



**CABINET – 17 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**RESPONSE TO THE CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL PRE-SUBMISSION CHARNWOOD LOCAL PLAN (2021-2037) CONSULTATION**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**PART A**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet on the content of Charnwood Borough Council's Draft Local Plan, and to seek approval for comments to be submitted to the Borough Council as the views of the County Council.
2. The detailed comments are set out in the Appendix to this report and key issues are highlighted in paragraphs 38 to 103 below.
3. As the consultation period ended on 23 August 2021 it was agreed with the Borough Council that comments would be submitted by officers by this date as the County Council's views. Formal confirmation of those comments, with any additions or amendments arising from consideration by the Cabinet will be submitted to the Borough Council following the Cabinet meeting.

**Recommendations**

4. It is recommended that:
  - a) The comments set out in the Appendix to this report be forwarded to Charnwood Borough Council (Charnwood BC) as the views of the County Council on the Draft Charnwood BC Local Plan 2021 to 2037;
  - b) Charnwood BC be advised that the County Council considers that partnership working arrangements between the Borough Council, the County Council and other partners, notably National Highways, need to be formalised at the earliest opportunity;
  - c) It be noted that
    - i. the initial cost of the further work required to identify the transport mitigation strategies to support the Draft Charnwood BC Local Plan at Examination in Public, estimated at £150,000 to £200,000, will be

shared between the County Council, Charnwood BC and other partners as appropriate;

- ii. given the distribution strategy proposed by Charnwood BC, it is likely that much of the transport mitigation will be achieved via Section 106 (developer) funding arising from multiple developments, securing which will require continued close working between the County and Borough Councils.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

5. Adoption of the new Local Plan will replace the existing Charnwood Core Strategy 2011 to 2028 (adopted 2015) and the Saved Policies of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan 1991 to 2006 (adopted 2004). The new Local Plan will provide Charnwood BC with a plan-led development strategy to 2037. Given the location of the district of Charnwood close to the City of Leicester and close functional connectivity to communities living and working in Blaby, North West Leicestershire, Melton and Hinckley and Bosworth, the content of the emerging Local Plan is particularly important to this area and the wider Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (L&L HMA).
6. The proposed response sets out key comments for consideration by Charnwood BC in progressing its new Local Plan. It seeks to ensure alignment with the strategic outcomes of the County Council's Strategic Plan, the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (SGP), and to influence the content of the Local Plan in the interests of local communities, including to ensure that the Local Plan provides as robust as possible policy platform for securing the provision of the infrastructure and services required to support its successful delivery.
7. The highways and transport issues arising from accommodating further growth in the Borough of Charnwood impact on both local road networks (County and City) and the strategic road network. Addressing the issues requires a formalised partnership approach to the development of the required transport mitigation strategies.
8. In the current financial climate, the financial risk to the County Council needs to be minimised. Therefore a joint commitment to developing a funding strategy for how infrastructure will be funded in the Charnwood BC Local Plan will be essential. It is vital that S106 contributions are secured to support mitigation strategies and to facilitate growth.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

9. As explained above, comments were submitted to Charnwood BC by 23 August 2021 and any additions or amendments arising from consideration by the Cabinet will be submitted following the Cabinet meeting.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

10. In December 2019 the Cabinet agreed a response to be submitted on behalf of the County Council to a consultation from Charnwood Borough Council relating to its Draft Charnwood Local Plan (2019-36) Preferred Option. In brief, key comments included:
- Environment needed to be placed higher at the forefront of the vision
  - Support for confirmation and identification of strategic sites as SUEs
  - Seeking commitment to comprehensive masterplanning
  - Outside proposed SUEs the scattered and relatively small-scale nature of development locations around the Borough meant it was especially important for the Local Plan to have strong policies around the identification of cumulative impacts and securing mitigation to offset those impacts
  - The County Council supported an evidence-based approach to housing to arrive at a preferred scale and noted scale expressed may be too low as required sufficient flexibility and ability to maintain a five-year land supply of deliverable sites, scale of unmet need from Leicester City was becoming clearer and a lower growth option did not chime well with Government's national ambition
  - Support for development and further expansion of the Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park
  - Increased recognition of key tourism assets was needed
  - The Local Plan should strive to reference the full challenge of climate change
  - Commitment to support sustainable modes of travel through new development appropriately supported by passenger transport services and commitment to walking and cycling was welcomed
  - Notwithstanding spatial distribution being relatively more scattered than the existing core strategy Charnwood BC's transport evidence suggests draft Local Plan proposals are nonetheless likely to place considerable additional pressure on Loughborough's transport system, which will require a co-ordinated strategy for mitigation
  - Proposed concentration of future growth around north and west of Leicester when combined with growth in City and Blaby District means a co-ordinated strategy will similarly be required
  - Proposed further growth in settlements in and around the Soar Valley is likely to put pressure on a highway network subject to significant resilience issues
11. The Council's Strategic Plan (2018 to 2022) "Working together for the benefit of everyone" was approved by the County Council in July 2020 (having been revised in light of the Council's declaration on climate change). It has five strategic outcomes, with the delivery of 'Affordable and Quality Homes' and 'Strong Economy' most directly affected by Charnwood BC's emerging Local Plan.

12. In 2018 the County Council, Leicester City Council, the seven district councils in Leicestershire, and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, approved the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) which provides the long-term vision for planned growth for the area up to 2050.
13. For the north and north west parts of Leicestershire, which includes Charnwood Borough, the foci for growth set out in SGP are:
  - The Leicestershire International Gateway;
  - Managed growth for Loughborough and Coalville;
  - The northern end of the A46 Priority Growth Corridor.
14. The essential infrastructure to support the delivery of growth shown on the SGP strategy diagram for the north and north west parts of Leicestershire are:
  - M1 Leicester Western Access and M1 North Leicestershire extra capacity;
  - a new Junction 20a on the M1;
  - A46 Priority Growth Corridor;
  - M42/A42 Expressway;
  - rail improvements.
15. The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities (LLTSTP) was approved by the Cabinet on 20 November 2020. This document was developed by the county and city councils alongside the SGP to ensure the long-term development needs and associated transportation requirements are co-ordinated.
16. In November 2020 Midlands Connect Published the A46 Phase 2 Study. Taking into account the SGP, the study showed a road of 'Expressway' standard is not needed around the South and East of Leicester to serve people making long distance trips but confirmed a lower standard of road is still required to support new housing and economic development delivered in accordance with the spatial distribution of housing set out in the SGP.
17. On 22 June 2021 the Cabinet received a report regarding the Leicester and Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground Relating to Housing and Employment Land Needs (SoCG) and noted that the County Council was a signatory to the document as a factual statement, i.e. not necessarily supporting the content of the emerging Charnwood Local Plan but agreeing the needs, theoretical supply, scale of unmet need from Leicester City, and process by which unmet need would be addressed. This SoCG prepared to accompany the Charnwood Local Plan process also provides an up to date context for the current stage of the Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan process. A signed SoCG by all partners was required by Charnwood Borough Council ahead of taking its emerging Local Plan to its Council meeting on 10 June 2021.

### **Resource Implications**

18. The revised capital programme for 2021-25 as presented in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report on this agenda now stands at £539m over the four

year period. This latest position includes £166m currently unfunded from borrowing (hopefully contained to internal borrowing against cash balances but the risk of having to undertake borrowing externally is increasing).

19. Within the programme, a significant list of schemes and activities linked to supporting both housing and economic growth are included. However, the proposals from the emerging and updated district council Local Plans will lead to a demand for further schemes to be delivered, and as such further substantial pressures on the County Council's financial resources.
20. Further schemes can only be accommodated when sufficient confidence can be obtained that developer funding will be forthcoming to repay the County Council's investment.
21. The scale of the infrastructure, and the need for much of it to be needed in advance of development, will put pressure on the County Council to cash flow it in advance of funding being received from developers. However, given the wider pressures on the County Council's financial position, there is limited scope for this and there will inevitably be a need for prioritisation.
22. It is of paramount importance that early engagement and close working is undertaken between the County Council and other partners in the delivery of infrastructure and related proposals to help to partially mitigate some of these risks.
23. It is also crucial that there is flexibility wherever possible around timing of spend and what money is spent on as well as ensuring developer contributions to local infrastructure costs can be secured in a coordinated and equitable manner.
24. The Government's ambitions in the Planning White Paper (August 2020) will also need to be factored into the delivery of emerging Local Plans, necessitating adjustment and perhaps major changes to the mechanisms used to secure and deliver infrastructure.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

25. This report will be circulated to all Members.

### **Officers to Contact**

Tom Purnell  
Assistant Chief Executive  
Tel: 0116 305 7019 Email: [tom.purnell@leics.gov.uk](mailto:tom.purnell@leics.gov.uk)

Simon Lawrence  
Growth Service and Major Programmes Manager  
Tel: 0116 305 7243 Email: [simon.lawrence@leics.gov.uk](mailto:simon.lawrence@leics.gov.uk)

Sharon Wiggins

Strategic Planning Manager, Chief Executive's Dept.  
Tel: 0116 305 8234 Email: [sharon.wiggins@leics.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.wiggins@leics.gov.uk)

Tim Smith  
Strategic Planning and Policy Officer, Chief Executive's Dept  
Tel. 0116 305 7219 Email: [tim.smith@leics.gov.uk](mailto:tim.smith@leics.gov.uk)

## **PART B**

### **Background**

26. The preparation of Local Plans involves various stages of consultation. This consultation from Charnwood BC is known as a “Regulation 19” consultation. Comments received will inform the Borough Council’s policy recommendations ahead of submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State. Once agreed by the Planning Inspectorate, the document will replace the current Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2028. It is currently expected that a Local Plan Examination (part of the statutory process prior to formal adoption) will be held in the latter part of 2022.
27. The Government’s Planning White Paper, considered by the Cabinet on 18 September 2020, proposes ‘end to end’ reform of the current planning system in England. Local Plans are proposed for retention but with a greater role and tighter timeframe. Once the consultation responses have been considered by Government legislative change and revision to national planning policy will take place and will impact on plan making processes. The timescale for these changes is not yet known, however, it is understood Government will make an announcement on planning reforms in the autumn.
28. In December 2020 Government announced a new Standard Method for the calculation of local housing need, which included a 35% uplift for the 20 largest cities and urban areas in England, including Leicester. For the L&L HMA this gives an indicative housing need figure of 5,520 per year 2020-2036. Whilst the figures in the districts remain largely the same, the need in Leicester has increased by about 10,000 homes (600 homes per year).

### **Overview of content of Charnwood BC Pre-Submission Local Plan document**

29. The identified Local Housing Need for Charnwood is 1,111 dwellings to be built annually between 2021 and 2037, a total of 17,776 dwellings. The Local Plan allocates land for the development of at least 19,461 dwellings, allowing for flexibility and response to unforeseen circumstances (an additional 10%).
30. The Plan seeks to focus development towards sustainable locations which will provide well-designed housing, intensifying and extending existing urban and suburban areas and larger villages. The majority of new dwellings (10,603) will come from existing planning permissions yet to be built, including sustainable urban extensions at west of Loughborough (Garendon Park), north of Birstall (Broadnook) and north-east of Leicester (Thorpebury). The remainder will largely be met through extensions to existing urban areas and larger villages.
31. Provision is made for 81.8 hectares of employment land and a 73-hectare extension to Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park (LUSEP), supporting flexible employment space for the 8,900 jobs needed in Charnwood to 2037.

32. The Borough seeks to make effective use of its strategic infrastructure, supporting growth at LUSEP, the urban edge of Leicester, and the International Gateway connection to the M1 and East Midlands Airport. Additional infrastructure requirements are identified, including five new schools at Loughborough, Shepshed, Barrow, Anstey and Syston – as well as new and expanded health services, roads and public transport networks.
33. The Plan looks to protect nearly 279 square kilometres of open countryside, whilst conserving biodiversity, protecting heritage sites, creating open leisure spaces and supporting healthier communities. It also considers the effects of climate change and how to reduce its impacts, including flooding.

### **Duty to Cooperate**

34. It is recognised that should an Housing Market Area (HMA) authority identify, quantify and provide robust evidence to demonstrate an unmet need, it is incumbent upon the HMA authorities to jointly resolve any cross-boundary matters with HMA partners under the Duty to Co-operate. Whilst it is acknowledged that Government intends to reform the planning system and in summer 2020 consulted on a White Paper – Planning for the Future, there is yet no formal timetable for such reforms. The Duty to Cooperate is key to the ongoing success of the SGP. Without the SGP and without a clear aligned approach to delivery, Leicestershire faces high levels of speculative/indiscriminate development with the consequent high risk of inadequate highway and education infrastructure. To avoid this, ongoing commitment from all the local authorities to the SGP is therefore crucial, as is their support for a collaborative and coordinated approach to the defining and allocating of infrastructure funding requirements of Local Plans.
35. All ten partners to the SGP also signed up to a Joint Position Statement relating to Leicester’s Housing and Employment Land Needs in September 2020. This set out how the local authorities and the LLEP will continue to work together to accommodate unmet need for housing and employment land identified in the draft City of Leicester Local Plan.
36. In April 2021, the County Council became a signatory to a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) prepared by the Leicester and Leicestershire local planning authorities and the County Council, guided by the Strategic Planning Group and Members’ Advisory Group to support the Charnwood Local Plan process. In becoming a signatory to the SoCG, the County Council was not necessarily giving support to the content of the emerging Charnwood Local Plan. The key strategic matters covered in the SoCG under the Duty to Co-operate are; Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Employment Needs to 2036; Unmet Need to 2036; and the process of apportioning unmet need to 2036.
37. A future SoCG for Leicester and Leicestershire dealing with the apportionment of unmet need from the City to the district councils will be informed by strategic evidence work currently being undertaken by partners in Leicester and Leicestershire to inform future infrastructure and growth, and work the City



Council is undertaking to maximise the growth it is able to accommodate without adversely affecting the environment and quality of place. It is expected this will be available in winter 2021/2022 and will be the subject of a report to the Cabinet.

### **Response to the Pre-Submission Local Plan document**

38. The comments of the County Council in response to the questions put in the consultation are set out in the Appendix to this report. A summary of the key issues is set out below, covering

- *Overarching response*
- *Scale, distribution and Local Plan Review trigger policy*
- *Further key comments on Vision, Objectives and Development Strategy*
- *Place Based Policies*
- *Housing*
- *Employment*
- *Town Centres, Services and Facilities*
- *Climate Change*
- *Environment*
- *Infrastructure and Delivery*
- *Appendix 3: Infrastructure Schedule*
- *Comments from the County Council as a landowner.*

#### **Overarching response**

39. Since the County Council submitted its response to the "Draft Charnwood Local Plan (2019-36) Preferred Option" in December 2019 there has been closer working across key disciplines, and at a senior level, with Charnwood Borough Council to inform and shape the Pre-Submission Local Plan. This is largely in recognition of:

- the challenges presented by the Strategic Road Network (SRN) in the Borough and wider area;
- the lack of capacity on the Local Road network;
- the need to take a strategic approach to education and other infrastructure provision; and
- the need to secure deliverable planned growth supported by infrastructure rather than unplanned speculative development.

40. The County Council acknowledges the scale of growth Charnwood Borough has planned for and delivered in recent decades; and with the long term strategic policy steer expressed in the Strategic Growth Plan looks to a broadening and shift of the focus for planned growth to the south and east of Leicester. Within this context the impacts of future growth in the Charnwood Borough area need to be fully understood, and flowing from this understanding needs to be a package of mitigation measures to deal with the planned growth and robust policies contained within the Local Plan to form a clear backdrop for securing developer contributions and dealing with cumulative impacts of sites.

41. Furthermore, the County Council wishes to enable continued progress towards an up to date adopted Local Plan recognising the risk presented by the lack of five year land supply, and the County Council will seek main modifications to the Local Plan to reflect the outcome from transport work to be undertaken and the resultant mitigation strategy.
42. The County Council is pleased to report that Charnwood BC are keen to maintain the positive partnership work on transport issues and evidence. They welcome the proposal that the County Council adopt an 'in principle' supportive approach to the draft Local Plan based on commitment by Charnwood BC to complete further work between now and the Local Plan Examination to inform the Examination process and the modifications proposed by the Inspector.
43. The Appendix contains the officer responses. Overall the position is generally positive, reflected in the support given and constructive comments made in response to the draft Local Plan.
44. The 'in principle' supportive approach is based on helping Charnwood BC in enabling the continued progress towards an up to date adopted Local Plan for Charnwood, recognising the risk presented by the lack of five year land supply and consequential and significant speculative development. To this end the County Council will seek main modifications to the Local Plan at the next stage to reflect the outcome of transport work being undertaken and the resultant mitigation strategy, and to ensure that the adopted Plan provides as robust a policy basis as possible for seeking to secure developer contributions towards the delivery of the overall package of highways and transportation measures that will be required to mitigate the impacts of accommodating further growth in Charnwood Borough.
45. Officers have been in dialogue with Charnwood BC for a sustained period to 'pin down' the further transport work required to inform a mitigation package to support the proposed growth, and the joint funding to do this, because it is critical to the successful delivery of the proposals in the draft Local Plan. Charnwood BC has now confirmed that additional budget has been secured to partially fund this work. Whilst Charnwood BC's position is welcomed and a co-ordinated, strategy-led approach offers the best opportunity for seeking to address the impacts of growth, there remain risks worth highlighting;
  - given the likely scale and cost of the mitigation package likely to be required its delivery will have to be phased over the lifetime of the Plan. There is a high degree of probability that traffic conditions in communities across the Borough will deteriorate unless and until the package is fully implemented;
  - elements of the package are not within the gift of either Charnwood BC or the County Council to deliver – notably the likely requirement for improvements to the Strategic Road Network (M1 and A46). The cost of mitigating these elements cannot be met by the planned development and so delivery will depend on National Highways (formally Highways England) future programmes. National Highways are in the early stages of study work in this area.

46. However, given these risks arise from the scale of growth across the Housing Market Area and the agreed need to move to a different distribution strategy it is considered appropriate that the Strategic Road Infrastructure requirements are considered in this context. Local Plan review triggers will need to provide an opportunity to revisit this should National Highways' support not be forthcoming.
47. From an education viewpoint, the County Council has worked closely with Charnwood BC on the implications for schools from their proposals and is content the Local Plan incorporates solutions to issues previously highlighted, with progress made to find suitable sites for new primary schools. However, it should be noted that further conversations are required with Charnwood BC and developers regarding the potential requirement of additional land for Woodbrook Vale Academy to support housing development to the south of Loughborough, and also for the delivery of new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provisions across the Borough. From an Early Years perspective, it is expected that new provision will be developed in each locality either attached to schools and/or placed separately in community hubs.
48. Officer's advice is to take an in-principle supportive approach to the draft Local Plan on the conditional basis of completing further work between now and the Examination in Public that will allow the Inspector to consider representations from the County Council to include additional text in the plan, and ultimately for the Inspector to recommend a modification. This is based on recent confirmation from Charnwood BC to the following principles:
- *Charnwood BC understands that LCC, as highway authority will be seeking to influence the inspector to recommend modifications to the current plan;*
  - *Those modifications are intended to link the identified impacts to a delivery strategy for the Local Plan especially given the reliance on a s.106 based strategy to deal with cumulative impacts; and*
  - *Charnwood BC is committed to work with LCC, HE and the City Council to achieve this and ensure the necessary strategies are developed and adopted.*
49. The conditional support position is dependent on Charnwood BC and LCC, together with partners such as Leicester City Council and National Highways , working together to undertake the additional work identified (particularly the commitment to develop and adopt specific transport strategies for key impacted areas). If achieved, then the supportive position will be sustained at Examination in Public as well as to the agreement of main modifications to the plan at examination.
50. Lack of progress or a change in position regarding the commitment from Charnwood BC will require coming back to Cabinet to consider the County Council's position ahead of the Local Plan Examination.
51. This is not a traditional approach and is not without significant risk and potential for substantial financial and staffing implications. As ordinarily the LHA would

give evidence to assist the Inspector's understanding in support of the Local Plan, and lack of progress or a change in position could mean giving evidence to halt the progress of the Local Plan. The risk would include the cost of obtaining specialist legal support and advice, potential costs for technical specialists, substantial staff time preparing and giving evidence at the Examination in Public etc to ensure a Local Plan isn't progressed without essential mitigation being secured. The challenge is amplified by the fact that the delay this would cause to Local Plan adoption would mean more unplanned growth is likely to be granted planning permission without the necessary levels of developer contributions or with regard to the cumulative impact of sites.

52. The responses of the County Council which follow in this report and the Appendix need to be considered within this context.

*Scale, distribution and Local Plan Review trigger policy*

53. The scale of provision for growth across the borough is supported. It is recognised that the Standard Method has been used as the starting point and that the Borough Council has included a 10% contingency.
54. The spatial distribution set out in the development strategy in the Pre-Submission Charnwood Local Plan 2021 to 2037 is almost 'ideal', seeking to align with County and wider HMA scale proposals set out in the Strategic Growth Plan (SGP), with the foci of additional future development directed to Leicester's urban edge at Birstall, Thurmaston and Syston (2,104 dwellings, 24%), Loughborough (2,242 dwellings, 25%) and Shepshed (1,878 dwellings, 21%). Shepshed is within the Leicestershire International Gateway and the regeneration of the town centre is sought as part of the delivery of new housing and the major employment opportunities in this area.
55. This leaves 30% which has been directed towards large and small villages in the borough. The service centres form the foci for the remaining growth with limited growth in smaller settlements related to providing for local needs. Whilst 1,819 dwellings (20% of additional growth) is directed to large villages, policy seeks to steer 815 dwellings (9% of additional growth) to small villages in the borough.
56. The County Council is supportive of locating growth to provide for new schools to come forward; though it is very mindful of the impact this is highly likely to have on other key infrastructure, in particular transport. The County Council is the main enabler/provider for both of these key forms of infrastructure, and it is understood that the scale of development for Service Centres and smaller settlements was informed by the hybrid strategy and further sustainability appraisal testing to understand the capacity of each settlement tier to accommodate development. This factor, together with the agreement on the transport work to be undertaken, means that on balance the County Council is willing to support the spatial distribution in the rural area provided mitigation measures for transport are clearly identified and policy requirements seek to secure and deliver the transport mitigation strategy once this work is complete.

57. The current situation with capacity on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and the local road network in Charnwood Borough means there are complex and interrelated connectivity considerations which need to be understood and considered within the Borough, across the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area and beyond.
58. The draft Plan text currently underplays the evidence-based situation in respect of the likely overall scale of the transport package necessary to enable growth going forward in the Borough of Charnwood, especially in respect of the Strategic Road Network.
59. It is suggested that amplifying matters early in the Plan should be helpful in establishing the narrative (which should run as a core through the document) for the transport partnership-working journey that the Plan making authority and the local and strategic highway authorities have been on; are still on; and that will continue well-beyond the Local Plan's adoption. This will reinforce that a coherent and realistic approach is being taken to deal with the substantial transport challenges faced with accommodating growth in the Borough (and elsewhere in adjoining areas).
60. As already referenced, further work is ongoing to aid understanding of the mitigation measures required. The County Council further advises a review of the Local Plan at the earliest opportunity to enable the full outcomes of this work to inform at an early stage the next round of plan making, the scale of which is highly likely to include a proportion of the increased unmet need arising from Leicester City.
61. To this end the County Council is keen to ensure a review trigger for an early review of this emerging Local Plan is included and comes into operation. This is likely to happen given the expected publication of the SoCG dealing with the apportionment of unmet need in late 2021/early 2022 following the completion of strategic evidence currently being undertaken on behalf of Charnwood Borough Council, the County Council, and other partners in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (L&L HMA).
62. Policy DS2 'Leicester and Leicestershire Unmet Needs' of the draft Local Plan forms this trigger policy which entails Charnwood Borough Council publishing a review of the Local Plan within six months of the agreement by all partners of the Statement of Common Ground dealing with apportionment. It is suggested that the wording of the policy is amended to refer to the SoCG being published for consideration through respective governance processes rather than agreement, to avoid the situation where a single partner withholding agreement could halt the review of the Charnwood Local Plan. The Local Plan Review trigger policy also needs to cover 'other significant changes in circumstances' which may trigger a Local Plan review, such as if National Highways' support is not forthcoming.

*Further key comments on Vision, Objectives and Development Strategy*

63. The objectives of the Local Plan should also embrace deliverability, to ensure communities benefit from the provision of infrastructure to support housing and employment growth.
64. A key indicator where planning can make a positive difference is regarding obesity, and it is requested this is added to the profile summary. The business tourism offer also needs to be included, as Loughborough University provides the largest business conference venue in Leicestershire.
65. It is suggested that it might be more appropriate in the circumstances to have a separate set of transport objectives, which inter-alia, could include an objective around Charnwood BC working in partnership with relevant transport bodies and Plan making bodies to ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to the delivery of transport measures required to enable further growth.
66. Policies DS1: Development Strategy and DS3: Housing Allocations. As a result of the proposed pattern of development, the transport evidence shows a wide pattern of impacts across the Borough, with impacts often leading to the use of less appropriate, lower order roads with potential implications for road safety and/or the communities living along those roads.
67. In some cases, these impacts are likely to be the result of existing network issues and in others the result of cumulative impacts of different sites. Whilst the County Highways Authority accepts that addressing such issues would be beyond what it would be reasonable (in planning terms) and/or affordable (in viability terms) for an individual site, nevertheless the causes of the impacts and who should pay for them to be resolved are likely to be of little concern to those affected; they will look to the relevant highway authority to deal with the impacts. This adds further weight for the need for a continued, cohesive, structured, strategy-led approach to the development of and securing the funding to deliver the package of highways and transport measures that will be required to support and enable growth across the Borough and ensuring that the Plan as adopted is properly reflective of this and provides as strong as possible policy platform for seeking funding.
68. Policy DS3: Housing Allocations. In some cases reference is made to dealing with the cumulative impacts of growth on educational infrastructure, the County Highway Authority wishes to avoid create a misleading impression about the need also to secure developer contributions towards addressing cumulative transport impacts across the Borough, through seeking clearer wording in the Plan. It is noted that several of the site allocations require the submission of a masterplan for the development of the site to accompany the outline applications for the delivery of the sites. It is requested that for some of the larger sites these should be Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) which have adopted status. This is important as SPD are consulted on and the process provides the opportunity for all infrastructure providers to be sure that what they have asked for can be delivered.

69. Within Policies DS3 and DS4 reference should be made to Health Impact Assessments (HIA) to ensure health issues are considered as part of the masterplanning process.
70. Policy DS5: High Quality Design should refer to places providing 'Space for Nature' and facilitate community interaction and social action.

### Place Based Policies

71. Support the recognition of the need for the timely delivery of infrastructure to support development. With regards to Policy LUC1: Loughborough Urban Centre, consultation with the Local Flood Authority should be key in addition to the Environment Agency.
72. The reference made in the policies for the Leicester Urban Area, the Loughborough Urban Centre, Shepshed and the Service Centres to ensuring the timely and coordinated delivery of infrastructure and improving connectivity and accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport are welcomed. However, that the two aspects are split within these policies and across Policies INF1, INF2 and CC5 does little to support the need for a coordinated, structured, strategy-led approach to addressing the transport impacts of growth across the Borough.
73. For the three SUEs and the Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park it is understandable that the respective policies reflect the history of the sites. Nevertheless, as the Local Plan is now proposing additional growth in and around the same area, the Plan should be clearer as to what contributions if any these sites will provide towards the delivery of an overall transport package that deals with any cumulative impacts of growth, both within the Borough but also reflecting growth proposals coming forward in adjoining areas.

### Housing

74. An addition to Policy H2: Housing for Older People and People with Disabilities is sought to refer to consulting and working in partnership with Leicestershire County Council Adults and Communities Department in planning for future demand and associated types of housing for Older People and for People with Disabilities.
75. Concern is expressed about Policy H4: Affordable Housing. This policy approach which requires a clear justification supported by an independent viability assessment if an applicant considers circumstances justify the need for a lower level of affordable housing provision could have an adverse impact on the provision of County infrastructure.

### Employment

76. It is suggested that text is added to encourage development that supports the move to a low carbon circular economy.

77. The Tourism & Leisure section is welcomed. There is a need to ensure tourism offer is sustainable and has the infrastructure to support it (skills, transport, accommodation etc). Welcome that support will be offered to the growth ambitions of key tourism businesses in the area.
78. Whilst reference in the policy to supporting development that supports and promotes transport, power and broadband infrastructure is welcomed, this Policy is inconsistent with the Place Based policies that reference Policies INF1, INF2 and CC5. Notwithstanding this, the Policy does little to support the need for a coordinated, structured, strategy-led approach to addressing the cumulative transport impacts of growth across the Borough, including interactions between growth in the Service Centres and Loughborough and Leicester.

### Town Centres, Services and Facilities

79. Tourism needs to be incorporated into the town centre role for Loughborough. The Local Plan highlights the main tourism assets in the Borough and aligns with the ambitions for sustainable tourism growth. It does not however, refer to the Leicester and Leicestershire Tourism Growth Plan and could improve alignment with sub-regional ambitions for the visitor economy and local tourism blueprint.
80. Policy T2: Protection of Community Facilities. Given many communities will continue to grow, the policy should be widened to positively support the provision of new, improved or replacement facilities in locations within easy reach of local residents.

### Climate Change

81. Policy CC1: Flood Risk Management. It is recommended that policy wording is amended to align with national policy and supporting guidance/standards. There should also be a strengthening of text around Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS).
82. Policy CC3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Installation. The generation of renewable energy is strongly supported, and it is suggested policy wording is made more positive by presumption in favour of development subject to there being no severe impacts that significantly outweigh the benefits of development.
83. Policy CC5: Sustainable Transport. There is no reference to contributions being required through planning applications to ensure that bus services and sustainable travel options are viable. It is also queried why this policy refers to just 'major developments', and it is not apparent how this policy would be applicable to address cumulative transport impacts arising from growth across the Borough. Furthermore, it is not just capitably funded infrastructure that needs to be considered. Evidence shows that revenue funded educational and behavioural change programmes are essential in achieving changes in peoples' travel habits.



Environment

84. The County Council is confident that Charnwood BC has appropriately considered issues around biodiversity, with it being vital that early consideration is given to the commitment to achieving biodiversity net gain within the design process.
85. Policy EV1: Landscape. Policy focuses on the look of the landscape and not the intrinsic natural capital biodiversity value it provides, suggested addition to policy wording.
86. Policy EV4: Charnwood Forest and the National Forest and Policy EV5: River Soar and Grand Union Canal Corridor. There are various suggested additions to policy including reference to eco tourism, Access for all, cultural links and biodiversity plans.
87. Policy EV6: Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Geodiversity. Should include reference to bigger, better, and more connected landscapes to be considered in enhancing fragmented habitats.
88. Policy EV7: Tree Planting. Project and ecological assurance of new planting schemes biodiversity surveys are mentioned greater elaboration on ensuring high value habitat is not displaced by new planting, for example grassland habitat nationally and locally in decline. Also, newly planted trees that are likely to interact with the public highway should be covered by effective management and funding arrangements for the lifetime of the development. e.g. through commuted sums and appropriate monitoring.
89. Policy EV8: Heritage. Policy identifies the role that heritage plays in creating a sense of place and attracting economic growth and tourism but perhaps fails to take into account the recent changes to the NPPF with regard to contested heritage.

Infrastructure and Delivery

90. With regards to transport, as detailed earlier in the report the Highway Authority requires further evidence is commissioned by Charnwood BC on behalf of the Borough, the County Council, the City Council and National Highways , and that the approach to transport infrastructure in the Local Plan will require modification based on that shared evidence. The County Council will seek to influence the Inspector to recommend modifications to the current draft Local Plan. Charnwood BC has agreed to work with the County Council, City Council and National Highways in drafting the modifications in the context of the new evidence with the aim of agreeing a mutually acceptable position.
91. This further evidence will also ensure appropriate developer contributions are secured to mitigate transport impacts, particularly important in light of the development pressures for unplanned growth being experienced in Charnwood

and the risks they present, and also adds weight to progressing the Charnwood Local Plan as quickly as possible.

92. The County Highways Authority notes that “...*new development cannot be used to fund an existing shortfall in infrastructure; it can only be required to address the needs arising from new development itself...*”. However, the transport evidence work undertaken to support the Local Plan’s development suggests that existing problems both on the local transport system and Strategic Road Network are likely to be a barrier to the ‘acceptable’ delivery of further growth in the Borough, unless a route(s) (i.e. alternate to developer funding) can be agreed towards identifying other ways to plausibly and reasonably address the problems within the Plan period.
93. In this respect and learning from its experience with the Melton Local Plan (and the considerable scale package of transport measures required to enable growth in Melton Mowbray) the County Highways Authority consider it is important the Local Plan should embed a coordinated, strategy-led approach, both through a core narrative about the journey up to and beyond the Local Plan’s adoption and in respect of robust policies linking growth to strategy development and delivery.
94. Policy INF1: Infrastructure and Developer Contributions and Policy INF2: Local and Strategic Road Network are too generic, and do little to embed in the Plan the coordinated, strategy-led approach that is required to supporting/ enabling further growth in the Borough.
95. Further to Policy INF1, schools are referred to, but not the delivery of new/extended libraries or waste facilities. The policy needs to be expanded to do so. To protect the position of the County Council it is also important that the Local Plan is properly viability tested at a strategic level to ensure that all of the infrastructure that is required as part of a development can be delivered.
96. There is also no mention of contributions to infrastructure that promotes healthy lifestyles, so primary prevention and wider determinants of health, only health services. A link could be made to Policies EV9 and EV10 to overtly link activity to health, and a HIA could help with placing these facilities around accessibility for those experiencing most inequality.
97. With regards to broadband the County Council supports the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. Any proposed development will be required to work with all engaged network operators to further this aspiration within the Charnwood area and to seek to leverage improved gigabit capable network deployment to surrounding areas.
98. The County Council aspires to encourage innovation within the telecommunications asset space. This includes but is not limited to the deployment of multi-use infrastructure components. Examples may include electric vehicle charging points or community WIFI hotspots.

Appendix 3: Infrastructure Schedule

99. Charnwood BC need to ensure developers sign up to developer contributions in the Infrastructure Schedule, otherwise this will give rise to financial risk to the County Council if this does not happen.
100. The Infrastructure Schedule is derived from transport evidence work undertaken to inform the Local Plan's development and does contain measures which provide a platform for moving forward. But, at as it stands at present the measures are not drawn together in a coordinated, strategy-led way. It is also noted that they have a cost running to several hundreds of millions of pounds, including Strategic Transport Projects.
101. In its overall comments on the draft Plan, the County Highways Authority references ongoing discussion with Charnwood BC to agree the details of a continuing work programme. The County Highways Authority expects that such a work programme is predicated on developing a more strategy-led and coordinated approach to the further development and delivery of the package of highways and transportation measures that are required to facilitate the Plan's successful delivery. The County Highways Authority also anticipates that the outcomes of the work programme available by the time of the Plan's Examination in Public are likely to necessitate discussions about possible changes to the Plan's narrative text and policies to reflect the evolved and evolving situation and to ensure that the Plan provides as strong a policy platform as possible for seeking to secure the required highways and transport investment.

Comments from the County Council as a landowner

102. The comments of Strategic Property Services representing the County Council's landowner interests largely align with and are incorporated within this report. However, from a landowner perspective there was a strong preference for a buffer of 20% to be included within the scale of housing in order to give the Local Plan greater resilience. In addition, concern was expressed regarding the distribution of housing allocations across the Service Centre settlements which potentially could constrain the ability to successfully promote the Council's land at Farley Way, Quorn.
103. In accordance with usual practice it is proposed that more detailed site specific responses be submitted in respect of this site, the proposed Quorn Solar Farm and the potential employment site off Barrow Road, Quorn in order to support their promotion through the later stages of the Local Plan process.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

104. There are no equality and human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Charnwood BC is working with the County Council and with other partners in the L&L HMA to provide for the homes and jobs required in the future.

### **Environmental Implications**

105. The County Council will continue to work closely with Charnwood BC and other partners to minimise the impact of the planned growth on the environmental assets of Leicester and Leicestershire.
106. The impact upon the environment is a key consideration in all planning decisions made within the context of an approved or emerging Local Plan, and the County Council will seek to ensure that opportunities are taken to enhance the environment through biodiversity net gain and sustainable forms of development.

### **Partnership Working and Associated Issues**

107. The County Council works closely with the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Planning Partnership, which includes Leicester City Council, the seven district councils in Leicestershire and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership. A strengthening of partnership working is sought to deal with the transport challenges which require a strategy-led approach with multiple partners, both in Charnwood Borough and the wider area.

### **Background Papers**

Report to Council on 6 December 2017: Strategic Plan and Single Outcomes Framework

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=5104&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 23 November 2018: Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan – Consideration of Revised Plan for Approval

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4603&Ver=4>

Minutes of the County Council meeting held on 15 May 2019 (10 (a) Climate Emergency)

<http://cexmodgov1/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=5112>

Report to the Cabinet on 17 December 2019: Response to Charnwood Borough Council's Draft Local Plan (2019-36) Preferred Option Consultation

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6052&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet on 20 November 2020: Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities 2020 to 2050

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=5999>

Report to the Cabinet on 22 June 2021: Urgent action taken by the Chief Executive in relation to the Leicester and Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground relating to housing and employment land needs (March 2021)

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=6444>

### **Appendices**

Appendix: Leicestershire County Council Officer Comments on Charnwood  
Borough Council's Pre-Submission Charnwood Local Plan (2021-37)  
Consultation

This page is intentionally left blank