

**THE CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL PLAN REVISED PUBLICATION DRAFT SITE
ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES DOCUMENT**

EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

OPENING STATEMENT BY CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

1. Cheshire East Council (“**the Council**”) is pleased to present the Revised Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (September 2020) (“**the SADPD**”) for public examination. The Council is very grateful to the Inspector for the notes and letters he has provided to date, and the time he has no doubt taken to review the many documents in the examination library. The Council is also thankful to the Programme Officer for all of her hard work in organising the administration of the examination, especially given the added complications of it being a virtual event.
2. The Council would also like to thank at the outset all of those who have participated in the examination by submitting their views on the SADPD. We look forward to discussing the various issues raised in those representation over the coming days.
3. The SADPD has been in preparation since 2016 and subject to four rounds of public consultation prior to submission. The Council greatly appreciates the time that residents, parish councils, businesses and other organisations have taken to help shape the SADPD, albeit appreciating that it is not possible to meet the aspirations of every respondent.
4. Preparing a development plan document is no mean feat, and the considerable efforts and expertise of a large team of officers and external consultants have enabled the SADPD to be prepared and submitted for examination. The Inspector will have seen from the comprehensive evidence base documents and the Council’s hearing statements how much hard work has gone into the SADPD.
5. Given the nature of what the SADPD is seeking to do, it is inevitably going to attract comment from those who reasonably disagree with the approach taken by the Council. The purpose of the multiple rounds of consultation and now this public examination is for those points to be aired and discussed, with a view to assisting the Inspector in his determination of soundness and legal compliance.

6. As is always the case, the SADPD has been criticised by some for not doing enough to provide for the development needs of the borough, and by others for going too far. The Council considers that, through the evidence base it has assembled in order to prepare the SADPD, it has sought to carefully strike the right balance between meeting needs and recognising the important constraints on development which apply.
7. As the Inspector recognised at para. 13 of his Examination Guidance Note (INS/06), it is not his role to “seek to improve the Plan or make it ‘more sound’”. There are undoubtedly things which the Council could have done differently, with other reasonable policy choices which could have been made. Participants and the Inspector might be able to identify various things which the Council could (and perhaps should) have put or not put in the plan: more development in this settlement, less in that settlement.
8. But what the Inspector has rightly identified is that he need only recommend modifications where necessary to ensure soundness or legal compliance.
9. The Council has prepared what it regards as a sound plan, but it will also constructively consider any recommended modifications found to be necessary by the Inspector to make it sound.
10. The Council is committed to a plan-led system. The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (“LPS”), adopted in July 2017, is working well. The LPS sets out the vision, spatial strategy and strategic policies for Cheshire East to 2030. Its strategic policies have done the heavy lifting in providing for the homes and jobs needed to allow the borough to grow sustainably.
11. The SADPD has been prepared to support the policies and proposals of the LPS by providing additional policy detail, through the setting of non-strategic policies to guide planning decisions and the allocation of additional sites to assist in meeting the overall development requirements set out in the LPS. In dealing with site allocations and the designation of safeguarded land, it is focused on any residual figures left over from the LPS, taking into account updated supply information.
12. As recognised by the Inspector in his Matters, Issues and Questions (Part 1) (INS/08), at page 2, the SADPD must be consistent with the LPS, and the test of soundness must be applied in a proportionate way: see para. 36 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (“NPPF”). It is not the intention or function of the SADPD to revisit or amend the

key strategic policy matters that were settled through the LPS process, including the overall planned amount of housing and employment land or its spatial distribution. The purpose and scope of the SADPD are therefore necessarily limited. Changes to, for example, Cheshire East’s housing and employment land requirement will be a matter for a future review and examination of the LPS, rather than this examination.

13. Once adopted alongside the LPS, the SADPD will put in place an up-to-date and consistent set of development plan policies for the whole of the borough, replacing the remaining saved policies in the legacy local plans.
14. It is important to mention neighbourhood planning. There are currently 36 made plans across the borough reflecting thousands of hours that local people have dedicated to improving their local areas. The Council has considered all made and emerging neighbourhood plans carefully and done its very best to avoid tension between policies within them and the SADPD.
15. Climate change and the immediate need for significant reductions in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions is at the forefront of all our minds and at the heart of this plan. In line with the Council’s declaration of a climate emergency and environmental strategy, and as far as national policy permits, the SADPD’s policies seek to tackle climate change, the most serious threat to the achievement of sustainable development in the future. We all have a part to play, including through plan-making and development management, in ensuring that the UK can comply with the obligation to achieve the “net zero” carbon account target by 2050 in section 1 of the Climate Change Act 2008.
16. As noted above, the plan has been prepared by a team of officers and they will be variously attending the hearing sessions over the three sitting weeks. The Council will also be supported by specialist colleagues from within the Council, as well as external consultants, for a number of the sessions. Rather than introducing them all now, a list of Council attendees for the various Hearing sessions is appended to this opening statement.

MATTHEW FRASER

**Landmark Chambers
180 Fleet Street
London**

12 October 2021