

Charnwood Borough Council Opening Statement – Eileen Mallon

As the Strategic Director responsible for leading the Planning Service and the Chair of the LDF Project Board that has steered the local plan over the last 6 years, I'd like to share a few thoughts from a more technical point of view.

The local plan has been written in the context of extensive cooperation with our partners and other stakeholders as explained in submission document SD/15. This cooperation has influenced our development strategy not least in how sites have been chosen to enable new schools to be identified and to coordinate highway and sustainable travel mitigation.

We have also worked tirelessly to engage with our local authority partners to plan strategically for growth across Leicestershire, bringing forward a Strategic Growth Plan in 2018. This plan has been managed through our Strategic Planning Group and overseen by Lead members from across the HMA in the Member Advisory Group. This cooperation and evidential work has informed our understanding of housing and employment needs and the unmet needs arising from Leicester as expressed in the SoCG (EXAM 15).

Our objective as a Council is to have a plan-led approach to development so that our communities and decision-makers can have certainty and we would like to achieve this at the earliest opportunity. We do not believe it is in the public interest to wait for all of the strategic planning work to be completed: to do so would mean delaying the submission of the local plan until 2023 and more speculative development. This would reduce the confidence of the public in the planning system and make it harder for stakeholders to coordinate infrastructure. It has been necessary therefore to move our plan forward in parallel with the strategic planning work and we have explained the reasons for this in our topic paper TP/4.

However, in such a dynamic environment, I'm sure the Inspector will be alive to the opportunity that the Hearings present to consider the views of respondents in relation to unmet needs and in light of the Cabinet's decision to sign the SoCG on 9 June. At every point in this process, the council's position on unmet need has been guided by evidence and by being open and reasonable. The plan before you will accommodate unmet need for employment. Through this examination of the local plan the council is open to demonstrating how it will accommodate its share of the unmet need for housing.