

## **Transition Town Wilmslow Response to the Cheshire East Local Plan:**

### **Shaping Our Future**

#### **Document 1: Policy Principles:**

##### **1. Purpose of Emerging Principles**

Within this section of the document, we do not feel that you have taken on relevant strategies at regional level, for example relationships with Manchester and Stockport and M6 growth corridor. This is very important in understanding the future of Cheshire East within its geographic and cultural context.

##### **2. Section 2 Background to Cheshire East:**

We felt this was a helpful and informative summary and gives a good breakdown of the characteristics and diversity of the area and the approach to the settlement hierarchy. However we do not agree with section 2.31: this really undersells the landscape character of the area. *This is an area with a very rich, diverse and attractive landscape in its own right which should be recognized.*

##### **3. Section 3 Enterprise and Growth:**

“We want to create thriving towns that are sustainable...” : here you are referring to sustainability in economic terms only. We regard sustainability as having a much wider definition that includes human wellbeing, and resilience to future events and challenges including climate change and food and energy security. We would ask that this section of the policies and principles section be reworded to take account of the importance of this wider definition.

Paragraph 3.3 Objective 1:

Point 1: Employment land should be looked at in terms of the overall spatial strategy for the Borough (see comments on strategy). Green belt land is not appropriate for employment land and this should be made clear.

We agree with the other points in EG1.

Policy EG2 Rural Economy:

We are supportive of this policy.

Policy EG3 Existing and allocated employment sites: Paragraph 3.2. 2. We support the consultation responses that state that the upper floors of town centre premises would provide excellent residential properties, increasing the town’s vibrancy. We strongly support this and would like to see it reflected in policy.

Policy EG4 Tourism: While we agree that sustainable transport is important to support tourism, we would like more specific reference to maintaining footpaths, cycleways, bridleways and canal side paths which are a key infrastructure for tourism and leisure, as is acknowledged in 3.27. We would like to see this specifically stated in the policy. In para 3.32 it states “planning has a key role to play...”: we would like to add “a key role in planning the access network for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders”.

EG5 Promoting a Town Centre First Approach to Retail and Commerce:

We strongly support the idea of supporting retail in town centres, particularly the enhancement and retention of the Borough’s Markets. The Artisan Markets are an exemplar of how to regenerate town centres, and we would strongly encourage support for these.

3.43: We note the comments in 3.43 and would support residential use in town centres as well as retail, in order to develop town centre vibrancy. We support the idea of improvements to the public realm, but would wish you to add that this includes town centre green infrastructure which has a vital role to play in the appearance of a town and sense of wellbeing.

#### **Section 4 Stronger Communities:**

We support the opening statements in 4.1 and 4.2. This resonates strongly with the principles of Transition Towns nationally and internationally. We would like to see the spirit of these paragraphs reflected in the plan itself.

We support objective 2 and the associated points in their entirety except for the proposed housing allocation of 27,000 new homes across the Borough which we do not feel has been justified. We would like to see this reviewed in the light of the forthcoming Housing Needs Assessment. The need to provide this particular (as yet unjustified in terms of housing need) target appears to be driving the entire CE plan.

We note performance indicator (4.6) We would suggest adding in a performance indicator for Accessible Natural Green Space.

We agree wholeheartedly with points 4.7 and 4.8. However we do NOT recognize the idea that leisure facilities could be surplus to requirements. Leisure facilities are vital to the wellbeing of the entire community, from infancy to old age. We are concerned that only larger towns such as Crewe and Macclesfield will have “facilities that attract large numbers of people”: there are other towns such as Wilmslow with good facilities which should be preserved. We are concerned about paragraph iv, ie increasing use of “shared space”. Buildings that combine public services, health and community functions are unlikely to have swimming pools, which would be highly detrimental to the health of the population. Many people with musculoskeletal disorders can only access exercise by swimming. There is a general underprovision of

sports and leisure facilities particularly for young people. It is vital that the Wilmslow Leisure Centre and Rectory fields stay where they are. Concerns about energy costs could be allayed with an energy efficiency retrofit.

4.12 We do not agree that shared services are necessarily suitable in all communities and communities need to be consulted about this.

### **Health and Wellbeing:**

#### SC2

We strongly support items 1-6 in SC2, particularly access to exercise, cycling and walking, but would wish to see access to swimming added to this. We support the idea of locally produced food and would like to see this expressed in the plan. There is no reference to fuel poverty and cold related deaths particularly in the elderly. *We note that cold related deaths in CE are above average and would want to know how CE are going to respond to this worrying statistic.*

#### SC3 Residential Mix:

We broadly support the principles stated, but note that in point 2 it is stated “if there is a need for Extra care” it should state “where there is a need”, as we see that there is definitely a need to provide housing for frail elderly. We would like this policy area to be reviewed in the light of the new strategic housing market assessment which is due in March 2013.

#### SC 4 Housing to meet Local Needs:

We support the policy as long as “affordable” housing does not mean a compromise on construction standards for energy efficiency. New building stock should be low to zero carbon (LZC) for truly sustainable development.

4.39 We would add that we would like to see the Council working more proactively with the Homes and Communities Agency and registered social landlords to identify possible suitable sites and opportunities for funding for social rent and intermediate housing products rather relying entirely on developers. Where necessary they should consider the use of public monies or land to support this.

### **5 Sustainable Environment:**

#### SE1:

We support the spirit of objective 3 wholeheartedly, with one exception (point 6) and would like to see these principles running through the entire local plan.

We particularly endorse providing green infrastructure and would like to see this in the Local Plan. We also endorse the proposals on climate change (points 2 and 5).

However, we strongly object to point 6 as drafted: it undermines the principle of the greenbelt. It introduces an element of flexibility and opportunism which is incompatible with the principle of the greenbelt as expressed in the National Planning Framework.

Performance Indicators: We would like to see a Performance Indicator on maintaining the integrity of the greenbelt.

Policy SE1: “Environmental Sustainability” should be a key design priority especially the use of green infrastructure and SUDS to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Policy SE2 Efficient Use of Land:

We support this in principle but are concerned that windfall development could erode urban greenspace particularly private gardens. We would like to see effective safeguards within the policy. We are concerned about “town cramming”, overdevelopment of sites and loss of urban greenspace, and with it resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Policy SE 3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity:

We support the policy however would note again that: 5.14 does not do justice to the quality and distinctiveness of the character of the Cheshire landscape.

Policy SE4: The Landscape:

We strongly support SE 4 but would note point 4:

Point 4: In Cheshire, the safeguarding Grades 1,2 and 3a does not do justice to the county’s pre-eminence in dairy and live stock production. Some of the most productive grasslands in Cheshire (and therefore in the UK) are on lower grade land. Much more regard should be given to agricultural productivity and farm structure in safeguarding the local farm economy.

Policy SE5: Green Infrastructure:

We support Policy SE 5 on green infrastructure. We wish to see an additional paragraph in this policy which recognises the degraded condition of the former Mosslands in Cheshire East north of the Meres and Mosses Natural Improvement Area. We would like to see a proactive approach from Cheshire East to restore the integrity of these Mosslands (most notably Danes Moss and Lindow Moss) and to restore their critical function as carbon sinks.

In Wilmslow, we (Transition Wilmslow) are currently working with students from the School of Environment and Development at the University of Manchester on a green infrastructure plan. The University will be inviting Cheshire East to become involved

in this project and we look forward to sharing our findings with Cheshire East in May of this year.

We would like to see the Green Infrastructure policy extended to reflect the importance of urban green space including tree lined avenues and private gardens, together with development of new green corridors within the built up area.

**SE6 Historic Environment:** We support this policy but would like to see explicit reference to the historic landscape (as illustrated by the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Assessment (2008)). A prime example of this is the historic field patterns surrounding Lindow Moss.

**SE7 Low Carbon Energy:**

We support this policy but note very little in the Local Plan that supports this. We have suggested under Policy SE5 that CE spearheads the reinstatement of the degraded Mosslands as carbon sinks. We strongly support the suggestions in 5.56 but would like to see specific mention of this throughout the Local Plan. We would request the provision of a Low Carbon Subject Plan. These comments are reflected in the Consultation Responses (5.58 and 5.59).

**SE8 Energy Efficient Development:**

We support this in principle but not point 3. We believe that the 10% renewables target is outmoded and need to define low to zero carbon developments to achieve this objective. We are very concerned that the effectiveness of policy SE8 is vulnerable to the interpretation of developers with regard to feasibility and would like to see this significantly strengthened.

**SE11 Waste:**

We endorse the principles of increasing recycling and reducing waste but would want to see this carried through into the Local Plan. Consideration should be given to the use of local Biodigestion facilities for dealing with waste from food and agriculture,

**SE12 Pollution:**

We are concerned about the pollution implications from road traffic of new developments and would like to see this concern carried through into the local plan. This has significant implications particularly for the Northern part of the Borough where traffic volumes are already high, both as a contribution to carbon emissions and impact on health through particulates and diesel fumes.

**SE15 Peak District National Park**

The word "resisted" should be replaced with "rejected": this is a National park and must be treated as such.

**CO1 Sustainable Travel and Transport:**

We are supportive of the comments on sustainable transport, including travel by sustainable means, developing better networks, building homes nearer to

employment, reducing the need for travel and improving infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. We greatly welcome CO1, and have some additional suggestions, including 20mph speed limits in residential areas. to achieve these objectives, and better access to railway stations to reduce barriers for disabled people and those with young children.

**CO4: Travel Plans:**

These developments need Green travel plans and transport assessments to be in place, implemented and followed up.

Transition Wilmslow Local Plan Subgroup Feb 2013