

**Save Macclesfield Greenbelt Residents Group should like to object** the inclusion of site **CS 40** Land South of Chelford Road in the revised Local Plan which involves rolling back the Greenbelt at this location. This forms part of Policy PG 3 to which we would also like to object. In addition, we are **objecting** to the low levels of housing allocated to Central Macclesfield **SL4**. Our **objections** also include the **growth figure increase to 0.7%** which makes the local plan unsound as it is undeliverable, unjustified with regard to the evidence and so has not been positively prepared.

**Save Macclesfield Greenbelt Residents Group** have previously objected with numerous other residents to the allocation of CS40, then part of CS32 in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy Consultation process. This site and nearly 60ha of CS32 were then removed from the submitted plan. Additionally, this site was part of a petition signed by 3500 people objecting to its removal and the building of a link road across the South West of Macclesfield.

**Save Macclesfield Greenbelt Residents Group request the Council to make the following modification to the Local Plan:**

1. Reduction in the growth figures to 0.4%.
2. That the Overall Development Strategy Policy PG 1 has an allocation of 100 ha of employment land, an OAN of 27,000 homes. That Greenfield sites are not released until the development of PDL land is undertaken.
3. The increase in housing from brownfield and windfall sites in Macclesfield at SL4 from 500 to 1,830 dwellings. The allocation of considerably more brownfield sites for housing to include the following sites – Gunco Lane, King’s School site Westminster Road, King’s School site Cumberland Street, Lyme Green Depot.
4. The deletion of strategic site CS40 Land South of Chelford Road.
5. The allocation of lower grade Greenbelt for strategic site allocations i.e. Danes Moss Tip in preference to Significant Greenbelt for Safeguarded Land.
6. CS 40 removed from the list of sites identified in paragraph 5 of Policy PG 3 Greenbelt and no change in the Greenbelt boundary along Chelford Road.
7. That the Spatial Distribution of Development in PG 6 reflects the infrastructure and Greenbelt constraints of settlements. Hence a reduction in allocation to Macclesfield of housing to 2,700 and employment land to 10 ha.
8. Policy IN 1 Infrastructure to include: ‘Development of sites will not occur until infrastructure development associated with them has been identified and secured’.
9. Policy SE2 Efficient Use of Land to include, ‘The Council will allocate development of sites in a sequential manner prioritising the redevelopment of PDL over Greenfield sites in the Local Plan.’
10. Policy SE 3 paragraph 4 to include: ‘Development Proposals which may have an adverse impact on a site with one or more of the following national, regional or local designations will not be permitted except where no appropriate alternatives can be found’.
11. Policy SE 5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland to reflect the wording of the NPPF and include in its introduction: ‘Development proposals which may result in the loss of, or threat to, the continued

health and life expectancy of trees, hedgerows or woodlands (including ancient trees or semi-natural woodland) that provide a significant contribution to the amenity, biodiversity, landscape character or historic character of the surrounding area, will not normally be permitted except where there need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. Where these exceptional circumstances exist the adverse impacts of the unavoidable development proposals must provide and maintain significant net environmental gain by appropriate mitigation, compensation or offsetting'.

**The reasons for these changes are:**

1. The job growth figures should be 0.4%
2. This plan is not deliverable in the plan period
3. Unjustified removal of Greenbelt
4. Ancient Woodland
5. Local Landscape designation
6. The unsuitable location of CS40 for development
7. Biodiversity
8. Agricultural Loss
9. Highway congestion issues
10. The flawed evidence and site selection
11. The under allocation of brownfield sites in Macclesfield
12. The over allocation of Employment Land
13. Safeguarded Land
14. The spatial distribution and HS2

## 1. Job Growth Figures

- a. Since the Inspector recommended a reassessment of the job growth forecast, with the resulting increase from 0.4% to 0.7%, the UK GDP growth forecast has been slashed. In March 2014 the UK GDP forecast was 2.8% (1), whilst in March 2016 the GDP forecast for this year is 2% (2). A decrease of 29% in GDP growth. The forecast has even been reduced in since December 2015, 'Under the OBR's new forecast, the estimate for economic growth in 2017 has been cut to 2.2% from 2.5%, and to 2.1% from 2.4% in 2018. Growth in both 2019 and 2020 is now estimated at 2.1% compared with the previous forecast of 2.3% (3). Since the increase in job growth figures the UK GDP growth forecast has been slashed by 20% in the short term and 15% for the next 5 years. (Source: The Office of Budget Responsibility).
- b. The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of the economic health of that sector. When examining Cheshire East's employment statistics it's possible to consider the PMI for each sector in Cheshire East.
- c. The Services Sector accounts for 83.6% of employee jobs within the Local Authority Region. (Source: Official Labour Market Statistics 2014). Since the Inspector recommended a reassessment of the job growth forecast, with the resulting increase from 0.4% to 0.7%, there has been a decline in the Services Sector throughout the United Kingdom. Notably the 2016 February data which was released in March 2016 shows the sharpest down turn in three years. Economists recognise this as a serious economic indicator, as is demonstrated by the Financial Times, '*Growth in the UK's dominant services sector cooled significantly in February and recorded its weakest rise in activity since March 2013, according to a well-respected survey. The disappointing result has raised fears that GDP growth could weaken to 0.3 per cent, or less, in the first quarter of this year.*' (4)
- d. The Manufacturing Sector accounts for 11.4% of employee jobs within Cheshire East. (Source Official Labour Market Statistics 2014). Since the Inspector recommended a reassessment of the job growth forecast, with the resulting increase from 0.4% to 0.7%, there has been a decline in the Manufacturing Sector throughout the United Kingdom.
- e. The Construction Sector accounts for 3.7% of employee jobs within Cheshire East (Source Official Labour Market Statistics 2014). Since the Inspector recommended a reassessment of the job growth forecast, with the resulting increase from 0.4% to 0.7%, there has been a decline in the Construction Sector throughout the United Kingdom.
- f. The above 3 data sets, known as Composite PMI, signal a 4 year low in growth.

- g. The Monetary Policy Committee have now unanimously voted in favour of keeping interest rates at a record low (Source: Bank of England publications, March 2016). Significantly this was not previously the case when the Inspector recommended a reassessment of the job growth forecast, with the resulting increase from 0.4% to 0.7%. It is an indicator that the Bank of England envisages a slowdown of the economy ahead.
- h. In the Council's Response to the Inspector's Specific Questions Arising from the Schedule of Matters & Issues (5) paragraph 33 it makes reference to the jobs rate being ambitious and it could be argued that a jobs growth rate of 0.5% or 0.6% is more preferable for its migrating and commuting impact alone. If Cheshire East continue to ignore economic slowdown signals there will be an oversupply of housing due to the current 'ambitious' growth rate of 0.7%. This will stimulate unsustainable patterns of migrating and commuting which contravening guidance laid out in the NPPF Paragraph 18 (6).
- i. In the Council's Response to the Inspector's Specific Questions Arising from the Schedule of Matters & Issues (5) paragraph 45 it makes reference to some cross boundary authorities questioning whether the 0.7% growth rate is achievable, again this is prior the UK economy slowdown and forecast downgrades and so adds more weight to reverting back to the 0.4% rate.
- j. With the Services, Manufacturing and Construction Sectors making up a staggering 98.7 % (2014) of Cheshire East Employment Sectors it would be irresponsible of the council not to revisit the latest Economic Data and revise the employment growth forecast accordingly to a more justified 0.4% figure.
- k. The UK and Global Economies are in decline. If the current plan is executed using the unjustified employment growth forecast of 0.7% Cheshire East will be at the mercy of an undeliverable level of growth.
- l. In light of the current economic state and the significantly reduced growth levels for the UK economy, Cheshire East Council should take the opportunity to reduce, its unjustified growth forecasts to 0.4%.
- m. In the Council's Response to the Inspector's Specific Questions Arising from the Schedule of Matters & Issues (5) paragraph 51 it refer to jobs growth figures between 1998 and 2008 then between 2009 and 2013. It is unclear whether the historical data provided by the council actually includes 2008. If the data doesn't include 2008 then it will not include a year's worth of data during a recessionary period which could have a negative effect on the average growth figure stated of 0.7%/annum. Greater clarity is required.

## 2. Not deliverable in the plan period

- a. This site is described in the supporting evidence provided by the council as not to be delivered in the plan period. In the Site Selection Report for Macclesfield (7) page 111 it states under the highway access, *'no potential access to the site without new link road.'*
- b. Additionally, in the same assessment table section 3.5 (7) Impact on the Strategic Road, it states, *'unlikely the full development of land can come forward without link road - principle impact Broken Cross Roundabout.'* Hence the site is not deliverable in the plan period as the link road will not be built by the developer until 1000<sup>th</sup> dwelling (page 34) (7). There are 300 houses to be developed at CS 10 and 200 at CS40. On the same page Highways reaffirm their views stating that CS40 *'(PSS216) cannot be developed without the link road'*.
- c. The development of this site relies upon the release of Safeguarded Land in the post plan period to fulfill the delivery of the 1000 dwellings. This may not occur. Hence the site will not be fully developed in this plan period and may not be developed in the next plan period. CS 32, Safeguarded Land, is proposed by the developer for an allocation of 2000 dwellings.
- d. The plan requires an average of 2500 d.p.a. in the next 8 years, with its hybrid version of the Liverpool and Sedgely model. This is not deliverable. It is not realistic. Cheshire East has on average delivered only 1000 d.p.a. and even in the boom years the highest level obtained was 1500 d.p.a. A similar lack of deliverability was evidenced in the Lichfield Local Plan. The Inspector's Report 16 January 2015 (8) Paragraph 56 states, *'I do not consider a figure of over 600 d.p.a. to be provided consistently over the entire 20 year period of the Plan would be deliverable when this has not in the past been consistently achieved even during the boom years of construction. It would be well in excess of the long term average net annual completion rate. Plans are expected to be aspirational but they are also expected to be realistic. National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 154. I do not consider such a high figure would be realistic'*. The uplift in housing causes the addition of this site to the plan. This level of housing delivery is not realistic. Hence the plan is not effective as the housing allocation is not deliverable.
- e. This is not a prudent strategy for the Council to employ. It places Cheshire East's Greenbelt and Greengap at risk from speculative developers. If CEC do not have a 5 year housing supply, developers will still be able to effectively challenge the policies of the local plan strategy in court. It will be impossible to demonstrate a five year supply with these inflated targets. In paragraphs 212 and 213 the Lichfield Planning Inspector recommends the Liverpool model as it is a realistic level of delivery
- f. There is a funding gap of £317,125,750 to £421,962,750 for infra structure such as schools, roads, health care and leisure facilities across the whole plan. Cheshire East states that it is aware it will not be all fund all of this from the Community Infra Structure Levy (9). However, no information is given as to the probability of the funding shortfall gap being delivered by other agencies.

- g. Currently the funding streams in education are unlikely to meet the expansion of and the capacity does not exist in the oversubscribed schools within Macclesfield. In Headteacher Update published on 2<sup>nd</sup> March (10), *'A recent survey by The Key found that 35 per cent of school leaders felt that their school buildings are unfit for purpose, and that leaders in six in 10 schools would like to improve or repair their current building 2016.'*
- h. Whilst the Guardian published an article on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2016 (11) stating, *'A survey in January of nearly 900 mainly secondary headteachers and senior leaders by the Association of School and College Leaders confirms that more than 38% of respondents made redundancies in the previous 12 months, with even more staff losses hidden by the under-the-radar non-replacement of teaching (70%) and support roles (80%)'*. The problem of increased development is already being felt in schools in Cheshire East an article examining school funding gives a direct example of this on Fiona Bruce MP's website on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014. Martin Casserley, Head of Black Firs, shared his school's experience: *"At Black Firs Primary school, the local house building has resulted in increased demand for places. With no local guidelines or requirements as to providing financial support for education provision, housing developers are building next to popular oversubscribed schools without making any contribution to the infrastructure costs in Cheshire East."* (12)
- i. The NHS is highly unlikely to meet Cheshire East's needs any better than education. In an article on BBC News 19 September 2014 entitled *'NHS finances 'worsening' as deficit nears £500m,'* (13) Rob Webster, chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which represents trusts, said: *"We have been warning for some time that NHS trusts will fall further into deficit as they try to balance rising demand for care against flat funding."*

### 3. Greenbelt

- a. The Land South of Chelford Road meets all 5 of the purpose of the greenbelt. It was assessed as making a 'significant contribution' to the Greenbelt in the Greenbelt Assessment Update (14). However, its assessment is incomplete as the recommendations made by ARUP have not been undertaken by the council in respect of identifying the boundaries around Henbury village settlement which is washed over by the Greenbelt. This is despite numerous requests by myself and others including Henbury Parish Council to do so. Reassessment of this site with due regard for the settlement boundary of Henbury village would result in it delivering a 'major contribution' to the Greenbelt as it prevents the merger of settlements. The lower value of Greenbelt is inconsistent with similar sites between Macclesfield and Prestbury, because Prestbury has a settlement boundary. Hence its allocation is in contravention of the NPPF (6) paragraph 80.
- b. The inclusion of CS40 in this plan causes the merger of Henbury and Macclesfield. The site is 400m away from the houses of Henbury. Travelling between the two settlements at this point there are no permanent physical features such as rivers and roads, and elements of landscape such as topography that make this short distance seem like a separation between the two

settlements.

- c. To accommodate the increased unmet housing need target the plan has increased its allocation of Greenbelt to be removed for development. Greenbelt loses in Macclesfield have more than doubled in this new plan. The additional allocation of CS40 as one of the new sites across the South West of Macclesfield completes the developer's master plan. This developer is no longer interested in urban sites as indicated by their withdrawal from the Gunco Lane development in Macclesfield. This is reinforced by their written comments on the development of the South Macclesfield Development Area, a large strategic site not currently Greenbelt.
- d. Unmet housing need does not equate to removal of Greenbelt. This was reflected in the statements made with regard to the removal of greenbelt in Local Plans. In his statement on 1 July 2013 Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis issued a written statement to Parliament which said *'Having considered recent planning decisions made by councils and the Planning Inspectorate, it has become apparent that the green belt is not always being given the sufficient protection that was the explicit policy intent of ministers. The Secretary of State wishes to make clear that ...he considers the single issue of unmet demand...is unlikely to outweigh harm to the green belt and other harm to constitute the 'very special circumstances' justifying inappropriate development in the green belt'* (15). The local plan defines exceptional circumstances as unmet demand. The adverse impacts of this plan will outweigh the benefits from fulfilling the OAN.
- e. The position with regard to Greenbelt and unmet housing need was further clarified in the Green Belt Briefing Paper Number 00934, 5 January 2016 (16), which states: *'Do housing and economic needs override constraints on the use of land, such as green belt? The National Planning Policy Framework should be read as a whole: need alone is not the only factor to be considered when drawing up a Local Plan. The Framework is clear that local planning authorities should, through their Local Plans, meet objectively assessed needs unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.'* It cannot be clearer that planning policy is to not use unmet housing need as a lever to destroy Greenbelt.
- f. Additionally, in a recent Inspectors Examination Report for Lichfield (8) paragraph 131 he states, *'All of these other sites are in Green Belt and, to repeat a point made earlier, Green Belt boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated. Moreover, one of the purposes of Green Belt is to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of urban land. It is difficult to see how releasing housing sites in the Green Belt as an alternative to developing urban sites ...would assist regeneration..'* Hence contrary to Cheshire East's assessment of this site in respect of the LPS Vision and Strategic Priorities it would not *'Support a major regeneration scheme in Crewe or Macclesfield town centre'* and would not *'enhance the vitality, viability and accessibility of a town centre.'* It will discourage urban regeneration. Allocation of such a large swathe of Greenbelt which is so desirable to developers will halt their interest in brownfield sites that then remain or become land-banked.

- g. This desire by developers to make greater profits on Greenbelt is a driver for the vast number of unused planning permissions across Macclesfield.
- h. When assessing the potential of this site in respect of the LPS vision and strategic priorities it is described as being capable of maintaining and enhancing the separate identity of the settlements (7). Yet it reduces the gap between Macclesfield and Henbury.
- i. In the site selection process Greenbelt sites with a lower value, i.e. ones that make a Contribution to the Greenbelt are assessed. The details of their assessment are contained in the Site Selection Report for Macclesfield (7), however no detailed evidence is given for the rejection of 12 of the 13 Contribution Greenbelt Parcels. Cheshire East Council Officers and the Leader of the Council Cllr Rachel Bailey agreed to provide detailed evidence on the site selection process for these sites on the 6/4/16. However despite reminders this has not been provided by the 17/4/16. No information has been provided and now cannot be included in this submitted consultation.
- j. One of these Contribution Greenbelt sites is Danes Moss Tip. It covers 68 ha and is now in a position to be allocated for future housing, if not in this plan period then as Safeguarded Land for the next plan period.

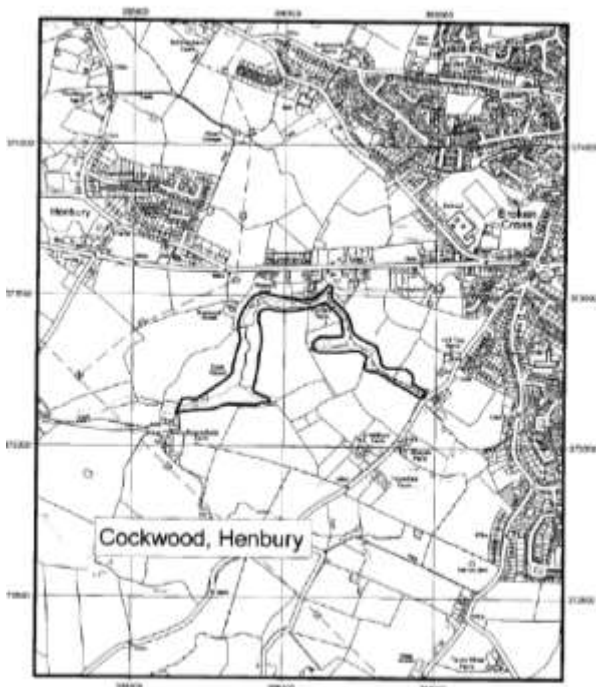
#### 4. Ancient Woodland

- a. Ancient woodland is one of the country's richest terrestrial wildlife habitats, home to 256 species of conservation concern as listed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. It has evolved over hundreds, if not thousands of years and cannot be recreated or its loss compensated for. Furthermore, it also holds a unique, immeasurable value for all those who visit or have an association with it.
- b. Natural England (NE), (the government's advisor on the natural environment) has produced 'Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees (April 2014)'. And states, '*Local authorities have a vital role in ensuring the protection and conservation of ancient woodland and veteran trees, in particular through the planning system*'. The purpose of this document is to be used in planning applications which affect ancient woodland however it also states that the information within it will be useful in the formation of Local Plans. It points out that ancient woodland is irreplaceable and no amount of planting of new trees can mitigate for its loss. The irreplaceable nature of them is reiterated by the government in the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology Postnote 465 June 2014 (17) which states: '*They cannot be recreated, as their composition is a product of environmental conditions and historic management that will not occur again*'.
- c. It is Government policy to discourage development that will result in the loss of Ancient Woodland, unless '*the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweighs the loss*' (6) (paragraph 118).



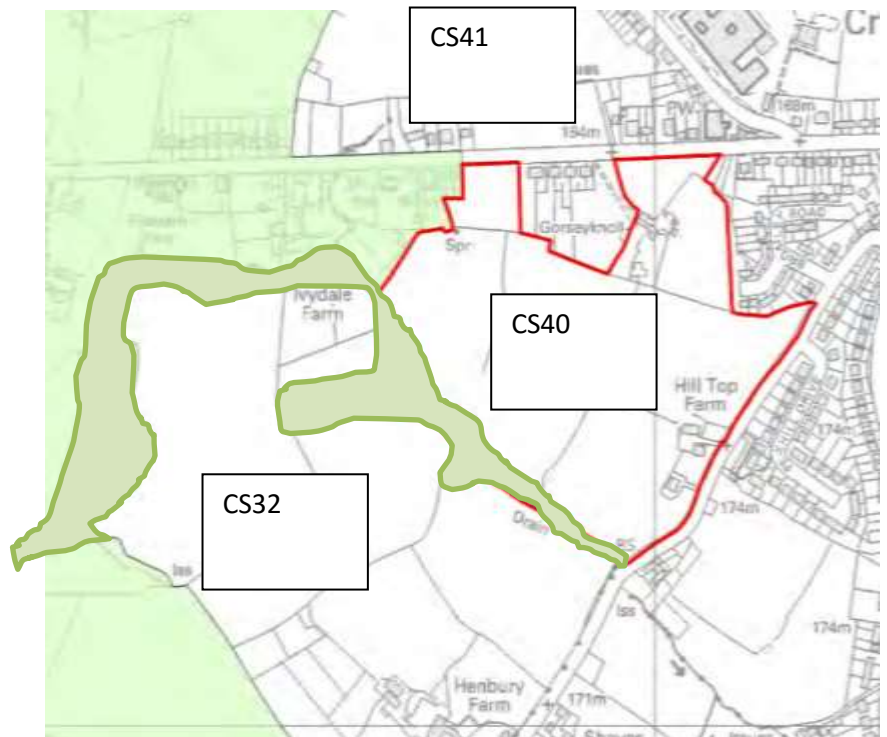
- d. Ancient woodlands are widely regarded as irreplaceable. They have great value because they have a long history of woodland cover, with many features remaining undisturbed. CS40 contains Cock Wood Site of Biological Importance, a combination of ancient woodland (registered in the Ancient Woodland Inventory), veteran trees, ponds and wet meadow. CS40 is not the only location in which additional housing can be located. In the site selection process no indication is given as to why this site is the only location for these 200 houses. Insufficient regard is given to the presence of the ancient woodland and veteran trees on this site in its evaluation and comparison to alternatives. The allocation of this site is not justified as it is not the most appropriate location having considered the reasonable alternatives.

### Cheshire Sites of Biological Importance



1:10000

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- e. CS40 contains a considerable number of Veteran Trees as defined in the Forestry Commission publication *Managing Ancient and Native Woodland in England* (18). *Veteran trees are ones which, because of their age, size or condition, are of cultural, historical, landscape and nature conservation value. They can be found as individuals or groups within ancient wood pastures, historic parkland, hedgerows, orchards, parks or other area.*
- f. This avoidance of ancient woodlands is reiterated in *Planning and Development Guidance Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees: protecting them from development: Natural England and Forestry Commission* First published 13 October 2014, updated 29 October 2015 (19). This states, *'Trees and woodland classed as 'ancient' or 'veteran' are irreplaceable. Ancient woodland takes hundreds of years to establish and is considered important for its wildlife, soils, recreation, cultural value, history and contribution to landscapes.....Planning authorities and developers should start by looking for ways to avoid the development affecting ancient*

*woodland or veteran trees*’. The allocation of CS40 does not avoid development which affects ancient woodland and veteran trees as it will have both direct and indirect impact.

- g. The development for housing and its associated road network of CS40 will have a major detrimental effect on the ancient woodland and veteran trees. In the aforementioned Planning and Development Guidance it describes this as:
- i. *‘Impacts of development in an area of ancient woodland or veteran trees can include:*
    - *damaging or destroying the trees or woodland*
    - *damaging or killing veteran trees or parts of them*
    - *damaging roots and soil, as well as the understorey (all the vegetation under the taller trees)*
    - *polluting the ground*
    - *changing the woodland’s water table or drainage*
    - *damaging archaeological features or heritage assets*
  - ii. *Impacts of development nearby can include these effects on the trees and woodland, and the species they support:*
    - *compacting the soil around tree roots*
    - *breaking up or destroying connections between woodland and other habitats*
    - *reducing the amount of semi-natural habitats (like parks) next to ancient woodland*
    - *changing the water table or drainage*
    - *increasing the amount of pollution, including dust*
    - *increasing disturbance to wildlife from additional traffic and visitors*
    - *increasing light pollution*
    - *increasing damaging activities like flytipping and the impact of domestic pets*
    - *changing the landscape character of the area’*
- h. It is clear that the proposal for CS40 will cause both direct development and indirect impact on both Ancient Woodland and Veteran trees. This is not a sustainable choice for the few remaining fragments of Ancient Woodland.
- i. Allocation of CS40 is in contravention of the policies and strategies for ancient woodlands and veteran trees as expressed by DEFRA and the Forestry Commission in *Keepers of Time* (20). One of its policies is that *‘The existing area of ancient woodland should be maintained and there should be a net increase in the area of native woodland.’* The development of CS40 would have the opposite effect. *Keepers of Time*, recognises a number of threats to ancient woodland, making specific reference to the threat posed by development pressures: *‘There are still occasions where native and ancient woodland is threatened by development, and many woods suffer attrition through incursions at their boundaries. Even if the woodland itself is protected, it can suffer serious disturbance where houses or roads are built right up to its margins, both directly from the impact of development, or indirectly through changes to drainage.’* The Government Forestry & Woodlands Policy Statement (2013) confirms the Government’s commitment to *Keepers of Time*.
- j. Government Policy with regard to Ancient Woodland is documented in the Natural Environment White Paper - *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature* (published June 2011) (21) Paragraph 2.53 - This has a *“renewed commitment to conserving and restoring ancient*

woodlands". Paragraph 2.56 – *"The Government is committed to providing appropriate protection to ancient woodlands and to more restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites"*.

- k. In the Planning Appeal at Copse Wood 2013 the Inspector noted that the NPPF has stronger wording for ancient woodland than PPS9: *'...whilst NPPF.. cancels the advice in PPS9, the test in respect of Ancient Woodland is very similar in NPPF paragraph 118 to that in PPS9 paragraph 10 save for the fact that there is now a more onerous requirement on developers to show that "the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh" as opposed to simply "outweigh" the loss.'*
- l. Additionally, at the same appeal the Inspector considered that Natural England's Standing Advice for ancient woodland, that there is no policy distinction between *'semi-natural ancient woodland'* and a *'plantation on an ancient woodland site'*. The Inspector also highlighted the need for planning measures to ensure the appropriate management of ancient woodland: *'...in policy terms, the protection afforded to 'ancient woodland' would appear to be independent of its 'quality' or species richness. This stance is reinforced by the Standing Advice from Natural England. Not only should Core Strategies provide strict protection for 'ancient woodland', but also such protection for that 'irreplaceable resource' should include management measures to maintain and enhance its special character.'* The Inspector also considered that the irreplaceable nature of the woodland outweighed the value of the compensatory measures being proposed: *'Clearly, the value of ancient woodland is that it is ancient. The complex interrelationships between plants, animals, soils, climate and people have developed over centuries and, for that reason, the habitat is practically irreplaceable. ...I consider that the direct and indirect effects of the scheme would severely damage that woodland. I doubt that these woods would necessarily suffer significant and continual decline in the absence of the proposed development and any deterioration likely would not compare with the irreplaceable loss entailed by the scheme... I do not accept that the management of the woods that would remain or the creation of new and radically different habitats would compensate for the loss and fragmentation of this ancient woodland.'* This level of loss has not been considered in the site allocation for CS40 and as such it is not justified and is inconsistent with national policy.
- m. Cock Wood may be a small remnant of Ancient Woodland, however this advice is given by the Forestry Commission in their Assessment Guide (22) which is referred to in their Standing Advice: *'The importance of diversity of habitat and species in small woods must not be underestimated, and also their function as stepping stones for the dispersal of species. Small ancient woodlands may be the remnants of formerly larger areas, and thus have a higher biodiversity importance than might be assumed. Ecological diversity in woodlands is not solely linked to the size of the woodland'*.
- n. Additionally they state in the guidance to assessment, *'A small loss from a small woodland or veteran tree loss could be more significant in its wider impacts than a large loss from a large woodland.... Consider the retention of connecting habitat such as hedgerows and copses and attempt to maintain and enhance long term protection secured through the planning process'*. Hence Cock wood is particularly vulnerable to the development proposed in this local plan.
- o. Cock Wood is particularly vulnerable to damage due to the small and linear nature of the site

and its reliance on the support from the surrounding hedgerow network.

## 5. Local Landscape designation

- a. This is traditional Cheshire farmland, dotted with ponds, crisscrossed with historical hedgerows and blanketed in a rich tapestry of fields. It is described in the Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment (23) as 'Higher Farms and Woods.' CS40 is described as '*very rural*' with '*dispersed farms connected by narrow country roads which rise and fall with the landform.*' It would be a tangible loss to the people of Macclesfield. '*The intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*' is a core planning principle [section 17] (6). The nature of this landscape has not materially changed since its assessment for this publication in 2008.
- b. The land between Chelford Road and Congleton Road has been farmed since medieval times and provides uninterrupted views of Henbury Church, Sutton Common and Crocker Hill.
- c. The importance of this landscape is not considered in the site evaluation because it is ignored within the Character Landscape Assessment and so its allocation is not justified.

## 6. The unsuitable location of CS40 for sustainable development

- a. CS 40 is not located near the town centre near the train and bus station for sustainable transport. It has a limited bus service and most people will use cars for work and leisure activities. It is not near the primary care services provided in the town centre.
- b. It is not located in the 'corridor of opportunity' described by Cheshire East.
- c. It is not near the developing transport systems of SEMMS/MAELR network.

## 7. Biodiversity

- a. *The NPPF requires sustainable growth. Defined as '...sustainable development is about positive growth - making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations.'* This is not making environmental progress for future generations.
- b. The proposals for CS40 will have detrimental effects on the pockets of natural habitat that remains due to their fragmentation, isolation and decrease in size. This negative effect on biodiversity is well documented. In Maximising Biodiversity - Best practice in regeneration published by the Forest Research - the research agency of the forestry Commission (24) which states, '*Habitat loss and fragmentation impacts on the species diversity in the following ways:*
  - *Populations are moved into smaller and smaller areas which, ultimately, are unable to support them.*
  - *Populations become fragmented so that they become isolated into populations that are too small to be self-sustaining.*
  - *Areas of habitats are so small that the 'core area' decreases to such an extent that they are influenced by negative edge effects.'* (24)
- b. Many species that commonly inhabit ancient woods are protected by The EU Habitats Directive, the EU Wild Birds Directive, The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Great Britain) and The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations

2010 (England & Wales).

- c. English Nature Standing Advice for Protected Species (25) states that *'Ancient woodlands can be particularly important for certain protected species such as dormice and bats. If protected species are present then additional assessments of noise and light pollution particularly for bats may be necessary. Many species live partly in woodland but also use other adjacent semi-natural habitat for feeding or breeding. Will the development result in the change or reduction of important habitats adjoining the woodland?'* For the developments proposed at CS40 the answer is yes. Hence the proposal is not in line with national planning policy.
- d. This land contains a stream which forms part of Cock Wood and Big Wood SBIs. It offers a continuous, and highly significant, green corridor on the western fringes of Macclesfield that continues from the Sandy Lane SBI area to Cock Wood and then on to Big Wood. The continuity of this corridor is essential to maintaining biodiversity across the area without introducing fragmentation, and the protection of the water source is key in ensuring the preservation of the value of the SBIs. Development on this site would therefore be contrary to NPPF 11.117
- e. The hydrology works that would be required to develop this site would negatively impact on the SBIs that are fed by this stream. These wide ranging impacts on biodiversity from developing this site will affect biodiversity across the south west of Macclesfield. Its allocation for housing is in contravention of NPPF and the Local Plan Policy SE 3.
- f. Yet the council consider it a sustainable option to include this site for development when, as they state in the Cheshire East Council Local Plan Strategy: Proposed Changes to Sites & Strategic Locations Sustainability (Integrated) Appraisal Addendum Report Volume 2 (26), by their own judgement they are uncertain as to the effect of development. *'It should be noted that it is not always possible to accurately predict sustainability effects when considering plans at a strategic scale. Impacts on biodiversity and cultural heritage, for example, will depend on more detailed information and studies at a site-level'*.

## 8. Agricultural Loss

- a. The site selection methodology in the Traffic Light Forms of Appendix 2 of the Macclesfield Site Selection Report described the majority this site as grade 3a, which is identified as red in the standard site assessment methodology. This methodology is followed for other sites that are mainly agricultural land grade 3a, for example in the Alsager Site Selection Report. Hence this traffic light should be red and not amber. The site selection assessment is not sound as its evidence base is incorrect. This site is not suitable in line with NPPF (6) as it does not take account of the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land - paragraph 112. It is not justified by the evidence. It does not reflect the focus of the plan which in paragraph 1.37 of the draft local plan states, 'The focus remains on protecting Green Belt, open spaces and the best agricultural land to make sure that growth is sustainable. However, some alterations to the detailed Green Belt boundary are required to provide the development land needed to deliver the vision.' (27) It is not positively prepared or sustainable as it leads to the destruction of a larger quantum of best agricultural land than the alternatives. It is in contravention of Cheshire East Local Plan Policy SE 2 Efficient Use of Land and the NPPF.
- b. The allocation of CS40 is part of a grouped site selection process where a number of site

combinations are discussed across the south west of Macclesfield. The importance to the economic benefit of agricultural land is used to dismiss option 3 in the site selection report (7) in comparison to option 4. In summary, option 4 contains CS10 and a southern section of CS32 for development in the plan period. Option 3 is CS10 with CS40. In paragraph 8.80 it states 'Site PSS205 (Option 3) impinges on land of higher agricultural value'. This suggests that this option is not been taken because of its impact on agriculture yet in the traffic light assessment page 82 it more clearly states, 'The majority of the site is Subgrade 3b, with some Subgrade 3a, small parts of Grade 4 and other plus a very small section of Grade 2 near Bailey Ridding Farm.' Site CS40 consists predominately of agricultural land 3a.

- c. This unjustified choice of option 4 makes this site selection unjustified - it is not the most appropriate choice given the evidence.

## 9. Highway congestion issues

- a. The development levels of the submitted Local Plan were identified as causing increased congestion Macclesfield. *'The level of development is predicted to lead to a 15% increase in traffic in the town during the morning peak hour, and an 18% increase in traffic in the evening peak hour'*. (27) For this study there was an allocation of 3,500 houses and 15ha of Employment Land. The link road is not included in this modelling for the May 2014 Submitted Local Plan.
- b. The link road across the south west is simply an access road for the developer. It is not listed as a infra structure development strategic highways studies in 2016 for the Revised Local Plan. (28).
- c. It does not have a strategic benefit. Traffic travelling from the South and South West of Macclesfield into Macclesfield town centre would have no reason to take the link road across the south west. Traffic from south of Macclesfield would already have had the opportunity to join the A34 for South Manchester at Congleton or at Marton. Hence no need to travel into Macclesfield to travel along this south west link road. Traffic from the South of Macclesfield heading north into Poynton will not change route onto this road but continue on the A523.
- d. Highways study shows significant delays on Pexhill Road and Chelford Road heading to the Broken Cross roundabout. The updated highway study in 2016 for the additional allocation of housing to Macclesfield (29) shows a 15% rise in journey times with the allocation of these additional sites in the plan period. This is a significant rise for an area that is already operating at full capacity. These results are flawed in that they are formulated on the basis that there is a link road across the south west of Macclesfield. This will not happen in this plan period as it requires 1000 houses to be built across CS10, CS32 and CS40. This may happen in the next plan period or it may not. Its inclusion in the next plan period depends on the Safeguarded land being released to developers.
- e. This road was objected to by residents, was not supported by the highways assessment carried out by Cheshire East, and when queried directly with the council was rejected. An example of

this is the email from Councillor Michael Jones, the then Leader of the Council, on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013 to Save Macclesfield Greenbelt and Cllr Andrews. *'To be clear the proposed road from Chelford Road to the Congleton Road across SW Macc is most definitely NOT to be included in the local plan. It has been rejected after consultation. The relief road mentioned should be the Congleton relief road or the South Macc Development. I think, and I apologise, if we have confused you, this consultation may contain information that would reflect former consultation but I can confirm we are focussing on central Macc highway priorities.'*

- f. A similar level of confusion occurred Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October at Macclesfield Town Hall Resumed Hearings when the Inspector was informed by Adrian Fisher that the only link road being considered was across the South Macclesfield Development Area and that there was not one being considered in the Local Plan. Mr Fisher and then the Head of Highways both agreed that the people of Macclesfield did not want the loss of Greenbelt that would result in this road being built and that its benefits to Macclesfield are marginal and do not warrant its development. Yet here it appears again in the local plan.
- g. The Planning Inspectors report of 1997 which included the same road [paragraph 4.402] stated that *'looking at road T5, this is only to facilitate development.'* (30)
- h. 3500 people signed a petition handed in to the council by Save Macclesfield Greenbelt against the removal of Greenbelt and the building of the south west link road.
- i. Henbury Parish Councils have objected to inclusion of these sites as have Macclesfield Town Council. They have raised serious unanswered issues with lack of brownfield development and the removal of Greenbelt.
- j. The MP David Rutley is on public record objecting to the removal of Greenbelt across the South West of Macclesfield.

## **10. The flawed evidence and site selection**

- a. The Site Selection Report (7) on page 111 in the ecology section of the traffic light assessment fails to mention the presence of Ancient Woodland and Veteran trees that make up the Cocks Wood SBI. This again is not repeated for other sites, for example on page 117 it states, 'Upton Wood adjacent - part ancient woodland and part semi-natural.'
- b. Site evaluation does not include and consider Pre-submission Core Strategy Consultation for site CS32 and CS32, 567 people objected out of 571 consultees with 1 supporting the inclusion of this site in the submitted plan. This consultation information was replaced with older and much smaller consultation from the Town Strategies.
- c. The site methodology is flawed in the allocation of sites. Only sites actively promoted by large developers are included and those in current use are screened out, even when the intent of the owners to relocate is known by the council. This includes sites that have been submitted for planning permission which is contrary to their own methodology.

- d. The assessment of sites in the south west of Macclesfield utilises a road which may not be built even in the next plan period. Hence the evidence for their assessment is fatally flawed.
- e. The technique of grouping sites together is not employed elsewhere in the assessment of potential sites around Macclesfield e.g. the assessment of PSS211 – Land North of Birtles Road, PSS212 and MF10 (contribution only Greenbelt) which are in the same locality. Hence not all reasonable alternatives have been considered and so the allocation of CS 40 is not justified.
- f. The Sustainability Assessment is flawed. It contains incorrect assessments for CS 40. For example the oversubscribed secondary school is over 1km away, the post office is over 1.3km and the medical centre is over 3km away. They are not coded correctly on the assessment table.
- g. The SA Accessibility Assessment which is discussed in Paragraph 8.82 of the Macclesfield Town Site Selection Report (7) states that, *'the site meets the minimum standard in relation to the majority of services and facilities in the Assessment. ('Red' elements relate to access to supermarket, PO, medical facilities and park). The allocation at CS8 makes provision for a retail element.'* CS8 at its closest point is no more accessible than the town centre supermarkets, medical facilities and post office are to CS 40.
- h. The site figures which were provided to the council are the developers and underestimate the size of Greenbelt sites in Macclesfield as well as underestimating the potential overall build/housing densities.
- i. Greenbelt sites continue to contain incorrect information even though the Council is aware of the validity of the error e.g. Henbury School demolished near CS 40.
- j. The site selection cannot have been based upon the Sustainability Appraisal as the document contains significant sections which were not produced by Enfusion until February 2016 (26). The local plan was published in February 2016.

## **11. The under allocation of brownfield sites in Macclesfield**

- a. In the Inspectors Interim views paragraph 61 he states, *'As CEC says, there may be a finite and diminishing source of such sites in the future...'* (31) The concept of a decreasing amount of brownfield sites is not substantiated by the evidence. The Office of National Statistics in their Land Use Database show that the area of PDL land in the North West over a six year period from 2004 to 2009 has increased from 2,730 ha to 3,870 ha. Additionally, the area of land that is suitable for development in this PDL has increased from 930 ha to 1,670 ha. An increase in building land that is PDL of 80% that is suitable for housing. Whilst the number of potential dwellings that could be built on PDL rose from 37,460 dwellings to 74,860 dwellings over a six year period. This represents a 100% increase in the number of houses that could be delivered on PDL land. (32) Hence, the empirical evidence clearly demonstrates that historical rates of delivery on brownfield sites can be maintained and potentially increased. The argument put forward by the council is erroneous and makes their disregard for the historical evidence of Brownfield site housing delivery unjustified and the plan unsound.
- b. Completions of dwellings in Macclesfield for just under first 5 years of the plan starting on 1st April 2010 are 608 to 30 sept 2015 which equals 122 d.p.a. (7)



- c. At the same rate for the next 15 years to the end of the plan period in 2030 there should be 1830 dwellings completed from non-greenbelt sites. Not the 500 allocated to SL4 Central Macclesfield.
- d. When added together historical annual completion potential from non-greenbelt sites (1830) and the SMDA (1050) there is capacity for 2880 dwellings.
- e. The commitments and completions for Macclesfield are already 1,443 dwellings as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015. The balance required of 2807 dwellings would be met by the non-greenbelt capacity of 2880 dwellings. Hence the allocation of Greenbelt sites is not justified by the evidence.
- f. The Planning Reform Briefing Paper on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016 (33) states that '*... the Government's aim to ensure that 90% of suitable brownfield sites have planning permission for housing by 2020.*' Additionally '*The Housing and Planning Bill 2015-16 contains a number of different planning measures which include: ... creating a zonal system for brownfield land creating automatic planning permission in principle for housing.*'
- g. This impetus for brownfield development is not reflected in the under allocation of brownfield sites or PDL in SL4, the wording of Policy SE 2 and the rest of the local plan.
- h. The government is also intending to encourage the use of PDL in Greenbelt. '*The government will amend planning policy to ensure the release of unused and previously undeveloped commercial, retail and industrial land for Starter Homes, and support regeneration of previously developed, brownfield sites in the greenbelt, by allowing them to be developed in the same way as brownfield sites elsewhere, providing it delivers Starter Homes.*' The changes in planning policy are not reflected on PDL sites such as Alderley Park.
- i. Additionally the government have stated their intention to increase emphasis on Brownfield in their planning reform proposals, '*We will ensure that brownfield land is used as much as possible for new development. We will require local authorities to have a register of what is available, and ensure that 90 per cent of suitable brownfield sites have planning permission for housing by 2020.*' (33)

## **12. The over allocation of Employment Land**

- a. The allocation of this Greenbelt site is part of a rolling back of the Greenbelt not because it does not fulfill the 5 purposes of Greenbelt but rather because Cheshire East Council intend to develop the land. This land is graded as making a Significant Contribution to the purposes of Greenbelt (14).
- b. The employment land completion data used in the site selection report for Macclesfield (7) shows completions and commitments up until 31-5-2013. This was queried with the planning officer (Pam Cunico) on 30<sup>th</sup> March at the Macclesfield Town Council Consultation Meeting and was recorded by Cllr Dooley. Yet no clarification has been given for this data being to 2 years and 6 months older than the housing commitments and completions. This plan is not positively prepared since it utilises outdated figures for calculating employment land needs.
- c. The Employment Land requirement in the Local Plan - Submission Version 2014 there was an

allocation of 300 ha as stated in Policy PG1: *'Provision will be made for a minimum of 300 ha of land for business, general industrial and storage distribution uses over the period 2010 to 2030 to support growth of the local economy'*. (34) This is repeatedly stated as 300 ha within the document. In paragraph 8.6 it states, *'The overall provision set out in the Employment Land Review equates to an annual provision of between 13.2 hectares and 15.4 hectares. Extrapolating this across the 20 year plan period gives an overall requirement of between 265 hectares and 308 hectares between 2010 and 2030. The minimum provision of 300 hectares of employment land as set out on Policy PG1 is toward the upper end of this range which is an appropriate figure for a strategy based on jobs-led growth'*. Paragraph 8.5 states that this already includes a 30% flexibility factor. Yet in Appendix A Table A.12 Employment Land Distribution: Totals, there is 351 ha allocated in the plan for employment land. This over allocation beyond the 30% flexibility factor is not justified.

- d. This submission figure for employment land has now been increased in the revised plan to 380 ha to provide 31000 jobs. The Sustainability Appraisal Addendum (35) states that the Alignment of Economic, Employment and Housing that an extra 27 ha is needed. This would take the total of employment land needed as 327 if added to the PG1 figure of 300ha. It has however been added to the Appendix A figure of 351 and rounded up to 380ha. Since the original figure of 351ha is unjustified the new value of 380ha is also unjustified.
- e. In the first three years of the plan to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 there was only 1.6 ha of completions on employment land. There was at the end of this period 46.7 Ha of employment land still available in Cheshire East. (36) This evidence does not show a lack of employment land. If this rate of development of employment land was maintained across the 20 years of the plan period there would be a need for 10.67 ha of in Cheshire East. The Local Plan allocates 380 ha. This requires a 3,500% increase in the rate of employment land development for it to be utilised. There is a significant difference between theoretical projections and reality. There should be no more than 100 ha of employment land allocated in the local plan.

### **13. Safeguarded Land**

- a. Road access to CS40 requires the allocation of Safeguarded Land for development in the next plan period.
- b. The Revised Local Plan contains more than twice the amount of Greenbelt to be safeguarded in comparison to the original plan: 2013 45ha in 2014 increased to 105 ha in 2016. This increase is not founded on robust empirical evidence.
- c. There is no clear justification for the allocation of 50% of all of Cheshire East's Safeguarded development land to be in Macclesfield.
- d. In an unjustified manor it allocates all this future development post 2030 in one unsustainable site, CS32. So completing the major developer's proposal.
- e. The safeguarded land for development should only be allocated in the next planning period when all PDL land has been utilised and yet the local plan strategy states in paragraph 1.38, *'The identification of Safeguarded Land between the urban area and the inner boundary of the Green Belt means that the permanence of the new Green Belt boundary will be secured. The*

*safeguarded land is not proposed for development in this Plan but may be required post 2030 if a future review of the Plan identifies further needs for development.*' (34) This statement should be modified to read, *'The safeguarded land is not proposed for development in this Plan but may be required post 2030 if a future review of the Plan identifies that the objectively assessed needs cannot be delivered through PDL land.'* This would be in line with NPPF (6) paragraph 14 which states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the NPPF.

- f. When discussing Safeguarded Land allocation in the submitted plan in paragraph it states, *'There will be a number of further options to accommodate future development needs beyond the Plan period, which could include measures such as (not exhaustive): For example, there may be opportunities around the former mills off London Road in Macclesfield where there could be potential for a new urban village development; Additional town centre and higher-density development;'* These measures are removed from the revised plan without justification and should be reinstated.
- g. Safeguarded Land needs to be removed from the plan as there is no robust evidence to support the allocation.

#### **14. The spatial distribution and HS2**

- a. The allocation of this site results from the view that the spatial distribution reflected in the submitted local was not justified as the allocation of a HS2 Hub to Crewe was not certain. In the revised local plan the distribution of housing and employment land is increased in the North of the region to reflect this view. However the HS2 hub at Crewe is now confirmed and the spatial distribution needs to return to that of the submitted local plan.
- b. This is justified by the evidence provided by Cheshire East who state that there will be *'An additional uplift of £1.8 billion to the UK economy by 2030 from development in Crewe, above and beyond the existing HS2 benefits to the UK; An investment of £880 million in the South Cheshire economy through development contracts; 20,000 additional jobs in and around central Crewe; 5,000 new homes directly linked to the station transformation; The potential for a massive increase in advanced engineering and manufacturing within the UK, building on both Crewe's rail heritage and the existing massive skills base'*. (37) If this evidence for development is not reflected in the local plan, then the plan is not justified or positively prepared.

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