

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Strategic Planning Board

Date of Meeting: 26th February, 2014
Report of: Head of Strategic and Economic Planning
Subject/Title: Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy-Submission Version
Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Brown

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 Following the decision of the Cabinet Member for Strategic Communities to approve a *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* for a further round of consultation at a meeting on the 1st November, 2013, this report makes recommendations for the next stage in the production of a Local Plan for Cheshire East.
- 1.2 This involves approving a *Submission Version* for the publication stage of the process prior to submission to the Secretary of State for formal examination later in the year. Members are being requested to approve the plan that the Council wants to adopt.

2.0 Decision Requested

Recommendations to Full Council:-

- To endorse the evidence base, including the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which has informed the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* ;
- To endorse the Officer responses to the consultations on the Cheshire East Local Plan *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* documents published in November, 2013;
- To approve the attached *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* (Appendix A) for publication and submission to the Secretary of State;
- To delegate authority to the Head of Strategic and Economic Planning, in association with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Communities, to agree any minor modifications to the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* during the publication phase and during its subsequent Examination; and
- To resolve that the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* be given weight as a material consideration for Development Management purposes with immediate effect.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

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

Wards Affected

- 4.1 All Wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All Ward Members

6.0 Policy Implications including - Carbon reduction & Health

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

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

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

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

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

- 7.1 The preparation of the Local Plan is a time consuming and costly process; accordingly additional resources have been identified in the 2014/2015 budget to support its preparation. The costs associated with an Examination can be met within existing budget funds. Otherwise, this report does not raise any additional direct finance issues.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* requires local planning authorities to prepare Local Development Frameworks, now known as Local Plans. The *Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012* set out the procedures to be followed in the preparation of such plans.
- 8.2 The consultation on the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*, which was open for representations between 5 November and 16 December 2013, was carried out pursuant to Regulation 18 of the *Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012*, which requires Local Planning Authorities to engage with statutory consultees, other consultation bodies, the community and businesses regarding the preparation of the Local Plan. There is also a specific obligation on the part of a local planning authority to take into account any representations received in response to a consultation exercise [Regulation 18(3)].
- 8.3 The consultation process was therefore an important part of the Local Plan process and the results of the various consultation exercises have informed and added value to the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version*. The extensive work undertaken by the Council in consulting upon and preparing the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* is considered to meet the statutory requirements of the Regulations. It is considered that the Council will be able to demonstrate to the Inspector who conducts the public examination not only that extensive consultation has been undertaken but that all reasonable alternative strategies have been considered.
- 8.4 Section 20(5) of the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* states that the purpose of an independent examination of a development plan document is not

only to determine the soundness of that document (and to ensure that the duty to cooperate has been complied with) but also to determine whether the submitted document “*satisfies the requirements of sections 19 and 24(1), regulations under section 17(7) and any regulations under section 36 relating to the preparation of development plan documents*”.

8.5 In respect of “soundness”, the requirements are as follows:

1. Positively Prepared: based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements
2. Justified: the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence
3. Effective: deliverable over its period based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities
4. Consistent with national policy: enabling the delivery of sustainable development

8.6 The preparation of the plan is guided by the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, emerging *National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)* and other related advice. The implications of this have been fully assessed both in responding to consultations and preparing the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version*.

8.7 In addition to the foregoing, section 33A of the Act (introduced by section 110 of the *Localism Act 2011*) imposes a duty on local planning authorities to co-operate with neighbouring authorities and other parties on strategic issues of common interest in preparing local plans. This duty to co-operate pervades all stages of local plan preparation. A specific requirement is placed upon the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to consider whether the local planning authority has complied with its duty to co-operate. If the Inspector considers that the local planning authority has not complied with that duty, then the *Local Plan Strategy* will fail, irrespective of whether it is found to be “sound” in other respects.

8.8 Regulation 19 requires that prior to submitting a local plan to the Secretary of State for examination, the proposed submission document must be made available, together with a statement of the procedure by which any person may make representations to the Secretary of State. The Regulations also prescribe what information must be submitted to the Secretary of State. It is the content of this submission document which Members are being asked to agree today.

Pre-Determination

8.9 Various representations have been made as part of the consultation on the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* that the Council has pre-determined the outcome of the consultation and thus the Local Plan Strategy. Primarily, the representations relate to an allegation that given the content of a letter issued by the Leader of the Council on 23 April 2013 and public statements made by him, the consultation process has been prejudiced and the Council has pre-determined the outcome of the Local Plan Strategy consultation.

8.10 As a number of such representations have been made, it is convenient to deal with them at this point in the report. For the avoidance of doubt, wherever reference is made to “pre-determination” or comments made by the Leader of the Council generally in the summary of responses received, this part of the report should be read into the Council’s response.

8.11 The requirements of Regulation 18 have already been referred to in earlier paragraphs in this section of the report. The purpose of this report is to enable Members to take into account the representations received in respect of *the Pre-Submission Core Strategy* when determining the final content of the *Local Plan Strategy- Submission Version*.

8.12 Section 25 of the Localism Act 2011 deals with predetermination and provides:

- (1) *Subsection (2) applies if—*
 - (a) *as a result of an allegation of bias or predetermination, or otherwise, there is an issue about the validity of a decision of a relevant authority, and*
 - (b) *it is relevant to that issue whether the decision-maker, or any of the decision-makers, had or appeared to have had a closed mind (to any extent) when making the decision.*
- (2) *A decision-maker is not to be taken to have had, or to have appeared to have had, a closed mind when making the decision just because—*
 - (a) *the decision-maker had previously done anything that directly or indirectly indicated what view the decision-maker took, or would or might take, in relation to a matter, and*
 - (b) *the matter was relevant to the decision.*

8.13 The statutory footing for pre-determination reflects the position of the common law as set out in the *R (Lewis) v Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council* [2009] 1 W.L.R. 83; the test at common law is whether the Councillor had, or there was a real risk given the evidence that the decision-maker had, a closed mind. Section 25 respects the common law position and adds that a decision-maker is not to be taken to have had, or to appear to have had, a closed mind “just because” the decision-maker has previously done anything that directly or indirectly indicated what view the decision-maker took or what view he would or might take.

8.14 The law places responsibility for all of the powers and duties relating to development plan documents on full Council, not on the Executive or indeed any committee or individual councillor. What is clear is that, despite whatever may have been said or written by any individual member of the Council, no decision has, as yet, been taken by the Council as regards the final content of the Local Plan Strategy.

8.15 Since the matters and events complained of, the Council has conducted a further round of consultation on all of the potential strategic policies, core strategy sites and core strategy strategic locations. This round of consultation has been open to all and there is nothing to suggest from the number of representations received that there has been any evidence of non-participation on the part of

interested parties on the grounds that the Council has already “made its mind up”.

- 8.16 The fact that the Council has not approached matters with a closed mind is made clear in the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* document itself which states in the section entitled “Your Views and How to Comment” that “*the Council will consider the consultation responses received to this pre-submission version and make any changes to the document as considered appropriate*”. As a consequence of the representations received, your officers are proposing that a number of amendments be made as detailed in this report and the accompanying papers. In addition, Council is free to accept or reject those officer recommendations and / or make such other modifications as they think appropriate in light of the representations received.
- 8.17 For all of the above reasons, it cannot therefore be said that the Council has predetermined the decision as to the content of the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version*.
- 8.18 That having been said, it is a matter for each individual Councillor, having taken advice from the Monitoring Officer, to determine whether any action which they may have taken in connection with the process towards the adoption of the submission version of the Local Plan Strategy is sufficient as to give rise to pre-determination on a personal level, such that they should not participate in the decision-making.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 **Local Plan Examination-** Following its approval, the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* will be submitted for formal examination. As set out earlier, the key test at examination is one of ‘soundness’. For a plan to be considered sound, it must be:
- Positively prepared
 - Justified
 - Effective
 - Consistent with National Policy
- 9.2 Failure at examination has serious negative consequences for any Local Planning Authority and the proper planning of its area. However, by preparing and consulting on a *Draft Development Strategy* and *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* and by undertaking a significant degree of evidence-based studies and background research, including sustainability appraisals at each key stage, it is considered that the Council has significantly reduced the risk of this outcome.
- 9.3 **Planning Applications and Appeals-** Whilst Cheshire East is able to demonstrate the availability of a five-year supply of housing land, as evidenced by the *Housing Land Supply Position Statement* published in February, 2014, the Council is still experiencing a number of planning applications for housing on sites that are not allocated in the development plan; some of these are currently subject to appeal.

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

10.0 Background and Context

National Guidance

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

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

- 10.3 The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* states that:-

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which has three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- **an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- **a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

10.4 It should be highlighted that these roles should not be undertaken in isolation, as they are mutually dependent. Hence, whilst economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions and the *NPPF* sets out a set of 12 core land-use planning principles which should underpin both plan-making and decision- taking.

Plan Making in Cheshire East

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

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

10.7 A *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* was subsequently published in November, 2013 setting out the Council's preferred approach to shaping the sustainable growth of Cheshire East, seeking to encapsulate the findings of all of the background work and evidence gathering to provide a clear steer to guide future development in the Borough up to 2030. The strategy focused on growth to create prosperous communities with the provision of new housing, employment areas and transport infrastructure being fundamental to its approach.

Delivering Wider Economic Growth

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

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

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

10.10 The Local Plan must set out the land uses required to deliver growth, as the spatial interpretation of the vision. It is considered that the key principles originally set out in the *Pre –Submission Core Strategy* and the consequent *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* reflect this wider vision for economic growth, whilst achieving the key principle of building sustainable communities.

Sustainable Community Strategy

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

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

- Nurturing strong communities, including the delivery of services as locally as possible and ensuring that communities feel safe;
- Creating conditions for business growth, including making the most of our tourism, heritage and natural assets and ensuring there is a range of available high quality employment sites and premises in all parts of Cheshire East with good transport links, to attract new and expanding businesses;

- Unlocking the potential of our towns; this focuses firstly on the regeneration of Crewe including the redevelopment of the town centre and the provision of new homes and jobs. Secondly, on the revitalisation of Macclesfield, including improving the quality and choice of shops and services in the town centre and progressing the development of South Macclesfield; and thirdly, on retaining the vitality and viability of our market towns to ensure that they continue to deliver essential services, retail, leisure and employment opportunities;
- Supporting our children and young people;
- Ensuring a sustainable future by providing affordable and appropriate housing to meet future needs, by promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, by ensuring that all major developments are located with good access to local amenities, cycle and walking routes, by developing a green infrastructure plan to safeguard, manage and enhance our green assets, giving priority to the redevelopment of our vacant brownfield sites and by recognising the importance of mineral extraction to the local economy;
- Preparing for an increasingly older population including the provision of an adequate supply of suitable extra care housing; and
- Driving out the causes of poor health including investment in green infrastructure to encourage active and healthy lifestyle choices.

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

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

11.0 The Evidence Base

11.1 The *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* is supported by a comprehensive evidence base. The studies and areas of work that have informed the strategy include:-

POPULATION AND HOUSING

11.2 Population Projections and Forecasts (September, 2013)

11.2.1 Determining how much new housing should be provided and where it should be located is an important element of the Local Plan. This paper is intended to give background information on the work done to date on revised population projections and forecasts. Some of these projections also incorporate information from past economic trends and baseline projections of expected future economic growth. A wide range of outputs from fourteen scenarios were modelled, depending on whether a narrow view is taken that provides for the likely needs of the existing population only, or a wider view is taken that allows for continued economic growth in the area and takes account of underlying demographic trends. The national trend of an ageing population is particularly

marked in Cheshire East, with all the scenarios forecasting a significant increase in older people during the Plan period. Hence a higher level of housing growth is needed than there would be if the population were not ageing.

- 11.2.2 The outputs from the modelling work represent only some of the elements that have been considered by the Council in determining the level of housing growth in the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* up to 2030.

- 11.2.3 The *Population Projections and Forecasts* paper may be viewed using the following link:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11.5 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) - 2013

- 11.5.1 The 2013 *SHLAA* forms an integral part of the annual monitoring process and is an important evidence source to inform plan-making. It also provides

background evidence on the potential availability of land in Cheshire East for housing and the choices available for delivering housing. The *SHLAA* does not determine whether individual sites are acceptable for future housing development as this is determined via the *Local Plan Strategy and Site Allocations and Development Policies* DPD's and also through planning applications assessed against the adopted Development Plan.

- 11.5.2 The current *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)* may be viewed using the following link:-

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

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

- 11.6.1 Following the Housing Act of 2004, local authorities have been tasked with developing and implementing strategies to respond to the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities living in their areas as part of their wider housing strategies. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) are designed to provide the evidence needed to inform these strategies. However, as well as presenting evidence and information on accommodation needs at an immediate local level, the evidence collected and analysis produced has a wider regional role.

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

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

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

11.7 Determining the Settlement Hierarchy (November 2010)

- 11.7.1 A background paper for the Local Plan entitled *Determining the Settlement Hierarchy* explained how the settlement hierarchy shown in the *Issues and Options* consultation document had been derived. The approach used and its outcomes were tested through the consultation processes associated with the development of the *Core Strategy Issues and Options* paper. This report therefore forms a fundamental element of the evidence base for the Local Plan and has been used as a basis for developing future spatial planning policy.

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

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

EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCE

11.8 Employment Land Review (November 2012)

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

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

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

11.9 Crewe Vision - A Prospectus for Crewe (2012)

11.9.1 One of the principal economic initiatives in Cheshire East is *All Change for Crewe* which represents an ambitious strategy to support Crewe's economic development over the next 20 years. The strategy is being promoted by Cheshire East with an aspiration that by 2030, the wider Crewe area will be a nationally significant economic centre with a total population in excess of 100,000 people, a substantial increase on its current population. This initiative has now been updated in the form of '*High Growth City*' whereby the Council and its partners are committed to releasing the massive potential within the town, thereby delivering the future vision for Crewe.

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

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

11.10 Cheshire Retail Study Update (April 2011)

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

11.10.2 The *Cheshire Retail Study Update* may be viewed using the following link:-

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

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

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

11.11.1 A partnership of local authorities and environmental agencies came together in 2010 to commission a framework looking at the planning and co-ordination of Green Infrastructure across North East Wales, Cheshire and the Wirral. The framework considered the natural environments of Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East and the Wirral. It set out a vision of how a healthy natural environment can help sustain economic growth and thriving communities. A *Green Infrastructure Action Plan* for Crewe has now also been prepared as part of the framework (see below).

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

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

11.12 Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Crewe (2012)

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

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

http://www.merseydealliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/small_IN2764.01_Crewe_Green_Infrastructure_Action_Plan_Final_Low_Res.pdf

11.13 Green Space Strategy (January 2013)

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

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

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

11.14 Open Space Assessment (March 2012)

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

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

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

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

11.15 Local Landscape Designations Study (May 2013)

11.15.1 The *Local Landscape Designations Study* adds value to the work previously undertaken by Cheshire County Council in 2007 in its *Landscape Character Area Assessments* which informed the identification of *Areas of Special County Value (ASCV's)* as part of its background work on the *Cheshire 2016: Replacement Structure Plan*. Pending the adoption of a Local Plan, the study highlights that planning policies for local landscape designations (ASCVs) currently consist of 'saved' policies from the *Cheshire Structure Plan* (since revoked) and development plans for the three former Boroughs. However, a robust re-appraisal concludes that nine local landscape designations should be retained for the purposes of preparing the Cheshire East Local Plan.

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

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

11.16 Green Belt Assessment (September, 2013)

11.16.1 The *Green Belt Assessment* forms an integral part of the evidence base, but does not identify areas that are suitable for development and does not recommend whether any site should or should not be allocated for development. It simply seeks to establish whether exceptional circumstances exist that would justify the alteration of Green Belt boundaries and also assesses land against the five purposes of Green Belt as set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*. The results of these assessments are an important consideration in determining future land allocations through the Local Plan. As a pure Green Belt assessment, it is acknowledged that it is beyond the scope of the study to make recommendations on suitable locations for development. However, the results of the assessment have been considered alongside all the other planning considerations and evidence collected when drawing up the Local Plan.

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

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

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

11.17.1 In 2013, the Council commissioned work on a peer review of the new Green Belt and amendments to the 'Strategic Open Gaps' which were advocated in the original *Draft Development Strategy*. This work highlighted three options for the Council to consider and concluded that strong policy protection continues to be necessary to safeguard the existing gaps between settlements that are at risk of coalescence resulting from the future growth of Crewe. It considered that a proposal to extend the existing North Staffordshire Green Belt, which already extends into South Cheshire between Crewe and Stoke, around the southern, eastern and western edges of Crewe, would provide more effective policy protection than the proposed Strategic Open Gap indicated in the earlier *Draft Development Strategy*.

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

11.17.3 The *New Green Belt and Strategic Open Gap Review* may be viewed using the following link:-

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

ENERGY

11.18 Climate Change and Sustainability Energy Study (September 2011)

11.18.1 The *Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Study* was produced to inform the development of energy efficiency and renewable energy policies within the Local Plan. The study assesses the feasibility of delivering various types of renewable energy and the total implementable renewable resource, taking account of constraints within the Borough. It also identifies potential planning policies that could be included within the Local Plan to ensure that new development is energy efficient and promotes the implementation of renewable energy across the Borough.

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

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

11.19 Renewable Energy Policy Study (2010)

11.19.1 The *Establishment of a New Renewable Energy Policy Study* was produced in 2010, recommending a range of actions for the Council to be applied to both domestic and non-domestic properties as well as new initiatives related to low carbon emissions and products.

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

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

INFRASTRUCTURE

11.20 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (June 2013)

11.20.1 The *Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)* provides a single planning tool relating to flood risk and development in Cheshire East. The flood risk information, assessment, guidance and conclusions of the *SFRA* provides strategic planners with the evidence base required to apply the sequential and exception tests in the preparation of their development plans and documents. The *SFRA* therefore provides the necessary links between spatial developments, wider flood risk management policies, local strategies and on-the-ground works by bringing flood risk information into one location.

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

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

11.21 Local Transport Plan (2011-2026)

11.21.1 Cheshire East's *Local Transport Plan (LTP)* relates directly to the seven priorities of the *Ambition for All-The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2010* which illustrates how transport contributes to the achievement of wider aspirations and ambitions for the area over the next 15 years (2011-2026). Cheshire East's first *Local Transport Plan (LTP) Implementation Plan* is aligned with the Coalition Government's four- year spending review period (April 2011 to March 2015) and contains details of the initiatives which will be delivered in order to meet the objectives and priorities for transport set out in the 15 year *LTP* strategy.

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

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel/local_transport_plan.aspx

11.22 Infrastructure Delivery Plan (February, 2014)

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

- 11.22.2 The information collated from infrastructure providers has been brought together in the *Infrastructure Delivery Plan*. This document outlines in broad terms what infrastructure is needed when, who is responsible for providing it, how much it is estimated to cost and how it can be funded; any shortfalls in currently identified funding are also highlighted. The document builds on the work contained in the Local Infrastructure Plan Baseline Report produced by the Council in 2011.
- 11.22.3 The *Infrastructure Delivery Plan* is a supporting document for the *Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* and covers the period 2014 to 2030. However, its content will be monitored and periodically reviewed to assist in the delivery of the identified infrastructure. The infrastructure requirements set out in the Delivery Plan are attributed to the relevant Strategic Sites and Strategic Locations in the *Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* and have also informed viability assessment work.
- 11.22.4 The *Infrastructure Delivery Plan* concludes that there are very few schemes that are fully funded, therefore there are significant funding gaps, this being the difference between the cost of the infrastructure and the amount of funding received for the proposed level of development. A preliminary estimate suggests that over the various category types (eg transport, education, open space etc), there is a shortfall in the range of £210m to £260m, but it is acknowledged that not all of this can be achieved through developer contributions, so other funding sources will need to be investigated.
- 11.22.5 The *Infrastructure Delivery Plan* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://cheshireeast-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/cs/sub>

SUSTAINABILITY AND VIABILITY

11.23 Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Report (February, 2014)

- 11.23.1 The report summarises the *Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)* undertaken of the *Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* produced by Cheshire East Council, as part of the development of the Local Plan. It identifies, describes and assesses the likely significant effects of implementing the strategy and policies on European designated sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites, and also any candidate SACs and potential SPAs) within and around Cheshire East.
- 11.23.2 European Directive 92/43/EEC of the *Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna (Habitats Directive)* provides legal protection to habitats and species of European importance. The Directive is transposed into English legislation through the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010*.
- 11.23.3 It is a requirement of these regulations that where a plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and where it is not directly connected with or necessary to

the management of the site, the plan-making authority must, before the plan is given effect, make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan in view of the site's conservation objectives. The plan-making authority must give effect to the plan only after having determined that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site (subject to considerations of overriding public interest).

- 11.23.4 The *HRA* process is underpinned by the precautionary principle. If it is not possible to rule out likely significant effects on the evidence available, then it is assumed that a risk may exist and it needs to be addressed in the assessment process, preferably through changes to the proposed measure or through options such as avoidance or mitigation. Only once this assessment has been completed can it be concluded that there is no adverse risk to a European site resulting from the plan. As the *Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version* is not connected with or necessary to the management of European sites, it is necessary to undertake a *HRA* of these strategies.
- 11.23.5 The purpose of the Appropriate Assessment is to assess whether Cheshire East Council's Local Plan Strategy has the potential to result in significant adverse effects on the integrity of identified European sites, either alone or in combination with a number of other plans and projects. The Habitats Regulations requires the competent authority, in this case Cheshire East Council, to make an Appropriate Assessment of any plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a protected European site. This report outlines the process which has been undertaken for the Appropriate Assessment.
- 11.23.6 The most likely effects of the Local Plan Strategy on European Sites are related to pressures from new development including water abstraction, changes to surface and ground water levels/quality (surface run-off, pollution events), air pollution and increased recreational pressures arising from new housing developments and increased tourism.
- 11.23.7 The existing policies and provisions in the Cheshire East Council Local Plan Strategy and other plans and strategies (as set out in the assessment tables at Appendix C in the main document) should ensure that potential significant adverse effects on the integrity of all identified European sites are avoided. However, as the Local Plan Strategy is a high tier plan, this means that it is difficult to devise more specific mitigation measures as the precise nature, scale, timing and location/layout of development is not known. Therefore, it will be necessary that Construction Environment Management Plans, landscaping, green infrastructure and open space proposals are submitted to the Council during the planning application process as part of sustainable development proposals for any sites in close proximity to European sites.
- 11.23.8 The *Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Report* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://cheshireeast-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/cs/sub>

11.24 Sustainability Appraisal (February, 2014)

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

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

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

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

11.24.3 At each stage of the Local Plan's development, all options and any reasonable alternatives to policy and allocation proposals have been considered and assessed. Options for the level of growth and spatial distribution were considered at the Issues and Options stage in 2010. These included consideration of low, medium and high growth strategies and three options for the spatial distribution of development around the Borough as well as a Rural Dispersal variant. Further alternatives were considered for policies and strategic site allocations as part of the *Development Strategy and Policy Principles* stage in 2013 and the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* in 2013. These included the consideration of policies that seek to protect and enhance the environment, promote economic prosperity, create sustainable communities and reduce the need to travel. The reasons for selecting or rejecting options are provided in Sections 4, 5 and 6 of the report.

11.24.4 The SA has helped to inform the selection and rejection of options and forms part of the evidence supporting the Local Plan Strategy. However, it should be noted that the SA findings are not the sole basis for a decision; other factors, including planning and feasibility, play a key role in the decision-making process.

11.24.5 A key function of the SA and overall Integrated Appraisal (IA) process is to provide advice and recommendations to the plan-maker in order to mitigate negative effects and enhance positive effects identified through the process.

These can then be carried forward in the remainder of the plan-making process and can include further recommendations for other Development Plan Documents (for example Area Action Plans) and for processes including development control and site master planning.

11.24.6 The Integrated Appraisal (IA) process found that on the whole, the mitigation provided through the Local Plan Strategy policies would address identified potential significant effects. Where necessary, the IA made recommendations for lower level planning. For example, the IA recommends that development proposals for certain strategic sites are accompanied by construction plans, Transport Assessments and Travel Plans to address potential negative effects on health.

11.24.7 The SA is an iterative and ongoing process that has been undertaken at each stage of the Local Plan Strategy, both during the internal production and external consultation of the document, helping to influence its development. The issues identified in initial SA's have led to additional mitigation measures for sites proposed and the tightening of policies to create appropriate conditions for sustainable development. The SA has also influenced the selection of sites included in the Local Plan Strategy.

11.24.8 The SA has identified that more detailed policies relating to waste management, contaminated land, recycling and reuse of water, resilience to extreme weather events and longer term rising temperatures and site remediation are needed, which can be looked at in the forthcoming *Site Allocations and Development Policies* and *Waste Development Plan Documents*.

11.24.9 The *Sustainability Appraisal* may be viewed using the following link:-

<http://cheshireeast-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/cs/sub>

11.25 Draft Core Strategy and CIL Viability Assessment (October, 2013)

11.25.1 This study provides an appraisal of the viability of the Cheshire East Local Plan in terms of the impact of its policies on the economic viability of development that was proposed to be delivered by the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*. The study considered policies that might affect the cost and value of development (Affordable Housing and Community Infrastructure Levy, Design and Construction Standards) as well as site specific cost constraints identified in the site allocations process (eg contamination, access issues, flood defence etc). The study also considered delivery over a 15 year plan period. In accordance with advice in the *NPPF*, the study should be seen as a strategic overview of plan level viability rather than as any specific interpretation of Cheshire East Council policy on the viability of any individual site or application of planning policy to affordable housing, CIL or developer contributions.

11.25.2 The *Draft Core Strategy and CIL Viability Assessment* may be viewed using the following link:-

12.0 Duty to Co-operate

- 12.1 The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* highlights that public bodies have a duty to co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to strategic priorities. The Government clearly expects joint working on areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the appropriate planning of the wider area.
- 12.2 Local planning authorities should therefore work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans. Joint working should enable local planning authorities to work together to meet development requirements which cannot wholly be met within their own administrative areas – for instance, because of a lack of physical capacity or because to do so would cause significant harm to the principles of sustainable development
- 12.3 Local planning authorities are expected to demonstrate they have effectively co-operated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for examination. This could be by way of plans or policies prepared as part of a joint committee, a memorandum of understanding or simply a statement of common ground (which may be no more than an exchange of letters), which is presented as evidence of an agreed position. It is stressed that co-operation should be a continuous process of engagement from initial thinking through to implementation, resulting in a final position where plans are in place to provide the land and infrastructure necessary to support current and projected future levels of development.
- 12.4 Previous consultations and ongoing discussions with our neighbouring authorities have raised a number of potential Duty to Co-operate matters including accommodating high development growth in Cheshire East with implications for loss of Green Belt separation, undermining urban regeneration in neighbouring authority areas, sharing housing requirements, protecting the character of the Peak District National Park, possible wider than Plan area impacts on important wildlife habitats, strategic infrastructure proposals, the operation and future development of Manchester Airport, the provision of school places, Gypsy and Traveller provision, the use and safeguarding of mineral resources and the management of waste.
- 12.5 The main strategic issue that has potential cross boundary implications is catering for the significant development growth requirements of the Plan area (especially housing), particularly in view of the extensive areas of Green Belt across the Borough. Before changing Green Belt boundaries in Cheshire East to accommodate at least part of this development, the possibility of a neighbouring authority being able to meet any of these requirements needed to be considered by the relevant local planning authorities. New housing will be the main land take of future development and the question of assistance with meeting Cheshire East's requirement has been asked of those neighbouring authorities that exhibit significant cross boundary housing linkages such as commuting to work and/or migration flows. These flows are particularly significant to/from the Borough and

South Manchester and between the Borough and the Potteries. Following detailed discussions, it is clear that these neighbouring authorities are not in a position to assist Cheshire East with its housing requirements.

12.6 Housing associated linkages occur with other adjoining areas. The Cheshire East town of Middlewich is surrounded on three sides by the Cheshire West and Chester Council area. However, close working between the two authorities has concluded that the housing needs of Middlewich can be best met wholly within Cheshire East Borough. Further east, following an approach from High Peak Council for assistance with their housing needs, it has been accepted that a relatively small contribution of 500 dwellings towards their requirements can be appropriately met in Cheshire East in the 2020-30 period. This decision takes account of the landscape and topographical constraints on development in High Peak, the need to avoid unwarranted housing in the Peak District National Park (an important tourism asset spanning the boundary of the two authorities), the mutual benefit of containing (to a degree) transport impacts on the A6 corridor and a recognition of cross boundary inter-dependence in the vicinity of Macclesfield, an area of former housing restraint.

12.7 Associated with this issue, Stockport Council has previously expressed concerns about any reduction of the Green Belt gap with Handforth as a result of the North Cheshire Growth Village proposal at Handforth East. The land to be allocated has been drawn to minimise the coalescence effect, retaining a significant extent of Green Belt and incorporating a landscape buffer. Similarly, the Potteries authorities objected at the previous Plan consultation stage that development proposed south east of Crewe and in the Alsager area would undermine regeneration efforts, particularly in Stoke-on-Trent. The reduced scale of development proposed in the vicinity of Crewe and Alsager, as well as provisions to improve cross boundary connectivity, have largely met the concerns of the Staffordshire authorities.

12.8 Managing transport impacts is another factor in relation to Handforth East. Transport for Greater Manchester (another Duty to Co-operate partner) asks for these effects to be fully evaluated and the subsequent transport modelling work that has been done has led to a series of sustainability measures that are now incorporated in the new village proposal. In terms of the other cross boundary issues referred to in paragraph 12.4 above, all these remaining matters have been resolved through detailed changes to the Plan now presented for Member approval and/or a commitment to deal with these aspects in forthcoming parts of the Local Plan. Memoranda of understanding/statements of common ground/exchanged letters will, as appropriate, set out the positions reached and the on-going collaboration committed to.

13.0 Consultation Responses

13.1 The *Pre-Submission Core Strategy*, upon which comments were invited during a 6 week period from the 5th November to the 16th December, 2013, was accompanied by a concurrent consultation on the following documents:-

- *Sustainability Appraisal*
- *Habitat Regulation Assessment*
- *Non-Preferred Sites*

13.2 The consultation was subject to a considerable level of public and stakeholder engagement including the following:

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

13.3 With respect to the consultation process, 8,585 responses were received from 2,777 different people and organisations. 38% of comments were submitted online using the Council's consultation portal, 36% were submitted by e-mail and 26% were submitted on paper. About 21% of the representations registered support with 62% raising objections; the remaining 17% submitted general comments for consideration by the Council.

13.4 Proposed sites that received the most comments were:

- Site CS9 - Land East of Fence Avenue, Macclesfield
- Site CS10 - Land between Congleton Road and Chelford Road, Macclesfield
- Site CS11 - Gaw End Lane, Macclesfield
- Site CS24 - Land adjacent to junction 17 of M6, Sandbach
- Site CS30 - North Cheshire Growth Village, Handforth

13.5 Other site-related representations mainly focused on the following:-

- Disproportionate level of housing proposed around Crewe versus the rest of the Borough.
- Level of housing development is too low: additional sites should be considered.
- Shavington should not be treated as part of Crewe for housing allocation purposes.
- Objections to the removal of land from the Green belt. The exceptional circumstances for altering the Green Belt have not been demonstrated.
- Objection to possible inclusion of land around Crewe and Nantwich in the Green Belt.
- Level of housing is too great in Macclesfield.
- Level of development will give rise to additional traffic problems on congested roads. A full transport assessment is required.
- New housing sites are too far from employment areas.
- Some indicated development areas in Knutsford are subject to high levels of Aircraft Noise. The proposed housing numbers are too high and infrastructure will not cope.
- Local Infrastructure is inadequate for the level of development proposed.
- Development should occur on brownfield sites only.

- Congleton link road is only a partial solution to traffic problems and will result in imbalanced growth. Road should link to the A34.
- Growth in Middlewich will result in its shape being even more distorted.
- There has already been significant development within Nantwich area over the last 10 years and the Town cannot take this sort of increase.
- There is sufficient brownfield land in Wilmslow to accommodate the required development.
- North Cheshire Growth Village should be deleted from policy.
- The Council should be prioritising housing sites within or on the edge of settlements, and not entirely new settlements as is proposed.
- New housing in Sandbach will only be utilised by commuters.
- Sandbach an ancient town which could be destroyed for ever, resulting in urban sprawl and the danger of being flooded with applications.
- Basford East is not a sustainable site as demonstrated by the Sustainability Appraisal.

13.6 Policies that received the most comments were:

- Overall Development Strategy (Policy PG1)
- Settlement Hierarchy (Policy PG2)
- Green Belt (Policy PG3)
- Safeguarded Land (Policy PG4)
- Spatial Distribution of Development (Policy PG6)

13.7 Other policy-related representations mainly focused on the following:-

- Over-supply of employment land.
- A higher proportion of dwellings should go to Local Service Centres.
- Object to removal of sustainable villages from PG2.
- Support the objective of sustainable, job-lead growth.
- Support priority to greenbelt over housing and the focus on brownfield sites.
- Proposals are divisive and reinforce the North-South divide in the Borough.
- An assessment of viability is required in view of the level of developer contributions sought.
- Congleton should be identified as a Principal Town rather than KSC.
- Creation of green infrastructure amongst other measures to manage surface water and reduce run off helping to alleviate danger of flooding supported.
- Water is a precious resource and needs appropriate management e.g. reduce flood risk by the use of SuDS.
- Need to ensure there are suitable amenities/infrastructure available for the proposed level of development.
- Support the identification of safeguarded land which is a well established planning tool in forward planning an area.
- No need or justification to safeguard green belt land for development beyond the plan period.
- Welcome the inclusion of the provision for habitats for great crested newts and other protected species.

- It is essential to attract inward investment, provide more employment and retain young and qualified people.
- Priority should be given to infill and regeneration of old housing stock.
- Grade 2a and 3 agricultural lands should be protected in the Core Strategy.
- With higher densities now being achieved on brownfield sites, the number of dwellings which that land can support has grown considerably.
- Most of the materials used to build houses are imported into the UK.
- The case for growth needs to be tempered by a proper regard to other considerations such as the need to protect the Countryside for its own sake, to preserve long standing Green Belt.
- An ageing population can best be accommodated by ensuring that they can remain in employment as long as possible. The plan does not address this issue.
- The plan as it stands is for growth, not for sustainable development.
- The countryside of Cheshire East provides spaces of great tranquillity relative to the urban areas within and around the Borough. This tranquillity should be recognised as a specific asset and protected accordingly.
- The visitor economy is crucial to Cheshire East's identity and brand and to creating the conditions for sustainable growth.
- Any plan will, inevitably, attract widespread criticism and objection. It is essential for the future continued prosperity of the region that a formal development plan is implemented without further delay.
- A considerable degree of experience in IT and copious amounts of time are required in order to be able to find the Local Plan and navigate around the web site to identify the various elements.
- The consultation has not been accessible to those residents unable to visit libraries or access materials online.
- The number of consultations and the volume of information have been too great.
- Support putting people at the heart of decision making.

13.8 In addition to the responses received on the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* and *Non-Preferred Sites*, the following petitions were also received:-

- **Site CS9 – Land East of Fence Avenue, Macclesfield** – Petition with 828 signatures, objecting to the inclusion of this site in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy. The petition states –

'We, the undersigned, object to the proposed development of Green Belt land at Fence Avenue. This site plays a key role in the landscape setting of our historic town. The Council's own Stakeholder Panel in 2012 rejected this Green Belt change and it has been strongly opposed in earlier consultation exercises. Insufficient evidence has been presented to justify the exceptional circumstances to warrant Green Belt change at Fence Avenue.'

- **Site CS9 Land East of Fence Avenue** – e-petition with 271 responses, objecting to the inclusion of this site in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy. The petition states –

'I object to the proposed development of Green Belt Land East of Fence Avenue, Macclesfield. This site plays a key role in the landscape setting of our historic town. The Council's own Stakeholder Panel in 2012 rejected this Green Belt change and it has been strongly opposed in earlier consultation exercises. Insufficient evidence has been presented to justify the exceptional circumstances to warrant Green Belt Change at Fence Avenue.'

- **Pre-Submission Core Strategy and Site CS24 – Land adjacent to J17 of M6, South East of Congleton Road, Sandbach** - Petition with 101 signatures, including comments and objections relating to the Pre-Submission Core Strategy and the inclusion of this site in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy.

'We, the under-signed submit the following comments/objections to be considered as part of the Public Consultation of the Local Plan Pre-Submission Core Strategy document. We are unable to participate via the on-line computer option.'

CONTEXT /INTRODUCTION.

a) Reduce the proposed housing figures to that issued by the Office for National Statistics 20,000 not 27,000 proposed by Cheshire East

SPATIAL PORTRAIT.

a) Much more limited development, especially housing, around the historic towns with development targeted evenly around the two major towns.

CONNECTIVITY.

a) Transport improvement should be based on a fully integrated Rail/Bus/Road/Cycle network.

VISION.

a) The vision needs to ensure the protection of heritage assets, including SBI's and woodland areas, from engulfment in unsuitable development

GREEN BELT.

a) The total absence of any reference to the protection of Green Gaps, previously included in the Core Strategy, is deplored.

INFRASTRUCTURE.

a) Roads infrastructure is already totally inadequate, the few proposals made relate to mitigation measures for what exists today and NOT the future.

SANDBACH.

a) Sandbach will become an M6 commuting dormitory, insufficient thought given to impact on employment, education, health and leisure facilities.

The CUMULATIVE impact of already COMMITTED sites, including the recent appeal losses, is UNSUSTAINABLE.

b) J17 will take the CUMULATIVE burden of developments OUTSIDE Sandbach. E.g. Winterley, Haslington, Moston, etc

J17 is Unfit for Purpose, needing much more than the few mitigation improvements proposed.

SITE CS24 - Land adjacent to J17 of M6, South East of Congleton Road, Sandbach

- a) This is an ideal site for employment and it was allocated for employment only in the Congleton Local Plan.*
- b) It was marked as employment only in the Sandbach Town Strategy and this was supported in the public consultation.*
- c) Housing was rejected on this site in the previous public consultation on the "Draft Development Strategy"*
- d) The wildlife corridor should be protected and enhanced. Houses should not be built immediately alongside it.*
- e) It is poorly located in terms of access to local services and facilities. There are no bus services on Old Mill Road.*
Residents would need to cross Old Mill Road (a 60mph A road) to get to parks, playgrounds, town centre and schools.
- f) By including this location, weight is knowingly being added to the current planning application, despite objections from the wider public.*
- g) The SHLAA contains more appropriate housing sites. This site should be promoted to attract valued and sustainable businesses.*
- h) Employment on this site has fewer problems than many of the other sites being promoted for employment. It simply needs the will to do it.*

- **Pre-Submission Core Strategy, objection to site CS25 – Adlington Road, Wilmslow and Non-Preferred Sites document - support for the inclusion of sites NPS 56 – Land at Dean Row (Western parcel) and NPS 57 - Land at Dean Row (eastern parcel):** E-petition from 'Friends of Dean Row' , with 273 names –

'We the undersigned petition the council to reject proposals to grant planning for any new houses in Dean Row, as proposed in Areas Ba, Bb, Bc, Ha, and Hb of the draft Wilmslow Vision document. The undersigned also call for all Green Belt in these areas to be retained, and for area Bc to be returned to Safeguarded status.

Friends of Dean Row is against the unnecessary and unsustainable developments proposed in the Dean Row area of Wilmslow, for the following reasons:

- Major questions regarding the sustainability for development on all sites*
- Lack of infrastructure to support a new conurbation (schools, health, utilities, shops, etc)*
- Relatively long distance to the town centre, making walking and cycling less viable compared to other potential development sites*
- Lack of public transport connections*
- Loss of Dean Row as a separate hamlet with its own character, which risks being subsumed into an urban sprawl*
- The planned development of a further 1,000 houses on the old Woodford airfield less than 2 miles away would mean chronic over-development of the area*
- Increased traffic congestion, with the likelihood of new traffic lights and/or roundabout on Adlington Road, Brown's Lane, Cross Lane, and/or Dean Row Road*
- Visual impact on the surrounding area*
- Destruction of areas of natural beauty and wildlife*

- Loss of open spaces in the Wilmslow area, including the children's playground and playing fields off Brown's Lane
- Drainage and flood risk
- Over reliance on this area of Wilmslow for new housing: the area to the west of Dean Row has already been subjected to considerable development over the last 10 years'

- **Non-Preferred Sites Document Site NPS53 - Land at junction of Town Lane and Smith Lane, Mobberley and site NPS54 – Ilfords, Mobberley** – e-petition with 79 signatures, supporting the inclusion of the sites within this document. The e-petition has been logged as a resubmission of the e-petition which included 52 signatures which was received earlier in the year and was logged in relation to the 'Possible Additional Sites' consultation. The petition states –

'We the undersigned petition the council to reject the two large housing developments (Sites 'O' and 'P') that have been put forward for possible inclusion in the Cheshire East Local Plan. In particular we urge the council to reject any plans submitted in the future to build 375 homes on the 39 acre Ilford Way site, currently being proposed by LPC Living.

Justification:

Our village school is already oversubscribed having absorbed the intake from Ashley Primary School and according to Cheshire East's own estimates this will become significantly worse by 2016 without any new housing. Our local amenities are already overstretched and will not be able to cope with the hundreds of new families these developments will bring to the area. Both sites border onto Smith Lane, a road that narrows to a single track in places that is completely unsuitable for the amount of traffic these developments will create. The planned entrance to the Ilford Way site is on a dangerous bend. The residents understand the need for new housing in the borough and Mobberley has expanded significantly in recent years. These proposed developments are simply too large for the local infrastructure and will permanently destroy the character and identity of the village.'

- **Site NPS53 - Land at junction of Town Lane and Smith Lane, Mobberley and site NPS54 – Ilfords, Mobberley** - petition with 170 signatures, supporting the inclusion of the sites within this document. The petition states –

'We the undersigned petition Cheshire East Council to reject the two large housing developments (sites O and P) that have been put forward for possible inclusion in the Cheshire East Local Plan. In particular we urge the Council to reject any plans submitted in the future to build 375 homes on the 39 acre Ilford Way site, currently being proposed by LPC Living.'

- **Support for the inclusion of sites NPS 56 – Land at Dean Row (Western parcel) and NPS 57 - Land at Dean Row (eastern parcel):** E-petition from 'Friends of Dean Row', with 273 names (see details above.)

13.9 Officers have given due consideration to all of the responses received and these have informed the preparation of the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy* –

Submission Version. Responses to the consultation documents, together with the methodology adopted in engaging with local communities are set out in the Appendices to this report.

- 13.10 A copy of all responses received on the *Pre-Submission Core Strategy* and supporting documentation are available to view on the Council's Consultation Portal using the following link:-

<http://cheshireeast-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/cs/cspre>

14.0 Strategy and Policy

14.1 The Context for the Plan

- 14.1.1 Cheshire East is one of the most successful economies outside of the South-East of England and remains a highly desirable place to live and work. The Borough has a strong industrial heritage from rail engineering in Crewe to silk manufacturing in Macclesfield and retains an entrepreneurial business base which has shown resilience during the recent recession.
- 14.1.2 Though manufacturing employment is reducing, reflecting the national picture, Cheshire East still has a higher presence of manufacturing than the North West or the UK. This is indicative of a strong industrial heritage and a growing number of local manufacturing businesses, some of whom are expanding at a rapid rate. High-skill sectors such as pharmaceuticals, automotive and research and development also have a strong presence. Whilst Cheshire East accounts for 5.6% of the North-West's total employment, 36.9% of the region's scientific Research and Development jobs are located in the Borough.
- 14.1.3 There are many factors which underpin the economic success of the area, including its connectivity into major infrastructure. Cheshire East lies at the heart of the country's major road and rail network, connecting the North West into the Midlands and South East, with Crewe to London journey times of 1hr 40mins by rail. The rich and diverse natural environment and close proximity to the Peak District and major cities make Cheshire East a very desirable place to raise a family. There are low levels of crime and a strong education offer.
- 14.1.4 Cheshire East is made up of a number of very distinctive market towns that provide a vital economic and social hub for rural communities and many towns are currently facing the same challenges in terms of vacancies on the high street and the threat of internet and out-of-town shopping.
- 14.1.5 The Council cannot be complacent about the future of its economy. In an increasingly competitive, global economic environment, Cheshire East must compete strongly to maintain its economic success and continue to build new enterprises that are able to compete in a global market place.
- 14.1.6 Over the next twenty years, there is a need to invest strongly in the Borough's infrastructure network, not only to improve local accessibility, but more importantly to ensure that Cheshire East is better connected to other economic centres such as Manchester and the South East. This means building new

roads, maintaining high speed broadband, improving rail stations and taking advantage of new national infrastructure such as HS2 and proposed A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road.

- 14.1.7 The Borough must also have a supply of new, high quality employment sites that take advantage of the infrastructure network. This means not only identifying more land for development, but linking new sites with appropriate infrastructure to ensure future job creation.
- 14.1.8 The Council must protect, invest and reinvigorate its market towns through a 'Town Centre First' approach and create the rich and diverse retail and social offer that can continue to be at the heart of community life. It must also protect its natural environment, and where new development is necessary, limit the impact of new building by safeguarding the intrinsic quality of the Cheshire countryside.

14.2 Overall Spatial Strategy

- 14.2.1 Cheshire East is a high quality place to live and work, but it will only remain that way if changes evolve to meet the needs of future generations. That change needs to be managed so that it reinforces the advantages the area already possesses, rather than work against them.
- 14.2.2 The development strategy contained in the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* clearly establishes the employment land, housing land, infrastructure and community facilities that the area will need in the future. It demonstrates that the Council is committed to a jobs-led growth strategy that places the prosperity of its citizens at the heart of everything it is seeking to achieve.
- 14.2.3 The strategy also recognises the distinctive character of different parts of the Borough, acknowledging that there is no single county town that dominates the area. The core principles are as follows:
- Concentrate development in the two Principal Towns of Crewe and Macclesfield by encouraging development that is necessary to support their regeneration and revitalisation;
 - Development of the Key Service Centres linked to their distinctive needs and characteristics. Those in the north of the central belt of the Borough will accommodate a greater proportion of development whilst those in the south of the Borough will accommodate correspondingly less development, recognising Green Belt constraints;
 - A new settlement at Handforth East (North Cheshire Growth Village), which will provide jobs and homes in a planned environment with good infrastructure, rather than loading onto the periphery of existing constrained settlements;
 - Significant new employment areas to underpin the growth strategy at Basford (Crewe), Radway Green and M6 J16 (Alsager), M6 J17

(Sandbach), Middlewich, North Congleton and at Wardle. Existing key employers will be supported to grow and develop; and

- Adjustments to the Green Belt to facilitate new employment and housing development, an extension to the South Cheshire Green Belt to prevent the coalescence of Crewe and Nantwich and to protect undeveloped areas adjacent to Crewe.

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

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

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

14.3 Jobs and Employment

14.3.1 Jobs and prosperity are at the heart of the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version*. Accordingly, the strategy seeks to promote the right conditions for job growth by boosting the delivery of existing major employment sites, improving connectivity and identifying new areas for future investment and expansion. The starting point for this is has been an assessment of current employment land and assets.

14.3.2 The *Employment Land Review 2012* considered the demand for and supply of employment land in Cheshire East between 2009 and 2030. The review considered all employment land uses that fall within Use Classes B1 (offices, research and development and light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution). It demonstrates that Cheshire East is a key economic driver for the North West region with the local economy providing 6.4% of the North West's economic output and containing 7.5% of its businesses.

14.3.3 The *Employment Land Review 2012* forecasts a need to provide between 277.8 and 323.7 hectares of land for employment purposes between 2009 and

2030 across the whole Borough based on current or past trends. This equates to between 13.2 and 15.4 hectares per year.

- 14.3.4 A review of sites currently considered to be part of the supply of land for employment development indicates that 272.4 hectares of land from the existing employment land supply should be retained for employment in the future.
- 14.3.5 A review of current areas in use for employment demonstrated that although the vast majority of these are still likely to be in use for employment purposes by 2030, a number may have ceased to serve a useful economic function and be better suited for other purposes.
- 14.3.6 The *Employment Land Review 2012* therefore provides a key part of the evidence base upon which to plan for future economic growth. In order to ensure the future prosperity of the area and to assist in the national growth agenda, new employment land is identified in key locations to provide further economic opportunities. Some of these are phased to later in the plan period to allow existing sites to fully develop.
- 14.3.7 There are a number of key employment/technological locations in Cheshire East, of which eleven have been identified as being of particular significance to the economy in Cheshire East. These are:
- Alderley Park, Nether Alderley
 - Hurdsfield Industrial Estate, Macclesfield
 - Bentley Motors, Crewe
 - Radbroke Hall, Knutsford
 - Jodrell Bank, Holmes Chapel
 - Booths Hall , Knutsford
 - Midpoint 18, Middlewich
 - Crewe Green Business Park, Crewe
 - Waters Corporation, Wilmslow
 - Sanofi/Aventis, Holmes Chapel
 - Crewe Gates and Weston Road Industrial Estates, Crewe
- 14.3.8 As these are existing developments, 'saved' planning policies apply to any planned development, but as Astra Zeneca has announced plans to scale down its facility at Alderley Park, a new strategic policy has been included in the plan. It is recognised that the sites are significant for the Cheshire East economy and this is demonstrated by the fact that these key employment locations represent the major sectors of the Cheshire East economy, notably

chemicals and pharmaceuticals, advanced automotive engineering, logistics and finance.

14.4 Transport, Accessibility and Connectivity

- 14.4.1 Improved connectivity forms a vital part of the development strategy and provides the necessary links between land use and transport. Better transport is also a driver for economic growth with new development providing opportunities to secure new infrastructure. The strategy highlights the role that Crewe Station can play in leading the regeneration of the whole town; this position could also be greatly enhanced by the advent of HS2, which is fully supported by Cheshire East, subject to environmental considerations. Fast rail links to Manchester, Birmingham and London are also key advantages of Macclesfield and Wilmslow Town Centres.
- 14.4.2 New road infrastructure is also promoted and protected in the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version*. For example, the dualling of the A500 will support future growth in Crewe as will improvements to junctions 16 and 17 of the M6. A new northern link road is proposed around Congleton to both relieve existing congestion and also open up new land, especially for employment development. This in turn will facilitate links into Macclesfield, where a new link road is planned, again connected to new development. Similarly, a new Eastern By-Pass is planned for Middlewich; this will be instrumental in opening up additional employment land at Midpoint 18.
- 14.4.3 To maintain linkages with Greater Manchester, the *South East Manchester Multi Modal Study (SEMMMS)* route proposes a new highway link between the A6 and Manchester Airport; a Woodford-Poynton Relief Road is also planned.
- 14.4.4 Accessibility is another key feature of the strategy and this has been a fundamental principle in determining the settlement hierarchy, where proximity to local services by all modes of transport is important, particularly in a predominantly rural Borough.

14.5 Housing Growth

- 14.5.1 In Cheshire East, there are a number of factors that influence the scale and location of future housing. The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* advises that Local Plans need to meet the full, objectively assessed housing needs for their area. In addition there is the ongoing requirement to identify a five year supply of 'deliverable' housing sites and to identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for housing growth for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15.
- 14.5.2 Evidence from the *Census 2011* suggests a highly mobile population with considerable movement of people in and out of the Borough. Similarly, projections at the higher end of the scale oversimplify the picture. Hence, a more moderated projection has been preferred with an estimated population increase of about 40,000 over the plan period. Once account has been taken of an annual jobs growth scenario of 0.4%, this produces an annual average housing requirement of about 1,350 homes per year, a labour supply increase of around 17,300 people and an increase of about 15,000 jobs up to 2030.

- 14.5.3 On the supply side of the equation, the *2013 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)* considered all potential housing sites. The results of this assessment suggest that a total of 49,645 dwellings could be delivered over the next 16 years, of which about 7,200 homes would be on brownfield sites with a further 4,800 on sites that are a mix of brownfield and greenfield.
- 14.5.4 Therefore, the demographic and housing market evidence currently available suggests that there is an ongoing need to provide additional housing in Cheshire East. This reflects population growth, changes in household size and composition, family breakdown and other societal changes in addition to patterns of UK migration. This evidence provides the base position against which the Council's economic development and jobs-led growth strategy has been derived. However, set against these 'elevating' factors are matters which serve to constrain potential growth; these include an economy recovering from recession, Green Belt, infrastructure limitations, highway capacity and environmental designations. The plan seeks to rectify many of these historic matters, but this indicates that full economic growth will take time to come to fruition.
- 14.5.5 Having factored the aforementioned issues into the supply calculation, it is proposed to increase housing provision from the (now revoked) *Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)* annual build rate of 1,150 to an average provision over the plan period of 1,350 homes per year rising from 1200 per annum in the first phase (ie 2010-2015) to 1500 per annum in the last phase (ie 2025-2030) of the plan period. A further allowance of 500 new dwellings has been added during the period 2021 – 2030 to reflect the needs of High Peak Borough, a neighbouring authority that has asked for assistance with its housing needs under the Duty to Co-operate.
- 14.5.6 Advice in the *NPPF* is to '*boost significantly*' the supply of housing land, whilst recognising current low rates of housebuilding and the likely timescales involved in delivering new housing land allocations. The increased provision from the former *RSS* levels in Cheshire East should also assist in the delivery of affordable housing in accordance with the policy principles set out in the *Local Plan Strategy*.
- 14.5.7 Therefore, although the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* establishes a minimum housing requirement of 27,000 new dwellings for the period between 2010 and 2030 with an additional overage to accommodate needs in High Peak Borough (ie 500 new dwellings) during the latter half of the plan period, housing land supply calculations have been tempered to reflect an under-provision in recent years. Therefore, acknowledging that higher levels of housing development should be adopted that '*boost significantly*' housing land supply in the future, the *Local Plan Strategy* advocates a 'stepped' approach to annualised housing targets (base date 31st March, 2010) as follows:-

2010-2015	1200 dwellings/year (6000 dwellings)
2016-2020	1300 dwellings/year (6500 dwellings)
2021-2025	1400 dwellings/year (7000 dwellings)

2026-2030 1500 dwellings/year (7500 dwellings)

2010-2030 Average = 1350 dwellings/year Total = 27,000 dwellings

(Note: This does not include the additional 50 dwellings/year during the period 2021 to 2030 to meet needs in High Peak Borough)

- 14.5.8 Once account is taken of committed housing sites, there is a requirement (base date of the 31st December, 2013) to identify sufficient land to accommodate a minimum of **16,594 new dwellings** (including an additional 500 for High Peak Borough) up to 2030. This residual balance will primarily be focused on the development sites identified in Section 17, though an allowance will also be made for further small-scale housing developments in the Principal Towns, Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres as defined in the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version*.
- 14.5.9 The sites identified in the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* have been selected on the basis that they will make a significant contribution to meeting the housing needs of the area over the whole plan period and are economically viable in terms of deliverability. Moreover, they will significantly improve the supply of affordable, intermediate and market housing once the *Local Plan Strategy* has been formally adopted following examination. There will also be a greater range of housing sites available with further sites to be identified in the *Site Allocations and Development Policies* DPD in due course.
- 14.5.10 Prior to Examination, the Council will prepare a revised *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)* with a base date of 31st March, 2014; this will inform and update the Housing Trajectory, as set out in Appendix E of the *Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version*.

14.6 Five-Year Housing Land Supply

- 14.6.1 The *NPPF* and the emerging *NPPG* require that Councils identify a five-year supply of 'deliverable' housing land in their development plans, plus a 5% 'buffer' to allow for choice and competition together with any under-supply arising since the plan's start date (ie 2010). In the context of Cheshire East, set against an annual target of 1,200 dwellings per year (2010-2015) and 1300 dwellings per year (2016-2020), sufficient land to accommodate a minimum of 6,400 new homes is required over the period 2014-2019.
- 14.6.2 However, once account is taken of the shortfall in performance over the first 4 years of the plan period (ie 2010-2014), together with the 5% 'buffer', the 5-year land supply requirement under the 'Liverpool' method rises to **7230 new dwellings**. This requires that the shortfall is addressed over the remainder of the plan period (ie 2014 – 2030), an approach which has been supported by Inspectors in examining other local plans (eg Blaby District Council – Inspector's Report – February, 2013). The target should include existing commitments, which are sites already having the benefit of residential planning consent, those subject to the signing of S106 agreements and those currently under construction.

- 14.6.3 Based on the range of sites allocated, and applying a 5% buffer in accordance with national planning guidance to allow for choice and competition, it is considered that in excess of a 5 years supply of 'deliverable' housing land is currently available in Cheshire East. Further flexibility will be afforded by 'windfall' development over the remainder of the plan period, which has not been accounted for in the overall supply calculations.

14.7 Landscape and Green Belt

North Cheshire Green Belt

- 14.7.1 When looking at future development needs across a wide area over a long time scale against the context of long-established, tightly-drawn boundaries with limited 'safeguarded land', it was considered appropriate to undertake a Green Belt review. As part of the local plan review, the Council has assessed the ongoing need for Green Belt in the north of the Borough, both locally and strategically.
- 14.7.2 The rationale for Green Belt in North Cheshire remains, as the need to provide open land around Greater Manchester and prevent adjacent towns merging is as strong as ever. Equally, there is a continuing need for regeneration in certain parts of the conurbation and these factors in tandem weigh heavily in favour of maintaining a strong green belt policy.
- 14.7.3 Where the issue of green belt policy becomes more pressing however is at the local level, particularly in terms of the sustainability of existing towns. For example, there is very little land that can be earmarked for new developments, should the need arise in the future. This creates difficult choices in these towns; either manage for the next 20-30 years within the confines of existing urban boundaries (essentially maintaining them for a period of well over half a century) or consider amending the Green Belt. Hence, thought was given as to whether needs could be met in towns beyond the Green Belt and whether Greater Manchester itself could accommodate future development needs.
- 14.7.4 The fundamental purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. As well as balancing social, economic and environmental objectives, 'development' is implicit as building and growth are part and parcel of sustainability. There are very limited opportunities for new development in the vicinity of Macclesfield, Knutsford, Poynton, Handforth and Wilmslow such that any new schools, businesses, housing or community facilities, all things normally considered necessary to sustain a town, must either be built as an 'exception' to the Green Belt or not at all. Hence, if 'sustainable development' is to be achieved in these towns, it follows that an adjustment of Green Belt must be considered. This, combined with the timing of a new local plan, is considered to be the exceptional circumstances that have warranted a Green Belt review.
- 14.7.5 Accordingly, the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version Core Strategy* proposes limited alterations to the North Cheshire Green Belt boundaries to accommodate new housing and employment growth together with areas of 'safeguarded land' to ensure the future sustainability of the northern towns. This approach should ensure sufficient land is available to

meet development needs beyond the plan period, thereby negating any further review of Green Belt boundaries in the medium-long term.

South Cheshire Green Belt

- 14.7.6 Green Belt also occurs in South Cheshire close to the North Staffordshire border. This forms part of the wider band that surrounds the various towns and settlements of the 'Potteries', principally Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme. In terms of the South Cheshire Green Belt, it is acknowledged that Crewe is the primary focus for regeneration and economic growth. The '*All Change for Crewe*' and '*High Growth City*' initiatives make a cogent case for the comprehensive revitalisation of the town.
- 14.7.7 To the west of Crewe, successive local planning authorities have sought to preserve the different identity of the historic settlement of Nantwich and Crewe and to maintain an area of open land between them. However, as Crewe has expanded, there remains continued pressure on the narrow 'green gap' that now separates the two towns, which looks set to continue into the future, especially as Crewe continues to be the pre-eminent economic growth point in the south of Cheshire; this is further endorsed in the spatial policy framework of the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version*.
- 14.7.8 Since the 'green gap' policy was first drawn up, circumstances have changed considerably, though it is worth noting that one of the key results of the public consultation stages of the plan-making process was the overwhelming local support for policies that retain the distinctive character of individual settlements and in the context of Crewe and for the 'green gap' policy that helps maintain this objective.
- 14.7.9 This inevitably lead to questions as to whether the 'green gap' was the right policy to deal with the planning challenges of the coming years and whether that alone was sufficient to stem the slow erosion of openness between Crewe and Nantwich. Hence, the separation of Crewe and Nantwich by an extension to the North Staffordshire Green Belt, as proposed in the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* should allow each town to grow in parallel and at a pace commensurate with its particular scale and identity. Land is allocated to the north and south of Nantwich to ensure there is sufficient space to accommodate growth in future years and equally, Crewe retains capacity to grow and develop. Therefore, the proposed Green Belt should reinforce the sustainable future development of each town.
- 14.7.10 The final element of new green belt policy within the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* is the proposal to prevent the spread of development in the arc between Leighton, Sandbach and Haslington, where there is a similar risk of erosion of countryside adjacent to Crewe. This results in a proposal to significantly extend the South Cheshire Green Belt within a broad area of search which includes large areas to the west, south and east of the Crewe urban area.
- 14.7.11 To summarise, the proposed adjustments to the boundaries in North and South Cheshire will result in a significant net gain in the overall amount of land designated as Green Belt within Cheshire East. This will underline and

reinforce the sensitivity of these areas, complimenting established open countryside policies. If these amendments are subsequently confirmed within an adopted *Local Plan Strategy*, detailed boundaries will be established within the subsequent *Site Allocations and Development Policies Development Plan Document* and associated *Policies Map*.

Peak District National Park

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

15.0 Strategic Planning Policy Framework

15.1 The policies set out in the *Shaping our Future: Policy Principles* document published in early 2013 have now been embodied (as amended following public consultation), within the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version*.

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

Strategic Priority 1

- Promoting economic prosperity by creating conditions for business growth.

Strategic Priority 2

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

Strategic Priority 3

- Environmental quality should be protected and enhanced.

Strategic Priority 4

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

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

15.4 **Policies PG1- PG6** relate to the '*Planning for Growth*' objective broadly setting out the overall levels of growth, where new development will be accommodated within the settlement hierarchy and the strategic approach to Green Belt, Safeguarded Land and Open Countryside.

- 15.5 **Policies SD1 and SD2** relate to the '*Planning for Sustainable Development*' objective setting out the Council's approach to sustainable development and how those principles will be applied in the decision-making process.
- 15.6 **Policies IN1 and IN2** relate to '*Infrastructure*' setting out the infrastructure requirements to support new development together with the Council's expectations in respect of developer contributions and the mechanisms for commuting appropriate levies.
- 15.7 **Policies EG1- EG5** relate to the '*Enterprise and Growth*' objective setting out how the Council will promote economic prosperity in all its guises, including the rural economy, tourism and a 'town centre first' approach to retail and commerce.
- 15.8 **Policies SC1-SC7** relate to building '*Stronger Communities*' setting out the Council's approach to meeting the needs of local communities and providing the social infrastructure, services and facilities required to create sustainable communities such as leisure, a mix of house types, affordable housing, housing to meet local needs and those of gypsies and travellers.
- 15.9 **Policies SE1-SE15** seek to protect and enhance environmental quality by creating a '*Sustainable Environment*', acknowledging its role in contributing to a successful economy and the well-being of local communities. A range of policies include addressing the wise use of resources (such as minerals), energy efficiency, protecting historic and natural assets, promoting a low carbon economy and providing guidance on waste, pollution and water management.
- 15.10 **Policies CO1- CO4** relate to '*Connectivity*', capitalising on the strengths of the existing transport system in the Borough, including links to major centres and how the Council will seek to improve connectivity in the future. The policy framework therefore highlights the role of sustainable travel and transport, enabling business growth through improving transport infrastructure, the need for travel plans and digital communication networks.
- 15.11 A Summary of Proposed Changes to the planning policy framework is set out in Appendix E.

16.0 Saved Policies

- 16.1 Consideration has also been given to the 'saved' policies in the local plans adopted by the former Boroughs. Where appropriate, 'saved' policies have been deleted to ensure no overlap with the policies contained in the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version*. A list of previously adopted policies which the Council is seeking to retain/replace is therefore set out in Appendix B of the main document. These policies will continue to be used in the determination of planning applications in the Borough until superseded by the *Site Allocations and Development Policies* and *Waste DPD's*.

17.0 Development Sites

- 17.1 The *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* is supported by the identification of land for development, which falls into the following categories:

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

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

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

Housing Distribution

17.4 The distribution of new housing development in the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy-Submission Version* broadly reflects the settlement hierarchy with the quantum of development, including existing commitments and completions, apportioned as follows:

- Principal Towns – 10,400 new dwellings
- Key Service Centres – 11,300 new dwellings
- New Settlement – 1,900 new dwellings

17.5 Additional housing development will be proposed in the emerging *Site Allocations and Development Policies DPD* amounting to about 3,000 new dwellings (see paragraph 17.11).

Strategic Sites

17.6 The proposed 'Strategic Sites' reflect the overall spatial distribution of both jobs and homes and would be supported in many cases by community benefits such as affordable housing, schools, open space and improvements to pedestrian and cycle networks. These sites have the capacity to accommodate about 11,800 new homes and about 210 hectares of new employment land.

17.7 The delivery of these sites, many of which are mixed use, will be phased over the plan period to accord with programmed infrastructure improvements. This should ensure that sustainable development is delivered in a timely manner with necessary improvements to local and strategic services. The *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* clearly highlights the necessary delivery mechanisms, often involving developer contributions towards essential infrastructure, without which many of the proposals would be deemed unsustainable.

Strategic Sites in Crewe

Site		Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS1	Basford East	Employment - 24 Ha Residential - about 1000 homes	No Change
CS2	Basford West	Employment – 22 Ha Residential – about 370 homes	No Change
CS3	Leighton West	Employment - 5 Ha Residential – about 1000 homes	About 850 homes
CS4	Crewe Green	Residential - about 150 homes	No Change
CS5	Sydney Road	Residential- about 250 homes	No Change
CS6	Shavington/Wybunbury Triangle	Residential - about 350 homes	No Change
CS7	East Shavington	Residential - about 250 homes	No Change

Strategic Sites in Macclesfield

Site		Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS8	South Macclesfield Development Area (SMDA)	Employment - 5ha Retail- up to 5000 sq metres (convenience goods) Residential- about 1100 homes	About 1050 homes
CS9	Fence Avenue	Residential -about 250 homes	No Change
CS10	Land between Congleton Road and Chelford Road	Employment - 5ha Residential - about 150 homes.	About 300 homes
CS11	Gaw End Lane	Employment- 5ha Residential- about 100 homes	Employment land deleted About 150 homes

Strategic Sites in Alsager

	Site	Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS12	Twyfords and Cardway	Residential - about 550 homes	No Change
CS13	Former MMU Campus	Residential - about 350 homes	No Change
CS14	Radway Green	Employment - 10 ha	No Change
CS15	Radway Green Extension	Employment - 25 ha	No Change

Strategic Sites in Congleton

	Site	Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS16	Giantswood Lane South	Residential - about 150 homes	No Change
CS17	Manchester Road to Macclesfield Road	Residential - about 550 homes	No Change

Strategic Sites in Knutsford

	Site	Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS18	North West Knutsford	Employment - 5 ha Residential- about 300 homes	Employment land deleted
CS19	Parkgate Extension	Employment - 6 ha Residential - about 250 homes	About 200 homes

Strategic Site in Middlewich

	Site	Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS20	Glebe Farm	Residential - about 450 homes	No Change

Strategic Sites in Nantwich

	Site	Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS21	Kingsley Fields	Employment - 2 ha Residential - about 1100 homes	No Change
CS22	Stapeley Water Gardens	Residential - about 150 homes	No Change
CS23	Snow Hill	Mixed uses including offices,	No Change

		leisure/hotel, housing, retail, community facilities and parking.	
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Strategic Site in Sandbach

Site		Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS24	Land adjacent to J17 of M6, south east of Congleton Road (Capricorn)	Employment - 20ha Residential - up to 450 homes	Up to 200 homes

Strategic Sites in Wilmslow

Site		Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS25	Adlington Road	Residential - about 225 homes	About 200 homes
CS26	Royal London	Employment - 2 ha Residential - about 75 homes	Employment – 5ha
CS27	Wilmslow Business Park	Business – up to 25,000sq m-3ha	No Change

Strategic Site at Wardle

Site		Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS28	Wardle Employment Improvement Area	Employment - about 31ha	Employment – 61 ha

Opportunity Site at Alderley Park

Site		Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS29	Alderley Park	Masterplan to be developed and adopted as a SPD.	No Change

Proposed New Settlement

Site		Proposed Uses (Pre-	Proposed Change
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		Submission Version)	
CS30	North Cheshire Growth Village – Handforth East	Employment - 12ha Residential - about 1800 homes	About 1650 homes

Strategic Locations

17.8 Where only the broad locality of the proposed development is known, the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* identifies ‘Strategic Locations’. Further work will be required to determine precise site boundaries, as some are affected by proposed highway improvement lines, which are yet to be finalised through public consultation and any necessary Compulsory Purchase Order procedures (eg Congleton Link Road). Other locations, such as Central Crewe and the wider Macclesfield urban area could accommodate development on a range of sites, which it would not be appropriate to separately identify in a strategic policy document. It is envisaged that the proposed ‘Strategic Locations’ are capable of delivering about 3,600 new dwellings, a further 90 hectares of employment land and up to 12,300 sq m of additional retail floorspace.

Proposed Strategic Locations

Strategic Location		Proposed Uses (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
SL1	Central Crewe	Residential - about 250 homes Retail – up to 5000 sq m	No Change
SL2	Leighton, Crewe	Residential - about 400 homes	No Change
SL3 (now CS37)	South Cheshire Growth Village , South East Crewe	Residential - about 900 homes, Retail - up to 1000 sq m.	About 800 homes
SL4	Central Macclesfield	Residential - about 850 homes	About 500 homes
SL5	White Moss Quarry (Alsager)	Residential - about 750 homes Retail - up to 1000 sq m	About 350 homes
SL6	Back Lane/ Radnor Park, Congleton	Employment - 10 ha Residential -about 500 homes	No Change
SL7	Congleton Business Park Extension	Employment - 10 ha Residential - about 450 homes Retail - up to 300 sq m	No Change
SL8	Giantswood Lane to Manchester Road, Congleton	Residential about 550 homes Retail - up to 3000 sq m.	No Change
SL9	Brooks Lane, Middlewich	Residential - about 400 homes Retail - up to 3000 sq m	No Change
SL10	Midpoint 18 Extension, Middlewich	Employment - up to 70 ha	No Change

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

17.10 In 2014, the Council will prepare a *Site Allocations and Development Policies Development Plan Document (DPD)* in accordance with its revised *Local Development Scheme 2014 - 2017*. This document will identify further smaller sites for different types of development, including housing and employment, which are not considered to be strategic in nature; these will be illustrated on a *Policies Map* to accompany the Local Plan

17.11 In terms of housing and employment, it is estimated that about 3,000 new dwellings and about 12 hectares of new employment land will be allocated in the *Site Allocations and Development Policies DPD*.

18.0 Safeguarded Land

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

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

18.3 Accordingly, the proposed 'Safeguarded Land', which has been identified in Macclesfield, Knutsford, Poynton, Wilmslow and Handforth may be required to meet longer term development needs beyond the end of the plan period and equates to about 140 hectares. Some parcels of 'Safeguarded Land' adjoin existing proposals in the plan, whilst others are discrete and stand alone in nature. In all cases, any development of this type of land will be subject to a further Local Plan review dealing with needs post - 2030. In the meantime, the land will be subject to protective policies similar to those applying to the open countryside. This will ensure that for the duration of the plan period, existing uses of the land will continue and the area will be fully protected for the duration of the plan period.

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

Proposed Safeguarded Land

	Site	Approximate Site Area (Pre-Submission Version)	Proposed Change
CS31	Gaw End Lane, Macclesfield	18 hectares	No Change
CS32	Land between Congleton Road and Chelford Road, Macclesfield,	137 hectares	46 hectares
CS33	Northwich Road/North West Knutsford	44 hectares	24 hectares
CS34	North Cheshire Growth Village	26 hectares	20 Hectares
CS35	Prestbury Road, Wilmslow	25 hectares	15 hectares
CS36	Upcast Lane, Wilmslow	14 hectares	7 hectares
	<i>Poynton</i>	<i>5-10 hectares</i>	<i>No Change</i>
	TOTAL	269-274 hectares	135-140 hectares

19.0 Next Steps

19.1 Once the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* has been approved, the document will be published for a six week period to invite further representations on the 'soundness' and legal compliance of the plan and these will be logged and sent to the Planning Inspectorate prior to Examination. The Council does not need to formally respond to the representations, but a short report on the main issues arising from them needs to be submitted; this will assist the Inspector in deciding what matters are to be examined.

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

19.3 The Examination process starts immediately after the plan is submitted. The Inspector will consider all the submitted written material including the representations and will decide which matters are discussed at the Examination hearing sessions. These sessions will be led by the Inspector, bringing in the Council and other participants to fully explore the matters, issues and questions that the Inspector wants answers to. However, formal cross-examination of participants by legal advocates will not normally take place.

- 19.4 Those persons or organisations that submit formal objections requesting changes to the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* within the prescribed six week period will have the right to appear before and be heard by the Inspector. However, the Inspector is not precluded from inviting anyone to appear and be heard at a hearing where he thinks that person is needed to enable the soundness of the Plan to be determined.
- 19.5 As soon as is practically possible, the Inspector may arrange a Pre-Examination Meeting (PIM) to outline the procedure for the hearing sessions and establish the deadlines for the submission of papers responding to the matters that he or she wishes to examine. It is anticipated that the Examination will commence in the summer of 2014 with the Inspector's Report expected towards the end of the year.
- 19.6 The Inspector's main concern is to establish whether the plan is legally compliant and 'sound'. The Council can suggest minor modifications to improve the plan that do not affect soundness. If the Inspector considers the plan would be unsound without more major modifications being made, these will need to be consulted upon (normally six weeks) and the representations reported to the Inspector before the Examination is concluded.
- 19.7 During the Examination, the Inspector may request the Council's opinion on any possible changes to the plan. Therefore, in order to smoothly manage the process without recourse to seeking the Council's opinion on every minor change, it is considered that responses should be delegated to the Head of Strategic and Economic Planning, in association with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Communities. The Portfolio Holder will exercise judgement as to whether such changes strike to the heart of the plan, but in appropriate cases, will report back to the Strategic Planning Board or Full Council for a formal decision.
- 19.8 The responsibility for adopting the *Local Plan Strategy* will ultimately rest with the Council and it is hoped that this can be achieved by late 2014. The document will then provide the necessary strategic planning framework for determining planning applications and provide a sound basis for preparing other Development Plan Documents, such as the *Site Allocations and Development Policies* DPD, *Waste* DPD and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's).

20.0 Access to Information

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

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Appendices:-

Appendix A *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version*

Appendix B	<i>Pre-Submission Core Strategy - Report of Consultations</i>
Appendix C	<i>Pre-Submission Core Strategy - Consultation Response Proformas</i>
Appendix D	<i>Non-Preferred Sites - Consultation Response Proformas</i>
Appendix E	<i>Pre-Submission Core Strategy - Summary of Proposed Changes</i>
Appendix F	<i>Pre-Submission Core Strategy - Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) - Consultation Responses</i>
Appendix G	<i>Pre-Submission Core Strategy - Sustainability Appraisal (SA) - Consultation Responses</i>