

North West Leicestershire Local Plan Partial Review

STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND between

- **Blaby District Council**
- **Charnwood Borough Council**
- **Harborough District Council**
- **Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council**
 - **Leicester City Council**
 - **Leicestershire County Council**
 - **Melton Borough Council**
- **North West Leicestershire District Council**
- **Oadby & Wigston Borough Council**

Xx xxx 2019

1 Introduction

1.1 The North West Leicestershire Local Plan was adopted in November 2017. It sets out a strategy for delivering the homes, jobs and infrastructure needed in the district between 2011 and 2031. The Council committed to start a review of the plan within three months of the date of adoption.

1.2 There are two main reasons why an immediate review was required:

- A shortage of employment land up to 2031 compared to what is needed (as identified in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment, or HEDNA)
- The possible need to accommodate additional housing arising from unmet needs in Leicester city.

1.3 The review commenced in February 2018. It was the district council's intention that the review would be a 'partial review' to address those issues above. It was also the intention, as required by Policy S1 of the adopted Local Plan, to submit the review for Examination within two years of commencing it.

1.4 Through the granting of a number of planning permissions, the district council is making good progress towards addressing the shortage of employment land. However, there remains a lack of sufficient clarity regarding the issue of unmet housing need in Leicester City and how such need would be redistributed amongst the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities. In addition, there have been significant changes in circumstances since the Local Plan was adopted, including a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and a new approach to identifying housing requirements coupled with uncertainty regarding nationally produced household projections.

1.5 Due to the above Submission within two years is no longer feasible. North West Leicestershire District Council is now proposing that the Partial Review will be limited to a review of Policy S1 only, but that a Substantive Review will also be undertaken to address not only the issues outlined above, but also to address other matters arising from changes in national policies. The Substantive Review will cover a longer period than the adopted Local Plan, going to at least 2036 but more likely later. The work undertaken on the Partial Review to date will feed in to the Substantive Review

1.6 This SOCG only relates to the Partial Review. There will be a separate SOCG in respect of the Substantive Review.

2 What is the purpose of a Statement of Common Ground?

2.1 The Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places a duty on local planning authorities and other bodies to co-operate with each other to address strategic issues relevant to their areas. The duty requires ongoing constructive engagement on the preparation of development plan documents and other activities in relation to the sustainable development and use of land.

2.2 A Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) is a written record to demonstrate how the duty to co-operate has been met as part of the plan making process.

2.3 This SOCG has been prepared in relation to the North West Leicestershire Local Plan Partial Review.

3 What administrative areas are covered by this SOCG?

- 3.1 Whilst the Local Plan Partial Review only relates to the administrative area of North West Leicestershire, the SOCG refers to matters of strategic importance which affect all of Leicester and Leicestershire.
- 3.2 There is a wide range of evidence, as set out in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) (2017) to show that Leicester and Leicestershire operates as both a Housing Market Area (HMA) and Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA). The HEDNA concluded that *“The study area is a self-contained area where the majority of the workforce works and live within its administrative boundaries”*¹
- 3.3 The map at Appendix xx shows the geographic extent of the area covered by the SOCG.

4 Which plan-making authorities are party to this Statement of Common Ground?

- 4.1 The SOCG has been prepared by North West Leicestershire District Council and agreed jointly by the following authorities:
- Blaby District Council
 - Charnwood Borough Council
 - Harborough District Council
 - Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
 - Leicester City Council
 - Leicestershire County Council
 - Melton Borough Council
 - North West Leicestershire District Council
 - Oadby & Wigston Borough Council

5 What are the governance arrangements for the cooperation process?

- 5.1 There is a strong history of joint working and co-operation amongst the authorities, including the joint preparation and agreement of a Strategic Growth Plan up to 2050.
- 5.2 The authorities listed above, along with the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP), work collaboratively to address strategic issues across the area. This work is led by the Members’ Advisory Group (MAG).
- 5.3 The MAG comprises of a councillor from each of the authorities, plus an observer from the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP). The MAG meets on a regular frequency and its role is advisory. Any proposals or recommendations of MAG are not binding on the constituent member authorities. However, where there are matters pertaining to key strategic planning, for example the preparation of a joint plan (e.g. the Strategic Growth Plan) or the distribution of development, then any agreement at MAG is subject to ratification at individual authority level. The MAG meets on a xxx basis.

¹ Paragraph 2.29, Appendices to Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (2017)

- 5.4 The MAG is supported by a Strategic Planning Group (SPG) made up of senior management representatives of each of the authorities and is responsible for overseeing policy development for strategic planning purposes. The SPG meets on a monthly basis.
- 5.5 The SPG is itself supported by further officer groups. The Planning Officers' Forum (POF) is a formal meeting of Chief Officers (or their nominee) responsible for planning and transport services across Leicester and Leicestershire. The Forum provides professional advice to the SPG and meets on a monthly basis.
- 5.6 The Development Plans Forum is a formal meeting of the managers responsible for planning and transport policy within Leicester and Leicestershire and reports to POF with the Chair attending POF as required.

6 How have the authorities been engaged in the Local Plan Partial review?

- 6.1 An Issues and Options Consultation was undertaken between 21 February and 4 April 2018 with an Emerging Options Consultation being undertaken between 12 November 2018 and 11 January 2019. All of the authorities were consulted on both consultations.
- 6.2 At the Issues and Options stage responses were received from both Charnwood Borough Council and Leicester City Council. Charnwood Borough Council also responded to the Emerging Options consultation.
- 6.3 A report was presented to the authorities at the Planning Officers Forum on 23 August 2019 which outlined the approach which North West Leicestershire District Council was proposing to take on the Partial review and the reasons for it.

7 What are the key strategic matters, which the authorities agree upon?

- 7.1 The authorities agree that:
- They are committed to joint working on long term strategic planning for housing and economic growth and the associated strategic infrastructure required to support growth across the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area and Functional Economic Market Area , including meeting the areas housing and economic needs within its boundaries.
 - The Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) (2017) is the most recent Housing Market Area wide based evidence study.
 - The annual housing need for Leicester and Leicestershire set out in the HEDNA for the period to 2031 is 4,829 dwellings, or 96,580 for the period 2011-2031. The figure for North West Leicestershire for the same period is 481 dwellings. This is the housing requirement set out in the adopted North West Leicestershire Local Plan.
 - The annual housing need for Leicester and Leicestershire using the standard method (2014-based) is 4,867 dwellings. The figure for North West Leicestershire is 379 dwellings. For the purpose of the Partial Review it is agreed that no change should be made to the housing requirement of the adopted North West Leicestershire Local Plan due to the reasons set out in paras 1.2 to 1.7 above.

- To date only Leicester City has declared that it will not be able to meet all of its housing needs up to 2031 and that the amount of the unmet need has yet to be quantified and resolved in discussion with the housing market area partners.
- A redistribution of unmet housing needs from Leicester City (or any other authority declaring and quantifying an unmet need) will be agreed through the established joint working mechanism outlined at Section 5 above.
- No authority has declared that it is unable to meet its own economic development needs.
- It is recognised that there have been changes in circumstances since the North West Leicestershire Local Plan was adopted. These changes are such that completing the Partial Review within the two years specified is not feasible

7.2 This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters of detail that the parties may wish to raise during the subsequent Examination of the North West Leicestershire Local Plan Partial Review.

8 Are there any key matters upon which the authorities do not agree?

8.1 No key matters have been identified upon which the authorities do not agree in the context of the Partial Review

9 Are there any other SOCG which are of relevance to the Local Plan Partial Review?

9.1 Not at this time. However, the authorities are working jointly on a SOCG which will address the issue of the redistribution of unmet housing needs from Leicester City. This is not expected to be finalised and signed off by all of the authorities until 2020. This SOCG will inform the Substantive Review of the Local Plan.

10 How will this statement will be maintained and kept up to date?

10.1 In the event that there are any changes in circumstances from those outlined in this SOCG, then these will be brought to the attention of the SPG and MAG and any amendments will be agreed accordingly.