

**Cheshire East Local Plan Site Allocations and Development  
Policies Document Examination**

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**By email via the Programme Officer**

Dear Mr. Owens,

**Examination of Cheshire East Local Plan Site Allocations and  
Development Policies Document (SADPD) - Initial Questions**

Further to your submission of the Cheshire East SADPD, I have undertaken an initial read of the plan, the supporting evidence base and representations.

There are a number of matters, issues and questions (MIQs), which I anticipate will need to be discussed at a Hearing. Before finalising these and the draft programme for the Hearing, I have to have a number of initial questions and requests for further clarification, on which I would be grateful for the Council's response, as follows.

**Development at Local Service Centres (LSCs)**

1. Policy PG8 of the SADPD expects the housing element of the LSC requirement to be addressed by windfall sites going forward. Please would the Council clarify the evidence to support this, in particular:
  - a) What is the breakdown of housing completions and commitments on windfall sites (of all sizes) in the LSCs, as at 31 March 2020, that were granted permission before and after the adoption of the LPS?
  - b) What is the average annual rate of completions on windfall sites in the LSCs that have been granted permission since the LPS was adopted?
2. Whilst noting the potential future contribution from small windfalls within the LSCs in paragraph 4.42 of ED05, as the windfall allowance of 875 dwellings for the Plan as a whole is separate from the requirement for 3,500 dwellings at the LSCs, please confirm whether the Council is counting part of the future projected supply from small windfalls towards the LSCs indicative target?
3. For which of the LSCs is a neighbourhood plan likely to be prepared or reviewed during the plan period? In the absence of a disaggregation of the housing requirement for the LSCs in Policy PG8, how will the Council determine a requirement figure for each neighbourhood area if requested?

### Green Belt and Safeguarded Land

4. Policy PG12 of the SADPD proposes the alteration of Green Belt (GB) boundaries to enable the designation of 14.48 hectares (ha) of safeguarded land (SL) at the LSCs in order to meet the remainder of the requirement for 200 ha of SL identified in the Local Plan Strategy (LPS). The exceptional circumstances set out in the LPS to justify the release of 200 ha of GB land for SL were based on a projection forward of the housing requirement in the LPS beyond 2030. However, I note that the standard method (SM) for calculating local housing need (LHN) shows the LHN for Cheshire East to be around 1,040 dpa, compared to the housing requirement of 1,800 dpa in the adopted LPS. Whilst I am clear that the housing requirement in the LPS for the period to 2030 should not be reviewed as part of this examination, I am mindful of the Aireborough court judgement<sup>1</sup> which indicates that a potential future change in the housing requirement in a strategic plan should be taken into account in determining exceptional circumstances for the alteration of GB boundaries in a site allocations plan. In the light of this, what implications does the SM for calculating LHN have for the future long term development needs in Cheshire East beyond 2030 and how should it be taken into account in determining whether exceptional circumstances continue to exist to justify the release of GB land in the SADPD for the designation of further SL to meet development needs beyond 2030?

### Limited Infilling in Villages

5. The definition of 'limited infilling' in Policies PG6 of the LPS and PG10 of the SADPD differ. The former defines it as 'the infill of a small gap with one or two dwellings in an otherwise built up frontage' and the latter 'the development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings'. To ensure it is clear how decision makers should react to proposals for infilling in 'villages', is there a need to modify or justify the definition in the SADPD? If not, which definition would take precedence?

### Local Green Gaps

6. Please identify any localised separation or green gap/green wedge policies in existing made Neighbourhood Plans that Policy PG14 would support. Would Policy PG14 unnecessarily duplicate those policies or would it serve a clear purpose in protecting the openness of local green gaps or green wedges identified in Neighbourhood Plans, which those plans do not currently achieve?

### Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation

7. The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites requires a supply of deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against the annualised need for pitches. For soundness this will need to be from the date of adoption of the SADPD. With regard to permanent pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, whilst the overall supply, comprising permanent pitches granted planning permission since the base date of the Gypsy and Traveller Need Assessment (GTAA) (19 pitches) and sites allocated in the SADPD (21 pitches), exceeds the need to the end of the plan period,

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<sup>1</sup> Aireborough Neighbourhood Development Forum v Leeds City Council & Others [2020] EWHC 1461 (Admin) (paragraph 103)

there is insufficient information on delivery timescales for the permitted or allocated sites, to demonstrate a deliverable 5 year supply from the date of adoption. If I have overlooked this in the evidence submitted, please point me to it. Otherwise, please would the Council supply a schedule of sites for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpersons' accommodation (both permitted and allocated), with dates for the completion of pitches and evidence to support the delivery trajectory.

8. With regard to transit pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, the site selection report [ED14] records that 12 transit pitches on two sites have been granted planning permission since the base date of the GTAA. Given that this already exceeds the need for 5-10 transit pitches over the plan period, please would the Council explain why the SADPD allocates a site (G&T5) for a further 10 transit pitches?

#### Crewe and Macclesfield town centres – Policies RET10 and RET11

9. Figures 9.1 and 9.2 of the SADPD show a series of development and character areas for Crewe and Macclesfield town centres to which Policies RET10 and RET11 apply area specific development considerations. However, it is not clear from the evidence what status these plans have, whether they are part of the policies, supporting text or policies map. If they are intended to illustrate geographically the application of Policies RET10 and RET11, they should be part of the Policies Map, with boundaries following clearly identifiable physical boundaries on an ordnance survey (OS) base drawn to scale. The boundaries for the character areas in Figure 9.2 are not clearly defined on an OS base and they overlap with each other in a number of places. Therefore, in some parts of Macclesfield town centre, it will be unclear which character area requirements must be adhered to. For example, the considerations relevant to development proposals in the Chestergate and historic heart area are different to those for the Retail core, but both will apply where the boundaries overlap. This would be ambiguous and it will not be evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals in those areas. Please let me have your comments on this matter.

#### Site Allocations

10. The allocation for Site CRE1 – Land at Bentley Motors includes the whole of the existing Bentley Motors site, which is also designated as a Strategic Employment area (EMP1). The sports ground is also identified as a Protected Open Space under Policy REC1. I have read the supporting evidence in the Crewe Settlement Report [ED28], which justifies the allocation to support further investment by Bentley Motors. But given that Policy EMP1 already supports proposals for further investment within the same site boundary and Policy REC1 protects the sports ground from development, it is not clear why the Bentley Motors site has been identified as a separate site allocation. This appears to be an unnecessary duplication of policies, which paragraph 16(f) of the NPPF discourages. The same approach has not been applied to other strategic employment areas. Please would the Council provide further clarification of the reasons for this allocation?

I would be grateful for your response to this letter by Friday 30 July 2021. If the Council requires more time to respond to any of the questions, please let me know a timetable for your response. If I have any further initial questions I will forward these to the Council as soon as possible.

With regard to the Hearing, I am grateful that the Council has reserved venues at Sandbach and Macclesfield Town Halls for late September and early October. I am working towards those dates and will be in contact again via the Programme Officer about the format, arrangements and dates for the Hearing, once PINS has reviewed its guidance on holding virtual and physical hearings, following the Government's announcement on the further lifting of Covid-19 restrictions due today. In the meantime, I would be grateful if the Council would hold the reservations on its venues.

On receipt of this letter, please would the Council upload it to the Examination library as an Examination Document and add a link to it on the Latest news and updates page.

Yours sincerely,

*Mike Hayden*

INSPECTOR  
Cheshire East Site Allocations and  
Development Policies Document Examination