

Charnwood Local Plan Examination Hearing Sessions 2023.

Matters, Issues and Questions.

Statement on Behalf of Redrow Homes, Davidsons
Developments and the Helen Jean Cope Charity (PSLP 598).

Matter 4: Assessment of Housing Need, The Housing
Requirement and Mix and Choice of Housing

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Matter 4: Assessment of Housing Need, the Housing Requirement and Mix and Choice of Housing

Issue 1 – Is the assessment of housing need and the housing requirement positively prepared, justified by the evidence and consistent with national policy?

Supplementary Questions

1. In the light of the Inspectors’ findings (Exam 55) that the minimum local housing need for Charnwood is 1,189 dwellings per year, should the housing requirement in Policy DS1 of 1,111 dwellings per year be increased to 1,189 to ensure that the Plan has been positively prepared? Is there any justification for a lower or higher figure?

2. Pending any changes to the housing requirement in Policy DS1 to accommodate Charnwood’s apportionment of Leicester’s unmet housing need, is there a sufficient buffer between the minimum housing requirement in Policy DS1 and the overall supply during the Plan period to ensure that there is a reasonable prospect of the housing requirement being met? In the event that the supply needs to be increased to secure an appropriate buffer, what sources of supply would help to deliver this? Are any new site allocations likely to be required? If so, what would be the process and likely timescales for identifying sites?

1.1. In our original submission on Matter 4, we made the case for a flexibility allowance of 15% and to extend the plan period by 1 year to 2038. Given the delays in the examination process we consider that the plan period should now be extended by 2 years to 2039. Following the Matter 10 sessions and the Inspectors’ letter to the Council, the housing requirement should be increased to 1,189 dwellings a year. There is no justification for considering a lower figure.

1.2. In terms of a buffer, we remain of the view that the plan needs to include a flexibility allowance of at least 15%. If the plan period is extended by two years and a flexibility allowance of 15% applied, this would mean the following additional housing requirement as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Additional Housing Provision Required

Housing Provision 2021-2039	Dwellings
Local Housing Need 1,189 dwellings pa x 18 yrs	21,402
Including 15% flexibility allowance	24,606
Housing Provision (Exam 11 trajectory with SUE completions extended by 2 years)	20,089
Additional provision required	4,517

- 1.3. It will not be possible for the Council to make sufficient provision to meet this shortfall through increasing capacity on existing allocations. In any event, we would question whether such an approach is appropriate or deliverable for certain allocated sites. We reserve our position to comment further on the Council's proposed approach to dealing with any shortfalls when the information becomes available and may wish to comment further on any assumptions on delivering increased numbers on proposed allocations.
- 1.4. New allocations will be required, and these can be readily identified through the submissions made by interested parties, including our clients, throughout the plan preparation process. Such sites have been subject to sustainability assessment and, in the case of land south of Watermead Way, Loughborough, the potential for the site to deliver housing has been the subject of a detailed assessment supported by a suite of technical reports to demonstrate the suitability and deliverability of the proposals. This includes an updated Promotional Document that is included with our submissions on the MIQs and has also recently been submitted to the Council as a formal pre-application request.
- 1.5. Expanding the existing allocations at South West Loughborough to include the land south of Watermead Way presents a real opportunity to properly plan strategically for growth at Loughborough – the most sustainable urban centre in the borough. This comprehensive approach would bring a number of benefits and would address the current shortcomings of the piecemeal approach adopted in the Submission Draft Plan. These benefits include:
 - The expansion of the Charnwood Forest Regional Park through a Loughborough Gateway in accordance with Policy EV4;
 - Creation of a new Charnwood Forest Gateway hub;
 - A net gain in biodiversity and a biodiversity bank for the wider area;
 - New wildflower meadow returning 46 ha of land from arable fields enhancing biodiversity;
 - Creation of 58 ha of publicly accessible open space;
 - Provision of new recreational cycle routes;
 - Potential to create a logical and feasible extension to the 4 existing bus services through the site;
 - Up to 600 new homes delivered with a unique National Forest identity.
- 1.6. The Promotional Document confirms the deliverability of the scheme with one committed landowner and two well respected local housebuilders working collaboratively to bring the site forward.

In our submissions on other Matters Issues and Questions we have noted that Leicestershire County Council has resolved to request that the Borough Council give due consideration to the inclusion of new sites to accommodate additional housing as this can aid the delivery of necessary supporting infrastructure and services (LCC Report to Cabinet 23rd September 2022). The inclusion of land south of Watermead Way as part of a South West Loughborough Strategic Allocation is a clear example of the benefits of including new sites to help secure supporting infrastructure and significant biodiversity benefits.

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