

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 18 October 2010
Report of: Strategic Director - Places
Subject/Title: Local Development Framework Core Strategy Issues and Options
Portfolio Holder: Cllr David Brown

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report is the first stage of the preparation of the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework. It has been prepared to generate discussion about the challenges facing the future planning of the Borough over the next 20 years, proposes a draft vision for the future of Cheshire East in 2030 and considers the impact of different strategic objectives. Finally, it looks at three options for housing and jobs growth and three options for how this growth could be distributed to the various towns in Cheshire East.
- 1.2 The Core Strategy Options and Issues Report is contained in Appendix 1.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 That the Cabinet considers the report in the light of any comments from the Strategic Planning Board of 6 October.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet approves the Issues and Options report for the Local Development Framework Core Strategy for consultation purposes.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The preparation of the Local Development Framework is a statutory requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Local Development Framework will form the statutory development plan for the Borough and will set out the strategy to deliver the spatial elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy. It will be used to consider planning applications.
- 3.2 In preparing the Core Strategy, the local planning authority is required to demonstrate that they have considered and consulted on alternative options for the future development strategy of the Borough.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change and Health

6.1 The Local Development Framework strategy will be focused on delivering sustainable development. The strategy and policies aim to reduce the effects of climate change and include mitigation measures to take account of the impacts of climate change.

6.2 The Local Development Framework will give consideration to how the planning of future development can contribute to improved health and quality of life.

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

7.1 The costs of consultation on the Core Strategy Issues and Options will be carried out within the current year's Spatial Planning Section's budget.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

8.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to prepare Local Development Frameworks. Planning Policy Statement 12 and supporting Good Practice Guidance and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended) set out the procedures to be followed.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 The risks associated with the preparation of the Local Development Framework are set out in the Local Development Scheme. The principal risks are

- That the Coalition Government will introduce changes to the procedures for preparing LDFs
- Changes to national planning policy
- High level of local opposition to development proposals
- Uncertainty and delays arising from local opposition to proposals.
- Legal challenge

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 Cheshire East is facing many challenges over the next twenty years or so including climate change, moving to a low carbon and globalised economy and increased housing need. These challenges will need to be faced in a period of a slow growing national economy and much reduced levels of infrastructure investment by the Government. It will therefore be important to have in place a clear plan, known as

the Local Development Framework (LDF), to tackle these issues and to map out how we want our towns and villages to change and grow.

- 10.2 LDFs were introduced through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in 2004. The Local Development Framework is made up of a number of documents which combine to form the statutory Development Plan within which planning decisions are made. The Core Strategy sets out the vision, strategic objectives and overall spatial strategy. The Site Allocations document identifies site allocations and sets out more detailed policies which will deliver the spatial strategy and which will be used in considering proposals for development. Supplementary Planning Documents will set out detailed guidance on the implementation of policies.
- 10.3 The objective of the new LDF system is to achieve sustainable development through a 'spatial planning' approach. Spatial Planning is about an integrated strategy for the future of an area which is supported by a clear vision, with commitment by all the relevant agencies to its delivery. Spatial Planning goes beyond the traditional view of planning as relating purely to the use of land and buildings and recognises the need to address a wider range of issues that affect our communities and the areas in which we live. The Core Strategy will integrate land use matters with other plans and strategies that deal with community issues such as health, community safety, housing, employment, community development, education, transport, the environment and regeneration.
- 10.4 The LDF will, therefore, play a critical part in delivering Cheshire East Council's ambitious plans for the future of the Borough. It will set out where new homes will be built, where new employment should be located and how the physical and social infrastructure will be provided to support new development. It will play an important part in tackling issues surrounding climate change and in achieving sustainable development.
- 10.5 The LDF will do far more than this, however. It is also concerned with protecting and enhancing parts of the Borough that are important natural or heritage assets. It is about improving our town centres, protecting valued areas of open space and providing new recreation and leisure facilities. It also plays an important role of ensuring that the community's need for affordable housing is met.
- 10.6 Through the LDF, critical decisions will have to be made which will seek to balance the need for future development to deliver economic prosperity and housing with the need to safeguard and enhance the environment. We need to ensure that Cheshire East is a well planned, attractive place to live in for future generations.
- 10.7 The Cheshire East LDF will cover the Borough which lies outside the Peak National Park. The Peak Park LDF will cover that part of Cheshire East within the National Park.
- 10.8 The LDF Core Strategy identifies the overarching objectives for spatial planning outcomes in Cheshire East. It will be used by everyone who want to see how Cheshire East will change or how new development will be planned for and managed over the next 20 years. It will deal with the strategic planning issues facing the borough.

10.9 The Core Strategy will therefore set out:

- Spatial vision and strategic objectives which provide a clear vision and direction for the future of the Borough and to steer the development of the strategy;
- A spatial strategy for the Borough as a whole and area strategies for main towns and sub areas which are holistic and which identify the broad locations for development, protection and change;
- Strategic policies for addressing how the vision and objectives can be achieved. These will set the scene for more detailed policies to be contained in the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document;
- Strategic development sites;
- An Infrastructure Plan; and
- A monitoring and implementation framework.

10.10 The Core Strategy is the spatial development plan for Cheshire East that will steer and be informed by other plans and strategies prepared by the Council and its partners and which will support their delivery. Key strategies that will inform the LDF include:

“Unleashing the Potential” – the sub-regional aspirations for growth

10.11 At the Sub Regional level under the auspices of the Cheshire and Warrington Enterprise Commission, in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Councils, Cheshire East Council has signed up to an ambitious growth strategy for Cheshire and Warrington in the form of a strategy document entitled 'Unleashing the Potential'.

10.12 The overall aim for the sub region is to achieve "significant economic growth by accommodating significant increase in population, housing, jobs and GVA". The potential is identified to increase annual GVA for the sub-region by at least £10 billion to at least £30 billion by 2030, together with an increase in population by at least 100,000 and 22,000 additional jobs during the same period.

10.13 In spatial terms, for Cheshire East the priorities are:

- 'Accelerated' growth for Crewe with the aim of significantly increasing its economic productivity - with an approximate 25% growth in jobs and population
- to retain the focus on Macclesfield and North East Cheshire as the North West's most productive business and entrepreneurial area with targeted growth and collaboration with key employers.
- to reinforce the role of market towns and larger villages as important components of economic growth and also in providing attractive residential locations for managers, professionals and knowledge workers. There is particular potential for economic and quality housing growth in the 'Weaver Towns' including Middlewich. The town of Congleton also is identified as having growth potential.

“Ambition for All” - the Cheshire East Sustainable Community Strategy

10.14 The LDF will deliver the place shaping aspects and objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) in particular:

- Creating conditions for Business Growth, including making the most of our tourism, heritage and natural assets and ensuring there is a good range of available 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;
- Driving out the causes of poor health including investment in green infrastructure to encourage active and healthy lifestyle choices.

10.15 Key, relevant actions to deliver those objectives include:

- Promote major regeneration of Macclesfield and Crewe;
- Maximise developer contributions to improve infrastructure, culture, leisure and green spaces;
- Meet targets in relation to the provision of affordable housing;
- Reduction in carbon emissions;
- Thriving and prosperous market towns; and
- Growth in the Cheshire East economy and the visitor economy.

Other Council Strategies

10.16 The LDF will also take into account and inform the Council's Local Transport Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Housing Strategy and Open Space Strategy, all of which are in the course of preparation.

The Core Strategy Issues and Options Report

10.17 The creation of Cheshire East Council provides us with the opportunity to look afresh at how we want the towns and villages of the Borough to grow and flourish over the next twenty years or so.

- 10.18 The Core Strategy Issues and Options report has been prepared to encourage a full debate about the future spatial strategy for Cheshire East. It builds on the feedback that has been made during the consultation on the Sustainable Community Strategy. This will be the first of several consultations on the LDF; the next consultation in spring 2011 will look at each of our towns and how they could contribute to the overall strategy.
- 10.19 Firstly this document includes a spatial portrait of the Borough which provides a description of Cheshire East and the main towns. From this the key challenges that the LDF will need to address are identified.
- 10.20 The next section proposes a Spatial Vision for how we would envisage the Borough in 20 years time. Seven key spatial objectives are then proposed; these would steer the development of the strategy.
- 10.21 Finally the document sets out a range of alternative options for how those objectives might be achieved. At the Borough level, three options for the amount of housing and job growth that would be appropriate are set out. There are then three options for how growth would be distributed across the Borough. Given the scale of the likely development and the Council's stated ambition for growth, the options essentially address the different proportions of growth each area will accommodate. The question is not so much of some growth versus no growth; rather it is one of what proportion of growth should each area accommodate.

The Proportions of Growth Across Cheshire East

- 10.22 Option 1 proposes that a high proportion of development over the next 15 - 20 years would occur in the southern part of the Borough with the focus of development on delivering the Crewe Vision and maximising Crewe's role, not just as the sub-regional centre for south Cheshire, but also as the main driver of growth for the whole of Cheshire. There would also be growth in the Key Service Centres in the south of the Borough (Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich, Nantwich and Sandbach).
- 10.23 Option 2 looks to reinforce the role of Crewe as the sub-regional centre for the south of the Borough and Macclesfield for the north. The Key Service Centres in the southern part of the Borough (Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich, Nantwich and Sandbach) would also be the focus for growth, albeit at a lower level than in Option 1.
- 10.24 Option 3 would focus development in the principal towns and Key and Local Service Centres in locations that have a good standard of accessibility that will enable people to travel to work, shops and services by means other than the private car i.e. public transport, cycling and walking. The following towns would be the focus of most development:
- Crewe, Alsager, Congleton, Nantwich and Sandbach in the south of the Borough;
 - Macclesfield, Alderley Edge, Handforth, Knutsford, Poynton and Wilmslow in the north.

- 10.25 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will test how the objectives and options will contribute to the development of sustainable communities. The parallel SA/SEA processes are taking place in tandem with the production of the Core Strategy and should inform key stages of the process.
- 10.26 A Habitats Regulations Assessment is required under the European Habitats Directive, to ensure the Core Strategy will not have an adverse impact on sites designated as being of European importance in terms of nature conservation and / or geological interest. Both the Sustainability Appraisal and the Habitats Regulations Assessment will be published for consultation alongside this Issues and Options Report.

Programme for Consultation

- 10.27 Consultation on the Core Strategy Issues and Options report will be the first stage of consultations on the Local Development Framework and will focus on the options for the overall development strategy for the Borough. Further consultations will be carried out in 2011 to consider town and area strategies.
- 10.28 Initial consultation on the Issues and Options would be carried out with the Strategic Planning Board. A workshop is to be held on 2 November for all Members prior to the launch of the public consultation. Further workshops will be held for the Housing Market Partnership, the business community, infrastructure providers and the Citizen's Panel during November and December. Widespread consultation would be carried out by letter and online with town and parish councils, stakeholders and the local community in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement.

11.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

- 11.1 The statutory development plan for Cheshire East currently consists of the saved policies from the Local Plans of the three former authorities. This report is the first stage consultation on the first part of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. The Cheshire East Local Development Framework will determine the new development strategy for the Borough to implement the Council's ambitions for growth in a sustainable manner; it will determine the housing, employment, retail and infrastructure needs and allocate land to deliver the strategy for the next 20 years. It will set out safeguarding policies to protect and enhance important environmental assets.

12.0 Access to Information

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

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