

Strategic Plan: Shaping Our Future: A Development Strategy for Jobs and Sustainable Communities:

The Vision for CE in 2030:

We are concerned about the foreword, which is entirely focused on jobs and employment. A true strategy for communities should be holistic, taking into account wellbeing, health, employment, housing, education and the green environment. While we appreciate the importance of jobs and development, these should be viewed in the context of a well justified spatial strategy and should not be the overriding factor that drives the plan.

We welcome the focus on investment to support the regeneration of Crewe and Macclesfield. We particularly welcome the focus on Crewe, whose key role within the West Coast Spine will be reinforced by the HS2 development. In marked contrast to settlements such as Wilmslow at the north end of the Borough, which is strongly tied into the Greater Manchester travel to work area, Crewe is essentially self-contained as a town, and an ideal location for investment. We think there is case for a bolder policy focused on Crewe akin to the development of Warrington as a new town in the 1970s. To promote the regeneration of Crewe and to capitalize on the proposed HS2 development we would like to propose the designation of Crewe as a 21st century New Town.

We recognize that development pressure is intense in the northern part of the Borough but it was ever thus. The North Cheshire Green Belt has consistently applied a policy of restraint for the last 50 years, since the original North Cheshire Green Belt was formally submitted to Government in August, 1961. It was established to contain the southern spread of the Greater Manchester Conurbation, to maintain the integrity of settlements in N Cheshire and to protect the open countryside. If anything, the functionality of the Green Belt has been reinforced by recent and impending developments to the north of Cheshire East at Manchester Airport and on the former Woodford Aerodrome site in Stockport. We therefore object to the proposed strategic development at Handforth east. The case for sustaining or revoking the Green Belt in any location should be considered on its merits and the notion of a “green belt swap” is unsound. There is a marked contrast between the systematic and consultative approach to the preparation of the Green Belt Subject Plan in 1977/98 and the current process which seems rather hurried and opportunistic.

Purpose of the Development Strategy Document:

We feel that the approach to strategy development is somewhat inward looking. We would like to see a strategic approach that takes full account of the wider relationships to the activities of neighbouring authorities, particularly Manchester and Stockport, and the place of Cheshire East in its regional and sub-regional context.

4. The Town Strategies:

We have previously commented on the Wilmslow Town strategy.

5. Planning for Growth:

Crewe requires additional employment therefore a jobs led medium to high growth strategy should be applied to that area. We have suggested that CE goes further and in effect works with government to take Crewe forward as a 21st century New Town. The potential expansion of Crewe New Town could be limited by an encircling Green Belt, rather than the mixture of isolated Green belt patches and Strategic Open gaps shown on the Key Diagram.

It does not follow that high house building strategies should be applied to the whole of the Borough at the expense of priorities for other areas, such as conserving heritage and the environment, providing sustainable modes of transport, renewable energy, care for the elderly, facilities for children and young people (which, by the way, all generate some form of employment).

We do not accept that growth pressures on the northern part of the Borough (eg around Wilmslow and Handforth) should be accommodated by revoking the Green Belt. The long established policy of restraint on the southern fringe of Greater Manchester is well justified and should continue. The proposal for a major strategic housing development on land to the north-east of Handforth (Handforth East) is substantially unrelated to the development needs of Cheshire East as a whole. It will erode the Green Belt in a critical location and undermine the effectiveness of ongoing development in Manchester and Stockport by creating severe congestion on a road network that is already overloaded.

For the avoidance of doubt, whilst broadly endorsing the Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution (Policy CS2), *we object to the proposed new strategic development north of Handforth.*

Section 6: Planning for Sustainable Development:

We are concerned that the document refers to development as only having value in terms of economic growth. There are many different types of growth, for example creating value, flourishing, improvement, progress and regeneration and in the developed world sustainable development may mean zero growth. *Prosperity and well-being should be the main aspiration* as perpetual growth is impossible and does not consider supply restraints.

Section 7: Infrastructure:

We are broadly supportive.

Section 8 Strategic Sites:

Wilmslow:

We welcome the reduction in proposed housing allocation for Wilmslow in response to the feedback on the Consultation and note that the residents of

Wilmslow have identified substantial capacity on brownfield sites. They have also identified “previously used land” in the form of substantial vacant office space.

The Adlington Road site currently provides a useful green wedge into the built up area but should this safeguarded land be developed we would express a strong wish that it would make a major contribution to the affordable housing needs of Wilmslow and Handforth.

We strongly object to the proposed removal of land at Royal London from the Green Belt and the proposed change in status of the land to the west of Alderley Road from Green Belt to safeguarding land. We have consulted the original Report Of Survey which established the N Cheshire Green Belt and we believe that the green belt function of this green corridor in separating Wilmslow from Alderley Edge is ,if anything, stronger now than at the time of original designation in 1978. When viewed from the railway, the landscape opens up south of Wilmslow station and after Wilmslow High School, the countryside begins.

Handforth:

We have already set out in detail why we consider this proposed development (Handforth East) is inappropriate and detrimental. In conjunction with our work on the development plan, we have undertaken a Landscape Character Assessment for the civil parish of Wilmslow (Wilmslow, Handforth and Styal) and have visited the land at Handforth East. This is part of a distinctive landscape character area (the Higher Farms and Woods) which offers fine views of the Pennine Hills to the east and in the southern part of the site (ie that covered by phase 2 and 3) the condition of the original farmed landscape is substantially intact. This is a green lung for the people of Handforth and highly regarded and well used by local people of all ages despite the lack of investment in countryside access and the landscape by CE.