

Matter 3 – Housing

Housing Density (Policy HOU 12)

Q.64 The housing density proposed is not justified. The supporting information to HOU12 references LPS Policy SE2 on the ‘Efficient Use of Land’. However, whilst Policy SE2 can be supported because it emphasises the importance of using previously developed land and safeguarding natural sources and sets down some important criteria specifically for windfall development, it does not go anywhere towards explaining how Cheshire East Council arrived at a recommended housing density of 30 per ha. across the borough. Nor does the justification for that policy, although it helpfully says that the council will “seek to resist inappropriate development where development would cause harm to the character of the surrounding area” (Para. 13.16, page 128).

Policy HOU12 in the SADPD lacks not only relevant evidence but specificity. This lack of specificity is potentially dangerous because of the harmful effect it could have on the character of local areas.

CPRE is keen to see high densities in towns, although we believe it is important for them to retain green lungs. Also, in village centres it is often appropriate to have higher densities but outside of them it has to be recognised that densities are often quite low. It is essential that the character of each area is recognised and protected and this includes the need to tailor development density to the local circumstances.

Q.65 The policy needs to be much more explicit and it should be specific to different settlements, all of which have different characters, settings and attributes. Such detail would be helpful to all concerned.

CPRE is very much in favour of making best use of land. That said, it accepts that ‘making best use of land’ can mean providing high density accommodation in some places where appropriate and providing low density housing in areas where that is the norm and where to do otherwise would have a detrimental effect and may also put unacceptable strains on environmental capacity and on inadequate infrastructure.

The proposed policy merely recognises “that there are some areas of the borough with an established low density character that should be protected”. However, it fails to explain either in the policy or the supporting text what constitutes “low density”. Nor is there an accompanying map. Whereas the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan was very specific in explaining and illustrating which areas constituted low density. Without that specificity, it is highly predictable that the matter of low density would subsequently be fought on a case by case basis as planning applications come forward. This would not be in anyone’s best interest.