14
Connectivity

14 Connectivity

14.1   National planning policy seeks to reduce car use and to encourage people to adopt more sustainable travel habits. The NPPF requires local authorities to support a pattern of development that facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport, locate significant trip generating development where the need to travel is minimised and promote a mix of uses within walking distance of homes.

14.2   The targets for housing and employment growth in the Borough further strengthen the need for adequate supporting infrastructure including the provision of new transport infrastructure, measures to restrain car use and increase use of public transport, cycling and walking as well as other improvements.

14.3   The relationship between Local Transport Plans and the Core Strategy is crucial to implementing the objective of managing transport demand and promoting accessibility and integration across Cheshire East. The Core Strategy aims to capitalise on the strengths of the existing transport system in Cheshire East, including good transport links to major centres by way of the rail and motorway network. It sets out how we will seek to improve connectivity in the future.

14.4   The scale of development proposed will require significant investment in transport infrastructure and a step change in the provision of public transport and other sustainable modes. The economic strength of Cheshire East, and the quality of life on offer, very much depend on the accessibility, speed, quality and cost of transport facilities. Therefore, increasing accessibility and promoting sustainable travel is a key theme within the Core Strategy.

14.5   We must also be realistic about the challenges we face. The way we travel is changing to adapt to climate change and new technologies, the age profile of the population and shifts in the global economy.

14.6   Good transport links are crucial for a successful economy, thriving towns and rural areas and a good quality of life for all our residents. We want to make sure that our transport system enables people to safely get to the places they want to, when they want to, that people can walk and cycle as a real alternative to the car and that our transport system is integrated across all modes of transport.

Sustainable Travel and Transport

14.7   The challenge for the Core Strategy is twofold; to redress shortfalls in infrastructure and improve connectivity to support economic growth, whilst changing the need for travel and the way we travel, by promoting new and sustainable options.

Policy CO 1

Sustainable Travel and Transport

To deliver a safe, sustainable, high quality, integrated transport system to encourage modal shift away from car travel to public transport, cycling and walking, to support the needs of residents and businesses and to prepare for carbon free modes of transport, the Council will expect development to:

1.   Reduce the need to travel by:

    i.   Guiding development to sustainable and accessible locations or locations that can be made sustainable and accessible;

ii. Ensuring development gives priority to walking, cycling and public transport within its design;

iii. Encouraging more flexible working patterns and home working;

iv. Supporting improvements to communication technology for business, education, shopping and leisure purposes; and

v. Supporting measures that reduce the level of trips made by single occupancy vehicles.

2. Improve pedestrian facilities so that walking is attractive for shorter journeys[70] including:

i. Supporting the priority of pedestrians at the top of the road user hierarchy and making sure that in settlements, town centres and residential areas, the public realm environment reflects this priority;

ii. Supporting safe and secure access for mobility and visually impaired persons including mobility scooter users;

iii. Creating safe and secure footways and paths linking with public transport and other services;

iv. Ensuring new developments are convenient, safe and pleasant to access on foot; and

v. Supporting work to improve canal towpaths and Public Rights of Way where they can provide key linkages from developments to local facilities.

3. Improve cyclist facilities so that cycling is attractive for shorter journeys[71] including:

i. Creating safe and pleasant links for cyclists travelling around the Borough;

ii. Providing secure cycle parking facilities at new developments, at public transport hubs, town centres and at community facilities;

iii. Improving route signing;

iv. Working with community groups to develop local cycling initiatives and seek external funding to assist with the development of the local network; and

v. Supporting the priority for cyclists over single occupancy vehicles by making sure that in settlements, town centres and residential areas, the public realm environment reflects this priority whenever possible.

4. Improve public transport integration, facilities, service levels, access for all users and reliability[72] including:

i. Rail infrastructure - current schemes comprise:

a. Improvements to Crewe Railway Station, promoting its role as a national rail hub;

b. Supporting the aspiration for re-opening the Sandbach to Northwich railway line to passengers; and

c. Engaging in proposals for improving rail connectivity through High Speed Rail;

ii. Bus Infrastructure - current schemes comprise:

a. Improvements to Crewe Bus Station.

iii. Improving public transport service levels, which may involve developers temporarily subsidising new bus services or the extension of an existing service to provide additional

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70   In line with policy S7: Walking of the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
71   In line with Policy S8: Cycling of the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
72   In line with policies S3: Public Transport (integration and facilities) and S4: Public Transport (service and reliability) of the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026

Connectivity

journeys, or supporting community transport initiatives to enable sustainable access to new development;

iv. Engaging in proposals for improving rail connectivity through the Northern Hub capacity improvement scheme; and

v. Considering options to enhance Bus Priority at junctions and the provision of dedicated bus lanes.

Justification

14.8   The National Planning Policy Framework states that *'transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. Smarter use of technologies can reduce the need to travel. The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel'.* Therefore *'encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion'*.

14.9   To effectively influence the individual's choice about their mode of travel, a range of options must be available that provide accessible, attractive, safe and reliable alternative options in respect of cost, time and convenience. Public transport has an important role to play in planning for sustainability and future needs by facilitating sustainable developments, as well as by encouraging a shift towards low carbon transport. An increase in the number of shorter journeys made on foot will contribute towards sustainability by reducing carbon emissions, as well as being beneficial for health and tackling congestion.

14.10   Cheshire East has strong links with neighbouring areas with an extensive road and rail network including the M6 and West Coast Main Line giving access to Greater Manchester and London Euston.

14.11   As currently proposed, the line of High Speed 2 (HS2) passes through the Borough. HS2 will have significant benefits for the Borough and the sub-region and is anticipated to connect to the West Coast Main Line just south of Crewe and will travel through parts of the Borough. In addition, Manchester International Airport lies immediately to the north of the Borough offering world wide services.

Key Evidence

1. Cheshire East Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
2. Cheshire East Local Transport Plan - Implementation Plan 2011-15
3. Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2026
4. Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan - Implementation Plan 2011-2015
5. Town Strategies for Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich, Sandbach and Wilmslow, Draft Town Strategies for Crewe, Handforth, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Nantwich and Poynton.

Policy CO 2

Enabling Business Growth Through Transport Infrastructure

The Council will support new developments that are (or can be made) well connected and accessible by:

1. Minimising the future need to travel by locating new development in locations where there is a good range of housing, jobs, shops and services already accessible by public transport, cycling and walking[73].

2. Enabling development by supporting transport infrastructure, regeneration and / or behaviour change initiatives that will mitigate the potential impact of development proposals[74] including:

   i. Supporting schemes outlined within the current Infrastructure Delivery Plan / Local Transport Plan. Current major highway schemes listed in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan include:

      a. South East Manchester Multi-Modal Strategy (SEMMMS) and consideration of relief for the A6 corridor;
      b. Poynton Relief Road and improvement to the A523 corridor;
      c. Improvements to Cumberland Street / Hibel Road link, Macclesfield
      d. Middlewich Eastern Bypass;
      e. Congleton Northern Link Road;
      f. M6 J17 improvements (Sandbach);
      g. M6 J16 improvements (Crewe and Alsager);
      h. Improvements to Crewe Green roundabout (Crewe);
      i. Improvements to the A5020 Weston Road roundabout (Crewe);
      j. A new highway link between the A536 and A523 (Macclesfield);
      k. Capacity improvements on the A500 Barthomley link road to M6 (Crewe);
      l. Sydney Road Bridge;
      m. Flag Lane link road (Crewe);
      n. Crewe Green Link Road (Crewe);
      o. Redevelopment of Crewe Railway Exchange;

   ii. Where new or improved infrastructure is provided, supporting measures to improve the walking, cycling and sustainable travel environment on routes relieved of traffic;
   iii. Supporting improvements to communication technology for business, education, shopping and leisure purposes;
   iv. Supporting the improvement of rail infrastructure - especially facilities at railway stations;
   v. Providing recharging points for hybrid or electric vehicles in major developments in order to reduce carbon emissions; and
   vi. Adhering to the current adopted Cheshire East Council Parking Standards for Cars and Bicycles set out in Parking Standards.

3. The Council will support the economic benefits of High Speed 2 whilst ensuring that environmental and community impacts are minimised.

4. Proposals for the safeguarding of disused transport corridors will be supported. Recreational and appropriate uses for disused transport corridors may be allowed provided they do not preclude eventual re-use for transport purposes or impact on public safety.[75]

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73   In line with Policy S1: Spatial Planning of the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
74   In line with Policy B2: Enabling Development of the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
75   This applies to sites of former railway stations, sidings etc, as well as to the alignment of the line. Such areas can provide essential space for interchanges, car parking, or other facilities associated with the new transport route.

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Justification

14.12 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF states that *'significant development should be focused in locations which are or can be made sustainable'* Good transport connections are integral to our ambitious plans for economic growth and to the protection of our environment to ensure a sustainable future for all our residents and businesses.

14.13 Climate change is nationally recognised as one of the most important challenges facing our society. Transport accounts for 25% of the carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions in the UK and personal car travel is the single biggest contributor to individual CO_2 emissions.

14.14 In 2011, residents of Cheshire East had higher than average CO_2 emissions at 8.5 tonnes per person, compared to the national average of 6.9 tonnes per person. In addition, transport accounted for an average of 38% of these emissions.[76]

14.15 One of the most important ways of reducing carbon emissions is to reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car, and to encourage more sustainable modes of transport such as cycling, walking, buses and trains. Development should be located in areas close to existing facilities and shops, and to transport hubs and bus routes. Maintaining or increasing the mix of uses in an area reduces the need to travel, as well as adding vitality and diversity.

14.16 The improvement of key transport links on the highway network will allow a better use of the network for bus users and cyclists. There is also the potential for high occupancy vehicle lanes to be provided in the future.

14.17 Another key element is to facilitate, where possible, ICT, broadband and other technologies that remove the need to travel and to facilitate local access to these technologies. A flexible approach to the emergence and uptake of new technologies will also be required where these offer attractive and affordable communication or transport solutions.

14.18 The Council will seek to ensure that development includes adequate parking provision for cars and bicycles. This should be based on the car parking standards set out in Appendix B.

14.19 There is a case for Britain to develop a high-speed rail network, primarily because there is a need for additional rail capacity in the future if we are to keep our economy moving. Building a high-speed railway (rather than a conventional speed one) is the best way to do this, as the faster journey times encourage people to switch from other, more carbon-hungry, modes of transport such as aviation or car. Building new fast lines also frees up space on the current railway system to allow more commuter or freight services, delivering further economic and environmental benefits.

14.20 High Speed 2 (HS2) is the most significant transport infrastructure project in the UK since the motorways were built in the 1950's and 1960's. It will provide a high speed rail line between London and Birmingham and on to Manchester and Leeds. Further details regarding HS2 will be included in the Site Allocations and Development Policies Development Plan Document.

Key Evidence

1. Cheshire East Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
2. Cheshire East Local Transport Plan - Implementation Plan 2011-15
3. Cheshire East Council's Business Travel Planning Guidance
4. Cheshire East Parking Guidance
5. Town Strategies for Alsager, Crewe, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow.

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76   www.decc.gov.uk

Connectivity

Digital Connections

14.21   Digital technologies have been a major driving force in influencing and shaping industry and society in the 21st Century. Changes that are currently transforming our working, learning, leisure and community environments should be given due consideration and accommodated in the future spatial design of Cheshire East.

Policy CO 3

Digital Connections

1.   High capacity, leading edge digital communication networks will be supported in Cheshire East to meet the needs of businesses and communities, subject to the number(s) of radio and telecommunications masts (and sites for such installations) being appropriately located and kept to a minimum and consistent with the efficient operation of the network.
2.   Developers will be required to work with appropriate providers to deliver the necessary physical infrastructure to accommodate information and digital communications (ICT) networks as an integral part of all appropriate new developments.

Justification

14.22   The National Planning Policy Framework states that *'advanced, high quality communications infrastructure are essential for sustainable economic growth. The development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks also plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services. In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including telecommunications and high speed broadband'*.

14.23   New developments must be 'future-proof' with appropriate digital infrastructure that will meet existing and future communication needs. It is essential that the Council works with developers to make sure that the appropriate digital infrastructure is incorporated, including 4G and 5G networks.

Key Evidence

1.   Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Business Plan (2012 - 2015)
2.   Connecting Cheshire Initiative

Travel Plans and Travel Assessments

Policy CO 4

Travel Plans and Transport Assessments

All major development proposals that are likely to generate significant additional journeys will be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and, where appropriate, a Travel Plan which will address the following requirements:

1.   The Transport Assessment will need to demonstrate that the capacity and efficiency of the highway network will not be severely affected as a result of the development. This should be undertaken in accordance with the latest Cheshire East Council guidance;

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2. The Transport Assessment and associated Travel Plan should demonstrate how the proposed development will link into and enhance existing walking, cycling or public transport infrastructure;

3. The Travel Plan will need to propose measures that will mitigate the impact of increased trips generated on the highway network;

4. The Travel Plan should propose measures to facilitate and encourage the use of sustainable travel alternatives (such as walking, cycling or public transport use), whilst discouraging single occupancy vehicle travel and parking; and

5. Major developments will be required to monitor the effectiveness of the travel plan and the traffic generated by that development and share data with the Local Authority.

Justification

14.24   The National Planning Policy Framework states that *'all developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment'*.

14.25   Proposals for developments that are likely to have a significant transport impact will be required to include a Transport Assessment and / or associated Travel Plan. This provides the opportunity to assess traffic generation, identify measures to reduce traffic congestion and improve accessibility by facilitating and encouraging sustainable modes of transport (walking, cycling, public transport use and car sharing).

14.26   A Travel Plan is essentially an action plan designed to help organisations implement measures to reduce the need for travel and to facilitate and encourage the remainder to travel more sustainably. It should help to reduce local traffic congestion, car parking problems and help to promote healthy lifestyles, economic growth and environmental improvements.

14.27   For any new development, it is important to encourage sustainable travel options from day one of occupation before car-based travel habits become established. Travel Plans can be origin-based (Residential Travel Plans) or destination-based (Workplace / Business Travel Plans).

14.28   Travel Plans can help overcome concerns about new development by finding new ways of addressing travel needs and demonstrating how to influence travel choices. They also offer numerous benefits to developers, businesses, employers, employees, residents and the local community. Further information on the purpose and benefits of Travel Plans and advice on how to prepare a Travel Plan is provided in the Cheshire East Travel Planning Guidance Note.

Key Evidence

1. Cheshire East Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
2. Cheshire East Local Transport Plan - Implementation Plan 2011-15
3. Cheshire East Travel Planning Guidance Note

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