

**Strategic Growth Plan Leicester and Leicestershire 2050: Consultation Draft.****Response from Leicestershire County Council Public Health Department.**

Being in good employment is good for health and wellbeing, whereas unemployment contributes to poor health. However “jobs need to be sustainable and offer a minimum level of quality to include not only a decent living wage but also opportunities for in-work development, the flexibility to enable people to balance work and family life, and protection from those adverse working conditions that can damage health” (1). In addition how far people have to travel to jobs, and the development of sustainable infrastructure that facilitates and encourages active travel can make a significant contribution to increasing physical activity and improving air quality (2).

More broadly, the built and natural environment is a key environmental determinant of health and wellbeing and the design the physical environment in which people live, work and play, including: schools, workplaces, homes, communities, parks/recreation areas, green (i.e. visible grass, trees and other vegetation) and blue spaces (i.e. visible water), makes a larger contribution to health outcomes than the provision of health-care (3).

The vision and strategy outlined in this draft plan is largely supported by this evidence and has the potential to both improve health and well-being and reduce health inequalities across L&L. We make a number of comments and suggestion where further detail or a change of emphasis may enhance these opportunities putting health and wellbeing at the heart of the vision for the people of Leicester and Leicestershire over the next 30 years.

**Overarching recommendation: This plan and all associated local plans and polices should take a ‘Health In All Policies’ approach to ensure that all opportunities are taken to make Leicester and Leicestershire among the healthiest places in the country, and exemplars in creating health promoting environments for future generations.**

**Leicester & Leicestershire Today:**

This section clearly outlines identified current strengths and weaknesses.

Recognised weaknesses have both direct and indirect impacts on health and health inequalities for people working living and working in L&L. Congestion on roads contributes to poor air quality and increased carbon emissions as well as wasted productivity and impacts on mental health. Congestion and gaps in the rail network (particularly east - west) reduces capacity for sustainable and active travel.

Low pay also has both direct and indirect health impacts – people in low paid insecure jobs are often unable to afford decent housing, healthy diets, access to leisure facilities and the ability to be full participants in civic life. For example, around 15% of people using Trussell Trust Food Banks are in families where at least one member is in employment. (4).

There is increasing evidence (1) that it is not the ageing population per se that presents a problem for the sustainability of health and social care, but the unhealthy ageing population. The gap between healthy life expectancy and life expectancy is growing, particularly within the most deprived communities. This is largely preventable and designing health promoting environments and investing in upstream public health prevention programmes can make a major contribution to reducing this gap.

Recommendation: The identified weaknesses should state ‘unhealthy ageing population’ rather than simply ageing population.

### **Planning for the future:**

Long term plan to 2050

*4 key matters –*

- *delivering new housing*
- *supporting the economy*
- *identifying essential infrastructure, and*
- *protecting our environment and built heritage.*

As described above each of the four key matter has the potential to improve health and wellbeing and protect against poor health. Built heritage and other community assets also have the potential to increase civic pride and belonging and help to improve community cohesion and social capital.

### **Accommodating our growth**

*96000 new homes to 2031*

Decent, affordable, well designed sustainable housing is a major contributor to protecting and improving health.

**Recommendation: There is potential to strengthen this section by emphasising the importance of housing provision that attains the highest possible standards of energy efficiency and are built to be affordable, adaptable, lifetime homes.**

### **Longer term growth 2031 – 2050**

*Significant investment in infrastructure and services*

Focussing growth in areas close to new infrastructure has the potential to increase active and sustainable commuting, both increasing physical activity and improving air quality.

**Recommendation: Infrastructure should be designed to be health promoting – incorporating a Health in all Policies approach to all future local developments. For example by considering**

provision of sustainable energy production, electric points for vehicles, and cycling and walking infrastructure.

## **7 LEICESTER & LEICESTERSHIRE 2050: OUR VISION FOR GROWTH**

### **Economy and Midlands Engine Strategy**

**Recommendation:** This section recognises the growth potential of major employment areas such as East Midlands Airport, East Midlands Gateway, the two enterprise zones. It should also however ensure Health Impact Assessment is made for major developments that can consider in more detail issues such as the impact on air quality, and access to employment opportunities for more deprived areas of L&L

### **Midlands Connect Strategy – road and rail networks**

*Rolling 25-year programme of strategic road and rail improvements around a series of economic hubs and intensive growth corridors.*

**Recommendation:** The health impact of transport should be at the heart of investment strategies for travel infrastructure. This would agree a hierarchy for sustainable travel placing walking and cycling at the top, followed by public transport and then private cars. Investment strategies should take account of this.

### **Our Draft Strategy**

*Better relationship between homes, jobs and infrastructure.*

**Recommendation:** This section should acknowledge the contribution long commuting makes to poor air quality, climate change, road traffic accidents, sedentary lifestyles and mental health.

### **Vision**

*Growth will contribute to people's health, happiness and well-being through the timely delivery of well-designed and high quality development, raising the bar in terms of environmental standards, quality of life and local distinctiveness.*

Public Health is at the heart of this vision – the challenge lies in converting this into real plans and developments.

### **Proposed Growth Areas**

There is a large emphasis on A46 and road improvements, and much less so on rail and other forms of public transport. .

**Recommendation: More emphasis should be given to improving rail and other public transport infrastructure.**

### **COMMON AGENDA: DELIVERING 21ST CENTURY GARDEN TOWNS, VILLAGES AND SUBURBS**

*It would ensure that new development is planned with strong social, economic and environmental foundations, and that communities are placed at the heart of planning.*

**Recommendation: Add 'health' to the list of 'foundations'**

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### **References**

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