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CABINET - 16 DECEMBER 2025

AGENDA ITEM 8 - STRATEGIC SPATIAL AND TRANSPORT PLANNING

COMMENTS FROM MR. P. KING CC

I welcome the candour of the Cabinet report, but it also exposes a pattern of failure in strategic planning across Leicester and Leicestershire that must now be acknowledged honestly.

I and many residents in my division have consistently stated that the draft **Harborough Local Plan (2020–41)** places homes and jobs in the wrong places. That concern is neither new nor ideological. It reflects a series of strategic misjudgements over many years, where growth has repeatedly been promoted ahead of infrastructure, with confidence placed in strategies and assumptions that have ultimately failed to materialise.

The **2018 Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan** was a previous attempt to provide a coherent, long-term framework for growth and infrastructure. In practice, it failed to secure the strategic transport investment required to make its assumptions deliverable. The subsequent collapse of the Expressway removed the single piece of infrastructure that many growth proposals had quietly come to rely upon, yet the spatial logic of development was never properly reset to reflect that new reality.

Similarly, the former **Stoughton eco-town** proposal for the same area failed because fundamental questions around location, transport capacity, funding and public acceptability could not be resolved. Those lessons should have been learned.

Instead, we now appear to be repeating the same mistakes at greater scale.

Only last week, in another forum, I was informed that proposals by **Urban and Civic and Homes England** for a new **4,000-home settlement**, larger than Lutterworth, at **land south of Gartree Road (Stoughton/Stretton Hall)** are ploughing ahead. This may suit national government housing and political objectives, but it does not answer the same basic questions that defeated the eco-town proposal and which remain unanswered today.

The consequences of this approach are already being felt across south Leicestershire. Communities along the A6 south corridor and beyond, including **Great Glen, Newton Harcourt, Burton Overy, Stoughton, Gaulby and Kings Norton**, are under increasing pressure.

Nearly **15,000 homes** are now being actively considered in Harborough, with **around a third of those entirely speculative** following the collapse of the five-year housing land supply. This is despite the draft Local Plan identifying a requirement of **around 6,500 homes to 2041 above existing commitments**.

Communities in the **Gartree Division** are therefore being asked to absorb growth based on infrastructure that is neither funded nor realistically deliverable.

I therefore welcome this Cabinet report, because it is refreshingly honest in one crucial respect. It accepts that there are **no simple or inexpensive fixes** for the transport impacts of growth and that, along the **A6 south corridor**, including the **Kibworth villages**, a road around the villages represents the **only realistic long-term solution**. That admission directly undermines the credibility of the approach taken in Harborough District Council's **Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation**.

In that consultation, mitigation relied largely on traffic signalisation and behavioural change, with an expectation that people could be persuaded to switch to buses and bicycles. This report makes clear that such measures, while potentially helpful at the margins, are wholly inadequate to address the cumulative and strategic impacts of growth at the scale now being promoted.

There is also a clear historical lesson that must not be ignored. The last County Structure Plan envisaged a new **railway station at Kibworth**, close to where I now live. At the time, this was presented as a credible part of the growth strategy. In reality, it proved to be **pie in the sky**, dependent on decisions by external rail partners and central government support that was never forthcoming.

That opportunity has now been lost. What did proceed, however, was the development. New homes and business parks were delivered regardless, leaving a legacy of infrastructure pressure that continues to overwhelm both the original and subsequently expanded facilities.

That experience should serve as a warning. Growth justified by aspirational infrastructure, reliant on third parties and unfunded national decisions, is not plan-led development. It is a gamble, and communities along the A6 south corridor are still living with the consequences of the last one.

The same risk now arises in relation to the report's reference to a potential new strategic road linking the **A47 to the M1 via a new Junction 20a**. Even if such a scheme were deemed technically supportable, the fundamental question remains unanswered: **where would the funding come from?** Once land acquisition, construction, environmental mitigation and associated works are accounted for, this would be a project running into **billions of pounds**.

In the absence of a committed funding stream, an identified delivery body, or a clear national programme, there is a real danger that such proposals create a **false sense of certainty**, encouraging erroneous growth decisions today based on infrastructure that may never be delivered.

The risks to residents of the **Gartree Division**, and across Leicestershire more widely, are therefore clear. Growth continues to be driven forward by housing numbers and external pressure, while the strategic infrastructure that once underpinned these proposals, whether the Strategic Growth Plan, the Expressway or promised rail investment, has either failed or been removed entirely.

What remains is **developer-led planning**, with communities expected to absorb congestion, disruption and safety impacts while strategies, studies and funding bids attempt to catch up, and may never do so.

I therefore cautiously welcome the move towards a more strategic spatial and transport planning framework, including the preparation of a **Spatial Development Strategy**, but we must be alert to institutional and policy bias.

If this Council is serious about learning from past failures, it must be prepared to say clearly that **large-scale development in the wrong locations, without funded and deliverable infrastructure, is not acceptable, not now, and not ever.**

In the interim, communities in my division of **Gartree**, along the **A6 south corridor**, and in surrounding villages must not be asked to carry further pressure arising from Local Plan proposals that this report itself acknowledges cannot be properly mitigated in the short to medium term.

Thank you for your time.

Mr P. King CC

Gartree division

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