From: C H[redacted]
Sent: 20 August 2021 16:45
To: localplans@charnwood.gov.uk
Subject: objection to planning permission HA15-17
Attachments: objection to HA15-17 plans.docx

Please find attached my objections to planning permission for sites HA15-17. If there are any issues with the format of my objections please let me know.
Regards,
Clare Hudson

[redacted]

20 August 2021

In response to the Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37, I wish to object to the request for planning permission on sites HA15-17.

I will be referring to the Summary of Charnwood Local Plan as a starting point for my objections as the proposed plans contradict the Council's own stated objectives of creating a 'thriving economy with healthy communities and environmental safeguards', and instead threaten already over-stretched local services as well as the precious natural environment. My objections are based on the impact such a large development will have on the town itself as well as the impact on the proposed site.

It is not clear how many homes are planned for sites HA15-17 but the Summary mentions '2242 additional homes to be built in Loughborough'. Taking 2242 homes as a starting point, and assuming an average of 3 residents per home, 2242 becomes potential for 7000+ extra residents. The new homes will not just be filled by existing residents – increased availability of homes will bring people and their cars (but not necessarily their jobs or incomes) into the town. A town of 60000 - according to the 2011 census; no figures are as yet available for 2021 - faces an increase in population of over 10%, and that is not even taking into account the impact of the huge Garendon Park development. Woodbrook Vale Secondary School - the closest to the proposed development- is already over-subscribed, with teenagers having to travel to the other side of town to attend school. Health provision is stretched to breaking point with many residents unable to access their GPs even pre-Covid.

So if the population of Loughborough is set to increase by 10% or more over the next 15 years, vague statements suggesting 'support for development' of infrastructure and services need to be backed up with actual, tangible development **before** the current infrastructure and services are completely overwhelmed by a foreseeable significant increase in the local population. It would be far more sensible to wait and see how sustainable the planned 'Sustainable Urban Extension' at Garendon Park actually is before granting planning permission for additional large scale, potentially unsustainable developments in the town.

Working with the figure of 2242 homes and the strong likelihood of the local population swelling, how many extra private cars on the roads does the proposed development of HA15-17 represent? It is not uncommon that a family of 2 parents and 2 over-18s will own 3-4 vehicles per household. Cars from this development will be used at peak times, adding to congestion and air pollution on Nanpantan Road, Forest Road, Valley Road, Park Road, and Beacon Road as these are the closest main roads to the proposed sites that lead into and out of the town. A significant impact on air quality and the experience of all road users should be expected.

Any housing developments of the scale proposed in the Local Plan should be diverted **away** from roads which are already over-used, not designed to create further congestion and pollution on existing routes or indeed the 'need' for new roads. The council's policy of 'supporting development

of (..) bus and cycle routes' seems to be paying lip service to good practice. It ignores the fact that so many people who live in Loughborough travel to work in locations outside the county, where reliance on public transport is impossible. This raises the question whether additional housing is actually needed here or elsewhere. New housing developments inevitably lead to more cars on roads and the sites at HA15-17 are no exception. A walk around the Grange Park estate in the evening clearly demonstrates what happens to fields that get built on – they turn into giant car parks.

The summary document states that development will be 'targeted away from areas of high environmental value' and that policies are to be 'directed towards protecting biodiversity and increasing resilience to climate change'. Development on sites HA15-17 will achieve the polar opposite of this. These sites are currently farmland overlooked by woodland. The fields and hedgerows are home to or visited by muntjac, roe deer, badgers, foxes, little owls, game birds, skylarks, green woodpeckers, rabbits, hares, dormice, newts, as well as insects such as cinnabar moths and rare hoverflies. These are just some of the creatures I've seen in daylight - I don't know the names of all the birds and insects I see. Peregrine falcons have been sighted locally and may be nesting in the area. There are irreplaceable oak trees growing along the edges of these fields (in which I have spotted little owls during the daytime). Wildlife flourishes here – those fields are areas of high environmental value and need to be recognised as such, not handed over to greedy developers who see only the monetary value in such a rich expanse of land.

Covering this land with houses would have a huge impact on the appearance of the landscape as well as the biodiversity. There will be no 'protection of the intrinsic character of the countryside' if these fields are built on – they **are** the countryside and would be destroyed by these plans. I notice that one CBC employee was proud enough of the commercial developments taking place in the Outwoods to tweet about them. If the plans go ahead, visitors to the Outwoods and Beacon Hill will be able to look down on vast swathes of the surrounding countryside being turned into building sites when they stand at the ancient rock formations overlooking Loughborough. That is not something to be proud of even if it does mean meeting government targets for new homes.

Since the start of the pandemic, more people have been using the fields and footpaths on sites HA15-17 to exercise and get out into open spaces for fresh air and a change of scenery. Hundreds of people walk or run on those fields each day and appreciate the connection with the natural environment and the sense of well-being it brings. If CBC are prepared to remove that opportunity from local residents, and allow fields to be replaced with building sites and housing estates, it is in direct contradiction with the Summary document which states there are to be 'protections for existing facilities promoting healthy communities, open space, sport and recreation'. If the owner of those fields needs to sell them, and is unable to find anyone to farm them (the most obvious use for the land – is this even being pursued as an option?), their value in promoting healthy communities should be recognised and protected by the council, possibly developed in ways that preserve their high environmental value with projects such as a nature park, community gardens, or allotments.

Developers might also find that easements by prescription have arisen over the years – inspection of the perimeter of these fields will show clear footpaths even where an official right of way is not in place. Farmers ploughing right up to the hedgerows in anticipation of the change of land use has not deterred long-standing walkers and runners from using what they have always believed are footpaths.

The Summary document states that development will be directed to areas with the lowest risk of flooding but the plans for HA15-17 seem designed to worsen flooding that's already occurring in

Bramcote Road and Forest Road, and threaten it elsewhere in the town. How can it be expected that turning such a vast area of land that naturally absorbs rainfall into a housing estate will not lead to serious problems with flooding as rain runs off hard surfaces? Flooding events cannot be blamed on climate change when flood risks are ignored and measures taken to mitigate such events are ineffective.

Lastly, I object to the proposed plans on the grounds that they are highly unlikely to fulfil the need locally for affordable housing for young people, single-storey housing for the elderly and people with mobility issues, or social housing for those families most in need. Even if these needs were considered, the location of HA15-17 is situated at such a distance from the town centre and other amenities as to make the homes impractical unless occupants are car owners. The trend for homes built on small plots over several storeys as seen on the Grange Park estate shows that developers' priorities are not geared to meeting the real and varied needs of local residents, or creating homes built to the highest environmental standards, but instead focus on meeting their own needs – maximising income.

I sincerely hope that the Planning Inspectorate denies permission to build on this land for the reasons given above and that the Council reflects on how this application is in direct conflict with its own stated policies. I would like to be kept informed of any developments or meetings relating to this plan. I would also like it to be noted that coinciding the consultation period with the summer holidays has not been a popular move with local residents, and is likely to be remembered next time local elections are held.

Yours faithfully,

Clare Hudson