

5. The Service has a recruitment strategy that seeks to attract new graduates and grow them through the business. Supporting this is a new Planning Intern post and outreach work allied to the Loughborough University Planning School. The Service was restructured in May 2024 to increase management capacity and provide the posts to help deliver this strategy. In addition, support is provided corporately through the use of market supplements and recruitment incentives along with the wider marketing of benefits, including inter alia: the salary sacrifice car scheme, Staff discounts and benefits scheme, agile working and annual leave purchase scheme.

10.5 Councillor Bokor – Local Development Scheme/Community Infrastructure Levy

The minutes of the Scrutiny Commission meeting 9th December 2024 state 'The Chief Executive highlighted that Leicestershire County Council Cabinet reports stated differences in opinion to those set out in Charnwood Borough Council's Cabinet report'.

Accordingly.

1. Have the differences in opinion been resolved between Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council?
2. If not, what impact will this have on obtaining a Community Infrastructure Levy in a timely manner as it could delay adoption by over a year if not more?
3. As a County Councillor himself, would the Leader give details of his involvement in trying to resolve this discord between the two councils, noting that this new delay in the adoption has occurred since the Labour/Green administration was formed over 20 months ago? The old draft was on its way to adoption until this new CIL was introduced by CBC Planning a few months ago rather than the original Transport Strategy from County.

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

1. The County Council disengaged from discussing the local plan and responses to planning applications with Charnwood Borough Council on 13 September 2024 and it has therefore not been possible to resolve differences of opinion. The Leicestershire County Council cabinet resolved on 17 December 2024 not to reengage with Charnwood Borough Council officers until the further CIL viability evidence had been submitted to the Inspectors and they had set out their next steps for the Examination.
2. The situation is not expected to affect the agreed programme for obtaining a CIL
3. The Leader has instructed officers to write to the County Council and its Cabinet members to assist their understanding of the situation and to insist they reengage with Charnwood officers.

The Transport Contributions Strategy for Charnwood was withdrawn by the County Council following consultation in the summer 2024. Because the

County Council chose not to revise the strategy, the Borough Council felt it had no alternative than to prepare a CIL so that infrastructure contributions could be secured on behalf of the County Council. This approach was taken to avoid the County Council's actions undermining the local plan examination process.

10.6 Councillor Snartt – Housing Assessments

At the Council meeting 4th November 2024, I asked a question about the average completion for housing assessments. Noting that in quarter 2 of 2024/25 the average was 72 days. I understood the backlog of assessment would be cleared by the end of November 2024. I asked the Leader if Members could have an update early December 2024.

Therefore, would the Leader give details on the current position with housing assessments against target and indicate the current longest individual wait times for housing assessment completions?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

The backlog of housing register applications has not yet been fully cleared, however good progress has been made and the backlog has been significantly reduced.

As of 6th January 2025 there are 225 new applications in total which have not yet been fully determined and are at some stage in the assessment process (this figure has reduced from 672 on 29th October 2024):

- a. 29 applications pending triage (this figure has increased from 12 on 29th October due to the council being closed over the Christmas and New Year period).*
- b. 87 applications where some of required information / evidence not yet supplied by applicant (this figure has reduced from 151 on 29th October 2024)*
- c. 109 applications ready for full assessment where all of the required information / evidence received (this figure has reduced from 509 on 29th October 2024).*

As of 6th January 2025 the oldest outstanding application ready for full assessment was submitted 62 working days ago (this figure has reduced from 231 working days on 29th October 2024).

There are 2 quarterly corporate performance indicators that relate to housing register application assessments:

- HA1b – Date of oldest outstanding housing register assessment (target 20 working days or less).
At the end of Q3 the oldest outstanding application ready for full assessment was submitted 141 working days ago (this figure has reduced from 313 working days at the end of Q2).*

- *HA1c – Percentage housing register application assessments completed within 20 working days (target 80%)*
During Q3 27% of assessments were completed within target (this figure has reduced from 55% within target during Q2). The average completion time for assessments during Q3 was 128 days against a target 20 working days (this figure has increased from 72 days during Q2). Performance against this indicator has been out of target because the majority of applications assessed have been older overdue applications from the backlog (including multiple complex cases).

Performance against both of these indicators is expected to improve when the backlog has been fully cleared. The backlog is expected to be fully cleared before the end of Q4.

10.7 Councillor Snartt – Delivery of Housing Development

At the Council meeting 4th November I asked a question about the mix of market housing on new development sites and why there had been an increase in the percentage of 4 plus dwellings. It was pleasing to hear that the Lead Member was also concerned about this matter.

I now have further evidence that shows by looking at 3 separate planning application from a developer, not only are they not compliant with the recommended housing mix but in two cases fall short of plot separation. Also one with 86% of 4 plus bedroom dwellings on one site. These examples are far out of line with the housing needs recommended for the Borough.

Accordingly,

1. With this extra information sent to him by e-mail on the 28th November, would the Lead Member give details on why this situation has occurred and why recommendations are made to approve these sites?
2. Does he agree with me that we are letting down first time buyers trying to get on the property ladder and the elderly needing to downsize to a smaller property?
3. Does he also agree with me that we are building houses that are best for the developer and not the needs of the people of the Borough?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

1. Members are referred back to the answer provided at the Council meeting on 4th November 2024, which is repeated below.

“There has been no deviation from policy. Core Strategy Policy CS3 and emerging Local Plan Policy H/1 require a housing mix that reflects the identified needs for the Borough as a whole over the local plan period. They are qualified policies though and are not therefore black and white tests. Where there is submitted evidence that the mix should deviate from our identified need, for example site viability, site specific circumstances,

housing market or other factors, then a judgment can be reached on whether the mix is appropriate overall taking account of all material considerations.”

The following table sets out the preferred mix for market housing set out in the 2020 Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) and the 2022 Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) alongside the proposed mixes for the three planning applications that Cllr Snartt identified:

- P/21/1797/2: Land off Zouch Road, Hathern – Erection of 56 dwellings
- P/22/1154/2: Land off Snells Nook Lane, Loughborough – Erection of 128 dwellings
- P/23/0645/2: Lady Jane Park, Newtown Linford – Demolition of No. 532 Bradgate Road and erection of 7 dwellings.

	2020 HNA	2022 HENA	P/21/1797/2	P/22/1154/2	P/23/0645/2
1 bed	Up to 10%	5%	0%	0%	0%
2 bed	20-30%	30%	8.8%	13%	14%
3 bed	45-55%	45%	44.1%	42%	0%
4+ bed	15-25%	20%	47.1%	44%	86%

All three applications were considered by the Plans Committee and in each case the officer’s report highlighted the divergence between the proposed mix and the preferred mix. The reports went on to consider the planning balance, including where appropriate space standards and separation distances, and reach an overall judgement on which to base a recommendation. All councillors will be aware of the fine balance that is involved in making many of these recommendations and decisions.

Councillors will be aware that, alongside these examples, the Council has recently also refused planning applications because of the divergence between the proposed mix and that set out in the HNA and HENA, including on sites allocated in the emerging local plan (for example P/22/2279/2 (Land off Melton Road, East Goscote and P/24/1023/2 (Land to the rear of Derry’s Garden Centre, Cossington)).

2. For the reasons set out above it is not considered that any part of the local planning authority has let down first time buyers or the elderly.
3. Developers are a commercial enterprise and build houses to make profit. In accordance with government policy, local planning policy can influence the type and mix of houses that are built in the borough as a whole but must take account of viability concerns, where this is evidenced.

10.8 Councillor Snartt – Draft Local Plan

With a further delay in adopting the Local Plan, I note a viability study will be submitted to the Inspectors w/c 13 January 2025. In response the Inspectors state ‘following our review of the document, if we conclude that the examination can progress. We will also set out the remaining stages of the examination that will be needed together with a draft timetable’.

Accordingly,

1. Would the Leader give details on plan 'B' if the Inspectors conclude that the examination cannot progress?
2. With this delay in adopting the Local Plan, what steps can the Labour administration take to mitigate the S106 strategic highway infrastructure issues that will inevitably cause major highway problems for future generations?
3. What will be the extra financial cost to the Council by having this delay?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

1. Decisions would be made in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This means the starting point for decisions will be the saved policies of the Charnwood Local Plan and the Core Strategy. The new NPPF will also be an important material consideration in this context and will have substantial weight in areas where development plan policy is out of date.

The Borough Council would have to consider if the existing draft local plan could be updated and resubmitted to the Secretary of State before the end of 2026 or if a programme for preparing a new local plan is preferred, under the new arrangements provided by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.

2. The Local Planning Authority must respond to requests for infrastructure funding made by the Local Highway Authority as a statutory consultee on planning applications. The Local Planning Authority does not have the technical expertise to determine the transport mitigation required on each major development site. The Borough Council is therefore pressing the County Council officers to reengage to discuss this issue; however, a County Council cabinet resolution currently precludes this.

Members should be aware that the policy basis for securing strategic transport mitigation is in the draft local plan and that only limited weight can be given to the policies at the current time. This is because they have been challenged by developers and the examination process remains unresolved. Therefore, the ability to secure strategic transport mitigation from major development sites through the development management process in the interim is intrinsically linked to the local plan process, the County Council's evidence suite and their ability to satisfy the three tests in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations when formally commenting on planning applications.

3. The costs arising above programmed costs for the local plan are those to prepare the CIL Viability Study, which is c£10k.

10.9 Councillor Fryer – Electric Vehicle Charging Points

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