



LOCAL PLAN – PARTIAL REVIEW

Statement of Consultation

November 2019

North West Leicestershire District Council Statement of Consultation (November 2019)

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of this document

- 1.1 This Consultation Statement has been published in support of the North West Leicestershire Local Plan - Partial Review Publication Plan (November 2019). It sets out how the community consultation and stakeholder engagement undertaken by the District Council since February 2018 has helped to inform this Local Plan – Partial Review (2019). This document provides a summary of the key relevant issues raised during the various consultations undertaken and explains how this Partial review helps to address these issues.

2 Why is the document needed?

- 2.1 Paragraph 16c of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out the Government's principles for stakeholder engagement;

“Plans should...be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between planmakers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees.”

- 2.2 [Regulation 17](#) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires a statement setting out:

- (i) which bodies and persons were invited to make representations under regulation 18,
- (ii) how those bodies and persons were invited to make such representations,
- (iii) a summary of the main issues raised by those representations, and
- (iv) how those main issues have been addressed in the local plan

- 2.3 [Regulation 19](#) of the Town and Country planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires that before submitting a Local Plan that the 'proposed submission documents' be made available.

- 2.4 The 'proposed submission documents' include this Consultation Statement which forms the statement defined in Regulation 17.

3 Relationship with the Statement of Community Involvement

- 3.1 The Consultation Statement also shows how the District Council has met the requirements of its [Statement of Community Involvement](#) (SCI) which was adopted in February 2019. The SCI sets out how we will involve and engage with stakeholders, through a range of methods, in reviewing the Local Plan, as well as other planning policy documents and in processing planning applications.

4 Duty to Co-operate

- 4.1 The Localism Act 2011 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.
- 4.2 We work particularly closely with the other Leicester and Leicestershire local authorities. These consist of:
- Blaby District Council
 - Charnwood Borough Council
 - Harborough District Council
 - Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
 - Leicester City Council
 - Leicestershire County Council
 - Melton Borough Council
 - Oadby & Wigston Borough Council
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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).
- 4.5 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 quarterly basis.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 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.

- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 All of the authorities were consulted on both consultations set out in Section 5 below. At the Issues stage responses were received from both Charnwood Borough Council and Leicester City Council. Charnwood Borough Council also responded to the Emerging Options consultation.
- 4.10 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.
- 4.11 In addition to the joint work undertaken by the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities, we also consult with a range of other organisations including:
- Neighbouring authorities outside of Leicestershire
 - Environment Agency
 - Historic England
 - Natural England
 - East Midlands Airport
 - Clinical Commissioning Groups
 - Highways England

CONSULTATION STAGES

5.0 Introduction

- 5.1 The Council has recognised the importance of engaging the community and stakeholders from the outset of the review of the Local Plan. A number of consultation exercises have been carried out and this section of the Consultation Statement sets out the consultation arrangements that have been carried out to date by the Council.

Consultation Undertaken	Date
Issues and Options Consultation	21 February to 4 April 2018
Emerging Options Consultation	12 November 2018 to 11 January 2019

- 5.2 This Consultation Statement considers each of these consultation exercises. It outlines who the District Council consulted and how these consultations were undertaken. It also summarises the main issues raised in the consultation responses and how they have informed the preparation of the Local Plan – Partial Review.

6.0 ***Issues and Options Consultation - 21 February to 4 April 2018***

Introduction

- 6.1 The North West Leicestershire Local Plan was adopted on 21 November 2017. The council committed (through Policy S1 of the Local Plan) to start a review of the plan within three months of the date of adoption. The Issues and Options consultation was the first step in reviewing the plan in accordance with the provisions of Policy S1 and Government regulations (Regulation 18 of the Local Plan Regulations 2012 (as amended)). It provided an opportunity to seek views from a wide range of interests at an early stage in the process to inform the Council's review of the Local Plan.
- 6.2 At this initial consultation stage, the Council's suggested approach was limited to a partial review of the Local Plan, with a specific focus on housing and employment issues.
- 6.3 In addition to providing useful background information on the reason for the review of the Local Plan, the consultation focused on the Council's initial thoughts on the key issues that needed to be addressed, including time frame, policies to be reviewed and the evidence base. The consultation document can be found [here](#).

Who was invited at this stage and how?

- 6.4 We contacted by email and/or letter everyone on our local plan consultation database including landowners, developers, local residents, neighbouring authorities, statutory consultees, Parish Councils, local interest groups and other stakeholders. The consultation was also publicised on the Council website and via social media. Paper copies of the consultation documents were also made available at the main Council offices in Coalville and in all libraries in the district for inspection.

What were the main issues raised by the respondees?

- 6.5 In total, we received 72 responses from a range of individuals and organisations. A summary of all comments received can be found [here](#). However the key points raised were as follows:
- Most respondents were supportive of the need to review the Local Plan, although some respondents suggested that a full review would be more appropriate than a partial review.
 - Nearly everyone who responded to Question 1 supported the plan period being extended up to 2036 from 2031. Reasons given for this included because it would be in accordance with the 15 year plan lifespan requirement for Local Plans in the then draft NPPF and because it coincided with the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) end date.
 - A lot of respondents agreed with our suggestions on those policies which needed to be reviewed – with a large focus on housing, employment and infrastructure.

- Many respondents raised the Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) and the publication of the then draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as new issues that we needed to take account of. There were also a number of suggestions to change settlement boundaries/limits to development (generally where respondents were promoting a site on the edge of a settlement), and suggestions of other specific sites that could be allocated for development.
- There were a mix of views on whether the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) needed updating – some thought that as it was only completed in 2017 that it was sufficiently up-to-date and robust, whilst others thought it needed updating to take account of the SGP work, the publication of new data, proposed national standard methodology for calculating housing need, etc.
- A number of respondents referenced the need to update the 2010 Employment Land Study and economic evidence more generally, which we have since done.
- There weren't many suggestions of potential additional evidence base studies required – but those that were suggested included evidence for retaining the Area of Separation, highway capacity studies and open space/playing pitch studies.

How, where necessary, these issues were addressed.

- 6.6 In the Issues and Options consultation documentation, the Council made it clear that in its view, because of the fact that the Local Plan had only recently been adopted the review should be a partial review; not all aspects of the Local Plan would be covered. Instead the intention was to focus on those issues where there were gaps (for example employment land, local green spaces) or where external factors had changed (for example the draft NPPF and progress on the SGP). However, a number of the representations to the Issues and Options Consultation suggested that the review should be widened, not least because of the possible implications arising from the revisions to the NPPF.
- 6.7 In response to these representations, the Council began to consider whether to widen the scope of the Local Plan review – but it was recognised that this would have a direct implications on the timetable for the review and specifically the ability to submit a draft Plan by February 2020, which was the requirement of Local Plan Policy S1.
- 6.8 Many of the other issues raised were already being addressed by the Council – either through the production of new evidence (for example Employment Land Study, Area of Separation assessment, etc) or through ongoing work (for example the joint working with neighbouring authorities on the SGP, and understanding the implications of the new draft NPPF).

7.0 *Emerging Options Consultation - 12 November 2018 to 11 January 2019*

Introduction

7.1 Between 12 November 2018 and 11 January 2019, we undertook consultation on Emerging Options which could be included in our Local Plan Review. A copy of the consultation document can be viewed from this [link](#). The document focussed upon the issues that were behind the need for an early review or topics that had seen significant change in policy/increased local importance since the adoption of the Local Plan. It included a series of questions to help guide responses:

- Making sure that we have sufficient land for housing (questions 1 to 6)
- Making sure we have sufficient land for employment (questions 7 to 12)
- Should we change the settlement hierarchy? (questions 13 to 15)
- Where will new development go? (questions 16 and 17)
- How can the review consider the issue of self and custom build housing? (questions 18 to 23)
- How can the review address issues relating to health and wellbeing? (questions 24 to 30)

Who was invited at this stage and how?

7.2 Once again, we contacted by email and/or letter all those landowners, developers, local residents, neighbouring authorities, statutory consultees, Parish Councils, local interest groups and other stakeholders who are included on our Local Plan consultation database. The consultation was also publicised on the Council website and via social media. Copies of the consultation documents were also made available at the main Council offices in Coalville and in all libraries in the district for inspection.

What were the main issues raised by the respondees?

7.3 Comments were received from 62 consultees representing a range of organisations, as well as individuals. A summary of each of the comments received can be viewed from this [link](#), while a summary of responses by question, and the Council's response to each issue, can be found [here](#).

7.4 The key responses received can be summarised as follows:

Housing - There were concerns about the lack of clarity on the District's housing requirement. These were due to a number of factors, but especially the continuing uncertainty over the quantum of unmet need from Leicester City Council and the recent introduction by the Government of the standardised housing methodology, and the advised use of the 2014 and not the 2016-based household growth projections.

Employment – There were differing views on whether our current employment land need evidence (the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment – HEDNA) was still robust and appropriate. It was seen by many as representing the latest up-to-date evidence for employment requirements in North West Leicestershire. However, for a similar number of respondents, the HEDNA was considered to be out of date due to some of the data it used and methodologies it employed.

Settlement Hierarchy – There was broad support for the change proposed by the Council to the settlement hierarchy policy. There were also other representations seeking other changes including:

- A new village option;
- Ashby de la Zouch should be a higher order settlement than Castle Donington;
- Coalville Urban Area should include Ellistown;
- Whitwick should not form part of the Coalville Urban Area;
- Ibstock to be classified as a Key Service Centre;
- More growth should be directed to smaller settlements e.g. Breedon on the Hill and Ravenstone; and
- Redefine hierarchy depending on location of future employment growth.

Site Assessment Methodology - There was a good level of support for the proposed approach to site assessment. There were others who, while supporting the broad approach to site selection, had concerns. In terms of the administration of the process, some felt that the Options Paper did not provide clear guidance on the approach to site assessment. A paper outlining further details to the site selection process was suggested with further opportunity for comment to ensure a transparent process.

Self and Custom Build - There was broad, but not universal, support for the inclusion of a self and custom build policy within the revised Local Plan. Various options gained some support, including a flexible policy which enables the delivery of individual plots in appropriate locations, infill plots in sustainable settlements and the allocation of small sites in locations linked to where self-builders are searching. There was little support for the application of a self and custom build percentage on allocated housing sites.

Health and Wellbeing - There was a good level of support for the inclusion of a health and wellbeing policy. Several organisations, including the Canal and River Trust, Historic England and Natural England, explained how their areas of responsibility contributed to healthy communities. There were suggestions for what such a policy should include:

- Waterways
- Cycle lanes and footpaths
- Heritage
- Green infrastructure
- Economic wellbeing

Several representations, mainly from the development industry, feel that a separate policy may not be necessary:

How, where necessary, these issues were addressed.

- 7.5 Reviewing the responses to the emerging options consultation, alongside the responses to the Issues and Options consultation and taking into account other external factors (most notably the introduction of a new NPPF and the ongoing uncertainty regarding future housing

requirements including the fact that the potential level of unmet need from Leicester City Council which had yet to be resolved), it became clear that the original proposal of a focussed partial review of the adopted Local Plan would not be sufficient. A wider review would therefore be appropriate to address all of the issues raised and the implications of the new NPPF.

- 7.6 However when the adopted Plan was examined, and Policy S1 composed, this had not been foreseen – and the timetable included in Policy S1 (for submission of a reviewed plan effectively by February 2020) was no longer realistic given the increased number of issues that the review would need to consider and resolve, some of which were beyond the Council's direct control, including the issue of unmet need from Leicester City which requires co-operation with all of the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities.
- 7.7 Addressing the issues raised during the consultations on the Local Plan review therefore led directly to the proposal for a dual-track approach to reviewing the Local Plan – a 'partial' review involving changing the content of Policy S1 in the adopted Local Plan and its supporting text, and a 'substantive' review considering a wider range of issues but which necessitates a longer production timetable.