From: Jane Watts [redacted]
Sent: 22 August 2021 16:56
To: localplans@charnwood.gov.uk
Subject: Consultation Response to Local Plan Draft Submission

Dear Charnwood BC

Since the online submission form to respond to the consultation on the **Charnwood Local Plan 2021 - 37 Pre-submission Draft** is overly complicated and seems to expect the ordinary resident to have a in-depth working knowledge of the legal and policy aspects and formats of local planning we are making our submission to the consultation in this email.

Re: Policy DS3(HA14) Land off Cliffe Road/Henson Close, Birstall

The Draft states:
We will support development proposals at site HA14 that:

restrict built development to the south-eastern corner of the site;
are supported by a Green Infrastructure strategy, prepared in consultation with the local planning authority and Leicester City Council, that demonstrates how the functions of Green Wedge will be maintained as part of the development of the site, including ensuring that the effect upon the separate identities and landscape setting of distinct settlements is mitigated, and linked areas of open space into the urban area of Leicester are maintained; and
include the enhancement of the area adjacent to the Great Central Railway
(page 42)

Our response on various grounds:

Sustainability of the proposed development with reference to Para 1.10

"Sustainable development is a key principle which underpins the planning system. It means ensuring a better quality of life, now and for future generations. "

The proposal to build on the already very narrow amount of the Leicester 'Green Wedge' directly contradicts the sustainability aspiration. Key points are:

Leicester City already proposes development in this part of the Green Wedge. If the development off Cliffe Road/Henson Close goes ahead, barely a field will be left of this corridor. Even leaving the mature hedge with a footpath would not provide the green space and habitats that are currently present. Wildlife living in the mature mixed hedges thrive in both hedge and field margin habitats. Destroying this mixed habitat would be to the serious detriment of the habitat and would reduce the green wedge to almost nothing at this point. The corridor of the Great Central Railway is not enough on its own and it is not particularly diverse. It needs the wider green habitats around it for wildlife to thrive.

This is the only green space on the western side of the A6 at Birstall where people may walk. and it is well used. Such green spaces have been shown to be increasingly important to all our wellbeing and building on this land would deprive nearby residents of this healthy environment. It is too far to walk to Watermead and then go for a walk, and then walk back, from this side of the village, especially for those with limited mobility. Not everyone can get in a car to go for a walk and nor should we. see that as a sustainable option. (2.38 also refers to this). We need green, natural space on this side of the A6.

Building on this particular Green Wedge land and depleting the existing and increasingly limited green space will not fulfill the stated policy desire to make Charnwood a desirable place to live and will degrade the experience of existing residents. People desire to live where they can easily, from the door, walk in natural green space. This will become increasingly important as the population in Charnwood ages, as is projected.

Page 14 of the submission document states: "Our communities will enjoy a cleaner and greener environment. " The community on the western side of the A6 will not enjoy a cleaner and greener environment if this land is built on.

Development /strategy:

page 16, point 8 - The plan aims “To reduce the risk to people and properties from flooding, particularly in vulnerable locations such as parts of Loughborough and the villages of the Soar and Wreake Valleys.” Flood risk - building yet more houses on the tops of the hills will create more run off, contributing to flood risk in the valleys.

Sewage and water: it seems that this area is already at capacity in terms of water/sewage infrastructure evidenced by regular overflow of drains in bad weather. The frequent unpleasant smells from the nearby sewage works suggest that we are also at capacity for sewage.

Environmental assets: 2.2 states: “We want to meet the development needs of our communities, create a strong and lasting economy and protect our environmental assets to create a good quality of life for all our residents.” This small field is a local environmental asset. It may not be as grand as the larger environment of Charnwood Forest, but to local residents it is a nearby, natural green space full of wildlife. It is a valuable asset to local residents and our environment would be much poorer without it.

2.4 Active Lifestyles: The loss of this space would remove the opportunity for local resident to enjoy a walk in this space.

Green Wedge: 2.43 states: “It has been necessary to identify some housing sites in Green Wedges, with the strategic need for development, on balance, outweighing the loss of Green Wedge. Following consultation with local authority partners, there is recognition that in allocating development in Green Wedges, significant and coordinated mitigation will be required. “

Our view is that precious little of the Green Wedge on this side of Leicester City and out in to the county in Birstall will be left. It is clear from the map in the Development Strategy document that both city and county intend to make the area to the west of Birstall contiguous, thus losing the Green Wedge entirely and losing its Area of Local Separation (3.17). The recognition that ‘mitigation’ will be required present in itself the issue of unsustainability. The Green Wedge will be almost if not entirely lost, to the detriment of the healthy, clean environment that the Council says it aspires to. Point 3.15 in the document states the importance of the Green Wedge as a Green Lung area. On this side of the A6 this site is part of the only area of Green Lung left and both Leicester City and Leicestershire County Council are now proposing to built on it.

Policy LUA1 states: “Leicester Urban Area We will support Leicester Urban Area in its role as the central economic, social and cultural focus of the County. We will do this by supporting development that: .....• ensures Green Wedge functions are maintained and development is co-ordinated across administrative boundaries where this is relevant, in accordance with Policy EV2;
and ....• protects and enhances the strategically important links in the wildlife network, including the Great Central Railway, River Soar, Grand Union Canal, Green Wedges and locations which provide connectivity between strategically important habitats, in accordance with Policies E5 and EV6;” Our submission is that building on this land contravenes both these aims.

Policy DS1: Development Strategy states: “maintains the functions of Green Wedges and Areas of Local Separation:. Building on this particular land directly contravenes both these policies. The Green Wedge would almost disappear and Birstall would become contiguous with the City’s new developments centred on Ash Green to the west.

Finally, building is being suggested just for the south east corner of the site, but the rest of that part of the Green Wedge is also allocation for housing. Thus the whole site must be seen in the context of the objections.

Leicester Urban Area 3.8 states: “In addition to having very good public transport connections into the city, Thurmaston, Syston and Birstall also individually provide a full range and choice of services and facilities to residents.” This is untrue. The only public transport is by bus and the buses are often erratic and unreliable. They are often late and sometimes do not appear, resulting in greater car use than necessary. In addition, Birstall does not have good leisure facilities for its expanding population: cashpoints and supermarkets alone do not a place make. There is no public leisure centre, for example, and this has long been an issue.

Yours
Jane Anger
Jane Watts

[redacted]