

CHARNWOOD LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION
MATTER 2: VISION, OBJECTIVES, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Inspectors' issues and questions in bold type.

This Hearing Statement is made for and on behalf of Bowbridge Homes (Nanpantan) Ltd. and should be read in conjunction with our representations dated 23rd August 2021 [REF: PSLP/630] submitted pursuant to the consultation by Charnwood Borough Council on its Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan 2021-37 [REF: SD/2] of July/August 2021. This Hearing Statement answers specific questions as set out in the Inspectors' Matters, Issues & Questions ["MIQs"] document issued on 25th April 2022.

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?

Q2.5 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?

The inclusion of Loughborough as the sole settlement within the Urban Centre category of the hierarchy is considered justified and reflective of its role and function.

Q2.10 Are the limits to development based on a robust and credible evidence base and are they appropriately drawn on the Policies Map?

The reasons for excluding certain sites from the limits to development proposed in the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan [REFS: SD/2 and SD/3] which are currently within the limits to development as defined by the adopted Development Plan are considered to be flawed, with particular regard to effects alleged in the Sustainability Appraisal [REFS: SD/5 and SD/6] on biodiversity and nature conservation, land and soils, heritage and accessibility to local facilities.

In particular, and as demonstrated in our representations dated 23rd August 2021 [REF: PSLP/630], which were submitted during the Council's consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan [REF: SD/2], it is illogical for a site currently within limits to development as defined by the adopted Development Plan – and which was previously included as housing allocation HS33 in the Regulation 18 consultation of the Draft Charnwood Local Plan 2019-36 [REFS: SD/20 and SD/20a] (and later assessed as site PSH447 in the Sustainability Appraisal [REFS: SD/5 and SD/6] of May 2021) – to be removed from the limits to development as proposed in the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan, given the site serves no public function, does not constitute a valued landscape, is not defined by any statutory designation, is bound on 3no. of its sides by existing residential development and by established woodland along its other boundary. These characteristics also make the site a logical setting for new housing, whether via allocation or as a windfall site, given its sustainable location and credentials.

Issue 3 – The Development Strategy

Q2.13 Should the figures in the table in Policy DS1 be expressed as minimum numbers?

Notwithstanding the amount of new housing referred to (which is also the subject of our Hearing Statements submitted in respect of Matter 1 (Issue 1), Matter 4 (Issue 1) and Matter 7 (Issue 1), the housing figures as set out in Policy DS1 of the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan [REF: SD/2] should be expressed as minimum number and should not be used as a cap to prevent sustainable development from coming forward.

Q2.15 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?

Policy DS1 is considered to be justified in allowing for development adjacent to settlement limits in such circumstances. The 4no. requirements of the policy in this respect will help to ensure that such development is focused tightly around the most sustainable settlements, whilst not prejudicing the delivery of important infrastructure.

Q2.25 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?

Notwithstanding the amount of new housing referred to (which is the subject of our Hearing Statements submitted in respect of Matter 1 (Issue 1) and Matter 4 (Issue 1)), a Main Modification is required to Policy DS1 of the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan [REF: SD/2] in order to achieve soundness, such that it expresses its housing figures as a minimum.