From: Mrs S. Chandler [redacted]
Sent: 22 August 2021 19:56
To: localplans@charnwood.gov.uk
Subject: Charnwood Local Plan
Attachments: Charnwood Plan Response.docx

Please find attached response to Charnwood Local Plan.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in response to the Charnwood Local Plan 2021-2037 (CLP). I am a homeowner and resident of Barrow upon Soar, with my response being focused on the 703 homes proposed for the village.

Residents of the village voted on a Neighbourhood Plan in 2017 to cover developments in the village from 2016-2028. As documented in this plan, 96% of residents agreed that we 'should not plan for more large-scale, greenfield development'. A more recent survey by the Barrow Parish Council in 2021 supports these claims, with over 72% agreeing that no further housing is needed in the village. Despite these concerns, the CLP outlines plans for 703 additional homes within Barrow upon Soar, more so than in any of the surrounding villages (Sileby, Mountsorrel & Quorn).

The basis for the allocation of homes to Barrow has been purely derived by the capacity of primary schools. As the schools in both Barrow and the surrounding villages are full, the only solution proposed by the CLP is to build a new school, with Barrow only being chosen as it is deemed to have sufficient space. To ensure there is demand for the school, 700 homes are required, thus creating a chicken and egg situation – is the school required first to justify the homes or are the homes built first to justify a new school. The primary concern of the CLP has been allocating the school, with insufficient consideration given to Barrow's ability to cope with the influx of homes and traffic.

It is noted that Barrow has been chosen due to having the 'least impact on landscape character and settlement identity' (4.27 of Site Selection Paper). By increasing the village size by 703 homes, which will equate to over 1400 people if assuming an average of 2 per household, there is no avoiding an adverse impact on the settlement identity. In comparison to the allocations for other villages (e.g. only 75 for Quorn), the impact on landscape character is inevitable, with the loss of valued green space for the village.

In addition, Barrow has only been chosen as a viable site once the criteria have been relaxed in relation to bus routes. The main bus service through Barrow is the Kinch Bus Service (2), which does not serve Cotes Road at present, with the closest bus stop being on the High Street. As such, if this new school is to ease pressures on the primaries in Quorn and Sileby, there would be the need for a new bus route or an amendment to the existing service. At present, this bus service can take more than 30 minutes for a journey between Barrow and Loughborough, and almost an hour between Barrow and Leicester. Any amendment to the existing bus route will only serve to increase these journey times for commuters, and could easily push commuters into using private cars rather than public transport. By extension, this would cause an increase in traffic through the village and in air pollution, in contradiction with Section 7 of the CLP, which discusses reducing carbon emissions.

The CLP fails to consider the increase in traffic through the village following the building of these 703 homes. With the village being accessed primarily via the bridge on Barrow Road, there is already congestion at peak commuter times with both work and school traffic. An influx of new homes will increase this congestion, with it having been noted in the Neighbourhood Plan that the bridge into the village could not be modified to hold two lanes of traffic. With two of the designated housing sites being on Melton Road, this would also increase congestion on the junction of Grove Lane and Sileby Road. The current CLP only includes £50k to modify the Bridge St roundabout, but no further funding to improve traffic flow.

The village is significantly affected in times of flooding, and becomes gridlocked as soon as Slash Lane is closed, with traffic from Sileby forced to travel via Barrow in order to reach

Loughborough and the northbound A6. In heavy floods, the other exit routes from the village also flood (Cotes Road and the junction of Paudy Lane / B676), leaving Barrow Road as the only way in. At present, our daughter commutes to Leicester via private car and there have been instances during the floods where an additional half hour is added to my journey for queuing from the A6 slip road to the village entrance. There are instances where these queues actually back on to the A6, a busy dual carriageway with a 70mph speed limit, forcing cars to break suddenly. An additional 1,000+ cars (assuming many new households will have 2 cars), will only serve to increase these queues and endanger road users on the A6. With the CLP also including thousands of new homes for Loughborough, there will be increased traffic on the A6 and therefore an increased likelihood of road traffic accidents.

With Barrow being in the Soar Valley and at frequent risk of flooding, it is noted that the Cotes Road site is next to the Soar and that at present paragraph 2.106 admits part of the site is at risk from surface water flooding. The development would depend on water runoff not affecting local wildlife sites, but no appropriate Flood Risk Assessment has been completed for the CLP. In order to uphold the CLP's statement on page 16 – 'to reduce the risk to people and properties from flooding, particularly in vulnerable locations such as…the villages of the Soar' – it is inconceivable that appropriate Flood Risks have not been undertaken prior to suggesting 220 homes and a new school. In addition, the existing Jelson's development on Melton Road has resulted in residents on nearby Breachfield Road experiencing surface water flooding in their back gardens. New homes should not be considered at the expense of existing residents' suffering.

In assessing which sites have been chosen, all are in contradiction to the Neighbourhood Plan, in which 72% of respondents agreed that green spaces should be protected, whilst 98.3% considered the village's green spaces to be an essential characteristic of the village. As documented in the CLP, the objective of the plan is supposed to be to 'protect…the identity of the Borough's locally distinctive towns, villages and neighbourhoods', which should include green spaces. Of the sites chosen, it is noted that in Appendix D of the Site Selection Paper, which covers the biodiversity assessment, site PSH392's original assessment is incomplete, PSH461 is precautionary and PSH484 has no consideration of drainage. It would therefore appear that further consideration is needed before confirming these greenfield sites for development and taking away the character of the village. The CLP even admits in paragraph 3.198 that there is a 'shortfall of natural and semi natural open space in Barrow upon Soar', with the plan taking even more natural space away from the village.

As well as destroying the green sites in the village, the CLP gives little consideration to improving village facilities. As documented in the Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2028, based on planning permissions granted at that time, the health centre was forecast to be 90% over capacity with there being no plans or funding for expansion. Based on the CLP, there is still no mention of expansion for these facilities, despite an additional 703 homes being proposed for the village. The doctors' surgeries in the local area are going to be further over capacity, which will lead to an increase in pressure on healthcare staff, who have already suffered enough pressure during the pandemic.

In proposing the building projects, the CLP includes policy H2, whereby at least 10% of new homes need to be accessible and adaptable for the elderly and people with disabilities. All of the new sites proposed in Barrow are at significant distance from the main High Street area of the village, which houses amenities such as the doctors surgery and the local shops, and do not feature on bus routes. As much as the inclusion of these accessible properties should be commended, residents with mobility issues may struggle in the sites suggested in the plan, with a better approach being required to include these individuals in the village community.

To conclude, as noted in paragraph 2.149 of the CLP, Neighbourhood Plans are to continue taking a strong lead in understanding places and their character. As such, I hope that you will take Barrow's existing Neighbourhood Plan and the views of its residents into consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Mr & Mrs Chandler
[redacted]