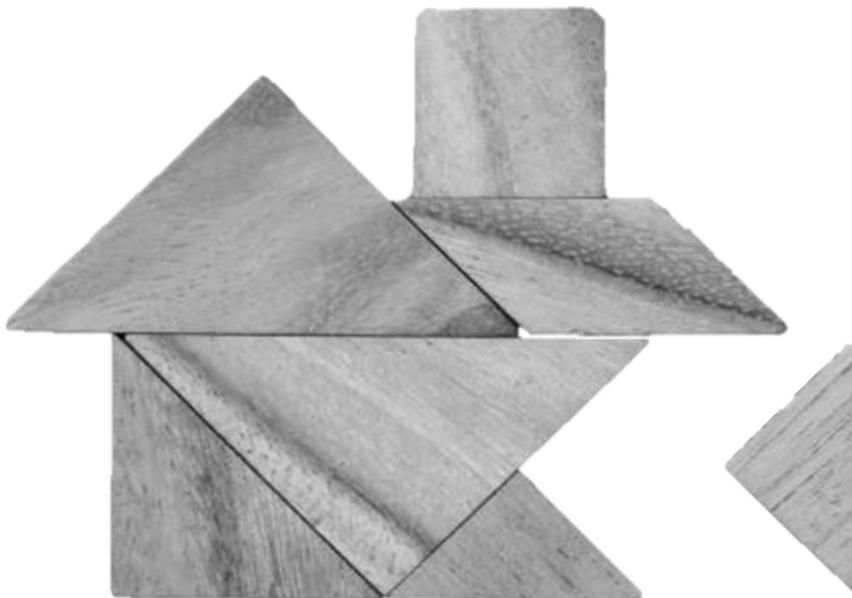


Responses to Cheshire East Council's

Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 Consultation



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Report produced 23rd January 2018 by the Research and Consultation Team, on behalf of Strategic Housing, Cheshire East Council. Please email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for further information

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

Between November 2017 and January 2018, Cheshire East Council consulted on a draft version of a new Housing Strategy for 2018 to 2023. This draft Housing Strategy set out how the council plans to increase and improve housing within the borough.

Consultation methodology

The consultation was widely promoted, both externally (of the council), and internally.

External consultation

External consultation on the strategy was conducted between November 2017 and January 2018, most notably via the council's website, via social media, and through [the Council's Digital Influence Panel](#). Respondents could give their views either within a consultation survey, or by formal letter / email.

Internal pre-consultation

Prior to the period of external consultation, the Strategic Housing Team at Cheshire East Council consulted with a number of internal stakeholders, including with Public Health, Spatial Planning, Adult Care and Cared for Children, and Care Leavers.

In addition the draft strategy was considered by the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2017, during which members were provided with an inclusive overview of the strategy, together with the proposed plan for external consultation and democratic approval for the final strategy.

Number of responses

173 responses were received as part of the consultation, and these included:

- 147 survey completions (see sections 1 & 2)
- 26 formal written responses received by email (see sections 3 & 4).

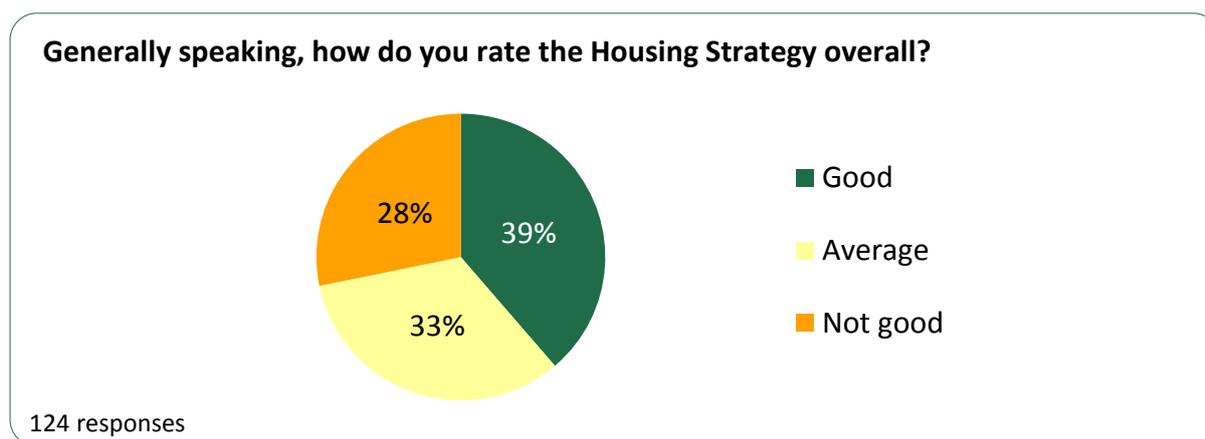
The following report presents the responses to this consultation.

Section 1 – Overall views of the strategy

The results presented in section 1 summarise responses to consultation survey questions.

Rating the strategy overall

Overall ratings of the strategy were fairly evenly split, with 39% of respondents rating it as good overall, 28% rating it as not good, and 33% rating it as average.



Commenting on the strategy

Respondents were asked for overall views of the consultation. 113 different comments were made in response to this question, by 73 respondents.

These comments have been divided into the following 17 categories depending on their topic, with almost half of comments coming under the first 3 categories – “Infrastructure and services” (29 of the 113 comments), “Greenbelt and brownfield sites” (13 of 113) and “Affordable housing” (13 of 113) – see below.

No.	Category – Summary of comments	Count
1	Infrastructure and services – Respondents felt more reference should be made in the strategy to the infrastructure and services that they felt should sit alongside housing development, including: transport provision, roads, parking (inc. on new builds), cycle ways, rail provision, employment, education provision, hospitals, doctors, pharmacies, dentists, local shops, large stores, post offices, leisure facilities etc.	29
2	Greenbelt and brownfield sites – Respondents felt there should be more emphasis on development on brownfield sites within the strategy, and that there should be more reference to the protection of greenbelt / greenfield sites, and “village life”.	13
3	Affordable housing – Respondents also felt there were issues with reference to affordable housing within the document, including that: they felt affordable housing isn’t affordable for those in genuine housing need, they felt there isn’t enough of it, there were too many “4 or 5 bed luxury detached houses” being built, they were unsure of what the actual definition of affordable housing is.	13
4	Some felt that more detail is needed in the strategy, that it is too theoretical or a tick	7

	box exercise, and wouldn't reflect what actually happens. They questioned how deliverable the aspirations are, and queried what the impacts of things such as Brexit, HS2 and the "Northern Powerhouse" would be.	
5	Others were concerned that the council can't "control developers" , that developers determine housing policy and the Local Authority doesn't.	7
6	Others felt that too many assumptions underpin the strategy, ones which are either untested, or are inaccurate forecasts e.g. do people agree with the overall vision for CE? Are the population/housing forecasts right, is air quality data to be trusted?	6
7	A few felt the strategy needs to focus more on wellbeing .	6
8	A number suggested there should be reference to having more social housing , council houses & HMOs, and less private rented housing.	5
9	A few felt the strategy document needs editing , that it is too long, or has grammar and spelling errors.	5
10	Some commented that the strategy is good .	4
11	Two respondents felt new buildings need to be more accessible , and designed for disabled and older residents.	4
12	Some felt the performance indicators are not specific enough .	3
13	Others commented that they felt residents are not listened to , and that the consultation processes is not good.	3
14	Another two felt that there re-use of empty households should feature more.	2
15	One felt that the housing market should dictate house prices .	1
16	One asked how the strategy links with neighbourhood plans .	1
17	Other.	4
	Total comments made	113

Section 2 – Views on the individual priorities

The results presented in section 2 summarise responses to consultation survey questions.

Ratings for the individual priorities of the strategy

Ratings for each of the individual priorities of the strategy were broadly in-line with the overall strategy ratings, with between 35% and 48% of respondents thinking the individual priorities were good, and between 24% and 33% of respondents thinking the individual priorities were not good.

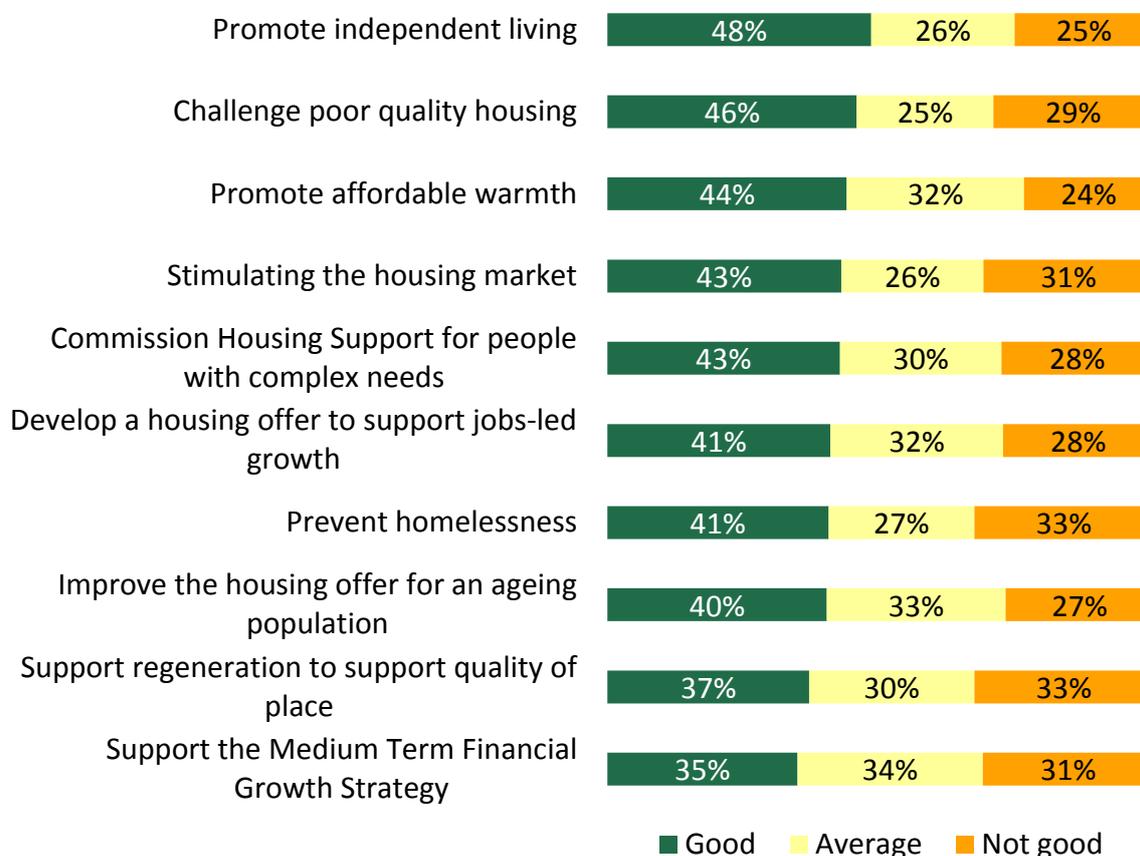
The priorities most likely to be rated good were:

- Promote independent living (48% felt it was good)
- Challenge poor quality housing (46%).

The priorities least likely to be rated good were:

- Support the medium term financial growth strategy (35% felt it was good)
- Support regeneration to support quality of place (37%).

How do you rate each of the following priorities of the Housing Strategy?



Between 114 and 122 responses

Comments made about the individual priorities of the strategy

Respondents were also asked to give comments on each of the priorities of the strategy, if they wished to. All comments made for each priority are given below. These comments are grouped into the same categories as used in section 1.

Comments made for the priority “Promote independent living” (48% good)

Infrastructure and services
Independent living has other social, transport, educational and leisure issues as well as housing to consider.
If bus services are stopped in rural areas this will trap many elderly people in their homes as they will have no transport.
What about ensuring that there are plenty of opportunities to walk instead of using transport.
Affordable housing
There is a chronic lack of choice and affordable housing for younger families, couples or single people of working age with mobility problems.
More detail is needed
Needs more detail on what EXACTLY you will do. Too woolly.
Depends on the deal of private public partnership, the past has been the taxpayer losing, we are still and will pay for decades the financial mismanagement of past policy.
Strategy document needs editing
This is on page 45 and your page numbers are wrong after this.
Accessibility
With an aging population and younger adults living with complex needs, the need to focus on housing that is modifiable to meet individual need and promote independent living is essential. This type of housing need is as essential in rural as in urban areas, especially in south, rural Cheshire where older people may be living in aging homes. There is often a mismatch where individuals are experiencing hardship living in homes that suggest they are 'asset rich' but 'cash poor'.
Wheelchair access is often not being considered in new developments or for alterations to existing buildings. It would save the council and the NHS significant funds if ALL new developments were required to make a large proportion of their properties wheelchair accessible to at least the ground floor with a percentage built to be single storey and accessible. Considering the percentage of the population in Cheshire East with a long term health condition or impairment that affects their mobility there is not a corresponding amount of focus on an appropriate housing supply in this strategy.
Other
(This) should also be a priority, nationally as well as locally.
Yes for older people.
Needs to be very limited.
Repeated comments
Severe limit due to costs and reluctance to provide, very limited plans and no imagination.
No Mention of infrastructure.
Not based on CEC's actions to date.
I don't understand why my council tax money is being spent on this.

Comments made for the priority “Challenge poor quality housing” (46% good)

More social housing
Private landlords must be pushed to be more proactive.
Respond promptly and with force to complaints about landlords.
Most social housing is kept in good repair. Some private landlords may not be quite as efficient as social housing groups.
Make landlords do repairs and fine and send to jail.
Over crowding of private rented terraced housing of 11 adults to one 3 bed terrace. Fly tipping in alleyways and no recycling by Polish. A fact I live by it and have reported. Housing checks not performed.
A register of landlords is necessary with effective enforcement action (particularly for HMOs). Planning control should be more robust in opposing inappropriate HMOs.
More detail is needed
(This is) window dressing again, tackle the people who are the main cause of this exploitation.
Focus more on wellbeing
Poor quality rental properties attract further social and localised problems if landlords are not adequately engaged. Any opportunity (for example the proposed changes to legislation in 2018) must be prioritised to protect the health and well-being of tenants - often the most vulnerable of Cheshire East residents.
What about green spaces among the housing to promote health and well being.
Other
People in this situation may not be aware of their circumstances as seen by the authorities or indeed be aware of help available. Properties identified as being in this situation might be targeted with a letter informing of help available for the first instance.
Make tenants more responsible.
New housing is poor quality.
Looks unwieldy.
Too many new houses seem to be of poor quality, lacking in accommodation and being sold as leasehold with all the problems that brings.
This needs more work; how can tenants improve their housing without the risk of eviction by private landlords?
Repeated comments
Severe limit due to costs and reluctance to provide, very limited plans and no imagination.
No Mention of infrastructure.
Not based on CEC's actions to date.
I don't understand why my council tax money is being spent on this.

Comments made for the priority “Promote affordable warmth” (44% good)

“Affordable warmth” specific comments
This is an intractable problem in some areas especially where the housing stock is old. Introducing insulation, double-glazing and improved heating systems can be financially prohibitive (even with grants), and are a common feature of some of our more elderly residents in rural communities. These issues are exacerbated by the higher fuel costs associated with rural areas (See Rural Services Network: December 20th 2017).
National policy needed between Government and energy suppliers.
Increase renewables e.g. wind turbines.

Why no targets for insulation?
Perhaps address the 200% mark-up in fuel prices.
Poor people cannot afford warmth and food nothing you have done enables the affordability of warmth.
It's a pity the council doesn't practice what it preaches.
That's a laugh, I have an inoperable cancer and I can't get help with heating costs. Don't believe it.
Strategy document needs editing
Stop wasting time on things like item 4 which are national issues.
Repeated comments
Severe limit due to costs and reluctance to provide, very limited plans and no imagination.
No Mention of infrastructure.
Not based on CEC's actions to date.
I don't understand why my council tax money is being spent on this.

Comments made for the priority "Stimulating the housing market" (43% good)

Infrastructure and services
Need to be mindful that the roads need to be updated in order to cope with extra traffic the new houses being built will create.
A mix of amenities/transport links (is) required.
(There is) no practical plan for infrastructure.
The market isn't just about building houses. Sort out the infrastructure. People buy into a town not just a house.
Greenbelt and brownfield sites
This is important for job-led growth and regeneration. However great care must be taken that the rural 'quality of place' (the iconic landscape's that attract people to Cheshire East), is not lost in the race to build quickly.
Where are all these houses going? Our beautiful countryside is fast disappearing.
No mention of strategy regarding the Green Belt.
You do not and will not promote brownfield first.
Too many houses on green field sites, more flats with green spaces nearby and must have good bus routes.
Affordable housing
Smaller starter homes needed in all areas – so people can stay in their local community. Children in their schools etc – not moved for social housing or renting/buying first house.
No garden villages in the middle and south of the borough the housing is needed in the north.
We need more AFFORDABLE housing.
This can only be done by true affordable homes and none of this favoured big business who are not in it for the good of the peoples, but profit, profit at any cost.
The only housing market apparently stimulated is 4 – 5 bedroom detached houses!
Most developers only want 4/5 bedroom detached houses.
Not enough affordable housing, affordable housing is poor quality and too small.
Too many houses being squashed together that aren't affordable – and some aren't even wanted, like the small cluster near Heath Farm.
The definition of affordable is too broad. If it means mortgage payments are no more than 80% of the rental value then it is not affordable compared the high prices in Cheshire East. Stimulate the housing market by building the right type of houses, e.g. more starter homes for young people and

bungalows for older folk rather than 4 and 5 bedroom houses.
Developers don't want to build 1 – 3 bed properties when they can build 4 – 6 bed, you can enforce a 30% affordable but I think there is a case for an emergency 90% affordable until we have the housing mix right.
More detail is needed
How is this to be done specifically?
Too many assumptions
Is "growth" the goal we should be working towards? Do we want a Cheshire which sees remorseless urbanisation to the detriment of landscape?
The housing market should dictate prices
(It is) not the responsibility of a local authority to stimulate housing market.
There is no need to stimulate the housing market in Cheshire.
Cheshire East does not need a stimulation of the housing market! It is one of the most expensive areas in the country to live and has rapidly rising house prices! What 'stimulation' is needed?!?!?
Other
Cheshire East Council should build homes, possibly through a subsidiary company or possibly by holding the freehold.
Catering for those who can already afford?
Repeated comments
Severe limit due to costs and reluctance to provide, very limited plans and no imagination.
No Mention of infrastructure.
Not based on CEC's actions to date.
I don't understand why my council tax money is being spent on this.

Comments made for the priority “Commission Housing Support for people with complex needs” (43% good)

More detail is needed
What will be the criteria to qualify for this?
The strategy is good
Good to see this featured.
Other
This is becoming increasingly important as medical advances ensure adults with complex needs can live near-normal life-expectancies. Innovative solutions from multi-disciplinary partnerships are necessary to best develop personalised housing support.
Need to be spread around where the need is – so people can stay in their community.
(The) council does the opposite.
This council have been closing down these options.
Repeated comments
Severe limit due to costs and reluctance to provide, very limited plans and no imagination.
No Mention of infrastructure.
Not based on CEC's actions to date.
I don't understand why my council tax money is being spent on this.

Comments made for the priority “Develop a housing offer to support jobs-led growth” (41% good)

Infrastructure and services
Jobs-led should be a pre-requisite of housing policy.
Smaller housing needed near jobs – because public transport is now so poor.
How will the infrastructure support additional areas of housing that are not within regeneration areas.
While job seeking information for teenagers and young adults is focussed on, the predicament of older employees with a different set of skills which may be obsolete should receive relative counselling for their situation enabling them to remain within the housing market scope longer.
Greenbelt and brownfield sites
More land should be available around Crewe for development. Get rid of the green gap policy to the south of Crewe.
Release more land in the North.
Give to small local business and proper skills for unemployed and young.
Affordable housing
Both my children have moved outside the borough for houses, not for price reasons but quality of houses on offer.
Either wages need to grow or low cost flats made available as many people in Crewe now multi-occupy and families are crammed into small properties with low wages.
Not enough detail
This is just words; houses are approved where for example there are already offices that are surplus to requirements.
Nice idea, fancy words but just window dressing.
This is vague and meaningless. How are you engaging the business sector to understand jobs growth? How are you connecting that to transport links?
Too short term.
Where will this be done?
Can’t control developers
This option plays into the hands of the developers.
Too many assumptions
Do residents really want this level of growth? No consultation held.
Repeated comments
No Mention of infrastructure.
Not based on CEC's actions to date.

Comments made for the priority “Prevent homelessness” (41% good)

“Prevent homelessness” specific comments
(The) current policy (is) not working.
(This) needs to be a continued high priority.
In my professional career I became aware of the complexity of issues behind homelessness particular in relation to substance abuse and mental health. The appointment of liaison officers between housing and health to address these issues is very welcome and commendable.
Preventing homelessness is essential.
I don't want to see the level of people living on the streets as you see in Manchester. However, the

market forces should be used to enable mobility of the workforce. So, if houses are available and affordable in other parts of the UK, then homeless people should be housed there. It would then help to regenerate those areas which are struggling, e.g. N E England.
These suggestions are sound and recent achievements in this area are welcome. However little is mentioned in specific relation to those individuals (albeit a minority) who choose not to engage with homelessness support services. This area requires a more explicit protocol within this strategy.
What about asylum seekers and refugees esp. children?
(There is) visible evidence of homelessness increasing across Cheshire East.
Is homelessness really an issue in Cheshire apart from drug users?
More action (is) needed on homelessness.
Affordable housing
More AFFORDABLE housing would help.
Again affordable housing, how is this to be worked out, as to me it is no good saying unless this is done in pounds, shillings and pence.
More detail needed
How?? Expensive rents do not prevent homelessness.
Homelessness is a much more complicated issue than this – where is the detail around helping those who are homeless for other reasons?
Won't hold my breath, very good if you carry out what you say.
More social housing
There is not enough social and affordable housing.
What happened to all of those council houses.
Bring down rents for low income families.
Re-use empty households
Empty buildings should be used.
Utilise care homes that have closed.
Repeated comments
Severe limit due to costs and reluctance to provide, very limited plans and no imagination.
No Mention of infrastructure.
Not based on CEC's actions to date.

Comments made for the priority “Improve the housing offer for an ageing population” (40% good)

Infrastructure and services
Ageing people need transport and safety.
My wife and I have been looking to move for several years due to the lack of public transport where we live. If there was a decent bus service there would be no need to move but as there is not it will be essential to move to be close to shops, transport, doctors etc. Unfortunately there is nothing that meets our needs. In addition the cost of moving is creating an additional problem to moving.
Affordable housing
Downsizing is only possible if there are suitable houses / apartments to buy. Build / require developers to build them.
(There) needs to be quality small units near facilities. A mix of flats, bungalows and smaller houses.
Yet again affordable housing.
More detail needed
Lame objectives.

This is too vague to be meaningful. Nor does it take into account that not old older folk need caring for – they just need the right kind of property, e.g. bungalows.
Can't control developers
How are you able to influence what developers build!
Accessibility
Ourselves and our peers are reaching the point of leaving family sized homes and looking to downsize. The development of a range of options for an ageing population is welcomed.
The vast majority of the over 70's want 2 bedroom semi-detached bungalows with integral garage and small gardens which would take up less ground space than a 3 bedroom house wit a garage, or the option of a 2 bedroom ground flat and not have to rely on stairs and lifts allowing them to lead a far better independent life and now have to go into care homes.
More bungalows needed – everywhere so people can stay in their local community.
I would also like to see developers being required to pay for improved accessibility to the local environment including lowered kerbs and gates that are accessible to the larger and longer powered and manual wheelchair and hand cycles.
Not enough housing for ageing population.
We need bungalows building not just flats for the older generation.
(They need) ground floor flats & bungalows.
Could be helped by having more bungalows and stop allowing existing bungalows to be converted into houses.
No bungalows at all in Sandbach. No houses at all suitable for the elderly or infirm.
Other
This should be a greater priority, given the ageing population.
Some of the residents in extra care housing are from outside Cheshire East. Need to ensure that a high percentage of older people are residents of Cheshire East. Crewe especially has a high number of older residents due to very few residents moving away to work as Rolls Royce and Bentley previously meant a job for life.
Only in exceptional cases.
Repeated comments
Severe limit due to costs and reluctance to provide, very limited plans and no imagination.
No Mention of infrastructure.

Comments made for the priority “Support regeneration to support quality of place” (37% good)

Infrastructure and services
Where is the commitment to increase and support the infrastructure that these badly needed accommodations require to ensure a quality of life commensurate with your aims?
No real investment in infrastructure or community.
Quality of place is not being supported if you are not protecting green spaces, environmental factors and resolving infrastructure challenges such as increased volume of traffic.
More details needed with sustainable transport links from home to school and work.
Greenbelt and brownfield sites
Again, the race for development and economic growth must NOT be at the expense of the surrounding rural landscapes and iconic Cheshire villages - these must remain a vital 'green lung' and leisure resource for the residents of Crewe and a sanctuary for the important nationally designated Nature Improvement Area that identifies the HS2a route as it enters Cheshire East to Crewe Station.
The majority of the application I see in the area are to build on Greenfield sites, so I don't see any

attempt at regeneration.
Affordable housing
There is no such thing as affordable houses do not exist, new or old. My daughter and family certainly could not afford even a 153.000 pound house in crew. Affordable I'm laughing.
The affordable housing is a joke due to the high value of housing in Cheshire East so it is not really affordable.
More detail needed
This again looks good on paper, in reality not to me believable.
How?
More social housing
Private rented sector in Crewe alone is immense 6000+ properties in one organisation.
Re-use empty households
Excellent to see the proposal to consider the readability of converting existing council buildings to residential use.
Still a huge amount of empty dilapidated properties around the area.
Other
This is especially important in the South of the borough where Crewe regeneration must be a priority and "HS2-ready".
Housing needs to be part of the regeneration of most of the towns of Cheshire.
Empty shops, excessive charity shops in all town centres across Cheshire East.
Yes provided it's of the type needed.
This (could) put up the cost of rented accommodation.
There seem to be too many organisations in this list, I appreciate this may not be your fault but it looks unwieldy.
Repeated comments
No Mention of infrastructure.
Not based on CEC's actions to date.

Comments made for the priority "Support the Medium Term Financial Growth Strategy" (35% good)

More detail needed
Again, woolly objectives on how you will achieve this.
The "how" statements are meaningless.
This policy won't achieve this.
Don't see how.
Too short term.
Focus more on wellbeing
Whilst new housing is a boost for the council, the quality of life for existing residents diminishes with each new house.
The performance indicators are not specific enough
This needs significantly better customer measures to have any value than simply words.
Other
For houses but not for area prosperity.
How much of taxpayers money will be wasted on the bidding process?
Repeated comments

No Mention of infrastructure.

Not based on CEC's actions to date.

Section 3 – Formal responses from organisations

The following formal responses were received as part of the consultation on behalf of organisations. These responses are presented in alphabetical order.

Affordable Homes & Hearle Homes	17
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Affordable Homes & Hearle Homes

CHESHIRE EAST HOUSING STRATEGY 2018-2023 CONSULTATION

RESPONSE BY



A NEW BLUEPRINT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Afordable Homes & Hearle Homes currently have a planning application lodged with Cheshire West & Chester [Ref: 17/01666/FUL], which is due for determination in February 2018. The proposal is for 11 affordable homes (75%) and 4 open market homes (25%), in a Local Service Centre, Rural Exception Site location.

The proposal set before Cheshire West & Chester Council seeks to bring forward a new model of affordable housing which is consistent with both national planning objectives, as well as the Council's own Local Plan and Rural Housing Strategy

The proposal offers a new model of affordable housing, recognised in the Government's White Paper - Fixing The Broken Housing Market - and in Cheshire East's updated housing strategy.

The model offered by Afordable Homes is:

- 100% private home ownership
- Approximately 30% below market value
- Discounted in perpetuity
- Available for local people with a local connection to the village
- Prices are affordable for people on a median salary within the Parish

The proposal has already attracted a lot of local support within the village. As a result of a successful public consultation exercise, we have Expressions of Interest for all of the affordable homes, as well as a waiting list of potential buyers.

The majority of the Expressions of Interest are local young people, between 25-35 yrs old, who have grown up in the village, who have family connections, or who work in the local area. Most of them would not qualify for a Council home and local house prices are far above their ability to afford to buy a home on the open market.

The model we are delivering will enable young singles and couples who work locally to own their own home and continue contributing to their local community, as well as putting down roots in the village and starting families (which helps to keep the local primary school and local serves viable). The model also suits older people downsizing.

HOW THIS NEW MODEL WILL BENEFIT CHESHIRE EAST'S HOUSING STRATEGY

- Offers a new and innovative model of affordable housing
- Offers 100% home ownership
- Discounted below market value, in perpetuity
- Will contribute to the Council's affordable housing target of 355 affordable homes per year
- Provides smaller family accommodation suitable for 18-35 year olds - supports job growth by retaining local people, through the provision of local affordable home ownership
- Affordable for those earning an average working salary

CHANGES TO HOUSING POLICY

As part of the process of progressing the planning application in Cheshire West & Chester, there have been some indications that planning and housing policy may have to be adapted to cater for this new type of affordable housing, particularly in Rural Exception Sites.

One of the key issues is the way in which social housing criteria are applied, and the assessment of 'current need' versus future needs [this issue has been the subject of a recent Government consultation exercise].

In order to ensure that rural areas maintain a balanced and sustainable population, it is vital that the eligibility of prospective buyers is not based solely on absolute current need. Such a narrow requirement potentially precludes a couple who do not currently have children, from buying a house which is larger than their 'current' need, because it ignores their plans to have children in the immediate future.

Council housing as provided by Registered Providers, is based on an allocation system, which assesses a tenant's housing needs, and gives priority to those who have a greater need, say for example homelessness, disability or a large family.

Private discounted market affordable housing needs to have a less restrictive approach in order to ensure that affordable housing is available for those who have future needs as well as current needs. Affordable Homes is keen to work with Cheshire East to discuss how planning and housing policy can accommodate this new model of affordable housing.

GARDEN VILLAGES

In 2014, Affordable Homes submitted a proposal to the Wolfson Prize: How would you deliver a new Garden City which is visionary, economically viable and popular?

This project interested Affordable Homes due to the principles of Garden City/Village development which seek to promote a fairer, more equitable and community-led ethos.

The document submitted by Affordable Homes proved to be very much in line with the 5 shortlisted entries, and the subsequent winning entry. Affordable Homes has had the privilege of working with David Rudlin of Urbed, the competition winner, and Barton Willmore Partnership, one of the top 5 shortlisted companies.

The Garden Village proposed by Cheshire East is something which is of great interest to Affordable Homes. This proposal has the opportunity to encourage small and medium sized house builders and those who share the same values and vision of Garden Village development.

The model being developed by Affordable Homes would be a perfect fit for the new Garden Village in Cheshire East.

Andrew & Jean Ford

 **AFORDABLE HOMES**

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January 2018

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Alsager Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, and Weston and Basford Parish Council

The Alsager Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would like to make the following comments on the Consultation document - Cheshire East Housing Strategy 2018-2023.

1. CE Housing Vision is that all residents in CE are able to access affordable, appropriate and decent accommodation.

Comment: We support this vision

2, Introduction

The overriding aim of the strategy is to improve the quality, choice and supply of housing for current and future residents. The current population of the Borough is 376,700 (2016 mid-year estimate) and this is estimated to grow to 427,100 by 2030. (OPS forecast for the 2015 CE Housing Development Study)

This growth is being shaped by the local Plan and housing is a key priority. CE intend to increase housing supply, accelerate delivery and explore modern methods of construction. Where the market is not delivering the type of housing across the Borough the Council agree there is a case for intervention as long as the risks are measured and any intervention does not distort or restrict the market.

Comment: We would hope that the Council's priorities are in the order of quality, choice and supply. There is uncertainty about the relevance of the 2030 population estimates when this strategy runs to 2023 albeit the Local Plan runs to 2030? Surely the Housing Strategy should look forward to 2030 and how and where the additional population referred to can be housed?

3. Challenges and Opportunities

- Increasing the number of quality, mixed tenure smaller type family homes
- Maintaining a housing delivery role in the economic regeneration of our town centres, villages and neighbourhoods
- Working with partners to provide accommodation for 18-35 year olds
- Improve the housing offer for an aging population including those with special needs and single storey accommodation as a choice
- Support people who want to downsize

· Intervention where the market is unable to meet housing needs including stimulation of growth in the private rented sector

There is also a need to address the challenges in the existing stock.

CE has the opportunity to utilise their land assets to meet housing need and provide revenue for the Council.

Comment: All very laudable but none of the existing policy framework including the Local Plan includes policies to deliver any of the above.

The strategy contains some interesting facts on page 13 regarding supply, affordability, health, local economy, demand, tenure, occupiers and housing costs.

4. Growth and Quality of Place

CE is the gateway to the 'northern powerhouse' and is enjoying the benefits of targeted regeneration programmes including HS2 however there are funding challenges which means that the Council's strategic objectives have to be achieved by best use of available resources and promoting fresh, innovative and new ideas. (cynically aren't these all the same thing?)

To meet the demand CE acknowledge that their strategic housing role must ensure that the Right Homes are in the Right Place with all new housing having good access to employment, healthcare, schools, retail and other facilities, so enabling low car use, sustainable travel and greater quality of life.

Comment:

This is at a time when the Council are withdrawing bus services from Local Service Centres across the Borough, there are waiting lists for doctors and dentists and a general reduction in the provision of local services and community facilities.

5. Housing need

The number of households is expected to increase by 20% from 159,441 in 2011 to 191,000 by 2030. In addition, the number of jobs is projected to grow with 31,400 jobs being created over the period 2010- 2030. (What is not clear is whether these numbers include the impact of HS2 or Brexit and how they relate to the Local Plan Strategy.)

The LP states that CE will have a 65% increase in the population age 65 and above and a 134% increase in the population aged 85 and above over the plan period.

Comment: Yet the LP does very little to address this in its housing policies and the Council are allowing developers to argue away low cost affordable smaller houses on almost

every new development across the Borough. See both Seddon and Gladman's responses to the Congleton Reg14 NP Consultation.

6. Affordability

Comment: This section deals with house prices across the Borough and comparisons with national averages. Unsurprisingly Crewe has the lowest median house price £125,000 followed by Macclesfield £166,000, Congleton £173,000 and Alsager £175,000. Nantwich and Sandbach are close to the average £214,000, whilst Wilmslow £342,000 and Knutsford £330,000 are the highest. For smaller settlements Haslington and Shavington are £318,500 to over £400,00 in Bunbury, Prestbury and Wrenbury.

7. Land Supply

CE acknowledge that the LP Strategy highlights the need to work further to ensure the continued supply of available land to meet both current and future housing needs.

Comment: The 5-year land supply is already under threat and is being questioned at appeal. It is not clear following the Budget if or when the Government propose to introduce legislation to make developers build on land where they have consent.

8. Private Rented Sector

CE fully support a well-managed and flexible PRS and believe that the major regeneration of the town centres in Crewe and Macclesfield offer 'unique' possibilities for higher-end PRS flats and family size accommodation.

Comment: It is not clear from the existing policies in the Local Plan how such development will occur and if flats are to be built anywhere it is likely to be in the north of the Borough where there is easy access to the Manchester conurbation.

9. Market Housing

CE claim that the LP sets out the requirements for new residential developments to provide a mix of housing tenures, types and sizes to help support the creation of mixed, balanced and inclusive communities meeting the needs of an ageing population.

Comment: If this is the case why are communities across the Borough objecting to new developments which are usually made up of 4 and 5 bedroomed houses with a token amount of 'affordable' housing tucked into a corner of the site and why are housebuilders objecting to housing policies in NP's which require a greater mix, provision for the elderly etc on the grounds of viability? Clearly the LP Housing policies are not working.

10. Affordable Housing

More Affordable Houses are needed to meet increasing demand and in the right location. Housing needs work undertaken for the Local Plan estimates that the objectively assessed need for affordable housing was a minimum of 7,100 dwellings or 355 per annum over the lifetime of the plan. Policy requires affordable housing to be provided as follows;

- In developments of 15 or more or 0.4 ha in the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres at least 30% of all units are to be affordable
- In developments of 11 or more dwellings (or a maximum gross floorspace of more than 1,000sqm) in Local Service Centres and all other locations at least 30% of all units are to be affordable.

The Council do however acknowledge that the affordable housing sector has experienced rapid change because of tighter budgets, development viability and recent changes in Government policy for more investment.

Comment: There is a problem in the provision and delivery of affordable housing which is a national not a local one and unfortunately planning policy is not responsive enough to quickly respond to any shift in Government Policy. Viability arguments put forward by developers are also an issue and the ability of Councils to respond robustly to their arguments resisting any reduction in numbers. If the Government are committed to the increased provision of affordable housing then this is one area of housing policy they need to focus upon.

11. Empty Homes

The Council consider that properties become 'empty homes' when they are left for more than six months without any obvious signs of renovation or rental. When left empty they have the potential to cause blight, prevent investment and regeneration, devalue surrounding properties and attract anti-social behaviour. The Council claim to have reduced empty homes by 53% during the lifetime of the previous housing strategy through intervention, information and advice, enforcement and policy changes around Council Tax. The Councils approach is to work with owners to support and encourage voluntary action to bring the homes back into use. Where this fails then the Council will consider enforcement action.

Comment: Each community should be looking at the number of empty homes in their community and reporting these to CE.

12. CE Priorities

Stimulate the housing market

The Council's aim is to improve the supply of affordable, market and homes to rent. Demand in Cheshire East is being shaped by growth and the need to meet the demand for smaller size homes of mixed tenure to meet the need of older residents looking to downsize and single person households.

Support regeneration to support quality of place

To ensure that housing focuses on quality of design and the right mix of housing is available.

To facilitate and encourage sustainable development of affordable homes.

Improve the housing offer for an ageing population

It is crucial that the Council have a clear vision and support the shaping of a housing market for older people that is responsive to their changing need.

Develop a housing offer to support jobs-led growth.

The LEP and the 'Constellation Partnership' share a common vision which includes HS2 across the Growth Zone including Stoke and North Staffs with a potential of creating 100,000 jobs and over 100,000 new homes.

Support the Medium Term Financial Growth Strategy.

This is a rolling 3-year strategy which is devised to support the CE Corporate Plan 2017-2020 to ensure that the financial resources, both revenue and capital, are available to deliver that plan. Housing has a clear role to play to achieve key community outcomes for residents.

Comment: This will need a change in the Council's housing policies to ensure that smaller, affordable homes are delivered, quality of design and place are secured, and affordable and smaller houses are delivered.

Conclusion

There is concern that all of this sounds very laudable however the existing political and policy framework, including the recently adopted Local Plan is failing to deliver. The housebuilders have shown a complete disregard for the provision of affordable and smaller housing and oppose any policies that seek to deliver these forms of housing.

Perhaps of greater concern is the lack of co-ordination between the various policy statements and initiatives currently being pushed out for 'consultation'. This strategy appears to have no regard to the Local Plan and we do not know how it may relate to the awaited Sites Allocation DPD. In addition, the HS2 Vision document currently out for consultation talks about 7000 new homes and 35,000 new jobs whereas this housing

strategy refers to 100,000 new homes and 100,000 new jobs. A significant difference with major implications for the south of the Borough in particular.

The view is that they should talk to each other, go away and produce a joint coherent strategy as part of the Review of the current Local Plan, not mess around and muddy the waters with a number of independent and contradictory so called strategies.

It is hoped that due consideration is given to the comments of this group and we look forward to seeing positive outcomes for all the residents of Alsager and Cheshire East as this consultation moves to its conclusion.

Chair

Alsager Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Audlem Parish Council



AUDLEM PARISH COUNCIL
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8th January 2018

AUDLEM PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE HOUSING STRATEGY 2018-2023

INTRODUCTION

With 13.4% growth envisaged within CEC, Audlem Parish Councillors agree that *'housing of the right type in the right place to support sustainable growth'* (p15 para 1 and elsewhere) should be prioritised. The proposed *'jobs led'* approach to housing provision has merit. If people live in good quality, affordable housing located near their work, schools and other essential services then commuting distances (and emissions) are reduced. Quality of life improves when people have time to participate more in their communities which is vital if community groups and services are to continue to thrive.

Growth has to be linked to *'quality of place'*. Unfortunately recent local experience has shown that – contrary to *'putting residents at the heart of everything we do'* - community views on design for larger projects are ignored. Audlem Councillors have been dismayed that affordable housing proposed in recent local planning applications is of a much lower size (in some cases below minimum recommended standards) and quality than the regular market housing. This should not be allowed to be the case; better quality housing should result in lower ongoing costs for less well-off members of the community.

DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY PRIORITIES:

Cllr Arnold's vision of *'Putting residents at the heart of everything we do'* is to be welcomed, but is not easy to achieve when many decisions are made because of government or pre-determined local policy.

Unfortunately in many of the actions outlined in tables HS01 to HS05 in the column *'Who will help us achieve this'* residents feature on the periphery. This implies that a long list of agencies' input will be given more serious consideration than that of the ultimate end user.

Additionally, in *'How the Strategy Links'* there is no mention of the LSC's, smaller towns and villages which also have a very small part in the CELP. The detailed tables fail to mention

Town and Parish Councils at all. Having encouraged communities to draw up Neighbourhood Plans it seems that the lower tiers of government are once again to be sidelined whilst other agencies determine what will happen in their locality.

Councillors comment on each of the priorities outlined below:

Stimulate the housing market (P27): Average

Just how would this be achieved when developers effectively control supply? There is no mention of encouraging developers to release land for building.

In the preamble reference is made to '*innovative forms of affordable housing*'. If this means consideration of prefabricated or non-traditional forms of building this would be supported, with the proviso that the buildings were of good quality and had long term sustainability.

The number of empty homes is referred to on page 23. Many potential landlords could be worried that they will not be able to remove unsuitable tenants or have huge expenditure in terms of repairs at the end of a tenancy. It is possible some empty home owners would be happy to work in cooperation with the Local Authority, as they do elsewhere, to ensure that private housing is utilised to provide homes for those less well off. This requires guarantees are put in place by the Council that the rent will be paid and the property returned to its original condition at the end of the tenure. Where the owners of empty homes are resistant to working in cooperation with the Local Authority then financial penalties should be considered.

Support regeneration to support quality of place (P28): Average

In some areas of the Borough regeneration will be key to ensuring that town centres and villages are brought back to life. As referred to above, quality of design and appropriate development is key to ensuring that communities look more favourably on proposed development. Whilst it is clearly important to work with providers and other agencies, more should be done to engage with local Town and Parish Councils as to how to achieve this. They may offer up different and/or innovative suggestions which could assist in this aim.

Improve the housing offer for an ageing population (P29): Average

The strategy refers to the need to integrate housing, care and health but little pre-planning seems to be done between the various social services, the CCGs and CEC to ensure that infrastructure is ready for new developments. Housing often appears many years before the promised supporting welfare infrastructure.

The outline described is laudable but may be difficult to achieve without full consultation and buy-in from the category under discussion – the older population of the Borough. They

will not welcome things being done 'to them' without full consultation as to what their requirements really are. Carers groups (such as ADCA in Audlem) can help facilitate this debate.

Audlem has a fairly large proportion of residents over the age of 65 and recent planning approvals have not provided any single storey properties to encourage them to downsize. There is a danger that an assumption is made that 'smaller' means 'very small' and often specifically targeted housing (such as McCarthy & Stone) is also very expensive. Many older people would be happy to downsize if they could find a home close to amenities which would take much of their existing furniture and possessions, was on one level and had some sort of outside space to potter in so that their overall quality of life was not significantly diminished.

Develop a housing offer to support jobs-led growth (P30): Average

This strategy is essential to ensure that '*housing of the right type is built in the right place*'. For too long developers have determined where housing is built by going to Appeal, thereby overturning a Local Authority's planning strategy.

It is crucial that affordability issues are addressed as swiftly as possible if economic growth is to be as strong as anticipated. To achieve the desired outcomes a strong line will have to be taken on the type of properties approved and the proposed reduction in requirement for affordable housing will not help meet these aspirations.

Audlem Parish Council would support Cheshire East Council taking more control over affordable housing provision in the Borough especially if this could guarantee that the homes built remained affordable throughout their lifetime. It is clear that the average house price of £214,000 is way beyond the reach of anyone earning the average salary in the Borough. Those on low incomes often have the furthest to travel to work or require a car for their duties which they can ill afford. It is important for them to be able to live nearer to where they work. Freeing up redundant Council land (especially in the more expensive areas of Cheshire East as identified on p17) to achieve more affordable homes for those on lower incomes could help achieve the desired result.

Councillors are concerned that on page 22 the requirement for affordable housing in new developments appears to have been downgraded from 30% for developments with more than 10 houses to 30% for developments with more than 15 houses in Principal Towns and Key Service Centres. For LSCs the proposal is for 11 or more dwellings – another reduction in requirement. If there is an identified need why is this being proposed? Is it because developers use a viability argument to get out of making any affordable housing provision?

Support the Medium Term Financial Growth Strategy (P31): Not at all good

In the current climate of ever-reducing government contributions towards local authority spending, the reliance on government grants to support the proposals in the Strategy is risky as they cannot be guaranteed throughout the lifetime of this Strategy

Health, Wellbeing and quality of life

There is little to argue with in the narrative. Housing is just one issue which needs to be addressed; without a warm, safe home all of the other aspects become irrelevant.

If the plan is to achieve a good quality of life (for all ages in the Borough) it is important that access to 'improved sustainable services and facilities' are put in at the start of development and included as part of the planning process. The information provided by developers is often significantly overstated and exaggerated to enhance their case and after Reserved Matters there is frequently an application to remove stipulated Conditions which improve the local facilities. This must be addressed if infrastructure improvement is to occur.

In the tables HSO6 – HSO10, the intended outcomes are good but how to do it is more complex. What is proposed requires significant coordination of efforts from a number of organisations. The history of such collaboration is not entirely good, with each organisation trying to protect its own 'patch'. How does Cheshire East intend to overcome this?

The ability to stay in one's own home is very important to people who are older and/or have mobility or other issues. They may require external assistance to allow them to do so. Supportive help and advice on how to adapt to changing needs or cope with inherent problems is to be welcomed, but it is difficult to see how Cheshire East can achieve this without the government grants referred to. If funding is cut, how will this aspiration be met?

Exploring options for rehousing before adaptation is necessary but often people are unwilling to move out of their immediate locality and their support circle and this aspiration may be difficult to achieve. A more localised approach may be necessary.

Additional support for care leavers, those with complex needs and the homeless is to be welcomed. As is the focus on housing quality and help to ensure that homes are safe and warm. However, the homes provided need to be close to sources of employment and public transport if their residents are to have any chance of improving their circumstances. Again, how can this be funded as the need is greater than the ability to finance the services?

Promote independent living (P44): Average

All new development should be required to include better placed electrical sockets, slightly wider doors and other design elements which would better allow for changes in mobility as people age.

Commission Housing Support for people with complex needs (P45): Good

The continued effective commissioning of Housing-Related Support projects is essential, together with the other elements of the strategy.

Prevent homelessness (P46): Average

The aims outlined are laudable. Rehousing homeless people is a significant cost to local authorities and needs to be dealt with as soon as possible. However:

This is to be the subject of a separate strategy which covers a different timeframe (2018 to 2021) from the Housing Strategy. This makes linking the two, and ensuring continuity, more complex

Where is the funding to support these planned interventions?

Challenge poor quality housing (P48) and Promote affordable warmth (P49): Average

Audlem Parish Council would support any proposals to ensure that conditions in the private rented sector are to a proper standard to provide safe, well insulated homes. 'Educating' the less pro-active landlords into the importance of ensuring that their houses are damp free would probably only be successful if financial penalties could be imposed.

CONCLUSION

Audlem Parish Council welcomes this document and the information it contains on how Cheshire East Council intends to manage its Housing Strategy. This is very much top line thinking and more information is required on the detail of how these aspirations can be put into practice.

The Strategy relies on good cross-departmental and cross-discipline communication if it is to make progress on any of these issues. Does Cheshire East Council have sufficient resources to ensure that it can be successfully implemented?

Councillors are also disappointed at the apparent failure to work with Town and Parish Councils in achieving these aims. There are concerns at the lack of emphasis in the document on ensuring residents' views are fully understood and also at how these worthwhile aims can be achieved when CEC's budgets are under severe pressure and government funding cannot be guaranteed.

Labour Group comments on draft Cheshire East Housing Strategy, 2018-23

The draft strategy presents a reasonable assessment of the 'as is' current housing market and actual and potential challenges facing Cheshire East. It also has a coherent link to other key local strategies such as the Local Plan and the place making agenda.

However, perhaps its weakest area is on affordability. Indeed, whilst it is referred to in passing in various places, this key element of the housing market doesn't merit a specific reference in draft strategy's key priorities! Why?

The draft delivery plan is also weak, and in places contradictory and muddled.

More detail is required to explain how Cheshire East land can be used to meet housing need and bring in revenue. It should be acknowledged that those households that cannot compete in the open market will rarely, if ever, be able to generate enough income through rent to even cover the development cost (loan etc) before progressing to contributing a positive financial return. It is suggested that non-housing financial inputs and outputs should also be included in a more sophisticated whole system model.

We would also RECOMMEND THAT the following specific changes are made to the strategy:

1. A far greater role for social landlords in meeting housing need, with partnership arrangements where the Council provides the land for social rented housing in return for nomination rights through Cheshire Homechoice.
2. A specific target that a minimum of 75% of the 'affordable homes' delivered to be for social rent over the life of the strategy, with bungalows and larger houses included.
3. Far stronger local regulatory and registration frameworks to oversee for-profit landlords in receipt of public money through Housing Benefit etc.
4. The creation of a needs-based budget to help deliver meaningful outcomes under the provisions of the Homelessness Prevention Act.
5. Long term partnership and financial arrangements with voluntary sector partners working with vulnerable and homeless households to provide for sustainable long-term planning and delivery of services.
6. The designation of Community Regeneration Areas where the current or projected concentration of poor housing, homelessness and HMO's is now affecting local housing market viability and sustainability – tools to include stronger local charged-for private rented registration and annual unannounced inspection regimes, removal of permitted development rights for creation of bedsits and/or HMOS.
7. Stronger tools to encourage sustainable communities where people can walk and cycle to work and school as well as climate change related commitments on well-insulated, low-energy homes free from congestion generated air pollution.
8. A commitment to developing, with statutory and voluntary partners, a specific housing plan for meeting the demands and needs of the growing number of households in their 60s in Cheshire East.

9. The development of an annual target to further reduce the number of empty homes in Cheshire East during the life of the strategy. Whilst they have fallen by 53% since 2011, mainly due to the abolition of the council tax empty property discount and the introduction of a premium council tax rate of 150% of the normal rate for properties that have been empty for more than 2 years - both proposals that Labour councillors put forward and helped to implement, there have been NO formal management orders made over the past four years. A schedule needs to be drawn-up of the most persistent long term empty properties, with action plans for each property to bring it back into occupation.
10. The requirement for the publication of all viability assessment reports produced by a planning applicant in justification for reducing the 30% Local Plan minimum affordable housing.

NM 01/18 FINAL

Crewe Town Council

Crewe Town Council has considered the draft Housing Strategy and resolved to respond as follows:

1. The preparation of a housing strategy for Cheshire East is welcomed.
2. With one exception the general priorities are supported. The exception is the “Growth and Quality of Place” priority to support the MTFs. Whilst the strategy and action plan must take account of the resources available, “supporting the MTFs” could be construed to mean that it is a priority of the Housing Strategy to raise income or capital for the implementation of the MTFs. Clearer wording is required to indicate that the strategy will be implemented by making best use of the resources available.
3. Whilst the generality of the priorities is supported, the detail underpinning them needs greater clarification. In particular:
 - a. There is insufficient mention and weight given to the need to prioritise the development of Brownfield sites to support the regeneration of Crewe and to relieve pressure on greenfield sites. There is reference to “Brownfield First” in the action plan. This needs clarification – a Google search of the Council’s website does not reveal any such policy, only references such as “Cheshire East has clearly adopted a brownfield first development policy” (Cabinet 16 September 2014). Is there such a policy? Does it need updating in the light of changes to government policy? And crucially, how will it be implemented in Crewe so as to bring sites in and around the town centre into housing use as part of the regeneration strategy.
 - b. The management of HMOs is underplayed. Whilst well-managed HMOs can play an important part in a balanced housing market, their proliferation in certain neighbourhoods in Crewe has a detrimental impact on the community as a whole. Greater consideration of the problems associated with both licensed and small unlicensed HMOs is required in the strategy. In particular, there should be a commitment to the investigation of the use of Article 4 directions.
 - c. It is essential that compulsory private landlord registration (like the one operating in Liverpool) is introduced to cover the whole of the private sector (both HMOs and single dwellings). Such a system would be rapidly self-financing through income from modest registration fees, and would ensure that landlords act responsibly and actively manage their properties. It is clear that the present voluntary registrations scheme is ineffective, as only responsible landlords are likely to register.

4. The strategy provides insufficient analysis of the social rented sector. Registered providers have suffered reduced income as a result of central government decisions which has led to consolidation in the sector and a cutting back of “soft” services to their customers aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour and benefit dependency. Nevertheless, social housing can address housing needs not being met by the private sector in terms of affordability, stability, and specialist provision. The strategy fails to develop the potential of decisions taken by other authorities referred to on page 10 “to develop in their own right”. Cheshire East Council should make the most of the opportunities afforded by changes in central government policy to develop council owned social housing. Such an initiative could have financial benefits to the Council, by making the most of low interest rates to borrow, or by generating higher rates of return than is available by putting cash reserves on deposit.

5. The Action Plan should give greater consideration to local areas within Cheshire East, and their distinct problems and opportunities. In the case of Crewe, the text makes mention of fuel poverty, low incomes, the need for new private rented development, and concentrations of HMOs in the town, but there are no specific actions to address these matters in the action plans, and no commitment to developing local area plans. This is a serious omission given the extreme contrasts in housing need and provision across the Borough.

Disley Parish Council

Disley Parish Council welcomes the draft strategy, in particular the priority for improving the housing offer for an ageing population. Disley and Newtown has an ageing population, which is above the Cheshire East and national average. The need for people to down-size their housing was the main factor in responses received to a consultation as part of the Disley and Newtown Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan is now in the final stages of consultation under Section 16. The Housing Policies for the Neighbourhood Plan were informed by a separate local Housing Needs Survey undertaken in 2017.

A considerable number of Town and Parish Councils across Cheshire East have also developed Neighbourhood Plans, setting out future housing policies, which have no doubt been similarly informed by local housing needs surveys. Therefore, it is suggested that the Cheshire East Housing Strategy should recognise Neighbourhood Plans in East Cheshire which contain local housing policies developed through considerable community engagement and consultation.

The draft Disley and Newtown Neighbourhood Plan can be found [HERE](#).

The Disley and Newtown Housing Needs Survey can be found [HERE](#).

Kind regards

On behalf of Cllr. David Kidd, Chairman of Disley Parish Council.

Goostrey Parish Council

Please find the comments from Goostrey Parish Council below. An acknowledgement of receipt is requested.

1. Goostrey PC suggests that CEC require Building Regulations M4 (2) Category 2) - equivalent to Lifetime Homes Guide standards - as a Condition in new homes so that they can be more easily adapted for older and disabled people if necessary in the future.
2. Goostrey PC notes that the document as a whole is not written in a way which makes it easy for the public to comment on.

Kind regards.

Holmes Chapel Parish Council



Holmes Chapel Parish Council

Clerk of the Council: Sue Davies

Email: clerk@holmeschapelparishcouncil.gov.uk

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1 Church Walk, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, CW4 7AZ

4th January, 2018

Housing Strategy 2018-2023 - Consultation

Holmes Chapel Parish Council have considered the consultation at its Strategy and Finance meeting on the 4th January 2018, and have the following comments to make:

Affordable Housing

There are references to affordable houses as a general term including social, rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing. The Parish Council considers that there should be a more positive statement included regarding the provision of social housing.

Regarding affordable housing, the policy across CEC is for 30% of housing to be subsidised in one way or another to make it 'affordable'. In many cases the houses in that market are still not affordable especially in the more expensive parts of the Borough. Could there be a more flexible approach such that the developer/land owner contribution is the same but the number of houses classed as affordable varies. Thus, a much greater contribution could be provided in the expensive areas but a smaller number of dwellings – less affordable houses but at least 'affordable'.

Infrastructure

The document makes no mention of the impact of the strategy on local infrastructure. A housing strategy alone is unsustainable unless it is integrated with strategies and plans to provide the infrastructure on which the residents of the additional housing will depend.

Healthcare and schools are mentioned only once in the document, on Page 14: *"To meet this demand, Cheshire East Council, along with our key stakeholders, acknowledge that our Strategic Housing role must link decisions for homes with economic growth throughout the Borough, to make sure that the Right Homes are in the Right Place, seek to ensure that all new housing is located with good access to employment, healthcare, schools, retail and other facilities, so enabling low car use, sustainable travel and greater quality of life."*

However, the strategy does not offer any thoughts as to how to ensure that sufficient facilities are available to meet the demand created by the proposed additional housing.

Traffic considerations are not mentioned at all.

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www.holmeschapelparishcouncil.gov.uk

Commercial Land

To enable 'Jobs Led Growth' it is essential that commercial land is retained within the smaller communities such as Holmes Chapel. In table HS04, there appears to be no reference to ensuring a sensible proportion of commercial land is retained and not used for housing.

Design Aspects

The Strategy has no reference to the Cheshire East Design Guide. The Strategy should consider the design features of housing developments such as the housing density to prevent the building of new developments with too little space between houses and insufficient servicing road.

The parish Council would like a statement whereby developments on the periphery of more rural settlements should be of comparatively low density.

In addition, developments designed with individuality should be encouraged. The large building companies tend to work with limited design styles which leads to little variation in the appearance of new developments across the Borough.

Housing for Elderly Residents

There seems to be an issue with some apartment blocks catering for elderly residents (eg McCarthy and Stone) whereby resale values seem to fall dramatically after a few years. Is this an issue the housing policy should address in order to create a stable market? If prices are falling when most housing is increasing in value is there an issue of design, maintenance contracts or some other factor at work?

Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Planning

The document refers to the Local Plan but makes no mention whatever of Neighbourhood Plans. It thus omits a major aspect of the planning process and takes no account of the democratically expressed wishes of local communities regarding the future development of their towns/villages.

In the column 'who will help to achieve this' there is no mention of Parish Councils. This seems surprising as the PCs are the people along with ward members with appropriate local knowledge which should be of advantage.

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Peaks & Plains Housing Trust (Formal response) I

PEAKS & PLAINS
Housing Trust



Response to Cheshire East Council - Housing Strategy 2018-2023 - Draft for Consultation

We welcome the publication of the draft Housing Strategy 2018-2023 as it provides a positive platform to encourage the delivery of additional housing and to ensure that quality and standards are raised within the existing housing stock. It also acknowledges the strong relationship between housing and health and how these are inter-dependent.

We support the two central themes of 'Growth & Quality of Place', and 'Health, Wellbeing and quality of life' and the key statements that homes should be "of the right type' and 'in the right place'.

The strategy recognises the changing demographic and economic circumstances from the previous, and responding to these issues will continue to be a major component in the successful delivery of the strategy. Cheshire East has plenty of potential if the right measures are put in place.

The strategy recognises links to other key drivers such as jobs-led economic growth which will attract people to Cheshire East. However, we must not lose sight of the need for a strong and attractive night time economy, to ensure that the people who chose to live in Cheshire East have attractive options to spend their leisure income and time within Cheshire East.

Placemaking will be a key component in achieving this, so it is important that this is front and centre in the strategy.

It is pleasing to see that the Council acknowledges that interventions might be needed in some circumstances where the private market is unable or unwilling to bring sites or development opportunities forward. We understand that the council's resources are finite in this respect but we feel that such interventions as CPO powers could have been more widely used in the past, to facilitate some problem sites, so this is a positive step.

We welcome the potential for a wider use of the council's resources such as its land and property assets, and how this could be achieved through collaboration and/or Joint Venture arrangements.

Work still needs to be done to improve some of the blockages that frustrate development and this will not happen without a concerted effort.

Email: trust@peaksplains.org Address: Ropewalks, Newton Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 6QJ

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Looking at smaller household need, and aligned to this the ageing population, from an affordable housing perspective we need to be conscious of the ageing stock that exists within the Borough and to ensure that we address these issues and that we are in a position to give people choices which make downsizing a really attractive alternative.

Although the use of Assistive Technology is mentioned in HS06 as a way of prompting Independent Living, we feel that the potential is still understated as it touches many different types of condition from loneliness to more obvious applications which could allow early discharge from hospital, or prevention of admission to hospital. To that end we would encourage a wider acceptance and awareness of this potential, and far more work needs to be done with partner agencies and providers.

Actions speak louder than words so it is important that where it is appropriate that the council takes the lead, that it does so in a decisive and pro-active way to ensure that a momentum is developed and maintained

Peaks & Plains Housing Trust is already working with many of the agencies identified within the strategy and we remain committed to the central themes and to delivering and improving e a wider housing offer and to increase the tenure mix and opportunities that this presents for a wider demographic than we have done in the past.

With a positive commitment and a willingness to collaborate we will see the energy needed to make the housing strategy a success.

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8th January 2018

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Peaks & Plains Housing Trust (Formal response) II

HOUSING STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Peaks and Plains Housing Trust is pleased to be provided with the opportunity to comment on the draft housing strategy. As a key partner of the council in meeting housing needs in the Borough, we hope that our views prove helpful.

We wholeheartedly support the focus on the two central themes identified in the foreword; namely Growth and quality of place together with Health, wellbeing and quality of life.

We also share the ambition of the key goal of the Housing Strategy; “to guarantee Cheshire East residents have a place to live that supports their health, wellbeing and contributes to the quality of life”. However the strategy is silent on what it considers the starting point on each of these and where it wants to end up. Consequently it will prove very difficult to judge at the end of the strategy period whether it has been a success.

We fully support the intention to “deliver housing through a place-based approach, thus sustaining the “unique character and identity” where it exists in Cheshire East. Unfortunately in too many parts of Cheshire East, this does not exist, as the council’s design guide acknowledges, in its introduction: “We have created places that have watered down the character and variety within our town and villagescapes, undermining the remarkable qualities of our area by creating places with little or no regard for local context and that look like anywhere else in the country rather than being specific to here.” We at Peaks & Plains recognise this and have indeed at times regrettably contributed to it through the development of “anywhere” type housing ourselves. We accept our responsibility in this and are keen to work with a more challenging and ambitious development control team to prevent what your design guide describes as “places (that) do not function well for people, creating neighbourhoods which are banal, inhuman in character and scale, poorly connected and also dominated by traffic and parking. We can and must do better to prevent the continued decline of Cheshire East’s specific local identity.” This represents a bold and welcome statement of intent and one that significantly changes previous and current practice. Unfortunately however it is not at all clear how this strategy will deliver the step change required.

We are disappointed not to see the provision of affordable housing listed on page 8 as one of the council’s priorities. Provision of more affordable housing to assist those who cannot afford to access the market feels like a major omission given the housing market pressures in the Borough. The council’s own evidence base surely justifies this being seen as a priority, not to mention the significant planning policy of 30% affordable provision on sites over 15 homes.

On the other hand, we do welcome within the priorities; the commissioning of housing support for people with complex needs within the council’s priorities. We see this as a significant and increasing challenge in that too many applicants registered on Homechoice

are unable to maintain a tenancy without such support; support which is very difficult to access and sustain.

We welcome the commitment made by the statement: "Cheshire East has the opportunity to utilise their land assets to meet housing needs, which are not fully being met by the market. Disposal of land assets will also provide much needed revenue to the Council"- However for us it rather raises many more questions than it answers. For example:

- Which needs is the council thinking of? Almost by definition those not met by the market are those requiring the greatest subsidy or high levels of (expensive) tenancy support. Consequently either or both diminish any "much needed revenue for the council"
- Does the council intend to develop homes themselves?
- Is the strategy to dispose of land and if so will it be for social purpose rather than highest capital receipt?
- Does the council intend to manage homes developed?
- What is the scale of the problem being targeted and the proportion of the problem is the council seeking to resolve?

We wonder whether it's appropriate on page 18 to describe Housing as being "expensive in Cheshire East" if the average house price of £214,000 is currently 9.8% below the England & Wales average [£238,000]. Given the Borough's numerous housing markets, completely unrelated to the administrative boundary, is it appropriate to cite a Borough average which is somewhat meaningless? The truth is a hugely varied pattern of house prices; some of which compare favourably with national averages and many that do not by a long way.

On Land supply we fully agree that "there are insufficient development opportunities in the right places, to build the homes we need". This feels like the appropriate place to promote the role of S.106 provision. We would like to see a more robust approach to manage / prevent / control Housing Developers use of viability arguments for avoiding their planning obligation. It was enormously disappointing to see the redevelopment of the Kings school sites in Macclesfield fail to have any s.106 affordable homes as opposed to the 30% Planning Requirement and at SMDA, the 30% requirement reduced to 10%

The Private Rented Sector is referred to as having "not been the tenure of choice, mainly due to concerns of security of tenure and property conditions". Having identified the problem there is nothing identified by way of response. Whilst it states that the council is "seeking to explore our role in successfully enabling direct invention into further growth of the sector"- it would be useful to identify what these interventions are likely to include.

We absolutely concur with your view that a neighbourhood with a mix of housing tenures, types and sizes will be more able to meet the changing needs and aspirations of its residents, through changing life stages, household shapes and sizes or changes in income.

That of course includes the provision of affordable housing and we welcome the council's ambitious affordable housing requirements in developments of 15 or more dwellings in the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres of at least 30% of all homes being affordable. We would refer to our earlier comments on s.106 provision. We would like to see a bolder statement in the housing strategy to reinforce the planning policy. At the very least we would like to see a more transparent process, such as that recommended by Brighton & Hove Council where Developers are to submit un-redacted viability assessments to be independently assessed by the District Valuer Services in an attempt to prove that meeting this affordable housing target would render the scheme commercially unfeasible; which are then published.

In the section outlining the council's priority to stimulate the housing market you state that

"In supporting the Government's housing policy approach, we will work to improve the housing offer through a package of measures to stimulating the investment in our housing market to support our continued economic growth" without explaining what the "package of measures" includes. It would be helpful to understand what these amount to and indeed what additional investment will be expected to flow from them.

We found the delivery plan tables difficult to interpret. The Column headed "Who will help us to achieve this? Seems to be an exhaustive list of all the partners who might contribute to the overall priority as opposed to the detailed projects listed in column B.

The tables are also short on specific measurable and targets; especially in terms of how many extra homes might be provided compared to simply leaving it to the market. For example does the delivery of 355 affordable homes depend upon the implementation of the remaining interventions. If not, then it might be helpful to identify how many additional homes might be provided if each intervention was successful.

There is also some detail lacking in the "How Will we do it" column. For example on the Stimulate the Housing Market table, the phrase "funding opportunities" is really very vague and the council's precise role with regards to it is also unclear. Similarly the all-encompassing phrase "planning policy" does not make clear which ones or how they will specifically stimulate the housing market.

We look forward to the publication of the final document and to working together with the council to deliver its housing strategy ambitions.



DRAFT CHESHIRE EAST HOUSING STRATEGY 2018-2023

DRAFT REPRESENTATIONS TO CONSULTATION

TEM PROPERTY GROUP AND THE TATTON ESTATE

Date: January 2018

Pegasus Reference: ST/P17-2988/R001v2

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On behalf of our clients, the TEM Property Group and the Tatton Estate, we have the pleasure of setting out our comments and representations towards Cheshire East's Housing Strategy below.
- 1.2 TEM Property and Tatton Estate are already responsible for over 500 residential tenants within a range of different dwellings. Moving forward, they have significant aspirations to deliver more private rented sector (PRS) dwellings within developments whereby they will have an ongoing interest in the management of the dwellings that they help to deliver, accompanied by affordable housing and some market housing for sale.
- 1.3 Opportunities for this have been formally identified in the Cheshire East Local Plan: Part 1, which deals with strategic sites. Indeed, two of the strategic housing allocations identified within the Part 1 Local Plan belong to Tatton Estate including land at:
 - NW Knutsford (Policy LPS 36), which is allocated for circa 250 larger family homes and other uses;
 - Parkgate, Knutsford (Policy LPS 37) which is allocated for circa 200 larger family dwellings (at circa 25 dwellings per ha) and benefits from a consent with no unit cap
- 1.4 Through the planning application process, it is anticipated that greater dwelling numbers will be achieved on the above two sites with a different type of dwelling mix than what is typically being delivered around the Borough by other developers including the national housebuilders.
- 1.5 We have also put forward a number of smaller, sustainable brown and greenfield sites via the Council's Brownfield Site Register and Call for Sites process which has been carried out in advance of the publication of the Part 2 Local Plan: Site Allocations & Development Management Policies DPD and whilst these have not yet been added to the register they in aggregate provide a strategic stock of potential new housing.
- 1.6 The Tatton Estate's interest largely sits within the north of the Borough where there is evidence of significant demand, affordability issues and a growing aging population. This in turn is affecting businesses who need to recruit but employees find it difficult to find the right type and quality of accommodation, often irrespective of price and tenure.
- 1.7 In light of the above, TEM Property and Tatton Estate are taking a much more active involvement in the provision and delivery of existing and new homes within Cheshire East, both as a market in its own right but also to support the business growth which is crucial to the area. They therefore would welcome a housing strategy from Cheshire East Council that clearly seeks to meet the housing needs of all within the Borough, especially key employers.

2. COMMENTARY ON HOUSING STRATEGY

2.1 Firstly, we welcome the Council's production of a Draft Housing Strategy and the opportunity to provide meaningful comments towards its content. We also welcome the following points that are made at the outset of the draft document, including:

- The Council's 'strong ambition' for jobs-led, economic growth across all areas and the acknowledgement that 'housing is essential to support this continuous growth'; and
- The Council's 'guarantee' to residents to have a place to live which supports their health and well-being and contributes to the quality of life.
- The Council's recognition that good quality, safe, and affordable housing is essential to meet this goal.

Purpose of the Housing Strategy, Scope and Timeframes

2.2 At the outset, we note that the purpose of this document is to ensure that the Council's housing strategy links with the policy decision making within the Council that ultimately supports the health and well-being of its residents¹. With this in mind, we raise the following points relating to timeframes and scope, and the need to start taking into account foreseeable events.

2.3 The draft Housing Strategy seeks to cover a 5-year period between 2018-2023. Whilst we accept the housing market can change rapidly and therefore it is important to have a strategy that is reviewed on a regular basis, we think it would still be prudent if the Council set out how they were going to meet their objectives over the longer term too. Indeed, a number of the points and aspirations raised within the document will require an ongoing long-term approach in order to be successful (e.g. how to tackle homelessness).

2.4 If nothing else, providing a longer-term strategy would also allow closer alignment with the Local Plan (Part 1), which seeks to ensure the delivery of up to 36,000 homes up to 2030. This is a considerable point beyond the Housing Strategy timeframe but considering the Council's Housing Strategy in the first 5 years and then beyond would also allow for consideration of other foreseeable events and horizons.

2.5 For instance, it is noted in the document on page 14 that Cheshire East is enjoying the benefits of targeted major regeneration programmes and masterplans from the investment in rail connections (HS2) and its significance for Crewe and all the stations north that will interchange with it. However, it is worth remembering that the Local Plan (Part 1) does not account for growth derived from the delivery of HS2. Indeed, the Council agreed that they would undertake a review of the Local Plan once HS2 was formally agreed. Phases 1 and 2a have now both been confirmed and 2b is

¹ Page 4 of Draft Housing Strategy

progressing rapidly (likely now joined with Northern Powerhouse Rail / HS3) and together these will also have major economic impact on the area around the M56 corridor which abuts the northern boundary of the Borough with other major catalysts like Manchester Airport and that will clearly influence growth around Knutsford, Wilmslow and Handforth.

- 2.6 In light of this, it would be helpful if the Council's Housing Strategy started to consider the implications of such growth derived from HS2 and what that could mean for Cheshire East's housing market in terms of opportunities and also risks (e.g. increasing impacts on demand and affordability in the north of the Borough).
- 2.7 The rationale for this longer-term overview could extend to looking at different types of housing products and the scope for new models and ways of doing things in what is currently described by central government as a 'broken housing market'.
- 2.8 For instance, the concept of PRS housing has been a relatively hot topic in central locations such as London and Manchester. However, there is a growing evidence base of need within market towns and communities in rural areas where young professionals and families require quality and flexibility, as well as sometimes being priced out of the regular housing market to buy. Instead, they look towards the rental market. However, given the Government's tax changes for individual investors in buy-to-let properties such as mortgage tax relief, stamp duty and council tax increases, the continued growth of this element cannot be relied upon. There are, however, inherent difficulties in delivering genuine PRS schemes of a decent scale due to valuation gaps, a lack of investor funding, willing landowners to sell their land at discounted prices or strong policy support.
- 2.9 The Housing Strategy could start to look at the issues facing PRS delivery in Cheshire East and how the Council could seek to facilitate this either by creating bespoke policies or exceptions tailored to facilitate this type of development, including the implications of CIL, affordable housing policies and other related areas of interest.
- 2.10 It would be useful in parallel to this to look at the current low take-up of offsite fabrication. Despite its ability to deliver homes quickly and cost effectively, there are risks associated with what is a relatively new and untested product offer in the open market. It would therefore be helpful to identify how similar policy support might help this gain momentum.

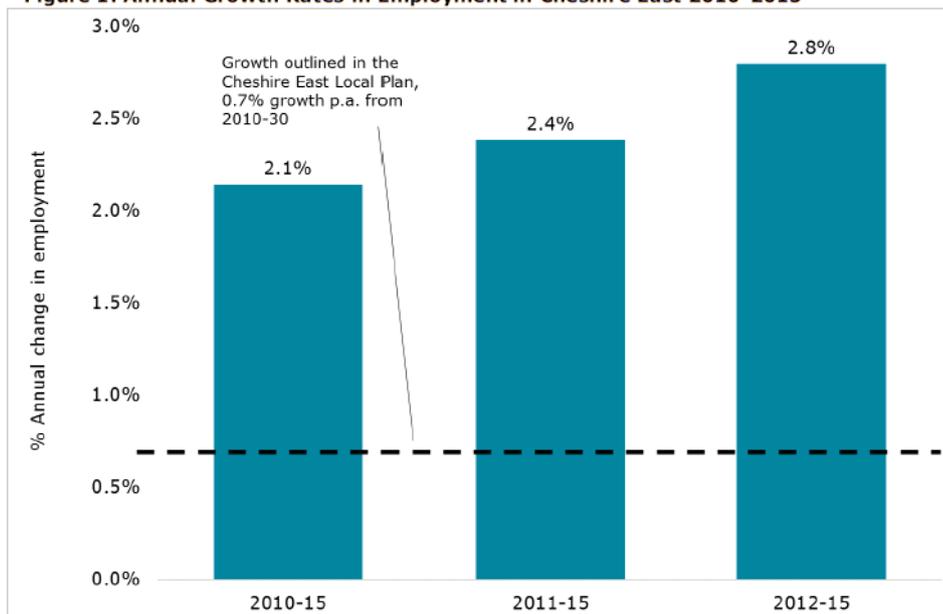
Jobs Growth and Housing Needs

- 2.11 On page 15 of the document, it is noted that the Cheshire East's projected population will increase by 20% from 2011 to 2030 from 159,441 to 191,000. It is also noted that the Local Plan outlines that economic growth is expected to increase the number of jobs by 31,400 between 2010-2030.
- 2.12 Crucially, the housing requirement in the Local Plan was forged from this jobs growth figure, which effectively equated to 0.7% per annum growth over the Local Plan period.

2.13 However, we think the Council's housing strategy needs to be mindful of the following facts:

- Between 2010 and 2015², jobs in Cheshire East increased by around 19,000 – an annual change of 2.1%. This is higher than the annual increases in:
 - the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area (which had an annual change of 1.9% between 2010 and 2015);
 - the national annual increase (1.3%); and
 - it is more than double the annual jobs growth seen in the North West (0.9%) over the same period.
- As already noted, the Local Plan currently allows for employment growth of 0.7% per annum between 2010 and 2030 compared to the 2.1% annual jobs growth in Cheshire East between 2010 and 2015. When focussing on shorter timescales, annual jobs growth in the district has been even higher – at 2.4% from 2011-2015 and 2.8% from 2012-2015 (see Figure 1 below).
- The 19,000 additional jobs in Cheshire East created between 2010-15 means the district has already achieved **60.0%** of its entire employment growth target for the Local Plan period of 2010-30. To achieve the remaining 12,400 jobs by 2030, jobs in the district will only need to grow by 0.4% per annum between 2015 and 2030.

Figure 1: Annual Growth Rates in Employment in Cheshire East 2010-2015



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey

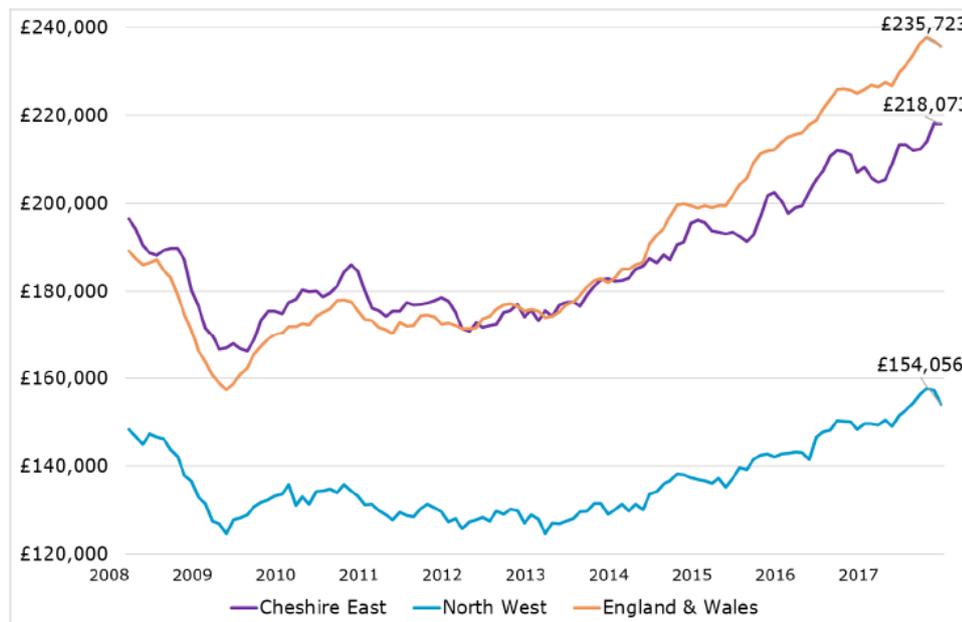
² Jobs data have been sourced from the Business Register & Employment Survey (BRES), published by the Office for National Statistics. BRES data are also available for 2016, however due to a methodology change it is not possible to compare and analyse trends over time going back as far as 2010. The timeframe of 2010-2015 has therefore been used to ensure consistency.

- 2.14 In short, Cheshire East has already achieved a significant proportion of its jobs growth as set out in the Local Plan. More recent evidence also indicates there are few signs of a slow-down, even in the context of Brexit. Whilst there are clearly some uncertainties still facing the national economy in the face of Brexit and other economic considerations, Cheshire East appears to be well placed to overcome these concerns. Indeed, the potential benefits created by major investments, such as HS2, we strongly anticipate that the jobs growth figure for Cheshire East over the Local Plan period is likely to be substantially higher than currently envisaged.
- 2.15 However, Cheshire East has still yet to deliver a substantial amount of the housing deemed necessary in the Local Plan. This essentially means in-commuting patterns will be driven up, as will house prices, which will clearly exacerbate existing affordable housing issues.
- 2.16 The above figures would suggest that the Council's Housing Strategy should be recommending that an early Local Plan review might be prudent.

Affordability

- 2.17 We concur with a number of key messages in this section including:
- housing in Cheshire East is expensive;
 - young people and especially those in vulnerable groups find it difficult to find a suitable home; and
 - many adults are delaying starting a family because of housing concerns.
- 2.18 We would go further however. Recent research commissioned by our clients from Atlas Residential shows that irrespective of price and tenure, there are massive gaps in housing stock. Very few new, good quality homes exist and irrespective of age and quality. There is a particular shortage of smaller properties such as 1 and 2 bedroom homes. This affects not only young people, but professionals over 30; divorcees; and empty nesters looking to downsize.
- 2.19 Whilst we are not able to source the exact figures the Council quote, we also concur with the general position and trend shown on housing prices in the Borough and we particularly note the high median prices within the north of the borough in Wilmslow (£342,000), Knutsford (£330,000) and Poynton (£275,000).
- 2.20 Indeed, average house prices in Cheshire East have increased by 10.1% (around £22,000) over the past decade. Although this is lower than the average growth in house prices nationally (18.6% – £44,000), it is almost 10 times the increase seen in the North West (1.1% – £1,600). Figure 2 shows the average house price trends over the last decade in more detail.

Figure 2: Average House Prices, December 2007 - October 2017



Source: UK House Price Index, 2017

- 2.21 The ratio of house prices to earnings provides a measure of the affordability of housing within an area. In 2016, the median house price to workplace-based earnings ratio in Cheshire East was 7.36, compared to 5.62 in the North West and 7.59 across England and Wales. This indicates that Cheshire East is less affordable than the regional average³. Indeed, it is the 4th least affordable Borough within the entire North-West region and as noted above, prices in Knutsford are some of the highest in the Borough.

Land Supply / Local Plan

- 2.22 On page 20, the draft Housing Strategy notes that land supply is a critical component for the delivery of new affordable homes and it is recognised that there are insufficient opportunities. This acknowledgement is welcomed.
- 2.23 This section goes onto note that the Local Plan Strategy highlights the need to work further to ensure a continued supply of available land to need both current and future housing needs. Indeed, this is critical particularly in locations where demand and development is curtailed by the strict

³ Median ratio of house price to workplace-based earnings – published by Office for National Statistics, March 2017.

restrictions on developing in the Green Belt, which can only be released via the Local Plan route either through site allocations or positively worded policies.

2.24 In this regard, the Part 1 Local Plan only identified strategic sites in and around the principal settlements within Cheshire East. For those villages and smaller communities that fall outside of the Green Belt within the middle part of the Borough, there has also been the ability to promote development outside of the Local Plan process with reasonable prospects of a successful planning decision outcome. The position in the north of the Borough, however, is very different and key service villages and smaller settlements have been far more restricted.

2.25 The Part 2 Local Plan has the remit and ability to address this through the allocation of more housing sites in the north. However, the Council's Housing Strategy should start to make the case for this given the associated difficulties in terms of affordability and lack of supply in this part of the Borough. Indeed, affordability needs provide a compelling and exceptional reason to release more land for development. We would kindly ask that the Council's housing officers consider the following recommendations that could be put to the Council's planning department:

- A recommendation to the Part 2 Local Plan that local housing need assessments for each settlement in the north of the Borough is carried out to see what needs arise. This is critical for communities in greenbelt areas which unless given local plan allocations will be prevented from any growth at all.
- A recommendation to the Part 2 Local Plan that seeks to deliver an additional level of supply in the north of the Borough (over and above needs set out within the Local Plan) to assist in the delivery of market and affordable homes. A common buffer used is 20% which could be considered.
- A recommendation to the part 2 local Plan that supports the inclusion of a policy that allows the delivery of affordable homes on Green Belt sites located on the edge of key service centres or villages where there is an identified need.

2.26 Clearly it would be for the Council's planning officers to determine if such recommendations could be supported through the Part 2 Local Plan process but we do not see why the Council's housing officers and Housing Strategy could not explicitly set out recommendations that would make a genuine and positive difference towards meeting the overall objectives/priorities of the Housing Strategy (as set out on pages 23-26).

Private Rented Sector/Build to Rent

2.27 The Council's recognition of the importance of this sector is very much welcomed including the Council's full support for well managed and flexible Private Rented Sector (PRS) / Build to Rent (BRT) schemes across all areas of the Borough. Indeed, TEM see this as a vital housing offer and component to attract and retain economically active people, ranging from graduates to senior

professionals who currently really struggle to find fit-for-purpose properties to rent in the northern parts of the Borough in particular.

- 2.28 This struggle to find suitable and available properties ranges from one bedroom units and co-living spaces up to larger family homes, both to rent and to buy. There is a shortage of co-living accommodation in particular. By way of example, Alderley Park have recently launched 50 studio units for key workers – scientists rather than postmen in their case - but confirm far more quantity and mix is required. For Barclays’ and their technology centre, local agents confirm that they frequently see groups renting larger family homes and subletting (often illegally) in order to “create” one bedroom and co-living space that is otherwise not available. The HUT Group, one of only two UK “unicorns” (£1bn+ businesses based outside of London) is based in Northwich and attracting and retaining technology workers continues to be a critical issue for their business. Quality purpose built rental accommodation with shared facilities is a concept that is tried and tested, is popular and should therefore be encouraged.
- 2.29 At a Cheshire Science Corridor Event in 2017, Peter Crowther at MSP described housing as the critical issue for Alderley Park’s success moving forward. Housing has never been more critical or strategic. The LEP have now also publicly confirmed a desire to see purpose built ‘PRS’ or ‘Build to Rent’ come forward in Cheshire and Warrington.
- 2.30 In light of this housing backdrop and market, having a secure, long term rental opportunity would assist in a wide range of health and well-being objectives (noting that the draft Housing Strategy also deals with this aspect of housing too). Indeed, the effective management of a larger purpose built rental development can deliver benefits in terms of the management of shared open space, community facilities, community pool car opportunities (thereby encouraging a reduction in private car ownership and more sustainable modes of transport), and the ability to create an engaged community with common lines of communication on how their community is managed and looked after. This can be achieved almost on day one whereas it could take many years for a new typical housing estate to establish a sense of community, which clearly impacts on our overall health and well-being.
- 2.31 The wellbeing accrued from the knowledge of being able to have a secure, long term rental opportunity for young families cannot be underestimated. It allows them to have the confidence that they can house their child in a safe community and in a location where they can provide a consistent position for schooling without the fear that their landlord might sell or occupy personally.
- 2.32 In terms of the need and demand for PRS in Cheshire East and around Knutsford in particular, TEM have appointed Atlas Residential to look at the local market. Atlas Residential manage and develop BTR schemes and whilst their involvement to date has typically been in the south, they see great potential in and around Knutsford for this concept. Indeed, their draft research (which is contained at **Appendix 1**) indicates that the local PRS market in Knutsford will be in excess of 1,050 households by 2018 and over 1,200 by 2020. Their research indicates a strong appetite and demand for PRS/BTR in the future.

- 2.33 It is also important to note that from a planning policy and viability perspective, the intricacies and funding model of how PRS/BTR schemes work needs to be taken into consideration. Indeed, the funding model of PRS/BTR schemes operate in a different manner to the traditional build to sell model and this needs to be fully accounted for in any future policy decisions. This is recognised within the NPPG.
- 2.34 It is clearly evident that the Government are now looking towards PRS as a potential solution towards solving the housing crisis⁴. This is replicated at both the national and local level, where there are many examples of successful arrangements between Councils and Developers for BTR schemes⁵. The concept of PRS is not considered within the NPPF, but the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) does refer to this important component of the housing market. The NPPG acknowledges that different types of residential development, such as those wanting to build their own homes and private rented sector housing, are funded and delivered in different ways. This should be reflected in viability assessments (Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 10-009-20140306).
- 2.35 The NPPG elaborates on PRS/BTR Schemes further, by further emphasising that the economies of such schemes differ from build to scale and should be determined on a case by case basis. To help ensure that these schemes remain viable, local planning authorities should consider the appropriate level of planning obligations, including for affordable housing, and when these payments are required. In February 2017, a consultation paper was published which suggested explicitly referring to build to rent and 'affordable private rent' within a revised version of the NPPF⁶. The government are therefore well-aware of the different approach which is required in terms of the definition of 'affordable private rent', and the increasingly prominent role BTR schemes can play in the housing market.
- 2.36 The NPPG therefore provides clear guidance that PRS/BTR Schemes may require a different approach to planning obligations or an adjustment to policy requirements, because of their differing funding models. We politely raise this point to the Council's attention, and emphasise that any future policy or housing strategy should consider how PRS/BTR Schemes may require different policy and planning obligation requirements to ensure that they remain viable prospects. In doing so, more certainty can be provided that PRS Schemes can make an important contribution to the housing market at large, as the borough, LEP and market all aspire.

4. The following news article provides a useful summary of the Government's policy approach to PRS in recent years: <http://www.iceniprojects.com/government-looks-prs-solve-housing-crisis/>

5. The Local Government Association helpfully outline some of the benefits of BTR and how the planning system and planning policy can help to facilitate growth in this sector: <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/planning-and-affordable-housing-build-rent-lga-consultation>

6. London First provide a helpful summary of the key points of note in relation to the government's recent consultation on BTR and suggested planning policy changes: <http://www.londonfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Planning-and-Affordable-Housing-for-Build-to-Rent-London-First-Response.pdf>

2.37 Indeed, we would ideally be looking for the Council to adopt a statutory affordable PRS housing policy through Part 2 of the Local Plan. In the meantime, there would be scope for the Council to informally adopt an interim policy on the back of the definition in the NPPG and cite how PRS/BRT scheme will contribute to affordable housing provision by virtue of their distinct offer and introduction of a new type of housing product to the Cheshire East market. The Council's Housing Strategy would be the ideal document to introduce and informally address this matter. The Council could then take a decision to include such considerations at the development control/planning application stages of development proposals. This would significantly assist the delivery of more homes within this distinct sector.

Affordable Housing Delivery

2.38 It is recognised and noted that more affordable homes need to be met within Cheshire East and the draft Housing Strategy, which we concur with.

2.39 However, we note that the Housing Strategy goes onto note that there will be a need to continually review the approaches the Council use to increase provision (and presumably the policies that influence their delivery). Indeed, we concur with the Council that the sector has undergone rapid change because of tighter budgets, development viability and recent changes in government policy.

2.40 It would be useful if the Housing Strategy also cited other potential threats to the delivery of affordable homes. For instance, we note that the Council are currently consulting on CIL charging rates for new housing floorspace, and sizable rates are being put forward for the north of the Borough at £168 per sq. m. Whilst we are contesting this figure, unless the Council adopt an exceptions policy as part of the CIL schedule and associated documents (which we note Cheshire East are not proposing), once CIL is adopted, there is no way the payments can be avoided. In locations where CIL is not adopted, there can often be a sensible discussion as to what takes priority (i.e. infrastructure provision or affordable homes or other forms of developer contributions).

2.41 From our extensive experience, in locations where CIL is adopted, the components of development that ends up being lost from proposals where viability becomes an issue is affordable housing and/or PRS. CIL can therefore propose a major risk in terms of the Council achieving the targets set out in the current Local Plan (Part 1). This risk would provide further justification to release more land for development through Part 2 of the Local Plan because it cannot be guaranteed that all current housing allocations identified in the Local Plan will actual meet the 30% requirement.

The Council's Priorities

2.42 The Council's suggested priorities within the Draft Housing Strategy include:

- Stimulate the Housing Market;
- Support regeneration to support quality of place;

- Improve the housing offer for an ageing population;
- Develop a housing offer to support jobs-led growth; and
- Support the Medium Term Financial Growth Strategy.

We address the first and fourth point together and have no comment on the fifth priority.

Stimulating the Housing Market / Develop a housing offer to support jobs-led growth

- 2.43 TEM support and advocate these priorities and welcome the continued recognition that housing development is essential to support continued economic growth. That said, it is notable that Cheshire East has managed to sustain economic growth even during periods of limited housing delivery. Indeed, as we have already highlighted, during 2010-2015 Cheshire East had already achieved 60% of its jobs growth requirement over the Plan Period up to 2030, which was based on delivering 31,400 jobs.
- 2.44 What isn't transparent in the Council's Housing Strategy is that only 2,770 dwellings were completed in Cheshire East between 2010-2015, against a requirement of over 9,000 homes (1,800 per annum) and against the context of an envisaged jobs growth rate of 0.7%.
- 2.45 The DCLG figures below demonstrate that there has been some progress with the figures for 2015/16 getting closer to the annual requirement of 1,800 dwellings. However, there is still some way to go before this figure is reached and there is a significant backlog of homes to deliver and in the meantime.
- 2010/11 = 350 dwellings
 - 2011/12 = 320 dwellings
 - 2012/13 = 600 dwellings
 - 2013/14 = 610 dwellings
 - 2014/15 = 890 dwellings
 - 2015/16 = 1,090 dwellings
- 2.46 The current mismatch between jobs growth and housing supply is placing additional pressures on the local housing market in terms of affordability.
- 2.47 This base line position should be made clear in the Housing Strategy, particularly under this priority, because the evidence demonstrates that more needs to be done to stimulate the housing market in terms of delivery and to ensure jobs growth is appropriately matched with the supply of new homes. Indeed, in moving forward it will be critical to encourage 'sustainable economic and housing growth', ensuring that those taking jobs in Cheshire East can also find a suitable home at the same

time, and indeed house many of the current in-commuters. We believe this priority should be amended to reflect the above position.

- 2.48 If not planned for promptly and if not at the forefront of the Council's Housing Strategy now, the above mismatched position between jobs growth and housing supply is also likely to continue. Indeed, under the 4th Priority, reference to the recently reviewed Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan, the delivery of HS2 and the Constellation Partnership initiative across Cheshire, Stoke and North Staffordshire, which seeks to deliver 100,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes is referenced.
- 2.49 Just to be clear, these economic ambitions did not form part of the Part 1 Local Plan and would result in a jobs growth housing growth figure in excess of that currently planned for. As such, if the Housing Strategy is to be successful it should be pushing for a joined-up approach and recommending that an early review of the Local Plan will be fundamental if future housing needs are going to be met.
- 2.50 The Cheshire Science Corridor mentioned above is through a key policy pillar of the LPS and clearly knowledge workers, more than any other category, need the right quality and mix of homes – within communities not just housing estates – and this needs to be embedded throughout the Housing Strategy.

Support regeneration to support quality of place

- 2.51 We support the Council's objectives in this regard and agree that the quality of place can have a major impact on the economic and social return from communities. We note the Council's Design Guide and only ask that where it is demonstrated that alternative forms of high quality design can be proven, equal weight be given to the benefits of such schemes during decision-making processes.
- 2.52 In terms of other aspects of design, we would suggest that density matters also need to be carefully considered. There should be a recognition that density levels will vary across the Borough, especially when considering PRS/BTR. These schemes will often require higher densities, with 3 to 4 storey elements, in order for these schemes to be economically viable. There should therefore be a recognition of this, and the need for a flexible approach to achieve a variety of densities across the Borough. This pragmatic and flexible approach to housing densities would particularly help to deliver successful PRS schemes, which are growing in importance (as recognised at both the national and local government level).
- 2.53 We also support the delivery of mixed communities and a range of market and affordable housing products.

Improve the housing offer for an ageing population

- 2.54 We agree that there is an aging population and there needs to be a housing strategy in place to cater for this demographic trend.
- 2.55 Given the Council are now progressing a Part 2 Local Plan and specific site allocations and development management policies, we would suggest now is the most opportune time to consider policy options for this. This could involve the allocation of specific sites and/or generic policies albeit we favour the former.
- 2.56 Whilst it is not uncommon to see generic policies in Local Plans that simply require a blanket percentage provision of homes suitable for elderly accommodation across all development sites, this ignores the fact that elderly housing provision might not be suitable in all locations currently identified for development in Part 1 Local Plan. Indeed, there needs to be a balanced approach to this matter, and an understanding that housing developments need to cater for people of all age groups in order to maintain vitality. In this regard, overly prescriptive planning standards on the percentage provision of homes for elderly accommodation could pose an unnecessary threat to achieving this aspiration.
- 2.57 Moreover, national housebuilders are likely to be promoting the vast majority of strategic sites that have been identified in the Local Plan Part 1. National housebuilders do not typically have a range of care homes or single-story house types within their portfolio and therefore there is a general tendency to avoid the delivery of such products on their sites. Clearly, this is not an unreasonable approach for a housebuilder to take if it is not their core business but it does mean that certain authorities end up failing to capture sufficient housing developments suitable for the elderly.
- 2.58 The Council are likely to see far more delivery of housing products suitable to the elderly if specific sites for different types of accommodation are allocated through Part 2 of the Local Plan, which would help to attract the likes of McCarthy and Stone, Pegasus Care, Audley, BUPA, Adlington and other recognised developers in this sector. This could include the allocation of specific sites to meet the specific needs of the elderly, whether this be the provision of C2 Use Class care homes, extra care villages, retirement homes, adaptable homes or simply single level properties. For example, bungalows can be located on sites that might otherwise be more sensitive in landscape impact terms (due to their low height). Extra Care apartments and their associated need to plan for less private car ownership could also deliver homes on sites that might otherwise be more restricted (i.e. smaller, urban sites).
- 2.59 As a final point, if the Council are to consider the introduction of Part M Building Regulations through the Local Plan in relation to adaptable homes, all we would ask is that this will need to be fully factored into the Council's emerging CIL viability analysis because it will add additional costs towards the delivery of new homes.

2.60 We appreciate much of the above detail will be for the Local Plan process rather than the Housing Strategy but it would not be inappropriate for the Housing Strategy to support the concept of allocating specific sites for the delivery of elderly accommodation.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 Overall, the TEM Property Group, the Tatton Estate and Pegasus Group are largely supportive of the Council's Housing Strategy subject to the amendments above and it is considered that it would benefit from a greater level of context and clarity so it is clear to all where the Council stand on its economic and housing requirements and ambitions.
- 3.2 It would also be helpful if the document could set out a range of potential recommendations to other departments within the Council as to what might assist the delivery of new homes and the delivery of the Housing Strategy's priorities. Indeed, the Housing Strategy should be making recommendations that can then be fed into other key Council documents that control and encourage the delivery of new homes. The most obvious document which is currently under perpetration is the Part 2 Local Plan – Site Allocations and Development Management Policies.
- 3.3 In this regard, our main comments are as follows:
- We are fully supportive of the Council's recognition of the importance of the Private Rented Sector/Build to Rent schemes. We urge the Council to follow the guidance contained within the NPPG, which makes it clear how the funding mechanisms of PRS schemes differ to the standard buy to sell format. There is a subsequent need to look at affordable housing requirements and obligations for PRS schemes in a different manner. Any future planning policy and decisions will need to reflect this, and the Housing Strategy should clearly set a guidance point to inform such planning policy going forward through informal policies that could influence the development control process when determining planning applications, Supplementary Planning Documents or Part 2 of the Local Plan.
 - The Housing Strategy and any affordable housing needs/targets that are set by this document or other forthcoming planning documents will need to be very mindful of the implications of additional financial burdens placed on developers through the Council's CIL charging schedule. We would suggest a full review of this is carried out as part of the CIL process and subsequently through a further review of the Housing Strategy and associated planning policies.
 - Cheshire East has already achieved a significant proportion of its jobs growth as set out in the Local Plan. More recent evidence also indicates there are few signs of an economic slow-down and we strongly anticipate that the jobs growth figure for Cheshire East over the Local Plan period is likely to be substantially higher than currently envisaged. We there suggest that the Council's Housing Strategy should be recommending that an early Local Plan review might be prudent in such circumstances, which could be subsequently articulated through Part 2 of the Local Plan.
 - Whilst we agree that there needs to be a housing strategy given the ageing population, we would not advocate this transferring to a policy approach which outlines prescriptive

standards in relation to the percentages of elderly housing on site. This can pose an overly restrictive constraint to the market, as well as not allowing for sufficient flexibility which takes into account the fact that not all sites and locations are suitable for such housing. Instead, the Council should be looking to identify specific sites that would be suitable for elderly housing provision through Part 2 of the Local Plan.

Pickmere Parish Council

Pickmere Parish Council considered the consultation draft of the Housing Strategy at its last meeting and had the following comments.

All members expressed concern about the esoteric nature of this exercise, especially in terms of the high cost of preparing such a document in the context of the current financial environment, and the lack of relevance to issues at a Parish Council level. There was one topic with which the Council could relate, and it was that of Gypsy and Travellers (sic). Strong criticism was made of the fact that the draft Strategy was not proposing any action to resolve issues surrounding known problems with travellers, e.g. at Spinks Lane, Pickmere, or identify replacement sites. Nor did the strategy report what action had been or was being taken by CEC to identify suitable sites, but it simply proposed updating CEC's 'assessment of need'. The need is considered to be well known. It was pointed out that CEC were well aware of particular problems but was not actually giving the solution of those problems sufficient priority.

I trust these comments will be taken into account.

Regards,

Clerk – Pickmere Parish Council.

Poynton Town Council

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Poynton Town Council in response to the draft Housing Strategy 2018-2023. The Town Council would comment as follows:

- Despite the clear expressed views and wishes of local communities, Cheshire East have insisted on imposing changes to the Green Belt. In Poynton, three so called "strategic sites" in the Green Belt were rezoned for housing, despite strong opposition from local people and a complete failure to address issues such as the impact of additional traffic and increased demands on local services. Sites have also been selected for housing which include flood risk areas.
- We remain disappointed that there continues to be an apparent reluctance to agree to the redevelopment of Brownfield Sites. Indeed, Cheshire East have even refused to consider a brownfield site in Poynton which they own, the former Vernon Infants School, for redevelopment, preferring to use Green Belt land instead.
- Cheshire East appear to be reluctant to rezone "brownfield" sites for development despite the owners of those sites supporting their reuse for residential housing. An example is the Armcon site bordering Poynton. The owners of this large industrial building wish to redevelop it for housing, but Cheshire East refused to even consider it for inclusion in the Local Plan.

Generally, the Town Council feels that the draft Housing Strategy appears to be based on the deeply flawed Local Plan. It also repeats the false analysis that building houses produces economic prosperity, and ignores the negative impact of increasing traffic and population on the environment.

Kind regards,

Deputy Town Clerk, Poynton Town Council.

Sandbach Town Council

Comments on Cheshire East Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023

From Sandbach Town Council

It is not clear as to why a Housing Strategy is required at this time and how much value or influence it will have given the recent adoption of the Cheshire East Local Development Plan for the period up to 2030. This document should have been produced much earlier in the Local Plan process, where it would have had a purpose in driving and shaping the Local Development Plan. It appears to be too late of be any major value.

An alternative would be to remove new housing from the strategy and have this document look at remediation measures to improve the existing stock of housing, looking to improve energy usage, refurbish property to meet the needs of the elderly and other groups highlighted in the predicted changing demographics.

A Housing Strategy should define the requirements for housing the existing and expected future population of Cheshire East, and that would be fed into a Local Plan alongside the requirements for employment, education, transport and health facilities. This document is too late and fails to develop detailed strategy.

The draft includes ten headline priorities many of which are worthy of support, such as “promoting affordable warmth”, improving the choice of housing for an aging population, prevent homelessness. It also includes worrying priorities such as stimulating the housing market, some areas of Cheshire East such as Sandbach require restraint not stimulation.

In summary:

- Overall, the document lacks substance. It gives a strong, positive picture of the housing strategy (though in places it borders on the self-congratulatory).
- The link between the priority goals and how to delivery them is weak – most deliverables seem either intangible or lack substance. For example, how is the priority of housing for an ageing population to be delivered?
- Other than mention of the strategy on jobs and growth, there is no reference to other strategies that are necessary to deliver the housing strategy, such as the road network and provision of medical facilities and schools.
- The underlying philosophy seems to be to rely on the market: the social rented sector – surely necessary given the failings of reliance on the market - hardly gets a mention.

And in a little more detail:

There are a number of claims of past successes and a number of laudable goals. However, there is frequent iteration of key goals and priorities, quite a lot of generalisation, repeated

claims with little of substance on how to make the strategy happen, and no mention of other strategies that are essential to successful delivery.

For example, there is frequent comment on the alignment of the strategy to that of Jobs and Growth. However, there is no reference to any allied infrastructure (both technical and social) that should be essential in providing the larger platform to facilitate delivery. Missing references include the provision of adequate health care, roads and schools required to service the growth in housing. The links between the sections on priorities and the sections entitled Delivery Plan are weak, in that delivery usually refers to documents or budget management, rather than any specific areas of actions.

Comments on specifics within the consultation draft:

1) P7. The text references the overriding imperative of the marketplace whilst mentioning the broken housing market. The clear statistical evidence, both nationally and within the Borough of Cheshire East, testifies to the fact that a market-driven ideological approach to housing has failed both nationally and locally. The forward states that the councils vision of "Putting residents at the heart of everything we do" seems to conflict with page 7 where "Our Residents" are at the end of the list detailing who the strategy is for: a. Ourselves (i.e. Cheshire East) b. Our partners (who have not been identified at this stage) c. Our residents. This sequence should be reversed

2) P9. The opening paragraph claims that a great deal has been achieved, whilst citing no evidence. The final bullet point states that Cheshire East will intervene where the market is unable to meet housing needs, but the only area for action references the private rented sector, and does not specify what kind of actions.

3) P10. The opening paragraph claims a successful economy (although whether national or local is not made clear). Either way, there is no reference to any evidence. The second paragraph states that Cheshire East will utilise their own land to meet housing needs. There are two dangers - firstly the need to protect community assets such as open spaces inside and bordering settlements, schools or key council buildings, the strategy must ensure that the assets are not compromised by the of selling land for short term gains - as happened with land adjacent to Westfields. The second danger is that external developers take the profit from the value of community land that should have been shared by the residents. It appears that the only direct action area is to sell off Cheshire East land holdings. The opportunity for enabling building for social rented accommodation does not appear to be explored in any detail.

4) P12. The diagram of how the strategy links together does not appear to have any meaning. It should either be qualified to make sense, or removed.

5) P14. The opening paragraph claims “enormous success” in attracting investment, which is to be greatly welcomed. However, there is no evidence quoted directly or referenced. The benefits being enjoyed from further major investment lists only two items, one of which is HS2, whose benefits are uncertain and beyond the timeframe of this strategy document. The final sentence quotes entirely excellent and laudable goals of “good access to employment, healthcare, schools, retail and other facilities, so enabling low car usage, sustainable travel and greater quality of life”. However, no evidence of past success or effective future actions to achieve these goals is quoted.

6) Within the long chapter on Growth and Quality of Place, there is no section on the social rented sector; just a small reference under the section on Affordable Housing. This would appear to be a major and significant omission, and reflects the overall emphasis on the marketplace as the only tool (see point 2 above).

7) P24. The paragraph on the priority “Support generation to support quality of place” states the need to ensure the right mix of housing, but, as elsewhere, the link to the associated Delivery Plan is weak.

8) P32-49. The entire chapter on “Health, wellbeing and quality of life” contains much well-meaning material and generalisations that make references to national policies and quotations from central government material, but little or nothing specific to the Cheshire East Housing Strategy.

9) A general editing point, but it would be helpful in future versions of the strategy to number the paragraphs and sections throughout, for ease of reference as a working document.

10) It is not clear who this document is directed at, the terminology is not always clear, technical planning language is used, knowledge of other CEC planning and strategy documents are assumed - this is not helpful if residents are expected to understand and work with this document.

11) Unanswered questions CEC need to be clear about who they expect to enable this proposed strategy, CEC need to explain the role expected from:

- The private sector
- Large and small commercial developers
- Small scale buy to let landlords
- Emerging corporate landlords such as Legal and General
- Quasi Governmental o Registered Social Landlords o CEC subsidiary
- Retain provision internally to CEC. Do you want CEC to build/manage/own its own stock of housing to enable this housing strategy? Do you want CEC to work with the

successors to the RSL's that operated within the three boroughs prior to the formation of CEC to ensure the provision of appropriate housing?

On behalf of Sandbach Town Council

January 2018

Scanlans

This is a well thought out document and will provide a useful tool in dealing with the housing issues in the locality.

However I would have expected to see as a key priority the provision of increased numbers of affordable homes throughout the area.

I note the opportunity to use Cheshire East land for increased housing provision but wonder whether in these cases the priority will be to achieve the maximum price for the land or to provide housing including affordable housing.

To this end I would cite the sale of the Council land in Macclesfield to Redrow where the effect of the contamination and other constraints which, in other market circumstances would simply be reflected in a reduced land value ,were reflected by a reduction in the number of affordable homes in order to support the land value.

If a site is less valuable due to constraints it should achieve a lesser sale price- not be subsidised by artificial planning relaxations , whether the land is owned by the Council or another third party That was an artificial mechanism to support land value/sale price at odds with and at the expense of the Councils avowed intention to achieve 30% affordable on ALL sites.

I would also suggest that where the Council are able to support affordable housing through contributions rather than by onsite provision the affordable housing should be targeted at those areas of highest housing values and lowest incomes.

Handforth for example has one of the highest levels of house prices - if one excludes ex-Council/housing association stock- but the third lowest incomes- surely that is a classic demonstration of an area where housing support for low cost/ supported home ownership and discounted rental levels is urgently needed - even if it is at the perimeter of the Council area and remote from its centre core and with non- majority councillors.

To be clear I support the policy but have concerns about the implementation where there is likely to be a conflict between the priorities of the housing /planning departments and those of the finance/ estates departments and would urge that the former take priority over the latter.

The Guinness Partnership

Dear Sir or Madam,

I understand that the consultation period ended on the above yesterday, but would be most grateful if you could take into account the comments below:-

Housing Growth – one key factor that we encounter as a problem is the planning process. Even when paid for a pre-application we have found response times to be lengthy with some of the consulted Departments not responding in the times set. Also engaging and having dialogue with the Case Officer has proved problematic with not be either able to speak to them or have e-mail responses. This has delayed development which in majority of cases would have had an impact on the funding (HCA) for the scheme. Appreciate that a scheme will be decided upon by a Committee, but the process leading up to scheme being presented to Committee can be lengthy, unnecessarily problematic and a costly exercise.

Section 106 Housing Opportunities – There is a lot of potential for affordable homes through 106 and whilst at the moment there are Registered Providers that are able to take these up, the money to purchase such homes is not finite and there may be a time where RPs decline submitting offers of purchase. To help with making the finances stretch that bit further, would it be possible to consider how this could be avoided. One suggestion is that have affordable homes have set price per house, tenure type & location, the Council also has an agreed list of Registered Providers who have funds to purchase the properties. Each new development then gets allocated to an RP on a rotation basis, if that RP is not in a position to purchase it then goes to the next RP on the rotation. I believe other local authorities have this model and it has worked, it also ensures that the developer is fully aware of what the cost would be to them to provide affordable housing on their development at inception.

Jobs Led Growth – how will demand be ascertained? Will there be consultation with key employers in CEC to determine salaries for affordability, plans for growth and where housing is required. Also would accommodation for graduates/apprentices help with growth?.

HMOs – such accommodation is important to the housing offer, but as you identify they do tend to be in specific areas and can be problematic within the local community, what would be the plan to try and break this offer up and make it throughout CEC?

Care Leavers accommodation – important provision to be made, but for this to be successful 1:1 support is vital to the individual to give them the life skills required when leaving care. Also location is key, close to all amenities but not in areas where there is a lot of vulnerable people.

I hope that the above is satisfactory and that you will be able to take our comments into account.

Regards

The Guinness Partnership.

The Skills & Growth Company



The Skills and Growth Company
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Research and Consultation Team
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01270 686170
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Our Ref: Housing Strategy Response
Your Ref: Cheshire East Housing Strategy

20 December 2017

Dear Sirs,

Cheshire East Housing Strategy 2017/18 – Response to consultation

The Skills and Growth Company welcomes the Cheshire East Housing Strategy and its aims to increase and improve housing in the borough, and we welcome the opportunity to comment on the Council draft strategy.

The focus of the Skills and Growth Company is to support economic development, leading to business creation, expansion and jobs growth within the borough. Our work complements the UK's Industrial Strategy in supporting the economy of the future, and the Northern powerhouse in delivering significant growth in the north of England linked to HS2, Constellation and the Cheshire Science Corridor. The quality and availability of the housing offer is a critical factor in building that vibrant economy, and we would welcome continued engagement in the delivery of the Council objectives.

Our specific responses have been grouped into the Council strategic priorities, outlined in the Housing Strategy.

Priority: Stimulate the housing market

Cheshire East has a number of priority sectors which will form the basis of our future economy – technology, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and energy. The Skills and Growth Company is supporting these sectors, alongside other high growth companies, to increase productivity, job creation and improve skills. Although housing is not seen to be a significant barrier to most businesses, we are aware of some specific issues which we would welcome further work to overcome;

- Attracting and retaining young talent is critical to our future economy. Providing housing that is suited to younger people (in terms of style and price) and is

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geographically aligned with employment opportunities (including high level/degree apprenticeships) would encourage school and college leavers to remain within Cheshire East, and draw the graduate talent in that our businesses require.

- New housing stock and developments need to be serviced with high capacity digital connectivity – ideally full fibre. This will future proof the development and address increasing market demand for on-demand internet services (e.g. BBC iplayer streaming services)
- The issue of affordable and accessible housing for the Cheshire Science Corridor (Alderley Park, Astra Zeneca, Jodrell Bank, etc.) is of particular interest given the access to high value and sustainable employment, and the growth potential in this area.
- Similarly we are seeing an increase in growth in creative & digital industries particularly across the north of the Borough, linked to the digital cluster in Greater Manchester. These industries require a ready supply of talent, who not only require affordability but also a wider 'place' offer to be attracted away from the larger cities.
- It is also likely that we will see an increase in digital and fintech employment in the Crewe area linked to HS2.

Priority: Support regeneration to support quality of place

Vibrant and vital town centres are key to a thriving economy, and we are collaborating programmes such as the Crewe Masterplan and the Macclesfield Town Centre Strategy to support this. We welcome the alignment of the Council ambitions with this objective, in particular in increasing the town centre housing offer and contributing towards place-shaping.

As part of the UK Industrial Strategy we are currently investigating the 'smart solutions' that may be appropriate to our towns and villages – these allow effective use of existing infrastructure and will future-proof our economy. As the applications for these technologies emerge, we would welcome the Council input to bring these solutions forward.

Clean growth is also a critical strand of the Industrial Strategy, not just the meeting of carbon reduction and pollution targets, but also in stimulating the market for low carbon technologies. We would welcome an increased focus on these clean growth targets for housing and we may be of assistance in developing opportunities to further integrate energy efficiency, electric vehicles, and heat and power networks.

Priority: Support the Medium Term Financial Growth Strategy

The Skills and Growth Company will play a key role in delivering the financial growth strategy through supporting business growth, higher value employment, and in securing capital funding for economic infrastructure (digital and energy in particular) to support that future growth. We

would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council to integrate our objectives with the Councils. In particular;

- Our Business Engagement and Inward Investment teams have increased the commercial floorspace used within the region and assisted in the growth of employment opportunities. The continued development of business parks and employment zones, accessible to high quality and affordable housing, will continue to increase employment and revenues.
- The Connecting Cheshire programme to roll out high speed broadband to areas not covered commercially, and we would welcome continued involvement with the Council and housing providers in facilitating this connectivity.

Our work with businesses already established within the borough leads to a strengthening of the businesses themselves and also to their ties to Cheshire East. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss further measures the Local Authority could take to supporting social value and local procurement.

Priority: Promote independent living

Many of the innovative areas of our work could have significant benefits for independent living. In particular;

- High speed broadband connectivity is vital for independent living. We currently have achieved a 96% coverage of households through Connecting Cheshire and aim to increase this further. We are also investigating full fibre networks and 5G. It is critical that housing providers ensure that they are making full use of this programme, and they seek to support this through the provision of basic digital skills to their residents.
- In future, digital innovations such as autonomous vehicles and the internet of things will provide assistance to those for whom independent living is a challenge. Cheshire East also has a particular strength in digital health to overcome health inequalities and inflation through. We will seek to ensure that Cheshire East is at the forefront of these innovations and would welcome the Council involvement as these start to emerge.

Priority: Prevent Homelessness

The prevention of homelessness we recognise is an important priority that will require a multi-agency approach to bring about improvements.

As a company we would feel our key areas to add value would be assisting companies to access government funding to tap into the non-traditional labour markets, this could help people with mental health issues or irregular work histories to access the job market.

Additionally we would see our ability to bring various partners together and organise and mediate an approach to be a strength which Cheshire East might utilise in this area.

Priority: Promote affordable warmth

We recognise that tackling affordable warmth, and energy, is a critical factor in overcoming deprivation and increasing economic wellbeing. The Skills and Growth Company is currently delivering a number of initiatives which will assist the Council objectives, and we would welcome continued engagement on these.

- We are leading the development of heat network schemes in Crewe and Macclesfield for the authority, with further schemes planned in the near term. Coupled with the district heating schemes we are seeking resources to test the potential for a geothermal resource within Crewe which could provide the heat to the network from a natural resource. District heating is a solution which can directly tackle affordable warmth, particularly in areas of high population density, and overcome the potential for future cost increases.
- Fairerpower, our responsible and (on average) cheaper energy offering is currently providing savings, especially to the customers with the least means. The PayGo offer from Fairerpower has proven particularly helpful to those in fuel poverty and we would welcome further opportunities to work with social landlords and other agencies to bring that help to more households. In the future Fairerpower intends to expand its offering to include affordable warmth to those in off grid areas.

We hope that these comments are useful in the development of the strategy, and it appears there are a number of areas where continued engagement would be beneficial.

Yours sincerely



Your Name **Julian Cobley**
Job Title **Managing Director**

Section 4 – Formal responses from individuals

The following 4 formal responses were received as part of the consultation from individuals.

Individual response 1

This may have been covered within this comprehensive document; apologies if so.

I would like to see town and village empty retail spaces or vacant spaces above retail spaces to be utilised to provide homes for people. Most young/old people do not have demand for houses with gardens but to have a convenient living space close to shops, bars and restaurants, as is evident from the huge numbers of apartments being built in city centres.

A cohesive plan to include properties close to bus routes and railway stations will also help working people get to their destination. The village railway station car parks are full before 9.00am, so additional parking spaces are required if permission is being granted for additional homes.

Regards.

Individual response 2

Good morning,

Surprisingly there is no mention of the exception rule which could enable affordable dwellings to be built outside a settlement boundary – where there is a genuine need.

Is this part of the strategy?

Individual response 3

Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

I suggest a strategy that compels builders to complete their developments rather than 'banking' lots.

I remember a BBC report on Housing where a Cheshire East officer said there were 17,000 unused planning permissions. If builders were compelled to complete unused permissions this would go a long way to meeting the targets in the Local Plan.

I also suggest that the housing includes a mixture which people can actually afford to buy or rent.

Regards.

Individual response 4

Too many houses are being built on green belt land.

Too many larger houses are being built because a bigger profit is made from larger homes.

Eventually my wife and I would like to downsize from our current 4 bed detached to a bungalow or 2 bed semi , but very very few bungalows are being built generally it's the 4,5 or 6 bed homes being built.

Affordable housing isn't buying part and rent the remainder as we all know this generates large returns for the housing developer.

Where developers promise to build some smaller units , provide landscaping , plant trees and bushes and screening with landscaping to gain planning consent these promises should be written into a binding contract for said planning consent and not like the PRESENT where most agreements are ignored and dropped once planning consent has been obtained.

A lot of new homes are in the wrong place and too expensive with many people having to commute longer distances to work adding to the already busting at the seams road network.

These are but a few things that need to be considered more carefully when building more houses.

Many thanks.

Appendix 1 – A profile of survey respondents

Consultation survey respondents were more likely to be male than female, and were most likely aged 45 to 74.

Gender	Count of survey respondents	Percentage
Male	78	68%
Female	36	32%
Total valid responses	114	100%

Age range	Count of survey respondents	Percentage
Under 25	0	0%
25-34	3	3%
35-44	9	8%
45-54	24	21%
55-64	25	22%
65-74	51	44%
75-84	4	3%
85 plus	0	0%
Total valid responses	116	100%

