



Strategic Planning Update

May 2021

The Strategic Planning Update is one of the ways that we aim to keep local councils in touch with planning policy matters affecting the Borough.

Officers in the Strategic Planning team continue to work from home. However, you can still get in touch with us about anything in this Update. The best way is via email; however, we will also pick up voicemail messages left on our general contact number (01270) 685893 and call you back.

[Click here to email the Strategic Planning team](#)

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- Housing Supply update
- Final approval for three Article 4 Directions regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation in Crewe
- Progress with Supplementary Planning Documents currently in preparation: Housing, Biodiversity and Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Neighbourhood Planning progress around the borough
- Authority Monitoring Report for 2019/20
- Updated Local Development Scheme 2020-22
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Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD)

Following approval at a Special Meeting of the Full Council on Monday 19th April the SADPD has now been submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination.

The public examination of the Plan is the next important stage in its journey towards adoption. The examination will be conducted by an independent Planning Inspector. The Inspector will assess whether the Plan has been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and if it is 'sound'. A 'sound' plan is one that has been positively prepared and is justified, effective and consistent with national policy. These four tests of 'soundness' are set out in national planning policy.

The submission of the Plan follows the further opportunity, between October and December last year, to make representations about a revised version of it. These revisions included:

- the removal of proposed housing allocations at Local Service Centres because of a change to housing land supply; and
- the inclusion of additional environmental standards for new development to help tackle climate change, responding to the Council's new Environment Strategy and its declaration of a climate change emergency.

Along with a summary of the main issues raised in them, the representations made at this stage are forwarded to the Inspector to consider alongside the submitted Plan.

You can find out more about the submission of the SADPD and the next steps by reading the report considered at the Full Council meeting. It is available via the following link (scroll down to Item 7 on the web page): <https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=239&MIId=8625>

An examination web site is also now live, via the link below, where you will be able to keep track of how the examination is progressing. You can also see the submitted Revised Publication Draft SADPD and the supporting documents that accompany it.

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/site-allocations-and-policies/sadpd-examination/sadpd-examination.aspx

Crewe Hub Area Action Plan (CHAAP)

Prior to the introduction of lockdown measures at the end of March 2020, the Council published its Regulation 19 version of the Crewe Hub Area Action Plan that sets the ambition to bring jobs, regeneration and environmental improvements to Crewe, building on the opportunity presented by the arrival of HS2.

Much has changed since March 2020 with the securing of £14.1 million of government investment through the [Future High Streets Fund](#), commencement of development at the [Royal Arcade](#) and the finalisation of the (soon to be opened) [Market Hall](#) and in the light of the Covid-19 situation, and wider progress in Crewe, the Council continues to review the detail of the CHAAP.

The plan is being looked at again to make sure that its policies and proposals are deliverable and continue to reflect the ambition for transformation change in the Town and we expect to be able to update on the document later in the year.

The following link gives more information on the [Crewe Hub Area Action Plan](#).

Housing Supply

The Council publishes information each year about its housing supply – how many homes have been built and the future pipeline supply of homes.

Since the last Strategic Planning Update, the Council has published an updated 5-year housing land supply position. National planning policy requires all councils to maintain a minimum 5-year supply of deliverable housing land. Not having a 5-year supply can have implications for planning application decision making, whereby the ‘tilted balance’ in favour of granting planning permission can apply. The Council’s deliverable supply as at 31 March 2020 was 6.4 years. You can read more detail about this in our latest Housing Monitoring Update via this link:

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/research_and_evidence/strategic_housing_land_assmnt/housing-monitoring-update.aspx

Houses in Multiple Occupation - Article 4 Directions in Crewe

Previous Strategic Planning Updates highlighted the steps that the Council is taking to put in place additional controls to manage the development of further houses in multiple occupation (HMO). This includes the introduction of Article 4 Directions within three areas of Crewe where there are higher concentrations of this type of property - around Nantwich Road, West Street and Hungerford Road.

Under national ‘permitted development’ regulations, planning permission is granted automatically to change a family home into a small HMO. However, through these Article 4 Directions, the Council is removing this ‘permitted development right’ within these three areas.

Following public consultation about the Directions and having considered the feedback received about them, a decision has now been made that will bring the Directions into force on 1 November this year. This means, from that date, a planning application would need to be made to the Council involving any proposal to convert a family home into a HMO, regardless of its size within the three areas covered by the Directions.

More information about the Article 4 Directions can be [viewed here](#).

Supplementary Planning Documents

HMOs

In parallel with progressing the Article 4 Directions, a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has also been prepared to provide further, more detailed guidance on the requirements that any new proposed HMO will need to meet, including managing the concentration of HMOs within a particular area. Although particularly relevant to the three areas of Crewe proposed to be covered by Article 4 Directions, the SPD will apply borough-wide.

Following public consultation on the draft HMO SPD between October and December last year and having considered feedback received about it, the SPD has now been finalised and published to allow any further representations to be made about it and its accompanying Report of Consultation, with a deadline of 5pm on Monday 7 June for receipt of views.

Details of the HMO SPD including how to respond is available via:

https://cheshireeast-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/planning/spd/final_draft_hmo

Housing

A first draft Housing Supplementary Planning Document is currently also being consulted on. Further details, including how to comment on it, can be [viewed here](#).

The SPD will apply across the whole borough and provides additional planning guidance on a range of housing matters for developers, applicants, and other stakeholders. The guidance describes how the Council will expect policies in the Local Plan to be applied, for example giving more information on how financial contributions to affordable housing should be calculated and how specialist housing provision will be considered.

The consultation runs until 5pm on Monday 7 June for receipt of views. Once feedback has been considered, the document will be updated and published for final representations later in the year.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. It is a priority of the Council to protect and enhance biodiversity and habitats across the borough and it already seeks to do this through a range of mechanisms. However, it wants to do more - to help bring about an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features.

To support this aim, this supplementary planning document provides advice that will apply across the borough and sets out the process through which developers should demonstrate how they have considered habitats and biodiversity in their applications – for example how assets have been retained and improved on site and how offsite financial contributions will be calculated and used.

Watch out for further details on consultation which will run from the middle of May until the middle of June.

Neighbourhood Planning

Whilst lockdowns and Covid restrictions presented some challenges to plan making by our communities, much progress has been made across the borough on a wide range of neighbourhood plans. On May 6th we will be holding long awaited referendums on plans for Alderley Edge, Hankelow, Gawsforth, Shavington, Eaton and Peover Superior.

Lots of our parishes have been working hard to move ahead with their emerging plans too – Marbury, Church Lawton and Over Alderley have all advanced their plans and Odd Rode and High Legh have both reached the regulation 14 first draft stage.

Of some note to neighbourhood planners, High Legh is proposing a very ambitious plan to bring additional services, affordable homes and open space to the village through a large site allocation in the Green Belt. The Parish Council is now consulting on their draft plan, including their masterplan for the village, so congratulations to High Legh for putting together a very complex set of proposals which can be [viewed here](#).

Sandbach is in the process of updating its Neighbourhood Plan and should be consulting in the coming months whilst Marton has claimed the title of being the first parish in the borough to complete a formal plan review updating their plan that was originally completed in 2016.

From the government's perspective, neighbourhood planning remains an important tool and a central part of the planning system. Whilst the wider planning reforms being proposed ([Planning for the Future](#)) remain under consideration, [new funding commitments and pilot programmes](#) are being launched across the country to support neighbourhood planning - so it seems clear that neighbourhood plans will remain a central part of government policy in whatever reforms are made to the planning system.

As ever, if you need support with your neighbourhood plan then please get in touch with the team and you can follow [this link](#) for more information on neighbourhood planning progress around the borough.

Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) 2019/20

Each year, the Council publishes an AMR. It has several purposes including to track the effect of Local Plan policies and the extent to which the Plan's objectives and targets are being met. AMRs also inform the need for future changes to Local Plan policies and proposals. The latest AMR covers the period up to 31 March 2020 and can be viewed via this link:

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire-east-local-plan/authority-monitoring-report/authority-monitoring-report.aspx>

Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2020-22

All councils are required to publish an LDS and keep it up to date. They list the local plan documents that the local authority is intending to adopt, and the timetable for their production. The Cheshire East LDS has recently been updated, covering the period 2020-2022. It can be viewed via the following link:

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire-east-local-plan/local-development-scheme.aspx>

Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2019/20

The Council has published its first report on the monetary (and non-monetary) contributions sought and received from developers for the provision of infrastructure to support development in the borough, and the use of those contributions. These contributions are provided through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and legal agreements, via Section 106 planning obligations and S278 highway agreements. This first Statement covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

The IFS can be viewed on the Council's website via the following link:

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire-east-local-plan/community-infrastructure-levy/community-infrastructure-levy.aspx>

National planning reforms

Many changes have recently taken place to the planning system and the pace of change is set to continue.

Radical changes to the current planning system were announced through the Government's Planning White Paper last year, including simplified local plans in which land would be categorised for growth, renewal or protection. The Government's response to the 40,000+ responses it received about the White Paper proposals is expected in the near future, to be followed by new draft primary planning legislation by the end of 2021 which will bring into effect the eventual package of reforms.

In the middle of last year, the Government also consulted on some shorter-term changes to the planning system. Two of these are summarised below which have subsequently been confirmed as going ahead:

- A revised way of calculating housing need within each local authority was proposed, driven by the Government's ambition to boost housing supply and reach a target of building 300,000 homes nationally by the mid-2020s. This proposal has now been changed in favour of increasing the level of housing need just within the largest city areas.
- The way that the Government would like to see 'First Homes' delivered has now been confirmed and is largely in line with the consultation proposals. These changes will be brought into effect through a Written Ministerial Statement later this year. First Homes, which are new homes discounted by at least 30% for first time buyers, will then be prioritised ahead of other forms of affordable housing in new housing schemes.

The Government has also been making changes to the Use Classes Order and to permitted development rights. Without getting into detail, the changes have the general effect of removing the need to apply for planning permission. Amongst other things, these changes allow for:

- upward extensions of existing purpose-built blocks of flats and certain other buildings by up to 2 additional storeys to create new homes;
- the demolition of certain vacant buildings and their redevelopment for residential use;
- the creation of a new use class, Class E, allowing for changes of use between retail and other commercial uses; and
- changes from Class E uses to dwellings – to come into effect from August.

It is important to highlight that developers are generally not free to carry out these things as they wish. Although a planning application will not need to be made, there are conditions and limitations that they will need to comply with. In some cases, where they involve 'permitted development', 'prior approval' may need to be obtained first from the local authority which allows certain matters to be assessed. However, this is generally far more limited than the range of considerations taken account of in determining a planning application.

Cheshire East has made representations to a number of these changes. Most recently it raised concerns to Government about the permitted changes between Class E and new dwellings – that there is a risk that it will further weaken the protection that can be given to town centres through the planning system, for example by commercial frontages in high streets being converted to residential use in a way which could harmfully dilute retail activity in them - at a time when town centres are already facing unprecedented challenges.