

Cheshire East Council Local Plan Part 2

Poynton Town Council: SADPD examination

Matter 3 Housing Density Policy

Q 64 and Q 65 in respect of Policy HOU 12 Housing Density (page 100 of the Site Allocations Plan)

Housing Density (Policy HOU 12)

64. Is the minimum density of 30dph for new residential development in Cheshire East specified in Policy HOU 12 justified on the basis of proportionate evidence? If so what is the evidence to support this minimum density?

65. Should Policy HOU 12 be more explicit in accepting densities below the minimum of 30dph where lower densities are important to local character? Given the diverse character of residential areas in Cheshire East, would setting a range of acceptable densities for new residential development for different settlements be more effective and consistent with national policy?

Poynton Town Council requests a number of changes to policy HOU 12. Cheshire East Borough Council has a population of more than 360,000 people and covers an area of nearly 120,000 hectares, being one of the largest boroughs by population in the North West region. Prior to the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) in 2012, policy direction and policy regarding the density of housing was contained in Planning Policy Guidance 3 (PPG 3). This required a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare (DpH). Following the introduction of the NPPF local planning authorities have been empowered to set out their own approach to housing density. The aim has been to reflect local circumstances such that the development potential of a site should be guided by the existing or emerging plan policy including locally determined policies on density.

Question 64 seeks evidence for the minimum density being proposed by policy HOU 12. Calculating density can be undertaken in at least three different ways. These are as follows: Number of habitable rooms; Quantity of floor area (in sq metres); Number of dwellings per hectare (dph – dwellings per hectare).

Taking the number of habitable rooms as the example of a measure, this can be based upon the total number of habitable rooms provided by homes on a site. A habitable room is often defined as 'Any room used or intended to be used for sleeping, cooking, living or eating purposes'. Enclosed spaces such as bath or toilet facilities, service rooms, corridors, laundries, hallways, utility rooms or similar spaces would likely be excluded from this definition. This method is often used in London to facilitate higher density urban and to reflect the larger proportion of studio and one bedroom (non family) homes.

At Q65 the Inspector has referred to the diverse character of the Cheshire East Council area. This diversity is reflected within the town of Poynton which has a current population approaching 15,000 with a substantial amount of new housing development to follow the Local Plan Part 1 allocations. By introducing a minimum density across the Borough area, the planning authority seeks to control the ambitions of all those seeking accommodation. New housing developments should assist in creating mixed communities with a variety of housing particularly in terms of tenure, price and a mix of different households such as families with children, single person households and older people.

In its previous representations regarding the policy HOU 12, the Town Council requested some additions to policy HOU12 to allow for the retention of a lower density component of this policy and that additions be made to the proposed adopted policies maps to include the areas currently defined in Saved policy H12 and accompanying plans of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan 2004.

The Town Council again requests that an additional point 5 should be added to HOU12 to read:

5 Low density housing areas as defined in this Plan are expected to meet the following criteria:

- Be sympathetic to the character of the established residential area
- Be commensurate with the surrounding area in terms of plot width and spaces between the sides of houses
- Existing low density should not be exceeded in any particular area
- Existing high standards of space, light and privacy should be maintained
- Existing tree and ground cover of public amenity value should be retained.

Conclusion

Poynton Town Council requests more flexibility in proposed policy HOU 12 so as to deliver a wider variety of house types within Cheshire East. Planning applications therefore should meet the housing needs of the Borough in a suitable and sustainable location, using land effectively and efficiently and be of high quality design. The proposed additional bullet point 5 would provide some criteria against which to assess more diverse planning applications than the minimum density currently being proposed in policy HOU12.