

## **Charnwood Local Plan Examination**

### **Hearing Statement on behalf of Loughborough University**

#### **MATTER 5 – EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT AND TOWN CENTRES**

June 2022

**Report Title:** Charnwood Local Plan Examination – Hearing Statement – Matter 5

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**For and on behalf of Avison Young (UK) Limited**

## **MATTER 5 – EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT AND TOWN CENTRES**

### **Issue 1 – Whether the assessment of the need for the employment and the employment floorspace are soundly based**

#### **Question 5.4 – should the Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park accommodate more general office and industrial uses as suggested by the Employment Land Review?**

- 1.1 The PBA Employment Land Review (ELR) 2018 recognises the unique role that LUSEP plays and that its inherent value lies in the high number of jobs it creates in the knowledge-based sector. The specialist nature of the LUSEP allocation and the role it plays in the wider Enterprise Zone means that the site serves a broader regional and national role. As a consequence, LUSEP has previously been excluded from the normal predictive models for employment land forecasting in the Borough. The ELR confirms as much.
- 1.2 The ELR goes on to suggest that PBAs market assessment (which was outside the scope of ELR it was instructed to undertake) identifies a lack of growth on or spin off property in the 'normal market' could hinder the full potential of LUSEP. It goes on to say that most office parks and industrial estates in Loughborough are full at the moment (Note - it would be helpful to understand whether this is still the case post Covid – if it isn't then this is a moot point) and that many of these sites are home to many firms who don't appear to need or want space on a dedicated site but wish to locate in the general area. It recommends therefore that consideration be given to whether the EZ/LUSEP could accommodate this more general need for self-contained industrial and office premises.
- 1.3 In the light of the above, the simple response to the question of whether more general office and industrial uses as suggested by the ELR has to be no. From the University's perspective it is vital that the development of LUSEP is tightly controlled so as to ensure that all occupiers operate within the high technology or R&D sectors and have appropriate links with the university and each other. Policy LUC3 is worded in such a way that it encourages the possibility of a wide range of appropriate high value uses and development within LUSEP.
- 1.4 In addition, the University as a landowner, is able to exert a significant degree of control over the nature of the business uses that can be based at LUSEP through the application of its own LUSEP Campus Partner Policy. This stipulates that those businesses / enterprises that occupy buildings on LUSEP will be required to be engaged in knowledge sharing activities and will be prepared to engage in discussions about joint partnerships and research initiatives. This Policy has been in place for many years now and it is helped LUSEP to grow and provide a home for a community of like minded businesses. This is an enormous competitive commercial advantage for the site. There is also an element of self-selection in the occupiers who are attracted to the site – businesses are attracted by a certain culture and environment and then themselves contribute to reinforcing and sustaining that same culture.
- 1.5 Opening up LUSEP to operators within the general office and industrial sectors would be contrary to the provisions of the NPPF (paragraph 83) and Policy LUC3. Moreover, it would dilute the distinctive nature of LUSEP, thereby disadvantaging the University commercially.

#### **Question 5.9 – will LUC3 be effective in bringing the Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park forward for business development. Are the development requirements comprehensive, including the effect on landscape character, open space and biodiversity?**

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#### **Avison Young**

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- 2.1 In our view Policy LUC3 provides an effective framework to guide the delivery of an expanded LUSEP. It should be noted that this policy replicates the provisions of previous Local Plan / Core Strategy policies for LUSEP, which have themselves provided a positive planning policy framework that has helped the University bring forward development on the first two phases of LUSEP over the course of the last 30 or so years. This in itself demonstrates that Policy LUC3 is effective in bringing forward science park development in this location.
- 2.2 From the University's perspective, LUC3 is well evidenced and supports the corporate objectives of the University, and its partners including Charnwood Borough Council, Leicestershire County Council and the LLEP. This is reflected by the site's inclusion in the Leicester Science and Innovation Enterprise Zone.
- 2.3 As with previous policies concerning LUSEP, the University has worked with Officers of the Borough Council and its consultees to ensure that the evidence underpinning the site allocation is robust and that the provisions of the policy appropriately control the type and nature of uses that can take place on the site, whilst ensuring its development does not give rise to any landscape or environmental harm.
- 2.4 The University has signed a Statement of Common Ground with the Borough Council which confirms that it is its intention to bring LUSEP forward for science park development, that the allocation of the site for an extended LUSEP is therefore appropriate and justified and to this end, Policy LUC3 is sound.

# Contact details

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