

Mr Ian Kemp: Programme Officer

Re: The Woodthorpe Residents Association objection to the Charnwood Local Plan 2021-2037, area HA15

31.08.22

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the examination documents provided for the CBC Local Plan as indicated in your email of 15 August 2022.

Having read the documents, the response from the Woodthorpe Residents Association remains unchanged; we support developments that demonstrate wide-ranging sustainability, but have significant concerns and objections to those that do not.

The area identified as HA15 in the Local Plan is one such unsustainable location that includes further issues as identified in our response below.

Our objection focuses on heritage, habitat and highways. Copies of previous objections to Charnwood Borough Council can be found on their Planning Portal, or are available on request. Please advise accordingly.

It is important to note that Woodthorpe is the last remaining hamlet of its type in Charnwood and is unique. Not only the residents of the hamlet, but also the wider community has expressed its alarm at the proximity of the proposed development to Woodthorpe. The hamlet is widely appreciated, hence the need for adequate protection of heritage.

Yours faithfully,

David Sangwine

Secretary to the WRA

Response follows (total 10 pages)

The Woodthorpe Residents Association objection to the Charnwood Local Plan 2021-2037, area HA15

## Overview

We recommend the reader to read previous depositions on our objections to the Charnwood Borough Council Local Plan that are available on their Planning Portal.

It is important to note that The Woodthorpe Residents Association only object to those new housing developments that are not sustainable. We understand that better sites are available within Charnwood that can provide adequate amenities and infrastructure. We recognise that unsustainable developments will not only create constraints for new residents but also for the existing wider community.

## Our objections and associated justification

1. Developments in this area are not sustainable. School placing and availability is compromised; there being little or no additional availability in local schools, both primary and secondary.

Doctor surgeries are already overwhelmed and no opportunity exists for them to expand capacity.

*The Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth page 3 identifies the current weaknesses within the county, specifically with respect to education and health – see appendix.*

Details on such constraints have been sourced and details confirmed by local councillors. Similar issues exist for NHS Dentists.

Whereas plans support the construction of a primary school on the site, this amenity needs to be provided prior to that of the development.

2. Our objection draws upon data from a number of sources, including that of the Leicester and Leicestershire 2050 “Our Vision for Growth” (LL 2050) document, to which Charnwood Borough Council contributed to, and agreed to comply with, together with nine other Leicestershire councils.

We strongly object to this proposal for area HA 15, as identified in the recently published Local Plan 2021-2037, as it significantly contradicts the policies of LL 2050.

Excessive pressures from the development of area HA 15 on the existing infrastructure will occur. Unsustainability is further identified in national policy and housing strategy identified LL 2050 clauses. This is a clear contravention of these agreed policies, in particular those of controlling excessive development pressures on small communities.

Other than the primary school proposal, no plans are in place to invest in new infrastructure to support development.

*The Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth page 9 identifies contradictions to housing strategy and national policies; it will have to be accompanied by investment in new infrastructure – see appendix.*

*The Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth page 18 identifies the need for shifting the focus of development:*

*Often these developments make little or no contribution to infrastructure or services and, instead, rely on existing facilities. This has created significant problems. Some communities feel overwhelmed by the speed and scale of change”. – see appendix.*

3. Although various studies have been conducted on the use of Main Street as an access to the site (principle of access strategy), none have identified the significant safety issue of egress at Woodthorpe traffic island. This has been commented on by the Woodthorpe Residents Association on a number of occasions in written responses; however, no authority has satisfactorily addressed this serious issue and it clearly needs resolving.

Traffic congestion is significant at rush hour periods along Terry Yardley Way, One Ash and Woodthorpe traffic islands. Developments in this area will therefore add to this issue and promoting an additional reduction in road safety.

*The Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth page 18 identifies the need for shifting the focus of development: “Congestion on local roads and public transport is a frequent cause of complaint” – see appendix.*

In addition, The Leicestershire Highways Authority is critical of the existing planning application, P21/0550/2, which falls upon area HA 15. Of the many criticisms, two have been included here:

*“The LHA notes therefore that on the one hand the Woodthorpe roundabout has capacity constraints which mean that it would be very unlikely be able to cater for the wider allocation in its current form, and on the other hand, a new access with Terry Yardley Way is contrary to adopted County Council policy”, and;*

*“With regard to the above, the pre-application enquiry which the LHA responded to in 2020 indicated that the wider allocation beyond the initial level of development currently proposed (namely, HA 15) would be served by a new signal-controlled junction from A6004 Terry Yardley Way. As set out in pre-application advice, the LHA advises that this would be contrary to Policy IN5 (LHDG Part 1) where the LHA will normally apply restrictions on new accesses for vehicles and the increased use of existing accesses for A/B class roads on roads with a speed limit above 40 mph (that is 50mph, 60mph or 70mph) or where measured vehicle speeds are in excess of 40mph”.*

4. The developments will add to dependency on car use, thereby increasing local atmospheric environmental pollution. No plans exist for bus route extension, or additional bus operator routes. It should be noted that the adjacent Allendale Road area residents associations have failed in their campaign for provision of bus routes for over 10 years.

*The Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth page 18 identifies the need for shifting the focus of development: “Often these developments make little or no contribution to infrastructure or services and, instead, rely on existing facilities. This has created significant problems. Some communities feel overwhelmed by the speed and scale of change. Congestion on local roads and public transport is a frequent cause of complaint” – see appendix.*

5. Good quality agricultural land will be lost. Areas around HA 15 are classified as Grade 2, land which should not normally be built upon. Continued use of good arable land is clearly not sustainable; the general public is becoming aware of the issues associated with loss of green space, it results in increased objection and action to loss of green environment.

In light of the current conflict in eastern Europe, the value of agricultural land has become clearly apparent. The UK needs to maintain its independence in food production to avoid similar issues in world conflict, as identified by the CPRE.

*HA 15 land is Grade 2 land which should not normally be built upon. Refer to the CBC Green wedge Review 2011 for land classification.*

6. Maintenance of local heritage will be lost. Woodthorpe will become swamped by housing and the policy of settlement separation will be violated. Woodthorpe, a popular hamlet, separate for over 1000 years, would be consumed by unsustainable development, with its local importance to the wider community and its historical value lost for ever.

This is further identified in recent planning application P/21/0550/2 for which extensive objection has already been lodged. It should be noted that significant local support has been raised; having identified public outrage with over 1300 signatures of support through objection mediums during June 2021. It follows that the Woodthorpe hamlet should be actively and responsibly preserved by officers of Charnwood Borough Council for civic heritage purposes and not ruined by unsustainable development. Failure to do this would contravene the policy adopted in LL 2050, as identified below:

*The Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth page 3 identifies the current strengths in distinctive environmental, historic and other assets, and popular villages – see appendix.*

*The Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth page 16 identifies the need for protection of our environmental, historic and other assets such as civic heritage, and, many other places that are important locally and these too need to be protected. From previous experience, (it has been identified) that unplanned growth can bring even more unacceptable consequences – see appendix.*

*The Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth page 18 identifies the need for shifting the focus of development: “To date, the majority of new housing in Leicester & Leicestershire has been built on small and medium-sized sites in the City, market towns, villages and rural areas. Some of this development has been unplanned. Often these developments make little or no contribution to infrastructure or services and, instead, rely on existing facilities. This has created significant problems. Some communities feel overwhelmed by the speed and scale of change. Others are disadvantaged by pressures on local schools, health centres and recreation facilities. Congestion on local roads and public transport is a frequent cause of complaint” – see appendix.*

*The Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth page 25 identifies the needs for our villages and rural areas, in particular for limited growth: “In recent years, our villages and rural areas have been under intense pressure for growth. The strategy proposes that, in future, there will be limited growth in these areas, consistent with providing for local needs”. – see appendix.*

7. Wildlife corridors, green wedges and areas of local separation and the prevention of merging of settlements, will be totally compromised. In addition, the maintenance of biodiversity and mitigation of climate change are subjects we are all becoming highly concerned with.

The development of HA 15 contradicts the requirements of the Charnwood Borough Council Green Wedge Review 2011:

*“5.3 The green wedge was considered to be a structurally important area of open land between Loughborough and Quorn. Its principle function was originally to secure open views of countryside from within Loughborough and Quorn, to safeguard rural, open aspect of approaches into*

*Loughborough and to provide for public access, recreation, nature conservation and other green and open uses in a location accessible to a wide area.*

*5.12 The southwest part of the green wedge is classified as grade 2 agricultural land. This covers land around Woodthorpe and southwards towards Woodhouse (namely HA 15)."*

It further places requirements on:

*"Preventing the merging of settlements*

*Settlement identity is a high priority for local people and it is important to ensure that planning policy continues to maintain it. Mechanisms need to be in place to consider at what point development is likely cause the coalescence of settlements.*

*Support for wider green infrastructure*

*The role that green wedge areas play in supporting wider green infrastructure needs to be recognised. This includes improvements to health, supporting and protecting biodiversity, promoting recreation and being able to mitigate the impacts of climate change. It is important that green wedge policy can complement the wider intentions of the green infrastructure policy approach.*

*Providing open space within urban areas is still very important in giving people easy access to these areas to improve their living standards and to allow for a healthy lifestyle.*

*Protecting areas from inappropriate development*

*7.9. Planning policy will need to be developed to ensure that green wedge areas are not affected by inappropriate development in the future.*

*7.10. A consideration will need to be given as to what forms of development will be acceptable in these areas". – see appendix*

It should also be noted that the draft plan included areas of separation/green corridors that have subsequently been removed in the current version. The Woodthorpe community further objects to these omissions; there is no basis for such changes. Areas of note are:

- The young copse which runs alongside the north east side of Main Street provided for the hamlet from previous planning agreements.
- The wooded area bounded by both Main Street and Terry Yardley Way.

8. Recreational facilities will be lost for the wider community. Woodthorpe hamlet, together with its associated green footpaths and country aesthetic has become a focal point for recreation for the surrounding local communities. It is known from a recent petition study, that 250+ people can use the hamlet for recreational purpose each day.

During the Covid pandemic, the recognition of the need for personal health and mental well-being was starkly identified. This human condition will undoubtedly become increasingly more important to us all as working, lifestyle and environmental pressures continue to develop.

Development will severely damage local biodiversity resulting in loss of habitat for badger, fox, birdlife, deer, reptiles, bats and insects.

The Charnwood Borough Council Green Wedge Review 2011 further identifies the need for recreational facilities:

*“Recreational resource*

*It is important to ensure that recreation is supported and improved in the countryside adjacent to urban areas to promote a healthy lifestyle. Locating recreational activities in these areas would also support reducing the need to travel by car “ – see appendix*

In the CPRE August 2021 review, the section: “Valuing our countryside, green spaces and nature” further cites the need for recreational facilities, physical and mental well-being in our green spaces:

*“The pandemic has brought home the need for a healthier environment for all. There has been an increased public recognition of the importance of countryside, green spaces, and nature for the promotion of physical and mental wellbeing.” – see appendix*

## **Conclusion**

It is recognised by the wider local community that Charnwood Borough Council should take the responsibility to preserve and protect the popular hamlet of Woodthorpe and its environs.

The “Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth”, states exactly the same, adequately substantiating the needs of the local community and identifying the risks in the event of mismanagement of resources. It identifies strengths and weaknesses from previous experience, weaknesses that should not be repeated by irresponsible action.

Therefore, as a policy document, those decisions taken by the ten Leicestershire partners as identified in this response, should be fully implemented.

The reader is recommended to visit the clauses highlighted in the attached appendix to establish the key points of this document that impact upon the hamlet and its locality.

Contradictions to policy show that the Charnwood Local Plan is flawed when discussing area HA 15 and therefore should become subject to immediate review and reconsideration in order to bring it in line with the approved county policy on growth and road safety.

## Appendix

Text identified in blue highlights the significant points in our objection

- Reference document 1: “Leicester & Leicestershire strategic growth plan 2050: our vision for growth”

Abstract from page 3

### LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE TODAY

Our strengths (listed in the plan):

Distinctive environmental, historic and other assets, beautiful countryside, valuable flora and fauna, and popular villages

Our weaknesses (listed in the plan):

Pressures on existing communities from new development, lack of infrastructure and services such as education and health

Abstract from page 9

### EXTENSIVE RURAL AREAS

Extensive rural areas encircling the city and the market towns, villages and hamlets. The landscape is beautiful and varied, and has an economy of its own, from nationally significant agriculture and food production to a growing professional services sector.

Together, this mix of urban and rural areas underpins our quality of life. The long-standing relationship between Leicester, the market towns and the rural areas is a feature that we wish to enhance

### NATIONAL POLICIES

We want to be ready to take advantage of opportunities that will bring benefits to our area, yet able to control excessive development pressures.

### THE HOUSING STRATEGY

Government has also published its strategy for tackling problems in the housing market. This recognises that if more new housing is to be built, at a faster rate, it will have to be accompanied by investment in new infrastructure. The housing strategy also recognises the importance of strategic planning for long term growth.

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## PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL, HISTORIC AND OTHER ASSETS

The fifth building block in the Plan is a recognition of the assets that are most important to us. [We have identified key features and designations to help us make decisions about areas that need to be protected](#) (See Fig 5). We have few national or international constraints but there are key features that are important to Leicester & Leicestershire, not least the National Forest, Charnwood Forest, Bosworth Battlefield, [areas separating urban areas \(our 'green wedges'\)](#), [valuable landscape and townscape](#), [local nature conservation designations](#), [civic heritage](#), [conservation areas](#), etc. Many other places are important locally and these too need to be protected.

In a strategic document such as this, it is impossible to convey the range of assets that we have. This information has been assembled, however, and is available on our website. Further detailed information is held by each of the local authorities and will be used to make decisions about potential development sites. Balancing the need for growth with protection of our assets has been a critical consideration.

Difficult decisions have had to be made but we know, [from previous experience](#), [that unplanned growth can bring even more unacceptable consequences](#). We will continue to gather evidence about our assets and how they can be protected as we continue our work on Local Plans.

Abstract from page 18

## SHIFTING THE FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

To date, the majority of new housing in Leicester & Leicestershire has been built on small and medium-sized sites in the City, market towns, villages and rural areas. Some of this development has been unplanned. Often these developments make little or no contribution to infrastructure or services and, instead, rely on existing facilities. This has created significant problems. [Some communities feel overwhelmed by the speed and scale of change](#). Others are disadvantaged by pressures on local schools, health centres and recreation facilities. [Congestion on local roads and public transport is a frequent cause of complaint](#).

Abstract from page 19

## SECURING ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

We recognise that, if high quality sustainable development is to be achieved, these schemes will need to be supported by public sector investment in local road and rail improvements, and in public transport. The City and County Councils, as highway authorities, are already starting to identify what will be needed but decisions cannot be finalised until specific development sites have been identified in Local Plans. The Strategic Transport Plan will provide more information on what these improvements are and how they will be delivered.

Abstract from page 25

## OUR VILLAGES AND RURAL AREAS

[In recent years, our villages and rural areas have been under intense pressure for growth](#). The strategy proposes that, in future, there will be limited growth in these areas, consistent with providing for local needs.

- Reference document 2: “Charnwood Borough Council Green Wedge Review 2011”

Green wedges and grade 2 agricultural land (as identified in 5.12)

5.3 The green wedge was considered to be a structurally important area of open land between Loughborough and Quorn. Its principle function was originally to secure open views of countryside from within Loughborough and Quorn, to safeguard rural, open aspect of approaches into Loughborough and to provide for public access, recreation, nature conservation and other green and open uses in a location accessible to a wide area.

5.12 The southwest part of the green wedge is classified as grade 2 agricultural land. This covers land around Woodthorpe and southwards towards Woodhouse.

5.16 There is limited access in to the green wedge. What access there is can be achieved from 2 public footpaths. One of these footpaths connect Woodthorpe to Quorn and the other footpath extends out from Loughborough Road, adjacent to Bull in the Hollow Farm which eventually connects to a footpath into Barrow upon Soar.

5.17 The public footpath at Quorn is not very well sign posted and is more easily accessed from Woodthorpe. There was evidence, during the site visit, of mixed use of the footpath by walkers and cyclists but the footpath may not be accessible to people with disabilities due to the rough ground.

### **Preventing the merging of settlements**

Settlement identity is a high priority for local people and it is important to ensure that planning policy continues to maintain it. Mechanisms need to be in place to consider at what point development is likely cause the coalescence of settlements.

### **Support for wider green infrastructure**

The role that green wedge areas play in supporting wider green infrastructure needs to be recognised. This includes improvements to health, supporting and protecting biodiversity, promoting recreation and being able to mitigate the impacts of climate change. It is important that green wedge policy can complement the wider intentions of the green infrastructure policy approach.

Providing open space within urban areas is still very important in giving people easy access to these areas to improve their living standards and to allow for a healthy lifestyle.

### **Recreational resource**

It is important to ensure that recreation is supported and improved in the countryside adjacent to urban areas to promote a healthy lifestyle. Locating recreational activities in these areas would also support reducing the need to travel by car.

### **Protecting areas from inappropriate development**

7.9. Planning policy will need to be developed to ensure that green wedge areas are not affected by inappropriate development in the future.

7.10. A consideration will need to be given as to what forms of development will be acceptable in these areas.

See also site survey notes – page 54

- Reference document 3: “CPRE August 2021”

### **Valuing our countryside, green spaces and nature**

The pandemic has brought home the need for a healthier environment for all. There has been an increased public recognition of the importance of countryside, green spaces, and nature for the promotion of physical and mental wellbeing.