housing Market Assessments: Practice Guidance*' and with guidance from the Cheshire East Housing Market Partnership. This work superseded previous housing needs assessments prepared by the former Boroughs.

11.4.2 For the purposes of informing the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*, the 2013 update uses recently released 2011 census data to update the general social, economic, demographic and dwelling stock context of Cheshire East. The update also aligns the *SHMA* evidence base to reflect the *National Planning Policy Framework*. The update follows the methodology for updating of the *SHMA* evidence base as originally presented in Appendix E of the previous *SHMA(2010)*:

- **reviewing** the general strategic housing market context and emerging issues;
- **updating baseline data** on housing needs and affordable housing requirements using updated house price and private sector rental information and updated information on the capacity of the social rented and intermediate tenure sectors; and draws upon
- **stakeholder consultation** with a range of agencies including estate agents, developers, Registered Providers' representatives and Council Officers carried out during 2012.

11.4.3 The evidence based study recommends that future development should focus on delivery to address identified requirements and help to address the mismatches between aspirations and expectations to the extent that this is reasonable and practical.

11.4.4 In terms of affordable housing, an annual net shortfall of 1,401 affordable dwellings has been calculated based on the *Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG)* housing needs assessment model presented in the *CLG SHMA* guidance. It is stressed however that there is a degree of imbalance between the need for affordable housing relative to supply, based on parameters set by the *CLG* guidance (for instance the proportion of income which should be spent on housing). It is not a target for delivery, therefore the actual proportion of affordable housing to be delivered should be assessed through an Economic Viability Assessment.

11.4.5 It should be noted that demand for new housing does not necessarily represent a level of need that has to be met. Demand for housing is a much wider concept than need and includes householders' aspirations to move to a different or larger property, even if the property they currently live in is

sufficient for their needs. Hence, Local Planning Authorities are not expected to simply translate the figures from the *Strategic Housing Market Assessment* into actual housing targets to be met. They are only part of the evidence that needs to be considered against other factors, including economic viability, cross boundary issues and other factors.

11.4.6 A tenure split of 62.4% affordable (social) rented and 37.6% intermediate tenure is suggested for affordable housing, which remains broadly in line with a 65% affordable/social rented and 35% intermediate tenure split being advocated by the Council.

11.4.7 In summary, key drivers in determining the tenure and type of future development include:

- The need to continue development to satisfy household aspirations and expectations, in particular the development of detached and semi-detached houses and properties with two, three and four bedrooms;
- Responding to the impact of demographic change on dwelling requirements and in particular developing an increasing range of housing and support products for older people. Adopting lifetime homes standards should be viewed as a priority along with diversifying the range of new build dwellings appropriate for a growing number of older person households whilst maintaining the delivery of homes to reflect the aspirations of economically active and younger households;
- Delivering additional affordable housing to help offset the identified net shortfalls; and diversifying the range of affordable options by developing intermediate tenure dwellings and products;
- The economic viability of delivering affordable housing on sites across the Borough.

11.4.8 The *Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.5 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

11.5.1 The *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)* is a key requirement of the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, which states that '*to boost significantly the supply of housing, local planning authorities should:*

- *Identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements; and*
- *Identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15'*

11.5.2 The primary role of the *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment* is to:

- Identify sites with potential for housing;

- Assess their housing potential; and
- Assess when they are likely to be developed.

- 11.5.3 The assessment forms an integral part of the annual monitoring process and is an important evidence source to inform plan-making. It also provides background evidence on the potential availability of land in Cheshire East for housing and the choices available for delivering housing. The *SHLAA* does not determine whether individual sites are acceptable for future housing development as this is determined via the *Core Strategy* and *Site Allocations and Development Policies* DPD's and also through planning applications assessed against the adopted Development Plan.
- 11.5.4 In terms of methodology, the baseline date for the *SHLAA* is the 31st March 2012 and the assessment considers Cheshire East as a whole focusing on the settlements identified as Principal Towns, Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres. The sites included in the study were identified from pre-application discussions, officer knowledge or from the previous 'Call for Sites' process.
- 11.5.5 The study concentrates on sites with a capacity for ten or more dwellings (generally sites of about 0.3ha or more), both previously developed land (brownfield sites) and greenfield sites, within settlements and adjacent to their limits.
- 11.5.6 Housing capacity of the sites is calculated based on existing information (such as previous planning applications or pre-application discussions) and a density multiplier. In Cheshire East, a density multiplier of 30 dwellings per hectare is generally applied to estimate the potential of a site. Whilst recognising that this density will not necessarily be appropriate on all sites, when considered across the Borough, it provides a reasonable average for the purposes of assessing site capacities.
- 11.5.7 All sites were appraised against the *National Planning Policy Framework*, with a note made of any key local planning policy and assessed on their capacity to ensure access to key services.
- 11.5.8 The outcome of the assessment of sites identified in the *SHLAA* resulted in the potential to provide a total of 49,645 dwellings over the next 15 years. It further identifies 9,771 dwellings that are expected to be deliverable within the first 5-year period of the plan. These conclusions have recently been called into question by appeal decisions, on 18th October 2013. However an updated *SHLAA* will be produced shortly, with a base date of 31st March 2013.
- 11.5.9 The *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.6 Cheshire Partnership Area Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment (2007)

- 11.6.1 Following the Housing Act of 2004, local authorities have been preparing to develop and implement strategies to respond to the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities living in their areas as part of their wider housing strategies and the then Regional Housing Strategy (RHS). Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs) were designed to provide the evidence needed to inform these strategies. However, as well as presenting evidence and information on accommodation needs at an immediate local level, the evidence collected and analysis produced has a wider regional role.
- 11.6.2 The assessment of accommodation need and pitch requirements were also to be fed into the Regional Planning Body (RPB), previously the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA), for inclusion into the now revoked Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RSS then specified pitch numbers required (but not their location) for each local planning authority (LPA) in light of the GTAAs conducted and a strategic view of need, supply and demand across the region was taken. The local planning authorities were then tasked with identifying specific sites to match pitch numbers from the RSS in their Development Plan Documents (DPD).
- 11.6.3 Nationally, there are no signs that the growth in the Gypsy and Traveller population will slow significantly. Although the supply of authorised accommodation has declined since 1994, the size of the population of Gypsies and Travellers does not appear to have been affected to a great extent. Instead, the way in which Gypsies and Travellers live has changed, with increases in unauthorised accommodation, innovative house dwelling arrangements (living in trailers in the grounds of houses), overcrowding on sites and overcrowding within accommodation units (trailers, houses, chalets etc.).
- 11.6.4 It was identified that over the next five years (2006-2011) there was a need for around 79 - 112 additional permanent residential pitches for Gypsies and Travellers across the Study Area. In addition, there was a need for 17 authorised residential pitches for Travelling Showpeople. On current trends and policies, this need was unlikely to be met since the only source of supply is a low pitch turn over on the sites and a small number of vacancies.
- 11.6.5 It was concluded that there is a need for more accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers across the Study Area. In the context of Cheshire East, the need assessment identified a requirement for 37- 54 additional pitches during the period 2006-2016 with an additional 10 transit pitches and 4 pitches for travelling showpeople. Further work is to be undertaken to update the needs assessment to 2030.

- 11.6.6 The *Cheshire Partnership Area Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment (2007)* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

11.7 Determining the Settlement Hierarchy (November 2010)

- 11.7.1 A background paper for the Local Plan entitled *Determining the Settlement Hierarchy* explained how the settlement hierarchy shown in the *Issues and Options* consultation document had been derived. In particular, it examined:-

- The reasons and context for introducing a settlement hierarchy;
- The structure and definition of the settlement hierarchy proposed for Cheshire East;
- The overall methodology for populating the settlement hierarchy;
- The settlements included and excluded from the hierarchy;
- An analysis of the settlements included in the hierarchy using a range of factors used to determine their role and function; and
- An assessment of the information gathered to determine which tier in the hierarchy to place the chosen settlements.

- 11.7.2 The approach used and its outcomes were tested through the consultation processes associated with the development of the *Core Strategy Issues and Options* paper. This report therefore forms a fundamental element of the evidence base for the Local Plan and has been used as a basis for developing future spatial planning policy.

- 11.7.3 The Settlement Hierarchy comprises:-

- **Principal Towns** (ie. settlements of Regional Significance)

These are the largest towns, having a wide range of services and opportunities for employment, retail and education. They serve a large catchment area with high levels of accessibility and public transport provision.

- **Key Service Centres (KSC)**

These settlements have a range of services and opportunities for employment, retail and education. They serve a wide catchment area and contain good public transport links.

- **Local Service Centres (LSC)**

These smaller settlements have a limited range of services and opportunities for employment, retail and education. They serve a limited local catchment and contain a lower level of access to public transport.

- **Other Settlements**

These settlements contain few or no services and facilities, with limited or no access to public transport and very limited or no employment opportunities.

11.7.4 The *Determining the Settlement Hierarchy* Report may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCE

11.8 Employment Land Review (November 2012)

11.8.1 The *Employment Land Review* acknowledges that Cheshire East is a key economic driver for the North West. The local economy provided 6.4% GVA (Gross Value Added) of the North West's economic output in 2008 and contains 7.5% (in 2010) of its businesses, the highest proportion of any unitary district in the North West.

- **Strengths** include strong GVA (Gross Value Added) and employment growth (primarily in relation to the former Crewe and Nantwich Borough), high productivity in the former Macclesfield Borough, sectoral strengths in pharmaceuticals, automotive, computing, financial services, logistics, major employment sites, local colleges, university presence and Higher Education institutions which provide strong links to Manchester and Keele. There are high business start-up rates across the Borough and a significant strength is its road and rail transport links.
- **Weaknesses** include job shortages in the Congleton area, a decline in manufacturing, pockets of deprivation in Crewe, Macclesfield, Wilmslow and Handforth, issues of unaffordable housing in the Borough, a lack of quality housing in Crewe, issues with accessibility to housing and services in some neighbourhoods (typically rural) and a need for road and broadband improvements.
- **Opportunities** include the economic growth of South Manchester, Media City and growth of Manchester Airport, strong GVA growth in pharmaceuticals, automotive, computing and financial services and communications, growth in home-based / micro businesses, regeneration of Crewe Town Centre, Basford, Crewe Station and Macclesfield's Town Centre and Southern Development Area, potential for industrial and distribution activity in Middlewich, Sandbach and Crewe.

- **Threats** include the downsizing of major high value-added sectors coupled with future growth being over reliant on low-value sectors, weak growth of Stoke impacting on the South East Cheshire economy, growth being constrained by the supply of commercial land and premises and housing, increased pressure on transport networks and public sector funding.

11.8.2 In terms of demand and supply, the study identifies that between 277.78ha-323.71ha (13.23ha - 15.41ha per year) could be required in Cheshire East up to 2030. An assessment of sites that could potentially form part of Cheshire East's employment land supply concludes that a total of 272.38ha could be considered for employment allocations. Based on this analysis, it concludes that Cheshire East could have a potential employment land shortfall of between 5.40ha and 51.33ha.

11.8.3 For planning purposes and in accordance with best practice guidance, all demand and supply figures for the study deal with gross land totals and a flexibility factor of 30% is applied to the land demand range to provide for flexibility in meeting future demand. It is however likely that more employment land will need to be identified in the future to meet the demand up to 2030 and a review of the flexibility factor could also be considered.

11.8.4 This is particularly relevant given that the study shows a potential shortfall of employment land to 2030 and that any potential loss of existing employment areas could result in an increase in the rate of losses. Planning policies therefore need to identify further potential employment sites and /or seek the retention of some of the existing employment sites which the market assessment suggests may be lost. Planning policies should also consider balancing employment land needs across the whole Borough.

11.8.5 The *Employment Land Review* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.9 **Crewe Vision - A Prospectus for Crewe (2012)**

11.9.1 One of the principal economic initiatives in Cheshire East is *All Change for Crewe* which represents an ambitious strategy to support Crewe's economic development over the next 20 years. The strategy is being promoted by Cheshire East with an aspiration that by 2030, the wider Crewe area will be a nationally significant economic centre with a total population in excess of 100,000 people, a substantial increase on its current population of about 83,000. It is envisaged that it will be one of the leading centres for advanced engineering and manufacturing in England and that it will be recognised as a sought-after place for people to live, work and develop their talents.

11.9.2 A range of ambitious development priorities reflect the scale of opportunity in the form of:-

- Retail-led development within the core of the Town Centre;
- Increased and enhanced Town Centre leisure and culture offer;
- Introduction of residential development into the core of the centre;
- Redevelopment of Crewe Railway Exchange as a strategic hub on the West Coast mainline;
- Landmark developments in key gateway locations; and
- Improvements to the physical environment of the Town Centre, the Grand Junction Retail Park, the University, Crewe Business Park and Crewe Railway Station.

11.9.3 This initiative has now been updated in the form of '*High Growth City*' whereby the Council and its partners are committed to releasing the massive potential within the town, and delivering the vision by making the following five key commitments to the future of Crewe;

- Achievable and Sustainable Growth
- A World Class Automotive and Rail Hub
- A Market Leader in Renewable Energy
- Connecting Crewe
- A UK Centre of Excellence for Employer Led Skills

11.9.4 The *All Change for Crewe - High Growth City* prospectus may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.allchangeformcrewe.co.uk/>

11.10 Cheshire Retail Study Update (April 2011)

11.10.1 White Young Green Planning & Design (WYG) were commissioned by Cheshire West & Chester (CWAC) and Cheshire East (CE) Councils in November 2009 to undertake a combined update of the *Cheshire Town Centre Study (CTCS, 2007)* and the *Chester Retail Study (CRS 2006)*. This study provided essential background information that forms part of the evidence base informing the production of the Local Plans for both Boroughs. The Study drew on new empirical research in the form of a telephone survey (May 2010) of 4,000 households covering CWAC and CE and the surrounding area to assess shopping patterns within the sub-region and to provide comparisons with previous studies where possible.

11.10.2 In terms of convenience (food) shopping, the study concluded that the priority for the two Boroughs in the short-term (up to 2015) would be to formalise planning and development strategies to secure new foodstore provision in those settlements where the study had identified a clear quantitative or qualitative need. These included Macclesfield, Northwich, and Winsford. It was imperative that centrally located sites are promoted to facilitate economic development that can establish strong relationships with the existing town centres wherever possible, thereby reinforcing each centre as a focal point for economic and community activity in the medium to long term.

11.10.3 In terms of comparison (non-food) shopping, the study concluded that the main focus of new comparison goods floorspace within the two Boroughs

should be within the defined centres of Chester, Crewe, Northwich and Macclesfield as principal destinations. Clearly, as the economy begins to recover in the medium to long term, expenditure on comparison goods will increase and pressure will be placed on delivering new floorspace through to 2026 to ensure capacity can be met.

11.10.4 The Study provided advice to the Councils in terms of delivering its vision at key centres, which would help shape the emerging framework or strategy for the management and growth of the Borough's centres over the future plan period. The Study proposed a hierarchy of centres that will be resilient to anticipated future economic change and ensure that the identified capacity from the Study can be facilitated up to 2026. This was centred on Chester as the Sub-Regional Centre supported by three Strategic Centres within the two Boroughs (Macclesfield, Crewe and Northwich) where major growth and investment should be focused. It advises that the Sub-Regional Centre and Strategic Centres should be supported by a network of Town Centres, which in the context of Cheshire East, comprise Alsager, Congleton, Holmes Chapel, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow.

11.10.5 The *Cheshire Retail Study Update* may be viewed using the following link:-
<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

11.11 Green Infrastructure Framework for North East Wales, Cheshire and Wirral (2010)

11.11.1 A partnership of local authorities and environmental agencies came together in 2010 to commission a framework looking at the planning and co-ordination of Green Infrastructure across North East Wales, Cheshire and the Wirral.

11.11.2 The framework considers the natural environments of Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East and the Wirral. It sets out a vision of how a healthy natural environment can help sustain economic growth and thriving communities. A *Green Infrastructure Action Plan* for Crewe has now also been prepared as part of the framework (see below).

11.11.3 Green Infrastructure can be defined as '*a network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities*'.

11.11.4 The *Green Infrastructure Framework for North East Wales, Cheshire and the Wirral* provides a guide for the next 10-15 years and beyond for Green Infrastructure planning, investment and delivery. It highlights where the existing Green Infrastructure assets are, locates the weaker areas and guides priorities for future investment. It has been produced to assist with, and guide actions for, the delivery of Green Infrastructure across North East

Wales, Cheshire and the Wirral as part of its long term sustainable development.

11.11.5 One of the key outcomes of the Framework within Cheshire East was the identification of areas of need, where there are particular needs for Green Infrastructure interventions to address social, economic or environmental issues; and opportunity areas, where there is a higher concentration of existing Green Infrastructure assets, which offer opportunities to create a wider Green Infrastructure network.

11.11.6 The identification of these areas was informed by the location and function of existing Green Infrastructure assets; gaps in provision or functioning of Green Infrastructure assets; areas of strong community wellbeing and business enterprise; and areas where specific issues, such as poor health, constrain community wellbeing and business enterprise.

11.11.7 Based on these areas of need and opportunity areas, a series of priority areas, where investment in Green Infrastructure will have the greatest impact were identified. These priority areas have different combinations of need and opportunity. The priority areas within Cheshire East are:

- Nantwich and Crewe – town regeneration and urban extensions;
- Macclesfield urban extension;
- Cheshire Peak and fringe farms and towns;
- Rivers Bollin, Dane and valley farmland; and
- The canal network and associated market towns and villages, such as Middlewich, Congleton, Sandbach and Audlem.

11.11.8 The *Green Infrastructure Framework for North East Wales, Cheshire and Wirral* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.merseydealliance.org.uk/green-infrastructure/>

11.12 Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Crewe (2012)

11.12.1 Following on from its identification in the regional green infrastructure study as a priority area for investment, a finer grained *Action Plan* was produced for Crewe which identifies the benefits and opportunities for the implementation of Green Infrastructure within Crewe, where investment will support the growth of Crewe and deliver the widest public benefits, environmental improvements and the enhancement of the town's economy.

11.12.2 The *Action Plan* concludes that there are five key methods of enhancing Green Infrastructure within the town in order to deliver social, environmental and economic benefits. These are:

- **Urban Greening:** provide and enhance Green Infrastructure assets across the town and in particular within new development, and improve the biodiversity value of existing and new Green Infrastructure.
- **Parklands and Landscapes:** improve opportunities to access healthy activities.
- **Improving Connectivity:** provide a multifunctional and connected Green Infrastructure network across the town; develop opportunities for walking and cycling to improve leisure and recreation, commuting and links between urban and rural areas; improve links to and connections between Crewe's major Green Infrastructure assets such as Queen's Park; and improve quality of pedestrian and cycle access between the railway station and the town centre.
- **Watercourses:** promote and improve Green Infrastructure along the three water corridors – Leighton Brook, Valley Brook and Gresty Brook; and
- **The Countryside:** restore landscape character in Crewe's countryside and improve access from the town's 'Green' edge.

11.12.3 The *Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Crewe* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.merseydealliance.org.uk/green-infrastructure/>

11.13 Green Space Strategy (January 2013)

11.13.1 The *Green Space Strategy* is a 'living' document that will require updating as more evidence emerges and more projects are envisaged, but it is an important tool to promote green space across Cheshire East to create sustainable communities. It can help co-ordinate the various sections of Cheshire East Council involved in green space, as well as partners and local communities, to ensure that resources are effectively used and further investment in green space is secured. The Vision is:

'To deliver a good quality, and accessible network of green spaces for people to enjoy, which provides for healthy recreation and biodiversity and which continues to provide a range of social, economic and health benefits - above all a Borough that is a beautiful and interesting place to live, work and visit both now and for future generations.'

The focus will be on linking the various assets of Cheshire East's unique landscape - its upland fringes, Cheshire plain, lowland heath, parkland estates, rivers, canals and watercourses, valleys and cloughs, meres and mosses and its distinctive towns and villages.'

11.13.2 The following recommendations emerge from the *Green Space Strategy* with a view to implementing the Vision:

- Increase awareness of the value and importance of green space;

- Explore education opportunities in schools and colleges;
- Promote partnership working to protect, enhance and increase the Borough's green infrastructure/green space network;
- Make sure that everyone has access to different types of green space;
- Agree and adopt minimum standards for the different types of green space in regard to quantity, quality and accessibility;
- Make sure that the provision of new green space or the improvement of existing green space in association with new development meets agreed new local standards and secures adequate funds for maintenance;
- Work towards filling the gaps in the Borough's green spaces network;
- Look at the green space requirements of individual neighbourhoods;
- Look at rural access issues such as lack of access to the surrounding countryside; and
- Explore how to achieve a 'feel-safe' environment, particular in remote areas.

11.13.3 The *Green Space Strategy* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.14 Open Space Assessment (March 2012)

11.14.1 The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* discusses how to create opportunities to bring together members of a community who work, live and play within an area. Paragraph 73 of the *NPPF* states:

'Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area.'

11.14.2 The Cheshire East *Open Space Assessment* combines existing data sources from previous surveys and carries out a new comprehensive survey of all the sites within the main settlements listed in the Council's *Determining the Settlement Hierarchy* study. All the sites are contained within a database with corresponding digital mapping.

11.14.3 The *Open Spaces Introductory Report* explains the structure and content of each open space summary report; those summary reports and associated maps cover the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres of Alsager,

Congleton, Crewe, Handforth, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow. In addition, there is a report covering the thirteen Local Service Centres.

11.14.4 The summary reports are 'living documents' and an addendum will be produced every year with any corrections, new information and new sites. The evidence contained in the summary reports informs the Cheshire East Local Plan.

11.14.5 The *Open Space Assessment* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.15 Local Landscape Designations Study (May 2013)

11.15.1 The *Local Landscape Designations Study* adds value to the work previously undertaken by Cheshire County Council in 2007 in its *Landscape Character Area Assessments* which informed the identification of *Areas of Special County Value (ASCV's)* as part of its background work on the *Cheshire 2016: Replacement Structure Plan*.

11.15.2 The *European Landscape Convention* recognises that all landscapes are of value whether they are designated or not. It also acknowledges the importance of landscape protection, which it defines as: '*measures to preserve the present character and quality of a landscape which is greatly valued on account of its distinctive natural or cultural configuration. Such protection must be active and involve upkeep measures to preserve significant features of a landscape*'.

11.15.3 The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by '*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes*'. Paragraph 113 of the *NPPF* states that '*local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged*'.

11.15.4 Pending the adoption of a Local Plan, the study highlights that planning policies for local landscape designations (ASCVs) currently consist of 'saved' policies from the *Cheshire Structure Plan* (since revoked) and development plans for the three former Boroughs. However, a robust re-appraisal concludes that the following nine local landscape designations should be retained for the purposes of preparing the Cheshire East Local Plan:-

- Beeston/ Peckforton/ Bolesworth/ Pickerton Hills
- Bollin Valley and Parklands
- Cholmondeley Estate
- Dane Valley
- Peak Park Fringe

- Rostherne /Tatton Park
- Tabley Hall
- Weaver Valley
- Wirswall/ Marbury/ Combermere

11.15.5 The *Local Landscape Designations Study* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.16 Green Belt Assessment (September, 2013)

11.16.1 Cheshire East has significant areas of Green Belt in the north of the Borough (North Cheshire Green Belt) and the east of the Borough (South Cheshire Green Belt). Green Belt boundaries are intended to endure and may only be altered in exceptional circumstances through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. Local Plans are required to meet the objectively assessed development needs of the area wherever possible.

11.16.2 The *Green Belt Assessment* therefore forms part of the evidence base, but does not identify areas that are suitable for development and does not recommend whether any site should or should not be allocated for development. It simply seeks to establish whether exceptional circumstances exist that would justify the alteration of Green Belt boundaries and also assesses land against the five purposes of Green Belt as set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* which are:

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

11.16.3 Para 79 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is '*to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence*', but it should be noted that the Green Belt is not a landscape designation.

11.16.4 There are two main purposes to the *Green Belt Assessment*:

1. To assess whether there are exceptional circumstances that could justify alteration of the existing Green Belt boundary through the preparation of the Local Plan; and
2. To assess land in the Green Belt against the five purposes of Green Belt to identify areas that perform the strongest Green Belt function and those that perform a lesser Green Belt function.

- 11.16.5 The assessment is strategic in nature and makes recommendations on whether exceptional circumstances exist to alter existing Green Belt boundaries. It assesses strategic parcels of land within the current Green Belt to determine the extent to which each strategic parcel fulfils a Green Belt function. However, the assessment does not make recommendations on specific areas to include or exclude from the Green Belt as decisions on future Green Belt boundaries must be determined through the Local Plan process following consideration of the results of the assessment, together with all other evidence, national policy and consultation responses.
- 11.16.6 Within Cheshire East, there are significant identified needs for market and affordable housing, as well as for new employment land provision. It is considered that in the north of the Borough, these needs cannot be met from towns and villages inset within the Green Belt boundary, or from urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary. Directing additional development to meet these needs to locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary would lead to unsustainable patterns of development and would not provide sufficient new development in the areas of need.
- 11.16.7 The requirements to allocate sufficient land for the development of market/affordable housing and for employment development to meet the identified needs within the north of the Borough are considered to constitute exceptional circumstances that justify the alteration of Green Belt boundaries through the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 11.16.8 The South Cheshire Green Belt abuts a number of significant settlements, but none are inset within it, retaining the ability to accommodate their development needs without incursions into the Green Belt.
- 11.16.9 Cheshire East has over 400 square kilometres of land designated as Green Belt. To reduce the size of the study area, a number of 'potential sustainable locations for development' were identified and strategic parcels of land in those locations were assessed against the purposes of Green Belt, as defined by the *National Planning Policy Framework*. If, during the production of the Local Plan for Cheshire East, development proposals arise in Green Belt areas not already considered within the assessment, it recommends that these areas be subject to a similar assessment of their contribution to the purposes of Green Belt using the same methodology.
- 11.16.10 Detailed assessment results for each parcel are included in the study. In very general terms, land which has a stronger relationship with the wider open countryside than with an urban area, which has no clear and defensible boundaries or which is important in maintaining a gap between settlements tends to perform the strongest Green Belt function. Land which is well connected to an urban area or contains significant urbanising influences, with strong defensible boundaries and not forming part of any narrow gap between settlements tends to perform a lesser Green Belt function.
- 11.16.11 The results of these assessments are an important consideration in determining future land allocations through the Local Plan. As a pure Green Belt assessment, it is acknowledged that it is beyond the scope of the study

to make recommendations on suitable locations for development. However, the results of the assessment should be considered alongside all the other planning considerations and evidence collected when drawing up the Local Plan.

11.16.12 The *Green Belt Assessment* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.17 New Green Belt and Strategic Open Gap Review (September, 2013)

11.17.1 In 2013, the Council commissioned work on a peer review of the new Green Belt and amendments to the 'Strategic Open Gaps' which were advocated in the draft Development Strategy. This work highlighted a number of options for the Council to consider, namely:-

Option 1: Is there sufficient planning policy justification for designating two new areas of Green Belt to prevent the towns of Crewe and Nantwich from merging?

Option 2: Is there sufficient planning policy justification for linking a proposed new area of Green Belt between Crewe and Nantwich with, or in place of, the proposed Strategic Open Gaps to the south and east of Crewe, then linking into the existing Green Belt?

Option 3: Is there sufficient planning policy justification for linking a proposed new area of Green Belt between Crewe and Nantwich with, or in place of, the proposed Strategic Open Gaps to the south and east of Crewe, together with further land to the south, then linking into the existing Green Belt?

11.17.2 In terms of the potential new Green Belt designation, the study concludes that strong policy protection continues to be necessary to safeguard the existing gaps between settlements that are at risk of coalescence resulting from the future growth of Crewe. It considers that a proposal to extend the existing North Staffordshire Green Belt, which already extends into South Cheshire between Crewe and Stoke, around the southern, eastern and western edges of Crewe, would provide more effective policy protection than the proposed Strategic Open Gap indicated in the Development Strategy.

11.17.3 It further considers that, on the eastern edge of Nantwich, there is sufficient justification to carry forward the previous Green Gap policy as a new area of Green Belt. This designation, if connected into the proposed Green Belt extension around the southern and eastern sides of Crewe, would ensure that the openness of the remaining narrow gap between Crewe and Nantwich would be safeguarded in the long term, beyond the plan period, as a permanent measure to prevent the merging of these two important towns and adjoining villages. However, for the second potential area of Green Belt, there is insufficient evidence to justify the designation of the

area to the west of Nantwich around the village of Acton, in terms of the Green Belt purposes defined in the *NPPF*.

- 11.17.4 The study considers that the proposed Green Belt should be extended to the south to encompass other nearby settlements such as Hough and Wybunbury in the gap between Crewe and Stoke that could in future become the focus for new development. An extended Green Belt designation would provide certainty in the long term; help to secure a sustainable future for the countryside and support the rural economy and local communities.
- 11.17.5 As an alternative to the proposal to link new areas of Green Belt, to the west, south and east of Crewe, into the existing North Staffordshire / South Cheshire Green Belt, the Study considers whether a Strategic Open Gap policy should be adopted in place of the saved Green Gap policy. This would seek to identify land that performs an important role in protecting the setting and separate identity of settlements, and to avoid coalescence; retaining the existing settlement pattern by maintaining the openness of the land; and retaining the physical and psychological benefits of having open land near to where people live.
- 11.17.6 In terms of the Strategic Open Gap policy, the study considers that this should only be applied to areas where there is considerable risk of coalescence of neighbouring settlements within the plan period. Therefore it concludes that, as an alternative to an extended Green Belt designation and to replace saved Green Gap Policy NE4 of the adopted Crewe and Nantwich Borough Local Plan, the Strategic Open Gap policy should be applied within the gaps between Nantwich, Wistaston and Willaston, between Rope and Shavington, West and East Basford and Weston, between East Crewe and Haslington, between Sandbach and Middlewich, and to protect the proposed green buffer between Leighton and Bradfield Green.
- 11.17.7 As an alternative to an extended Green Belt designation, the study recommends that areas to the south of Shavington, Basford and Weston should be considered for inclusion in the Strategic Open Gap policy where open land performs an important role in protecting the setting and separate identity of these small settlements, and to avoid coalescence. Otherwise, it concludes that normal countryside, environmental and heritage policies should provide sufficient control to keep the countryside open between Acton and Nantwich, between Haslington and Sandbach and to the north-west of Sandbach.
- 11.17.8 The *New Green Belt and Strategic Open Gap Review* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

ENERGY

11.18 Climate Change and Sustainability Energy Study (September 2011)

11.18.1 The *Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Study* was produced to inform the development of energy efficiency and renewable energy policies within the Local Plan. The study assesses the feasibility of delivering various types of renewable energy and the total implementable renewable resource, taking account of constraints within the Borough. The renewable energy technologies investigated as part of this work were:

- Wind
- Solar
- Ground, water and air source heat pumps
- Hydropower
- Combined heat and power and district heating
- Biomass energy
- Anaerobic digestion and energy from waste
- Geothermal heating

11.18.2 The research also identifies opportunity areas that could be suitable for the implementation of renewable energy technologies, along with identification of financial incentives and potential project developers. Key opportunities identified within the Borough include: district heating within a number of the larger towns in the Borough (particularly Crewe and Macclesfield); air and ground source heat pumps (particularly in areas off the gas network); solar energy throughout the Borough; anaerobic digestion and biomass (particularly in agricultural areas); and wind power of various scales throughout the Borough.

11.18.3 The study identifies potential planning policies that could be included within the Local Plan to ensure that new development is energy efficient and promotes the implementation of renewable energy across the Borough. According to the research, the implications of the energy opportunities on the spatial strategy are considered to be:

- Concentration of development in larger settlements could mean greater exploitation of communal energy infrastructure, such as combined heat and power and district heating.
- Higher density and mixed use development would have similar benefits.
- However, it may put more pressure on the capacity of the electricity grid, resulting in the need for expensive upgrades that adversely affect the viability of development. Low carbon energy generated locally or even on-site may act to mitigate this.

- Lower density development opens up more opportunities for microgeneration such as development integrated solar thermal and photovoltaics.
- Rural development has similar benefits with greater potential for wind, biomass and heat pumps in areas off the gas network.
- Focusing development in areas constrained by the Green Belt and other environmental designations (especially towns in the north) will limit the extent to which certain technologies, wind for example, can be employed unless support is given to low carbon energy development in the Green Belt.
- A more dispersed development pattern will better enable new development integrated with low carbon energy generation to bring financial and energy security benefits to a larger number of new and existing communities.
- Low carbon energy dispersed across the Borough can be used to encourage communities to have a closer relationship with the energy they use.

11.18.4 The research concludes with a recommendation that the *Core Strategy* and other development plan documents reflect the findings of the study, highlighting that the spatial strategy needs to reflect the desirability of focusing new development in areas with the greatest low carbon energy opportunities.

11.18.5 The *Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Study* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.19 Renewable Energy Policy Study (2010)

11.19.1 The *Establishment of a New Renewable Energy Policy Study* was produced in 2010, its purpose being:

- To provide a summary of the strategies and policies driving renewable generation and carbon emission reductions;
- To demonstrate that it is practically and economically viable to require developers to install renewable electricity generation of a capacity equivalent to saving 20% of the carbon emissions of new domestic and non-domestic buildings; and
- To explore the potential social and economic benefits of such policies.

11.19.2 The Study concludes by recommending the following actions for the Council:

- For domestic properties - planning policies and supplementary planning guidance should require a 44% reduction from the 2006 Target

Emissions Rate (i.e. the allowed CO₂ emissions) through design of the building fabric and heating systems, and an additional 20% reduction from renewable generation.

- For non-domestic properties - there should be a 44% reduction in carbon emissions compared to a building designed to the 2002 Building Regulations and an additional 20% reduction from renewable generation.
- Cheshire East should require interim code certificates and final post-certification certificates for the *Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH)* to ensure compliance with planning policies.
- Cheshire East should allow renewable generation from adjacent new developments, for example a community wind turbine or an anaerobic digester, to be considered as eligible measures. Indeed, such developments should be welcomed as they are likely to benefit the wider local economy.
- Cheshire East should embed sustainable building design and renewable generation into its strategic plans and planning criteria particularly for the strategic development areas and areas identified for housing within the Borough. This could include the installation of heat networks, and the mixing of different types of building within the area served by the heat network, to achieve maximum benefit from renewable energy and energy efficiency measures.
- The carbon emissions benchmark (Target Emission Rate) for gas heating should be used, and there should be a consistent use of fuel coefficients for electricity from the grid.
- Cheshire East should make planning requirements more flexible, to allow renewable generation which is not integral to a building, acceptable to be used to offset carbon emissions.
- Cheshire East should lead by example and implement these carbon emission reductions when refurbishing, or commissioning new build, for the Council Estate.
- Cheshire East should set up a Low Carbon Fund to assist Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME's) and householders to install renewable generation and undertake energy efficiency measures.
- Cheshire East should consider how it can invest in an Energy Services Company (ESCO), or other enterprises, to support the establishment of renewable energy projects or low carbon industries.
- If the targeted carbon emissions savings are not achieved, developers should be allowed to contribute to the Low Carbon Fund at a rate equivalent to the cost of achieving the savings through the use of photovoltaics. An alternative could be to pay for the upgrade of social housing to achieve the equivalent or greater carbon reductions.

- Cheshire East should actively support initiatives for training related to low carbon products and services and develop links with universities and colleges nearby.
- Cheshire East should actively support companies providing low carbon products and services to locate in the Borough, particularly SMEs, focusing on the facilities and training that they require.

11.19.3 The *Establishment of a New Renewable Energy Policy Study* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

INFRASTRUCTURE

11.20 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (June 2013)

11.20.1 The *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)* provides a single planning tool relating to flood risk and development in Cheshire East. It has involved consultations with key flood risk stakeholders such as the Environment Agency and United Utilities and collated all available and relevant flood risk information on all sources into one comprehensive assessment.

11.20.2 The flood risk information, assessment, guidance and conclusions of the *SFRA* provides strategic planners with the evidence base required to apply the sequential and exception tests, as required under the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, and demonstrate that a risk based, sequential approach has been applied in the preparation of their development plans and documents. This will allow for the preparation of a sustainable and robust *Core Strategy*.

11.20.3 Whilst the aim of the sequential approach is the avoidance of high flood risk areas, in locations such as Crewe, Macclesfield, Congleton and Nantwich where Cheshire East Council strives for continued growth and regeneration, this will not always be possible. The *SFRA* therefore provides the necessary links between spatial developments, wider flood risk management policies, local strategies and on-the-ground works by bringing flood risk information into one location.

11.20.4 The *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.21 Local Transport Plan (2011-2026)

11.21.1 Cheshire East's *Local Transport Plan (LTP)* relates directly to the seven priorities of the *Ambition for All-The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2010* which illustrates how transport contributes to the achievement of wider aspirations and ambitions for the area over the next 15 years (2011-2026). The *SCS* themes are:

- To ensure a sustainable future
 - To create conditions for business growth
 - To drive out the sources of poor health
 - To nurture strong communities
 - To support our children and young people
 - To prepare for an increasingly older population
 - To unlock the potential of our towns
- 11.21.2 In developing the strategy, consideration has been given to the relative priorities across the thematic areas and an understanding of where transport interventions can achieve the greatest results. Following consultation with stakeholders, Members and the general public, the priorities for the *LTP* are to '*ensure a sustainable future*' and '*create conditions for business growth*'.
- 11.21.3 In terms of spatial planning, the *LTP* addresses Transport Challenges and Policy Solutions acknowledging that the Council's *Local Development Framework (LDF)* provides the overall spatial development strategy for the Borough. There is a critical link between spatial planning and transport, as the location of housing, employment, retail, healthcare and education facilities will be a major determinant of the need to travel and the attractiveness of each mode.
- 11.21.4 Whilst current planning policies encourage new development in sustainable locations, so as to minimise the need to travel by private car, in those circumstances where a greater range of attractive travel opportunities exist, more people will have the ability to choose sustainable travel modes such as public transport, walking and cycling. There is also a balance to be struck regarding the future vitality of rural towns and villages whereby new development and population increase may support jobs and services and such issues should be dealt with through the local plan-making process rather than the *LTP*.
- 11.21.5 The aim of the *LTP*, which is widely supported by stakeholders, is to ensure that development sites have good accessibility and that appropriate conditions are imposed on planning approvals which ensure the developer makes them accessible -whether in urban or rural locations. This will help create sustainable communities where people are able to 'live local, work local and buy local'.
- 11.21.6 *LTP* policy needs to reinforce and help deliver the approach set out in the emerging Local Plan. There are two strands of influence; the first is guiding most new development to locations with good existing levels of accessibility and the second relates to mitigating the impact of development and encouraging provision of high quality sustainable transport options. The section relating to sustainability and future needs focuses on the first element and seeks to influence spatial considerations within the local plan.
- ***Policy S1 Spatial Planning:*** *Seek to minimise the future need to travel through a strategic approach in the Local Plan that focuses most new development in locations where there is a good range of housing, jobs,*

shops and services already accessible by public transport, cycling and walking.

11.21.7 This policy is supported by the following Policy Initiatives:-

- **Transport assessment of strategic site proposals:** *Assess the likely cumulative impact of development proposals on the highways and transport network, and inform the local plan process by producing public transport accessibility mapping of all strategic sites proposals.*
- **Neighbouring authority developments:** *Work with neighbouring authorities to test the transport impact of adjacent developments on Cheshire East's highways and transport network and ensure appropriate mitigation is provided.*

11.21.8 Cheshire East's first *Local Transport Plan (LTP) Implementation Plan* is aligned with the Coalition Government's four- year spending review period (April 2011 to March 2015) and contains details of the initiatives which will be delivered in order to meet the objectives and priorities for transport set out in the 15 year *LTP* strategy.

11.21.9 The *Local Transport Plan (LTP)* may be viewed using the following link:-

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel/local_transport_plan.a.spx

11.22 Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (October, 2013)

11.22.1 As part of the Core Strategy, the Council must identify what infrastructure of strategic significance is needed to support the scale of development proposed and how such infrastructure can be provided. Infrastructure of strategic significance is defined as that which is over and above the normal provision that is part and parcel of developing a site.

11.22.2 The information collated from infrastructure providers has been brought together in the *Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan*. The draft outlines in broad terms what infrastructure is needed when, who is responsible for providing it, how much it is estimated to cost and how it can be funded; any shortfalls in currently identified funding are also highlighted. The document builds on the work contained in the Local Infrastructure Plan Baseline Report produced by the Council in 2011- see following weblink:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.22.3 The *Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan* is a supporting document for the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* and covers the period 2013 to 2030. However, its content will be monitored and periodically reviewed to assist in the delivery of the identified infrastructure. The infrastructure requirements set out in the Draft plan are attributed to the relevant Core Strategy sites and Strategic Locations in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* and have also informed viability assessment work.

- 11.22.4 The *Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan* concludes that there are very few schemes that are fully funded, therefore there are significant funding gaps, this being the difference between the cost of the infrastructure and the amount of funding received for the proposed level of development. A preliminary estimate suggests that over the various category types (eg transport, education, open space etc), there is a shortfall of over £200m, but it is acknowledged that not all of this can be achieved through developer contributions, so other funding sources will need to be investigated.
- 11.22.5 The *Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan* may be viewed using the following link:-
- <http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

SUSTAINABILITY AND VIABILITY

11.23 Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Report (September, 2013)

- 11.23.1 The report summarises the *Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)* undertaken of the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* produced by Cheshire East Council, as part of the development of the Local Plan. It identifies, describes and assesses the likely significant effects of implementing the strategy and policies on European designated sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites, and also any candidate SACs and potential SPAs) within and around Cheshire East.
- 11.23.2 European Directive 92/43/EEC of the *Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna (Habitats Directive)* provides legal protection to habitats and species of European importance. The Directive is transposed into English legislation through the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010*. It is a requirement of these regulations that where a plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and where it is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site, the plan-making authority must, before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan in view of the site's conservation objectives. The plan-making authority must give effect to the plan only after having determined that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site (subject to considerations of overriding public interest).
- 11.23.3 The *HRA* process is underpinned by the precautionary principle. If it is not possible to rule out likely significant effects on the evidence available, then it is assumed that a risk may exist and it needs to be addressed in the assessment process, preferably through changes to the proposed measure or through options such as avoidance or mitigation. Only once this assessment has been completed can it be concluded that there is no adverse risk to a European site resulting from the plan. As the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* is not connected with or necessary to the management of European sites, it is necessary to undertake a *HRA* of these strategies.

11.23.4 The study concludes that the most likely effects of the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* on European Sites are related to pressures from new development including water abstraction, changes to water levels/quality (surface run-off, pollution events), air pollution and increased recreational pressures arising from new housing developments and increased tourism. The policies and provisions in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* and other plans and strategies should ensure that potential significant adverse effects on the integrity of all identified European sites are avoided. However, as the *Core Strategy* is a high tier plan, this means that it is difficult to devise more specific mitigation measures as the precise nature, scale, timing and location/layout of development is not known. Therefore, it will be necessary that *Construction Environment Management Plans (CEMP's)*, landscaping, green infrastructure and open space proposals are submitted to the Council during the planning application process as part of sustainable development proposals for any sites in close proximity to European sites.

11.23.5 The *Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Report* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

11.24 Sustainability Appraisal (September, 2013)

11.24.1 Planning legislation requires that the Local Plan is subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA). SA is a systematic process designed to evaluate the predicted social, economic and environmental effects of development planning. European and UK legislation require that the Local Plan is also subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA); a process that considers the effects of development planning on the environment. Government guidance advises that these two processes should be carried out together and outlines a number of stages of SA work that need to be carried out as the Local Plan is being prepared. These stages are:

- Stage A: Setting Context and Scope
- Stage B: Preparing and Developing Options
- Stage C: Preparing the SA Report
- Stage D: Consulting on the Plan and the SA
- Stage E: Monitoring the Implementation of the Plan

11.24.2 Details on the performance of each of these stages in relation to the preparation of the Cheshire East Local Plan are contained in Section 2 of the full report which will accompany the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. In addition to the SA/SEA requirement, the Integrated Appraisal of the Draft Core Strategy has also incorporated the following:

- Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (A statutory requirement for Local Plans)
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) (Non-statutory)
- Rural Proofing Assessment
- Accessibility Assessment

- 11.24.3 At each stage of the Local Plan's development, all options and any reasonable alternatives to policy and allocation proposals have been considered and assessed. Options for the level of growth and spatial distribution were considered at the Issues and Options stage in 2010. These included consideration of low, medium and high growth strategies and three options for the spatial distribution of development around the Borough as well as a Rural Dispersal variant. Further alternatives were considered for policies and strategic site allocations as part of the Development Strategy and Policy Principles stage in 2013. These included the consideration of policies that seek to protect and enhance the environment, promote economic prosperity, create sustainable communities and reduce the need to travel. The reasons for selecting or rejecting options are provided in Sections 4 and 5 of the report.
- 11.24.4 The SA has helped to inform the selection and rejection of options and forms part of the evidence supporting the Local Plan. However, it should be noted that the SA findings are not the sole basis for a decision; other factors, including planning and feasibility, play a key role in the decision-making process.
- 11.24.5 A key function of the SA and overall Integrated Appraisal (IA) process is to provide advice and recommendations to the plan-maker in order to mitigate negative effects and enhance positive effects identified through the process. These can then be carried forward in the remainder of the plan-making process and can include further recommendations for other Development Plan Documents (for example Area Action Plans) and for processes including development control and site master planning.
- 11.24.6 The Integrated Appraisal (IA) process found that on the whole, the mitigation provided through Draft Core Strategy policies would address identified potential significant effects. Where necessary, the IA made recommendations for lower level planning. For example, the IA recommends that development proposals for certain strategic sites are accompanied by construction plans, Transport Assessments and Travel Plans to address potential negative effects on health.
- 11.24.7 The SA is an iterative and ongoing process that has been undertaken at each stage of the Core Strategy, both during the internal production and external consultation of the document, helping to influence its development. The issues identified in initial SA's have led to additional mitigation measures for sites proposed and the tightening of policies to create appropriate conditions for sustainable development. The SA has also influenced the selection of sites included in the Draft Core Strategy.
- 11.24.8 The SA has identified that more detailed policies relating to waste management, contaminated land, recycling and reuse of water, resilience to extreme weather events and longer term rising temperatures and site remediation are needed, which can be looked at in the forthcoming *Site Allocations and Development Policies* and *Waste Development Plan Documents*.

11.25 Viability Study (September, 2013)

- 11.25.1 This study provides an appraisal of the viability of the Cheshire East Local Plan in terms of the impact of its policies on the economic viability of development proposed to be delivered by the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. The study considers policies that might affect the cost and value of development (Affordable Housing and Community Infrastructure Levy, Design and Construction Standards) as well as site specific cost constraints identified in the site allocations process (eg contamination, access issues, flood defence etc). The study also considers delivery over a 15 year plan period.
- 11.25.2 In accordance with advice in the *NPPF*, the study should be seen as a strategic overview of plan level viability rather than as any specific interpretation of Cheshire East Council policy on the viability of any individual site or application of planning policy to affordable housing, CIL or developer contributions. Similarly, the conclusions and recommendations in the report do not necessarily reflect the policy position of Cheshire East Council.
- 11.25.3 The study area covers the whole of the administrative area of Cheshire East Council excluding the Peak District National Park. The assessment first considers the existence of economic sub-market areas for residential and commercial development within the study area which may also form the basis for the Local Planning Authority's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Zones in the event that Cheshire East pursues the adoption of CIL.
- 11.25.4 The study seeks to assess the viability of residential developments and commercial sites taking account of all relevant factors. The study considers delivery of residential sites within three time periods from 2015 to 2030 (0-5 years, 6-10 years and 11-15 years). The cost and value assumptions are adjusted accordingly to reflect market forecasts for residential costs and values over these periods. Commercial site delivery is based on current market assumptions.
- 11.25.5 The study involves an assessment of market values for residential and commercial development in Cheshire East based on valuation advice and uses base construction costs and rates based on advice from consultants together with advice on costs for abnormal site constraints.
- 11.25.6 The study firstly tests mixed residential and commercial development scenarios considered relevant and likely to emerge in the study area to assess the potential to adopt a Community Infrastructure Levy. The study then tests specific sites being proposed for allocation in the Plan to determine viability over the plan period. The viability appraisal considers two principal land value benchmarks from which development is likely to emerge – greenfield and brownfield.
- 11.25.7 The residential valuation assessment study also factors in the Council's affordable housing targets. Affordable Housing is however exempt from CIL charges, so this is also factored into the appraisal. The CIL viability

assessment produces maximum rates of CIL that could be applied whilst maintaining the economic viability of development.

- 11.25.8 The viability study firstly concludes that the variations in the values of residential development are significant enough to warrant differential assumptions being applied to different geographical locations in the study area (low, medium, high and very high zones). Similarly the economic viability of residential development in these zones is significantly different and therefore warrants a differential rate approach to CIL. For example, the CIL Viability Appraisals demonstrate that greenfield residential development is generally viable for all forms of housing in the Medium, High and Very High value sub-market areas in Cheshire East. However, it is acknowledged that based on current sale values of residential property in the lowest value areas, primarily in Central Crewe, that new development would not be viable and could not support CIL.
- 11.25.9 The appraisals demonstrate that greenfield residential development is generally viable with the Council's policy target of 30% Affordable Housing in the Medium, High and Very High value sub-market areas. However, brownfield development is only viable in the very high value sub-market area with 30% Affordable Housing delivery. The appraisals also illustrate that brownfield residential development in the medium and high value zones may only be viable if lower levels of affordable housing are permitted at planning application stage.
- 11.25.10 The CIL study factors in the impact of Local Plan policies on the economic viability of development including Affordable Housing Targets and sustainable construction standards. The results of the viability testing provide maximum potential rates of CIL (in relation to different levels of Affordable Housing delivery). Based on the Council's policy target of 30% Affordable Housing and given a reasonable allowance for a 'viability buffer', it recommends CIL rates that would be viable in the various sub-market areas.
- 11.25.11 The viability study also concludes that the variations in the values of some types of commercial development are significant enough to warrant differential assumptions being applied to different geographical locations in the study area (a high and low zone). The viability appraisals illustrate that most categories of commercial development are not viable in current market circumstance in either high or low value zones in Cheshire East, which is evident by the current lack of activity in these sectors. The exceptions are food supermarket retail and general retail, which were assessed to be viable and capable of accommodating CIL in both greenfield and brownfield development scenarios. The study recommends CIL rates which would be viable in the various sub-market areas.
- 11.25.12 The site specific testing indicates whether individual development sites are considered viable on a 'traffic light' red, green, amber approach (having applied draft CIL rates as well as the policy impacts considered in the CIL analysis).

- 11.25.13 The study illustrates that, subject to land value adjustments to reflect the rectification works where abnormal site factors and mitigation costs are encountered, all greenfield sites in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* delivery period (ie the 5 year land supply for 2015-2020) are viable. This situation is slightly different with brownfield sites where the level of negative viability exceeds the abnormal cost allowance.
- 11.25.14 Whilst all greenfield sites are deemed to be viable across the entire plan period, the delivery of some brownfield sites may require landowners to be realistic about value reductions to take account of abnormal development costs and the Council may need to reduce affordable housing aspirations to encourage development in the short to medium term. However, brownfield development makes up a relatively small proportion of the total site allocations in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* and hence the overall residential delivery strategy is considered sound. Viability does improve in the medium term (2021-2025) with all greenfield sites demonstrating viability. In the longer term (2026-2030), all greenfield and brownfield sites demonstrate viability.
- 11.25.15 The study of employment sites has not sought to assess delivery over the 15 year plan period, as commercial values are much more difficult to predict than the residential market. The study is therefore based on current costs and values which remain reflective of the base of an economic cycle with investment yields still performing poorly since the downturn in 2007. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the viability of commercial development will improve over the plan period and sites currently demonstrating negative viability will be deliverable in the future.
- 11.25.16 Nevertheless, based on the study assumptions in relation to employment sites being driven by owner occupiers rather than speculative developers, 92% of the greenfield employment sites demonstrate positive viability. As with the residential sites, brownfield development is more challenging and may require a shift in property values before some sites can be delivered economically. The majority of employment development proposed in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* will be on greenfield sites and therefore the delivery strategy is considered sound.
- 11.25.17 The *Viability Study* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan>

12.0 Duty to Co-operate

- 12.1 The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* highlights that public bodies have a duty to co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to strategic priorities. The Government clearly expects joint working on areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities.
- 12.2 Local planning authorities should therefore work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-

ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans. Joint working should enable local planning authorities to work together to meet development requirements which cannot wholly be met within their own administrative areas – for instance, because of a lack of physical capacity or because to do so would cause significant harm to the principles and policies of their Development Plan. As part of this process, consideration could be given to producing joint planning policies on strategic matters and informal strategies, such as joint infrastructure and investment plans.

- 12.3 Local planning authorities are expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively co-operated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for examination. This could be by way of plans or policies prepared as part of a joint committee, a memorandum of understanding or a jointly prepared strategy, which is presented as evidence of an agreed position. It is stressed that co-operation should be a continuous process of engagement from initial thinking through to implementation, resulting in a final position where plans are in place to provide the land and infrastructure necessary to support current and projected future levels of development.
- 12.4 The plan making authorities Duty to Co-operate with neighbouring councils and other specified bodies applies to strategic issues that affect two or more authority areas (eg. major cross-boundary matters). The Duty is to do more than simply consult other parties; it is to '*engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis*' (NPPF) with the aim to reach an agreed resolution to such issues.
- 12.5 Previous consultations and ongoing discussions with neighbouring authorities have raised a number of potential Duty to Co-operate matters including accommodating high development growth in Cheshire East with implications for loss of Green Belt separation, undermining urban regeneration in neighbouring authority areas, protecting the character of the Peak District National Park, possible wider than Plan area impacts on important wildlife habitats, strategic infrastructure proposals, the operation and future development of Manchester Airport, the provision of school places, the use and safeguarding of mineral resources and how Cheshire East manages its waste.
- 12.6 The main strategic issue that has potential cross boundary implications is catering for the high development growth requirements of the Plan area (especially housing), particularly in view of the extensive areas of Green Belt across the Borough. Before changing Green Belt boundaries in Cheshire East to accommodate at least part of this development, the possibility of a neighbouring authority being able to meet any of these requirements needs to be considered. New housing will be the main land take of future development and the question of sharing such provision needs to be asked of those neighbouring authorities that exhibit significant cross boundary housing linkages such as commuting to work and/or migration flows. These flows are particularly significant to/from the Borough and South Manchester and between the Borough and the Potteries.
- 12.7 Associated with this issue, Stockport Council has expressed concerns about any reduction of the Green Belt gap with Handforth if the proposal at Handforth East goes ahead. Similarly, the Potteries authorities objected at the previous Plan consultation stage that development proposed south east of Crewe and in the Alsager area would undermine regeneration efforts, particularly in Stoke-on-

Trent. All relevant authorities have been asked if they could accommodate any of Cheshire East's housing requirements. Stoke-on-Trent City Council has responded to suggest this may be possible in the longer term but cannot be definite at the present time. Stockport Council has commented that it may be feasible to assist with general housing if Cheshire East could accommodate some of its Gypsy and Traveller needs. The other relevant authorities (Trafford, Manchester and Newcastle-under-Lyme) have indicated that they cannot meet any of Cheshire East's housing requirements.

12.8 In the context of Cheshire East, there are no major infrastructure programmes in adjacent local authority areas that affect the delivery of development proposals in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*, though schemes emerging from work on the *South East Manchester Multi- Modal Strategy (SEMMMS)* may have a bearing on future transportation modelling in the north of the Borough.

13.0 Consultation Responses

13.1 The *Policy Principles and Development Strategy*, upon which comments were invited during the 6 week period between the 15th January and the 26th February, 2013, was subject to a considerable level of public and stakeholder engagement including the following:

- Consultation Documents
- Notification Via Cheshire East's Consultation Portal or Letter
- Events/Meetings
- Web Site and Cheshire East's Consultation Portal
- Publicity and Media Coverage
- Young People
- Consultation Responses
- Petitions and Standard Letters Received

13.2 In respect of the *Shaping our Future: Policy Principles* document, almost 1500 responses were received to the consultation with about 50% registering support for the 'Policy Principles' and 20% raising objections; the remainder submitted general comments for consideration by the Council.

13.3 The following provides a brief summary of the responses received:-

- Concerns over definition of 'local service centre';
- Strong concern over definition of 'sustainable village' and identified settlements;
- General support for encouraging economic prosperity, including the rural economy;
- Overwhelming support for promoting a 'town centre first' approach;
- General support for 'sustainable communities' policies;
- Concerns over policies on housing to meet local needs;
- General support for policies on 'protecting and enhancing environmental quality';
- General support for 'sustainable environment' policies, particularly the historic environment and promoting high quality design; and

- General support for reducing the need to travel and promoting more sustainable travel modes.

13.4 In respect of the *Shaping our Future: A Development Strategy for Jobs and Sustainable Communities* document, almost 10,000 responses were received to the consultation with just over 50% of the representations involving objections to the Development Strategy. A further 25% of responses highlight broad support with the remainder submitting comments for consideration by the Council.

13.5 The following provides a brief summary of the responses received:-

- Overall support for Vision for Cheshire East in 2030;
- A majority of respondents objected to the levels of proposed new house-building;
- Concern over status and findings of *Town Strategies*;
- Concern at Growth Strategy, but general acceptance of growth to promote regeneration and jobs;
- Concern at findings of settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution of development;
- General support for Crewe and Macclesfield vision;
- Concern over visions for Key Service Centres, Local Service Centres and other Villages;
- Concern over adjustments to the Green Belt;
- Support for new Green Belt, Strategic Open Gap and Open Countryside policies;
- Concern over 'safeguarded land';
- Support for sustainable development;
- Concern over supporting infrastructure, particularly roads;
- Concern over focus on greenfield rather than brownfield land;
- Strong objections to Leighton West, The Triangle and East Shavington sites in Crewe;
- Support for Crewe Railway Exchange;
- Strong objections to land between Chelford Road/Congleton Road in Macclesfield;
- Broad support for strategic sites around Congleton;
- Objection to site in North West Knutsford;
- Broad support for sites in Alsager and Middlewich;
- Broad support for sites in Nantwich;
- Strong objections to Capricorn site in Sandbach, as well as alternative sites;
- Strong objections to sites in Wilmslow;
- Strong objections to new settlement at Handforth East;
- Objections to new settlement at South East Crewe;
- Concern over evidence base; and
- Some support for alternative sites.

13.6 In addition to the responses received on the Development Strategy and Policy Principles, 9 petitions were also received. Several standard letters were also received with an estimated 500 copies of a questionnaire submitted by the pressure group '*Hands Off Handforth Green Belt*'.

13.7 It should be noted that some of the representations received relate to support for alternative sites put forward in the Development Strategy. However, as these were not in the Council's list of preferred sites, it is not possible to gauge the level of objection they may have elicited at the consultation stage.

13.8 In respect of the *Shaping our Future: A Development Strategy for Jobs and Sustainable Communities - Possible Additional Sites Proposed by Developer and Land Interests Consultation* document, the consultation period between the 3rd and 30th May, 2013 focused on 27 possible additional sites and elicited nearly 5,000 responses. Of these, over 80% were objections with less than 10% expressing support for the possible alternative sites; the remainder submitted general comments for consideration by the Council.

13.9 With the exception of White Moss Quarry, none of the possible additional sites received any majority support in favour of allocation in the emerging *Core Strategy*. Indeed, several sites, notably Site H (Wistaston Green Road, Wistaston) and Site J (Gorsty Hill Golf Course, Weston) received considerable objection. It should also be noted that Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme Councils did not consider White Moss Quarry offered a reasonable alternative to their original objection to sites in the South East Crewe growth corridor. Seven petitions were also received in respect of the possible additional sites.

13.10 With regard to the responses to the *Development Strategy and Policy Principles Sustainability Appraisal Report (2013)*, a total of 221 representations were submitted and the following provides a brief summary of the responses received:-

- Objection to the length of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and how the sections have been split up;
- Concern that the proposals are unsustainable;
- Suggestions that the SA is superficial and repetitive;
- Doubts about the worth of the SA;
- Support for the principles of the SA;
- Suggestions that it is unclear as to how the SA has been used for inform the Development Strategy and Policy Principles documents;
- Concern that development can negatively affect an area's character;
- Suggestion that the SA has not been objective for Handforth East;
- Suggestion that the SA is not compliant with legislation;
- Suggestion that there is a lack of detail on community infrastructure and health;
- Suggestions on additional sustainability considerations for canals;
- Queries on the scoring of some proposals and request for further clarity on how/why options have been selected or rejected;
- Suggestion that there is a lack of evidence to support statements in the SA;
- Queries as to the significance of some of the option's effects;
- Objection to some of the terminology used;
- Concern regarding how the SA has been carried out; and
- Amendments suggested to some of the site commentaries.

- 13.11 It should be noted that there was a considerable amount of objection to Goostrey being a Local Service Centre, however this is primarily a matter for the plan-making process and not for the Sustainability Appraisal. Similarly, there were many other responses on different themes that are also primarily matters for the plan-making process.
- 13.12 With regard to the responses received to the *Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Development Strategy and Policy Principles* consultation, 26 representations were received with an even split between support/comment and objections. The principal areas of concern related to the potential impact of development proposals on sensitive ecological areas, particularly the 'Shavington Triangle', Wybunbury, Goostrey and North West Knutsford.
- 13.13 At the meeting of the Strategic Planning Board on the 26th September, 2013, further oral submissions were made by 33 interested parties to the emerging *Core Strategy*.
- 13.14 Due consideration has been given to all of the responses received and these have informed the preparation of the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. Comments made on the consultation documents, along with the Council responses may be viewed using the following link:-
- www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan
- 13.15 Details of the methodology adopted in engaging with stakeholders and local communities, may be viewed, in Annex 1 and 2 of the Report to Spatial Planning Board, dated 26th September 2013, by using the following link:-
- <http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=279&MId=5069&Ver=4>

14.0 Strategy and Policy

The Context for the Plan

- 14.1 Cheshire East is one of the most successful economies outside of the South-East of England and remains a highly desirable place to live and work. The Borough has a strong industrial heritage from rail engineering in Crewe to silk manufacturing in Macclesfield and retains an entrepreneurial business base which has shown resilience during the recent recession.
- 14.2 Though manufacturing employment is reducing, reflecting the national picture, Cheshire East still has a higher presence of manufacturing than the North West or the UK. This is indicative of a strong industrial heritage and a growing number of local manufacturing businesses, some of whom are expanding at a rapid rate. High-skill sectors such as pharmaceuticals, automotive and research and development also have a strong presence. Whilst Cheshire East accounts for 5.6% of the North-West's total employment, 36.9% of the region's scientific Research and Development jobs are located in the Borough.
- 14.3 There are many factors which underpin the economic success of the area, including its connectivity into major infrastructure. Cheshire East lies at the heart of the country's major road and rail network, connecting the North West into the

Midlands and South East, with Crewe to London journey times of 1hr 40mins by rail. The rich and diverse natural environment and close proximity to the Peak District and major cities make Cheshire East a very desirable place to raise a family. There are low levels of crime and a strong education offer.

- 14.4 Cheshire East is made up of a number of very distinctive market towns that provide a vital economic and social hub for rural communities and many towns are currently facing the same challenges in terms of vacancies on the high street and the threat of internet and out-of-town shopping.
- 14.5 The Council cannot be complacent about the future of its economy. In an increasingly competitive, global economic environment, Cheshire East must compete strongly to maintain its economic success and continue to build new enterprises that are able to compete in a global market place.
- 14.6 Over the next twenty years, there is a need to invest strongly in the Borough's infrastructure network, not only to improve local accessibility, but more importantly to ensure that Cheshire East is better connected to other economic centres such as Manchester and the South East. This means building new roads, maintaining high speed broadband, improving rail stations and taking advantage of new national infrastructure such as HS2 and proposed A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road.
- 14.7 The Borough must also have a supply of new, high quality employment sites that take advantage of the infrastructure network. This means not only identifying more land for development, but linking new sites with appropriate infrastructure to ensure future job creation.
- 14.8 The Council must protect, invest and reinvigorate its market towns through a 'Town Centre First' approach and create the rich and diverse retail and social offer that can continue to be at the heart of community life. It must also protect its natural environment, and where new development is necessary, limit the impact of new building by safeguarding the intrinsic quality of the Cheshire countryside.

Overall Spatial Strategy

- 14.9 Cheshire East is a high quality place to live and work, but it will only remain that way if changes evolve to meet the needs of future generations. That change needs to be managed so that it reinforces the advantages the area already possesses, rather than work against them.
- 14.10 The development strategy contained in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* clearly establishes the employment land, housing land, infrastructure and community facilities that the area will need in the future. It demonstrates that the Council is committed to a jobs-led growth strategy that places the prosperity of its citizens at the heart of everything it is seeking to achieve.
- 14.11 The strategy also recognises the distinctive character of different parts of the Borough, acknowledging that there is no single county town that dominates the area. The core principles are as follows:

- Concentrate development in the two Principal Towns of Crewe and Macclesfield by encouraging development that is necessary to support their regeneration and revitalisation;
- Development of the Key Service Centres linked to their distinctive needs and characteristics. Those in the north of the central belt of the Borough will accommodate a greater proportion of development whilst those in the north of the Borough will accommodate correspondingly less development, recognising Green Belt constraints;
- A new settlement at Handforth East (North Cheshire Growth Village), which will provide jobs and homes in a planned environment with good infrastructure, rather than loading onto the periphery of existing constrained settlements;
- Significant new employment areas to underpin the growth strategy at Basford (Crewe), Radway Green and M6 J16 (Alsager), M6 J17 (Sandbach), Middlewich, North Congleton, South Macclesfield and at Wardle. Existing key employers will be supported to grow and develop; and
- Adjustments to the Green Belt to facilitate new employment and housing development, an extension to the South Cheshire Green Belt to prevent the coalescence of Crewe and Nantwich and surrounding villages and to protect undeveloped areas adjacent to Crewe.

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

14.13 The *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* also adopts a 'Town Centre First' approach to retailing and commercial development, supporting but changing the way existing Town Centres perform and function. In particular, there is support for the revitalisation of the principal Town Centres of Crewe and Macclesfield, which are identified as major growth points. In Crewe, this is complemented by urban regeneration based on the railway station as a further potential growth 'hub'.

14.14 Apart from areas allocated for necessary development, the unique character and distinctiveness of the Cheshire countryside will be protected and enhanced within the overall spatial strategy. Hence, new Green Belt is proposed to separate the historic town of Nantwich from Crewe and surrounding settlements and to preserve undeveloped areas between the Crewe Urban area and adjoining settlements to the south and east. New Landscape Character policies will apply across the Borough and the periphery of the Peak District National Park will be protected.

Jobs and Employment

14.15 Jobs and prosperity are at the heart of the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. Accordingly, the strategy seeks to promote the right conditions for job growth by

boosting the delivery of existing major employment sites, improving connectivity and identifying new areas for future investment and expansion. The starting point for this is has been an assessment of current employment land and assets.

- 14.16 The *Employment Land Review 2012* considered the demand for and supply of employment land in Cheshire East between 2009 and 2030. The review considered all employment land uses that fall within Use Classes B1 (offices, research and development and light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution). It demonstrates that Cheshire East is a key economic driver for the North West region with the local economy providing 6.4% of the North West's economic output and containing 7.5% of its businesses.
- 14.17 The *Employment Land Review 2012* forecasts a need to provide between 277.8 and 323.7 hectares of land for employment purposes between 2009 and 2030 across the whole Borough based on current or past trends. This equates to between 13.2 and 15.4 hectares per year.
- 14.18 A review of sites currently considered to be part of the supply of land for employment development indicates that 272.4 hectares of land from the existing employment land supply should be retained for employment in the future.
- 14.19 A review of current areas in use for employment demonstrated that although the vast majority of these are still likely to be in use for employment purposes by 2030, a number may have ceased to serve a useful economic function and be better suited for other purposes.
- 14.20 The *Employment Land Review 2012* therefore provides a key part of the evidence base upon which to plan for future economic growth. In order to ensure the future prosperity of the area and to assist in the national growth agenda, new employment land is identified in key locations to provide further economic opportunities. Some of these are phased to later in the plan period to allow existing sites to fully develop.
- 14.21 There are a number of key employment/technological locations in Cheshire East, of which seven have been identified as being of particular significance to the economy in Cheshire East. These are:
- Alderley Park, Nether Alderley
 - Hurdsfield Industrial Estate, Macclesfield
 - Bentley Motors, Crewe
 - Radbroke Hall, Knutsford
 - Jodrell Bank, Holmes Chapel
 - Booths Hall , Knutsford
 - Midpoint 18, Middlewich
- 14.22 As these are existing developments, 'saved' planning policies apply to any planned development, but as Astra Zeneca has announced plans to scale down

its facility at Alderley Park, a new strategic policy has been included in the plan. It is recognised that the sites are significant for the Cheshire East economy and this is demonstrated by the fact that these key employment locations represent the major sectors of the Cheshire East economy, notably chemicals and pharmaceuticals, advanced automotive engineering, logistics and finance.

14.23 The table below outlines the current take-up of employment land against supply targets contained in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* using a base date of 2010. These are apportioned according to the settlement hierarchy and demonstrate that, during the last three years (ie 2010-2013), the development of employment sites in the Borough has been slow, reflecting post-recessionary market conditions.

Employment Land Supply (31st March, 2013)

	Target (2010-2030) (ha)	Take-up (2010-2013) (ha)	Balance (2014-2030) (ha)
Principal Towns	85.0	0.20	84.80
Key Service Centres	196.0	0.74	195.26
Local Service Centres	5.0	0.09	4.91
Other settlements and rural areas	5.0	0.57	4.43
Wardle Improvement Area	31.0	0	31.00
N. Cheshire Growth Village	12.0	0	12.00
Total	334.0	1.60	332.40

Transport, Accessibility and Connectivity

14.24 Improved connectivity forms a vital part of the development strategy and provides the necessary links between land use and transport. Better transport is also a driver for economic growth with new development providing opportunities to secure new infrastructure. The strategy highlights the role that Crewe Station can play in leading the regeneration of the whole town; this position could also be greatly enhanced by the advent of HS2, which is fully supported by Cheshire East, subject to environmental considerations. Fast rail links to Manchester, Birmingham and London are also key advantages of Macclesfield and Wilmslow Town Centres.

14.25 New road infrastructure is also promoted and protected in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. For example, the dualling of the A500 will support future growth in Crewe as will improvements to junctions 16 and 17 of the M6. A new northern link road is proposed around Congleton to both relieve existing congestion and also open up new land, especially for employment development. This in turn will facilitate links into Macclesfield, where a new link road is planned, again connected to new development. Similarly, a new Eastern By-Pass is planned for Middlewich; this will be instrumental in opening up additional employment land at Midpoint 18.

- 14.26 To maintain linkages with Greater Manchester, the *South East Manchester Multi Modal Study (SEMMMS)* route proposes a new highway link between the A6 and Manchester Airport; a Woodford-Poynton Relief Road is also planned.
- 14.27 Accessibility is another key feature of the strategy and this has been a fundamental principle in determining the settlement hierarchy, where proximity to local services by all modes of transport is important, particularly in a predominantly rural Borough.

Housing Growth

- 14.28 In Cheshire East, there are a number of factors that influence the scale and location of future housing. The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* advises that Local Plans need to meet the full, objectively assessed housing needs for their area. In addition there is the ongoing requirement to identify a five year supply of 'deliverable' housing sites and to identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for housing growth for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15.
- 14.29 In terms of evidence, the starting point is demographic information. The Council commissioned a range of forecasts to be produced using POPGROUP software based on the *Office for National Statistics (ONS)*. This led to fourteen demographic scenarios being considered in total. It produced a wide range of outputs for growth from the narrow view of providing for the likely needs of the existing population only (i.e. natural change) to a wider view based on providing for continued economic prosperity.
- 14.30 Whilst a natural change option could be desirable in terms of minimising impacts on local services, evidence from the *Census 2011* suggests a highly mobile population with considerable movement of people in and out of the Borough. Similarly, projections at the higher end of the scale oversimplify the picture. Hence, a more moderated projection has been preferred with an estimated population increase of 40,500 people over the plan period which produces an average housing requirement of about 1,350 homes per year and an additional 14,800 jobs to 2030.
- 14.31 Demographic information is however only part of the equation. On the supply side of the equation, the *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)* considered all potential housing sites. The results of this assessment suggest that a total of 49,645 dwellings could be delivered over the next 15 years, of which about 7,200 homes would be on brownfield sites with a further 4,800 on sites that are a mix of brownfield and greenfield.
- 14.32 Therefore, the demographic and housing market evidence currently available suggests that there is an ongoing need to provide additional housing in Cheshire East. This reflects population growth, changes in household size and composition, family breakdown and other societal changes in addition to patterns of UK migration. Set against these 'elevating' factors are matters which serve to constrain supply; these include Green Belt, infrastructure limitations, highway capacity and environmental designations. Having factored these issues into the supply calculation, it is proposed to increase housing provision from the

(now revoked) *Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)* annual build rate of 1,150 to an average provision of at least 1,350 homes per year.

14.33 Advice in the *NPPF* is to ‘*boost significantly*’ the supply of housing land, whilst recognising current low rates of housebuilding and the likely timescales involved in delivering new housing land allocations. The increased provision from the former *RSS* levels in Cheshire East should also assist in the delivery of affordable housing in accordance with the policy principles set out in the *Core Strategy*.

14.35 The *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* therefore establishes a minimum housing requirement of 27,000 new dwellings for the period between 2010 and 2030 which equates to at least 1,350 new dwellings per year. Whilst any land supply calculations must be tempered by an under-provision of housing during the past few years, it should be acknowledged that higher levels of development might occur in the future either due to increased densities of development or improvements in the housing market.

14.36 As outlined in the following table, once account is taken of committed housing sites, there was an overall requirement (as of the 31st March, 2013) to identify sufficient land to accommodate 18,233 new houses in the Borough up to 2030. This residual balance will primarily be focused on the development sites identified in Section 16, but it should be noted that an allowance has also been made for further small-scale housing developments in the Principal Towns, Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres as defined in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*.

Housing Completions and Permissions		
Housing Land Supply	Net Dwellings	
Net completions 2010/11:	466	
Net completions 2011/12:	535	
Net Completions 2012/13:	651	
Planning Permissions at 31st March 2013	Sites under construction:	1,783
	Full planning permission:	1,132
	Outline planning permission:	905
	Subject to Section 106 Agreement:	3,295
Total completions and planning permissions:	8,767	
Residual Requirement (2013-2030):	18,233	

Five-Year Housing Land Supply

14.37 The *NPPF* requires that Councils identify a five-year supply of ‘deliverable’ housing land in their development plans, plus a 5% ‘buffer’ to allow for choice and competition. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of

housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. In the context of Cheshire East, set against an annual target of 1,350 new dwellings per year and using a 5% buffer, this equates to sufficient land to accommodate 7,793 new homes over the period 2014-2019. This target includes existing commitments, which are sites already having the benefit of residential planning consent and those currently under construction. It also addresses the shortfall in performance over the last 3 years (ie 2010-2013) using the 'Liverpool Method'.

14.38 The sites identified in the submitted *Core Strategy* have been selected on the basis that they will make a significant contribution to meeting the housing needs of the area over the whole plan period and are economically viable in terms of deliverability. Moreover, they will significantly improve the supply of affordable, intermediate and market housing once the *Core Strategy* has been formally adopted following examination. There will also be a greater range of housing sites available with further sites to be identified in the *Site Allocations and Development Policies* DPD in due course.

14.39 The *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* sets out a comprehensive range of sites, including those in the Green Belt. Currently, these are excluded from the 5-year supply, along with certain other strategic sites where the Council is more cautious over the timing and yield of development. However, once the *Core Strategy* has been adopted and adjustments to the Green Belt have been approved, these sites will be deliverable and thereby contribute to the 5-year supply.

14.40 Based on the range of sites selected, using the 'Liverpool Method' and applying a 5% buffer, it is considered that a 5.8 year supply of 'deliverable' housing land is currently available in Cheshire East; if a 20% buffer is applied, this reduces to a 5.14 years supply. However, in two recent appeal decisions, allowing significant housing schemes in Sandbach, Inspectors have called into question the Council's 5-year land supply and the timing/delivery of strategic housing sites. In the light of these decisions, received at the time of preparing this report, the Council will re-examine the methodology applied to the supply calculations together with the results of a revised *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)*. It is envisaged that the results of these deliberations will be published at the submission stage of the emerging *Core Strategy*.

Landscape and Green Belt

North Cheshire Green Belt

14.41 In the north of Cheshire East, Green Belt forms part of the protective band that encircles the conurbation of Greater Manchester. Green Belt in this locality has endured for several decades, with selected boundaries last altered in the 1980's. The *Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West* (now revoked) reinforced the role of Green Belt and indicated that there should be no review of Green Belt in Cheshire until after 2011. In the north of the Borough, there are currently only two relatively small areas of 'safeguarded land' at Handforth and Wilmslow; these represent 'open land' not washed over by Green Belt, but

reserved for future development needs. Therefore, apart from recycling land, principally brownfield sites, development opportunities will inevitably be limited within the North Cheshire settlements in terms of scale and location.

- 14.42 When looking at future development needs across a wide area over a long time scale against the context of long-established, tightly-drawn boundaries with limited 'safeguarded land', it was considered appropriate to undertake a Green Belt review. As part of the local plan review, the Council has assessed the ongoing need for Green Belt in the north of the Borough, both locally and strategically.
- 14.43 The rationale for Green Belt in North Cheshire remains, as the need to provide open land around Greater Manchester and prevent adjacent towns merging is as strong as ever. Equally, there is a continuing need for regeneration in certain parts of the conurbation and these factors in tandem weigh heavily in favour of maintaining a strong green belt policy.
- 14.44 Where the issue of green belt policy becomes more pressing however is at the local level, particularly in terms of the sustainability of existing towns. For example, existing 'safeguarded land' is confined to Handforth and Wilmslow, extending to just 22 hectares. In Macclesfield, with a population of over 50,000, there is no 'safeguarded land' and the same situation prevails in Knutsford and Poynton. Hence, there is very little land that can be earmarked for new developments, should the need arise in the future. This creates difficult choices in these towns; either manage for the next 20-30 years within the confines of existing urban boundaries (essentially maintaining them for a period of well over half a century) or consider amending the Green Belt.
- 14.45 Before the latter course was adopted, thought was given as to whether needs could be met in towns beyond the Green Belt. In the case of North Cheshire, the Green Belt extends southwards beyond Macclesfield and Chelford, including all of the north west of the Borough around Knutsford. The only Key Service Centres that could accommodate some of this additional growth are Sandbach, Congleton and Middlewich. Whilst these areas could accommodate proportionately more growth, further development in these towns cannot reasonably be considered to support the sustainability of large discrete settlements some 15- 25 kilometres to the north.
- 14.46 Consideration was also given to whether Greater Manchester itself could accommodate future development needs. Generally, across south Manchester, Green Belt boundaries are drawn very tightly and it is necessary to travel within the M60 or further north and eastwards before sizeable brownfield development opportunities present themselves. There are two notable exceptions to this; Manchester Airport is currently the focus of considerable additional development, centred on an Enterprise Zone with an aspiration to develop 'Airport City'. However, this cannot be considered a driver for more growth in the north of Cheshire East. Equally, the former Woodford Aerodrome also provides development opportunities, with the benefit of planning consent, close to Wilmslow and Poynton, but neither of these sites is unconstrained by green belt issues. Therefore, whilst they could accommodate 'footloose' development that might seek locations in the northern part of the Borough, they do not address sustainability issues within towns in the north of the Borough.

- 14.47 The fundamental purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. As well as balancing social, economic and environmental objectives, 'development' is implicit as building and growth are part and parcel of sustainability. There are very limited opportunities for new development in the vicinity of Macclesfield, Knutsford, Poynton, Handforth and Wilmslow such that any new schools, businesses, housing or community facilities, all things normally considered necessary to sustain a town, must either be built as an 'exception' to the Green Belt or not at all. Hence, if 'sustainable development' is to be achieved in these towns, it follows that an adjustment of Green Belt must be considered. This, combined with the timing of a new local plan, is considered to be the exceptional circumstances that have warranted a Green Belt review.
- 14.48 Accordingly, the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* proposes limited alterations to the North Cheshire Green Belt boundaries to accommodate new housing and employment growth together with areas of 'safeguarded land' to ensure the future sustainability of the northern towns. This approach should ensure sufficient land is available to meet development needs until at least 2050, thereby negating any further review of Green Belt boundaries in the medium-long term.

South Cheshire Green Belt

- 14.49 Green Belt also occurs in South Cheshire close to the North Staffordshire border. This forms part of the wider band that surrounds the various towns and settlements of the 'Potteries', principally Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- 14.50 Limited alteration of the Green Belt is proposed, to allow for an expansion of Radway Green Business area over the coming years. If the growth potential of South Cheshire is to be realised, then additional business space, in well connected locations, needs to be allocated. The Council has had regard to the potential of directing development to other locations within the Green Belt boundaries or outside it, but neither would meet the particular needs of Radway Green, in the M6 Growth Corridor.
- 14.51 In terms of the South Cheshire Green Belt, it is acknowledged that Crewe is the primary focus for regeneration and economic growth. The '*All Change for Crewe*' and '*High Growth City*' initiatives make a cogent case for the comprehensive revitalisation of the town. However, regeneration and growth in Crewe depends on good communications, particularly the town's role as a national rail hub (a role that could be significantly enhanced by HS2); improved road communications are also vital to the town's success. Currently, Crewe is connected to the M6 by the A500. Whilst this road is dual carriageway for much of its length, the pivotal 4 kilometres closest to the M6 is only single carriageway and is already heavily congested. Therefore, if Crewe is to be developed to its full potential, the dualling of the A500, which currently lies within the South Cheshire Green Belt, represents a key infrastructure requirement.
- 14.52 To the west of Crewe, successive local planning authorities have sought to preserve the different identity of Crewe and the historic settlement of Nantwich and to maintain an area of open land between them and their surrounding

villages. This led to the inclusion of a 'Green Gap' policy within the Crewe and Nantwich Borough Local Plan. However, as Crewe has expanded, there remains continued pressure on the narrow gap that now separates the two towns. This pressure looks set to continue into the future, especially as Crewe continues to be the pre-eminent economic growth point in the south of Cheshire; this is further endorsed in the spatial policy framework of the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*.

- 14.53 Since the 'green gap' policy was first drawn up, circumstances have changed considerably. Crewe now finds itself as the largest town in a Borough of 372,000 people; it has been identified as a key driver for growth in the Cheshire/Warrington Sub-Region, a position that will only be intensified if HS2 is confirmed. Major new employment sites at Basford East and West are now ready for development. As well as new development being planned for other more sustainable areas on the periphery of the town, planning applications continue to be made for major residential development within the 'green gap'. This strongly suggests that it lacks credibility as a defensible planning policy in the minds of both strategic land buyers and development interests and therefore needs to be critically reviewed. It is worth noting that one of the key results of the public consultation stages of the plan-making process was the overwhelming local support for policies that retain the distinctive character of individual settlements and in the context of Crewe, for the 'green gap' policy that helps maintain this objective.
- 14.54 This inevitably leads to questions as to whether the 'green gap' is the right policy to deal with the planning challenges of the coming years and whether that alone is sufficient to stem the slow erosion of openness between Crewe and Nantwich. Hence, as part of the evidence base, it was appropriate to consider creating a new Green Belt around Crewe as a long-term solution to an issue that can only be resolved via the land use plan-making process. It would clearly not only contradict the 'localism' agenda, but also the principles of sustainable development, if a gradual merging of these areas took place.
- 14.55 The separation of Crewe and Nantwich by an extension to the North Staffordshire Green Belt, as proposed in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*, will allow each town to grow in parallel and at a pace commensurate with its particular scale and identity. Land is allocated to the north and south of Nantwich to ensure there is sufficient space to accommodate growth in future years and equally, Crewe retains capacity to grow and develop. Therefore, the proposed Green Belt should reinforce the sustainable future development of each town.
- 14.56 The final element of new green belt policy within the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* is the proposal to prevent the spread of development between Crewe and Haslington, where there is a similar risk of erosion of countryside. This results in a proposal to significantly extend the South Cheshire Green Belt within a broad area of search which includes large areas to the west, south and east of the Crewe urban area. It is considered that this proposal will provide stronger protection than the original 'Strategic Open Gap' policy outlined in the Draft Development Strategy, but in the interim, it is proposed that the existing 'Green Gap' policy be 'saved' pending the adoption of the *Site Allocations and Development Policies* DPD.

14.57 In summary, the proposed adjustments to the boundaries in North and South Cheshire will result in a significant net gain in the overall amount of land designated as Green Belt within Cheshire East. This will underline and reinforce the sensitivity of these areas, complimenting established open countryside policies. If these amendments are subsequently confirmed within an adopted *Core Strategy*, detailed boundaries will be established within the subsequent *Site Allocations and Development Policies Development Plan Document* and associated *Policies Map*.

Peak District National Park

14.58 Cheshire East is also proud to encompass part of the second most visited national park in the world, the Peak District National Park. To ensure that the national designation is given the highest protection along its border, a new 'buffer zone' is proposed that will safeguard both its amenity and visual character.

15.0 Strategic Planning Policy Framework

15.1 The policies set out in the *Shaping our Future: Policy Principles* document published in early 2013 have now been embodied (as amended following public consultation), within the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*.

15.2 The *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* is predicated on the following four 'Strategic Priorities' and it is upon these guiding principles that the planning policy framework for Cheshire East has been formulated:-

Strategic Priority 1

- Promoting economic prosperity by creating conditions for business growth.

Strategic Priority 2

- To create sustainable communities, where all members are able to contribute and where all the infrastructure required to support the community is provided.

Strategic Priority 3

- Environmental quality should be protected and enhanced.

Strategic Priority 4

- To reduce the need to travel, manage car use, promote more sustainable modes of transport and improve the road network.

15.3 **Policy MP1** relates to the '*Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development*'.

15.4 **Policies PG1- PG6** relate to the '*Planning for Growth*' objective broadly setting out the overall levels of growth, where new development will be accommodated

within the settlement hierarchy and the strategic approach to Green Belt, Safeguarded Land and Open Countryside.

15.5 **Policies SD1 and SD2** relate to the '*Planning for Sustainable Development*' objective setting out the Council's approach to sustainable development and how those principles will be applied in the decision-making process.

15.6 **Policies IN1 and IN2** relate to '*Infrastructure*' setting out the infrastructure requirements to support new development together with the Council's expectations in respect of developer contributions and the mechanisms for commencing appropriate levies.

15.7 **Policies EG1- EG5** relate to the '*Enterprise and Growth*' objective setting out how the Council will promote economic prosperity in all its guises, including the rural economy, tourism and a 'town centre first' approach to retail and commerce.

15.8 **Policies SC1-SC7** relate to building '*Stronger Communities*' setting out the Council's approach to meeting the needs of local communities and providing the social infrastructure, services and facilities required to create sustainable communities such as leisure, a mix of house types, affordable housing, housing to meet local needs and those of gypsies and travellers.

15.9 **Policies SE1-SE15** seek to protect and enhance environmental quality by creating a '*Sustainable Environment*', acknowledging its role in contributing to a successful economy and the well-being of local communities. A range of policies include addressing the wise use of resources (such as minerals), energy efficiency, protecting historic and natural assets, promoting a low carbon economy and providing guidance on waste, pollution and water management.

15.10 **Policies CO1- CO4** relate to '*Connectivity*', capitalising on the strengths of the existing transport system in the Borough, including links to major centres and how the Council will seek to improve connectivity in the future. The policy framework therefore highlights the role of sustainable travel and transport, enabling business growth through improving transport infrastructure, the need for travel plans and digital communication networks.

15.11 Consideration has also been given in drafting the policy principles to the 'saved' policies in the local plans adopted by the former Boroughs. Where appropriate, 'saved' policies have been deleted to ensure no overlap with the policies contained in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. A list of previously adopted policies which the Council is seeking to retain will be set out in the submission version of the document. These policies will continue to be used in the determination of planning applications in the Borough until superseded by the *Site Allocations and Development Policies* DPD.

16.0 Development Sites

16.1 The *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* is supported by the identification of land for development, which falls into the following categories:

- **Core Strategy Sites** – where the boundaries of the site are clearly defined;

- **Strategic Locations** – where the broad locality is known, but where further work is necessary to identify appropriate site boundaries;
- **Areas of Search** - where there is a need to identify proposals that will take effect well into the future. Detailed policies will be brought forward through the *Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD)* or possibly an *Area Action Plan*; and
- **Corridors of Interest** - where new road proposals are under consideration, but a protected line has not yet been agreed. The strategy identifies ‘Corridors of Interest’ to illustrate land within which new roads are to be located.

16.2 The proposed ‘Core Strategy Sites’ and ‘Strategic Locations’ are located for the most part within the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres. These towns have the infrastructure and facilities best able to support new jobs, homes and other development. The Towns and Centres have also been the subject of *Town Strategies*, each prepared according to neighbourhood planning principles, with the majority of ‘Core Strategy Sites’ being the subject of preliminary consultation.

16.3 Where a *Town Strategy* has already been approved by the relevant Town Council, the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* (wherever possible) reflects the preferred sites or options set out in those strategies. However, it should be noted that a number of sites have been proposed following more recent consultations which post-date the work undertaken on the *Town Strategies*.

Housing Distribution

16.4 The distribution of new housing development in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* broadly reflects the settlement hierarchy with the quantum of development, including existing commitments and completions, apportioned as follows:

- Principal Towns – 10,386 new dwellings
- Key Service Centres – 10,535 new dwellings
- New Settlement – 1,800 new dwellings

16.5 Additional housing development will be proposed in the emerging *Site Allocations and Development Policies* DPD amounting to about 4,000 new dwellings (see paragraph 16.12).

Core Strategy Sites

16.6 The proposed ‘Core Strategy Sites’ reflect the overall spatial distribution of both jobs and homes and would be supported in many cases by community benefits such as affordable housing, schools, open space and improvements to pedestrian and cycle networks. These sites have the capacity to accommodate about 11,500 new homes and about 185 hectares of new employment land.

16.7 The delivery of these sites, many of which are mixed use, will be phased over the plan period to accord with programmed infrastructure improvements. This

should ensure that sustainable development is delivered in a timely manner with necessary improvements to local and strategic services. The *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* clearly highlights the necessary delivery mechanisms, often involving developer contributions towards essential infrastructure, without which many of the proposals would be deemed unsustainable.

16.8 Further information on the background and methodology to support site selection is attached at **Appendix B**, but a detailed *Site Justification Background Paper* will be published with the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*.

Core Strategy Sites in Crewe

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS1	Basford East	24ha of employment land, about 1000 homes, local centre (including a doctor's surgery, primary school, new retail and community venue).	A longstanding allocation for employment now proposed for business, mixed use and housing development; this is a high priority in the draft <i>Crewe Town Strategy</i> and the <i>All Change for Crewe</i> prospectus. A mix of uses is necessary to produce a viable development, but the fundamental objective remains the creation of a high quality employment area.
CS2	Basford West	22 ha of employment land, about 370 new homes, a new local centre, hotel and significant green open space/woodland and ecological mitigation areas.	A longstanding allocation for employment now proposed for business, mixed use and housing development; this is a high priority in the Draft <i>Crewe Town Strategy</i> and the <i>All Change for Crewe</i> prospectus. A mix of uses is necessary to produce a viable development, but the mix is subordinate to creating a business environment suitable for manufacturing and distribution. The site is now subject to a resolution to grant planning permission, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement.
CS3	Leighton West	5 ha of employment land, space for extension of Leighton Hospital, about 1000 new homes and key worker housing for employees at Leighton Hospital, new local	A greenfield site which provides an opportunity for a mix of uses and provides land for the expansion of Leighton Hospital. A sustainable location on the edge of town

		centre (including a community centre), green corridor and other open space, new bus interchange and road improvements. Potential for geothermal district heating scheme and the creation of a science/energy park.	close to the Bentley works, one of Crewe's largest employers. Development will need to support key improvements at Leighton Hospital, key highway improvements and the opportunity to create an automotive hub linked to Bentley.
CS4	Crewe Green	About 150 new homes, highway improvements at Crewe Green Roundabout; incorporation of Green Infrastructure; improvement of existing and provision of new pedestrian and cycle links to link new and existing residential areas, employment areas, shops, schools and health facilities; inclusion of appropriate planting and buffering along the northern boundary.	An opportunity to deliver improvements to the transport network, in particular the Crewe Green roundabout and to provide a high quality residential development at a key gateway into Crewe. Surrounding uses include residential uses situated to the west, mixed uses including employment and Crewe Green roundabout to the south. This site is currently located in the Green Gap and has been added following the 'Possible Additional Sites' consultation.
CS5	Sydney Road	The delivery of about 250 new homes and contributions towards highway improvements at Crewe Green Roundabout, Maw Green junction and Sydney Road bridge. Incorporation of Green Infrastructure including: allotments, equipped children's play area, community woodland. Improvement of existing and provision of new pedestrian and cycle links to link new and existing residential areas, employment areas, shops, schools and health facilities.	An opportunity for a high quality, sustainable residential development on a site which is located about 1.5 km from Crewe Town Centre. Surrounding uses include residential, the railway line and open countryside. The site is designated as 'green gap' in the Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan. The site was originally put forward as an 'Alternative Site' in the Development Strategy.
CS6	The Shavington/Wybunbury Triangle	About 350 new homes, small scale retail, community facility, open space, village green and new pedestrian and cycle links.	A greenfield site, outside the green gap and close to the villages of Shavington and Wybunbury. It is largely surrounded by existing residential properties. The site

			now has a resolution to grant planning permission, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement.
CS7	East Shavington	About 300 new homes, small scale retail, community facility, open space, village green, green infrastructure and new pedestrian and cycle links.	A greenfield site on the eastern edge of Shavington village comprising approximately 11 hectares of agricultural land. Recent highway issues in the transport corridors serving the site suggest that development will need to be phased until after 2020.

Core Strategy Sites in Macclesfield

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS8	South Macclesfield Development Area	5ha of employment land, about 5,000 sq metres of retail development (convenience goods), new link road, about 1100 new homes, green infrastructure and open space, improved pedestrian and cycle links.	A long-standing allocation for employment that has not come forward. The area is the only significant parcel of undeveloped land in Macclesfield outside of the green belt. The introduction of higher value uses will produce a viable scheme that will deliver the necessary infrastructure.
CS9	Fence Avenue	About 250 new homes, open space, local facilities, new pedestrian and cycle links.	A sustainable site close to Macclesfield Town Centre and Rail Station, which involves an alteration to the Green Belt boundary. The full site extends to around 14ha; however all of the land would only become available if there was a future consolidation or relocation of the King's School facilities. Encouragement should be given to the re-use of key buildings where possible.
CS10	Land between Congleton Road and Chelford Road	Mixed use proposal includes 5ha of employment land and about 150 new dwellings located adjacent to Congleton Road. Additional land in the Green Belt adjoining the site is safeguarded for potential development beyond	A greenfield allocation which involves an alteration to the Green Belt boundary. The site benefits from direct access onto the main Congleton Road and therefore considered suitable for both new business and

		2030.	housing. The site could be extended after 2030 onto adjoining land, should a need for more growth be identified.
CS11	Gaw End Lane	About 100 new homes, 5 hectares of employment land, open space and new pedestrian and cycle links.	This area lies to the south of Macclesfield beyond the Lyme Green Business Park. The site is mainly agricultural land with the Council Depot at the northern end. Surrounding uses include industry, business, residential uses and agricultural land. This site was originally identified as an 'Alternative Site' in the Development Strategy.

Core Strategy Sites in Alsager

	Site	Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS12	Twyfords and Cardway	About 550 new homes, retention of existing offices, new open spaces and improved pedestrian and cycle links to the Town Centre, railway station, Excalibur Industrial Estate and Talke Road. Potential for specialist older person's accommodation, additional employment development, local retail facilities and community facilities.	A substantial brownfield site to the east of Alsager with opportunities to provide a wide range of uses, including residential and employment. Much of the site is subject to a resolution to grant planning permission for housing.
CS13	Former Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Campus	About 350 new homes, together with sports and leisure hub, open space and improved pedestrian and cycle links. Potential for older person's accommodation, local retail facilities and community facilities.	A partly brownfield site on the west of the town which is available for redevelopment following the consolidation of the MMU South Cheshire Campus at Crewe. The site was allocated in the Congleton Local Plan with a recognition that some development would take place after 2011.
CS14	Radway Green	10 ha of employment land, open space and improvements to pedestrian and cycle links.	An extension and redevelopment of an established employment site to the west of Alsager.
CS15	Radway Green Extension	A 25 ha site for new employment and business. In single ownership, it is suitable for large scale end-	The allocation allows the southwards extension of Radway Green and is intended

		users.	to support the role of the site as a significant strategic employment location. The land is currently designated as Green Belt.
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Core Strategy Sites in Congleton

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS16	Giantswood Lane South	About 150 new homes, open space, new pedestrian/cycle links.	New residential development associated with the proposed Congleton Northern Link Road.
CS17	Manchester Road to Macclesfield Road	About 550 new homes, local retail facilities, new pedestrian and cycle links and open space.	New residential community associated with the proposed Congleton Northern Link Road.

Core Strategy Sites in Knutsford

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS18	North West Knutsford	5 ha of employment land, about 300 new homes, new primary school, open space, local retail facility and community facilities. Additional land to be safeguarded for housing and employment development beyond 2030.	A sustainable urban extension to the town which requires an alteration to the Green Belt boundary. There is an area of Protected Open Space to the south of this site and reserved for open space and sports uses.
CS19	Parkgate Extension	6 ha of employment land and about 250 new dwellings, subject to site access improvements. Improved pedestrian and cycle links and improvements to Green Infrastructure.	This predominantly greenfield site is located to the north and east of Parkgate Trading Estate. The land is outside of the Green Belt, but was allocated for employment in the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

Core Strategy Sites in Middlewich

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS20	Glebe Farm	About 450 new homes, together with open space and improved pedestrian and cycle links. The development will be expected to provide funding towards the completion of the Middlewich	A greenfield site to the south of the town where development is associated with the completion of the Middlewich Eastern Link Road.

Core Strategy Sites in Nantwich

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS21	Kingsley Fields	2 ha of employment land, about 1100 new homes, local centre including local retail and community facilities. A financial contribution for education provision will be required. Substantial open space to be provided including an extension of the Riverside Park between Reaseheath College and the Town Centre. Improved pedestrian and cycleways including links to the Connect 2 Greenway route. The development will include a new road link to Waterlode, the realignment of the A51 through the site and assist in funding improvements at the Burford Cross Roads.	A greenfield site which provides the opportunity for a sustainable extension to the town delivering community infrastructure, including open space, road improvements and pedestrian and cycle links.
CS22	Stapeley Water Gardens	About 150 new homes, open space, provision of green infrastructure and improved pedestrian/ cycle links.	A mix of greenfield and brownfield land. Land adjacent already has planning permission for housing development.
CS23	Snow Hill	Regeneration for a mix of uses including offices, leisure/hotel, housing, retail, community facilities and parking. Existing swimming pool to be retained. The design of the scheme will provide for strong pedestrian and cycle linkages between the site and the Town Centre. Open space to be provided including an extension of the Riverside Park.	A brownfield site close to the Town Centre which offers the potential for regeneration.

Core Strategy Sites in Sandbach

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS24	Land adjacent to Junction 17 of M6, south east of Congleton Road (Capricorn)	20ha of employment land, hotel, up to 450 new homes, retention and strengthening of wildlife corridor, allotments, new local centre, open space, improved pedestrian and cycle links. Initial phases will necessitate improved access whilst development of the entire site will be dependent on the prior delivery of improvements to Junction 17 of the M6.	A greenfield site adjacent to J17 of the M6 motorway which provides the opportunity for a high quality business park together with residential development. Final housing figures are dependent on further viability work and may consequently increase.

Core Strategy Sites in Wilmslow

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS25	Adlington Road	About 225 new homes, open space, community facilities, new pedestrian and cycle links.	A largely greenfield site outside the Green Belt and previously 'safeguarded for future development' in the Macclesfield Local Plan. Provides a sustainable location for new residential development.
CS26	Royal London	2 ha of employment land, hotel, about 75 new homes, open space, new pedestrian/ cycle links. Land to the west of Alderley Road will be protected for future open space.	A greenfield site, with a current developable area of around 12.5ha to the east of Royal London's office campus. It represents an extension of the existing Royal London office complex for employment and housing and involves an alteration to the Green Belt boundary.
CS27	Wilmslow Business Park	The delivery of a business use development of about 25,000sq metres in line with the principles of sustainable development, across a site of about 6ha.	The site is located to the south east of Wilmslow town centre, bordered on the west side by the West Coast Main Line, and to the east by the A34 Wilmslow bypass. The site is relatively flat and lies adjacent to the west coast main line.

Core Strategy Site at Wardle

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS28	Wardle Employment Improvement Area	An existing employment site in the countryside focused around the Wardle Industrial Estate, where there is scope for intensification of employment and ancillary uses within the area. Two phases of development have the potential to deliver about 31ha of new employment land adjacent to the A51.	An existing employment area in open countryside which will benefit from intensification and environmental improvements.

Opportunity Site at Alderley Park

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS29	Alderley Park	The Council and Astra Zeneca have a shared aspiration to develop a 'Science for Life' Park on the site. A masterplan will be developed and adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to provide guidance on the design principles for the site.	The site is identified as a major employment site in the Green Belt in the current Macclesfield Local Plan and is currently occupied by Astra Zeneca, a major pharmaceutical company. As the site is to be vacated, it is necessary to consider the future of this strategic employment site.

Proposed New Settlement

Site		Proposed Uses	Commentary
CS30	North Cheshire Growth Village – Handforth East	A sustainable new settlement comprising 12ha of new employment land, about 1800 homes, local centre with retail, community facilities, contributions to educational provision, leisure facilities, country park, open space and sports pitches, new pedestrian and cycle links, particularly to Handforth Railway Station, and protection and enhancement of the setting of Handforth Hall. Additional land will be 'safeguarded' for further	An area of largely unused land in the Green Belt to the east of the A34 Handforth By-Pass which is proposed for a new sustainable settlement with self contained facilities and properly planned infrastructure. It will accommodate a significant proportion of development needs in the north of the Borough without any adverse impact upon the existing settlement of Handforth.

Strategic Locations

16.9 Where either only the broad locality of the proposed development is known or additional technical assessment is considered necessary, the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* identifies 'Strategic Locations'. Further work will be required to determine precise site boundaries, as some are affected by proposed highway improvement lines, which are yet to be finalised through public consultation and any necessary Compulsory Purchase Order procedures. Other locations, such as Central Crewe and the wider Macclesfield urban area could accommodate development on a range of sites, which it would not be appropriate to separately identify in a strategic policy document. It is envisaged that the proposed 'Strategic Locations' are capable of delivering about 5,000 new dwellings and a further 90 hectares of employment land.

Proposed Strategic Locations

Strategic Location		Proposed Uses	Commentary
SL1	Central Crewe	About 250 new homes (including student accommodation) with retail, leisure and commercial uses including offices, restaurants, cafés and bars. Improvements to Crewe Railway Station and its surroundings and 5,000 sq metres of retail development in Mill Street, expansion of existing sports and leisure hub at Crewe Alexandra Football Club and new office/commercial development in Macon Way.	The Town Centre is an important focus for regeneration in line with the 'All Change for Crewe' initiative to improve the range of retail units and to introduce leisure, cultural and residential development to improve its vitality, in accordance with the 'Town Centre First' objective. The railway station area, formerly identified as the 'Crewe Rail Exchange Zone' has been added as part of the 'strategic location' providing the opportunity to create a high quality gateway into Crewe, including a new entrance to the station, new bus interchange and redevelopment of surrounding areas. Improvements in the linkages between the station and the town centre are a key objective.
SL2	Leighton, Crewe	About 400 new homes, local centre including retail, community facilities, open space, new pedestrian and cycle links and highway improvements.	The opportunity to deliver a new sustainable urban extension that will support and complement the nearby mixed use allocation, the adjacent Leighton Hospital and other major employers including

			Bentley. The site lies to the north west of Crewe and borders existing residential development to the east and Leighton Hospital to the north. Development will provide the opportunity for further highway improvements, notably the A530.
SL3	South Cheshire Growth Village , South East Crewe	A sustainable new settlement providing an opportunity for the phased delivery of about 900 new homes, education provision, up to 1000 sq metres of retail centre, community facilities, sports/leisure facilities, open space and green infrastructure.	An area of land adjacent to Crewe Hall to the south east of Crewe. It will accommodate a new sustainable settlement with self contained facilities and properly planned infrastructure within a high quality environment. The settlement will complement the nearby allocation at Basford East. The proposed strategic location will accommodate a significant proportion of housing development needs and will be expected to contribute towards related road and infrastructure improvements.
SL4	Central Macclesfield	Primarily retail, commercial and leisure development, about 850 new homes within the wider urban area and improved pedestrian and cycle links with the rest of the town.	There are redevelopment opportunities within the Town Centre and the wider urban area for a variety of uses including retail and residential development in accordance with the 'Town Centre First' objective.
SL5	White Moss Quarry (Alsager)	A sustainable new settlement comprising about 750 new dwellings, local centre with up to 1000 sq metres of retail, community facilities, contributions to public transport links, open space and new pedestrian/cycle links.	The site is centred on the peat and sand workings at White Moss. Although classed as greenfield (and subject to restoration conditions) the land has been extensively disturbed by mineral extraction. Remainder of the site is in agricultural use and contains a variety of wooded landscape, existing hedgerows and field systems, much of which will be retained and incorporated into the proposed scheme. This site has been added following the 'Additional Sites' consultation.
SL6	Back Lane/ Radnor Park, Congleton	10 ha of employment land and about 500 new homes, convenience retail, leisure hub, new primary school, open	An extension of the existing Radnor Park Industrial Estate to allow for the expansion and relocation of existing businesses

		space and recreation facilities. Scheme is dependent on and to be served by a new Congleton Northern Link Road. New pedestrian and cycle links.	together with residential development and recreation facilities associated with a new Northern Link Road.
SL7	Congleton Business Park Extension	10 ha of employment land and about 450 new homes, up to 300 sq metres of new retail, local centre, open space and recreation facilities to be served by a new Congleton Northern Link Road. New pedestrian and cycle links.	Location to the north of the town presents a significant strategic location in scale. It presents an opportunity to establish a high quality extension to Congleton Business Park alongside other uses. Residential development will support the creation of this new community set in ample greenspace which supports existing wildlife areas and the River Dane which is a key asset to the town. Key to this development will be the provision of the Congleton Northern Link Road.
SL8	Giantswood Lane to Manchester Road, Congleton	About 550 new homes, new primary school, up to 3000 sq metres of new retail, open space, new pedestrian/cycle links. Site release dependent upon and to be served by proposed Congleton Northern Link Road.	New residential community associated with the proposed Congleton Northern Link Road.
SL9	Brooks Lane, Middlewich	About 400 new homes, local centre with up to 3000 sq metres of new retail; leisure/community facilities, improvements to canal-side environment and improved accessibility to Town Centre for pedestrians and cyclists.	An existing industrial area close to the Town Centre which is proposed for comprehensive redevelopment.
SL10	Midpoint 18 Extension,	Up to 70 ha of employment land. The release of this site will be expected to occur only after the completion of Midpoint 18 Phase 3 for which outline planning consent has already been granted. The development of Midpoint 18 Phase 3 is itself dependent upon the completion of the Middlewich Eastern Link Road. The allocation of this site should also provide an additional financial contribution	An extension to the Midpoint 18 employment area, to be developed towards and beyond the end of the plan period.

16.10 All sites proposed in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* will be expected to be developed in accordance with the relevant policy principles, unless otherwise specified. One of the key challenges will be to connect sites into the existing urban and rural fabric. It is acknowledged that many communities are already established and new development, where appropriate, should take advantage of existing facilities and services. However, where new services are provided to support proposed developments, they will need to be accessible and integrated into existing communities.

16.11 In 2014, the Council will prepare a *Site Allocations and Development Policies Development Plan Document (DPD)*. This document will identify further smaller sites for different types of development, including housing and employment, which are not considered to be strategic in nature; these will be illustrated on a *Policies Map* to accompany the DPD.

16.12 In terms of housing and employment, it is estimated that about 4,000 new dwellings and about 16 hectares of new employment land will be allocated in the *Site Allocations and Development Policies DPD*, broadly apportioned within the overall settlement hierarchy as follows:-

- Principal Towns - 550 new dwellings/2 hectares
- Key Service Centres - 1300 new dwellings/12 hectares
- Local Service Centres – 1100 new dwellings/2 hectares
- Other Settlements and rural areas – 1000 new dwellings

17.0 Safeguarded Land

17.1 In order to avoid the need for future reviews of the Green Belt, it is necessary, in accordance with advice in the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, to identify 'safeguarded land' between urban areas and Green Belt boundaries as proposed in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. Such land is intended to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period - in other words during the 2030's at the earliest.

17.2 It should be stressed that 'safeguarded land' is not allocated for development at the present time and should not be viewed as being potentially available for building in the near future. It is also not appropriate to propose any eventual use of the land at this time. Planning permission for the permanent development of 'safeguarded land' should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes development. Any such review will need to take account of the development needs arising at that time and the availability of other sources of land available at that point.

17.3 Accordingly, the proposed 'Safeguarded Land', which has been identified in Macclesfield, Knutsford, Wilmslow and Handforth East may be required to meet longer term development needs beyond the end of the plan period and equates to some 258 hectares. Some parcels of 'safeguarded land' adjoin existing proposals in the plan, whilst others are discrete and stand alone in nature. In all

cases, any development of this type of land will be subject to a further Local Plan review dealing with needs post - 2030. In the meantime, the land will be subject to protective policies similar to those applying to the open countryside. This will ensure that for the duration of the plan period, existing uses of the land will continue and the area will be fully protected for the duration of the plan period.

17.4 In the case of Poynton, more detailed investigations to determine the precise quantum and boundaries of 'safeguarded land' will be carried out during the preparation of the *Site Allocations and Development Policies Development Plan Document* (DPD).

Proposed Safeguarded Land

	Site	Approximate Site Area
CS31	Gaw End Lane, Macclesfield	18 hectares
CS32	Land between Congleton Road and Chelford Road, Macclesfield,	137 hectares
CS33	Northwich Road/North West Knutsford	44 hectares
CS34	North Cheshire Growth Village	20 hectares
CS35	Prestbury Road, Wilmslow	25 hectares
CS36	Upcast Lane, Wilmslow	14 hectares
	<i>Poynton</i>	<i>5-10 hectares</i>
	TOTAL	263-268 hectares

18.0 Next Steps

18.1 Once the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* has been approved, the document will be published for a six week period to invite further representations. All comments received will be fully considered to assess whether any further modifications are required to the plan before final consideration is given to a *Submission Core Strategy*; it is anticipated that this will be presented to Council for approval next Spring. All outstanding representations, normally invited over a further six week period, should relate to the 'soundness' of the plan and these will be logged and then sent to the Planning Inspectorate prior to examination.

18.2 The *Core Strategy* will in due course be formally submitted to the Secretary of State who will appoint an independent Planning Inspector to hold a public examination to test the legal compliance and soundness of the plan document. Prior to formal submission, a Programme Officer will be appointed to assist the Inspector in the efficient running of the Examination. This has already been budgeted for in terms of the management of resources together with the Inspector's costs, which will be principally determined by the number of sitting days and the hiring or use of a suitable venue.

18.3 Those persons or organisations that submit comments requesting changes to the *Submission Core Strategy* within the prescribed six week period will have the

right to appear before and be heard by an Inspector. As soon as is practically possible, the Inspector will arrange a Pre-Examination Hearing to outline the procedure for those intending to appear and establish the deadlines for the submission of evidence. It is anticipated that the Examination will commence in the summer of 2014 with the Inspector's Report expected towards the end of next year.

18.4 Either before or during the Examination, the Council may ask the Inspector to recommend any additional changes which it feels would improve the 'soundness' of the *Core Strategy* and will need to publish any substantive modifications for further comment, usually for a further six week period, before the Inspector completes his or her report.

18.5 The responsibility for adopting the *Core Strategy* will ultimately rest with the Council and it is hoped that this can be achieved by late 2014. The document will then provide the necessary strategic planning framework for determining planning applications and provide a sound basis for preparing other Development Plan Documents, such as the *Site Allocations and Development Policies* DPD, *Waste* DPD and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's).

19.0 Access to Information

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

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Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Sandbach, Cheshire*

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Appendices:-

Appendix A Pre-Submission Core Strategy

Appendix B Site Justification: Background and Methodology