

For and on behalf of
Lagan Homes

**Charnwood Local Plan
Examination in Public
Matter 2: Vision, Objectives, Sustainable Development and the
Development Strategy**

Gorse Hill, Anstey

**Prepared by
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June 2022



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This response to Matter 2 of the Inspectors' MIQs in respect of the Charnwood Local Plan (CLP) 2021-37 Examination has been prepared by the Strategic Planning Research Unit ('SPRU') of DLP Planning Ltd. SPRU have been instructed to appear at the Examination on behalf of Lagan Homes.
- 1.2 This hearing statement should be read alongside previous representation to the Regulation 19 consultation (PSLP/162), submitted by Geoffrey Prince Associates Ltd on behalf of Cawrey Homes, in respect of the Local Plan and should be considered in the context of support for the Local Plan. The site in which these representations related, is now being promoted by Lagan Homes. DLP have not been invited to participate in the Matter 2 Hearing Session, but have prepared this Written Statement to assist the Inspectors as part of the Local Plan Examination.
- 1.3 This statement outline's Lagan Homes comments in respect of the Spatial Strategy, with responses to the Inspector's MIQ's (Matter 2) set out below.

2.0 ISSUE 1 - ARE THE VISION FOR CHARNWOOD 2037 AND THE PLAN'S OBJECTIVES SOUNDLY BASED AND WILL THEY CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

2.1 Do the Plan's vision and objectives cover the full range of opportunities, challenges and priorities that need to be addressed in the Borough over the Plan period? Is it clear how the policies will help to deliver the vision and objectives over the Plan period?

2.1 No response.

2.2 Will the Plan contribute to achieving sustainable development, including a sustainable pattern of development, as set out at NPPF paragraph 11a and if so, how?

2.2 No response.

3.0 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?

2.3 Is the Settlement Hierarchy Assessment (EB/DS/3) based on a robust methodology and relevant criteria in relation to the availability of and access to services and facilities?

- 3.1 Within the Settlement Hierarchy (EB/DS/3) Anstey is determined to form part of the list of settlements in the Service Centre category. In respect of the settlement, at appendix A the following is stated;

“Anstey has a strong relationship with the city. 37% of the economically active residents in Anstey work in Leicester and there are excellent transport connections to the city with a 15-minute daytime service and hourly evening service that gets residents into the city centre within 30 minutes travel time. This ensures there is excellent access to both jobs and higher order services.

Anstey has a similar relationship with the city as Birstall, Syston and Thurmaston, however it does not enjoy the same level of facilities and services as these settlements which have greater choice available to residents”.

- 3.2 Whilst we do not wish to raise any concerns in respect of the methodology for determining the settlement hierarchy, the sustainability and connections shared between Leicester and Anstey should be given careful and due consideration when determining how and where to locate housing growth to meet Leicester’s unmet housing needs. The SA is clear in recognising the close-relationship between Anstey and Leicester and states at paragraph 5.3.2 of Appendix G;

“Anstey appears to offer the greater potential for a strategic growth cluster that could support new infrastructure and ensure minimal effects upon the environment. This location is also well related in terms of its relationship with Leicester (and any unmet demand for housing originating in this area)”.

- 3.3 The SA lists Anstey as being part of the Leicester Urban Fringe in section 7.2, but also refers to it as being part of the Service Centre tier in the sub heading between paragraphs 7.2.30 and 7.2.31. Based on a review of Chapter 7, it appears that the Council intended for Anstey to be listed as a Service Centre rather than as part of the Leicester Urban Fringe. The inclusion of Anstey in the periphery settlements, while erroneous, reflects the settlement’s proximity to Leicester. In Table 6.2 of the SA, where Anstey and Glenfield are grouped together for the purpose of analysing housing site alternatives, the distinction between the LUA and Anstey is further blurred.

- 3.4 It may not be appropriate to distribute growth towards Leicester’s unmet need in line with the spatial strategy or settlement hierarchy specifically on a pro-rata basis given the need to locate such growth a close to Leicester as can reasonably be achieved. The location of our client’s land at Gorse Hill, Anstey provides one such demonstration of this complementary relationship within the settlement pattern whereby further development would be accessible to services and facilities in Anstey while functionally forming an element of growth within the boundaries of the Leicester Urban Area that would remain physically separate and distinct from the built edges of the village. This is principally due to the alignment of the A46 and undeveloped land to the north.

2.4 How has the Settlement Hierarchy Assessment informed the development strategy in Policy DS1?

- 3.5 Broadly speaking the development strategy set out in Policy DS1 is consistent with the

settlement hierarchy, with the largest and most sustainable settlements and those within or well-related to the LUA being apportioned the majority of the growth.

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?

3.6 No response.

2.6 How does the 'Leicester Urban Area' relate to the settlement hierarchy in Table 4?

3.7 Clarification is required to confirm that for the purposes of distributing growth under the settlement hierarchy the approach, correctly taken by the Council, has been to recognise that locations forming part of the functional Leicester Urban Area (whether or not presently designated as such on the proposals map) are equivalent to the three named locations within the LUA specified at Table 4.

3.8 In practice this is already acknowledged by the Plan both in terms of the accompanying description of the hierarchy category and also for the purposes of Policies DS1 and DS3 through the inclusion of further allocations (such as those under HA12 and HA13 at Glenfield) against this tier.

3.9 In sustainability terms the characteristics of the LUA in these locations can be considered indistinguishable from the named urban settlements for the purposes of site selection. Indeed, locations at the north-western edge of the LUA including our client's site at Gorse Hill should be designated as part of the LUA and considered as such within the equivalent tier of the hierarchy for the purposes of directing future growth including the additional contributions required towards Leicester's unmet needs.

3.10 While the relationship with the functional urban area is the principal factor to recognise in terms of the sustainability of growth in related LUA locations outside of the named 'Urban Settlements' further benefits also arise at Gorse Hill from the relationship with the neighbouring Service Centre at Anstey.

2.7 The Plan also refers to 'Urban Areas', for example in paragraph 3.206. What areas are being referred to and is this clear?

3.11 No response.

2.8 Should the Sustainable Urban Extensions be identified as urban settlements in the hierarchy?

3.12 No response.

2.9 Why have small villages or hamlets been identified as a separate category in the settlement hierarchy if they are subject to the same policy approach as the countryside in Policy C1?

3.13 No response.

2.10 Are the limits to development based on a robust and credible evidence base and are they appropriately drawn on the Policies Map?

3.14 No response.

4.0 ISSUE 3 – THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2.11 Is the distribution of development in Policy DS1 justified by the evidence and were all options for the level and distribution of growth tested through the Sustainability Appraisal? What is the justification for a greater proportion of new dwellings being delivered in the Service Centres compared with the ‘hybrid’ option tested?

- 4.1 A range of scenarios were tested through the SA and considered a spectrum of development patterns across the Borough including an approach focused upon urban areas, a dispersed approach and a new settlement approach.
- 4.2 On the evidence available, we consider that the approach taken to distributing growth in line with Policy DS1 is justified and represents the most suitable and sustainable option for growth in the Borough.
- 4.3 A pure focus on the urban areas, and in particular the three existing SUEs, would give rise to a number of risks including market absorption, delays in delivery and significant upfront costs. It is therefore appropriate to focus growth on the LUA, Loughborough and the Service Centres.
- 4.4 The Council's evidence indicates that the justification for a greater proportion of new dwellings being delivered in the Service Centres, against the hybrid approach, is related to the need to provide new or expanded Primary Schools and a desire to prevent smaller settlements having to accommodate more significant levels of growth. In strategic locations such as Anstey, the delivery of a more strategic scale growth and associated infrastructure is fundamentally supported. This is further underlined by the capacity for growth within the LUA as part of allocations at Glenfield under HA12 and HA13 adjacent to our client's land at Gorse Hill.
- 4.5 The delivery of the scale of growth allocated and potentially further growth to meet the unmet needs arising from Leicester that could be accommodated in this location is reflective of the proximity of the settlement to Leicester and the sustainability credentials associated within this locational relationship.

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?

- 4.6 In respect of the Service Centres, Policy DS1 simply provides a grouped required for all settlements and does not seek to break down the 2,747 (928 commitments and 1,819 allocations) to be delivered in the Service Centres by settlement.
- 4.7 It is noted that within Policy DS2, a total of 1,819 dwellings are allocated within the Service Centres across 16 sites, with the largest being at Anstey (600 dwellings and a new Primary School). This is in excess of the 1,000 dwellings recommended in the SA and as confirmed at paragraph 5.2 of the Development Strategy and Site Selection Paper, is resultant of an overall higher housing level of growth and the need to support provision and growth of a new or expanded Primary schools, including a new school at Anstey.

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

- 4.8 The housing requirement set out in Policy DS1 should be expressed as an absolute minimum. The planned housing need of 17,776 homes, as confirmed at paragraph 61 of the NPPF 2021, is a minimum, not a maximum, and should not be regarded as a restriction to otherwise sustainable development from coming forward.
- 4.9 A Main Modification expressing the housing figures set out in Policy DS1 as minimum numbers is necessary for the Plan to be found sound.

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?

- 4.10 By focusing the majority of development on higher order settlements, with access to a wider range of facilities, the strategy set out in Policy DS1 will effectively minimise the need to travel.
- 4.11 When determining the location for growth in circumstances where a shortfall against the minimum five-year requirement for deliverable housing land supply exists and unmet housing needs are concerned, the strict application of the current development strategy could again act to prevent otherwise sustainable development from coming forward. For instance, the Council's own evidence base recognises the intrinsic relationship and excellent connectivity that exists between Anstey and Leicester. If the development strategy were to be strictly applied, suitable opportunities in the settlement might not come forward if the percentage of growth assigned to the tier had been exceeded, despite the ability to deliver growth that minimises the need to travel with access to a wide spectrum of services and facilities in Leicester.
- 4.12 Accordingly, by way of main modification, additional flexibility should be established within Policy DS1 that would allow for a departure from the rigid application of the spatial strategy in circumstances whereby a sufficient supply of sites cannot be demonstrated. Additionally, and notwithstanding our submissions in respect of a review mechanism, a similar mechanism for allowing a sustainable departure from the development strategy when seeking to identify additional land to meet the unmet needs arising from Leicester should be considered if it is determined to be appropriate to address the issue through a pause in this Plan.
- 4.13 If such identification were to come through a review of the Plan, the Council should undertake a separate exercise which consider the sustainability and impact of development in the settlements best relating to Leicester itself i.e. LUA and Anstey. Any such review should have regard to the 600 dwellings and Primary School to be delivered at Anstey as part of allocation HA43 and provision within the former Green Wedge at Glenfield under HA12 and HA13.

2.15 Is Policy DS1 justified in allowing for development adjacent to settlement limits in circumstances where a five year supply of deliverable housing land cannot be demonstrated? How would proposals be expected to accord with the pattern of development set out in the table in Policy DS1?

- 4.14 We fully support the mechanism established in Policy DS1 that seeks to allow development adjacent to settlement limits in circumstances where a five year supply cannot be demonstrated. We do however support the minor modification to Policy DS1, with it be recommended that the second bullet is amended to read;
- *“Adjoin the Limits to Development **or functionally forms part of the LUA**”.*
- 4.15 Notwithstanding this, we continue to support the inclusion of the land at Gorse Hill within the defined LUA, reflecting the intrinsic physical and functional connections that exist. Indeed this relationship is noted throughout the Council's evidence base which recognises in particular the movement of people between Anstey and Leicester on a daily basis.
- 4.16 Further and with reference to LUA1, we recommend a Modification to the Policy as currently drafted with the addition of the following bullet point supporting the existing content;
- **“Sustains and enhances the provision of services and facilities at Anstey and complements the functional relationship between the LUA and this Service Centre in terms of accessibility and the provision of**

open space”.

2.16 What is the justification for the level of growth being directed to Service Centres given the Sustainability Appraisal’s finding (paragraph 5.1.2) that there is potential for negative effects above 1600 dwellings?

- 4.17 As stated above, the Council consider the need to support new or expanded primary schools, justification for the allocation 1,891 dwellings in the Service Centres. Whilst this reason is not of particular question, the Council should provide additional evidence to the Examination which supports this level of growth and will potentially need to produce an addendum to their SA which focuses on the harms and benefits associated with development in the identified Service Centres. In the case of Anstey, the preparation of any such work, if required, would be a relevant opportunity to consider the settlement’s complementary relationship with the Leicester Urban Area and opportunities for additional growth (noting also the provision of new Primary School facilities at Glenfield).

2.17 Are the site allocations in the Service Centres of Anstey, Barrow upon Soar and Sileby (served by Cossington primary school) as proposed in Policies DS1 and DS3 justified when there is a lack of capacity in their respective primary schools? How would this be addressed?

- 4.18 Policy HA43, land west of Anstey, will provide a site for a new 1 form entry primary school. It will potentially be necessary to consider a trigger for the release of land and financial contributions within an associated planning application so as to ensure swift delivery to meet the needs of existing and future population of Anstey.

2.18 What is the relationship between the Service Centre category in the settlement hierarchy and the District Centre/Local Centre designation? Is there any potential for confusion about the role of the Service Centres?

- 4.19 No response.

2.19 How would a ‘proven local need’ for off street parking in the last bullet of Policy SC1 be identified and is this part of the policy justified?

- 4.20 No response

2.20 How would ‘small scale’ development in bullet two of the policy be defined and is the policy clear and effective in this regard?

- 4.21 No response.

2.21 Why are proposals for new services and facilities required to meet a ‘proven local need’ (bullet four)? What would be the harm in approving new services and facilities without a demonstration of proven local need?

- 4.22 No response,

2.22 Should the policy give more support to development outside the Development Limits on brownfield or underused land?

- 4.23 No response.

2.23 How would ‘small scale new built development’ in bullet two of the policy be defined and is the policy clear and effective in this regard?

- 4.24 No response.

2.24 What is the justification for requiring new services and facilities to meet a ‘proven local need’ (bullet three)? What harms would arise if new services and facilities are approved without a demonstration of proven local need?

4.25 No response.

2.25 Overall, will the Plan's vision and objectives contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and is the development strategy justified by the evidence and positively prepared? Are any main modifications necessary for soundness?

4.26 It will be necessary to ensure that Policy DS1 reflects minimum requirements for the purpose of achieving a sound plan.

