

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet

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**Date of Meeting:** 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014  
**Report of:** Strategic Housing Manager  
**Subject/Title:** Brownfield Development (Ref CE 14/15-20)  
**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Don Stockton, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Jobs

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### 1. Report Summary

- 1.1 Cheshire East's Local Plan creates a vision for the future which is to deliver jobs-led growth and sustainable vibrant communities. The Plan coupled with our five year housing supply, protects residents against unwanted, unsustainable and unplanned development, whilst also protecting our countryside.
- 1.2 Within Cheshire East we still have a number of **town centre brownfield sites** that are suitably located for housing and commercial development which if delivered would reduce the need for development on green land, however many of these have failed to be delivered. We are constantly defending against applications for development on green land whilst resident groups are voicing their concern and dismay about the lack of development on brownfield sites.
- 1.3 An excellent recent publication by Peter J.K.Haslehurst in the May 2014, the Civitas report titled "ideas for economic growth - restoring brownfield sites in our inner towns and cities", provides an insight into the problem in Macclesfield and researches the causes and potential solutions to brownfield regeneration.
- 1.4 Additional research into best practice and policy has also been undertaken to establish what the barriers to development are and what initiatives and policy changes, if implemented, could help deliver these types of sites.
- 1.5 Cheshire East Council has clearly adopted a "brownfield first" development policy with over 77% of housing development being delivered on brownfield sites over the last 5 years. However the NPPF has established a new policy environment, particularly in relation to how and when such land should be used. Beyond merely encouraging the effective re-use of previously developed land, national policy no longer holds any quantifiable requirements to meet development targets on brownfield land and instead promotes an agenda of growth to meet identified housing needs in the most sustainable locations.

- 1.6 In short, housing restraint in Cheshire is no longer supported by national and regional policy and can therefore no longer be justified as an aim in itself by local policy.
- 1.7 Following discussions with Peter Haslehurst, and our own local focus on 'brownfield first' the Council is engaged with Government through the Treasury and CLG to raise the profile on the work the Council is doing, but also engage in policy development to encourage Government to take a more direct approach which may lead to availability of grant funding/and or tax incentives.
- 1.8 Interestingly, the Chancellor made a speech on this very issue recently when he stated that "through a combination of planning reforms and government investment it would boost house building in the UK, Billed as an 'urban planning revolution', the proposed shake-up hinges on plans to release more brownfield land for the delivery of 200,000 new homes.

The Chancellor demanded that councils establish local development orders (LDO) on brownfield land – providing sites with outline planning permission to speed up development. Council's will be required to put LDO's on more than 90 per cent of the brownfield sites suitable for housing by 2020. The Treasury has now created a £5million fund to help create the first 100 LDOs.

Cheshire East is in a prime position to work with Government on this issue to establish LDOs and the Leader has written to the Chancellor expressing our support and commitment.

- 1.9 In order to proceed more fully with this agenda it is proposed the following actions take place:
  - Cheshire East Council to be at the forefront in the development of Local Development Orders. We will do this by establishing a cross departmental Task Group to develop a pilot within Macclesfield, identifying and working with the owners of the brownfield sites.
  - Work with Government to explore the creation of a fund to build capacity to develop knowledge and understanding of smaller sites likely to be beneficiaries of Local Development Orders. This could include landowner engagement, site evaluation and assessment, and potentially a private public delivery model where applicable.
  - Explore the potential for the development of an Equity share or grant schemes, delivered through a public / private partnership approach, targeted at clearly evidenced negative equity sites. (State aid implications will have to be considered when developing such a scheme).
  - Work with the Government on the development of tax incentives targeted at brownfield sites that are identified within the Local Development Order sites or in existing town centre boundaries.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet endorse the approach set out in this report with a focus on Macclesfield as a pilot area for research and bid development.

## **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Local Plan sets out the Borough's ambition to develop 27,000 homes. 3500 homes is the expected delivery level for Macclesfield and of that figure 500 homes are expected to be brought forward on brownfield sites.
- 3.2 The Plan promotes the efficient use of land, protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land and make best use of previously developed land where possible and support the achievement of vibrant and prosperous town and village centres. The development of Brownfield sites supports this approach.

## **4. Wards Affected**

- 4.1 All Wards

## **5. Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 All Members

## **6 Policy Implications**

- 6.1 Cheshire East's Local Plan promotes Sustainable Development , the concept of which is "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"
- 6.2 To achieve sustainable development the Local Plan gives consideration to a number of factors including, the prioritisation of investment and growth within the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres, make efficient use of land, protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land and make best use of previously developed land where possible and support the achievement of vibrant and prosperous town and village centres. These and more support the concept of brownfield development.

## **7 Implications for Rural Communities**

- 7.1 The proposal focus's around a pilot scheme within Macclesfield and therefore will not impact on the surrounding rural communities, the proposal will however protect the Green field, preserving our rural communities by developing on Brownfield sites.

## **8 Financial Implications**

- 8.1 At this stage of the process, there are currently no identified financial implications for the authority, however in order to carry out feasibility reports on proposed sites there will be financial resources required which will have to be funded via the Local Authority or owner.
- 8.2 These costs will be evaluated as part of the project and if resources cannot be identified within our existing budgets a business case will need to be put forward.

## **9 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 The recommendation sought by this report does not in itself have any legal implications, however, as the work evolves officers will need to ensure that they take legal advice to ensure that any final recommendations and/or bids are sound.

## **10 Risk Management**

- 10.1 The approach could lead to uncertainty in Macclesfield resulting in Builders delaying development sites in order to ascertain if there any advantages to being within the Housing Zone.
- 10.2 Owners of sites outside of the zone may feel that they being treated unfairly and that they are disadvantaged. This could lead to negative publicity.
- 10.3 Both risks need and can be mitigated through a clear communications plan.

## **11. Access to Information**

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

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