## Contents

1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 2

1.1 Purpose of the Document ............................................................................................................. 2

1.2 Contributing to the Rural Issues Consultation ............................................................................. 3

2 Rural Issues ...................................................................................................................................... 4

2.1 Rural Economy .............................................................................................................................. 4

2.1.1 Agriculture .................................................................................................................................. 4

2.1.2 Diversification & Re-use of Rural Buildings .............................................................................. 7

2.1.3 Tourism ....................................................................................................................................... 11

2.1.4 Minerals Extraction ..................................................................................................................... 13

2.2 Green Belt ..................................................................................................................................... 16

2.3 Landscape Character ..................................................................................................................... 20

2.4 Biodiversity ................................................................................................................................... 23

2.5 Heritage .......................................................................................................................................... 28

2.6 Renewable Energy ......................................................................................................................... 31

2.7 Rural Housing ............................................................................................................................... 35

2.8 Rural Transport and Community Facilities ..................................................................................... 40

## Appendix

A Glossary of Terms ................................................................................................................................. 46
1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Document

1.1.1 This report is to serve as a discussion paper for the Rural Stakeholder Workshop scheduled to take place on 16th September 2011, as part of the council's Place Shaping Consultation. It will also provide the starting point for any organisation or individual to offer their views on matters relating to rural areas. The report performs the following roles:

- It provides a summary of existing local plan policies in relation to a variety of topic areas that affect Cheshire East's rural areas;
- It identifies emerging Government guidance and other sources of pertinent information that relate to each of these topic areas; and
- It identifies some of the key challenges facing rural areas that need to be addressed as part of the council's local development framework.

1.1.2 In particular, this report identifies some of the key implications of the forthcoming national planning policy framework. The framework is currently at the consultation stage and will, upon completion, replace existing planning policy statements and provide a single source of national planning guidance that local authorities will have to take into account when preparing their local development frameworks and performing their development management functions. It is clear from the draft version of the framework that there will be a dramatic reduction in the amount and detail of national planning guidance; as a consequence local authorities may have to produce more locally specific guidance on many topics.

1.1.3 The main aim of the Rural Stakeholder Workshop is to seek the expertise of a number of key agencies to help determine an appropriate way forward in planning the future of our rural communities over the next 20 years. Through the Place Shaping Consultation, all organisations and individuals with a stake in our rural areas will have the opportunity to have their say on:

- Whether there are any further challenges for rural areas that need to be addressed;
- The future strategic planning policy position for rural areas in Cheshire East; and
- How more detailed policies should be developed for the local development framework.
1.2 Contributing to the Rural Issues Consultation

1.2.1 If you would like to contribute please send us your views by 30th November 2011 using the accompanying comments form.

1.2.2 The comments form is also available online at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ldf or further copies can be obtained by contacting the Spatial Planning Team using the details below or by telephone on 01270 685893.

1.2.3 Comments forms can be submitted in one of the following ways:

Online via the Consultation Portal accessed from www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ldf

By email to ldfconsultation@cheshireeast.gov.uk

By post to Spatial Planning, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, CW11 1HZ

1.2.4 This document and the comments form will also be made available in Cheshire East libraries and Cheshire East Customer Service Centres.
2 Rural Issues

2.1 Rural Economy

Overview

2.1.1 Cheshire East has extensive areas of countryside which play active and valuable roles in the local economy. The countryside contributes to the local economy through agriculture (e.g. production of food and energy crops), land management (e.g. providing an attractive setting to encourage inward investment), tourism (e.g. drawing visitor spending into Cheshire East) and in many other ways as well. The planning system is an important mechanism for protecting the countryside, whilst at the same time ensuring that opportunities for maximising the productivity of our rural areas are taken. Some of the key issues facing the rural economy are discussed below.

2.1.1 Agriculture

Context

2.1.1.1 Cheshire East has a significant amount of high quality farmland: for example around 12,753 ha is grade 2 farmland (around 11% of the authority area), which is concentrated centrally running north-south through the borough[1].

2.1.1.2 In 2007 agriculture directly provided approximately 5,300 jobs, generated 1.7% of the area’s GVA, and accounted for 80% of the area’s land usage[2]. In addition to such direct economic benefits, land management practices are vital for enhancing the character of the countryside.

2.1.1.3 The benefits of a successful agricultural sector extend far beyond the countryside, as research on local[1] For further information on agricultural land classification see: http://naturalengland.etradenstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/Product.aspx?ProductID=88ff926a-3177-4090-aecb-00e6c9030b29


Figure 2.1 Agricultural Land Classification in Cheshire East
food webs has shown that local produce can reduce ‘food miles’, increase consumer choice, support local retailers and as a consequence enhance the diversity, distinctiveness and vibrancy of our towns\(^3\).

2.1.1.4 In order to support the agricultural sector, extensive permitted development rights exist to reduce the burden on farmers and provide them with greater flexibility\(^4\). Nonetheless, in planning for economic development for rural areas, PPS4 requires local authorities to strictly control development in the open countryside away from existing settlements. PPS7 para 28 seeks to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land (classes 1, 2 and 3a) from development.

Existing Policy Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Key Policies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>The plan strategy seeks to direct development into locations that are well served by existing infrastructure and reduce the need for development on greenfield sites. In rural areas the primary location for development is in the designated villages. Generally, the plan seeks to support economic development that would provide further opportunities for residents to work locally. Development should be of a small-scale and appropriate to a rural area, or relate to an existing business. Acceptable uses are considered to be B1 uses which do not impact on local communities, however, small-scale is not defined. New built economic development in the countryside is more restricted. It should be of a small-scale (described as less than 5,000 sq ft), relate to a business that requires a rural location, and require a new building to be constructed (i.e. No existing buildings in the locality are available to be converted). Policy NR8 has not been saved, however, it did previously stipulate that irreversible development on agricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a would only permissible if the need for the development is supported by the local plan, where no other more appropriate land is available (e.g. lower agricultural land classes or derelict land), and the proposal would not break up a viable agricultural land holding.</td>
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</tbody>
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The plan supports economic development in villages provided the scale and character of the development is appropriate for its surroundings; no fixed parameter is given to indicate the maximum scale of a development.

Economic development outside settlements is restricted to appropriate small industries, commercial enterprises (including small scale business developments) and small-scale workshop units within or adjacent to farm buildings or other existing employment areas.

A policy has been saved which protects agricultural land of grades 1, 2, and 3a, and specifies the same criteria as the deleted policy for Congleton. An additional policy specifically permits agricultural development requiring planning permission provided it meets various criteria, including establishing the necessity of the scheme for agricultural purposes and reducing the impact on the surrounding landscape.

In the areas beyond green belt appropriate small industries and enterprises are permitted provided they contribute to the growth and diversification of the rural economy. As with the other local plan, controls are tighter for land within the green belt (green belt controls or discussed in a later section of this document).

Policy GC13 set out the approach for protecting agricultural land, however, this policy has not been saved. The reason given is that the guidance was superceded by para 28 of PPS7.

Further Guidance


2.1.1.5 The national framework seeks to raise the quality of life in rural areas by promoting thriving, inclusive and distinctive rural economies. Authorities will be required to prepare policies that support the sustainable growth of rural businesses, promote the development and diversification of farm enterprises (see next sub-section), and support rural tourism. Local authorities will also be required to take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is necessary, lower quality
agricultural land should be used in preference to good quality land; the only exceptions will be where this would lead to conflict with other sustainability considerations or where poorer quality land is either unavailable or unsuitable.

**CPRE (2011) Local Food Webs**

2.1.1.6 CPRE are leading on a 'Mapping Local Food Webs' project, which seeks to increase policy-makers' awareness of the importance of local food networks and identify ways to support them. A location specific project has recently been completed for Knutsford. Key recommendations have included the need to maintain town-centre first policies and support local smaller food retailers, to encourage local food sourcing and consider the impact of development on local food webs, to promote local markets, and to protect high quality farmland.

**Cheshire East Council (2011) Economic Development Strategy for Cheshire East**

2.1.1.7 The strategy sets out the council's understanding of the local economy and economic trends that may impact upon it, identifies economic development objectives and priorities for the area, and provides a strategic policy context. The strategy seeks to maximise the role played by the area's smaller towns and their rural hinterlands in the local economy.

**Challenges**

2.1.1.8 Agriculture is a significant component of the rural economy, and an activity which can directly influence economy of local towns. Cheshire East has much high quality agricultural land which needs to be protected. It will be important to balance the need to protect this land with the requirement for additional land to accommodate Cheshire East's development growth.

2.1.1.9 The forthcoming national policy framework will remove much of the detail of planning policy for economic development in rural areas, and there may be a need for further guidance to be developed as part of local development framework. For example, within the existing local plans there is general policy support for small-scale economic development appropriate for rural areas; however, it is not always clear what constitutes a development of an appropriate scale or character for a rural location.

**2.1.2 Diversification & Re-use of Rural Buildings**

**Context**

2.1.2.1 Over recent decades the agricultural industry in England has experienced significant changes that have led to the restructuring of farm businesses and to a dramatic decrease in agricultural related jobs. As a consequence there has been an impact on the income of those working in the agricultural industry. These changes
have also affected the farming community in Cheshire East and have led to the decline of the traditional rural economy. Increasingly there has been a need to diversify rural economic activity and for farmers to supplement their income with non-agricultural activities. Through the decline of agriculture and changes in agricultural practices, many farm buildings have become surplus to requirements. However, many of these buildings have the potential for alternative uses such as business, tourism and leisure or residential.

2.1.2.2 PPS4 requires local planning authorities to support the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside (especially those adjacent or close to towns or villages) for economic development. In preparing policies, authorities should set out the permissible scale of replacement dwellings and set out when replacement would not be acceptable. In addition, authorities are to set out the criteria to be applied to planning applications for farm diversification, and support diversification for business purposes that are consistent with the scale and environmental impact for the rural location. Equine enterprises are to be supported provided that such enterprises maintain environmental quality and countryside character.

### Existing Policy Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Key Policies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CBC</strong></td>
<td>PS7-8, E5-E6, BH15-BH16, RC5, CBC SPD: Rural Development</td>
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To supplement local plan policies Congleton Borough Council adopted an SPD to provide detailed policy guidance on rural development. The local plan policies provide a positive framework for development proposals which support the growth of existing rural enterprises and enable farm diversification (e.g. establishment of farm shops).

Existing buildings, in order for them to be converted, should not require substantial reconstruction, and be for a use which does not have an adverse impact on the surrounding countryside. The architectural character of buildings should also be protected as part of development schemes.

In the first instance, the new use should have an economic end-purpose (e.g. B1 office uses). Conversion of rural buildings to residential uses will only be considered where reasonable attempts to market the site for business re-use have been undertaken, where the nature of the site makes residential use the only appropriate use of the building, or where residential conversion is a sub-ordinate part of a scheme for business re-use (e.g. live-work schemes).
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buildings considered suitable for most forms of re-use include older agricultural buildings such as barns and shippons, pump houses and old mills. Modern agricultural buildings are not considered suitable due to their lack of openings and large volumes; however, the SPD recognises that such buildings could function as stabling or exercise areas for horses. Equestrian uses are considered appropriate in rural areas provided that they do not occupy the highest quality agricultural land (grades 1, 2 or 3a), and they do not harm nature conservation features, landscape character or the residential amenity of the immediate and surrounding areas.</td>
<td>NE13, NE15, NE16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crewe &amp; Nantwich Local Plan supports rural diversification schemes which create or maintain jobs, or support farm diversification, provided they are located within or adjacent to existing farm or commercial complexes, and maintain landscape quality. The re-use of rural buildings for commercial, industrial or recreational uses will be allowed if: the buildings are of sound and substantial construction; the development would not result in the dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice the vitality of a nearby town or village; architectural character is respected; development impacts could be managed (e.g. highways impact); operational impacts (e.g. dust, noise, vibrations) do not harm the local environment; the visual amenity of the countryside would not be harmed. Re-use for residential development is only permissible where the rural building is not suitable for conversion for economic development. Such buildings may be considered unsuitable if the location / character of the building is inappropriate, if the applicant has made every reasonable attempt to secure a business re-use of the building, or if the residential proposal is a subordinate part in a scheme for wider economic development.</td>
<td>NE13, NE15, NE16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The Macclesfield Local Plan also promotes an economic development first approach to the re-use of rural buildings. Such re-use is contingent upon proposals: not having a materially greater impact on the openness of the | GC8, GC9, DC32, SPG: Equestrian Facilities | Rural Issues
<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>countryside than the present use; ensuring that buildings are of substantial and permanent construction; and being of an appropriate design. Residential proposals will only be permitted where the nature / location of the building makes it unsuitable for business use or where every reasonable attempt to secure a business re-use for the building has been made. The scheme should not result in an isolated dwelling subject to further policy tests. Policy DC32 of the plan allows for equestrian facilities subject to a range of criteria which are elaborated upon within the SPG. Larger scale facilities in particular should utilise redundant buildings or be sited within an existing complex of buildings, form part of a farm diversification scheme, and remain as part of the original holding.</td>
<td></td>
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**Further Guidance**

**Communities & Local Government (2011) Draft National Planning Policy Framework**

2.1.2.3 The proposed policy framework provides a highly supportive stance toward the re-use of rural buildings. The policy framework states that in the green belt the re-use of a rural building of permanent substantial construction is appropriate, and that throughout the countryside agricultural diversification schemes are to be supported.

**Challenges**

2.1.2.4 The diversification of the rural economy, and the re-use of rural buildings, is generally supported. There are a number of issues associated with this topic however. These include the definition of what uses are generally considered appropriate for rural buildings; it is noted that the former Congleton Borough Council SPD7 for Rural Development did provide a list of uses that the former council considered appropriate, and it may be desirable to retain such a list.

2.1.2.5 Another issue is the potential for suburbanisation of areas of countryside. For example, where residential conversions are undertaken, permitted development rights, if not modified, could result in the appearance of garages, gates and walls, thus changing the character of these areas. There is also the potential conflict of sustainability objectives where new dwellings or clusters of dwellings are located in rural areas that are distant from local services and public transport networks.
2.1.3 Tourism

Context

2.1.3.1 Cheshire is well renowned for its attractive countryside and market towns. For tourism purposes, the area advertises itself based on the quality and nature of its rural areas: "Rolling hills, sweeping valleys and serene rural landscapes offer a perfect sanctum away from the stresses and strains of everyday life. When you come and visit Cheshire, you say goodbye to hustle and bustle and arrive in a sea of tranquillity".5 Cheshire East has many tourism assets located in rural areas, ranging from stately homes such as Tatton Park and Lyme Park, to visitor centres such as that at Jodrell Bank, and the area's extensive canal networks and rights of way.

Existing Policy Framework

<table>
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<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>The plan policies allow for tourism development in rural areas, notably where it involves the re-use of an existing building, expands an existing facility, or is a new small-scale facility in the open countryside. Whilst most tourist development is expected to take place within the urban areas, it is recognised that certain tourist uses will require a rural location. Recreational facilities in the countryside are acceptable subject to certain criteria being met, relating to the environmental impact, servicing requirements, and taking opportunities for integrating facilities into networks of green spaces and public rights of way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNBC</td>
<td>Crewe &amp; Nantwich Local Plan policies provide a similarly permissive framework for recreational developments, which also must meet certain criteria such as minimising impact on the highways network, reducing environmental impact, and taking any opportunities for linking proposals with other visitor attractions. In terms of visitor accommodation, new facilities are directed to existing settlements, with only residential conversions to guest houses being explicitly supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBC</td>
<td>The policy relating to visitor accommodation was not saved following the adoption of the RSS. In terms of general tourism development, the plan supports improvement of existing facilities and provision of new ones, provided there is no adverse impact on the character of the area, and the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Marketing Cheshire (2011) http://www.visitchester.com/site/discover
development is appropriate in terms of scale and type to the location. The re-use of existing rural buildings, including for short stay holiday accommodation, is supported, although conditions and other legal instruments will be used to ensure such accommodation does not subsequently become private residential accommodation.

Further Guidance


2.1.3.2 The policy framework requires planning policies to support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.

Marketing Cheshire (2011) Visit Cheshire

2.1.3.3 The Visit Cheshire website\(^6\) covers the areas of Warrington and Cheshire West and Chester as well as Cheshire East. The website markets the area to potential visitors and highlights local events and other tourism assets within the area.

Cheshire East Council (2011) Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy

2.1.3.4 The visitor strategy notes the value of tourism to Cheshire East, contributing £653m a year to the local economy. Particular targets in the strategy include raising the level of the visitor economy to £818m by 2015, and increasing the number of jobs in tourism by 1,271 up to the same period. Evidence underpinning the strategy however indicates that the rural tourism sector in Cheshire East is underperforming, with average lengths of stay for visitors below the regional average, and a low number of survey respondents considering Cheshire as a short-break destination compared with other rural destinations\(^7\).

Challenges

2.1.3.5 One of the key issues in planning for rural tourism is to decide whether further hotels or visitor accommodation should be permitted within villages or as part of farm diversification schemes, or whether they should be concentrated in the market towns and higher order settlements. Cheshire East may also need to be more

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6 Website available via following link: [http://www.visitcheshire.com](http://www.visitcheshire.com)

7 TEAM (2009) Destination Report
proactive in exploring the potential for developing small-scale visitor attractions linked to the area's canals, countryside or other heritage features (such as the area's railway heritage). Such actions will depend on the determination as to what kind of tourist the area aspires to attract, and how best to cater for them (e.g. day visitors, or weekend break visitors).

2.1.3.6 Managing the impacts of tourism development where it does occur will be vital. Some of the key issues include accessibility and the ability of the highway network to accommodate the volume of traffic generated by such uses, linking these developments to other visitor attractions, and maintaining the character of locations in which developments occur (especially in terms of impact on the landscape). It is also important to ensure that developments such as holiday lodges permitted in countryside locations do not subsequently turn into permanent residential accommodation.

2.1.4 Minerals Extraction

2.1.4.1 The underlying geology of Cheshire East provides a diverse range of mineral deposits and resources. Silica sand; construction sand and gravel; sandstone; salt (brine); and peat are all currently extracted at sites located across the borough. Clay and coal resources are also found but no longer commercially worked.

2.1.4.2 The supply of minerals as essential raw materials to industries such as manufacturing, construction, and chemicals makes their provision economically important on a wider scale.

Figure 2.2 Mineral Sites in Cheshire East
2.1.4.3 The silica (or industrial) sand resource found in Cheshire East is one of the most important in the country\(^8\). It is used in a range of applications, principally glass manufacture and foundry casting but also for horticultural and leisure based uses. Silica sands produced in Cheshire East supply markets nationwide.

2.1.4.4 Sand and gravel resources are used primarily as an aggregate material in construction. The Cheshire sub-region (Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester combined) has historically provided the largest proportion of sand and gravel in the North West (approximately 50%) supplying markets within the region and further afield.\(^9\)

2.1.4.5 Hard rock (sandstone) quarried in the borough is used principally as building stone although quantities are crushed for sale as an aggregate material. Crushed hard rock produced in Cheshire East contributes to less than 1% of regional supply serving primarily local markets within the North West.\(^10\)

2.1.4.6 Some of the most significant resources of underground salt in the country are found in Cheshire East.\(^11\) Brinefields near Warmingham supply salt (in the form of brine) to the British Salt works at Middlewich to be processed for a wide variety of end uses.

2.1.4.7 Peat extraction takes place at two sites in Cheshire East but production is small in scale.

**Existing Policy Framework**

<table>
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<tr>
<td>CRMLP</td>
<td>Provides comprehensive background and planning policies for minerals development in both Cheshire East and Cheshire West &amp; Chester Boroughs. Seeks to achieve the correct balance between the release of sufficient minerals and the protection of environmental resources. Proposes that future working of salt, silica sand and sand and gravel should come from limited identified areas (Area of Search and Preferred Areas). Contains detailed policies to minimise the impact of mineral working enabling rigorous monitoring of site operations and ensuring positive site restoration on set timescales for both phasing and completion.</td>
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</tbody>
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8 BGS Mineral Planning Factsheet - Silica Sand  
9 NWRAWP Annual Monitoring Report 2010  
Further Guidance


2.1.4.8 Affirms the provision of minerals infrastructure as a strategic priority to be delivered through strategic polices in the Local Plan. As a key objective, the planning system is to secure an adequate and steady supply of minerals needed to support sustainable growth whilst encouraging the recycling of suitable materials to minimise the requirement for new primary extraction. Sets out draft policy requiring Local Authorities to take into account aggregate apportionments, maintain mineral landbanks and safeguard mineral resources. Also contains policies facilitating sustainable use of energy minerals and the encouragement of underground gas storage where local geological circumstances indicate feasible.


2.1.4.9 Provides information and guidance on how national planning policy concerning Minerals Safeguarding Areas should be complied with. Gives advice on how to define safeguarding areas to prevent the unnecessary sterilisation of minerals resources.

Challenges

2.1.4.10 The key challenge faced is ensuring an adequate and steady supply of minerals needed by society and the economy is provided, but done so in a sustainable and environmentally acceptable way without irreversible damage.\(^{(12)}\)

2.1.4.11 In planning for future mineral development, Cheshire East must meet agreed levels of sub-regional aggregate supply\(^{(13)}\) and the maintenance of mineral landbanks\(^{(14)}\) which will involve an understanding of where future mineral workings in Cheshire East can appropriately take place.

2.1.4.12 Cheshire East faces the challenge of ensuring that its proven, and in the case of silica sand, scarce mineral resources are not needlessly sterilised by non-mineral development leaving sufficient supplies for future generations. This will involve considering which mineral resources need safeguarding and then to what extent through the definition of 'Minerals Safeguarding Areas'. The safeguarding of minerals related infrastructure will also need to be considered.


\(^{(13)}\) Current apportionment figures for Cheshire (Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester combined) are detailed in the ‘North West RAWP Annual Monitoring Report 2010’. Sand and gravel: 24.18 million tonnes up until 2020 equating to an average of 1.51 million tonnes per annum. Crushed rock, 0.66 million tonnes until 2020 equating to an average of 0.04 million tonnes per annum. Work is currently underway on splitting the Cheshire sub-regional apportionment figure between the two respective Mineral Planning Authorities of Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester.

\(^{(14)}\) National indicator for sand and gravel 7 years, crushed rock 10 years (collective of sites across Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester). Silica sand 10 years at individual sites.
2.1.4.13 As minerals can only be worked where they naturally occur, potential conflict can arise between the benefits minerals bring to society and the environmental impacts of their extraction and supply. Cheshire East must face the challenge of protecting the environment and seeking to enhance its overall quality once extraction has ceased through high standards of site restoration.

2.1.4.14 Geological circumstances in Cheshire East have been proven suitable for underground gas storage in cavities created following the controlled solution mining of brine. As such, planning policies will need to consider future potential for this purpose. National energy policy has placed emphasis on the need for new energy infrastructure including gas storage\(^\text{(15)}\).

2.1.4.15 The council is in the process of preparing a more detailed technical discussion paper to explore the issues surrounding planning for minerals extraction in Cheshire East.

2.2 Green Belt

Context

2.2.1 The concept of the green belt dates back to 1935 when the Greater London Regional Planning Committee introduced it, initially “to provide a reserve supply of public open spaces and of recreational areas and to establish a green belt or girdle of open space”. In 1947, the Town & Country Planning Act provided a mechanism for local authorities up and down the country to designate areas of land as green belt in their first development plans. In PPG2, the purposes of designating land as Green Belt are set out as follows:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

\(^{15}\) DECC (2011) Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) Version for Approval
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

### 2.2.2 Figure 2.3 illustrates the coverage of the green belt in Cheshire East.

#### Existing Policy Framework

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CBC</strong></td>
<td><strong>PS7, PS8, H6, E6</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The policy framework seeks to limit development in the green belt to the following uses:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Agriculture / forestry</td>
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<td>- Essential facilities for outdoor sport, recreation, or other uses which preserve the openness of the Green Belt</td>
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<td>- Limited new dwellings (e.g. affordable housing), limited extensions and alterations, and limited employment development</td>
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<td>- Infill development in designated villages</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Re-use of rural buildings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside of the green belt similarly restrictive policies apply for the open countryside.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CNBC</strong></td>
<td><strong>NE1, NE2, NE4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The policy framework for Crewe is equally restrictive in the green belt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In most locations outside the green belt (namely the open countryside), development is limited to those uses considered appropriate in the green belt, with minor infill development also considered acceptable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In addition, a green gap policy exists which seeks to limit development in areas which would adversely affect the landscape and erode the physical gaps between the settlements of Crewe, Nantwich, Shavington and Haslington.</td>
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</table>
The policy approach to green belt in Macclesfield is similar to that in Congleton, although the policy guidance is more detailed.

A number of major developed sites that currently lie in the Green Belt are permitted to be redeveloped or accommodate infill development provided they don’t have a greater impact on the Green Belt than the site already has.

Between the Green Belt and some urban edges the Local Plan contains a policy which seeks to safeguard land around Handforth and Wilmslow for future development.

Outside the Green Belt and Areas of Special County Value, policies adopt a flexible approach to support the provision of key worker dwellings for example, and the expansion of existing industrial premises in so far as they do not harm the character of rural areas.

Further Guidance


2.2.3 The NPPF states that the general designation of green belts has been long established, and that there should be no need to designate additional land for this purpose, notwithstanding exceptional circumstances. The framework reiterates the guidance in PPG2 that green belt boundaries can be reviewed when preparing local development frameworks to ensure sufficient land is available to meet future needs. It also retains the presumption against inappropriate development, which includes most forms of new built development. The framework does however propose that the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (excluding temporary buildings), whether redundant or in continuing use, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the green belt, might not be inappropriate development. Other types of development which constitute appropriate uses for the green belt include: minerals extraction; engineering operations; local transport infrastructure requiring a green belt location; the re-use of existing buildings (of substantial and permanent construction); development brought forward under a community right to build order.
2.2.4 The TCPA has long supported the green belt since its inception, however, it believes that a reappraisal of the roles, purposes and extent of the green belt is now required. Criticisms have included: the lack of flexibility, particularly with regard to local small-scale development, in green belt policy; the preclusion of options for sustainable urban extensions which may necessitate greenfield sites, but which conflict with green belt objectives; the restrictive nature of green belts inhibiting new forms of development supporting rural diversification, and other projects including renewable energy facilities, small-holdings for organic market gardening, and so on.

Challenges

2.2.5 The green belt serves an important role in protecting the countryside and in ensuring that settlements do not merge and retain their individual character. It also helps to promote regeneration by encouraging development on brownfield land, and in areas in need of new development (including Manchester and the Potteries).

2.2.6 Cheshire East has significant development requirements arising from population and economic trends. Many existing settlements are tightly bounded by green belt however, and have limited areas of brownfield land available for development. The situation may arise where development may be forced into less sustainable locations (in terms of accessibility for example) as a result of the lack of available development opportunities within the settlements and the green belt. The challenge is to consider whether or not the boundaries of the green belt should be reviewed to facilitate the development of land to meet current and projected development needs. The alternative would be to identify sites in settlements located outside the green belt to meet the needs of the green belt towns, with the consequential impacts on these towns and the surrounding countryside.

2.2.7 It has been recognised that not all land within the green belt is presently serving a positive function; such land may provide opportunities for promoting improved access to the countryside, for sport and recreation, and for improvements to the quality of the landscaping and settings of towns. It is important to maximise the contribution made by land within the green belt towards enhancing the environment and quality of life in Cheshire East.

2.2.8 A final policy issue is the application of controls for development that seeks to alter, extend or replace existing buildings which lie within the green belt. The issue of replacement dwellings in the former Macclesfield Borough is a particular problem.

2.2.9 Such challenges also apply to areas beyond the green belt, including the locally designated green gap around Crewe and open countryside in general.
2.3 Landscape Character

Context

2.3.1 Cheshire East has extensive areas of high quality landscape. Although there are no nationally recognised areas of outstanding natural beauty, local designations have been developed in the past to identify and protect areas of high landscape value. Such areas are known as areas of special county value, and the distribution of these are shown in Figure 2.4. These areas are focused around the Peak District, between Macclesfield and Alderley Edge, north of Knutsford, between Congleton and Holmes Chapel, and around the fringes of the former Crewe & Nantwich Borough.

2.3.2 The landscape in Cheshire East varies widely, from low-lying relatively flat farmlands to upland mosses near the Peaks, and historic country manor estates to river valleys. It is the larger open plains which tend to characterise Cheshire as a whole. By contrast, woodland cover is estimated to be around 4% across the county area (16), this compares with an average for England of 9% and 12% for the UK (17).

Existing Policy Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Key Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>PS9, NR1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The plan designates two broad locations as areas of special county value, the Dane Valley and Congleton Cloud / Timbersbrook / Roe Park / Mow Cop. Within these areas there is a general presumption against development subject to exceptions being met. Development that is acceptable in these areas must be sited and designed to minimise its impact on the landscape (e.g. by respecting traditional buildings forms, providing landscaping schemes etc).

17 Forestry Commission (2010) http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-84whmp
### Summary

Development affecting trees and woodlands must take into account the likely impact on these features. The plan seeks to retain existing woodland due to the contribution it makes to the quality of the landscape. Tree surveys may be required, and conditions imposed on planning permissions to protect these assets.

### CNBC

The formally designated areas of special county value cover Peckforton / Bickerton Hills, the Weaver Valley, the Cholmondeley Estate, and Wirswall / Marbury / Combermere.

Within these areas housing, commercial and industrial development is only allowed if they meet an agricultural need or satisfy the requirements of the rural economy, meet the essential needs of local people, enhance people’s enjoyment of these areas, and do not have an adverse impact on the character or features for which the areas have been designated.

The plan commits the authority to implementing tree planting schemes for a number of sites within its ownership such as Mill Street, Crewe and Nantwich Riverside.

Local policy also states that landscaping and tree-planting schemes will be secured as part of proposals for a number of specific sites to be brought forward by developers, and on sites that are gateways to the Borough.

### MBC

There are several extensive areas of special county value in the former Macclesfield Borough area. The local plan states that the council will protect and enhance areas of special county value, and protect them from development that will have an adverse impact on the character appearance of these areas. In addition, the plan seeks to maintain the diversity of its landscapes, by protecting their unique features. The plan will permit, subject to compliance with other plan policies, developments that seek to create and restore hedgerow, dry stone walls, woodlands and other natural features.

Woodlands are to be protected, and the plan provides a commitment to developing a 'strategic framework of woodland'. A particular focus for the restoration of woodlands is the Royal Historic Forest of Macclesfield.
Further Guidance

Cheshire County Council (2008) Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment

2.3.3 The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment provides an up to date classification of the whole of Cheshire’s (East and West) landscape which can be used for making assessments of landscape character for development management and as a basis in the formulation of a Landscape Strategy in the future. The assessment identifies discrete areas within the county which have particular traits in terms of their landscapes, and highlights issues that must be addressed when considering the impact of development proposals on the landscape. It provides a new approach to managing the impact of development on the landscape, which does not prioritise specific sections of the authority area. The figure below illustrates the range of landscape character types across Cheshire.
2.3.4 Cheshire East Council, in partnership with neighbouring local authorities, has developed a Green Infrastructure Framework. The framework provides a strategic policy context to manage 'green infrastructure'. The framework contains recommendations and proposals for action plans to enhance the sub-region's green infrastructure, and maximise the range of functions this infrastructure performs (such functions include the provision of an attractive and accessible setting for an area's residents and visitors).


2.3.5 The draft framework aims to promote a strategic approach in local plans for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure, and give great weight to protecting the landscape in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is no detail on the approach to landscape management outside these areas.

Challenges

2.3.6 The key challenge is to protect and enhance the character and quality of Cheshire East's landscapes. The present mechanism however of identifying specific areas of 'high quality' can however have a negative implication for the management of development's visual impact outside such designated areas. The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment, in identifying the traits which make landscape areas across the whole of Cheshire, provides a possible replacement mechanism for ensuring higher quality development across the Council's rural areas.

2.4 Biodiversity

Context

2.4.1 Cheshire East's rural areas house a wide variety of habitat types, and as a consequence a diverse array of flora and fauna. Protected species found within Cheshire East include:

- Great Crested Newts
- Bats
- Water Voles
- White Clawed Crayfish

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18 Green infrastructure is defined as a crucial network of natural environmental components and green and blue spaces that lie between and within towns and villages and which provide multiple social, economic and environmental benefits within the area.
2.4.2 Figure 2.6 shows the distribution of a variety of sites of biodiversity importance, and Table 2.1 lists the number and area of all these formally designated sites. Please note some sites have multiple designations in effect. A number of sites are subject to European and national designations, and others are protected by local plan policies.

2.4.3 PPS9 sets out the Government's planning policy in relation to nature conservation. Key principles are to ensure that local policies are based on up-to-date information on local data about an area’s environment characteristics, that they aim to protect, restore and enhance nature conservation assets, and that policies seek to incorporate opportunities for biodiversity features into development proposals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Type</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>No. of Sites</th>
<th>Total Area (Ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>7 (6 are part of the South Pennine Moors)</td>
<td>711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Protection Area (SPA)</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>1 (West Midlands Mosses)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsar Site</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Nature Reserve (NNR)</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>2 (Rostherne Mere and Wynbunbury Moss)</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Resource Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Type</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>No. of Sites</th>
<th>Total Area (Ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS)</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites of Biological Interest (SBI)</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>4103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade A</td>
<td></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>2096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade B</td>
<td></td>
<td>116</td>
<td>1052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade C</td>
<td></td>
<td>139</td>
<td>955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 Geological & Biodiversity Assets in Cheshire East (including Peak District)

### Existing Local Policy Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Key Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CBC</strong> Policies require developers to submit detailed evidence of proposals that have the potential to impact upon nature conservation sites and features. Schemes that would adversely affect legally protected nature conservation sites, such as SSSIs, would not be allowed. For non-statutorily designated sites any schemes that have the potential to have adverse impacts will not be allowed except where there are overriding reasons for development, and where there are no alternative sites available. Such protection is also extended to specific habitat types including heathland, important hedgerows, meres and mosses etc. Where development is permitted, which may impact upon environmental assets, policies require mitigation measures to be put in place to protect ecological features as far as possible, and compensations measures may also be sought.</td>
<td>NR1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CNBC</strong> The Crewe &amp; Nantwich Local Plan policies are similar to those for Congleton, although an additional policy which explicitly addressing protected species is included. Policy NE10 also lists particular woodland planting projects which the authority would implement.</td>
<td>NE5-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Macclesfield Local Plan again provides a similar policy framework to the above local plans. Policy NE15 states the council will seek to create or enhance habitats in reclamation schemes, open spaces, educational land and other land held by local authorities where appropriate. Policy NE16 identifies nature conservation priority areas for which the council would seek to implement management plans.

Further Guidance


2.4.4 The Government’s objective as set out in the policy framework is that planning should help to deliver a healthy natural environment for the benefit of everyone and safe places which promote wellbeing; this is to be achieved, in part, by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity, where possible. Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value where practical, having regard to other policies in the framework including the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policies in local plans are to:

- Take account of the need to plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries
- Identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including: international, national and local sites of importance for biodiversity, and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation
- Promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan; and
- Aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests.

TEP (2011) Green Infrastructure Framework for North East Wales, Cheshire and Wirral

2.4.5 Cheshire East Council, in partnership with neighbouring local authorities, has developed a Green Infrastructure Framework. The framework provides a strategic policy context to manage green infrastructure. The framework contains recommendations and proposals for action plans to enhance the sub-region’s green
infrastructure, and maximise the range of functions this infrastructure performs. One of the key aims of the document is to protect and enhance biodiversity and natural networks, and provide opportunities for people to experience the natural environment.

**Cheshire Region Biodiversity Partnership (2011)**
http://www.cheshire-biodiversity.org.uk/

2.4.6 The CrBP coordinates and delivers conservation action to help safeguard the Cheshire region's most vulnerable wildlife. Their programme of activity is part of a national and international programme of biodiversity actions. A variety of action plans have been established by habitat type and by species; these action plans identify threats to the flora and fauna to be taken account of by a wide variety of organisations and individuals, and actions to address these threats and improve the biodiversity resource across Cheshire.

**RECORD (2011)** http://www.record-lrc.co.uk/

2.4.7 Record maintain a website which provides a facility for the storage, validation and usage of Cheshire based biological data under the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) project. It brings biological recording, the needs of the community, and a range of organisations together as a 'one-stop' information resource for organisations and individuals alike.

**Challenges**

2.4.8 Cheshire East has extensive natural environmental resources. The existing local plans promote a hierarchical level of protection to biodiversity assets, with international sites receiving the very strongest levels of protection. The policies generally seek to refuse applications which are likely to have unacceptable impacts on the natural environment, and secure mitigation measures on proposals which may be acceptable where impacts can be controlled. Where loss occurs and is deemed necessary, the policies provide for compensation to be provided so there is no net loss of ecological value from a site.

2.4.9 In addition to protecting the existing resource, the authority will need to play a more proactive role in enhancing areas of nature conservation value, including by improving linkages between these sites. A strategic approach to identifying interventions has been undertaken in partnership with neighbouring local authorities and other key partners through the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Framework.

2.4.10 The local authority will need to review its sites of local nature conservation value (known as Sites of Biological Importance) in line with guidance published by DEFRA\(^\text{19}\), which is seeking to standardise the terminology, methodology used in identification, and management of areas of nature conservation importance (these are to be known as Local Wildlife Sites) across the country.

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2.5 Heritage

Context

2.5.1 Cheshire East has rich and extensive historical, architectural and archaeological resources, many of which can be found in rural areas (see Figure 2.7 and Table 2.2).

2.5.2 With the exception of conservation areas and identified areas of archaeological potential, most registered or designated heritage assets are located within the rural areas outside the urban settlement boundaries.

2.5.3 In addition to these formally recognised or designated heritage assets, there are many more local features, buildings, or groups of buildings of immense community value, and which help to shape the character of specific areas.

2.5.4 There are many policy tools that have in the past been used to protect and enhance the built environment, and improve our understanding of it. These range from conservation area appraisals, performed by the local authority, to village design statements, which are prepared by local community groups or parish councils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage Asset</th>
<th>Cheshire East</th>
<th>Rural Areas</th>
<th>% in Rural Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listed Buildings Grade I</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed Buildings Grade II*</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed Buildings Grade II</td>
<td>2430</td>
<td>1542</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Areas</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Monuments</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Archaeological Potential</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.7 Cheshire East Heritage Assets
Table 2.2 Heritage Assets in Cheshire East and Rural Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage Asset</th>
<th>Cheshire East</th>
<th>Rural Areas</th>
<th>% in Rural Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Parks &amp; Gardens Grade II*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Parks &amp; Gardens Grade II</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Battlefields</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Existing Policy Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Key Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>BH1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNBC</td>
<td>BE7-19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The policies in the main seek to protect both the setting of designated heritage assets, such as registered parks and gardens and listed buildings, and heritage assets themselves. Demolition of listed buildings is only permissible where the building is structurally unsound and repair is not feasible, and alternative end uses cannot be found. Changes of use and alterations to listed buildings will only be allowed with the special interest of the building is preserved, and the character of the building is not harmed. The former council also maintained a local list of important buildings which, although not legally designated, benefited from additional policy protection in new development.

The policies provide for the designation of new conservation areas, or amendment to the boundaries of existing conservation areas, on the basis of available evidence and the impact of new development. The council commits itself in the local plan to undertake assessments of conservation areas to assist in the implementation of policies that control new development in these areas.

The policies relating to archaeological features have not been saved following the adoption of RSS.

The former council local plan policies follow the same approach as outlined above. The authority also had a local list of historic buildings, and in addition there is a policy relating to a registered battlefield located within the local...
Summary | Key Policies
--- | ---
plan area. The policies relating to archaeological areas of potential and scheduled monuments have however been saved. In terms of developments that affect archaeological features, assessments are required as part of planning applications. Proposals should aim firstly to preserve features in-situ where appropriate, or where this is not warranted provide for a programme of archaeological works to record the feature found. | BE1-4, BE6-9, BE12-13, BE15-24, numerous conservation area appraisals

**MBC** The policies in the Macclesfield Local Plan broadly provide the same criteria for proposals affecting designated heritage assets. The authority also had a local list of historic buildings to be afforded additional protection through the planning process.

The plan did, however, also include more detailed policies that were particular to locations, such as The Edge at Alderley Edge. For the location specific policies, the criteria sought to protect identified features that contributed to the character of an area (e.g. winding setted lanes, boundary enclosures, and low density housing). In addition, the former borough also produced a number of conservation area appraisals. These appraisals provided thorough accounts of the elements of conservation areas that contributed to their character, to inform planning decisions on any proposals within these areas.

**CEC** This supplementary planning document designates locally listed buildings and encourages the retention and conservation of the borough’s local heritage assets. The SPD is a material consideration in the assessment and determination of any planning application submitted for a site contained on the Cheshire East local list. This guidance sets out the approach adopted in Cheshire East Borough, with the aim of achieving a common standard for all Locally Important Buildings.

**SPD: Local List of Historic Buildings**
Further Guidance


2.5.5 The NPPF states the Government’s objective is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. There is less detail than in PPS5, however, the concept of assessing and protecting an asset's significance is retained. The framework states that evidence collected by the authority regarding the significance of these assets should be made publicly available. Policy guidance regarding 'enabling developments' has been radically scaled down.

Communities & Local Government (2010) PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment

2.5.6 The PPS has climate change at its heart, and promotes the suitable adaptation of heritage assets to combat the causes and adapt to the effects of it. Local authorities are to set out proactive strategies for the management of heritage assets in their areas, taking into account the type and distribution of such assets. The PPS requires developers to submit heritage statements alongside applications involving heritage assets, comprising an assessment of an asset's significance, the contribution of the setting to this significance, and the impact of the proposal on the asset's significance.

Challenges

2.5.7 The LDF will contain strategic policies to conserve and enhance existing heritage assets. The challenge will be to develop suitable policies to provide a sufficiently detailed framework for planning applications affecting heritage assets. As policies at the national level become less detailed, one of the main challenges presented by the new system for managing heritage assets will be to ensure appropriate guidance is available to assist in understanding the significance of heritage assets and to advise potential developers on suitable approaches to the design of schemes.

2.6 Renewable Energy

Context

2.6.1 Renewable energy is energy generated from natural resources. There are a variety of renewable energy technologies available for the generation of energy, some of the most common are highlighted in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wind Power</td>
<td>Wind power is the generation of electricity from wind by using wind turbines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solar Power is the generation of either heat or electricity from sunlight through solar panels.

Biomass power is the generation of energy through the combustion of biomass materials e.g. wood chip.

Anaerobic digestion is the generation of energy through the use of micro-organisms to break down biodegradable material in the absence of oxygen.

Geothermal heat is found near the Earth’s surface and remains approximately 10-16°C throughout the year. The technology works by pumping liquid in pipes into the ground and returning it into buildings or to certain types of power plant. In the winter when the ground is warmer than the buildings above, the liquid absorbs heat from the ground, which is then concentrated and transferred to the buildings. This can also be used to heat domestic water. In the summer, when the ground is cooler, the pump transfers heat from the buildings back into the ground.

Analysis of Cheshire has indicated that geothermal resources are concentrated around Crewe, with the resource quantified as between 60-70 GJ/m². In order to assess the potential of the resource, a geothermal resource calculation and financial viability assessment would need to be undertaken.

Combined heat and power is the generation of both heat and power from the use of a standard combustion process.

Combined heat and power can be generated from a standard fossil fuel engine or a biomass engine.

Hydroelectric power is the generation of electricity through the use of the gravitational force of falling or flowing water.

Heat pumps transfer heat from one location to another. Air sourced heat pumps transfer heat from the outside air. Water sourced heat pumps transfer heat from water. Ground source heat pumps transfer heat from the ground.

There are a number of reasons why the generation of renewable energy is beneficial, these include:

- Environmental legislation: An EU directive has set a target for 2020 which requires 20% of energy used to be generated from renewable resources and greenhouse gas emissions to be cut by 20% (based on 1990 emission rates).

- Security of supply: The United Kingdom is a net importer of energy. Increasing the amount of renewable energy generated will increase fuel security.
- The cost of fuel: As oil prices rise, so does the cost of gas and electricity. This is only likely to increase as supplies of fossil fuels dwindle.

- Combatting climate change: The use of renewable energy will reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and therefore the impact of humans on the environment.

- Financial benefits: The Government has established Feed In Tariffs to support the generation of electricity from renewable resources, and the Renewable Heat Incentive to support the generation of heat from renewable resources. These will allow for the generation of a fixed income for every kilowatt of energy generated.

Existing Policy Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Key Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBCRequires new development to take into account energy conservation and energy efficiency by means of building type, orientation and layout, sustainable drainage systems and use of landscaping. Outlines the considerations when judging the suitability of a renewable energy proposal.</td>
<td>GR2, NR9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNBCRequires new development to take into account the need for energy efficiency by means of building type, orientation, and layout. Outlines the considerations when judging the suitability of a renewable energy proposal.</td>
<td>BE.2, NE.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBCOutlines the considerations when judging the suitability of a renewable energy proposal.</td>
<td>DC62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further Guidance


2.6.3 The Government's objective is that planning should fully support the transition to a low carbon economy in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. The NPPF also states that planning policies and decisions should encourage, rather than restrict, the use of renewable resources. To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low-carbon energy, local planning authorities are to recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low-carbon sources, and should:
• Have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low-carbon sources, including deep geothermal energy
• Design their policies to maximise renewable and low-carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily
• Consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low-carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure the development of such sources
• Support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside such areas being taken forward through neighbourhood planning; and
• Identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.


2.6.4 Specifies renewable energy generation targets and the methods of achieving them (through implementation of renewable electricity, heat and transport) with the intention of tackling climate change; carbon dioxide emissions; security of energy supply and increasing the potential for sustainable economic growth.

Department of Energy and Climate Change (2011) Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy EN1

2.6.5 Sets out the objectives, need and broad considerations for all forms of energy supply in the UK. It is estimated that by 2025 around 33GW of all electricity supplied will need to come from renewable sources.


2.6.6 The National Policy Statement provides policy guidance for on shore wind (>50MW), off shore wind (>100MW) and biomass / energy from waste (>50MW) energy generating facilities. Its policies and objectives may however in certain circumstances be applied to other relevant developments.

Challenges

2.6.7 Within Cheshire East, significant constraints exist to implementing renewable energy, these include: separation distances of technologies from buildings and infrastructure; environmental constraints; physical constraints; green belt; and airport / radar exclusion zones. The combined effect of these constraints on renewable energy opportunities in the borough means that becoming self-sufficient in renewable
energy will be challenging. This is particularly the case in rural areas, where many there is often the greatest potential for the generation of many types of renewable energy, but also a greater likelihood for environmental and green belt constraints to restrict implementation.

2.6.8 Renewable energy technologies that are most suitable in rural areas are wind power, biomass fuel and anaerobic digestion. The council has commissioned a study on the potential for renewable energy generation in Cheshire East, which it is hoped will enable it to identify broad areas for particular technology types.

2.7 Rural Housing

Context

2.7.1 Approximately 30% of Cheshire East's population live in local service centres (LSCs) and smaller villages. Of all the houses completed in 2009 / 10 (634 homes), 6% were located in rural areas and smaller villages, and 4% in the area's LSCs. The provision of additional housing is vital to the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities in rural areas. Further supply is required to address the cost of housing, and to enable newly forming households to remain in their communities. Additional housing can also help to improve the viability of existing or potential local services.

Existing Policy Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Key Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>The general approach to managing residential development in rural areas is to direct it to existing towns and villages, within their settlement zone lines. There are a limited number of cases whereby housing development would be considered acceptable outside settlement boundaries. These are as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The dwelling to be developed is required for a person engaged full-time in agriculture or forestry, or outside the green belt, for other rural enterprises appropriately located in the countryside (sited and designed in relation to a nearby group of dwellings or a farm complex).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The proposal is for replacement of an existing dwelling (not materially larger than the existing dwelling).</td>
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<td>The proposal involves the conversion of a rural building and satisfies other policy requirements.</td>
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<td>PS5-8, H5-6, H13-14</td>
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### Summary

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<tr>
<th><strong>Key Policies</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Limited infilling of settlements that have defined 'infill boundary lines', provided the scale and character of a development is appropriate. Limited development is defined as a single or small group of dwellings.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Affordable housing that comes forward as a rural exception site (see CEC summary below).</strong></td>
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### CNBC

The Crewe & Nantwich plan follows a similar pattern in concentrating housing development to within the settlement zone boundaries of the area's towns and villages. In the open countryside (but not the green belt) additional dwellings will be permitted provided they are for limited infill development in existing villages, or they are for agricultural / forestry workers, their dependents, or their widows / widowers.

The policies for agricultural dwelling development are highly detailed, and specify that evidence of a farm's viability must be provided and that such dwellings will only be permitted if there are no better alternative sites available. Occupancy restrictions will only be removed subject to certain criteria being met, including submission of evidence of marketing for the site and the applicant being able to demonstrate that the dwelling is no longer needed in connection with enterprise for which it was originally constructed, and that there is no long term need for the dwelling to serve agricultural or forestry workers.

In addition to the above, the local plan also had a policy in relation to rural exceptions sites.

Replacement dwellings are permitted in the open countryside subject to numerous criteria including the requirement for a positive planning benefit, recent occupancy of the building, and the subsequent building not being materially larger than the existing property. For the purpose of interpreting the policy "materially larger" means an expansion of the cubic content by more than the appropriate permitted development allowances of the dwelling on the site at the time the planning application is first submitted; notwithstanding that the existing dwelling may have included previous extensions.
**Summary**

**MBC**
Within the green belt limited infill residential development is permitted within the settlements of Gawsworth, Henbury, Lyme Green and Sutton. Replacement dwellings, agricultural / forestry worker dwellings, and limited affordable housing schemes are also permissible subject to policy criteria being satisfied. Similar proposals are acceptable in the rural areas outside the green belt. The re-use of rural buildings for residential purposes is acceptable provided the development doesn’t result in the creation of an isolated dwelling and meets other policy criteria. All schemes for windfall housing development, irrespective of being located in rural or urban areas, will be assessed against numerous criteria, including:

- Location and accessibility of sites to jobs, shops, services and public transport;
- Capacity of existing physical and social infrastructure;
- The ability to build communities to support new physical and social infrastructure and retain existing services;
- Environmental constraints;
- Allocation of land for other uses.

Policies relating to replacement dwellings and rural exception sites were not saved following adoption of the RSS.

**CEC**
The council adopted interim planning statements to reflect the changing policy environment and gathering of new evidence in relation to the area's housing requirements earlier in 2011. The council, at present, does not have a 5 year housing land supply, and has produced a policy statement which enables the development of land, in addition to that permitted by local plan policies, on greenfield sites around Crewe (not within the designated green gap) or as part of mixed use town centre / regeneration schemes. As such, the local plan position of directing the bulk of new residential into existing urban areas is substantially maintained.

**Key Policies**

<p>| MBC | GC1, GC5-6, GC9, H5, DC41 |
| CEC | Interim Planning Statements for Release of Housing Land / Affordable Housing |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<td>The affordable housing statement builds upon existing local plan policies and replaces previous SPDs or other statements to provide a consistent approach to affordable housing policy across Cheshire East. It provides for rural exception sites to be developed in rural areas, either adjoining the settlement boundary of a village, or within a village that has no defined boundary. Such development will only be permitted where the proposal is exclusively for affordable housing, and if a need for affordable housing has been identified within the settlement. Cross subsidisation of proposals with open market housing provided on site is forbidden.</td>
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**Further Guidance**


2.7.2 The draft planning framework emphasises the Government's commitment to increase the supply of housing. In rural areas, the framework requires local planning authorities to be responsive to local circumstances and to plan housing development to reflect local requirements. Local planning authorities are encouraged to consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs. To promote sustainable development, housing in rural areas should not be located in places distant from local services. The policy framework seeks to avoid allowing isolated homes in the countryside to be developed unless there are special circumstances such as:

- Meeting an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;
- Ensuring the future of buildings of special architectural or historic interest;
- Re-using redundant or disused buildings leading to an enhancement to the immediate setting;
- The exceptional quality or the innovative nature of the design of the dwelling.

2.7.3 The consultation paper set out a range of options looking at the potential scale of development in Cheshire East over a 20 year period, and three options for dispersal of this development across the council area. The report proposed between 1,150 and 1,600 homes per annum to be built in Cheshire East, with three options concentrating the bulk of this development in Crewe, Macclesfield and the area’s key service centres. In all the main options, 3% would take place in the smaller villages, and between 7-9% would to take place in the local service centres.

2.7.4 A separate 'rural variant' is also discussed in the paper. The variant would amend any of the proposed options and entail the diversion of some proposed development from key service centres to the local service centres and / or smaller villages. Although no firm proportions are provided, it is noted that around 30% of existing housing is located in these rural areas. During the consultation process, 14% of respondents supported some form of further development in rural areas, 22% were against the variant, and 64% of respondents did not answer the question.

Cheshire East Council (2010) Strategic Housing Market Assessment

2.7.5 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2010) plays an important role in informing the council of the amount, mix, type and size of housing required in Cheshire East. It states that the population of the area is expected to increase from 362,700 in 2009 to 379,300 by 2026, and that the number of households will increase by 24.2 % from 138,000 to 171,000 during that same period, pointing to an annual increase of 1,320 households.

2.7.6 Over the last decade, strong demand for housing in Cheshire East has contributed to a dramatic increase in house prices and created an acute need for both market and affordable housing to meet the needs of the local community. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment forecasts that the population of Cheshire East will age, with an increase of 44% between 2009 and 2026 in the number of residents over the age of 65. This trend will create a significant additional demand for adapted and specialist housing in the Borough.

Challenges

2.7.7 The provision of sufficient and high quality housing is vital to the well-being of Cheshire East residents. Parish councils have been asked by Cheshire East Council if they wish to see any additional housing development in their areas in the plan period to meet the needs of their local communities; this includes both market and affordable housing. Only a small number of parish councils have so far indicated their interest in further residential development.
2.7.8 There are numerous difficulties in procuring more houses in rural areas. The first problem is the lack of available sites, with the current policy framework severely restricting sites that can come forward in rural areas. Furthermore, whilst providing high speed broad band may facilitate increased home-working, it is likely that there would be an increase in commuting by car on minor rural roads. A more dispersed pattern of growth in housing will result in an increased demand for public services to be delivered to rural areas giving rise to increased costs in school transport, health and social care, for example. The cost of providing utility services such as water, sewerage and telephones is also usually greater in rural areas.

2.7.9 The affordability of housing, as well as its availability, is also a significant issue in Cheshire East; it is well known that the age of first-time house buyers nation-wide is rising, and many young people and families are being priced out of their local communities.

2.7.10 In addition to the possibility of increasing general housing provision in rural areas, in the open countryside there are discrepancies amongst existing local plan policies that need to be addressed. These include, for example, the approach to replacement dwellings in the countryside and the interpretations of 'materially larger' replacements. The change in approach to rural exception sites proposed in the draft NPPF also needs to be considered.

2.8 Rural Transport and Community Facilities

Context

2.8.1 All communities, be they rural or urban, require social, physical and environmental infrastructure to serve them. Many services are located in the key and local service centres, which then serve their rural hinterlands. In order for the system to work, reliable public or community transport options should be available for residents in rural areas to access these services. Alternatively, outreach services may be provided.

Existing Policy Framework

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>The policies in the plan require developer contributions toward the provision of any additional infrastructure needed to serve proposed developments. Known infrastructure requirements of allocated sites are set out in the plan’s policies. Proposals resulting in the loss of community facilities which make a positive contribution to the social or cultural life of a community, will not be permitted unless suitable alternative provision is made.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Key Policies</td>
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<td>Residential developments must have regard to the accessibility of their locations to local jobs, services and public transport.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNBC</td>
<td>The Crewe &amp; Nantwich Local Plan policies also require planning obligations to off-set the impact of development on local infrastructure networks, and seek to retain existing community facilities that contribute to the social or cultural life of communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBC</td>
<td>The Local Plan also requires developers to make provision for additional infrastructure if necessary. The plan also requires residential developments to be located in sustainable locations, with good access to local services and public transport. Other policies in the plan safeguard land for highways schemes.</td>
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</table>

Further Guidance

**Communities & Local Government (2011) Draft National Planning Policy Framework**

2.8.2 The framework states that local planning authorities should work with other authorities and providers to:

- Assess the quality and capacity of transport, water, energy, telecommunications, utilities, health and social care, waste and flood defence infrastructure and its ability to meet forecast demands; and

- Take account of the need for nationally significant infrastructure within their areas.


2.8.3 The Spending Review built upon the June Budget to deliver the Government's planned saving of £81 billion by 2014-15. There have been significant cuts in government budgets, and councils will face a 7% annual reduction over four years. It is not possible to assess precisely the implications of the Spending Review on infrastructure projects planned for Cheshire East, however, it is clear that in future there will be far less funding from Central and Local Government for many capital projects.
Communities & Local Government (2011) Community Infrastructure Levy: Overview

2.8.4 The community infrastructure levy is the new mechanism for ensuring the impacts of new development on local infrastructure are managed. The system is based on the local authority identifying the range of new infrastructure required to meet the development proposed in the LDF; the levy is calculated on the basis of the cost of this new infrastructure, taking into account existing funding streams and the need to ensure the levy is not set at a rate to high for developers to pay. A proportion of the levy is to be spent in the vicinity of the development proposed.

Cheshire East Council (2011) Local Transport Plan 3

2.8.5 The local transport plan sets out the overarching strategy for transport in Cheshire East, and is supplemented by implementation plans to translate the strategy into concrete actions. The plan recognises that access to services varies greatly across the Borough, and the challenges to rural accessibility include greater distances to travel, topography, less concentrated levels of demand for public transport and the increasing loss of local service provision.

2.8.6 The plan states that living in a rural area does not necessarily translate to a problem of access to services, as many of these communities have high levels of car ownership and often do not consider themselves to be experiencing difficulties; nonetheless, increased rates of car ownership and reliance contribute to problems of congestion on the wider highway network, increased road maintenance requirements, and higher greenhouse gas emissions. Accordingly, activities to address rural accessibility are targeted at the people for whom accessing essential services is a real challenge (for example young and elderly people). Initiatives aimed at improving access to local services include:

- Key service location: working with service providers (NHS, schools, colleges, leisure centres) to ensure that changes to service location do not have a detrimental impact on accessibility for vulnerable groups and isolated people;
- Multi-use premises: working with service providers to explore opportunities to utilise existing community facilities to provide a wider range of services locally (e.g. village halls);
- Rural taxi services: promoting the role of taxis and private hire vehicles by investigating innovative taxi-sharing initiatives serving rural areas;
• Access to employment, skills and education: working with employers and education providers to ensure that future and (where possible) existing sites are as accessible as possible to local communities, particularly young people from areas of deprivation.

• Sustainable communities: Encouraging communities to “live local, work local, buy local” to support the viability of local services, promote home delivery of goods which cannot be purchased locally and increase the availability of allotments to facilitate access to affordable healthy food.

Challenges

2.8.7 Some of the key challenges facing rural communities include poor connectivity in terms of public transport (hindering access to public services located within the larger urban areas), the trend for centralisation of services into single central hub sites, and the closure of many local services and facilities especially following the economic downturn (e.g. pubs and post offices). It may be desirable to prepare LDF policies that safeguard these shops, pubs, village halls and other such facilities.

2.8.8 The recent spending cuts and present economic climate make it increasingly difficult to maintain existing service provision, or to remedy any existing deficiencies in local services. New development can however present opportunities, through the generation of capital via the community infrastructure levy, to secure investment in existing local services or to provide new services. The council has already commenced work on a local infrastructure plan which will, upon completion, identify additional infrastructure needed to support new development and the timescales, funding arrangements and responsibilities for delivery of this infrastructure.

2.8.9 Other proposals coming forward under the localism bill will also provide communities with the opportunity to take over and operate community assets should they choose to do so. In addition to voluntary and community groups offering services (such as community transport schemes), technological improvements can play a key role in supporting rural communities in the future, for example, through the roll-out of superfast broadband enabling home-working and improving access to publicly held information.
Appendix
### Affordable Housing
Affordable housing covers a range of housing types and tenures. It includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. It should include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

### Allocated / Allocation
An allocated site is one that has been identified for development through the planning process. Existing allocated sites in Cheshire East are those identified within the three former authority Local Plans. Future site allocations will be made within the Core Strategy and Site Allocations Development Plan Documents.

### Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)
The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) forms part of the Local Development Framework. The purpose of the report is to:
- Provide a profile of the Borough of information and key trends;
- Identify the effects of planning policies on social, environmental and economic outputs;
- Help determine the extent to which objectives, targets and programmes are being met;
- Inform and guide future plans and policies; and
- Monitor the extent to which the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme is being met.

### CBC
Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review, Adopted 27th January 2005

### CEC
Cheshire East Council

### CNBC
Crewe & Nantwich Replacement Local Plan, Adopted 17th February 2005

### CRMLP
Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan, Adopted June 1999
<p>| <strong>Combined Heat and Power (CHP)</strong> | CHP is the use of a power generator to simultaneously generate electricity and useful heat, to provide hot water for example in a district heating system. |
| <strong>Community Infrastructure</strong> | Community infrastructure is the basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society. Community infrastructure includes community buildings and halls, leisure facilities, education services, healthcare facilities and renewable energy installations. |
| <strong>Conservation Area</strong> | An area considered worthy of preservation or enhancement because of its special architectural or historic interest. |
| <strong>Core Strategy</strong> | The Core Strategy will set the strategic spatial planning framework for how Cheshire East will develop in the future. Its vision, objectives and strategic policies are overarching and form the basis for the whole LDF. |
| <strong>District Heating</strong> | A system for distributing heat generated in a central location for example in a combined heat and power plant. |
| <strong>Green Infrastructure</strong> | The network of natural environmental components and green and blue spaces that lies within and between cities, towns and villages which provides multiple social, economic and environmental benefits. Green Infrastructure is the region's life support system. |
| <strong>Habitats Regulations Assessment</strong> | The Habitats Regulations Assessment process is intended to describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of implementing a policy document on Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites, taking into account the document’s objectives and geographical scope. It is required to ensure that the document will not individually or cumulatively impact on the Natura 2000 network. |
| <strong>Listed Building</strong> | A building or structure that has been placed on English Heritage’s Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. Listed Buildings may not be demolished or altered without permission from the local planning authority. There are three grades of listing: Grade I (buildings of exceptional interest); Grade II* (particularly important buildings of more than special interest); and Grade II (nationally important buildings of special interest). |
| <strong>Local Development Framework (LDF)</strong> | A folder of documents that will outline the development plan for Cheshire East. This sets out the planning policies used when determining planning applications. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary of Terms</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Locally Listed Building</strong></td>
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<td><strong>MBC</strong></td>
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<td><strong>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Planning Policy Statement (PPS)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ramsar Site</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Section 106 Agreement (s106)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Site Allocations Document</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Site of Biological Importance (SBI)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Special Protection Area (SPA)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)</strong></td>
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