

Alsager
Neighbourhood
Plan:
**Housing Needs
Note**

**July
2017**

A report outlining demographic profile, housing need and policy recommendations for the Alsager Neighbourhood Plan

1. Alsager Housing Needs Note

- 1.1. **The Planning Practice Guidance and the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF are clear on the importance of up to date evidence on housing need and the relationship between Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans¹. Relevant information has been prepared to support the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) which is appropriate to draw upon for the strategic planning context for Alsager. This note seeks to draw together and summarise those parts of the CELPS evidence base which are relevant to housing issues in Alsager.**

2. Background Context

- 2.1. Alsager is a popular and sought after place, and considered a viable residential area due to its local facilities, potential employment opportunities and proximity to neighbouring urban centres at Crewe and Stoke on Trent. In the period to 2010 there has been limited new development in the local and wider area creating an underlying demand.
- 2.2. Historically, Alsager was a small farming village. With the advent of rail, Alsager became a commuter town for the

nearby Potteries, and later grew with the expansion of the munitions factory at Radway Green.

- 2.3. Two key sites in the town have ceased activity and are in the process of being redeveloped for residential use: the Twyford's site and Manchester Metropolitan University Alsager Campus, which was transferred to the main Crewe site and is scheduled to close in 2019.
- 2.4. Over the next decade, these factors will have a significant impact on the level of housing mix and need for the area, requiring prudent consideration; within the context of significant Green Belt and highway matters².

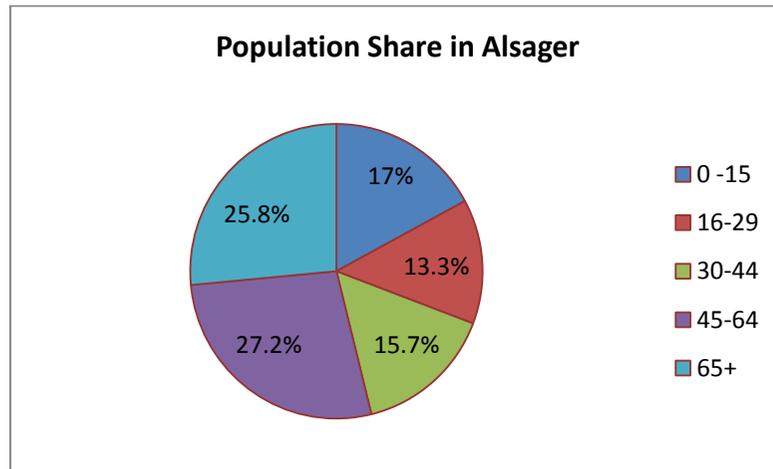
3. Demographics

- 3.1. At 2013 the population of Alsager was estimated to be 11,800. Alsager has been identified as an area with the lowest ratio of workplace to residence employment of the Key Service centres (EO33) with notable out commuting for employment needs, primarily to Crewe. More than half of the population is over 45 and above. The working age population has decreased overall by 32% between census periods.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (2012) – see paragraphs 183-185 'Plan making'

² AECOM (2015) Spatial Distribution Report.

- 3.2. The population mix for Alsager is as follows (ONS mid-year population estimates 2015).



4. Strategic Development Context

- 4.1. Alsager is a Key Service Centre (KSC), for the purposes of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy. In KSCs development (scale, location and nature) that recognises and reinforces the distinctiveness of each individual town will be supported to maintain their vitality and viability.³

- 4.2. Alsager is a town with its own settlement boundary. Outside of the boundary is Green Belt and Open Countryside. Key strategic priorities for Alsager include boosting local economic development and employment opportunities; a core priority in the NPPF⁴ in developing sustainable communities.
- 4.3. Alsager has 3.2% of the population of all KSCs and the CELPS identifies a need to deliver 2000 homes and 40ha of employment land at Alsager.
- 4.4. A further 2.88ha of employment land is to be allocated through the part two Local Plan.⁵
- 4.5. Delivery of residential development will be achieved across a series of strategic sites including the former Manchester Metropolitan Campus, Twyfords & Cardway and White Moss Quarry, and through a small number of additional sites allocated through part 2 of the Local Plan process (note - exact quantum to be updated by CEC on release of 2016/17 housing data).

³ Cheshire East (2016) Local Plan Strategy p.63

⁴ DCLG (2012). National Planning Policy Framework.

⁵ Cheshire East Local Plan (2016) Site Selection Final Report

Target	2050
Residual site allocations	122
Completions at 30.09.15:	98
Commitments at 30.09.15	530
Former MMU Campus:	400
Twyfords and Cardway:	550
White Moss Quarry:	350

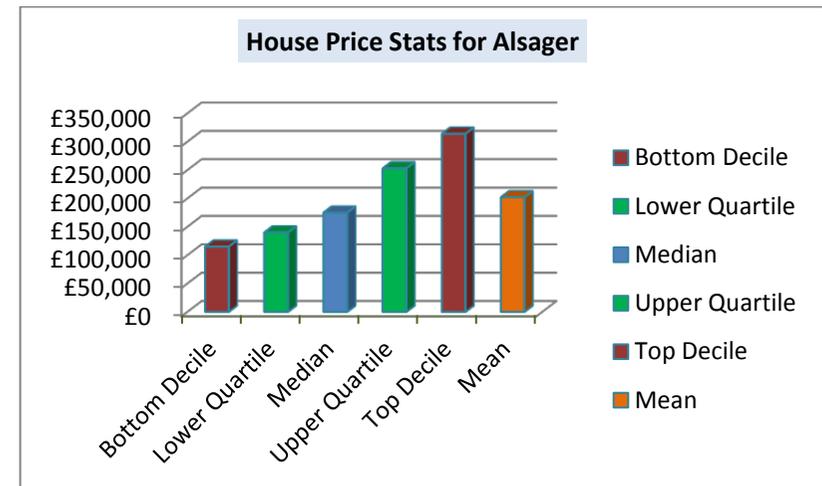
4.6. The Urban Potential Assessment (PSE039 PSE039b) highlights limited opportunity for development in the urban limits of Alsager. A total of potential capacity of 31 homes has been identified (27 on green field and 4 brownfield)⁶. There are minimal vacant urban sites available but opportunities may exist for windfall sites to arise.

⁶ Cheshire East Council (2015) Assessment of Urban Potential



5. House Price Statistics for Alsager.

5.1. There were 202 housing market transactions to March 17. The table below sets out current house price statistics in Alsager⁷



5.2. A decile is equivalent to 1/10 of the sample or population.

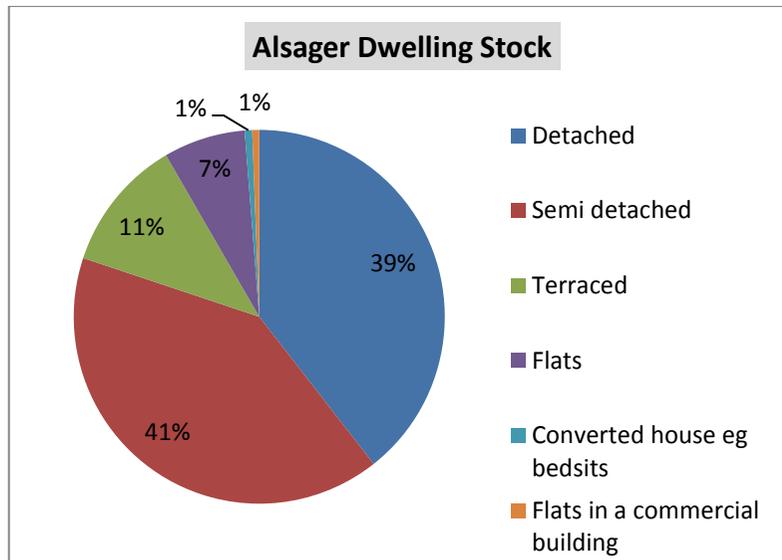
5.3. Average house prices in 2014 were approximately £175,000, just under the Cheshire East overall average of £181,000. Nearly 78% of all homes are owner occupied with just over 10% privately rented and 11% affordable housing⁸

⁷ Land Registry (2017).

⁸ Cheshire East (2016) Site Selection Report.

6. Housing Mix

6.1. The Alsager dwelling stock consists of the following:

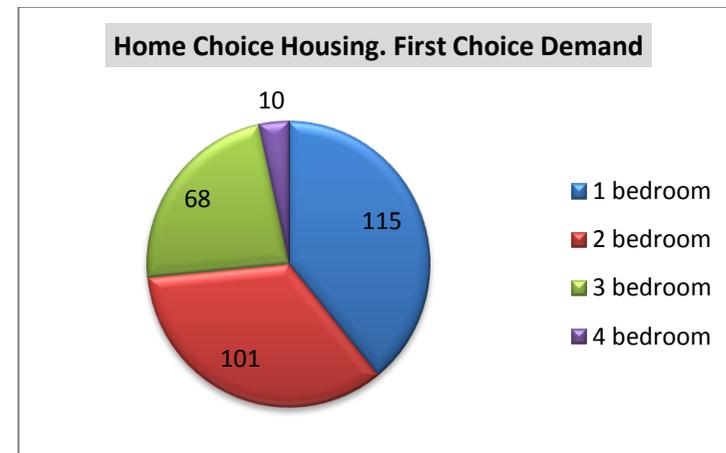


6.2. Alsager has a level of affordability and house prices similar to the Cheshire East and Key Service Centre average figures. The proportion of affordable households in Alsager (11.6%), are in line with the Borough average (11.8%)⁹. Although more affordable housing is still required in the borough¹⁰.

6.3. The Cheshire East Housing Development study¹¹ highlights a need for affordable housing within the Cheshire East area. There is a need to provide an additional 7,078 affordable houses over a 20-year period (an average of 354 dwellings per year).¹²

6.4. There has been a reduction in the availability of temporary accommodation and most properties in the area are two storey.

6.5. Information from Cheshire Home Choice, suggests that there is an affordable housing need of 294 dwellings in Alsager. Figures until March 2017 show there is a first choice requirement for 1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties, as indicated in the chart.



⁹ AECOM (2015) Spatial Distribution Report

¹⁰ Cheshire East Local Development Framework (2011). Alsager Snapshot report

¹¹ ORS (2015) Cheshire East Housing Development Study

¹² ORS (2015) Cheshire East Housing Development Study.

7. Alsager CLG Assessment Summary

- 7.1. Many of the properties in Alsager are detached or semi detached houses with many of these under occupied¹³. This is contrasted with some families having insufficient bedroom space. Although there are a greater number of bungalows in Alsager than in other parts of Cheshire East, there are around half the amount of these types of dwellings compared to detached properties.
- 7.2. Average age in Alsager is comparatively higher and the ageing population is likely to increase. A limited amount of bungalows and suitable accommodation is likely to affect the housing needs of this section of the community. Over time, older adults may wish to downsize but there are limited opportunities to do so without leaving the area. These factors also suggest that provisions for care facilities may be required in the future.
- 7.3. Currently there are limited flats and terraced houses available. There is also a demand for one and two bedroom properties in the local area.
- 7.4. Housing policy for Alsager should consider how to address the following issues:

- Increase the number/provision of affordable housing, in particular 1 and 2 bedroom properties.
- To provide a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties.
- To increase the mix to include terraced houses and apartments.
- To consider the property mix needed for an ageing population.
- To consider some availability of larger properties with above 4 bedrooms.
- The range of homes to be provided to suit all income groups.
- To identify further small scale development or redevelopment opportunities and sites through the neighbourhood plan and / or the Site Allocations and Development Policies DPD.
- Design policies which identify locations of special value and locations where specific design criteria should be introduced (areas where taller buildings may be allowed for example or where special consideration needs to be given to the surrounding context (adjacent to heritage assets/conservation areas/ open countryside)

¹³ Cheshire East Local Development Framework (2011) Alsager Snapshot report