

DUTY TO CO-OPERATE
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN
STOCKPORT METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
AND
CHESHIRE EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL

PRELIMINARIES

Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding primarily relates to the preparation of Development Plans in the two local planning authority areas – Stockport (the ‘Metropolitan Borough’) and Cheshire East (the ‘Borough’). It also documents other related past and present collaborative working undertaken by the authorities as well as set out future intentions. The overall aim is to appropriately plan for the cross boundary strategic planning issues that exist and/or likely to arise in the foreseeable future between the two Boroughs

Purposes

The main purposes of this Memorandum of Understanding are to:

- Establish areas of agreement between the Cheshire East Council and Stockport Metropolitan Council;
- Identify areas where further work is required;
- Set out a future work programme for areas of collaboration

Scope

The scope of this Memorandum of Understanding is to cover:

- The scale of Borough-wide development requirements, particularly housing needs in Cheshire East because meeting these will involve the allocation and delivery of a large extent of land, but also including Gypsy and Traveller accommodation;
- Green Belt implications of the development proposals in Cheshire East;

- The formulation of specific development proposals at Handforth East ('North Cheshire Sustainable Village') and at other sites across Cheshire East
- The wider transport impacts and mitigation proposals associated with these developments set in the context of the existing and future transport network

Established Joint Working Arrangements

Stockport and Cheshire East Councils collaborate in a range of bipartisan and multi-agency arrangements. The ones relevant to this Memorandum of Understanding are:

- South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy - a sub-regional approach to addressing transport issues that is currently focussed on delivery of the A6 – Manchester Airport Relief Road and Poynton Relief Road which involves close co-operation and liaison between Stockport and Cheshire East Councils. This has led to the joint promotion of the A6-Manchester Airport relief road proposal.
- Manchester Airport Consultative Committee – a body on which a wide range of nearby local authorities are engaged in a dialogue on the operation of the airport
- Stockport/Cheshire East Collaboration Board – specifically set up to address cross boundary planning and transport issues at elected member level
- Joint officer work on the plans by Harrow Estates at the former BAE site at Woodford, a large scale potential housing development site on previously developed land in Stockport with social and transportation implications for Cheshire East. This site is now at planning application stage.

Specific Co-operation on Development Plan Preparation

- Each authority has historically formally consulted the other at every preparatory stage of Plan preparation;
- The authorities have engaged with each other on specific cross boundary matters as set out in the Cheshire East Duty to Co-operate Statement of Compliance

Development Plan Preparation Position at the Introduction of the Duty to Co-operate

At the time the Duty to Co-operate came into operation (16 November 2011) with the enactment of the Localism Bill:

- Stockport Core Strategy was already adopted (as of 17 March 2011). It was prepared to meet inter alia the housing requirement figure for the Borough as set out in the now revoked Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West
- Stockport Allocations Development Plan Document was at its Issues and Options consultation stage;
- The Former Woodford Aerodrome Site Supplementary Planning Document had gone through non-statutory consultation
- Cheshire East Core Strategy (now known as the Local Plan Strategy) had been through Issues and Options consultation

Current (February 2014) Development Plan Preparation Position

The current position is as follows:

- Stockport Core Strategy remains in force and is considered up to date in terms of the development requirements of the Borough
- Stockport Allocations Development Plan Document remains in preparation
- The Former Woodford Aerodrome Site Supplementary Planning Document is adopted (as of 14 January 2013) and is being used to guide the consideration of development proposals on the site, a current undetermined planning application refers
- Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy will be put forward to full Council on 28th February 2014 for publication and subsequent submission

MAIN PROVISIONS

Meeting Development Requirements

Agreed

- The amounts of overall housing and commercial development required in Stockport are as set out in the Stockport Core Strategy. These quantities are still considered sufficient to meet development needs in Stockport and are not dependent on any contribution from development sites located outside the Metropolitan Borough.

- The outstanding need to allocate sites to meet overall development requirements in Stockport will be pursued through the preparation of Site Allocations Development Plan Document
- The amounts of overall housing and commercial development in Cheshire East will be established in the Local Plan Strategy. The housing requirement will be derived from the full objectively assessed need for housing arising in the Borough taking account of the economic growth aspiration set out in the Plan and a 500 dwelling contribution to the housing required in High Peak Borough. The amounts of land needed will be met entirely from sites located within Cheshire East Borough.
- The housing market areas in Cheshire East are substantially contained within the Borough although there are some significant migration and travel to work movements with south Manchester and north Staffordshire
- Stockport Metropolitan Borough cannot accommodate any of Cheshire East's housing requirements
- Cheshire East Council has formally approached other neighbouring authorities with significant migration and travel to work connections to the Borough and none of them are in a position to accommodate any of Cheshire East's housing requirements
- Cheshire East Council will meet its own Gypsy and Traveller/Travelling Show people accommodation requirements by identifying sufficient appropriate sites in the Local Plan – Site Allocations and Development Policies document
- Cheshire East Council will also make best endeavours through site allocations and the use of its own land to assist Stockport Council meet its Gypsy and Traveller/Travelling Showpeople accommodation requirements

Green Belt

Agreed

- The Green Belt in the northern part of Cheshire East adjoins similar areas of greenbelt in the Stockport Borough as part of the wider Greater Manchester Green Belt;
- That part of the Green Belt that exists in the northern part of Cheshire East has served a clear purpose and has not been changed for many years. Although development within the towns inset from the Green Belt has been limited by additional policy measures over the last decade or so, very little land now remains available for meeting future development requirements within these settlements

- It is appropriate in terms of overall sustainability to accommodate at least a significant proportion (as is proposed) of the development needs arising in the north of the Borough at those northern towns (including Handforth). This will be likely to mean that Green Belt boundaries around these settlements will need to be relaxed
- When designating new Green Belt boundaries it is necessary, in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to establish new boundaries that will endure beyond the Plan period (2030) and it is appropriate to do this by identifying Safeguarded Land as well as land for development
- In considering changing Green Belt boundaries Cheshire East Council has assessed a large number of land parcels in terms of their contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt (as defined in the NPPF) relevant to the Borough
- When deciding which parcels of land to remove from the Green Belt the decision needs to take into account a wide range of factors, not just the contribution a parcel makes to the purposes of the Green Belt but also the appropriateness of sites for delivering sustainable development

Specific Development Proposals

Woodford Village

Agreed

- This site is appropriately designated as an Opportunity Site in the adopted Stockport Core Strategy based on being a major development site in the Green Belt
- Although the former Aerodrome site straddles the boundary between Stockport and Cheshire East the Woodford Village proposals appropriately only relate to land within the Metropolitan Borough
- The adopted Supplementary Planning Document for the site was appropriately prepared following active involvement by Cheshire East Council
- The site will be accessed from the road network within Stockport but will have some impact on the wider highway network that extends into Cheshire East
- An adequate range of public services for future Woodford Village residents will be provided in Stockport but some residents may choose services located in Cheshire East, where such demand can be reasonably accommodated
- The site includes safeguarding of land for a new protected Poynton relief road

Handforth East ('North Cheshire Sustainable Village')

Agreed

- The land parcel within which the bulk of the Sustainable Village is proposed in the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy was assessed by the Council as making a major contribution to the relevant purposes of the Green Belt
- The development site boundaries of the Sustainable Village as defined in the Local Plan Strategy leaves a wedge of land adjoining the northern boundary to remain as Green Belt preserving the open gap between Handforth and the built up extent of Stockport
- The northern boundary of the Growth Village site is proposed to be appropriately reinforced with a substantial landscape buffer on the south side of the A555 road;; this will add to the sense of separation of development between Handforth and Stockport. However it is acknowledged that this may be impacted upon by the requirement for additional access to the highway network in order to make the site deliverable (see below).
- The Sustainable Village will need to be appropriately accessed from the A34 road.
- The Sustainable Village will be required to be implemented complete with all the appropriate local social, community, health and social services enabling residents to conveniently access these without leaving the site and reducing the external trips from the site.
- The Sustainable Village is a readily deliverable development site, subject to the provision of appropriate investment to secure relevant transport outcomes.

Wider Transport

Agreed

- There is an opportunity, subject to funding, to provide pedestrian and cycle links between Woodford Village and the Sustainable Village linking with Poynton and Handforth respectively that would benefit both new communities and mitigate to a degree demand to use other transport modes in this vicinity.
- There is also an opportunity, again subject to funding, to provide a dedicated bus service that would link Woodford Village and the Sustainable Village connecting with Poynton and Handforth as part of a wider a regular service linking with such employment centres as Manchester Airport and Stockport town centre

- To note that discussion and work is on-going around transportation infrastructure planning , and that further work will be required to identify specific locations and corridors for improvement and mitigation
- There is scope to improve links between the Sustainable Village and Handforth railway station to provide an attractive, convenient route to access rail services. The deliverability of this will be investigated and involve Transport for Greater Manchester as a key partner.
- Providing 500 dwellings in Cheshire East on behalf of High Peak will significantly reduce what would otherwise be extra traffic congestion on the A6 and avoid a material deterioration of air quality at High Lane in Stockport

Commitments to further work

- It is agreed that some transport corridors within Stockport will require capacity enhancements or other mitigation measures. This will be informed by undertaking a full A34 corridor multi modal study which will determine necessary measures and define appropriate scale of development including wider need for mitigation measures on the surrounding local highway network. This will need to involve a range of partners including the Highways Agency given the implications at Gatley Lights and the M60.
- Feasibility of a new junction on the A555 to specifically serve the Handforth Sustainable Village and reduce the traffic impact of development on the A34/A555 junction. This could include the utilisation of land owned by Cheshire East and other parties but within Stockport Borough.

Future Joint Working Commitments

- Results of the latest traffic modelling test considering the effect of wider proposed junction mitigation and highway improvement options on the A34/A555 junction.
- Confirmation on land use allocations at Handforth and along the A34 corridor including any safeguarded land
- A robust strategic travel plan for the Sustainable Village with a dedicated Travel Plan officer and a package of sustainable transport measures
- Triggers around when public transport and other mitigation measures would be implemented e.g. at 500 houses and the duration of public transport support

- A commitment by Cheshire East Council that any of the measures mentioned derived from the development of the Handforth East site will be funded from the proceeds of development or relevant transport funding sources.

ONGOING INTENTIONS

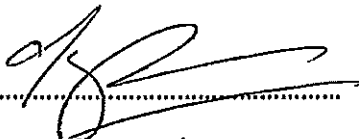
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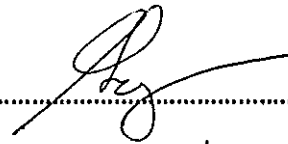
The two authorities will continue to actively and diligently co-operate on all cross boundary planning and transport matters with a view to achieving the proper planning of the wider area. There will be an on-going commitment to consult SMBC throughout the detailed transport assessment work for Handforth Sustainable Village and CEC will work with SMBC to ensure the mitigation package is specific in relation to public transport investment and named corridors and junctions.

Signed:

Eamonn Boylan
Chief Executive, Stockport MBC

Mike Suarez
Chief Executive, Cheshire East Council

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Dated: 19/2/2014

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