

Strategic Planning Board

Date of Meeting: 26 February 2020

Report Title: Crewe Hub Area Action Plan Report – Publication Draft Plan

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Toni Fox – Planning

Senior Officer: Frank Jordan, Executive Director of Place

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. To help Crewe improve its performance on a range of key indicators from health, education, homes and transport to reducing vacancies in the town centre, the Council is supporting multiple projects and plans across the town.
- 1.2. As part of this approach the Council is supporting plans for investment in Crewe Station to demonstrate how the arrival of HS2 can underpin regeneration and development opportunities in this area.
- 1.3. The Crewe Hub Area Action Plan (Area Action Plan) sets out a detailed planning framework in response to the opportunity presented by HS2. The report seeks Cabinet's approval of the *Publication Draft* version of the Action Plan and to publish it for consultation under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 1.4. The Area Action Plan is a non-strategic document and expands on matters addressed at a high level in the Local Plan Strategy (LPS), in particular on policy LPS1 'Central Crewe'. It will support the Council toward fully realising the benefits of investment in Crewe station and will set out how employment opportunities, new homes, improvements to the local environment and enhancements to the transport network and public realm can best be achieved.
- 1.5. Importantly, to address current constraints and to enable longer term highways capacity, the Area Action Plan includes a package of highways interventions alongside proposals for a Southern Link Road Bridge crossing, south of the station. Whilst this bridge is not dependent on the

future delivery of the Area Action Plan, long term growth ambitions for the area are dependent on delivery of the bridge.

- 1.6. The delivery of matters addressed in the Area Action Plan is also dependent on Council approval of the Strategic Business Case for the Crewe Hub Station Regeneration and Investment Programme. A separate report on this matter is being considered by Cabinet, a decision on the Area Action Plan should only be taken if recommendations regarding the Strategic Business Case are approved.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Strategic Planning Board:
- 2.2. Consider the Publication Draft version of the Crewe Hub Area Action Plan (Appendix 1), its Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 2) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (Appendix 3), Crewe Hub AAP Development Strategy and Further Options - Summary of Consultation Responses (Appendix 4) and the suite of documents which form the supporting evidence base (Appendix 5).
- 2.3. Recommend that Cabinet approve the above documents for publication and public consultation, under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, for a period of six weeks from 17th March to 30th April 2020
- 2.4. Authorise the Head of Planning to make any additional non-material changes to the consultation documents or supporting information ahead of the consultation and prepare any additional explanatory information to support the consultation.
- 2.5. Notes that a Cabinet decision is required to implement consultation on the Publication Draft Crewe Hub Area Action Plan
- 2.6. Notes that Full Council approval will be sought to implement the submission of the Area Action Plan to the Secretary of State.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. To enable public consultation to take place on the publication draft version of the Area Action Plan so it can progress to be submitted for examination by the Secretary of State.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Crewe has a pipeline of strategic projects underway that underpin growth in the town now and anticipate the arrival of HS2 in the future. The measures

set out in the Area Action Plan align to the Councils wider ambitions for Crewe.

- 4.2. Area Action Plans are discretionary planning documents and are prepared to address a significant change which is specific to a particular area. The arrival of HS2 services to Crewe rail station is anticipated to catalyse investment in the town and stimulate change in the built environment. Whilst the existing local plan anticipates the arrival of HS2 and contains planning policy that will be relevant to managing such change, it does not contain a sufficiently detailed approach to enable the Council to promote the most positive outcome for Crewe that could be possible.
- 4.3. The Council could wait to address all HS2 matters through a full review of the local plan, required by 2025. Indeed, a full review of the local plan would address any wider strategic issues arising from implementation of HS2, including the distribution of growth based on an appropriate assessment of the boroughs housing and employment needs at that time (which would account for any potential uplift arising from HS2).
- 4.4. However, works to upgrade rail infrastructure to enable HS2 services to operate from Crewe station are anticipated to begin ahead of 2025, which may stimulate local investment and change in the area surrounding the station. It is this significant change in the local area that requires a more bespoke approach to planning matters around the station and the need to introduce a planning policy framework to manage and promote the best outcomes for Crewe.

5. Background

- 5.1. Background and current status of HS2
- 5.2. A hybrid bill related to phase 2a of the project is currently passing through parliament and includes measures to ensure that HS2 trains change at Crewe Station. The Council continue to engage with government and Network Rail to secure this outcome, alongside the investment in rail infrastructure and track alignments that allow enhanced HS2 services to Crewe in the long term.
- 5.3. The Area Action Plan is predicated on government's future support for HS2 and investment at Crewe Station.
- 5.4. The government commissioned review of HS2 (the Oakervee Review) was published on 11th February and recommended that the HS2 project in it's entirety should proceed. Govenrent has since re-confirmed its support for the project with proposed ammendments that will see proposals to deliver

Phase 1, linking London to Birmingham and onwards to Crewe by 2028-31, and Phase 2, incorporating Northern PowerHouse Rail from 2035-40.

- 5.5. The detailed implications of the Oakervee Review are unclear in terms of timings for project delivery, rail possessions, engineering works etc but the process has resulted in Governments reconfirmation of support for the entire scheme and an indication that HS2 services will be planned to arrive at Crewe from 2028 onwards.
- 5.6. A Bill to support delivery of Phase 2a has been introduced to Parliament in July 2017 and has been committed to a Select Committee that was appointed on 30th October 2019. Following dissolution of parliament to accommodate a general election in December 2019, parliament is expected to confirm that the Bill should resume its progress but a date for this is not yet confirmed.
- 5.7. Whilst the relevant legislation that enables enhanced provision of services to Crewe has not been completed its process, confirmation that HS2 will proceed and that it will deliver services to Crewe from 2028 onwards is very positive for Crewe's role in the rail network and the opportunities presented to support regeneration and investment in the area
- 5.8. The Area Action Plan is predicated on delivering investment in Crewe Station that can enable HS2 services to Crewe. Confirmation that HS2 will proceed means that it is important to proceed with the Area Action Plan and ensure the Council is ready to implement a robust and positive planning framework for the area at the earliest opportunity.
- 5.9. Background to the Area Action Plan
- 5.10. The Local Plan Strategy recognises the importance of Crewe Station as a transport hub – but it does not plan directly for the implications of HS2 and acknowledges that a more detailed Area Action Plan might be necessary in the future. The Local Plan Strategy is a pre-HS2 document and if the Council is to manage the change associated with a new station, and the increased connectivity at Crewe through high speed rail, it needs to have a robust and up to date development plan in place which addresses additional development directly associated with the station.
- 5.11. Cree Hub AAP Chronology:
 - I. November 2018: Consultation on Crewe Hub AAP Issues and Options:
 - II. February 2019: Consultation on Crewe Hub Development Strategy:

III. July 2019: Consultation on Crewe Hub Development Strategy and Further Options

IV. March 2020: Consultation on Crew Hub AAP Publication Draft

- 5.12. In August 2018, the Council adopted its Local Development Scheme setting out an ambition to prepare an Area Action Plan for the Crewe Hub Station and its environs. The Area Action Plan will have a very narrow geographic focus, being confined to the areas close to Crewe Railway Station in order to plan for economic growth and regeneration opportunities emerging from investment in the rail infrastructure at Crewe station.
- 5.13. In order to maximise the opportunities for inter-regional connectivity and economic growth for the borough, the Council continues to support a full HS2 station and associated rail infrastructure (enabling north and south connections) to be provided in Crewe. The Plan is conceived as a means of demonstrating how such investment can be delivered and to manage and coordinate the significant change likely to arise from this.
- 5.14. In the autumn of 2018 the Council began work on the Area Action Plan and has gathered evidence and sought the views of stakeholders on a range of issues associated with the delivery of a HS2 Hub Station at Crewe and what this may mean for development opportunities in the area of land around the station.
- 5.15. In November and December 2018 the Council consulted on a Crewe Station Hub Area Action Plan Issues Paper holding public events and inviting comments on a series of initial ideas to develop the approach to the plan.
- 5.16. The feedback from this informed the production of the Crewe Station Hub Development Strategy that progressed ideas further setting out a series of planning policy themes and seeking to define a boundary for the plan. Consultation took place for six weeks over January and February 2019.
- 5.17. A third consultation was then held on the Crewe Hub Development Strategy and Further Options, again for six weeks, from late July to September 2019. This document presented a boundary to the plan, more detailed policies, set out a framework for land use within the area and included proposals for a Southern Link Road Bridge, the subject of it's own parallel consultation across the same period. Letters and leaflets were sent to residents likely to be affected by the proposals and an exhibition on the SLRB was held at Crewe Alexandra attended by around 200 people. Three workshops on the Action Plan proposals were also held at the YMCA on Gresty Road attended by 25 residents in total.

- 5.18. This process of engagement has enabled key development principles, a detailed policy framework and masterplan to be drawn up for the Area Action Plan. The strategy is supported by a Sustainability Appraisal and a number of evidential documents; these are accessible via the Councils web pages:
- 5.19. https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial_planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/area-action-plan-for-crewe/crewe-area-action-plan.aspx
- 5.20. The Form of the Crewe Hub Area Action Plan
- 5.21. Firstly, building on previous work, the Area Action Plan sets out a defined plan boundary. Unlike all other development plans which match the boundary of Cheshire East as a Planning Authority (the Peak District National Park having its own planning powers) a fundamental choice for the Area Action Plan is how far it should extend. In simple terms the wider the area covered, the more comprehensive it will be – but equally the more issues that will be provoked and the longer it will take to prepare.
- 5.22. Conversely a more confined plan may prove more agile but also may fail to sufficiently address the development implications of the enhanced station. Accordingly it is recommended that a balance is struck between these two positions and a preferred boundary is set out in the document. The boundary includes land west of the rail line to Gresty Road in the south and to Mill Street in the north west and extending north east to Macon Way, south east across Second Avenue to Gateway.
- 5.23. Secondly the Area Action Plan sets out a series of key policy principles for which all new development would be expected to adhere to.
- 5.24. The matters addressed by these policies include:
- Development Opportunities
 - Improving Connectivity
 - Infrastructure for Sustainable Development
 - Improving Environmental Quality
 - Development Area Policies
- 5.25. Thirdly the Area Action Plan sub-divides the Plan into six ‘development areas’ for which a masterplan, detailed spatial policies and principles are drawn up. Foremost amongst these are:
- Crewe Hub Commercial District / Weston Road Gateway – The Weston Road gateway seeks to create a new main entrance to the station, alongside supporting facilities and transport interchange. Opposite this

will be the new Crewe Hub Commercial District – a fresh business location which capitalises on the enhanced connectivity afforded by the upgraded station and services. This area will be characterised by landmark buildings and higher density development

- Mill Street Area – a revamped commercial and residential area focussing on a direct link between Nantwich Road and the Town centre via Mill Street Bridge. There are also important heritage assets in this vicinity which require preservation and integration.
- Gresty Road Gateway - This area will safeguard a potential future pedestrian entrance directly into the station. There is scope for additional development to complement the retained Crewe Alexandra stadium and improved public realm.

5.26. Infrastructure and accessibility

5.27. Realising the opportunities arising from investment in Crewe Station requires significant improvements in accessibility in and around the station. The benefits of HS2 will not be realised if major cities can be reached in minutes by train but gridlock prevails beyond the station entrance resulting in the benefits of high speed rail travel and enhanced connectivity being undermined by poor accessibility.

5.28. Accordingly, the Area Action Plan anticipates new and improved transport infrastructure through a package of highways interventions and, given that within the station all passengers are effectively pedestrians, and the plan supports the creation of new neighbourhoods in the vicinity of the station, much support is provided for the movement of people by non-vehicular modes. Allied to this there will be complementary strategies for a public transport interchange, public car parking, proposals to improve traffic management within the town of Crewe and the delivery of additional highway capacity at key pinch points.

5.29. Southern Link Road Bridge

5.30. To help address this, the Area Action Plan builds on previous versions of the document and separate consultations, setting out ambitions for a new high capacity road bridge located to the south of Crewe Station.

5.31. Whilst the need for an additional rail crossing exists now, investment in this infrastructure (and its associated package of junction improvements) will enable the longer term efficiency of the highways network, supporting future growth around the station. The bridge will carry through traffic away from the congested station area and enable Nantwich Road to be significantly amended to improve the environment for pedestrians and

cyclists accessing the station – offering the flexibility to allow multi modal improvements on the Nantwich Road corridor.

- 5.32. A separate report on this matter, concerning to the route of bridge and further investigation into its feasibility, has been endorsed by Cabinet on 5th November 2019. The Area Action Plan has incorporated the recommendations of this report in its approach and sets out a policy framework to support delivery of these measures. Together, the proposed highways interventions are designed to meet an immediate need to alleviate the exiting constraints facing the highways network in this area and, in the longer term, support the successful operation of the highways network in a context of realising regeneration benefits and additional growth.
- 5.33. Duty to co-operate
- 5.34. The Council is required to co-operate on strategic planning matters that cross administrative boundaries. As would be expected, this is an issue most relevant to the preparation of policies in the Local Plan Strategy, and was fully addressed through engaging with our relevant partners in developing the LPS, including the preparation of policy LPS1 'Central Crewe' at that time.
- 5.35. Area Action Plans are designed as non-strategic documents and as such, the Crewe Hub AAP is a more detailed expression of LPS1 and defers strategic matters to a full review of the LPS by 2025 (including any future potential growth target to be attributed to Crewe based on an uplift derived from HS2 and other factors). Therefore it is not considered that any new, cross-boundary strategic matters arise through the preparation of the Area Action Plan.
- 5.36. This is evidenced through a proposed Statement of Common Ground which would be published alongside the Publication Draft Plan. Neighbouring authorities and other relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies would be invited to sign a final Statement of Common Ground following consultation, which would accompany the Plan when submitted for examination.
- 5.37. The next stage of consultation
- 5.38. The next stage of public consultation would be carried out under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Publication Draft Plan should be the version of the Plan which the Council considers is sound and capable of adoption.

- 5.39. Following consultation, a final decision to formally submit the Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination would be made through a Full Council decision, anticipated to be taken in May 2020.
- 5.40. During the consultation, which must be no less than 6 weeks and will be held between 17th March to 30th April 2020, representations would be invited on whether or not the Plan has met the legal requirements for its preparation and whether or not it is sound, namely that it has been positively prepared and is justified, effective and consistent with national policy. These tests would be applied to non-strategic policies in a proportionate way, taking into account the extent to which they were consistent with strategic policies in the LPS and in this context, represent a proportionate evolution in response to the significant change likely to arise from investment in Crewe station.
- 5.41. The results of consultation will be analysed and presented to Council initially, who will decide whether to submit the plan to Government. The feedback from consultation will also be submitted to the Secretary of State to be considered by an appointed planning inspector during examination of the plan.
- 5.42. Consultation and engagement on the Plan has been carried out in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement 2018. This will also be true of the proposed consultation under Regulation 19. A Consultation Statement will be prepared to reflect the stages of consultation undertaken to date and updated to reflect the Regulation 19 consultation. This will then be submitted to the examining Inspector.
- 5.43. Once the Plan is published the timescale for its completion is largely dependent on the volume of representations received, the progress of the examination and the views of the examining Inspector. However the best estimate of these stages is as follows:

Stage	Date	Decision making body
Publication Consultation	March 12 th – April 17 th	Cabinet
Submission	Following Council on 13 th May 2020	Council
Examination	Circa October - December 2020	Secretary of State
Inspector reports findings	December 2020 / January 2021	Secretary of State
Consult on any modifications (if necessary)	January/February 2021	Cabinet

Adoption	February/May 2021	Council
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6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. In accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'), the Council has a statutory duty to prepare planning policies and maintain an up-to-date development plan.

6.1.2. Secondary legislation relating to the preparation of development plan documents is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The proposed consultation will be carried out in the stage of the plan-making process governed by Regulation 19. Regulation 19 requires councils to notify particular bodies and groups on the published Plan, and to ensure they are able to make representations on it.

6.1.3. In preparing a local plan, local planning authorities have to comply with the statutory duty to co-operate and carry out engagement throughout the plan making process in accordance with its Statement of Community Involvement.

6.1.4. The development of the publication draft Area Action Plan has taken proper account of the legal requirements associated with Sustainability Appraisal and the Habitats Regulations. These are intended to ensure that the Plan's preparation has taken full cognisance of the environmental, ecological and sustainability implications of its intended policies and proposals.

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. The preparation of the Publication Plan, including public consultation on it, is resourced through the existing Spatial Planning budget. The particular resources involved in carrying out public consultation comprise officer time, up to around £1000 in printing costs and up to around £500 to pay for any venues required for consultation events, although if council buildings can be utilised the latter cost will reduce.

6.2.2. By enabling redevelopment of brownfield land, the Area Action Plan sets out how growth linked to HS2 can support growth in the Borough's Tax base above a level identified in the existing Local Plan. Any site specific obligations will benefit infrastructure provision within the Area Action Plan boundary, benefiting Crewe as a whole.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. The Local Plan is a key policy document, central to the achievement of sustainable development in Cheshire East.

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. The Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equalities Act to have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a “relevant protected characteristic” and persons who do not share it; foster good relations between persons who share a “relevant protected characteristic” and persons who do not share it.

6.4.2. An Equality Impact Assessment is incorporated into the integrated Sustainability Appraisal of the Area Action Plan. This will consider how development proposals and planning policies will impact on different groups within the community.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. Existing resources are in place and there are no new implications arising from this decision.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. A Publication Draft Plan has been prepared taking account of the need to demonstrate the Plan’s legal compliance and soundness at examination.

6.6.2. Publication is an essential stage in the progression of the Area Action Plan and a major milestone towards its completion. The Local Plan Strategy do not directly address the implications and opportunities arising from the arrival of HS2 to Crewe and there is currently no meaningful policy framework in place to deal with the level of growth and opportunity presented. To manage and enable positive development here, there is hence a significant advantage in securing the timely progression of the Area Action Plan.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. The Area Action Plan concerns land within the urban area of Crewe and does not directly impact on any rural communities. However, supporting growth and regeneration within urban Crewe will deliver a significant amount of new housing and employment opportunities on previously developed land, therefore reducing the need to allocate greenfield development sites in the future.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people however the ambitions set out in the AAP will have a benefit in terms of the employment, homes and (environmental and social) services available to children and young people in Crewe and beyond.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. Appropriate Development Plan policies can help foster healthier living and working environments. The Crew Hub AAP contains a series of policies intended to improve public health through contributions to public realm and green infrastructure. The need for high quality pedestrian and cycling transport options is recognised. Traffic calming and speed control measures should also be considered where appropriate in the planning.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. The Area Action plan includes a series of measures that will improve local air quality, reduce energy use in new buildings and secure additional green infrastructure in the area around Crewe Station. Within the plan there are requirements for new buildings to work toward achieving a net zero carbon footprint; a package of highways and transport interventions to manage congestion and air quality, and requirements for development to fully integrate walking and cycling throughout the area. Together these measures will enable the Council to reduce the carbon footprint of the borough, whilst delivering growth and achieving environmental sustainability in new development.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. All Crewe Wards are affected by this decision.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. The report seeks approval to carry out further public consultation on the AAP ahead of its submission to the Secretary of State, building on the significant consultation and engagement that has already taken place in developing the draft Area Action Plan.

9. Access to Information

9.1. Aside from the supporting information referenced in this report the relevant section of the [Council's website](#) includes the previous Area Action Plan Issues Paper; Development Strategy; and Development Strategy and Further Options papers; plus related supporting information.

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officers:

Name: Tom Evans

Job Title: Neighbourhood Planning Manager

Email: tom.evans@cheshireeast.gov.uk or

Name: David Malcolm

Job Title: Head of Planning

Email: david.malcolm@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Crewe Hub Area Action Plan (Publication Draft)

Appendix 2: Crewe Hub Area Action Plan (Publication Draft) Sustainability Appraisal

Appendix 3: Crewe Hub Area Action Plan (Publication Draft) Habitats Regulations Assessment

Appendix 4: Crewe Hub AAP Development Strategy and Further Options (2018) - Summary of Consultation Responses

Appendix 5: Crewe Hub Area Action Plan (Publication Draft) Evidence Base