

Cheshire East Local Plan Evidence Base
Assessment of Additional Brownfield
Potential For Housing Development
November 2013



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1.0 Purpose of paper

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to set out the contribution previously developed ("brownfield") land is envisaged to play in the provision of housing proposed in the Pre-Submission Draft Core Strategy, to show to what extent this supply is derived from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2012 (SHLAA) and in particular to report on the outcome of further work carried out to establish whether any additional quantum of previously developed land could come forward for residential development in the Plan period (to 2030).
- 1.2 It is necessary to fully appreciate the role brownfield land could play in delivering housing development because:
- the amount of land needed to meet the objectively assessed housing requirement to 2030 is substantial (27,000 dwellings);
 - Green Belt boundaries around settlements in the north and south of the Borough were drawn many years ago and since then there has been significant development within these places leaving little clear scope for further development;
 - most remaining greenfield land within settlements is in beneficial use; so
 - brownfield land within urban areas represents the only other significant potential source of housing land supply.
- 1.3 The potential use of brownfield land is presented in this paper in the context of changes that have taken place in terms of national and regional policies since the 1990's and the high proportions of new housing built in Cheshire East on previously developed land in the last 10 years or so. Also it must be remembered that land is required for other types of development in addition to housing.
- 1.4 This assessment is a desk based survey. The site assessments have been limited to a review of existing data and evidence only. Therefore, conclusions are drawn from secondary data available at the time of undertaking the assessment. The sources of data are:
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2012 (SHLAA), published February 2013
 - Employment Land Review 2011
 - Sites brought to the attention of the Council through previous stages of consultation on the Core Strategy

2.0 Background to the report

- 2.1 The decline of the UK's manufacturing economy during the 1970's and 1980's left a legacy of de-industrialised and de-industrialising urban centres across the country. In the North West of England - covering Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside - those areas worst affected by economic decline and experiencing the highest levels of social deprivation also contained the highest levels of disused land and buildings.
- 2.2 Addressing this issue gave rise to a series of initiatives including the Strategic Plan for the North West (1973) and the first Cheshire County Structure Plan (1979) directing development to the Mersey Valley and Manchester Conurbation. This

period saw decades of regional and local planning policy directing investment and development back into the region's core cities of Manchester and Liverpool and its key, Principal Towns. Broadly, three mechanisms were employed to focus development back into these areas:

- Establishment of a settlement hierarchy to create an artificial restriction on housing supply in the region's hinterland (including Cheshire East)
- Re-emphasis of the role and function of Green Belt (on urban regeneration)
- Favouring the re-use of previously developed land for housing development through target setting

- 2.3 Until the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 and the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West, these aims were underpinned through a succession of regional and local planning guidance and policy which prioritised development on 'brownfield' land. By 1999 this had resulted in a national minimum target requiring 60% of development to take place on previously developed land, a target which endured from 1999 to 2011.
- 2.4 During this period the aims of national and regional policy were reflected in the plans of Cheshire East Council's legacy authorities including the Structure Plan for Cheshire, each of which were underpinned by a general strategy to support the regeneration of the older urban areas within the north west and west midland regions.
- 2.5 This resulted in the imposition of a set of policies that can collectively be understood as a general restraint on housing development across Cheshire. In the former Macclesfield district, development was limited to reflect the constraints of the South Manchester Green Belt and the need to support redevelopment within Greater Manchester. The sub regional role of Crewe and Nantwich was reflected in allowing for modest development, and in the former Congleton district restraint was exercised to reflect the constraints of the South Cheshire Green Belt and the need to restrain development in Alsager in order to support the regeneration of the Potteries conurbation.
- 2.6 The collective effect of this approach was that significant levels of brownfield land have been brought back into use. Over the past ten years some 70% of development in Cheshire has been delivered through the re-use of brownfield land.

3.0 Brownfield and the NPPF

- 3.1 The introduction of the Localism Act 2011, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategies have all signalled an end to the policy constraint that set brownfield delivery targets and drove development within a tightly regulated regional settlement hierarchy during the previous two decades.
- 3.2 Whilst there are still national policy references to encouraging the re-use of previously developed land (NPPF para.17, para.111) and bringing empty homes back into use (NPPF para.51) these are, in practice, subsumed by the wider intent of the government to deliver sustainable development and ensure Local Plans are positively prepared to meet the objectively assessed housing needs of each local planning authority in England.
- 3.3 In regard to brownfield land the NPPF has established a new policy environment, particularly in relation to how and when such land should be used. Beyond merely

encouraging the effective re-use of previously developed land, national policy no longer holds any quantifiable requirements to meet development targets on brownfield land and instead promotes an agenda of growth to meet identified housing needs in the most sustainable locations.

- 3.4 In short, housing restraint in Cheshire is no longer supported by national and regional policy and can therefore no longer be justified as an aim in itself by local policy.

4.0 Historic Rates of Brownfield Delivery

- 4.1 Although Macclesfield, Crewe and Bollington have an industrial heritage, the historic development of Cheshire's towns has, by and large, been defined by their roles as market and trading towns. This role has generally resulted in a pattern of land use that has ensured there are relatively few large scale areas of historic industrial decline and a corresponding absence of dereliction on any significant scale.
- 4.2 This lack of large scale redevelopment potential, combined with a policy approach restricting greenfield development, has resulted in high levels of land reuse over the last ten years or so. Therefore much of the previously developed land within the Borough has already been redeveloped for new residential and employment purposes whilst that remaining is, for the most part, already in productive use.
- 4.3 Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate the historic delivery of housing development on brownfield land in Cheshire East over the past decade.

Table 1: Net number of residential units developed across Cheshire East by land type (2003 – 2013)

Year	Brownfield	Greenfield	Mixed	Total
2003	375	167	0	542
2004	455	361	60	876
2005	811	329	0	1140
2006	628	268	4	900
2007	752	162	0	914
2008	751	242	3	996
2009	611	246	3	860
2010	587	132	0	719
2011	492	123	0	615
2012	630	176	2	808
2013	184	62	0	246
Total	6276	2268	72	8616

Table 2: Net numbers of residential units developed within Principal Towns and Key Service Centres (2003-2013)

Settlement	Brownfield	Greenfield	Mixed	Total
Alsager	77	4	0	81
Congleton	647	191	0	838
Crewe	1871	219	4	2094
Handforth	169	4	0	173
Knutsford	106	22	15	143
Macclesfield	740	88	0	828
Middlewich	296	154	0	450
Nantwich	504	278	0	782
Poynton	44	0	0	44
Sandbach	359	160	0	519
Wilmslow	247	51	8	306
Total	5060	1171	27	6258

4.4 Over the past decade, some 70% of housing development within the Borough has been completed on previously developed land and, in general, those sites that were most viable are the ones that have been built on. In addition around 80% of all brownfield development has been in the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres.

5.0 Cheshire East Core Strategy

5.1 The historic patterns of growth experienced by Cheshire's towns, the previous restrictive policy framework and the high level of land recycling in the Borough have been significant factors in forming the Pre-Submission Core Strategy.

5.2 A Core Strategy may include an assumed contribution from unspecified 'windfall' sites within its identified supply of housing development land. However, this source may only be included where compelling evidence can support the assertion that such sites have consistently become available over a number of years and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply over the plan period. Where the evidence does not support this assumption, reliance on such windfall sites may undermine the soundness of the plan.

5.3 With the change of policy direction heralded by the NPPF, the prospects of projecting the previous high rates of brownfield delivery into the future are made very uncertain.

5.4 Hence, although the Pre-Submission Core Strategy has identified brownfield sites for inclusion as preferred sites and locations, these proposals represent a greenfield and brownfield land supply that, collectively, the Council consider can reasonably be expected to come forward for housing development in the plan period. These sites have been derived from the SHLAA.

6.0 Brownfield sites identified within the SHLAA

6.1 The production and interpretation of a proportionate evidence base is required to credibly underpin the Pre-Submission Core Strategy. In determining housing need and supply, two sources are of importance. These are the Strategic Housing Market

Assessment (SHMA) which informs the future need for housing, and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which seeks to establish the capacity to deliver that need.

6.2 Correspondingly, the only comprehensive source of housing development site information that can credibly be relied upon to determine where a future potential supply may arise is the SHLAA. This assessment of additional brownfield potential for housing development complements the SHLAA. It also acts as a background topic paper and is part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy. This paper will inform an update to the SHLAA prior to examination of the Core Strategy.

6.3 The SHLAA was last updated in February 2013 and includes a range of brownfield land sites which are suitable for development. The SHLAA categorises potential housing land in three terms:

- **Deliverable:** a site is considered deliverable if it is available now, offers a suitable location for housing development now and there is a reasonable prospect that housing development will be delivered within five years and in particular that the site is viable.
- **Developable:** a site is considered developable where it is in a suitable location for housing development, where there is a reasonable prospect that it will be available for development and could viably be developed at a specific point in time.
- **Not Currently Developable:** a site is considered not currently developable where it is not known when a site can be developed, this may be due to the existence of development constraints and a lack of information indicating when these may be overcome.

6.4 Excluding those sites that are identified for inclusion within the Core Strategy and those sites with planning permission, existing allocations or which are under construction, the 2013 SHLAA identifies capacity for 600 dwellings on brownfield 'Deliverable' sites and 1651 on brownfield 'Developable' sites within the main settlements of the Borough i.e. within the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres.

Table 3: The potential for brownfield development on the identified Deliverable and Developable sites shown in the 2012 SHLAA. Figures are in dwellings by main settlement and exclude existing allocations, proposed allocations, completions and commitments.

Settlement	Deliverable	Developable	Total
Alsager	1	6	7
Congleton	48	156	204
Crewe	90	783	873
Handforth	9	164	173
Knutsford	2	56	58
Macclesfield	195	177	372
Middlewich	191	183	374
Nantwich	42	8	50
Poynton	8	62	70
Sandbach	0	46	46
Wilmslow	14	10	24
Total	600	1651	2251

- 6.5 These figures represent sources of land supply known to the Council. There may be other potential sources of supply which have not been brought forward through the SHLAA process. These potential sources were explored through the assessment process as detailed below.

7.0 The Assessment Process

- 7.1 The purpose of the assessment has been to identify potential urban brownfield capacity that is located within or immediately adjacent to the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres within Cheshire East Borough (as identified by the settlement hierarchy).
- 7.2 The assessment draws from three principal sources of data:
- 2012 SHLAA
 - Employment Land Review 2011
 - Sites brought to the attention of the council during previous stages of consultation
- 7.3 The Employment Land Review 2012 identifies some 294 hectares of land currently in employment use and with the potential for future redevelopment or change of use by 2030. Whilst it is not possible to accurately identify the exact quantum of development this may generate, some of the sites identified within this figure have been identified in the SHLAA and the Pre-Submission Core Strategy.
- 7.4 As mentioned above, the 'Deliverable' and 'Developable' brownfield sites held within the 2012 SHLAA are already part of the identified potential brownfield supply and have been discounted from further consideration. Only those sites identified in the Employment Land Review 2011, those sites identified through previous stages of consultation and those sites which are considered as 'Not Currently Developable' in the 2012 SHLAA have formed the basis of a potential land supply for consideration within this assessment.

Types of potential site:

- 7.5 Within urban areas housing development can arise from a wide range of sources including:
1. Previously developed vacant and derelict land and buildings (non-housing)
 2. Intensification of existing housing area (gardens etc)
 3. Redevelopment of existing housing
 4. Redevelopment of car parks
 5. Conversion / Redevelopment of buildings
 6. Review of other non-housing allocations in plans
 7. Vacant land not previously developed within settlement limits
 8. Other land currently in employment use
 9. Allotments
 10. School playing fields
 11. Sports pitches
 12. Other open spaces

7.6 The potential sites that have been identified have been categorised according to this list and the assessment takes, as a starting point, the definition of brownfield land contained within the NPPF:

7.7 *Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.*

7.8 It should be noted that some of the categories shown in the list above do not fall within the NPPF definition of brownfield land but are included as potential land sources for completeness. However, for the most part, these sources include land that is in active use and is required to remain so to meet the various needs of communities and businesses.

Discounting the potential:

7.9 Once the broad sources of potential land supply were established, a discounting process was undertaken which removed sites falling into the following categories:

- Sites duplicated between different sources (for example where a site is included both in the 2012 SHLAA and has also been identified via the consultation process, the site has only been assessed once)
- Sites identified for inclusion within the Pre-Submission Core Strategy
- Sites identified as 'deliverable' and 'developable' in the 2012 SHLAA
- Sites with existing planning permission
- Sites disconnected from existing urban areas and considered 'rural'
- Sites consisting of entirely greenfield land

7.10 Land is most likely to come forward if it becomes disused and the site is vacated and whilst it is recognised that some uses will cease over time and some sites may be redeveloped for housing, this is very difficult to quantify accurately and therefore, for the purposes of this assessment, the sites with most potential for further investigation are considered to fall under the following categories:

- 1. Previously developed vacant and derelict land and buildings (non-housing)
- 5. Conversion / Redevelopment of buildings

7.11 Therefore all other categories have been discounted.

Assessing the yield:

7.12 Through the discounting process, those sites remaining will constitute the potential brownfield capacity within and adjoining the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres of the Borough. This includes 'Not Currently Developable' SHLAA sites subject to the filtering process identified above.

7.13 Each site has been assessed on the basis of a 30 dwellings per hectare capacity as a typical average density (although actual built densities will vary).

7.14 It should also be noted that the assessment does not consider the availability, deliverability or viability of sites and has been undertaken to understand potential capacity only.

8.0 Results of the Assessment

8.1 In the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres of the Borough, the 2013 SHLAA identifies a capacity of 600 residential dwellings on brownfield sites considered Deliverable, and a capacity of 1651 residential dwellings on brownfield sites considered Developable(see table 3 above). Some of these (smaller) sites may be allocated for housing in the Site Allocations and Policies Document; others may come forward as planning applications.

8.2 The Pre-Submission Core Strategy identifies a significant amount of brownfield land for housing outside the strategic locations of central Crewe and central Macclesfield, amounting to some 1300 homes:

• Manchester Metropolitan University, Alsager:	350
• Twyfords and Cardaway, Alsager:	550
• Brooks Lane Middlewich:	400
Total:	1300

8.3 This assessment considered a total of 691 sites derived from the following sources:

• Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment:	367
• Employment Land Review:	228
• Consultation:	96

8.4 From these sites a total potential capacity of 348 residential dwellings has been identified for further investigation. These are noted by town and shown in Table 4. A more detailed breakdown by site is provided in Appendix 1.

Table 4: Summary findings of the Assessment which identifies the potential number of additional housing units which can be provided on brownfield land within the main settlements during the plan period¹.

Settlement	1. Previously developed vacant and derelict land and buildings (non-housing)	5. Conversion / Redevelopment of buildings	Total
Alsager	0	0	0
Congleton	18	25	43
Crewe	0	5	5
Handforth	96	0	96
Knutsford	1	0	1
Macclesfield	18	75	93
Middlewich	55	2	56
Nantwich	0	0	0
Poynton	0	0	0

¹ Excluding sites identified in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy, Deliverable Sites in the SHLAA and those within category 8 (other land currently in employment use).

Sandbach	11	25	36
Wilmslow	0	19	19
Total	199	149	349

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 A limited amount of additional brownfield land with the potential for housing use has been identified in this assessment amounting to a theoretical total of 349 homes derived from land source categories 1 and 5 above. This figure excludes land considered 'Deliverable' or 'Developable' as identified in the 2012 SHLAA to avoid double counting.
- 9.2 The outcome of this work supports the case that there is a need to change Green Belt boundaries to accommodate housing (and other) development. The growth of towns in the north of the Borough is restrained by existing Green Belt boundaries and the development needs of these towns cannot be accommodated on brownfield land alone.
- 9.3 However there is scope within central areas of Crewe and Macclesfield to meet the envisaged scale of housing redevelopment identified in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy. Table 5 below demonstrates potential development capacity identified in the 2012 SHLAA and within categories 1 and 5 of this assessment.
- 9.4 The SHLAA identifies a potential deliverable and developable capacity of 873 homes in Crewe and 372 homes in Macclesfield. The assessment of other land sources identified in this paper suggests that there is potential capacity to deliver a further 5 homes in Crewe and 93 homes in Macclesfield. The combined figures for potential brownfield capacity for housing are shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Summary of identified potential for housing development on brownfield land in Macclesfield and Crewe ²

Settlement	SHLAA Deliverable Homes	SHLAA Developable Homes	1. Previously developed, vacant or derelict land and buildings (non-housing)	5. Conversion / Redevelopment of buildings	Total
Crewe	90	783	0	5	878
Macclesfield	195	177	18	75	465
Total	285	960	18	80	1343

- 9.5 Although these figures are below the stated capacities of the central Crewe and Macclesfield strategic locations in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy, it is reasonable to expect further sources of brownfield supply will arise in these areas, including from sites falling into the category of 'Other land currently in employment use' (i.e. category 8 referred to in paragraph 7.5). The validity of this assumption will be regularly reviewed as part of the Local Plan monitoring process.

² The initial publication of this paper included errors in Table 5 that have been amended

Appendix 1 - Assessment of additional brownfield potential for housing land in Cheshire East by site and residential units (at 30 dwellings per hectare).

Settlement / Site	1. Previously developed vacant and derelict land and buildings (non-housing)	5. Conversion / Redevelopment of buildings	Total
Congleton	18	25	43
Bath House, Colehill Bank, Congleton	2		2
Former Infants School, Spragg Street, Congleton.		2	2
Garages, Banky Fields, Congleton		23	23
Land at Mill Green, Congleton	2		2
Land off Forge Lane (south), Congleton	14		14
Crewe		5	5
High Street / Oak Street, Crewe		5	5
Handforth	96		96
Land at Knowle House, Sagars Road, Handforth.	1		1
LAND TO THE REAR OF MARKS AND SPENCERS AND TESCO STORES, EARL ROAD, HANDFORTH	95		95
Knutsford	1		1
Conservative Club, Knutsford	1		1
Macclesfield	18	75	93
Crompton Road Garage, Macclesfield		2	2
Crompton Road Mill, Macclesfield		2	2
Crompton Road Tavern, Macclesfield		2	2
Derelict buildings, Buxton Road/Union Road	18		18
Highfield House (nursing home), Park Lane, Macclesfield		8	8
Macclesfield Leisure Centre, Priory Lane		62	62
Middlewich	55	2	56

LAND AT LEADSMITHY STREET, MIDDLEWICH		2	2
Land at Strata Surveys off Holmes Chapel Road, Middlewich	52		52
Land off Faulkner Drive, Middlewich	3		3
Sandbach	11	25	36
Garage site, Lightley Close, Sandbach		4	4
GARAGES, BAILEY CRESCENT, SANDBACH		1	1
Land to rear of 474 Crewe Road, Sandbach		1	1
Land to south of Rookery Bridge, Hall Lane, Sandbach	11		11
PROVIDENCE SCHOOL, CHAPEL STREET, SANDBACH		1	1
Waterworks Farm, Dingle Lane, Sandbach		18	18
Wilmslow		19	19
Former George & Dragon Public House, Church Street		5	5
Rifleman's Arms, Moor Street		7	7
Robinson's Brewery - Kings Arms		7	7
Total	199	149	349