

Cheshire East Council. Handforth Garden Village Consultation.

Draft Supplementary Planning Document.

Elected Councillors for Bramhall South and Woodford, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.

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Introduction

This consultation response raises specific concerns over a number of infrastructure issues, the suggested timings and phasing for the site development, transport and connectivity, the impact of the Garden Village on existing infrastructure both within Cheshire East and across the local authority border into Stockport as well as the proposed mitigation measures.

The purpose of the draft SPD is to guide the delivery of the site and we believe there are a number of challenges which remain unaddressed and opportunities which have not been fully taken which could enhance the long term sustainability both of the site itself and of the adjacent safeguarded land (LPS35) as well as minimise or mitigate the impact on our own residents in Stockport Borough.

The Council's Vision and Strategic Objectives for the Garden Village

The Council's Vision for the Garden Village is for a sustainable settlement which is faithful to and consistent with the "Garden Village Principles" outlined in the draft SPD ("About Garden Villages", paragraph 1.8, pages 5-6, draft SPD). This includes inclusive community involvement and self-management and a well-designed and healthy environment in which people can live and work. We don't believe there are enough planned infrastructure facilities and services built into the draft SPD to make this vision a reality.

The draft SPD also states that to create and provide "a sustainable place to live, work and play", the site itself "should provide...day to day facilities for new residents and existing residents within the local area" (para.9.5, p37). There are a number of day to day facilities – doctors, dentist, other health and social care, day nurseries/ childcare, secondary education - which are either not currently provided on site with no clarity over how residents will access these facilities off-site or for which provision on site seems low. Access to these facilities is important for long term sustainability, to minimise vehicular movements and impacts on the highways network, to minimise the potential adverse impacts on existing health and education services in the area and should be given further consideration.

It is surprising and disappointing that specific reference to provision of education for this sizeable community does not appear among the social objectives of the Council's strategic objectives for the Garden Village.

Site usage and allocations

While the Council has outlined the land use and features of most areas of the site, there are two parcels of land that Stockport Conservative Group would welcome more clarity on in terms of designation and future use. These are both to the North of the site and therefore closely border Stockport Borough and any development or change here will impact considerably on our residents and infrastructure. These are Parcel 1 (MoD) and Parcel 6 (Total Fitness).

Parcel 1 (MoD) is currently marked as employment land, but we would like clarity on the future of this land should the MoD choose to withdraw. Would this remain as employment land or would a further residential/ housing use be sought? This is a significant sized parcel of land and should the Council seek to bring forth further housing this would have considerable impact on the sustainability of the Garden Village as a whole, creating a greater need for supporting infrastructure which we believe is already below an optimal level in the draft SPD and planned site delivery.

Parcel 6 (Total Fitness) is currently marked as leisure use and is occupied by Total Fitness. It is our understanding that the land is in the ownership of Cheshire East Council and is leased to the current occupier. Should Total Fitness withdraw from this site or the lease run-out/ not be renewed, what is Cheshire East Council's intention for this parcel of land? Would they seek a further leisure use? Is it intended that the current occupier is in situ long term, or is the lease likely to end during the period identified for delivery of the site? This is a significant size parcel of land and again should the Council seek to bring forth further housing development on this part of the site, we believe this would significantly and fundamentally alter the infrastructure requirements of the settlement as a whole and would impact further on the neighbouring areas in terms of roads, transport, health and social care provision, education provision and policing.

The layout of the housing adjacent to Blossoms Lane will severely impact on the rural character of Woodford. The current draft SPD does not currently note that Blossoms Lane has a quiet lane designation to protect and maintain its rural character, allow shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorised users and to contain rising motorised traffic.

Highways and Connectivity/ Traffic and Transport

The draft SPD outlines how it will achieve a safely accessed site with acceptable capacities on the local and strategic highway network resulting in a site which is well connected within and to the surrounding area (para. 9.13, p. 43). We would challenge whether the Council's plans will achieve this. We do not currently believe that the proposed vehicle access planned for the site is realistic and would question whether the local and strategic highways will be able to absorb the additional traffic flows created by 1,500 houses given the limited

actions proposed in the draft SPD, current traffic flows in the area and a number of highways or landscape constraints which exist.

Main vehicle access is to be taken primarily from the A34 at already existing junctions. The A34 is already a highly congested route with recent SEMMMS data highlighting that this route is projected to get significantly busier with worsened conditions. This is a key corridor route and we do not agree that the junction and highways improvements proposed will sufficiently address capacity issues and congestion caused by the Garden Village. The traffic movements out of the Garden Village are likely to result in journeys which are predominantly north-south. We believe that the adverse impacts on the local and strategic highways network have not been sufficiently addressed. In particular, traffic movements from the 1500 dwellings North wards into Stockport Borough at morning peak will severely impact on our residents and will cause delays, congestion and increased journey times. This is exacerbated by the under provision of education, child care and health services on the Garden Village site which will create more peak time A34 north-south car movements as people will have to travel daily to access educational provision in particular.

The proposals for secondary (restricted) access to the site at Dairy House Lane currently fail to address a number of concerns and practical issues.

There is no explanation as to how restricted entry/ exit will be achieved. The current system (for gym users) is often not working and could not be a sustainable method for any increased traffic flow.

The proposal for buses to use the Dairy House Lane (restricted) access results in entry and exit of buses via Hall Moss Lane in Stockport. This is ill thought out and not a suitable location for movements of large vehicles such as buses due to the width and layout of the road. There are no proposals and no detail on what mitigation might be undertaken to improve this situation and make it suitable for a buses and other road users. How will the road cope? We believe the bus entry/ exit onto Hall Moss Lane will lead to additional delays for Stockport residents and road users and will impact adversely on residents and business already located here.

We were disappointed that the draft SPD contains no quantitative data on the number of traffic movements that are likely to be generated from the Garden Village onto the local and strategic highways network to allow a deeper analysis of the proposed highways and connectivity treatments.

The draft SPD does not indicate how the Stockport roads will be maintained and who will bear the cost of the impact on infrastructure on Hall Moss Lane and any mitigation measures that might be required here to adequately accommodate the new and increased use.

We request that Cheshire East engage fully with SMBC Officers, Councillors and Stockport residents to resolve real concerns regarding transport and connectivity, the impact of additional traffic exiting into Stockport and the impact on local Stockport roads immediately

adjacent to the site – residents of Bramhall, Woodford, Cheadle Hulme and Heald Green will be particularly affected.

SEMMMS

The SEMMMS refresh is absolutely critical to any proposals of development of the North Cheshire Growth Village.

The refresh which is currently in progress will further raise a number of issues. Cheshire East Council do not show how they will incorporate these into their plans.

We would like to see the draft SPD to take into account the issues raised within the refresh. To presume it will all be fine would appear to be a dangerous strategy.

The position of CEC remains that the SEMMMS development gives them a 10 year window of opportunity to resolve any issues which they may create. Stockport Conservative Group do not consider this is acceptable for SMBC residents.

SEMMMS was developed to sort out current issues within the road network and to take traffic out of the communities especially the communities within SMBC and leave the traffic relief in place. In effect it was designed to free up space for local communities and remove them from the harmful impacts of congestion. It was not designed to reduce capacity for a neighbouring authority to fill it up again whilst they consider their plans. The reliance on a growth window does not take into account that application sites may be completed in a far shorter time scale and certainly does not take into account any of SMBC's current plans within its own borders.

The current issues the A34/A560 junction at Gatley will be compounded unless a workable solution can be delivered. There is already a considerable and real traffic issue at this junction with standing traffic and journey times increased by up to 30 minutes at peak times. Traffic regularly extends back towards the Stanley Green junction and further additional traffic attempting to access both the motorway network and M60 will grid lock the location.

The current draft SPD documentation relies heavily on residents entering and exiting the site using both cycle and bus transportation. In reality is this a realistic option when the majority of employment will be in Manchester and Airport City.

We are not convinced that CEC has deliverable proposals on their plan to deliver cycle and bus use to the high level of usage they project.

We would realistically expect the majority of residents to commute by car to and from both of these locations out of Cheshire East into Stockport adding immense pressure on Stockport's infrastructure especially along the A34 and Gatley.

We consider that CEC are currently presuming that their proposals are all fine and deliverable and it will all happen at the delivery stage. In reality if this course of action is taken it must work as there appears to be no strategy if it does not.

Our concerns remain that without reasonable certainty at this stage that the traffic implications can be adequately mitigated, communities in both CEC and SMBC will face the prospect of development being granted planning permission in due course without adequate mitigation, potentially being considered justified because the importance of the site the overall Local Plan Strategy's delivery outweighs the impact. Addressing each issue via planning applications is not in our view appropriate. Applications in the main do not fully mitigate traffic implications and if this were the case could be considered to have an unreasonably detrimental impact on viability. Subjecting Stockport residents to congestion from the NCGV development will have a major impact on our communities and has currently not been fully addressed by CEC especially when taking into account that safeguarded land has not been taken into account.

Phasing and site delivery

The draft SPD contains very limited information on the phasing of the site delivery with just two very broad representations of the phasing in Figure 13 (Chapter 10, p. 53) and Figure 28 (Chapter 12, p. 76) and a broad indicative delivery programme at 12.3. At present the draft SPD shows only indicative phasing. We believe this needs early agreement and formal tying-in so that adequate infrastructure is in place at the earliest possible stage. For example, consideration of conditions on the number of houses which may be built before completion of critical infrastructure such as the primary school and full highways mitigation measures. This approach and strategy has been used at Woodford Garden Village. The current illustrative phasing diagram shows that the single form entry primary school should be completed in the first phase with around 100+ houses expected at this point. Cheshire East Council should identify a phasing which ensures that further house building cannot take place beyond an identified number unless the school is complete. We would recommend that there can be no building beyond the four hundredth house until the primary school is fully complete and open.

The draft SPD proposes full site delivery by 2030. Is this deliverable? For a fully sustainable, high quality development with adequate infrastructure and considerable highways and transport works required this seems like a relatively short timescale.

Infrastructure and supporting facilities

Education

Stockport Conservative Group have a number of concerns regarding the draft SPD's approach to infrastructure provision and development requirements. We believe these do not currently result in a fully sustainable Garden Village and will ultimately place additional

pressures on currently existing services in Cheshire East and Stockport and will adversely impact on the current residents of the surrounding area and Stockport Borough.

The draft SPD states that day-to-day facilities for new residents and existing residents within the local area should be provided on site. The education provision in particular is a matter of considerable concern to the Stockport Conservative Group. There is one nursery and a two form entry primary school planned but no secondary school provision is available on site.

The provision of just one nursery on the site seems low and there is no data on the intended size of the nursery and how many children this would accommodate. While the local market would presumably pick up any latent or outstanding demand, this may necessitate conversion of dwellings into nursery space or, again, generate additional traffic movements on and offsite for families to access these essential services.

In terms of secondary provision, there is a planned financial contribution to expand Wilmslow High School as the village grows but the capacity to be provided here is not quantified. Further detail should be provided on how much capacity can be created here and whether this is likely to fully meet the needs of the Garden Village. The secondary school provision in the vicinity of the development site – both in Cheshire East and Stockport Borough – was oversubscribed in 2018.

Stockport Conservative Group have real and justifiable concern about the adequate provision of education for the future residents of the Garden Village and the impact of the development on educational provision for the current residents of the surrounding areas, including Stockport Borough. Given the location of the Garden Village on the border of the SMBC local authority area we believe that residents are likely to seek school places within the SMBC area at schools which currently do not have capacity to accept additional pupils.

At present it would appear that there are is no secondary provision within statutory walking distance (3 miles) or even within 5 miles of the Garden Village which was not at capacity or oversubscribed in 2018. The draft SPD contains no information on the size of the projected secondary age population that will arise from the Garden Village and at what point they will need to be accommodated at local schools.

We believe that the above concerns are compounded by the safeguarded land site (LPS35) which has potential to deliver a high quantum of further housing in the future and therefore a significant additional secondary age population who will need accommodating.

The Garden Village principles and the key development requirements emphasize that to be fully sustainable day-to-day facilities should be provided on site. Not providing further quantified secondary education on site or close to the site harms the sustainability of the Garden Village and is also likely to contribute to increased vehicular traffic movement both within the site and on the local and strategic highways network. The site is bounded by major roads to the North and East, which is unlikely to make school travel by sustainable modes a possibility.

Stockport Conservative Group are therefore concerned that the draft SPD does not fully address the education infrastructure required to support the Garden Village now and in the

future. We would raise concerns about the potential impact of increased demand for secondary places on Stockport residents.

Health services

The draft SPD contains little or no detail on health services and how and where these will be provided for this very significant sized community. This should be considered critical to the infrastructure requirements of the Garden Village and its ability to be a sustainable development. Again, if primary, dental and other health facilities are not to be provided on site Stockport Conservative Group raise concerns about the potential impact on health facilities in Stockport Borough.

Air quality

We are concerned at the environmental and air quality impacts created by the traffic flows generated from the Garden Village and the resulting congestion (particularly on the A34). These have not been addressed by the draft SPD and further examination of this issue is required, particularly given the existence of very nearby locations where there are already exceedances of emissions and air quality issues and the emerging GM Clean Air Plan.

Electric vehicles

There is no planned provision for electric vehicle charging points or a dedicated vehicle hub to capitalise on this growing technology. This we consider to be a mistake.

Conclusion

While the overall vision statement for the Garden Village attempts to present a positive picture, the draft SPD is very light on detail and how the vision can or will be delivered. The document frequently refers to sustainability and a community that will be self-managing, self-sufficient, sustainable and integrated but the plan lacks essential infrastructure that will secure this vision. In particular, we do not believe that provision of adequate childcare, secondary education and health facilities have been addressed. Stockport Conservative Group are concerned about the potential generation of additional pressure on these services in the Stockport area due to a lack of provision either on site or within Cheshire East. The Garden Village is located near or on the boundary of Stockport Metropolitan Borough area and it is likely that residents of the Garden Village will look towards this area to access services as it may be closer than services within the Cheshire East boundary.

In terms of transport and connectivity, the main access is via the A34 which is an already very congested route with projected growth in traffic and worsening conditions. It is not clear the junctions and highways improvements will be able to deliver or sufficiently

mitigate the impact of traffic generation from the Garden Village. We consider that the current proposals will severely impact capacity on the local and strategic highways network which will be adversely affected in Stockport.

Eroding the benefits that SEMMMS will bring to the communities of SMBC by CEC in its entirety for a period of up to 10 years in our view remains unsupportable.

The secondary (restricted) access to the site to the North at Dairy House Lane is extremely difficult to access and we would question the suitability of the current plans for bus route entry/ exit onto Hall Moss Lane here. The current proposals do not mitigate the on-going maintenance costs which Stockport residents will have to fund unless financial provision is made to Stockport by Cheshire East. In addition, should any mitigation measures or road layout changes be required to accommodate the planned restricted access scheme and bus entry/ exit it is not clear that this cost would be borne by Cheshire East.

The current plans appear to result in generation of significant additional traffic flows, particularly north-south journeys, on the local and strategic road networks which will direct traffic into Stockport resulting in long delays and congestion in the Stockport area.

There is more work to be done on phasing and delivery, with further clarity and commitment needed on early delivery of essential infrastructure before housing completions.

Given the location of the Garden Village at the border of the Stockport Local Authority area and its impact on local Stockport residents we would request ongoing communication, engagement and consultation with residents of Woodford, Bramhall, Cheadle Hulme and Heald Green. Residents of these Stockport communities in particular are likely to experience adverse impacts from the development of the Garden Village and have local expertise in how these might best be mitigated. We would request that such engagement is ongoing throughout the design and policy development period, the planning period and the delivery and construction period. We specifically request that Cheshire East Council engage fully with SMBC and address residents' real concerns regarding traffic, infrastructure and lack of service provision.

We would seek or ask for confirmation that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of 2016 between SMBC and CE remains valid.