

# Charnwood Local Plan Examination

## Matter 2: VISION, OBJECTIVES, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Barkby Road, Queniborough

Prepared by Fisher German LLP on behalf of David Wilson  
Homes East Midlands

### Project Title

Land at Barkby Road, Queniborough

### Agent

Angela Brooks MRTPI

James Beverley MRTPI

Fisher German LLP

### Contact details

The Estates Office

Norman Court

Ashby de la Zouch

LE65 2UZ

# 1. Introduction

1.1 This Supplementary Hearing Statement has been prepared on behalf of David Wilson Homes East Midlands in respect of their land interests at Barkby Road, Queniborough. This site is an omission site in the emerging Charnwood Local Plan. The site is considered suitable for allocation in the scenario further housing sites are required to enable the Local Plan to be found sound (as we consider to be the case within representations and statements). These statements should be read in conjunction with our Regulation 19 submissions and initial examination Hearing Statements.



Figure 1: Barkby Road, Queniborough, Site Location Plan

1.2 The Barkby Road site is located to the southern edge of Queniborough. The adopted Core Strategy identifies Queniborough as one of Charnwood’s 12 ‘Other Settlements’ which are acknowledged to be sustainable settlements, located approximately 9km to the northeast of the centre of Leicester, just south of the A607. The existing facilities and services in Queniborough, and nearby Syston, are within walking distance of the application site.

1.3 David Wilson Homes are a respected national housebuilder who deliver high quality new residential development and who have a strong track record of delivery in the local area. The Company is proud to have been awarded the Home Builders Federation (HBF) 5 Star Home Builder status for thirteen consecutive years. This accolade demonstrates the quality of both our client’s product and service; awarded only to housebuilders who receive a higher than 90% recommendation by their customers.

## 2. Matter 2: VISION, OBJECTIVES, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### Supplementary Questions

*1: Does the development strategy set out in Policy DS1 represent a robust and appropriate approach for the distribution of housing, employment and other development in the longer term, having regard to the Inspectors' initial findings (Exam 55) in relation to Charnwood's apportionment of Leicester's unmet need for housing and employment land?*

- 2.1 The development of the Charnwood Local Plan was entirely undertaken under the pretence that any unmet need distributed from Leicester City will be dealt with by means of Plan review. This is confirmed at paragraph 2.11 of the Pre-Submission Local Plan which states:

*"A Statement of Common Ground is advanced between partners setting out the process by which unmet need will be distributed. Policy DS2 provides a clear mechanism for the local plan to be reviewed, and then updated if necessary once the Statement of Common Ground is agreed by all partners".*

- 2.2 This approach is embedded in policy through the Plan's draft Policy DS2, which confirms that within 6 months of the agreement of all partners of the Statement of Common Ground for the apportionment of unmet housing and employment need (SoCG), the Council will review the Local Plan. Timescales are then provided within the Policy to undertake this review.
- 2.3 The SoCG was published in May 2022, before quickly being withdrawn and republished in July 2022. There remains a lack of full agreement on this Plan, with Hinckley and Bosworth maintaining a not unreasonable objection on the basis of the low level of growth directed to Charnwood having regard for its size and spatial relationship with Leicester, when compared particularly with authorities like Melton, North West Leicestershire and Hinckley and Bosworth.
- 2.4 Policy DS1, and the Plan as a whole, has not been developed with any regard for an immediate need to meet Leicester City's unmet need. The development strategy set out in Policy DS1 may represent a robust and appropriate approach for the distribution of Charnwood's development needs, it clearly does not address Leicester City's unmet needs.
- 2.5 In light of the change of development requirements for Charnwood, which is a fundamental pillar of the Plan, the development strategy must be updated. This update must have regard for a full

assessment and due process against reasonable alternatives as part of a robust plan making and Sustainability Appraisal process. This process must, amongst other things ensure a sustainable pattern of development and also ensure that the Council's housing supply is robust, containing an appropriate mix of sites to ensure both a five-year housing land supply on adoption and continuity of supply throughout the Plan period.

2.6 Given the scale of additional development need distributed to Charnwood through the SoCG, it cannot be assumed that the previous spatial development strategy remains robust, and it must be fully explored if the additional dwellings to be delivered provide any new opportunities for housing growth. In particular, housing growth must be balanced against the availability or capacity of infrastructure or services, including the ability to viably increase or expand service provision where necessary, particularly as this formed part of the Council's strategy adopted to date in respect to proposed allocations. This approach is confirmed in the Council's Development Strategy and Site Selection document (TP/2), which states that the development strategy utilised infrastructure capacity and opportunities for increased provision of service.

2.7 Given the increases in need now proposed, it is not clear at all whether the strategy within the submitted Plan remains sensible and robust and it is procedurally incorrect to assume increases can simply be absorbed into the existing strategy, when that strategy was very specifically and deliberately created to deliver the specific housing requirement, with settlement specific strategies related to education for example. The increase in housing may therefore open up new opportunities in respect of the delivery of new services and facilities, particularly in areas where this is currently an existing issue. To not fully explore such opportunities, and its impact on better delivering sustainable development, is neither sound nor consistent with National Policy and legislation (as discussed below).

*2: Is any further SA testing of the options for the level and distribution of growth necessary having regard to the Inspectors' initial findings (Exam 55) in relation to Charnwood's apportionment of Leicester's unmet need for housing and employment land?*

2.8 Unequivocally yes. Paragraph 32 of the NPPF is clear "*Local plans and spatial development strategies should be informed throughout their preparation by a sustainability appraisal that meets the relevant legal requirements*".

2.9 Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires LPA to carry out sustainability appraisal in each Development Plan Document, which logically must include the

ultimately adopted Plan. It would be entirely illogical for the Plan to go through SA assessment throughout the Plan making process, only to be altered fundamentally through examination and not go through SA assessment, resulting in a Plan which does not reflect any SA assessments undertaken prior.

- 2.10 The PPG (Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal) confirms that an updated SA may not be required if any Main Modifications are “not significant” (Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 11-023-20140306). However, materially increasing a housing requirement by definition can only be described as a significant change to the Plan, and the Plan would be eminently and demonstrably at risk from legal challenge if the Council were to state that the inclusion of Leicester City’s unmet need (distributed to Charnwood) was not equivalent to a significant change to the Plan, particularly given changes in likely commuting patterns for example.
- 2.11 It cannot be reasonable or right that the Examination of the Plan as a ‘plan-making phase’ should be considered unimpacted by the above requirements, particularly in the scenario where the Plan is fundamentally changed through the Examination itself. In this case, a significant increase in housing requirement, with likely additional housing allocations or at the very least extension to draft allocations, absolutely must go through due SA process.