

# **EiP Statement**

## **Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document**

### **Story Homes**

### **Representor ID 1255389**

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**Our ref** 42155/11/CM/NMi  
**Date** September 2021

#### **Subject Matter 2 – Planning for Growth**

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#### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Lichfields is instructed by Story Homes [Story] to make representations on its behalf to the emerging Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document [SADPD].
- 1.2 This Statement has been prepared in response to the Matters, Issues and Questions [MIQs] raised by the Inspector for the Matter 2 Examination in Public [EiP] hearing session.
- 1.3 These Matter Paper representations should be read in conjunction with previous submissions on the SADPD [Representor ID 1255389].
- 1.4 Story is seeking to bring forward a sustainable and high-quality residential site (including affordable homes) at Ryleys Farm, Alderley Edge. In the Publication Draft SADPD, part of this land was allocated for residential development (Site ALD2 – Ryleys Farm, north of Chelford Road) and part of the site was identified as Safeguarded Land (Site ALD3 – Ryleys Farm (Safeguarded)).
- 1.5 In the Revised Publication Draft SADPD, the subject of the Examination, the proposed allocation has been removed. The Safeguarded land at Ryleys Farm remains but the northern and southern boundaries have been amended and the site has been reduced in size (from 2.7ha to 2.32ha).
- 1.6 Story strongly objects to the removal of the allocation at Ryleys Farm in the Revised Publication Draft SADPD. The identification of the safeguarded land is supported but we consider that the boundaries of the Safeguarded land should be amended, to provide a more permanent defensible boundary and to revert to the original draft allocation boundary of land at Ryleys Farm.

#### **2.0 Planning issues**

##### **Development at Local Service Centres (Policy PG8 and Site HCH1)**

*11. Is Policy PG 8 consistent with the strategy in the LPS for growth and the spatial distribution of development at the LSCs, and with the relevant provisions of national policy? In particular:*

*a) Should it include a disaggregation of the indicative levels of development for the LSCs, of 3,500 dwellings and 7ha of employment land, to individual settlements, in order to ensure decisions are plan-led and that the needs of individual settlements are met?*

- 2.1 It is vital for Policy PG8 to disaggregate indicative levels of development for the LSCs. This is the only way to ensure that development is properly plan-led and the needs of individual settlements are met, and to provide certainty that both market and affordable housing is delivered in the areas which most need it. The LPS is not sound as it fails to support the Government's objective contained in the Framework [§60].
- 2.2 The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy [LPS] sets out a clear strategy in order to ensure that development is steered to the right locations so that the delivery of sustainable development can be achieved. The approach proposed in Policy PG8 does not support this strategy and instead proposes a 'scattergun' approach by relying on windfall delivery where there will be no control over the location of development.
- 2.3 As detailed in §3.14 to §3.22 of our representations to the Revised Publication SADPD, the Local Plan Inspector for the LPS<sup>1</sup> clearly anticipated the apportionment of growth to the Local Service Centres [LSCs] through the SADPD, including Alderley Edge and this is supported in LPS Policy PG2.
- 2.4 To be sound, the SADPD needs to reflect the approach advocated in the LPS and supported by the Inspector as it did at the Publication Draft stage by reintroducing disaggregation to the LSCs and allocating sites to meet the outstanding requirement.
- 2.5 The Publication Draft SADPD proposed to disaggregate 250 dwellings to Alderley Edge and 250 units were identified as part of the overall housing requirement of 36,000 dwellings which LPS Policy PG1 makes clear is a minimum figure and can be exceeded. Document EDO5 suggests that at the 31 March 2020 completions and commitments in Alderley Edge totalled 165 dwellings. This suggests a shortfall of 85 dwellings against the previously identified disaggregation figure for Alderley Edge. There is no certainty that this shortfall can be met through the Council's 'application led' approach due to policy constraints in and around Alderley Edge. The re-allocation of land at Ryleys Farm would assist in meeting this shortfall.

*b) Should it set out indicative housing levels for designated neighbourhood areas, to provide an effective framework for neighbourhood plans?*

- 2.6 Yes. The SADPD is currently not sound as it fails to meet the requirement of the Framework [§66]. The Council will claim that this is no longer relevant given that Alderley Edge Parish recently made its own Neighbourhood Plan, but these strategic decisions have only sought to perpetuate the issue of a lack of homes in Alderley Edge.

*c) Is it positively prepared and justified in relying on existing commitments and windfall development to meet the indicative level of housing development for LSCs, set in Policy PG 7, rather than allocating additional sites at the LSCs?*

- 2.7 The proposed approach is neither positively prepared nor justified and is contrary to the Framework [§60]. The failure to disaggregate the housing target for LSCs and allocate sufficient land to meet this target fails to align with the policy approach taken in the LPS which makes it clear that development in the LSCs will be supported through the allocation of sites in the

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<sup>1</sup> Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Inspector's Report: June 2017 §90

**SADPD<sup>2</sup>. A reliance on windfalls is not proper planning. It is just reactionary, lacking strategy, lacking vision and reliant upon the Council’s past failure at challenging unplanned development through the appeal process to continue.**

- 2.8 The provision of small-scale windfalls only meets a small cross-section of the needs of the population. It does not follow the debate that was had at the LPS nor the Inspectors recommendations. As the majority of completions in Alderley Edge since the beginning of the Plan period have been on small windfall sites which fall below the size threshold for affordable housing<sup>3</sup>, this has restricted the delivery of affordable housing in Alderley Edge and a similar approach through the SADPD is likely to have the same effect. In addition, the LPS set out a vision for the pattern and scale for growth. Story Homes is concerned that the reliance on windfalls will be at the long-term detriment of Alderley Edge. Alderley Edge fulfils a very important role in the District. It provides essential day to days services for the local populations and for the network of smaller surrounding villages like Nether Alderley and Great Warford. The function of Alderley Edge assists significantly with the sustainable location of growth to ensure that those services and facilities are maintained and enhanced.
- 2.9 A clear need for additional residential development still exists to meet the requirement in LSCs. Net completions and commitments at 31 March 2020 total 3,210 dwellings against a LPS Policy PG7 target of 3,500 dwellings, resulting in a shortfall of 290 dwellings. The proposed approach in Policy PG8 will fail to ensure that this shortfall will be distributed to the LSCs as the Council will have no control over the location and amount of development. In addition, there is no certainty that existing commitments will deliver as anticipated so the shortfall could be even greater. This undermines the delivery of sustainable development and ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes, including affordable housing can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations. Story Homes considers that the Plan is not aspirational or deliverable given the over reliance on windfalls. A reliance on windfall delivery in Alderley Edge since the beginning of the Plan period has failed to address affordable housing need and this situation is likely to prevail under the proposed approach in the SADPD given the lack of larger sites for development and the tightly defined Green Belt boundary around Alderley Edge.
- 2.10 As detailed in §3.7 of our representations to the Revised Publication SADPD, whilst the majority of the development in LSCs has been delivered on windfall sites to date, we note that the supply of windfall sites is finite and it is limited in many LSCs, so there is no certainty that a sufficient supply will be available to enable the windfall delivery envisaged over the remainder of the plan period. This is a particular issue in LSCs such as Alderley Edge which are completely contained by Green Belt with limited opportunities for development to come forward.
- 2.11 In addition, the evidence provided in the Council Responses to the Inspector’s Initial Questions suggests that windfall completions (all sizes) in the LSCs have dropped considerably since the LPS was adopted in 2017. On sites granted permission on or before 26th July 2017, it identifies net completions of 1,767 (an annual average of 252 dwelling assuming this figure dates from the beginning of the plan period in 2010). However, Table 2 of the Council’s Response (which is replicated in Table 1 below) identifies that completions post 2017 are significantly lower than this:

<sup>2</sup> Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy §8.34

<sup>3</sup> Evidence provided in Table 15 of ‘The provision of housing and employment land and the approach to spatial distribution’ [ED 05] suggests that 76 of the 90 completions between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2020 were on small sites (9 or less excluding gardens).

Table 1 Windfall completions granted permission after the adoption of the LPS

Period	Number of dwellings completed in LSCs (net)
27 July 2017 – 31 March 2018	2
1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019	32
1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020	206
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>

Source: Council Responses to the Inspector's Initial Questions

2.12 Table 1 shows, over the last two monitoring periods, 238 dwellings have been completed on sites granted permission after the LPS was adopted (an annual average of 119 dwellings over two years). If the figure for the partial period (27 July 2017 – 31 March 2018) is factored in (2 dwellings) this drops to an average of 80 dwellings per annum. Given the recent drop in windfall completions it is uncertain what contribution windfall sites will be capable of making in LSCs over the remainder of the plan period.

2.13 For the Plan be sound, it is vital that sufficient land is allocated in the LSCs to ensure that the needs of individual settlements are met, and to provide certainty that both market and affordable housing is delivered. It is imperative that the Council disaggregates the need for housing into settlements like Alderley Edge where need is the greatest [SHMA p.63]. The reliance on windfall provides no contingency which may be experienced over the course of the plan period should circumstances change.

*12. Are the other policies in the LPS and SADPD sufficiently flexible to enable the remaining part of the indicative level of housing development for LSCs, set in Policy PG 7, to be met from further windfall sites? Is there any substantive evidence of opportunities for further windfall development on sites within the proposed Settlement and Village Infill Boundaries?*

2.14 The other policies in the LPS and SADPD cannot be relied upon to deliver housing needs within the LSCs in isolation as they do not provide a mechanism to steer development towards the LSCs and ensure that development is distributed as was originally envisaged in the LPS. In addition, they would not override Green Belt policy which constrains development in settlements including Alderley Edge.

2.15 Story is not aware of any significant opportunities for windfall development within the proposed settlement boundary in Alderley Edge. A reliance on windfalls is not proper planning. The purpose of the SADPD is to set out the strategy for the pattern and scale of housing (market and affordable) and it has failed to do this positively.

*13. Is there a need for further site allocations for housing at the LSCs to be included in the SADPD to ensure the indicative level of housing development set in Policy PG 7 of the LPS will be met in full and the need for affordable housing addressed, in particular at settlements within the North Cheshire Green Belt?*

2.16 It is imperative that housing allocations are included in the SADPD to ensure that development is steered to the right locations, that the indicative level of housing development set in Policy PG 7 of the LPS will be met in full and the need for affordable housing is addressed.

2.17 This is particularly important for settlements in the North Cheshire Green Belt where development potential is severely restricted by Green Belt boundaries. The allocation of sites is the only way to ensure that the overall spatial strategy can be achieved, the needs of individual settlements are met and to provide certainty that both market and affordable housing is

delivered in the areas which most need it. The findings of the Council's own evidence in the SA supports this approach as it indicates that it would have less impact than the option being pursued.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

- 2.18 For the reasons set out in §3.4 to §3.13 of our representations to the Revised Publication SADPD, we consider that an exceptional circumstances case exists to justify Green Belt release in the SADPD.

### **Affordable Housing**

- 2.19 There is a national housing crisis and this filters down to Cheshire East and in particular to Alderley Edge. Affordability across Cheshire East and in Alderley Edge is a significant issue. It continues to be a barrier to accessing housing for sale. In 2018 the median house price in Cheshire East was 7.95 times the median gross annual earnings. This is significantly higher than the North West average of 5.86 and is only slightly below the national average of 8.00. Median house prices also differ across the authority with the median house price in Alderley Edge being amongst the highest at over £400,000<sup>4</sup>. The LSC Distribution Report<sup>5</sup> notes that there is a high rate of housing need in Alderley Edge suggesting a pent up demand for more affordable accommodation. The settlement has a high share of the Borough's Housing Register applications (1.9%) relative to its share of the total Borough population (1.5%).
- 2.20 The 2013 Strategic Housing Market Assessment [SHMA] identifies Alderley Edge as having a greater number of households in need of affordable housing than any other northern LSCs at 87 dwellings per annum<sup>6</sup>. In addition, the Council's Rural Housing Needs Survey for Alderley Edge<sup>7</sup>, which was produced in 2017, identifies an affordable housing requirement from within Alderley Edge parish of 140 households and notes that there may be additional affordable housing requirements in the parish not captured within the survey based on the response rate.
- 2.21 This significant need is demonstrated by more recent evidence from the Cheshire Homechoice waiting list. The number of those on the list with Alderley Edge as their first choice is 321 (broken down to 148 x 1 bedroom, 90 x 2 bedroom, 53 x 3 bedroom, 18 x 4 bedroom and 12 x 5 bedroom dwellings)<sup>8</sup>. This evidence highlights the requirement for a mix of dwelling sizes to help address local need.
- 2.22 The above evidence makes it clear that the need for affordable housing in Alderley Edge is significant. This affordability issue is exacerbated by the low number of affordable housing completions in Alderley Edge between 2010 and 2021. Information provided by the Council suggests that the number of affordable dwellings provided in Alderley Edge over this period was 10 dwellings. This is due in part to the lack of available land for development in the settlement. In terms of future provision, the Council has indicated that 21 affordable dwellings will be delivered on the committed schemes at the Alderley Park development<sup>9</sup>. Overall, the evidence shows that there has been a drastic under provision of affordable housing in Alderley Edge since 2010. Future delivery based on current commitments is likely to be minimal compared to need.

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<sup>4</sup> Cheshire East Cabinet Report - Procurement of a Housing Development Framework, 5th May 2020

<sup>5</sup> Local Service Centres Safeguarded Land Distribution Report [ED 53] §3.11

<sup>6</sup> An affordable housing need of 87 dwellings per annum is identified for the Mobberley, Chelford and Alderley Edge sub area for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18

<sup>7</sup> Rural Housing Needs Survey 2017 Alderley Edge Parish (May 2017)

<sup>8</sup> Figures provided by Cheshire East Council 10/09/21

<sup>9</sup> Figures provided by Cheshire East Council 10/09/21

- 2.23 The recently made Alderley Edge Neighbourhood Plan<sup>10</sup> [AENP] also identifies a lack of affordable housing as a local challenge but does not allocate any sites for either market or affordable housing. It relies instead on the SADPD to allocate sites. If provision is not made in the SADPD, there is no fallback position to immediately provide sites in the AENP given that it has only recently been adopted.
- 2.24 The evidence produced to inform the AENP strongly supports the provision of affordable housing within the settlement. The Local Housing Needs Assessment<sup>11</sup> notes that for households on lower incomes, their options with housing in Alderley Edge are very limited. Households with an income within the Boroughs lower quartile can only afford social and affordable rent homes without diverting resources from other forms of expenditure. Owner occupied homes remain dominant in the neighbourhood area [NA], yet these are unaffordable to those even on the average household income in the NA. It identifies a clear need for Affordable Housing in the NA and concludes that the projected population increases, and demographic forecasts, justify building more homes of all types and sizes, particularly smaller family housing and housing for the elderly.
- 2.25 There is a compelling case that for the Plan to be sound, it needs to allocate Ryleys Farm in the SADPD so that it can deliver the market and affordable housing needed in the LSC.

### **Flexibility Allowance**

- 2.26 To ensure a positively prepared plan, we consider that a 20% flexibility allowance is essential to account for any lapses and shortfalls in anticipated delivery on sites. This should include a flexibility allowance of 20% for each of the LSCs (please see §3.64 to §3.72 our representations to the Revised Publication SADPD for further details).
- 2.27 In order to address the above matters in Alderley Edge, land at Ryleys Farm should be re-allocated for residential development.

### **Safeguarded Land at LSCs (Policy PG12)**

*15. Is the identification of additional safeguarded land at the LSCs justified to meet the longer-term development requirements of the Borough, taking account of the expectations of the LPS, the potential for the development requirements of Cheshire East beyond 2030 to change under the standard method for calculating local housing need, and the requirement in paragraph 140 of the NPPF that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where justified by exceptional circumstances?*

- 2.28 The identification of additional Safeguarded Land at the LSCs to meet the longer-term development requirements of the Borough is considered to be justified. The adopted LPS [§8.57] considers that 200 ha Safeguarded Land will enable the Green Belt boundary to retain a sufficient degree of permanence. The identification of 186.4ha in the LPS leaves 13.6 ha to be identified through the SADPD.
- 2.29 The Council has considered this matter in detail in its responses to the Inspector's Initial Questions (Question 4) and we are of the view that the circumstances differ from the Aireborough judgement (regarding the Leeds Site Allocations Plan) such that the standard method does not result in any implications for the evidence and approach of the SADPD or its proposals.

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<sup>10</sup> Alderley Edge Neighbourhood Plan (made 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021)

<sup>11</sup> Alderley Edge Housing Needs Assessment, AECOM (July 2019)

*16. Is the selection and distribution of sites for designation as Safeguarded Land at the LSCs, as set out in the Local Service Centres Safeguarded Land Distribution Report and the Settlement Reports for Alderley Edge, Bollington, Chelford, Disley, Mobberley and Prestbury, based on a robust methodology and justified by proportionate evidence and is it consistent with the LPS and national policy?*

2.30 The Council has prepared substantive evidence to justify the distribution of sites for designation as Safeguarded Land including the LSC Safeguarded Land Distribution Report. This document includes an eight stage methodology to identify the most suitable land for designation. It has also been supported by detailed reports for individual settlements, including Alderley Edge [ED21] and considers distribution in line with the Site Selection Methodology [EDO7]. The identification of Safeguarded Land is therefore considered to be based on a robust methodology and is considered to be proportionate and consistent with the LPS and national policy.

2.31 Story fully support the identification of Site ALD3 'Ryleys Farm, west of Sutton Road' Alderley Edge as Safeguarded Land.

*18. Have exceptional circumstances for removing each of the eight Safeguarded Land sites from the Green Belt been fully evidenced and justified, and are the sites defined by boundaries using physical features that are recognisable and likely to be permanent?*

2.32 The exceptional circumstances to justify the alteration of Green Belt boundaries to accommodate the remaining amount of Safeguarded Land are set out in the LSC Safeguarded Land Distribution Report and in the LPS. They include a spatial dimension and the need to avoid unsustainable patterns of development. In addition, the Alderley Edge Settlement Report<sup>12</sup> identifies the exceptional circumstances required to release Site ALD3 from the Green Belt. The exceptional circumstance identified for the release of the site are considered to be fully evidenced and justified.

2.33 We consider that the boundaries of the Safeguarded Land Site ALD3 should be amended in order to help ensure that a permanent and firm defensible Green Belt boundary can be provided and to enable the delivery of a greater number of dwellings on omission Site ALD2 which we are seeking to re-allocate (as shown on the sketch layout below).

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<sup>12</sup> Alderley Edge Settlement Report (August 2020) §4.160





## Settlement Boundaries (Policy PG 9)

*26. Is the principle of defining Settlement Boundaries consistent with the strategic policies in the LPS and with national policy in enabling the delivery of sustainable development?*

2.34 The principle of defining Settlement Boundaries is not consistent with the strategic policies in the LPS as it fails to accommodate any Green Belt release around Alderley Edge.

*27. With particular reference to the Settlement and Infill Boundaries Review (SIBR) and the individual Settlement Reports:*

*a) Is the methodology for the review and definition of detailed Settlement Boundaries robust?*

2.35 Story has no comment on this matter.

*b) Have the criteria and judgements used to inform the choice of Settlement Boundaries been consistently applied?*

2.36 Story has no comment on this matter.

*c) Are the proposed Settlement Boundaries justified on the basis of proportionate evidence?*

2.37 No, the evidence supports the alteration of Settlement Boundaries around Alderley Edge in order to accommodate the allocation of land at Ryleys Farm for residential development.

*28. Will the Settlement Boundaries defined on the Draft Policies Map be effective in enabling further windfall sites to come forward, to meet the remaining unallocated element of the indicative level of housing development at the LSCs, and elsewhere in the borough?*

2.38 The proposed Settlement Boundary around Alderley Edge is tightly defined and the surrounding Green Belt limits opportunities for significant levels of development which could deliver much needed market and affordable housing. This approach does not support the LPS aims of steering development towards the LSCs to ensure sustainable development as it limits opportunities for development in these settlements. The Green Belt boundary around Alderley Edge should be amended and Site ALD2 at Ryleys Farm should be re-allocated for residential development.

*29. Is there any substantive evidence to demonstrate that any of the proposed Settlement Boundaries are not justified in defining the boundary between the built-up area of the settlements and the open countryside?*

2.39 Yes. Site ALD2 at Ryleys Farm should be reinstated as an allocation within the SADPD and the boundary increased in size in order to help meet housing need and deliver a high-quality scheme for Alderley Edge and to provide permanent and defensible Green Belt boundaries. There is a compelling need to deliver market and affordable homes in Alderley Edge. By not allocating sufficient sites which can assist in the delivery of affordable homes it is contrary to National Policy [§ 11, 16, 60] and to the Council's own LPS objectives.

2.40 If the allocation is re-instated and amended as requested, the settlement boundary of Alderley Edge will need to be amended accordingly.