

CHARNWOOD LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION – MATTER 2

Representor: Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd and Merton College, Oxford

Representor Reference Number: 536

Date: 6 June 2022

MATTER 2: VISION, OBJECTIVES, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1. This Hearing Statement has been prepared on behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd and Merton College Oxford (hereafter 'Merton College') the respective promoters and landowners of draft allocation HA1 'Land South East of Syston'.
2. The Inspectors' issues and questions as set out in the 'Matters, Issues & Questions' document of 25th April are set out in bold text below. The representations follow in standard text.

ISSUE 2 – IS THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY POSITIVELY PREPARED AND JUSTIFIED BY THE EVIDENCE AND ARE THE PROPOSED LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT JUSTIFIED AND SOUNDLY BASED?

2.5 Are the settlements included within the settlement hierarchy categories of Urban Centre (Loughborough), Urban Settlement, Other Settlements and Small Villages or Hamlets in the Countryside justified? (Table 4 of the Plan). Does the settlement hierarchy appropriately reflect the role and function of these settlements?

3. The Settlement Hierarchy includes five tiers. The top two tiers are:
 - a) Urban Centre: Loughborough
 - b) Urban Settlement: Shepshed, Birstall, Syston and Thurmaston
4. The top two tiers of the Settlement Hierarchy do not sensibly align with the proposed Development Strategy. The Development Strategy in order of the quantum of housing provision includes:
 - a) Leicester Urban Area (Birstall, Syston, Thurmaston) – 7,358 homes
 - b) Loughborough Urban Centre – 6,073 homes
 - c) Shepshed Urban Area – 2,331 homes
5. The Settlement Hierarchy as currently drafted is unclear in some respects, and this might be said to be disadvantageous as regards its efficacy. To be effective the top two tiers of the Settlement Hierarchy should be combined into a single tier 'Urban Centres' to reflect the Development Strategy. The top tier of the Settlement Hierarchy should therefore comprise:
 - a. Urban Centre:
 - i. Leicester Urban Area (Birstall, Syston, Thurmaston)
 - ii. Loughborough Urban Area
 - iii. Shepshed Urban Area

6. The existing terminology of 'Urban Centre' is considered appropriate for the three areas identified above. It is recommended that the Urban Settlement tier be removed.
7. The proposed modification would better reflect the distribution of development within the Local Plan and is justified, appropriate and sound. It would also reflect the diverse range of services and facilities, access to employment opportunities and public infrastructure available within these urban areas.
8. Subject to the above modification, we consider that the hierarchy appropriately reflects the role and function of each settlement identified and that the tier allocation is justified.
9. Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd and Merton College, Oxford also support the change in the settlement hierarchy when considered against that set out in the Core Strategy (2015) which identified Syston as a Service Centre. The conclusions of the settlement hierarchy's assessment of Syston, that it has a range and choice of services and facilities to meet the day to day needs of residents are agreed with and supported.
- 10.

ISSUE 3 – THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2.12 Does Policy DS1 set out a clear approach to the distribution of future housing and employment development across the different settlements in the hierarchy?

11. Policy DS1 sets out a clear approach to the distribution of future housing across different settlements in the hierarchy and is supported. Policy DS1 sets out that the overall spatial strategy for Charnwood is urban concentration and intensification with some limited dispersal to other areas of the Borough. The bullet points set out within the policy align with this approach as do the apportionment of new homes set out within the table.

2.13 Should the figures in the table in Policy DS1 be expressed as minimum numbers?

12. The figures in the table in policy DS1 should be expressed as minimum numbers. This would assist in ensuring that housing provision within the Local Plan is sufficiently flexible to account for the uplift from Leicester's unmet housing need, as well as to account for changes in economic circumstances, the delivery of affordable housing, and reliance on strategic scale provision.

2.14 Will the distribution of housing development set out in the table within Policy DS1 achieve the overall stated aim of Policy DS1 for urban concentration and intensification, as well as minimising the need to travel, particularly by private car, and to prioritise sustainable modes of transport?

13. The distribution of development focuses housing growth in three key urban areas: Leicester Urban Area (38%), Loughborough Urban Centre (31%), and Shepshed Urban Area (12%). The distribution of development is supported. These are sustainable locations for new development which already have a range of services and facilities, employment opportunities and public transport infrastructure in place. The provision of new homes within these areas will support these existing facilities whilst also providing opportunities to improve these areas and increase the range and availability of services to existing communities. The pattern of development supports the overarching sustainable development objectives: economic, social and environmental.
14. The distribution of development also reflects the Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire (2018) which identifies Leicester as the 'central city', illustrates the A46 Priority Growth Corridor wrapping to the east and northeast of Leicester and highlights the need for regeneration in Shepshed.
15. The provision of the highest number of dwellings in the Leicester Urban Area (38%) is supported. The Leicester Urban area represents a sustainable location for housing growth and focusing growth in this location is sustainable and consistent with Leicester's position as the central city at the heart of the county.
16. With regard to draft allocation HA1, the site is located within an accessible location within walking distances to all of the main facilities of Syston. Syston is well served by public transport with access to frequent local bus services and train station within walking distances of the site.

17. A review of the journey to work Census data shows high proportions of existing residents walking to work within the town. The frequent bus services to and from Leicester are used by a relatively high proportion of existing residents for journeys to work. There is significant potential for education trips to be undertaken on foot or by cycle. Retail and leisure facilities are located within walking distances within the built-up area.
18. Appropriate points for pedestrian and cycle access would be provided linking the site to the wider existing network.
19. The site would be supported by a comprehensive Travel Plan to provide further encouragement for travel by means other than single occupancy car drivers.
20. In summary, the location of the site and proposals are entirely consistent with local and national transport planning objectives. The proposed allocation of HA1:
 - a. provides significant opportunities for new residents to reduce the need to travel, distance to travel and reduce dependence on the private car for a significant proportion of journeys;
 - b. enhances pedestrian and cyclist linkage;
 - c. facilitates enhanced bus linkage and enhanced bus frequency.