

Application No: 12/3114N

Location: Land South of Newcastle Road, Shavington & Wybunbury, Cheshire

Proposal: Outline Application for Residential Development of up to 400 Dwellings, Local Centre of up to 700 sqm (with 400 sqm being a single convenience store), Open Space, Access Roads, Cycleways, footpaths, Structural Landscaping, and Associated Engineering Works

Applicant: Mactaggart & Mickel Homes Ltd

Expiry Date: 14-Nov-2012

ERRATUM

The accessibility table included in the “sustainability” section of the report refers to ‘Land At Rose Cottages, Somerford’. It should read “Land South of Newcastle Road”.

ADDENDUM– 23rd JANUARY 2013

The following additional representations have been received.

Shavington-cum-Gresty Parish Council Comments

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement comprises an objection from Shavington cum Gresty Parish Council to an outline planning application submitted by Mactaggart and Mickel for residential and associated development on land south of Newcastle Road, west of Stock Lane and east of Dig Lane, Shavington/Wybunbury. All matters are reserved for subsequent approval. The site has been known as Shavington Triangle.

1.2 It is submitted alongside and to support the many other objections submitted by local residents of Shavington and Wybunbury to the same planning application.

2.0 THE CURRENT SITE

2.1 This is a large greenfield site comprising some 17.38 hectares and according to the submitted Planning Statement is to accommodate up to 400 dwellings plus a single convenience store, open space, access roads, cycleways, footpaths, structural landscaping and associated engineering works.

2.2 Its release for housing will have a major impact on the character of the area.

3.0 EXISTING PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1 The site lies outside the settlement boundary of both Crewe and Shavington as shown on the Urban Areas Inset Plan of the Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. (CNRLP) This is the current Statutory Development Plan for the area. The site is currently not within an area considered appropriate for new housing development.
- 3.2 It lies within an area of open countryside and policy NE2 applies as set out below.

Policy NE.2: OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

ALL LAND OUTSIDE THE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP (SEE ALSO POLICIES RES.5 AND RES.6) WILL BE TREATED AS OPEN COUNTRYSIDE.

WITHIN OPEN COUNTRYSIDE ONLY DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE PURPOSES OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, OUTDOOR RECREATION, ESSENTIAL WORKS UNDERTAKEN BY PUBLIC SERVICE AUTHORITIES OR STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS, OR FOR OTHER USES APPROPRIATE TO A RURAL AREA WILL BE PERMITTED.

AN EXCEPTION MAY BE MADE WHERE THERE IS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE INFILLING OF A SMALL GAP WITH ONE OR TWO DWELLINGS IN AN OTHERWISE BUILT UP FRONTAGE.

- 3.3 Quite clearly the proposal for residential development does not comprises one of the uses set out in the policy which will be permitted nor is it a use which is appropriate to a rural area. Further it does not comprise a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage. The proposal is contrary to policy NE2 of the Local Plan. The release of this site would represent an ad hoc expansion into Open Countryside.

The Interim Planning Policy (IPP)

- 3.4 This document was adopted by Cheshire East Council on 24th February 2011. Its purpose is

“To manage the release of additional land for residential development through the consideration of planning applications to maintain a five years supply as an interim measure pending the adoption of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

The policy has been developed in a manner so that it would not prejudice the consideration of alternative options for the development strategy of the Local Development Framework.”

- 3.5 Cheshire East Council has recently published the Crewe Town Strategy for consultation as part of the LDF and this considers how the challenges facing towns and villages are to be addressed. It is inappropriate to consider the

release of a significant housing site in Shavington/Wynbunbury Parish such as this now as this **would clearly prejudice the consideration of alternative options for the development strategy of the LDF.**

- 3.6 This is contrary to The Interim Planning Policy and as such this site should be rejected by the Council.
- 3.7 The release of this site would undermine the policies of the current Local Plan and pave the way for more challenges to its credibility. This would lead to an approach whereby planning permissions were helping to influence, drive and determine the strategy of the forthcoming LDF as it progresses towards the adoption of the Core Strategy. It would undermine public confidence in the LDF process and make a sham out of the public participation and consultation on which Cheshire East Council is placing so much emphasis.

Interim Planning Policy 1: Release of Housing Land

- 3.8 The text below is an extract from this document.

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

- 3.9 This site is located within Shavington cum Gresty and Wybunbury parishes and it is not located “adjacent to the Local Plan settlement boundary of Crewe”. This boundary is well defined by the railway line some distance to the north and of Shavington. As Shavington is **not** included within the area where there is considered to be land for housing development to meet the short term need for housing land in the Borough, there is an objection in principle to the release of housing at this time through this planning application.
- 3.10 Giving planning permission to this site in advance of establishing the appropriate level of future housing provision across Cheshire East would undermine the credibility of the LDF process. It would also mean that it would make it more difficult for committed brownfield sites in the area to be developed.
- 3.11 The Parish Council still remains to be convinced that there are not more brownfield sites in the urban areas of Cheshire East which can improve the Council’s 5 year supply of housing land. It urges the Borough Council to look more imaginatively at the opportunities offered by old employment sites.

The Revised Interim Planning Policy: Release of Housing Land (IPP2)

- 3.12 The Cheshire East Council confirms that

“This draft Revised Interim Planning Policy for the Release of Housing Land has been prepared to take into account changes in circumstances since the original Policy was adopted and to ensure that new housing development takes place in locations where the Council and the local community considers appropriate.”

3.13 This is Cheshire East Council’s response to the continuing challenge it faces in maintaining a 5 year supply of housing land.

3.14 So that there can be no doubt as the status of the CNRLP in respect of the determination of planning applications, the document also confirms that:

“Until the Local Plan is adopted, the Development Plan policies for Cheshire East relevant to the consideration of proposals for residential development are the saved policies of the Crewe and Nantwich, Congleton and Macclesfield Local Plans. The revised timetable for the Local Plan indicates a date for adoption of the Core Strategy in late 2013 and Site Allocations in late 2014.”

3.15 Despite the adoption of the IPP 1 In February 2011, the Council has still found the maintaining of a 5 year supply very challenging and has consequently sought to produce IPP 2 to address housing supply issues.

“Its purpose is to manage the release of additional land for residential development through the consideration of planning applications to maintain a 5 year supply of housing land in a manner that will not prejudice the consideration of alternative options for the development strategy of the Cheshire East Local Plan Core Strategy. The policy will only apply at such times that the Council is unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land and until such time as the Local Plan Core Strategy is adopted.”

3.16 The revised IPP 2 which now is also important to the determination of planning applications.

3.17 IPP1 has been successful in delivering more housing land:

“The Interim Planning Policy has been operating successfully since its adoption and has led to an increase in the supply of housing as expected. Developers have submitted planning applications on a number of sites adjacent to the settlement boundary of Crewe. Some of these planning applications have already been considered and approved by the Council, resulting in the approval of about 1,150 additional homes. In addition planning applications have been submitted for mixed use developments in Alsager and Macclesfield, although as yet undetermined”

- 3.18 The Council continues to recognise that Crewe will continue to play a strategic role in the delivery of new housing in Cheshire East:

“The development of Crewe remains fundamental to the development strategy for the Borough and the draft Revised Interim Planning Policy will therefore continue to facilitate the release of a limited number of housing sites on the edge of Crewe outside the Green Gap.”

- 3.19 The important phrase in the context of this application is “on the edge of Crewe.”

- 3.20 However, the Council recognises that it still faces a challenge in ensuring the availability of a 5 year supply of housing land:

“It is also clear that without a 5 year supply the Council remains vulnerable on appeal to speculative planning applications on sites where the Council would not necessarily wish to see development take place. It is therefore proposed that the main thrust of the Interim Planning Policy remains unchanged but that additional provisions are included in relation to allocated employment areas and in respect of housing development in other towns in the Borough.

Firstly, it is proposed that in the Crewe area the policy is amended to allow for housing development to take place on parts of allocated employment areas.

In respect of housing development on the periphery of other towns, there is a risk that allowing the release of major non Green Belt housing sites on the edge of towns other than Crewe would pre-empt decisions on the future development strategy for the Borough, which should be taken as part of the Local Plan process. The Council is currently engaged with local communities in preparing town strategies for our larger towns, which will be used to contribute to the forthcoming Core Strategy and Site Allocations documents.

- 3.21 The Council is also proposing to amend its Interim housing policy by relaxing restrictions on developments in respect of small sites:

It is proposed therefore to broaden the policy to allow for modest housing developments on sustainable sites on the edges of towns other than Crewe. To avoid prejudice to the Development Plan process or undue harm to the countryside and settings of towns, the following key principles will be incorporated into the revised policy:

Developments should be small scale
Developments should not prejudice key strategic decisions about the growth of a town. Sites should not be within the Green Belt or the Green Gap
Impact on the countryside should be minimised.
Locations should be sustainable.

It is proposed that the revised policy should be used in the consideration of planning applications with immediate effect and will be

considered to be a material consideration, although it is recognised that it will not carry full weight until it is adopted by the Council following consultation.

3.22 It is clear that neither of these changes to policy give the green light to the release of the application site for residential development as it is not an employment site in the Crewe area nor does it comprise small scale development on the edge of a town. It is located beyond the village of Shavington in open countryside.

3.23 So to examine how the application site stands up against the relevant requirements of the new revised IPP 2:

- **It is not adjacent to the settlement boundary of Crewe**
- **It is not well related to the built framework of the settlement;**
- **It does not uniquely deliver development that improves the supply, choice and quality of housing in Crewe. This could apply to any large housing site**
- **It does not support the delivery of the Council's overall vision and objectives for Crewe as it is not in Crewe or on a site well, related to the built framework of the town**
- **It is not adjacent to any of the identified towns or 9 service centres.**

3.24 The Borough Council is clear in respect of its focus on Crewe as a strategic location for future development and equally clear as to how it views Shavington and by implication how it should determine this application as not in accordance with policy.

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

4.0 APPLICANT' PLANNING STATEMENT

SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

4.1 The assertion that the site is located within the framework of Shavington is not accepted nor that it functions as a suburb of Crewe. Shavington is physically separate from Crewe and in planning policy terms divorced from the town by a

swathe of agricultural land within a Green Gap designation. The village has its own separate identity and its residents view the village as a separate community distinct from the town of Crewe.

- 4.2 The purpose of the Green Gap designation is to preserve that separate physical identity.
- 4.3 The application site itself comprises a significant area of agricultural land beyond the bulk of Shavington village which lies to the north. The existing development along Dig lane and Stock Lane are only ribbons of development. The site is open for much of its length along Newcastle road.
- 4.4 It is considered that the site itself is more similar in character with the larger area of agricultural land in open countryside to the south west and south east.
- 4.5 It is acknowledged that the site lies outside the development boundary of Shavington and this is agreed but the site itself is an open area with the undeveloped frontage facing Newcastle Road which itself provides views from a public vantage point into the site.
- 4.6 IPP2 confirms that Crewe is a principal town and a focus for new development. There is no mention of a “**wider Crewe area**”. The IPP is very clear as to potential suitable locations for new housing development. These should be at the edge of the town boundary and well related to that physical boundary. This application site is not such a location as it is some distance beyond the boundary of Crewe and even outside the Shavington development boundary as accepted by the applicant.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

- 4.7 Contrary to the applicant's view the adverse impacts of the proposed development **would** significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.
- 4.8 Such a decision would mean that other sites beyond the Shavington development boundary would be vulnerable from the pressure of new development and it would considerably undermine the CNRLP and IPPs 1 and 2.
- 4.9 The development of such sites not protected by the Green Gap policy would be very difficult to resist and the combined effect of such a release of land would be to prejudice future decisions which should be taken through the LDF about the locations of future development.
- 4.10 This would lead to considerable expansion of Shavington village which is positively excluded from new development by the IIP.
- 4.11 The [strategic ambition to concentrate growth around Crewe](#) does not envisage the release of sites such as the application site.

- 4.12 It is accepted that additional housing sites will be required over the LDF plan period. However sites of this scale should be considered through the LDF process.
- 4.13 The “call for sites” through the evidence gathering process of the SHLAA has resulted in the identification of sites in the Shavington area of over 2000 dwellings which are the subject of planning applications submitted, being progressed or the subject of preliminary discussions with Cheshire East and Shavington Parish Council.
- 4.14 The plethora of such sites makes it essential for Cheshire East to resist the release of the application site and ensure that the consideration of such sites is undertaken through the LDF process and through consultation on the Crewe Town Strategy document. This is on-going at the moment.

Annex 1: Implementation

- 4.15 Contrary to the applicant’s view, the NPPF clarifies at para.215 and footnote 39 that until March 2013, decision takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies adopted since 2004 in development plan documents adopted in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, even if there is a limited degree of conflict with NPPF.
- 4.16 CNRLP 2011 was adopted in February 2005. It is an old style saved plan to which the one year exception does not apply. Therefore in accordance with the same para 215, due weight should be given to relevant policies in the Local Plan according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.
- 4.17 On the proposals map of the local plan, the site is located outside the settlement boundary of Shavington. The site lies in open countryside and therefore policy NE2 is relevant.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONFORMITY

- 4.18 The applicant points to the relevance of the fact that the Shavington/Wybunbury area forms part of the Crewe Town Strategy area as support for planning permission being granted on this land.
- 4.19 It is clearly contradictory to comment that the Cheshire East Local Plan has not been advanced to a policy stage so limited weight can be given to it and the say that the Crewe Town Strategy, only published for consultation, contents can be relied onto support the release of this site. The site cannot be appropriate for release given its scale and conflict with IPPs 1 and 2.
- 4.20 The site is not a [countryside enclave in the settlement boundary of Shavington](#). The site lies outside and beyond the settlement boundary, divorced from the main part of Shavington village.
- 4.21 The applicant notes that:

- The planning application does not comply with policy NE2
 - Proposed development that conflicts with an up-to-date Local Plan should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.22 The Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper 2010 puts forward three options for growth. However no reliance can be placed on this document since no decision has yet been made as to the level of growth appropriate for Shavington.
- 4.22 Strong objection is made to the applicant's assertion that the application site is in accordance with IPP2.
- 4.23 To meet the criteria in the IPP, the site needs to be well related to the built framework of **Crewe** not Shavington/Wybunbury. It is not. It fails on this first test. In addition, the village has only one settlement boundary and the site is not within it.

KEY MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.24 It is accepted that Cheshire East does not have a 5 year supply of housing land, that the housing supply policies of the CNRLP are out of date and that it may be necessary to look at green field land to accommodate additional housing to meet the supply.
- 4.25 However it is considered that the approach taken by Cheshire East to look at sites well related to the edge of the built framework of Crewe, the potential of existing employment sites and smaller developments in or at the edge of other towns is the correct approach. Indeed it may be possible to look at all employment sites in sustainable locations to see if there is scope for releasing part of such sites for housing.
- 4.26 It is not accepted that large scale development on sites in the open countryside divorced from the largest settlements such as Crewe, as in this case, is a sound approach to take.
- 4.27 It is not considered that this site supports the All Change for Crewe Vision.
- 4.28 In respect of the delivery of affordable housing and recreational facilities, these are not unique material considerations which weigh in support of the application as all large sites would be expected to deliver such planning obligations. Many sites would also be able to argue strong sustainability credentials.
- 4.29 The Council has taken steps to increase housing supply through the IIP and is conscious of the need to increase housing land availability through the local plan process. It does not need to rely on the application site to increase housing supply.

4.30 The applicant seems to be making a case for the release of this site as follows:

“There is a strong strategic case for housing growth to be located at Shavington/Wynbunbury in the form of a strategic allocation as part of the Greater Crewe area which accords and responds to the Crewe Vision.”

4.31 The applicant now seems to be putting a case for an allocation through the LDF process.

4.32 This representation is supportive of an approach which looks to identify appropriate levels of growth and locations for new housing through the Local plan process not through the granting of planning permissions in advance of the LDF.

4.33 A response can be made to the applicant's strong case as follows:

- Crewe is to be a focus for new development but this site is not well related to the built framework of Crewe.
- The LDF will decide the level of growth and planning applications of this scale should not be used to circumvent and prejudice these future decisions.
- No decision has yet been made as to the locations for new development. Whilst Shavington is included in the Crewe Town Strategy document, no agreement has been reached that the village is to be a location for development on the scale proposed by this application.
- The Parish Council is opposed to Shavington being identified for major development in the Cheshire East LDF.
- The consideration of this application is not the opportunity to debate the merits of the appropriate level of development for Shavington or which sites if any should be released for housing.
- The sustainability credentials of the site do not justify planning permission when there are strong policy objections to its release for housing.
- There is not an excellent fit between the application proposals and the spatial vision for the area since this is not determined yet. What is clear is that the proposals are contrary to CNRLP and IPPs 1 and 2.

4.34 The fact that pre-application consultation has been carried with the local community is not considered to be a relevant material consideration as all competent applicants and agents should undertake such an exercise for large scale proposals as set out in the NPPF.

4.35 However it is noted that of the 92 responses received to the consultation, 70 were objections and none were received in support of the scheme.

5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

5.1 It is possible to make an assessment of the site's character in the local landscape by a site visit which involves walking the public footpath which crosses and by walking along the roads surrounding the site.

5.2 When viewed from Newcastle Road, the site opens up and appears as part of a much larger area of open countryside beyond. This is because the houses on Stock Lane are only seen intermittently and are screened to some extent by existing mature tree cover.

5.3 The impression is not one of a site enclosed by existing ribbon development. This impression of a countryside location is further enhanced by the fact that a number of properties on Stock Lane are single storey dwellings. The impression remains that the site is not seen as part of Shavington village.

5.4 The site itself comprises a number of separate fields with hedgerows and hedgerow trees and this also helps to combat the appearance of being a site enclosed by built development.

5.5 From Stock Lane looking back towards Newcastle Road, the appearance of open countryside ends at Newcastle Road with the bulk of Shavington village beyond.

5.6 It is clear that a better impression of the character of the area is gained by site visit rather than merely looking at plans of the site.

6.0 DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

6.1 The section on Site location repeats much of what is contained within the Planning Statement. Suffice to say that the Parish Council does not agree with the description of the site in respect of its location vis a vis Shavington and its inferred relationship with Crewe

6.1 It is absolutely clear that the site comprises significant area of land in agricultural use which lies beyond the main part of Shavington Village.

6.2 Despite the description in para. 2.6 of a settlement fringe location, the site is clearly not an urban fringe location. It is not a degraded landscape but is in active agricultural use despite the difficulties mentioned in farming the land.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The application site is clearly outside and beyond the current well defined local plan settlement boundaries of Crewe and Shavington. It lies within an area which is not considered appropriate for development in the CNRLP.
- 7.2 The proposed development is in conflict with the Countryside Protection policies NE2 Open Countryside of the CNRLP which comprises the current statutory Development Plan for the area in which the application site is located.
- 7.3 The release of this site would represent an unplanned, ad hoc and unnecessary major intrusion into the open countryside beyond the confines of Shavington village and some distanced from the well-defined edge of the built framework of Crewe; and the Parish Council would question what evidence of need exists for this number of dwellings in this location.
- 7.4 The site's release for development will make it more difficult to resist the release of other sites beyond the edge of the village of Shavington.
- 7.5 The potential release of this site has very important implications for the village of Shavington as a whole. As a result of the SHLAA and the Council's " call for sites," it is one of a number of sites comprising 2000 dwellings currently outside the settlement boundaries of Crewe and Shavington which are in the pipeline for consideration by Cheshire East Council either as pre-application discussions, shortly to be submitted as applications or submitted applications.
- 7.6 The release of such a large site will make a number of other sites vulnerable to developer pressure such that the individual identity of Shavington would be lost and the whole community absorbed within the built framework of Crewe.
- 7.7 IPPs 1 and 2 are in place and 1 has been adopted by Cheshire East for Development Management purposes. This specifically excludes Shavington from its consideration and the requirement to provide sites to meet a 5 year housing supply. The Council has reviewed this document and has widened the criteria for or location of sites which can be considered acceptable to meet the housing supply but the release of this site for housing is still in conflict with IPP 2. Both documents do have weight in the consideration of the planning balance.
- 7.8 Despite the applicant's contention that some weight can be attached to the Draft Crewe Town Strategy, paragraph 7.8 and the statement below the list of sites makes it abundantly clear that these sites are not proposals and not all sites will be required to deliver the vision for the town. Nevertheless this is the appropriate mechanism for considering the appropriate levels of growth and the location of new housing development in the Crewe and Cheshire East area.
- 7.9 Whilst it is conceded that there is not a 5 year supply of housing land available in Cheshire East and some developers consider that policy NE2 is

out of date because Cheshire East is willing to approve housing on some sites with an open countryside designation, development is only acceptable in those areas which comply with IIP1 and 2. This site does not so comply.

- 7.10 Contrary to the applicant's view the adverse impacts of the proposed development **would** significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development. Permission on the land would increase the pressure to set aside policy NE 2 on land in a number of locations surrounding Shavington and would undermine the Development Plan. As such the proposal would be contrary to the NPPF. So the lack of a 5 year supply should not be seen as an overriding material consideration such to justify permission.
- 7.11 The release of such site will make it much more difficult to ensure the regeneration of Crewe and make brown field sites less attractive for housing development and investment by developers because of the availability of easier green field sites.
- 7.12 Planning legislation requires that planning applications are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations dictate otherwise. It is not considered that such material considerations exist in this case.
- 7.13 **Shavington cum Gresty Parish Council urges Cheshire East Council to refuse this planning application No 12/3114/N.**
- 7.14 In addition it urges the Council to progress rapidly the LDF process and to remove the uncertainty and inconsistency which exists in the determination of planning applications for housing in the Crewe area. The Parish Council also wishes to actively engage in continued discussions with Cheshire East Council over the future planning policies for the Shavington area.

G.V.A. Grimley

- On behalf of the HIMOR Group, GVA are instructed to object to the above planning application.
- The proposal entails the substantial expansion of the village of Shavington beyond its existing settlement boundaries, through the development of up to 400 dwellings and 700 sq m of commercial / community space.
- The proposal is predicated on the development serving and meeting the need for development in and around Crewe. The applicant's agents regularly refer in the supporting Planning Statement to the concept of a 'Greater Crewe' and place considerable reliance on the established and emerging emphasis upon Crewe as a focus for growth, as expressed in the Crewe Vision Statement 'All Change for Crewe' and documents of the emerging Local Plan.
- GVA wholly support the established and emerging focus on accommodating a significant proportion of the Borough's future growth in and around Crewe. However, Shavington is a separate, lower order settlement. It does not form

part of, or represent a 'suburb' of Crewe. It does not have the significant infrastructure and facilities associated with the principal urban area and whilst its residents may rely upon and gravitate towards the town of Crewe, this is appropriate given its higher order status and relative proximity.

- Such a relationship is to be expected in a network of settlements where lower order, outlying villages function around a principal town. It does not however, follow that such settlements should accommodate the growth objectives and requirements of that higher order settlement. Rather, they should accommodate their own requirements, commensurate with the status, scale and character of the settlement and the facilities it has to offer, or could provide for. To do otherwise would markedly alter the function and character of such settlements and remove the distinction in hierarchy. This is particularly the case when such growth is unwarranted and the principal town can meet its own growth objectives and requirements by other means.
- This is entirely the situation in respect of Crewe and Shavington. Crewe has significant attributes that provide the opportunity for it to be a key economic driver and growth hub for the Borough. But it also has the ability to accommodate the required growth without reliance on lower order peripheral settlements such as Shavington. Suitable, available and achievable development opportunities exist within and particularly on the edge of the principal urban area, and hence better related to the town of Crewe. The concept of 'Greater Crewe' is not established but is being used by the applicants to justify a scale of development which is disproportionate to the scale of settlement which it will adjoin. Shavington is a separate settlement and the appropriate scale of development should be adjudged in the context of that settlement, not some wider 'Greater Crewe' concept that has no standing and would undermine the distinction in settlement hierarchy and character.
- On a final point, it is understood that the Council's Strategic Planning Board recently resolved to approve the Council's draft Development Strategy (due to be issued for consultation on 15 January 2013) as a material consideration to be used for development management purposes with immediate effect. This document has not yet been published (other than as a paper to the Board), no consultation has taken place on its content, no evidence has been published to support or justify its content and it has in no way been tested through the statutory plan-making process. Accordingly, no weight should be attributed to the document in the determination of this application.

RECOMMENDATION

As per main report