

Charnwood Local Plan Examination. Matters, Issues and Questions.

Statement on Behalf of Taylor Wimpey Limited (PSLP 595).

Matter 6 – Urban Area Policies, Site Selection, Sustainable
Urban Extensions and Housing Site Allocations

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Matter 6 – Urban Area Policies, Site Selection, Sustainable Urban Extensions and Housing Site Allocations

Issue 1 – Whether the Urban Area Policies are justified and will be effective in meeting development needs?

Policy LUA1 – Leicester Urban Area

- 1.1. Policy LUA1 sets out the overall strategy of the plan to support the Leicester Urban Area in its role as the central economic, social and cultural focus of the County, supporting development that delivers the housing and employment allocations as set out in Policy DS3, which includes site HA3, north of Barkby Road Syston to provide 195 dwellings.
- 1.2. Table 4 to the Plan sets out the settlement hierarchy with Birstall, Syston and Thurmaston identified as urban settlements having a significant range and choice of services and facilities that meet the day to day needs of residents and physically or functionally form part of the wider Leicester Urban Area. Policy DS1 sets out the development strategy with some 7,358 homes directed towards the Leicester Urban Area (Birstall, Syston and Thurmaston) – some 38% of the proposed housing development over the plan period.
- 1.3. The Charnwood Settlement Hierarchy Assessment, 2020 (EB-DS-3) explains why Syston has been identified as one of the Urban Settlements forming part of the Leicester Urban Area. Paragraphs 9.5–9.8 of the report explain that Syston has a population of more than 10,000 and therefore falls within the definition of an urban area, provides all the audited facilities including excellent connections to Leicester and secondary school, with strong links in terms of travel to work patterns with 37% of the economically active working in Leicester. This confirms the sustainability of Syston and its suitability for inclusion as an Urban Centre in the settlement hierarchy.

Issue 2 – The Site Selection Process

- 1.4. The Sustainability Appraisal by AECOM (May 2021) (SD/5) sets out a robust assessment of housing site options for Syston. The reasons for selecting the land north of Barkby Road, Syston (HA3) are clearly set out and justified.
- 1.5. The proposed allocation north of Barkby Road, Syston is assessed under site reference PSH441. The assessment concludes that the site performs generally well in environmental terms but has relatively poor access to schools and a convenience store. In our response on the Regulation 19 consultation, we noted that the Merton Primary School is the nearest current primary school located on Cherry Drive, some 500–700 metres from the site entrance. It should also be noted that Taylor Wimpey are the promoters of the large-scale development to the south of Barkby Road (HA1) which includes provision for a new two form entry primary school. The Key Diagram for HA1 shows that the new primary school would be well located in relation to the proposed development north of Barkby Road.

- 1.6. In terms of access to convenience stores, Aldi and Tesco's on Melton Road are some 1.6 km from the site.

Issue 4 – Housing Allocations – Question 6.16

- 1.7. In relation to Matters Question 6.16, the scale of housing for the site reflects the detailed masterplanning undertaken for the site through the preparation of two outline planning applications. It therefore accurately reflects the capacity of the site. The capacity for the site was indicated as 157 dwellings in the Regulation 18 Draft version of the plan but was increased to reflect the detailed work on site capacity undertaken by our clients.
- 1.8. The allocation of the land to the north of Barkby Road is wholly consistent with the plan's strategy seeking to focus development in the identified Urban Centres forming part of the Leicester Urban Area.

Likely Impacts

- 1.9. The potential impacts of the development have been considered by the Council's officers in preparing the plan. The site has also been subject to an outline planning application submitted in July 2018 (ref P/18/1366/2) and subsequently withdrawn. A new application (ref P/21/2639) was submitted in February 2022 with a decision pending. Both applications are supported by a full suite of technical documents demonstrating the suitability of the site for development.
- 1.10. Lying to the north of Barkby Road the site does not form part of an existing area of Green Wedge or Local Separation. The site is well related to the existing settlement form, representing a logical extension to existing residential development that has taken place along Barkby Road. The proposal does not extend development beyond Queniborough Road and the masterplan proposals prepared to support the current planning application includes planting on the eastern boundary of the development to screen views from the wider landscape.
- 1.11. In support of the current planning application, EDP prepared an Ecological Appraisal of the site that concludes that by virtue of the relatively limited constraint posed by the sites habitats and protected species interest, coupled with mitigation measures proposed, the site is capable of compliance with relevant planning policies for the conservation of the natural environment. A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has identified the scope to provide a net gain of 2.49 units (15%) and 4.33 linear units (57%).
- 1.12. The existing public right of way through the site is to be retained as part of the masterplanning proposals for the site.
- 1.13. A detailed agricultural land quality assessment by ADAS in support of the application confirms that site consists of some 50% grade 2 (4.2 ha) and 50% grade 3b agricultural land. The Sustainability Appraisal for the Local Plan identified the whole 8. Ha of the site as Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land and recorded this loss as a neutral effect. The detailed survey results reduce the loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land to some 4.2 ha.

- 1.14. An Archaeological and Heritage Assessment by EDP concludes that the proposals will not result in an adverse impact on, or harm to, or loss of significance from any of the identified designated heritage assets and will result in no adverse effects to the physical fabric or setting of listed buildings.
- 1.15. In terms of infrastructure matters, the planning application is supported by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan prepared by DTA Transport Planning Consultants. This demonstrates that the site can come forward in a manner consistent with the NPPF without the need for wider strategic transport mitigation or any significant local mitigation which cannot be dealt with through the normal development management process. This is consistent with the position agreed with the County Council in respect of a previous application on the site. Following comments received from the Highway Authority on the current planning application, work is currently being undertaken to corroborate traffic counts to reflect changes that may have resulted as a result of COVID and to investigate opportunities for public transport improvements pending wider public transport improvements that will be associated with the wider development proposals in the area. The proposed access to the site takes account of the access requirements for the land to the south of Barkby Road. Necessary contributions to health, education and open space provision will be addressed through appropriate section 106 contributions. As noted above, the Local Plan policy requires contributions towards the new primary school to be provided on the wider development to the south of Barkby Road (HA1).
- 1.16. The application for the site is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment by Travis Baker. This includes a detailed surface water management strategy for the site informed by a comprehensive hydraulic modelling exercise on the existing watercourse. To address potential issues associated with existing surface water flooding, site levels are proposed to be elevated in parts along with the provision of low lying areas for flood storage compensation, allowing areas of open space and landscaped areas in the site to flood in a controlled manner. The surface water management strategy will ensure that emergency access will be available from the proposed site access at all times and a second point of access is not required. The upgraded and improved public footpath through the site also provides for a secondary point of pedestrian access east and west from the site. This detailed work on a surface water drainage strategy for the site as part of the current planning application demonstrates that the reference to the provision of two points of access to the site at paragraph 2.68 of the Submission Draft Plan is not justified or required.
- 1.17. The Council's evidence supporting the proposed allocation of the land north of Barkby Road confirms that it is a suitable site for allocation that would not result in any unacceptable impacts. The detailed technical work undertaken on behalf of Taylor Wimpey to support the outline application confirms this conclusion.



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