



The countryside charity
Leicestershire

Charity Number: 1164985

CHARNWOOD LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Matter 3: Climate Change and the Natural and Built Environment

Submission from CPRE Leicestershire

June 2022

Representation Number: 340

Issue 1 - Whether the policies relating to climate change and the natural and built environment, are positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy

Policy CC5 – Sustainable Transport

Question 3.12

Will the policy facilitate a reduction in the need to travel and support alternatives to the use of private motorised transport including walking, cycling and public transport?

For reasons set out in this submission, we do not see this policy facilitating the changes referred to in the question to any significant extent.

CPRE Leicestershire is supportive of the aim of Policy CC5 to minimise the need to travel and support a shift of travel by private car to walking, cycling and public transport. However we cannot see it delivering, except possibly in most marginal ways, changes in travel patterns sufficient to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate climate change.

Experience with very similar policies in the past have in practice carried little weight and have been ineffective. Our concern is that CC5 as drafted does not demonstrate the commitment needed to achieve a reduction in the need to travel, especially by car. We want to see the policy strengthened and conclude the submission by putting forward an amendment to this policy.

The Policy Approach

Policy CC5 sets out various requirements. These include excellent accessibility to key facilities by walking, cycling and public transport; safe and attractive walking and cycling routes; where possible, new and enhanced bus routes; well-designed sustainable transport infrastructure and contributions to the infrastructure to improve public transport, especially for buses.

A key element of the policy is to support development which is informed by a robust transport assessment and travel plan which considers sustainable travel options at the outset so that they form an integral part of the development.

CC5 is the latest version of policy on Sustainable Transport within Charnwood Local Plans. Previous and similar policies can be found in the 2004 Charnwood Local Plan (Policy TR/5) and in the 2011- 2028 Core Strategy (Policy CS17). In essence, the same basic requirements are encompassed in these policies. (*Examination References*¹)

Unlike CC5, the 2011—2028 Core Strategy Policy CS17 set a target to “achieve a 6% shift from travel by private car to walking, cycling and public transport” relating to requirements similar to those now included in CC5. The Adopted Local Plan does not mention how the 6% shift across the Borough from private car would be monitored or how a greater, unspecified, shift would be achieved or monitored from the major developments.

All Annual Monitoring Reports including the current one (SD/17) provide no information on the extent of any shift as a result of Policy CS17 and the indicators couldn't do that anyway.

We suspect that the dropping of a target in CC5 indicates that the predecessor policies have not delivered developments in line with the requirements set out in them. Unless there is a change in the way development is planned and implemented in practice, this will continue with CC5. A plan that cannot be monitored and has no meaningful targets is not at all constructive.

Despite the incorporation of these policies into recent Charnwood Local Plans, traffic has continued to grow significantly and alternatives have not been prioritised. Frequent mentions of public transport, walking and cycling throughout the Plan will not compensate for allocating sites in locations where most people will choose to travel by car.

Past and Current Experience

In response to the question, we would argue that past and current experience suggests that prioritising measures that will deliver a significant reduction in the need to travel, support

¹ CPRE Matter 3 Charnwood 2004 Local Plan Policy TR5 and CPRE Matter 3 Charnwood Local Plan 2011 2028 Policy CS17

for sustainable transport or mitigation climate change through Policy CC5 will not be successful.

Paragraph 104 of the NPPF states that transport issues “should be considered from the earliest stages of plan making and development proposals” so that, among other considerations, the environmental impacts of traffic and infrastructure are taken into account to avoid and mitigate adverse effects and seek environmental gains. Paragraph 105 of the NPPF refers to managing patterns of growth to support these objectives which help to reduce congestion and emissions. In paragraph 106 it refers to protecting routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and to the provision of attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks.

Policy CC5 states that it will support development which is informed by a robust transport assessment and travel plan which considers sustainable travel options at the outset so that they form an integral part of the development.

However, there is little sign that this is happening. This is evident in the selection of sites where the ability to deliver sustainable transport options has in many cases been given very little weight. Consequently sites have been selected where effective sustainable transport options are unlikely to be deliverable and other sites where sustainable transport could be achieved have not been taken up.

The experience in relation to the Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE) point to the difficulties in incorporating the type of measures set out in CC5 into new developments. Over 10 years ago the size and location of the three SUEs in Charnwood was touted as a way of reducing the need to travel. However, it is evident that all the S106 agreements have prioritised highway capacity and access over public transport, walking and cycling. Very few changes were made to the original developers' masterplans. The Transport Appraisals and Assessments are voluminous and appear to have raised few concerns other than in relation to dealing with the traffic generated in their vicinity, but not elsewhere.

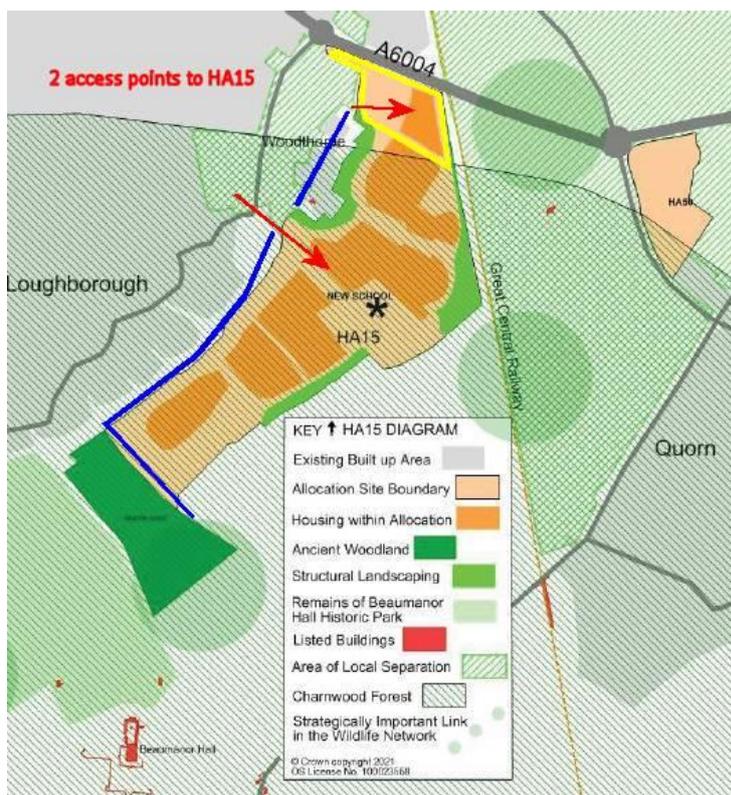
The sites are far from ideal in terms of providing good bus penetration or services and it is difficult to serve the whole development without compromising their routing and operation. Some parts of the sites do not meet the requirement to be within 400m of a bus stop. It is not clear whether proposed bus services will be viable. If they are not, there is no guarantee they will continue. At a time, when bus services generally are being reduced or cut, the introduction of new services to new developments is likely to be problematic regardless of what CC5 seeks to achieve.

Issues surrounding the current planning application P/21/0550/2, which is now the subject of an appeal to PINS, for a development of up to 120 new dwellings with access from Main Street, Woodthorpe, Loughborough highlights some of the potential difficulties in implementing CC5. It is a proposal for development of part of site HA15 in the Plan which is

located on the southern edge of Loughborough. Its relationship to wider HA15 site illustrates the difficulties of implementing the requirements of CC5 and the ineffectiveness of current policy to deliver sustainable transport.

This is a site, like HA16 and HA17, next to Loughborough where it ought to be much easier to promote and achieve sustainable transport than most of the sites in the Plan. It is relevant that a large part of the recent Grange Park development to the northwest of HA15 is not served by buses.

Discussions between the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Local Housing Authority (LHA) and the applicant show no commitment to reduce car dependency and promote genuine choice of transport modes as required by NPPF 105. The focus of discussions between the LHA and the LPA has concentrated on highway works in the immediate vicinity of the site. There has been no consideration of how cycling or walking could be made attractive. Approval of the Woodthorpe site as proposed would also compromise the provision of public transport to the rest of site HA15.



Concept Plan for HA15 showing the Woodthorpe site

Yellow - Woodthorpe site
 Red - Site access points
 Blue - Barrier to access

Barriers along the boundary and the shape of HA15 already makes it a difficult site to serve by public transport but this is not mentioned in Policy DS3(HA15). This is a common problem and there is no masterplan for HA15 or the adjoining areas. Access should have been considered at the outset. If it is difficult to achieve the aims of CC5 in areas close to existing urban areas such as Loughborough or settlements on the edge of Leicester, it will be much

more difficult to achieve them for developments which are located away from main public transport routes and away from full range of services and facilities.

The backdrop to all this is likely to be a continuation of significant levels of car ownership across much of Charnwood, high levels of car journey to work and low levels of bus usage. The 2021 Census will almost certainly confirm an increase in car ownership and the use of cars since the 2011 Census. Bus use has showed a steady decline and the final package of government pandemic support is due to end in October.

Given the journeys most people want to make public transport is never going to be useful or attractive for most journeys in Charnwood. This also has to be considered in the context of viability and current bus legislation which is not conducive to the optimisation of services or fares. As such bus use is likely to remain very low or decline. If there is an increase it will be modest.

It is also evident from the Infrastructure Schedule that most of the funding being sought for transport infrastructure is seeking to increase the capacity of the highway network and facilitate an increase in car use. It shows around 85% of the £85 million total for local transport measures is allocated for roads with only 12% for walking and cycling. The Government has indicated it wants to see a greater commitment to walking and cycling and this could be effective for many journeys with the right approach; 58% of car journeys are under 5 miles.

Amending CC5

All this makes delivering the elements set out in CC5 challenging. A change of attitude is required to ensuring that developments meet the requirements set out in CC5 and that monitoring is effective.

In its *Sustainability Appraisal (SD/5)* (p. 148) AECOM recommended that Charnwood should be more ambitious regarding climate change mitigation. In particular, it recommended: “*Set more ambitious standards and ‘require’ improvements in sustainability credentials of new development, rather than ‘encouraging’*”. Charnwood rejected this approach but in CPRE’s view, if change is to be delivered, then improvements must be ‘required’ rather than just ‘encouraged’.

CC5 is in a chapter of the Plan related to Climate Change. In our view, Policy CC5 needs strengthening. It is too permissive to deliver any mitigation of climate change.

The danger with the policy as drafted is that in effect, all it requires developers to do is to provide some access by public transport, walking and cycling to some key services and to put in place a Transport Plan which very weakly ‘considers’ sustainable transport options. This still allows developments which are highly car dependent to go ahead provided they include some modest ameliorations at least in the short term. For example, this has

included provision subsidised bus services initially subsidised which then prove unviable and are cancelled or cycling and walking facilities that are not designed to make them attractive.

In line with our objection to DS1 in relation to climate change CC5 needs to put more onus on developers to actually demonstrate that their proposals will lead to a reduction in car dependency and assist in a reduction in carbon emissions with an effective review process.

We have provided amendments to the text of CC5 to address those issues as well as the wider climate issue. Our proposal is to add a new bullet point as the first one in the Policy and additional amendments highlighted in bold typeface.

“We will support sustainable patterns of development which will minimise the need to travel and seek to support a shift from travel by private car to walking, cycling and public transport.

*We will **only** support major development which can demonstrate it:*

- ***is carbon costed and can demonstrate that its transport needs will contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions in line with a target to reduce emissions across Charnwood by XX in line with policy DS1;***
- *is **accompanied** by a robust transport assessment and travel plan which **genuinely prioritises** sustainable travel options at the outset so that they form an integral part of the development;*
- ***minimises the need to travel, in particular reducing the reliance on the private car, while providing excellent accessibility to key facilities and services by walking, cycling and public transport, including for people with restricted mobility;***
- *provides well-lit, safe and attractive walking and cycling routes and secure cycle shelters;*
- *secures ~~where possible~~, new and enhanced bus services, **with evidence that they will be viable in the long term or provides a guaranteed commitment to their continuation**, including new bus stops, where development, is more than a 400m walk from an existing bus stop;*
- *ensures sustainable transport infrastructure is well designed, integrated with the Green Infrastructure and contributes towards making high quality places;*
- *contributes to the infrastructure required to improve the speed, reliability and attractiveness of public transport including, where appropriate, bus gates, bus priority measures and bus links; and*
- *reduces, as far as possible, the negative impacts on air quality in accordance with policy EV11.”*

Question 3.13

How will ‘excellent accessibility’ to key facilities by walking, cycling and public transport referred to in the policy be defined?

At present, the policy is totally aspirational. For the reasons set out throughout our response there is no prospect whatsoever of achieving excellent accessibility by these

modes on the scale needed with the Plan as drafted. We await the Council's response to this question.

Policy DS5 – Design

Question 3.36

Overall, does the Plan set out a positively prepared strategy to address the causes of and mitigate the impact of climate change and to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment? Are any main modifications necessary for soundness?

While different policies across the Plan refer to or set out policies related to directly or indirectly to the impact of climate change and the natural and built environment, the Plan lacks a clear overall statement of how these knit together into a coherent strategy.

We face both a climate crisis and a nature and biodiversity crisis. The design and construction of developments and Policy DS5 should ensure effective action is taken to tackle these crises.

Focusing specifically on Policy DS5, we note that new developments will be required to “reduce their impacts upon, and be resilient to, the effects of climate change in accordance with Policy CC4.” However, while climate change impacts are mentioned in DS5, biodiversity impact is not.

If developments are to be of high quality and to achieve biodiversity gain as required by Policy EV6, then they need to be designed with nature in mind and demonstrate how their design benefits nature as well as people.

A reference to biodiversity and nature is absent from the list of design requirements for developments set out in DS5 and should be added to the list. Policy EV6 indicates that development proposals should be accompanied by an ecological survey....and demonstrate how they have been designed to minimise ecological impact and provide 10% net gain on site... This requires a positive approach to benefiting nature where possible as well as people.

Therefore in DS5, an additional bullet point should be added to the list requiring new developments to “reduce adverse impact on nature and biodiversity and achieve biodiversity gain in accordance with Policy EV6”.

Roads and Highway Improvements to be provided in Association with New Development

7.43 POLICY TR/4

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would prejudice the following road and highway improvements which are required in association with specific allocations for development:

- i) a local distributor road from a new junction north of No. 148 Cotes Road to Willow Way, Barrow upon Soar;
- ii) a local distributor road routed to the south of Dishley Pool between Bishop Meadow Road, Loughborough and the north of Dishley Grange, Hathern which allows for an independent access to the Astra Charnwood site routed to the north of Dishley Pool;
- iii) the diversion and re-alignment of the A6 to provide a dual carriageway section of road to the north-west of Dishley Grange, Hathern to include a roundabout link to the new distributor road;
- iv) a local distributor road between Meadow Lane and Nottingham Road, Loughborough.

(See also in particular Policies H/1(b)[re i]), E/5(c)[re ii) and iii)] and E/10 [re iv)]

7.44 None of the schemes listed in this policy is provided in any programme for public investment but each is required in association with specific proposals for development advanced elsewhere in this local plan. It is expected that the Borough Council will seek to negotiate reasonably related contributions from developers to fund these improvements, secured through planning agreements and in accordance with the rules governing planning obligations.

7.45 The new local distributor road at Barrow upon Soar (item i)) is required to service a new housing development (H/1(b) applies). The proposed employment area at Dishley Grange, Hathern will require provision of a new distributor road (item ii)) and diversion and re-alignment of the A6 (item iii)) to provide access. Design of a new distributor road must allow for the implementation of an independent access road to the AstraZeneca site. The independent access road will need to be designed to minimise impact on the environment in terms of noise and visual intrusion and to safeguard wildlife and ecological interest in the vicinity of Dishley Pool.

Transport Standards for New Development

7.46 POLICY TR/5

Planning permission will be granted for development which is, or forms part of a larger scheme, for 25 or more dwellings, in excess of 1 hectare (2.5 acres) of employment land, or other proposals likely to function as a major trip generator where the development:

- i) is in an urban location well served, or capable of being well served, by non-car modes and having short walking, cycling and public transport links to town and district centres or existing rail stations;
- ii) ensures that the needs of buses are met by provision of a road layout providing maximum penetration of the development by bus services with all parts of the site falling within approximately 400 metres of a potential bus route, with bus-shelters, bus lay-bys and information points provided at main stops;
- iii) ensures the needs and safety of pedestrians are met in terms of access to the site and the inclusion of an integrated public footpath system which avoids roads wherever possible and provides pedestrian friendly links between the main land uses within the site, linkages with the established network outside the site, and safe road crossings where needed;

- iv) ensures that the needs and safety of cyclists are met in terms of access to the site and the inclusion of special features such as cycleways, cycle lanes, safe cycle crossings and direct links between land uses, and between the site and adjoining cycleway provision;
- v) makes adequate provision for vehicular access and circulation, highway design and layout and servicing arrangements. In approving detailed housing layouts the Borough Council will expect schemes to utilise the lowest order of road compatible with the scale of development to be served.

7.47 This policy provides guidance on the road layout, public transport provision, footways and cycle access to be sought in new developments. It is complementary to sustainability and transport choice objectives, and is framed to ensure satisfactory access for all travel modes, and avoid over-dominance by provision for road traffic. Detailed guidance is contained in the 'Highway Requirements for Development' prepared by Leicestershire County Council and Borough Council's 'Supplementary Planning Guidance'. Consultations on planning applications will be undertaken with the Highway Authority prior to their determination.

Traffic Generation from New Development

7.48 POLICY TR/6

Planning permission will not be granted for development on non-designated sites where the impact of traffic generated by an individual proposal or the cumulative impact together with other committed and allocated development in the locality would:

- i) result in unsafe and unsatisfactory operation of the highway system; or
- ii) have a significant adverse impact on the environment.

Unless measures are proposed to overcome any harmful effects. Where such measures involve improvements to the transport system they will need to be environmentally acceptable, minimise land take and have a reasonable design life.

In all cases measures should help to reduce car use to and from development and contribute to genuine and effective transport choice facilities through the encouragement of walking, cycling and the use of public transport for occupiers jointly or separately.

7.49 New development must be acceptable in terms of its impact on the existing highway network. Solutions to identified problems will be expected to improve the overall transport system rather than merely pursue road-based solutions. Development proposals should ensure that the impact of traffic generated, access arrangements, related road schemes and improvements, and other transport infrastructure safeguards the environment. Proposals should not have a damaging impact on the character and appearance of a locality. Features such as country lanes, areas of historic, ecological or other interest should be safeguarded. Living and working conditions should be safeguarded from the effects of visual intrusion, noise, emissions and other disturbance.

7.50 Developments will not be permitted which would add unacceptably to congestion and delay, generate additional on-street car parking and manoeuvring, or damage local amenities particularly in residential areas. Sites which have good access to existing public transport systems will usually be favoured for new developments. In all cases the potential effects of traffic generation on road safety will need to be assessed and the adopted highway standards met in relation to matters such as access, visibility and junction design taken fully into account.

7.51 Traffic Impact Assessments will be required for any proposals for development which would in part, or in total, generate:

- over 250 vehicle movements per day or 50 vehicle movements in the peak hour; or
- traffic exceeding 10 percent of the traffic flows on the adjoining highway, or 5 percent where traffic congestion exists or will exist; or



Charnwood Local Plan 2011 to 2028

Core Strategy

Adopted 9th November 2015

- 8.15 We want to improve the quality and frequency of bus and rail passenger services and maximise opportunities for freight movement by rail.
- 8.16 We will work with our partners to make sure that these developments provide smarter travel choices. We will also work with our partners, including Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, Network Rail and local service providers and user groups to improve access to our bus network and railway stations.

Policy CS 17

Sustainable Travel

By 2028, we will seek to achieve a 6% shift from travel by private car to walking, cycling and public transport by:

- requiring new major developments to provide walking, cycling and public transport access to key facilities and services;
- requiring new major developments to provide safe and well-lit streets and routes for walking and cycling that are integrated with the wider green infrastructure network.
- securing new and enhanced bus services from major developments and new bus stops where new development is more than 400 metres walk from an existing bus stop;
- securing contributions from our sustainable urban extensions towards improvements to public transport corridors into Leicester City and Loughborough in accordance with Policy CS19, CS20 and CS22; and
- working with our partners to maximise opportunities for freight movement by rail.

We will do this by:

- assessing the impact of major developments through Transport Assessments and Travel Plans; and
- working with our partners, including Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council, to secure funding for and delivery of sustainable transport improvements.