

Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Economic Regeneration

Agenda

Date: Monday, 5th November, 2012
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Fred Flint Room, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach
CW11 1HZ

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

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

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

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

In accordance with Procedure Rules Nos.11 and 35 a period of 10 minutes is allocated for members of the public to address the meeting on any matter relevant to the work of the meeting. Individual members of the public may speak for up to 5 minutes but the Chairman or person presiding will decide how the period of time allocated for public speaking will be apportioned where there are a number of speakers. Members of the public are not required to give notice to use this facility. However, as a matter of courtesy, a period of 24 hours' notice is encouraged.

Members of the public wishing to ask a question at the meeting should provide at least three clear working days' notice in writing and should include the question with that notice. This will enable an informed answer to be given.

Contact: Paul Mountford, Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 01270 686472
E-Mail: paul.mountford@cheshireeast.gov.uk

4. **Rural Housing Enabling Guide** (Pages 1 - 32)

To consider a report outlining the purpose of the Rural Housing Enabling Guide and seeking permission for the Guide to be published.

5. **Vision for Visitor Information in Cheshire East** (Pages 33 - 44)

To consider a report profiling the vision and strategy for visitor information in Cheshire East, with a specific recommendation for visitor information provision in Nantwich.

6. **Bowling Facilities, Cranage** (Pages 45 - 48)

To consider the transfer of the bowling facilities in Cranage to Cranage Parish Council, plus associated legacy funding to Cranage Parish Council.

THERE ARE NO PART 2 ITEMS

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Economic Regeneration

Date of Meeting: 5th November 2012
Report of: Strategic Housing and Development Manager
Subject/Title: Rural Housing Enabling Guide
Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Macrae

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 Cheshire East needs more homes that people can afford to live in and to own. This need is particularly acute in smaller rural settlements. The Rural Housing Enabling Guide (appended to this report) has been produced to support rural affordable housing in Cheshire East and help clarify where the priority areas for development are. The Guide aims to help local people and developers to work together to secure the new affordable housing that their communities need. This report outlines the purpose of the Rural Housing Enabling Guide and asks for permission for the Guide to be published.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Rural Housing Enabling Guide be approved for publication.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To support rural affordable housing in Cheshire East and help clarify the priority areas for development

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All rural wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All rural ward members

6.0 Policy Implications (including carbon reduction and health)

- 6.1 Carbon reduction

Affordable housing is built to standards contained within the Government's Code for Sustainable Homes. The Code for Sustainable Homes was developed using the Building Research Establishment's (BRE) EcoHomes System. It introduces minimum standards for energy and water efficiency at every level of the Code, therefore requiring high levels of sustainability

performance in these areas for achievement of a high Code rating. It also includes areas of sustainability design, such as Lifetime Homes and inclusion of composting facilities.

In addition providing homes in rural areas can help reduce carbon emissions as provision enables people to live nearer to their places of work or their support networks

6.2 Health

Housing is fundamental to the wellbeing and prosperity of the Borough. There is substantial evidence which identifies the links between access to affordable, sustainable housing and improved health and educational attainment.

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

7.1 The costs of producing the Guide have been met from existing budgets

7.2 The Guide proposes that up to date housing need surveys are conducted in the rural parishes of Cheshire East. The cost of these surveys equate to £1.20 per household based on an average return rate of 33%. Therefore the total cost of surveying the 24,252 residential households in Cheshire East in rural areas is £29,342.40. This would be over a 5 year period costing £5,868.48 per annum. The cost of these surveys is currently accounted for within service budgets

8.0 Legal Implications (authorised by Borough Solicitor)

8.1 There are no legal implications that place a duty on local authorities to produce a Rural Housing Enabling Guide.

8.2 The Guide explains the importance of section 106 legal agreements in ensuring the provision of affordable housing for local people in rural areas in perpetuity.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 The Rural Housing Enabling Guide has been designed to help developers and communities to better understand the impacts of affordable housing in rural settlements of Cheshire East. It does this by providing information which can be used to assess the sustainability of areas that have been identified in the 2010 Cheshire East Strategic Housing Market Assessment as primarily rural. The Guide has been developed for use for a varied audience to support collaborative working. There is no stipulation that the Guide must be adhered to but it has been developed with support from internal and external agencies who have helped produce the draft to ensure that the content is practical and helpful for them.

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 Cheshire East Council has enabled the provision of many new affordable homes across the Borough but the current economic down turn has impacted on delivery

at a time when affordable homes are needed more than ever. Affordable homes are essential to the continued vitality of our villages. One of the Council's corporate priorities is to increase the provision of affordable homes for local people where they are needed and in response we are promoting a range of initiatives to maintain a supply of affordable homes for local people.

- 10.2 In 2011 Cheshire East Strategic Housing Services began a process of engagement with a number of internal and external agencies to work with them to produce a good practice guide which would meet the priority of improving the strategic approach the Council takes to delivery of affordable housing in rural areas of Cheshire East whilst ensuring that the approach was acceptable and practical to them.
- 10.3 The intention to produce a Rural Housing Enabling Guide was met with a very positive response as it will enable the Council to maximise it's resources for the provision of new affordable housing in rural communities and be clear about which locations the Council prefers to support proposals for new development. The Guide will help illustrate the recommendation made by the Audit Commission from their inspection in 2010 to improve consistency in our strategic approaches to ensure all aspects of housing strategy are fully informed by partners.
- 10.4 Contained within the body of the Rural Housing Enabling Guide is information which supports rural affordable housing in Cheshire East with robust information about housing need and identifies those areas with the greatest housing need. Affordable housing need information is provided on the basis of the 15 areas evidenced in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment as primarily rural.
- 10.5 The Guide highlights five factors which can be used to measure sustainability and which are explained and illustrated within the maps provided with the Guide. The five factors are outlined below
- **Service accessibility** which includes access to amenities. These services include such facilities as health surgeries, village halls, faith centres and leisure areas such as children's playgrounds.
 - **Public transport** which includes regular weekday bus services, community bus services and railway stations.
 - **Educational establishments** includes primary schools, nurseries and colleges but does not include private schools
 - **Retail establishments** includes general stores, post offices, public houses and convenience stores attached to garages
 - **Employment** which highlights the ratio of people of working age resident in an area in relation to the number of people employed in that area.

These factors combined with the housing needs information then help us identify which parishes have the highest need for affordable housing and are also the most sustainable location for it's development

- 10.6 When developing the Guide consideration was given to the local context and the importance of partnership working with communities and neighbourhoods which is integral to the positive approach to rural development. The Guide is designed to meet the housing needs of local communities and the Cheshire East Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) has been a valuable resource to help the Council engage with communities.
- 10.7 The role of the Enabler is to work with rural communities providing independent advice and support. Therefore it is important to ensure that a consistent process is demonstrated for enabling rural housing schemes. A useful flowchart to map the steps required to engage and consult with all interested parties is included in the Guide which should provide guidance especially to Parish Councils about the process to follow to progress development.
- 10.8 The Guide is able to illustrate how local communities are actively engaged in the decisions affecting their community. The Enabler contributes to this by carrying out local housing surveys to evidence local housing need through engagement with individual parishes. A number of local surveys have been surveyed over the past five years. As further surveys are conducted the Guide will become more effective.

11.0 Consultation

- 11.1 Initially a draft Guide was prepared and distributed for consultation to a number of parties. These parties included:

A number of internal Cheshire East Council departments including Spatial Planning, Development Management, Transport and Economic Development and Regeneration.

Cheshire Community Action

All Cheshire East Council Ward Members

All Cheshire East Rural Parish Councils (via Parish Council Clerks)

All the Registered Providers currently managing and/or developing housing in the Cheshire East rural areas

- 11.2 The consultation period was conducted between 22nd May and the 1st July 2012. During this period, as well as the distribution of the Guide, consultees were invited to attend one of two consultation events held at Crewe and Macclesfield. Any comments regarding the Guide could be submitted to the Strategic Housing and Development team in person, e mail, letter or telephone. In addition a 'survey gizmo' was used to collate responses.
- 11.3 All the responses received were collated and assessed and as a result a number of changes were made to the Draft Guide. The changes that were made provided further clarity on the contents of the Guide.

12.0 Access to Information

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

Name: Vikki Jeffrey

Designation: Strategic Housing and Development Manager

Tel No: 01270 685642

Email: Vikki.jeffrey@[cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:Vikki.jeffrey@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

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Cheshire East Rural Housing Guide 2012

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

	Foreword	page 2
1	Introduction	page 3
2	Planning Policy for Affordable Housing in Rural Areas	page 6
3	Community Engagement	page 9
4	Our Strategic Approach	page 11
5	The Process for Enabling Rural Housing Schemes	Page 18
6	Further Work	page 21
	Example of a Recent Development of Affordable Housing in a Rural Area	page 23
	Glossary and Related Documents	page 24
	Maps	page 25

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Rural Housing Enabling Guide for Cheshire East

Foreword

The Council has adopted their first local housing strategy 'Moving Forward'. This has been developed at a time of significant change within the housing sector, with a move towards localism and the flexibility to make local decisions. These changes bring with them great opportunities for the Council to address housing at a local level, in order to create balanced and sustainable communities across Cheshire East.

Affordable homes are essential to the continued vitality of our towns and villages. This is why this is one of the Council's corporate priorities to increase the provision of affordable homes for local people.

Cheshire East Council has enabled the provision of many new affordable homes across the Borough but the current economic downturn has impacted on delivery at a time when affordable homes are needed more than ever. In response we are promoting a range of initiatives to maintain a supply of affordable homes for local people.

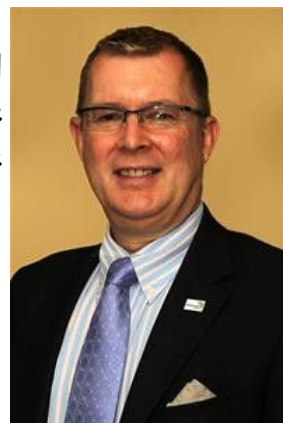
It is important therefore that we include in these our approach to maximise our resources for the provision of new affordable housing in rural communities and be clear about which locations the Council is able to support proposals for new development. The Rural Housing Enabling Guide has been developed to make our strategic approach clear and transparent to our residents and stakeholders.

Our approach also aims to embrace the drive toward localism by providing an opportunity for communities to actively engage in the decisions affecting their community.

We hope that landowners, Parish Councils and local communities will engage with this Rural Housing Enabling Guide, as a positive opportunity to meet local housing need and help maintain the livelihoods of our rural communities.

Cllr Macrae

Prosperity and Economic Regeneration Portfolio Holder



RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

1 Introduction

Cheshire East needs more affordable homes that people can afford to live in to rent or to own. This need is particularly acute in smaller rural settlements, those with less than 3000 residents, where housing stock is limited and constraints on new development have contributed to an imbalance in the type, size and cost of housing that is available.

Housing in the rural areas is more expensive. Lower quartile house prices exceed £200,000 in rural areas around Crewe and Macclesfield. Evidence from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment shows that average lower quartile weekly incomes in rural areas were £380. Using a multiplier of 3.75 this would allow a mortgage of £74,000 excluding deposit. This demonstrates the problems that local people in rural areas have when trying to access housing in their own locality. On average 62% of people in rural areas can afford to access private rented properties if they are available, however the availability of properties for rent in rural areas is much lower than in urban areas.

Most new affordable homes are provided through Registered Providers and through planning obligations. The downturn in housing and financial markets has led to a significant decline in developer activity which has directly affected the level of new affordable homes built. In addition grant funding for affordable housing is also in short supply and is likely to decrease further in the future. With demand for affordable homes increasing priority must be given to the approach the Council takes to delivery in rural areas of Cheshire East. The Council is therefore encouraging a strategic approach to provide small scale affordable housing schemes in sustainable rural locations across the Borough.

Purpose of the Rural Housing Enabling Guide

The aim of the Rural Housing Enabling Guide is to support development of rural affordable housing in Cheshire East in rural areas with housing need and help clarify the priority areas are for development. The Guide supports this in the following ways:

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

- To provide information on the contribution that affordable housing makes to the sustainability of small rural communities
- To provide information on how Cheshire East aims to plan positively for developments in small rural communities
- To provide information on how we have carried out sustainability assessments which will be used to:
 - o Assess the current sustainability of the community
 - o The impact of affordable housing development proposals and
 - o Assess the future needs of the community

The guide will act as good practice for:

- Developers including house builders and Registered Providers
- Parish Councils
- Community groups including Parish Plan Committees
- Land owners or land agents
- Residents living and working in rural communities and people who have connections to these communities. (see definition in glossary)

Engagement

The guide has been developed with support from the following internal and external agencies:

- Cheshire East Spatial Planning
- Cheshire East Development Management
- Cheshire East Strategic Transport
- Cheshire East Economic Development
- Cheshire East Local Area Partnership
- Cheshire East Planning and Performance
- Cheshire Community Action

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

- Cheshire Homechoice
- Wulvern Housing
- Peaks and Plains Housing Trust
- Plus Dane Housing Group

In addition we have consulted with various local organisations including all Parish Councils across Cheshire East.

For further information or hard copies of this guide and any associated documentation in the Glossary please contact any of the following

Bob Vass e-mail bob.vass@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Amanda Boffey e-mail mandy.boffey@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Vikki Jeffrey e-mail vikki.jeffrey@cheshireeast.gov.uk

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

2 Planning Policy for Affordable Housing in Rural Areas

Housing policy and practice takes account of Government guidance that is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was published in March 2012. This Framework replaces the previous suite of national Planning Policy Statements, Planning Policy Guidance notes and some Circulars with a single, streamlined document.

Some rural settlements have a defined boundary within the former District's Local Plans where limited development, in accordance with Local Plan policies, could take place. A list of relevant planning policy documents can be found in the glossary.

However affordable housing may also be built in areas outside the defined settlement boundary and in areas that do not have a defined boundary, for example in the Green Belt for local community needs. Any approval for these schemes would need to be granted outside normal planning policy. These policies are set out in the Council's planning policy documents. However between 2012 and 2014 the Council is preparing a replacement Local Plan and the current timetable is for a replacement to be adopted by the end of 2014.

Sites developed outside planning policy are commonly referred to as Rural Exception Sites and all homes on these sites must be affordable homes. Applications for developments on Rural Exception Sites must be supported by evidence of housing need gathered as part of a Local Housing Needs Survey. A flow chart of how this is conducted has been provided later in the Guide to help understand how this works in practice.

In addition NPPF allows limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing

Sites should be located in the more sustainable areas of Cheshire East. This means that the parish or cluster of parishes has local facilities such as education or regular public transport. An appraisal has been carried out to identify sustainable rural areas in Cheshire East where development of affordable housing may be suitable and this information is contained in the Maps at the end of this Guide.

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

A number of possible sites for rural affordable housing have already been identified and these are included in the Cheshire East Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. If any future sites are to be considered for the Assessment the following details should be submitted to Cheshire East Spatial Planning:

- details of the site including the address,
- a map with a site edge boundary,
- the owner's details,
- the interest in the site of the person submitting

Further advice on planning policy for affordable housing in rural areas can be sought from Cheshire East Planning (www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localplan or 01270 685893)

Typical site size

The scale of a Rural Exception site should broadly reflect the average level of affordable housing need appropriate to the parish in which it is situated. The Guide seeks to promote developments in line with this small scale approach. Actual numbers of homes on such a site vary but will be agreed on a site by site basis and in consultation with Parish Councils and local people.

There is no definition of small in this respect however a balanced view must be taken having regard to the site itself, the size of the community and the housing need. No scheme should be allowed to overwhelm the existing homes and buildings and should be proportionate in number and be complementary in design to the surrounding area. Again, advice regarding specific sites should be sought from Cheshire East Planning.

What is an Affordable Home?

Affordable housing tenures are typically defined as either social rented (homes for people on low incomes), affordable rent (approximately 80% of market rent for an area) or intermediate tenures such as discount for sale, intermediate rent and shared ownership. The tenure of the affordable homes will largely reflect the identified needs of the community.

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

It should be noted that some forms of affordable housing are more expensive to provide than others. The choice of tenure will also need to reflect the availability of funding. If funding is not available it still may be possible to provide the affordable housing through intermediate models. The Council will discuss these options with the local community. All of the affordable homes delivered on rural exception sites will remain available and affordable in perpetuity.

Definitions of types of affordable housing can be found in the Glossary at page 23

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

3 Community Engagement

Neighbourhood Planning

The Localism Act 2011, puts communities and neighbourhoods at the heart of plan making.

The Act makes new provisions to enable people to shape the way that areas in which they live develop and grow. The provisions for neighbourhood planning will empower local community groups to bring forward proposals for a development plan for the neighbourhood area or for an order granting planning permission(s) in that area. They will be able to require the local planning authority to assist them in the preparation of their proposals and require them to take the proposals to independent examination and potentially on to a referendum.

Community Role

Partnership working with communities and neighbourhoods is integral to the positive approach to rural development set out in this Guide and is designed to help local communities meet their housing needs and maintain the sustainability and vitality of their community. Our approach is one which is based on an active partnership with local people. Typically this will be through the Parish Council but we welcome wider community engagement through the Local Area Partnerships for villages.

A further resource for engaging communities is through the work of the Cheshire East Rural Housing Enabler (RHE). The role of the Enabler is to work with rural communities providing independent advice and support, acting as a facilitator and working with them to enable the provision of affordable housing. The Enabler works with Parish Councils, Parish Planning Committees, Cheshire East Councillors, local landowners, Planning Officers, Registered Providers, National Parks and other relevant individuals and organisations.

Homes for Local People

Cheshire East Council wishes to meet the needs of rural communities by ensuring affordable homes are provided for local people. New affordable homes built in a rural parish are prioritised for people with a connection to that parish and who are in need of affordable housing. This is known as the 'Local Connection'. If for any

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

reason a property cannot be occupied by anyone from within the Parish properties will be offered to people with a connection to the neighbouring parishes before being cascaded further throughout Cheshire East. The Local Connection is contained within a legal provision known as a Section 106 agreement that is attached to each home and ensures that local people who have an identified need will be offered the properties first each time the property becomes vacant. This legal agreement also restricts who the properties can be sold on to at later date to ensure they are in need of affordable housing and have a local connection.

In addition community connection criteria are in place in the Cheshire Homechoice common allocation policy. The criteria act in a similar way to Section 106 local connection criteria and are applied to the allocation of existing as well as new affordable homes in rural areas to prospective residents.

It is important to ensure therefore that local people know about any proposed development for affordable housing in their village in order that they can apply to be registered with Cheshire Homechoice.

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

4 Our Strategic approach

Assessment of Development Proposals

Opportunities to improve the sustainability of a village through development may emerge at any time. It is vital new development contributes to the long term sustainability of the community which hosts it. This approach is relevant whether considering a site already allocated for development, a windfall site or a rural exception site. Our strategic approach to providing affordable housing in rural areas can be used to assess the likely or potential impact of development proposals on the future sustainability of a community, and by using the feedback provided from the community to design and improve development proposals.

The level of affordable housing need in an area will be affected by past and planned delivery of affordable housing and a calculation will be made prior to dialogue commencing with local communities and parish councils.

Contribution new developments can make to communities

Developments contribute to the sustainability of the community or group of communities in which they are located. This includes both the direct and indirect impacts on the elements of sustainability identified by our strategic approach. The following are factors which will be considered to help assess the contribution a development can make to the sustainability of an area.

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Sustainability elements	Direct impact of affordable housing	Indirect impacts of affordable housing
<u>Housing need</u>	Provides housing to allow people from all age and income groups to live in the community. Provide for sustainability of the housing stock.	Allows for a wide mix of age groups to continue to contribute to the rural communities.
<u>Service accessibility</u> transport, education and retail	From 2014 the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is used to bring community benefits from development.	Increase in potential users of local services - public and private.
<u>Local economy</u>	We would support use of local labour and materials in construction can bring jobs and training opportunities.	Homes for people who work, or might work locally, supporting the local economy. Live-work units can be particularly valuable in rural areas.

Priority areas for future development

The areas that have been used as a guide in this prioritisation are those identified in the 2010 Cheshire East Strategic Housing Market Assessment, known as the SHMA, as primarily rural.

Each of these areas contains a number of parishes. The areas are not equal in area or population. This has been taken into account when determining the comparison and the factors below aggregated accordingly. It should be noted that three of the areas contain parishes that are not rural. Shavington Parish in the Wybunbury and Shavington area, Haslington parish in the Haslington and Englesea area and Prestbury Parish in the Prestbury area are not rural Parishes. Where this occurs the non rural parishes have not been included in the appraisal of the area.

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Map 1 - Strategic Housing Market Assessment areas

The 15 rural areas of the Cheshire East Strategic Housing Market Assessment are shown on map 1 and the list below shows which parishes are included in each area.

Please note that a rural parish is a parish in a rural area with a population of less than 3,000

Acton

Acton, Austerson, Baddington, Broomhall, Burland, Coole Pilate, Edleston, Henhull, Hurleston, Sound, Stoke

Audlem

Audlem, Buerton, Dodcott-cum Wilkesley, Hankelow, Newhall

Bunbury

Alraham, Bunbury, Calveley, Wardle

Minshull

Aston-Juxta-Mondrum, Cholmondeston, Church Minshull, Minshull Vernon, Poole, Warmingham, Wettenhall, Worleston

Peckforton

Bickerton, Brindley, Bulkeley, Cholmondeley, Chorley, Egerton, Faddiley, Haughton, Peckforton, Ridley, Spurstow

Wrenbury

Baddiley, Marbury, Norbury, Wirswall, Wrenbury

Haslington and Englesea

Barthomley, Basford, Crewe Green, Weston

Wybunbury and Shavington

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Batherton, Blakenhall , Bridgemere, Checkley, Chorlton, Doddington, Hatherton, Hough, Hunsterson, Lea, Stapeley, Walgherton, Wybunbury

Alsager Rural

Church Lawton

Congleton Rural

Hulme Walfield, Moreton Cum Alcumlow, Newbold Astbury, Smallwood, Somerford Booths, Somerford

Holmes Chapel Rural

Cranage, Goostrey, Swettenham, Twemlow,

Sandbach Rural

Arclid, Betchton, Bradwall, Brereton, Hassall, Moston

Knutsford Rural

Agden, Ashley, Aston by Budworth, Bexton, Chelford, Great Warford, High Legh, Little Bollington, Little Warford, Marthall, Mere, Millington, Mobberley, Nether Alderley, Ollerton, Peover Inferior, Peover Superior, Pickmere, Plumley, Rostherne, Snelson, Tabley Inferior, Tabley Superior, Tatton, Toft

Macclesfield Rural

Bosley, Eaton, Gawsworth, Henbury, Higher Hurdsfield, Kettleshulme, Lower Withington, Marton, North Rode, Over Alderley, Pott Shrigley, Rainow, Siddington, Sutton, Wildboarclough, Wincle

Prestbury

Adlington, Mottram St. Andrew

The comparison of the 15 areas is shown on a series of maps (Maps 1 - 8) to help illustrate their locations. The maps have been collated to help prioritise which parishes would be a priority for future development proposals, based on the following elements:

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Map 2 - Housing Need in the rural areas of Cheshire East

The Housing Need figures are those taken from the Cheshire East Strategic Housing Market Assessment and represent the housing need for the 5 years from 2009 to 2014.

The areas that are coloured blue are those five rural Cheshire East areas in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment with the highest affordable housing need. Those areas coloured orange are in the next five areas of housing need and the coloured green areas are those five areas with lowest housing need.

Map 3 Transport Services in the rural areas of Cheshire East

Transport is represented as the number of existing accessible transport services available in each parish in each individual SHMA area per 1000 existing households (includes regular weekday bus services, community bus services and railway stations)

The areas that are coloured blue are those five rural Cheshire East areas in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment that have the highest number of existing transport services in comparison to the others. Those five areas coloured orange have the next highest number of existing transport services and those five areas coloured green the least.

Map 4 - Housing Services and Community Facilities in the rural areas of Cheshire East

Services and Community is represented as the number of existing facilities available in each parish in each individual SHMA area per 1000 existing households in each area (includes such facilities as doctor's surgeries, village halls, churches and playgrounds)

The areas that are coloured blue are those five rural Cheshire East areas in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment that have the highest number of existing community and services facilities in comparison to the others. Those five areas coloured orange have the next highest number of existing facilities and those five areas coloured green the least.

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Map 5 - Educational Facilities in the rural areas of Cheshire East

Education is represented as the number of existing educational facilities available in each parish in each individual SHMA area per 1000 households (includes primary schools, nurseries and colleges but does not include private schools)

The areas that are coloured blue are those five rural Cheshire East areas in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment that have the highest number of existing educational facilities in comparison to the others. Those five areas coloured orange have the next highest number of existing facilities and those five areas coloured green the least.

Map 6 - Retail Outlets in the rural areas of Cheshire East

Retail is represented as the number of existing general retail outlets available in each parish in each individual SHMA area per 1000 households (includes general stores, post offices, public houses, convenience stores attached to fuel stations but does not include restaurants and non general retail outlets such as clothing shops and hardware stores)

The areas that are coloured blue are those five rural Cheshire East areas in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment that have the highest number of existing retail outlets in comparison to the others. Those five areas coloured orange have the next highest number of existing outlets and those five areas coloured green the least.

Map 7 - Employment in the rural areas of Cheshire East

Employment is shown as the ratio of people of working age resident in each area in relation to the number of people employed in that area

The areas that are coloured blue are those five rural Cheshire East areas in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment that have the highest level of employment in comparison to the others. Those five areas coloured orange have the next highest level of employment and those five areas coloured green the least.

Map 8 - Overall Priority Order for each rural area of Cheshire East

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

The priority order is established by the comparison of the level of need with the level of sustainability in each of the rural Strategic Housing Market Assessment areas and then prioritising the areas in order.

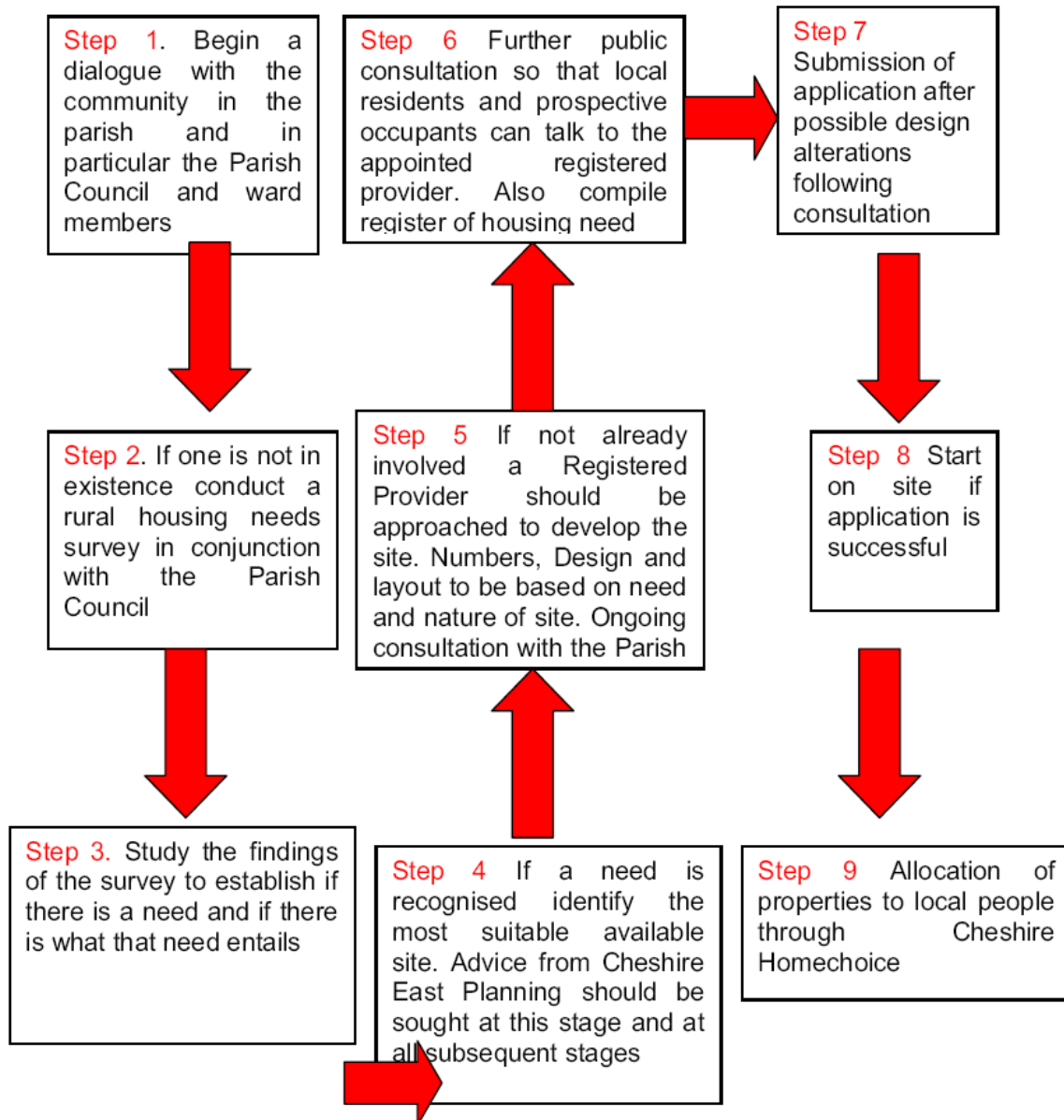
5 The process for enabling rural housing schemes

To help engage communities and provide guidance to Parish Councils about the process of development the following order of activities is described. The flow chart overleaf provides a demonstration of the process

- Steps 1-3 Discussion will begin with the Parish Council, ward members and the community in general. The level of housing need should be evidenced through a local housing needs survey .
- Step 4 If there is housing need the most suitable site should be identified with advice sought from the Cheshire East Planning Department. It will be key to suitability that the site is available for sale by a landowner to a Registered Provider at a price which allows the development of affordable housing. This means the land may realise agricultural value and certainly much less than market value
- Steps 5-6 A Registered Provider will need to be appointed at this stage to take the proposal forward. The legal agreements known as s106 agreements require that properties to be made available as social/affordable rented or as shared ownership units should be owned and managed by a Registered Provider. There is no defined process for this to happen but the local authority can provide contact details for Providers with good experience of developing in rural areas or a Parish Council or landowner may be aware of a particular Provider that they would prefer to deal with. Alternatively a Provider may already have extensive stock holdings in the area and it makes sense for them to be involved in any proposed development. The Provider will draw up suggestions for a scheme based on the identified need and further public consultation can take place to take into account the views of local people and provide further evidence of housing need.
- Step 7 Planning application is submitted. If the planning committee is satisfied with the scheme and the scheme meets the provisions of planning

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

START

Rural Housing Enabling
Flowchart

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FINISH

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

It should be noted that the flowchart diagram demonstrates the sequence of events in an ideal situation. However, in most cases the process may differ from that shown. For instance the land may come forward before dialogue has taken place in the community or the Registered Provider could be involved at a much earlier stage. The important thing is that the local community and, in particular, the Parish Council are involved in the process and kept informed throughout.

Community Land Trusts

A Community Land Trust is a non-profit, community-based organisation run by volunteers that develops housing or other assets at permanently affordable levels for long-term community benefit. It does this by separating the value of the building from the land and, in the case of shared-equity homes, fixing the resale percentage, thereby enabling occupiers to pay for the use of buildings and services at prices they can afford.

The number of such trusts throughout the country is limited. However, these numbers are increasing and have government support, as a method of developing affordable homes as part of neighbourhood planning. Cheshire East is working closely with other authorities in Cheshire with a view to create and facilitate Community Land Trusts in the area. More information can be found by following the link in the Glossary and Related Documents section.

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

6 Further Work

The affordable housing needs information contained within this Guide has been sourced from the 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which does not supply information about individual parishes. A large number of rural parishes, however, have been surveyed over the past five years. These are as follows:

- Audlem Survey 2007
Audlem, Buerton, Dodcott-cum-Wilkesley, Hankelow, Newhall
- Plumley and nearby Parishes Survey, 2008
Chelford, Little Warford, Lower Withington, Ollerton & Marthall, Peover Inferior, Peover Superior, Plumley (including Toft and Bexton), Snelson
- Congleton and Macclesfield Border Parishes, 2008
Bosley, Brereton, Eaton Gawsworth, Hulme Walfield and Somerford Booths, Marton, North Rode, Siddington, Somerford, Swettenham
- Southern Area Rural Housing Needs Survey 2010
Acton (including the parishes of Acton, Edleston and Henhull), Burland Cholmondeley (including the parishes of Cholmondeley and Chorley), Marbury and District (including the parishes of Marbury cum Quoisley, Norbury and Wirswall), Sound and District (including the parishes of Austerson, Baddiley, Baddington, Broomhall, Coole Pilate, and Sound), Wrenbury cum Frith
- Pickmere and Tabley Survey, 2011, Pickmere, Tabley Inferior, Tabley Superior
- Sutton Parish Survey, 2011, Sutton Parish

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

These localised surveys provide information for rural communities as they aim to provide an indication of local housing need. As further surveys are carried out the information from them will be used to inform the Guide and make the Guide more effective.

Further surveys need to be carried out in the following areas

1. Agden, Ashley, Aston by Budworth, Great Warford, High Legh, Little Bollington, Mere, Millington. Mobberley, Rostherne, Tatton
2. Barthomley, Basford, Crewe Green, Weston, Hough, Lea, Walgherton, Wybunbury, Chorlton
3. Wattenhall, Cholmondeston, Aston-Juxta-Mondrum, Poole, Worleston, Church Minshull, Minshull Vernon, Warmingham, Moston, Bradwall
4. Higher Hurdsfield, Kettleshume, Pott Shrigley, Rainow, Wildboarclough
5. Cranage, Goostrey, Swettenham, Twemlow, Arclid
6. Moreton cum Alcumlow, Newbold Astbury, Smallwood, Betchton, Hassall, Church Lawton
7. Batherton, Blakenhall, Bridgemere, Checkley, Doddington, Hatherton, Hunsterson, Stapeley
8. Stoke and Hurleston, Alpraham, Bunbury, Calveley, Wardle, Bickerton, Brindley, Bulkeley, Egerton, Faddiley, Haughton, Peckforton, Ridley, Spurstow
9. Adlington, Mottram St Andrew, Nether Alderley, Henbury, Over Alderley

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Example of a recent development of affordable housing in a rural area

An example of how the process works can be shown in the recently built small scheme of six affordable houses on Oak Gardens, Bunbury. The location was a small disused factory site approached from one of the main roads in Bunbury. Equity Housing Group completed the scheme in 2010, and built all units to high standards including a number of energy saving features. Funding was provided by Cheshire East Council and the Homes and Community Agency as part of the National Affordable Homes Programme 2008-2011.

Equity Housing worked closely with the local Parish Council, Cheshire Homechoice and the Rural Housing Enabler to ensure that all the homes were allocated to the local people. As a result six families from the Bunbury area can continue to live in and contribute to the local community.

A resident of one of the new homes, has commented "These fabulous, well built homes, with energy saving features such as solar panels and energy efficient central heating as well as excellent insulation, which makes them economical to run which is a blessing in these financial times. My husband and myself were living in Bunbury, but following the collapse of our business we were in great danger of having to leave because we could not afford to continue living here. As it is we are now part of a small community who get on well and are always available to help one another. The children here range from teenagers to a baby born shortly after her parents moved in. My neighbours say that had these homes not become available they would have been forced to move out of the area, and an important section of the next generation may have been lost to Bunbury forever."



Oak Gardens Bunbury

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Related Documents (All the documents below are web links alternatively for hard copies please get in touch with any of the contacts on page 5)

- Living Working Countryside: The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Rural Housing
- Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005)
 - o Policy H6
 - o Policy H13
 - o Policy H14
- Supplementary Planning Document 6: Affordable Housing and Mixed Communities (Congleton Borough Council 2006)
- Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011(2005)
 - Policy RES. 7
 - Policy RES. 8
- Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (2004)
- Policy H8
- Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing (Cheshire East, 2011)
- Cheshire East Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2010
- Cheshire East Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
- Cheshire Homechoice
- Community Land Trusts
- Codes for sustainable homes
- Cheshire East Housing Strategy "Moving Forward" 2011-16

Glossary

Registered Provider

Private non profit making organisations that provide social housing for those in need of a home

Local Connection

A person who currently lives or has recently lived in the parish or has immediate family who live or have recently lived in the parish or has a contract of employment within the parish or some other strong connection to the parish

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Glossary (continued)

Types and tenures of affordable housing in rural areas

Social rented

Rented housing owned and managed by local authorities and Registered Providers for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime.

Affordable Rented

Rented housing let by Registered Providers to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is not subject to the national rent regime but is subject to other rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent.

Shared Ownership

Shared Ownership is a part-buy, part-rent scheme for people who cannot afford to buy a home with a commercially-available mortgage. It is a way to buy a share in a home now with the option to buy more of it in the future—commonly known as staircasing. You will need a minimum level of income/savings depending on the value of the home you want to buy. In the case of rural affordable housing built on an exceptions site there are sometimes limits on the levels of staircasing in other words it is not possible to own 100% of the property. There are also restrictions on resale in accordance with local connection criteria

Rent to Homebuy

Rent a property at an affordable discounted rate (usually up to 20% lower than average average local market rents) for between three and five years. In the future as circumstances change the occupier can purchase shares of the home or even buy it outright.

RURAL HOUSING ENABLING GUIDE

Glossary (continued)

Discount for Sale

A purchaser who qualifies through local connection and housing need buys a percentage of the market value of the house. The future ownership and selling price of the discount for sale house is controlled by a legal charge on the property which means the solicitor always has to advise the local authority of the intended sale.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Economic Regeneration

Date of Meeting: 5th November 2012
Report of: Strategic Director (Places and Organisational Capacity)
Subject/Title: Vision for Visitor Information in Cheshire East
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jamie Macrae

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 In February 2011, Cabinet endorsed the Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy including a recommendation to make it easier for visitors to plan and book their visit to Cheshire East and to improve the provision of visitor information services throughout the borough. A strategy for Visitor Information within Cheshire East has therefore been developed outlining a number of models which can be applied to relevant towns and villages within Cheshire East.
- 1.2 Both the Visitor Economy Strategy and the strategic work on visitor information identified a need to maintain high quality visitor information services in Nantwich to serve the town and surrounding areas. Due to the Council's asset transfer process, Nantwich Civic Hall transferred to Nantwich Town Council in April 2012. As this housed the existing visitor information provision as part of the Customer Service Point the move highlighted the requirement to secure the future of visitor information provision in Nantwich and South Cheshire. The proposed original move to the library would have resulted in a reduction in services offered. This would have had a detrimental effect on those businesses and events that have relied on Nantwich TIC to sell and profile activities for visitors. This report profiles the vision and strategy for Visitor Information in Cheshire East along with a specific recommendation for visitor information provision in Nantwich.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That
- (1) the visitor information strategy for Cheshire East as set out in Appendix 1 be approved; and
 - (2) Nantwich Tourist Information Centre be transferred to Nantwich Town Council on the basis set out in paragraph 10.1 of the report.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Visitor Information Strategy for Cheshire East provides a cost effective solution to Cheshire East Council enabling visitor information to be provided,

integrated and improved in future years. The recommendation to transfer visitor information provision in Nantwich over to Nantwich Town Council will reduce costs to CEC and will lead to an overall improvement in service.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 Nantwich South & Stapeley; Nantwich North & West

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 Cllr Penny Butterill; Cllr Arthur Moran; Cllr Peter Groves; Cllr Andrew Martin.

6.0 Policy Implications including carbon reduction and health

6.1 The visitor economy strategy may inform the development of other strategies, particularly economic strategies. A healthy, competitive and high performing economy will contribute to the health, wealth and well being of the population of Cheshire East. This can help shape the scale and location of employment opportunities and encourage accessibility. The Visitor Economy of Cheshire East is worth £578m (STEAM 2010), sustaining 8693 jobs.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 To assist the transfer, especially during the early years of delivery, it is proposed that there would be, on a reducing scale, an incentive to the Town Council. This would be through an agreed subsidy (based on the existing Customer Services budget) from April 2013 of £12k in year one, reducing to £6k in year 2 and £3k in year 3. This will reduce to nil after that. The process will be for Cheshire East Council to raise a purchase order to Nantwich Town Council; Nantwich Town Council then send CEC an invoice for the contribution on an annual basis for the 3 year period.

8.0 Legal implications (authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

8.1 As the transfer of the Tourist Information Centre involves the transfer of a service the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations 2006 (TUPE) will apply. As a result any staff deemed to be assigned to the service will transfer to the employment of Nantwich Town Council pursuant to those regulations. Potentially one employee may be assigned. As part of that transfer Cheshire East Council will have to provide employee liability information to the Town Council, engage in the appropriate consultation with any affected employees and attend to pension issues.

8.2 As the transfer of the Tourist Information Centre is not a transfer of asset but a transfer of service it is not considered to be part of the Nantwich Transfer of Assets report agreed by Cabinet on 5th September 2011. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Nantwich Town Council will need to be produced before the transfer is completed.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 The risk of not implementing the visitor information strategy for Cheshire East would be a reduction of visitor information available, initially within South Cheshire. This would have knock-on effects for visitor numbers to local attractions due in part to the location of the visitor information service in the future; as well as in the value of the visitor economy to Cheshire East.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 Cheshire East's Visitor Economy Strategy recognises that the market town of Nantwich and the rural area of South Cheshire are classed as spatial priorities and as such are outlined in the Council's Economic Development Strategy and are directly relevant to the visitor economy sector. Nantwich is already seen as being of significant established value to the Borough's visitor economy which is why a quality visitor information service is crucial.

Due to asset transfers within Nantwich, visitor information has become a priority and the following states the case to work with Nantwich Town Council to ensure the future of visitor information provision for Nantwich & South Cheshire as part of the strategy for visitor information in Cheshire East. If agreed the model and process will be rolled out to other towns and villages in the borough.

Objectives

The objectives for visitor information services in Cheshire East are:

- A modern, customer focussed and transformational Visitor Information Service.
- Recognised as an integral part of the community, promoting & selling the local area and further afield; what's on and local products to locals and visitors alike
- Contributing positively to the visitor economy of Cheshire East.
- Ensuring Cheshire East is promoted where and when visitors require it.

Strategic Approach to Visitor Information

Following the adoption of the Visitor Economy Strategy in 2011, a new approach to improving visitor information was developed. In 2011, two of Cheshire East's TIC's came under the direction of the Visitor my Service, and was clear that in order to survive and ultimately thrive they must develop new ways of working. For the service to be sustainable, additional income must be developed, efficiencies sought where available and the reliance on running costs being covered by Cheshire East Council reduced. New ways of working include working with community organisations regarding the visitor offer and the sourcing of quality local products for re-sale; where possible incorporating the 'town' branding such

as 'Make it Macclesfield'; extending the reach of the 'Welcome Courses' to up-skill relevant Cheshire East businesses in showcasing what Cheshire East has to offer as a place to visit; and promoting the local area in more effective way than has been historically done. The offer is now firmly focussed on Cheshire East as a location. The approach helps to identify a role for Visitor information Centres, but also develops a hierarchy of other visitor information provision that can help to ensure that visitors have a broad range of relevant provision through other venues such as libraries, visitor attractions and retail outlets. The Visitor Information Strategy for Cheshire East can be seen in full in appendix 1.

Nantwich Tourist Information Centre

From April 2012 Nantwich Town Council took control of Nantwich Civic Hall. Nantwich Tourist Information Centre although based within the Civic Hall was not part of the initial asset transfer; therefore a proposal to secure its long term future was put together. A plan has been agreed on the short term future for this financial year and a proposal for the Town Council to run the service after this date is proposed, with the detail being progressed through Visitor Economy, Customer Services and Nantwich Town Council. The current customer service net budget for this operation is £12k per annum. To assist the transfer, especially during the early years of delivery, it is proposed that there would be, on a reducing scale, an incentive to the Town Council. This would be through an agreed subsidy (based on the existing Customer Services budget) from April 2013 of £12k in year one, reducing to £6k in year 2 and £3k in year 3. This will reduce to nil after that. The advantage of this approach includes a reduction in cost to the council over time whilst maintaining an important visitor information service. The Town Council is fully aware of the costs associated with running a TIC and has shown a willingness to reduce and absorb the costs going forward.

The following outlines the role Cheshire East Council will continue to play in terms of overall consistency, co-ordination of message and development of visitor information in Nantwich.

With regard to the future of Nantwich, it has been discussed that Cheshire East Council and Marketing Cheshire work closely with Nantwich Town Council to share knowledge, experience, buying patterns and training, whilst the Town Council will ensure the service meets the needs of the community. There will also be regular dialogue with local organisation including Nantwich LAP and Nantwich Flourish. This will mirror work currently happening in Macclesfield and Congleton as well as the work completed on visitor information in the borough's libraries. This means Nantwich will share a common vision, development and co-ordinated message as the rest of Cheshire East; and along the implementation of the visitor information strategy will improve the current available offer in Nantwich.

11.0 Access to Information

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

Name: Richard Milkins

Designation: Visitor Economy Development Manager

Tel No: 78060

Email: Richard_milkins@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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Strategic Direction for Visitor Information within Cheshire East

Transforming the experience of visitors depends not only on getting the attractions and accommodation right, but through quality visitor information delivered where and when visitors need it. Cheshire East Council recognises the importance of visitor information and through the development of this strategy is looking to work in partnership with Cheshire East towns and villages to improve the quality and availability of visitor information. Visitors must be able to find the information they require to make the most of their stay and this will be achieved through the development of new approaches to visitor information provision. Visitor information plays an important role in increasing visitor spend and supporting the growth of the visitor economy.

Traditionally, Cheshire East have invested in Visitor Information Centres (VICs) as the main form of provision, however we are now responding to growing demand for other cost-effective models to compliment this provision.

Cheshire East's visitor profile is predominately day visitors categorised in the main by high spending Cosmopolitans (*strong, active, confident, style and brand important but as an expression of their self-made identity. High spenders, especially on innovation and technology. Looking for new challenges, new experiences, globetrotters*) and Traditionals (*self-reliant, internally referenced, slow to adopt new options, strong orientation towards, traditional values, value individual attention and service*). Our challenge is to grow this important market whilst actively looking to convert more of the day visitors into overnight stays. Cheshire East is also growing as a family destination particularly with the investment that is happening in family attractions. This will be an audience to target in future years.

What do we mean by Visitor Information?

Well informed visitors will stay longer in destinations and most importantly will want to return. Visitor information can best be defined by considering the range of interactions that take place throughout the "visitor journey" and the provision of appropriate information - when, where and how - at each stage.

The information needs and expectations of visitors in the early 21st century are distinctly different from those of a decade ago. Visitors now have easy access to the web and mobile multi-media devices – to download information, make bookings and seek independent consumer advice. Whether through new technology or via face to face contact, visitor information provides an opportunity to influence decision making – the choice of destination; the length of stay; what to see, do and experience during a visit and whether to return or recommend to others.

As the emphasis shifts towards collaboration and taking information to the visitor, rather than expecting the visitor to come to the information, there is an

opportunity for a wider range of 'contact points' to emerge, equipped with the tools and product knowledge required to service visitor needs effectively.

Businesses such as visitor attractions, hotels and accommodation, retailers, restaurants, travel agents, transport operators, car rental companies, public houses, village shops, petrol stations and post offices will find that they can increase their business and increase customer satisfaction by providing visitor information as part of their service.

Way Forward

It is the aim of Cheshire East Council to provide a framework for Cheshire East towns and villages to increase the provision of visitor information in a cohesive manner providing a service that enhances and compliments the visitor information already available in libraries and Visitor Information Centres; working collaboratively with popular venues to ensure information is readily available; raising awareness and improving the visual presence of the Cheshire Market Towns, Cheshire Peak District and South Cheshire brands and establishing a cost effective distribution system for leaflets.

Visitor Information Centres have traditionally been seen as the main source of visitor information in an area and within Cheshire East we are fortunate to have quality centres in Macclesfield, Congleton & Nantwich. These are valuable assets; however they are cash and resource-intensive and with downward pressure on resources, now is the time to look "outside of the box" at new, additional and innovative ways of providing visitor information.

Work has been completed providing visitor information in a number of libraries across Cheshire East, and although this provision is good, the service is limited as it can only be accessed during library opening hours. In Cheshire East towns popular with visitors there is still a lack of cohesive visitor information on offer.

Nationally, new partnerships are being established all the time with the private sector. Businesses are beginning to understand the value of visitor information as an add-on to their core offer, to drive footfall, create distinctive local appeal, and differentiate themselves from competitors.

Ideally, information services should closely reflect visitor movements and needs. Visitor information is a means to generate sales and raise awareness. This is about encouraging longer stays and greater spend: up-selling and cross-selling, and capturing customer data to enable cost-effective direct marketing and customer retention

Cheshire East Council will investigate new models for providing visitor information; as relying solely on Visitor Information Centres is not applicable for all areas of Cheshire East. We will however continue with the management of Macclesfield and Congleton Visitor Information Centres. The key to this innovative approach is to complement other available sources of visitor information through the use of non-traditional premises at locations where visitors and the locality may benefit from improved access to information.

Visitor Information Models

Visitor Information Centre

- As funding from Cheshire East is becoming limited, traditional council run Visitor Information Centres will be limited to their current locations. There will however be opportunities for community organisations to take over the running of these centres if it is felt that this will be in all stakeholders' interests.
- There is also the opportunity for communities to set-up their own Visitor Information Centre. This will be run and financed through the local community; however this will be supported by the Cheshire East Visitor Information Network that includes Cheshire East Council and Marketing Cheshire. The benefit of this approach is that the centre could be located at strategic locations within the town and run by knowledgeable, enthusiastic residents of the locality. The link between tourist numbers and visitor information will be the catalyst for this type of venture.

The focus of face to face provision must continue to be on providing excellent standards of service (including recommendations), provided by skilled personnel trained to understand visitor's individual requirements, tailor information accordingly and maximise benefit for the destination area. Face to face contact with customers each year should be a crucial element in understanding our visitors. Visitor Information Centres provide an opportunity to learn more about their profile, visitor patterns and booking habits and to influence them to make repeat visits. They can also play a key role in customer data collection and e-marketing.

Visitor Contact Points

Cheshire East Council Visitor Economy is currently developing visitor contact points across the Borough. It requires engaging with businesses in a town to discuss new ways of providing visitors with the information they require. There is potential to work with certain town centre businesses, such as book shops, coffee shops, wine bars, the railway station or the museums as examples, to explain the potential advantages this new way of working would bring to all parties.

The concept is that visitor information would be available within the identified businesses in the town, backed up by staff having the product knowledge to answer visitor enquiries. An assessment of the information most relevant for the area will be developed, and in partnership with the business supply branded dispensers to be displayed in the business; window stickers and branding so the visitor would recognise they can ask for information; a local PR campaign to ensure everyone can understand the scheme and a welcome manual with the necessary support information – top historical facts, key Cheshire information and relevant contacts, provided.

The intended work will have Cheshire East as its primary focus, with regard to what's on, local products, places to visit, places to stay and places to eat. As well

as visitors the project will be of most relevance to the resident population, particularly in relation to the day visitor market and visiting friends and relatives (VFR), which are significant markets in Cheshire.

Positives to the project:

- Using local knowledge and pride to have ambassadors throughout the town.
- Looking at all aspects of the customer journey – able to target at more strategically placed points in the town centre.
- Information could be accessed outside of the more traditional office hours when restaurants or pubs take part.
- Cost effective
- Targeted information on local attractions, events and local produce to showcase the distinctiveness of the area.
- Capture consumer feedback – able to really understand the needs of the visitor and in addition any relevant comments can help develop future tourism agendas.
- Businesses working together to improve their network and further develop their knowledge on the area.

Positives to the businesses:

- Raises their profile through additional signage, PR and communication channels
- Encourages a new type of audience to visit the business
- Promotes community support and will profile the link between the businesses and the local area
- Aid to secondary spend
- Added support to the business through tough economic times

Mobile Visitor Information

Mobile visitor information is the final piece of the jigsaw. With the huge rise in ownership of personal computers, mobile smart phones and access to websites, visitors can now access visitor information anywhere at anytime and in most cases free of charge. The information is always up to date allowing the visitor to plan their visit in advance and to access relevant information when they are at their destination. Cheshire East is at the forefront of this technology and uses it in a way that adds to and compliments existing visitor information sources.

Cheshire East uses a number of websites to promote the area and to inform visitors and potential visitors of where to stay; what to do; where to eat; places of interest and further sources of information. Added to this are the apps and widgets that are also available including the accommodation widget that sits on the businesses website to enable the visitor to book accommodation immediately.

These are all sources of further information that can compliment other visitor information provision or provide the information directly to the customer.

Support

Cheshire East Council

The Visitor Economy Department of the Council have many years' experience of developing, implementing and improving visitor information services in the borough. From developing Visitor Information Centre business plans to redesigning the layout to reducing costs to implementing retail plans the Council will work in partnership with the town to develop appropriate visitor information points. We will also utilise the knowledge and experience of Marketing Cheshire to fully integrate the services within Cheshire's visitor economy.

Visitor Information Network

Cheshire East Council has developed a Visitor Information Network Group through the social business networking site LinkedIn. The group is for any person or business within Cheshire East who comes into contact with visitors. Within the site anyone can offer incentives, update on news items, inform on promotions or when new leaflets and brochures are available. The aim of the group is to provide an opportunity for everyone to keep informed of all tourism activity within the area and to create real partnerships and contacts for all involved.

Welcome Courses

For Visitor Information Centres, libraries and businesses to react to and service comprehensively customer queries and questions, staff need to be equipped and trained to the highest standard. This has and will continue to be achieved through a series of welcome courses, equipping staff with the necessary skills to exceed customer's expectations and to give added value. The courses cover customer service, itinerary planning, additional sources of information, hidden tourism gems and general travel queries. This will give the visitor a welcome to Cheshire East as never before; leading to return visits and longer stays.

Objectives

Visitor information is inextricably linked to destination marketing – it delivers the “brand promise” on the ground. To be effective, it needs to be governed by a set of quality standards that reinforce the brand, ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction. It means that customers receive consistent, quality-assured messages about what Cheshire East has to offer, no matter where they are in the borough. In short, the “prize” for partners is to maximise the opportunities for the visitor economy by providing appropriate, cost-effective visitor information in the right place, at the right time to the right people.

Cheshire East Council's vision and objectives for visitor information services are designed around providing quality visitor information where and when the customer requires it:

- A modern, customer focussed and transformational Visitor Information Service, recognised as an integral part of the community, promoting &

selling the local area and further afield; what's on and local products to locals and visitors alike

- Contributing positively to the visitor economy of Cheshire East through the promotion of what's on, where to go and see, where to eat and where to stay and through the added value of knowledgeable staff.
- Ensuring Cheshire East is promoted where and when visitors require it.
- Ensuring that those who come into contact with visitors are understanding of the area and what it has to offer through relevant training courses and material.
- The implementation of partnership working to engage specialists in the visitor economy to impart valuable knowledge and experience; including Cheshire East Council and Marketing Cheshire.
- To work in partnership with Cheshire East attractions to continually up-sell the offer

Next Steps

Cheshire East Council will pilot the strategy with Nantwich Town Council who has recently taken ownership of Nantwich Civic Hall, which currently houses Nantwich Visitor Information Centre. The town council have expressed an interest in running the visitor information centre and Cheshire East Council will explore the opportunity further, in line with this strategy. Once completed it is anticipated that the strategy will be opened up to the rest of the borough through the Cheshire East Sustainable Towns Network.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Economic Regeneration

Date of Meeting: 5th November 2012
Report of: Assets Manager
Subject/Title: Bowling Facilities, Cranage
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jamie Macrae

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the transfer of the bowling facilities located in Cranage to Cranage Parish Council plus associated legacy funding to Cranage Parish Council.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Economic Regeneration approve
- (1) the transfer of the bowling facilities located off Byley Lane/Needham Drive, Cranage to Cranage Parish Council by a 25 year lease at a peppercorn rent which lease imposes all maintenance, management and financial responsibility for the facilities on the tenant and restricts their use to bowling, recreational and complementary uses on terms and conditions to be determined by the Assets Manager, Streetscape and Bereavement Manager, Director of Finance and Business Services and Borough Solicitor; and
- (2) the payment of existing associated legacy funding to the Parish Council out of the existing reserve held by the Council to enable improvements and repairs to the premises within a timeframe to be agreed by the Assets Manager subject to the Parish Council completing an under-lease of the bowling facilities to The Good Companions Bowling Club for a term of not less than 5 years.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To enable the Parish Council to the manage the facility on a local basis and to undertake necessary improvements as required to the pavilion through the use of the existing reserve currently held by Cheshire East Council.
- 3.2 To relinquish Cheshire East Council of all management and financial liabilities for the facility for the duration of the lease.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 .Dane Valley

5.0 Local Ward Members

Councillor L Gilbert
Councillor A Kolker

6.0 Policy Implications (including carbon reduction and health)

6.1 None

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

7.1 With regard to the transfer of the available reserve of £18,000, the Parish Council will be required to use the funding within a specified period and demonstrate the manner of the spend which must enable improvements and repairs to the premises. Should the funding not be spent within the agreed time period then it will be necessary to return any unspent monies.

8.0 Legal Implications (authorised by Borough Solicitor)

8.1 The land must be sold in accordance with the obligation in section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to obtain the best consideration reasonably obtainable.

8.2 Under the terms of the proposed 25 year lease the Parish Council will be liable for all management and financial responsibilities thus the suggested peppercorn rent is considered by the Assets Manager to fulfill the necessary best consideration requirements.

8.3 In transferring assets the Council must behave prudentially to fulfill its fiduciary duty.

8.4 The payment of the £18,000 to the Parish Council should not cause any State aid difficulties to the Council as the Parish Council does not operate as an “undertaking” on the commercial markets and is not in competition with other unsubsidized undertakings. It is a pre-requisite to the finding of State aid that the aid beneficiary is an “undertaking”. The Parish Council itself is capable of granting State aid to third parties via the use of the property or the £18,000 but this should not be the Council’s concern. Given the amount of aid the Parish Council may give the “de minimis” State aid block exemption (EUR200,000) is likely to apply in any event provided the aid beneficiary/ies have not been/ will not be in receipt of significant aid from other sources.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 Through the transfer of the facility the Parish Council will be responsible for all maintenance, management and cost liabilities.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 In August 2002 the Congleton Borough Council took ownership of a large area of public open space off Needham Drive, Cranage from Wainhomes Limited and as a part of the area the Council also took ownership of a bowling green and pavilion. The said bowling green and pavilion had previously been a part of the Cranage Hospital complex which was partially demolished to accommodate residential development.
- 10.2 The green and pavilion were then and continue to be utilised by the Good Companions Bowling Club without any formal documentation from either the Council or the previous owners of the land. It is understood that the Club commenced use the facilities following eviction from their former site (now the McCarthy Stone Development in Holmes Chapel.) It is understood that the Club expended money received from their surrender of the site to bring the green and pavilion back into reasonable use after standing idle for a number of years.
- 10.3 Since the Council took ownership of the green and pavilion it has only undertaken emergency maintenance work to the pavilion and minor works to the green. All other costs including services are understood to be borne by the Club.
- 10.4 The bowling pavilion is in a very poor state of repair and cannot be reasonably considered to be fit for purpose.
- 10.5 In March 2009 Congleton Borough Council allocated a capital sum of £20,000 towards the improvement of the Pavilion. The budget was intended to act as a lever to enable the Club to bid for match funding to undertake significant improvements/rebuilding of the Pavilion. The level of reserve currently available is approximately £18,000 following the deduction of costs and fees associated with the planning permission detailed below.
- 10.6 In 2010 CEC Asset Management, working in cooperation with the Club gained a planning permission to replace the existing timber Pavilion with a new brick built structure. Cost estimates of £50,000 for the replacement facility were received from a Quantity Surveyor.
- 10.7 The Club believed that they had a Contractor who could provide the facility at a cost of £30,000 subject to confirmation of the required specification. The Club considered that they had the ability to raise the balance of monies.
- 10.8 It was agreed with the Club that the Council would advertise for expressions of interest in tendering for the said work on 'the chest' and the aforementioned Contractor would have the opportunity to bid with other approved Contractors. Unfortunately the said Contractor did not progress the necessary documentation and thus no bid was received. In the knowledge that the necessary finance was not available at the level of anticipated costs detailed by the Quantity Surveyor this route of procurement was not progressed further.

- 10.9 Provisional heads of Terms have now been agreed with the Club to formalise their occupation of the facilities.
- 10.10 The Club are still eager to improve the facilities and have provided further costs estimates from two contractors to undertake the improvement of the facilities in accordance with the Planning Permission.
- 10.11 Following meetings with Club Representatives and Members of Cranage and Holmes Chapel Parish Councils to discuss the manner in which the facilities can be improved, Cranage Parish Council have since expressed their interest in taking over the management of the bowling facilities from Cheshire East Council.
- 10.12 Discussions have been undertaken with the Parish Council and provisional terms agreed based upon those used in phase one of the transfer of assets to Town and Parish Councils. The basis of transfer being a 25 year lease at a peppercorn rent with the Parish Council taking on all repairing and insuring liabilities.
- 10.13 In addition to the usual terms of transfer the Parish Council also require the existing legacy funding from Cheshire East Council to provide the opportunity to improve the facilities. The Parish Council consider that with this budget they can work with the Bowling Club to deliver an improved, replacement facility to benefit local residents.
- 10.14 The Director of Finance and Business Support has been consulted and is supportive of the proposals to transfer the existing legacy funding to the Parish Council with the necessary safeguards regarding the nature of spend and repayment. The Streetscape and Bereavement Manager has been party to discussions on the matter and is also supportive of the transfer from a Service Delivery viewpoint.
- 10.15 Should the suggested transfer not proceed then the future provision of bowling facilities in this location will need to be fully considered.

11.0 Access to Information

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

Name: Peter Hall
Designation: Property Portfolio Manager
Tel No: 01270 686 133
Email: Peter.Hall@cheshireeast.gov.uk