

Our Ref: ARAG/CE/2013 10 30 – **Letter from ARAG to Cheshire East Cabinet**

Cheshire East – Adopting White Moss as a Strategic Location

Dear Sir,

Will the Cabinet please explain to the people of Alsager how a determination to include White Moss in the Core Strategy of the Local Plan can be made given the following circumstances?

- The Ombudsman, to whom we will be returning, has published a report associated with a part of this location which could not be more critical of Cheshire East Council's administrative conduct. The outcome of this report is not yet complete.
- The Inspector in charge of the recent Sandbach Road North appeal, Philip Major, in his report, when considering Cheshire East's duty to consult with neighbouring authorities (66) stated that there are “*reservations in relation to development close to the common boundaries of a scale which might prejudice regeneration in their areas.*” He further stated that “*it would seem wise in this part of the borough not to proceed with development*”. Letters from these Authorities clearly specifically refer to White Moss as a concern to them.
- In this appeal, Cheshire East has recently argued that Alsager itself is not sustainable as a Key Service Centre, that the settlement Zone Lines must not be violated and that intrusion into and harm to the countryside is so significant that such development cannot be allowed. If Cheshire East adopts the White Moss as a Strategic Location, it would demonstrate an obvious and unjustifiable inconsistency in Cheshire East decision making, which the Inspector argues should be ‘cautious’ with regard to inclusion of major development in this part of the Borough. At a stroke, the inclusion of White Moss would potentially open the door to a judicial review of the Sandbach Road North appeal and it would undermine all future Alsager appeals. It would potentially double Alsager's housing allocation, violate the settlement zone lines, ignore the objections and reservations of neighbouring councils and intrude into open countryside close to an environmentally sensitive area.
- The White Moss Quarry site, a significant part of this proposed location, is subject to licence agreements, planning conditions and subject to an agreed Restoration Plan which is part of a legal agreement. The purpose of the Restoration Plan is to create a Nature Reserve in an environmentally sensitive area and provide valuable recreational facilities for the Community.

- As you will no doubt be aware, over many years, Residents have reported violations of planning conditions at White Moss Quarry which have either not been enforced or have been changed, sometimes without any consultation, to the detriment of the Community. Quite apart from the obvious destruction of Greenfields, prime agricultural land, the White Moss Nature Reserve and recreational amenities, adopting the White Moss as a Strategic Location would absolve the Quarry owner of all these issues and responsibilities. There will also be serious ramifications on the Ramsar site at Oakhanger Moss. It would further create infill and positively promote further building in that area.

It would be difficult to overstate how emotive the subject of this site is within our Community. We consider that if Cheshire East adopts the White Moss as a Strategic Location, especially when a Local Plan does not exist and a 5 year housing supply cannot be demonstrated, it will be in danger of discriminating against the interests of the community of Alsager by abandoning it to speculative Development. Far from the already imposed target of 1,000 houses over the next 20 years, this will inevitably lead the way to well over 3,000 houses.

ARAG represents thousands of Alsager Residents. It is totally bewildering to many of our members that Cheshire East is prepared to promote and champion housing development on the White Moss when there are so many well known, serious, outstanding issues.

The Alsager Town Council has clearly stated it doesn't want it.

Residents don't want it.

Alsager certainly doesn't need it.

Cheshire East's recent appeal arguments argue against it.

The unresolved important issues around the location remain unresolved.

Why would Cheshire East even consider making such a perverse decision?

Inclusion of White Moss as a location for development that is entirely additional to all of the other designated sites in this Community, is also likely to encourage sub-regional self-interest to the disadvantage of the Alsager Community. We look to the Council elected representatives to demonstrate leadership that is both fair and principled.

Alsager Residents Action Group

www.alsageraction.org.uk