

Charnwood Local Plan Examination
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Mr R Bennett
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2 February 2022

Dear Mr Bennett,

Charnwood Local Plan Examination

As you will know, we are appointed by the Secretary of State to hold an independent Examination of the 'Charnwood Local Plan 2021 – 37' (the Plan). We look forward to working with the Council, representatives, and the Programme Officer to progress the Examination.

From our reading of the Plan, the submitted evidence, and the representations so far, some preliminary matters have arisen on which we seek early clarification from the Council. We emphasise that we are still reading through the submitted documents, but the Council's clarification on the points in this letter will assist us in defining our matters, issues, and questions (MIQs) on the legal compliance and soundness of the Plan, and in establishing the Examination timetable and format.

References in brackets () are to the document references in the Submission Documents List.

Superseded policies

Where a local plan contains a policy that is intended to supersede another policy in the adopted development plan, it must state that fact and identify the superseded policy/policies. Paragraph 1.4 of the Plan's Introduction states that it is intended to replace the policies of the Core Strategy (2015) and the saved policies from the Borough of Charnwood

Local Plan (2004). To ensure that it accords with Regulation 8(5)¹, the Plan should therefore contain a schedule of the policies that will be superseded and this could be progressed by means of a proposed main modification.

Main Modifications

The Council has submitted a Schedule of proposed minor modifications (SD12). However, having regard to the matter of superseded policies, it is clear that it will be necessary for us to recommend main modifications to ensure that the Plan is legally compliant. Further main modifications are also likely to be necessary to ensure that it meets the tests of soundness as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In these circumstances, it will be necessary for the Council to make a formal request to us to recommend main modifications as set out in Section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 (as amended).

Five-Year Land Supply

Paragraph 3.6 of the 'Justification for Progressing the Local Plan' Topic Paper (TP/4) states that the Plan is critical to demonstrating and maintaining a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, given the increase in local housing need identified for the Borough.

The Council's submission letter of 3 December 2021 indicates that it is currently in the process of agreeing a number of statements of common ground (SoCG) with promoters of site allocations within the Local Plan and that these will be forwarded through the Programme Officer as they are finalised. Can the Council please set out a timescale for the completion of the SoCGs and indicate which sites will be included?

Having regard to paragraph 67 of the NPPF, we therefore assume that one of the Plan's purposes is to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land on adoption. However, this is not clear from the Plan or the submitted evidence and the Council should confirm that position.

Whilst we note the table in Appendix 2 of the Plan, further evidence will also be needed to confirm the five-year land supply position on adoption. This will, however, need to be informed by the SoCGs including any updated information on delivery rates and start dates. Could the Council please confirm a timescale to prepare a note setting out the five-year land supply calculation on adoption of the Plan, taking into account the anticipated date for the completion of the SoCGs.

¹ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

Local Development Scheme

The Local Development Scheme (SD/16) programme chart indicates that Plan submission would be in October 2021. The document should be updated with an Addendum to reflect the Plan's later submission date and the likely date for adoption. We appreciate that this may need to be done after the timescale for the Examination has been established but this should be actioned as soon as possible after that.

Statement of Common Ground on Housing and Employment Needs (SCG-1)

SCG-1 sets out the background to, and circumstances behind, the scale of Leicester's unmet need for both housing and employment to 2036. It indicates that the revisions to the standard method to apply the cities and urban centres uplift announced on 16 December 2020 has resulted in a significant change to the scale of Leicester's unmet housing need which requires additional evidence. SCG-1 indicates that the following workstreams will be carried out to inform the apportionment of the unmet need:

- Housing and Economic Needs Assessment
- Strategic Growth Options and Constraints Mapping
- Strategic Transport Assessment
- Sustainability Appraisal

This Examination concerns the soundness of the submitted Plan which seeks to meet the Borough's housing, employment and other development needs to 2037. The Examination will examine whether or not the Duty to Cooperate has been met and the soundness of the approach to responding to any formal position on the apportionment of Leicester's unmet need for housing and employment through Policy DS2.

In order to inform our MIQs, we require a timescale for the completion of each of the above workstreams. In addition, we would like to know the following details about each workstream:

- The scope of the work that has been commissioned and confirmation of any contracts that have been awarded;
- Confirmation of the commissioning authorities;
- Timescale for completion.

We would like to know what meetings and liaison have taken place between the signatories to the SoCG since the announcement of the revisions to the standard method on 16 December 2021 together with an indication of the working arrangements that are in hand to pursue the apportionment of the unmet need for both housing and employment.

Progress of the Examination

We have given further consideration to the Examination structure and timing. These are our initial suggestions based on the representations and evidence that we have read so far. We emphasise that we are still reading through the Examination material but thought it would be useful to share a suggested outline.

We consider it likely that the majority of the hearing sessions can be conducted over a period of 3 to 4 weeks. We would, however, programme a break between the first and following weeks to allow for some flexibility in the programme. We will liaise with you via the Programme Officer to establish suitable dates for the Examination hearing sessions.

This letter should be put on the Examination web site. We would be pleased to receive a response to the queries we have raised by 21 February 2022, but if there are any questions in the meantime please let us know.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Housden and Hayden Baugh-Jones
INSPECTORS