

Meeting	<b>CABINET</b>
Time/Day/Date	5.00 pm on Tuesday, 8 December 2015
Location	Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville
Officer to contact	Democratic Services (01530 454512)

All persons present are reminded that the meeting may be recorded and by attending this meeting you are giving your consent to being filmed and your image being used. You are kindly requested to make it known to the Chairman if you intend to film or record this meeting.

The Monitoring Officer would like to remind members that when they are considering whether the following items are exempt information under the relevant paragraph under part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 they must have regard to the public interest test. This means that members must consider, for each item, whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure outweighs the public interest in making the item available to the public.

## AGENDA

Item	Pages
<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	
<b>2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</b>	
Under the Code of Conduct members are reminded that in declaring disclosable interests you should make clear the nature of that interest and whether it is pecuniary or non-pecuniary.	
<b>3. MINUTES</b>	
Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2015.	<b>3 - 8</b>
<b>4. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION</b>	
<b>5. GENERAL FUND AND SPECIAL EXPENSES REVENUE BUDGETS 2016/17</b>	
Report of the Head of Finance Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder	<b>9 - 14</b>



<b>6.</b>	<b>CAPITAL PROGRAMMES - GENERAL FUND, COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (H.R.A). PROJECTED OUTTURN 2015/16 AND DRAFT PROGRAMMES 2016/17 - 2020/21</b>	
	Report of the Head of Finance Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder	<b>15 - 32</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2016/17</b>	
	Report of the Head of Finance Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder and Housing Portfolio Holder	<b>33 - 46</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>HOUSING ENERGY STRATEGY</b>	
	Report of the Director of Housing Presented by the Housing Portfolio Holder	<b>47 - 72</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>ASHBY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - PROPOSED RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION</b>	
	Report of the Director of Services Presented by the Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Holder	<b>73 - 146</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS, CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS, COUNCIL TAX, NON DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTOR WRITE OFFS</b>	
	Report of the Head of Finance Presented by the Corporate Portfolio Holder	<b>147 - 152</b>

Circulation:

Councillor R D Bayliss  
Councillor R Blunt (Chairman)  
Councillor T Gillard  
Councillor T J Pendleton  
Councillor N J Rushton  
Councillor A V Smith MBE

MINUTES of a meeting of the CABINET held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2015

Present: Councillor R Blunt (Chairman)

Councillors R D Bayliss, T Gillard, T J Pendleton and A V Smith MBE

In Attendance: Councillors R Adams, J Bridges, J Clarke, D Everitt, T Eynon, F Fenning, D Harrison, G Hault, R Johnson, J Legrys, S McKendrick and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr S Bambrick, Mr S Barrett, Ms C E Fisher, Mrs C Hammond, Mr G Jones, Mr P Padaniya and Miss E Warhurst

#### **47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N J Rushton.

#### **48. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **49. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

#### **50. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**Reason for decision:** To comply with the Constitution.

#### **51. PROPOSED LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY**

The Leader presented the report to Members.

He advised Members that the report sought the support to bring forward the first stage to enable the Leicestershire to demonstrate that they could work as a combined authority and that all nine Councils needed to agree.

He highlighted to Members the three areas that were to be proposed which were transport, planning and skills. He stated that as the district grew all nine authorities would need to work together to ensure that the transport infrastructure was in place, that there was the opportunity for local residents to continue to improve on their skills for a better quality of life and that the neighbouring authorities talked to and co-operated with each other as to where housing and development would take place.

He informed Members that there were a number of proposals across the Country, but he was committed to the Leicestershire model, adding that should the proposal go ahead it would almost certainly provide a financial injection to the district and that following recent

consultations there was strong support for a combined authority, but it did not mean that each authority would lose its own sovereignty.

Councillor T J Pendleton stated that Leicestershire didn't have an option as both Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire were already attempting to combine.

Councillor R D Bayliss agreed with Councillor T J Pendleton adding that there was no reason not to.

Councillor A V Smith stated that she was happy with the proposals and that it was the way forward.

The Chief Executive advised Members that the Government required a governance review and scheme to be drawn up and that the proposals would benefit the district post 2028 in locating where future development should go. She informed Members that this was due to the urban areas of the County being unable to take any further housing, adding that it would allow the authority some control on the volume, speed and area of growth. She highlighted to Members that they were being asked to recommend the delegation of authority to herself in consultation with the Leader to make minor amendments to the submission. She assured that anything that was more substantial would go back to Members. She also assured Members that a joint scrutiny committee would be established with one non executive member from each authority nominated to ensure that appropriate scrutiny of decisions.

Councillor R Blunt advised Members that the recommendations were identical to those going to Council.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor A V Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet recommend to Council that it:

1. Approves the scheme for the Combined Authority;
2. Approves the Governance Review;
3. Authorises the publication of the Scheme and its submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government;
4. Authorises the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader, to make any final amendments to the Scheme and Governance Review prior to their submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government in December 2015 or January 2016;
5. Authorises the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader, to enter into discussions with the Department for Communities and Local Government and such other Government departments and other persons as are considered necessary by the Chief Executive to agree the terms of the order establishing the Combined Authority and to approve the final form of the order on behalf of the District Council; and
6. Authorises the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader:
  - (I) To negotiate, agree and execute all ancillary documents in support of the operation of the Combined Authority, including (without limitation) the constitution of the Combined Authority; and

- (II) To take all decisions and actions necessary to enable the establishment of the Combined Authority.

**Reason for decision:** To ensure North West Leicestershire District Council can benefit with the other local authorities in Leicestershire, from increased autonomy and funding to support strategic economic, transport and planning decisions.

## 52. NEW BUILD PROPOSALS FOR COUNCIL HOUSING

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He reminded Members that the Council had gone from a poor no star rated authority to a fully decent authority with robust finances that were in order, which would allow the authority to look to start building new Council Housing. He advised that three sites had been identified as set out in the report and that the cost would be met from existing finances.

Councillor T Gillard stated that it was a good report and he was excited about the prospect of building new homes.

Councillor T J Pendleton expressed that he was bowled over by the detail, thought and consideration, and was very excited by the plans.

Councillor A V Smith stated that it was an excellent report and congratulated the officers for all the work that had been put into the project so far.

Councillor R Blunt stated that he welcomed the position.

It was moved by Councillor R D Bayliss, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The investigatory preparation work undertaken to date be noted;
2. Subject to positive land, utility searches and confirmation from the external health check, the proposal to include the following 3 schemes in the initial new build programme be approved:
  - Willesley estate sites x 2 (Ashby);
  - Greenacres, Coalville; and
  - The Brownfield site, Coalville (if successfully acquired);
3. At the appropriate time, a further report from the Director of Housing recommending the most appropriate method of delivering the new build units be received.

**Reason for decision:** To seek Member approval to progress the proposed schemes included in the recommendations.

## 53. 2015/16 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Leader opened the floor for Members to comment on their portfolio areas.

Councillor T Gillard thanked all staff that had been involved with arranging the celebration to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Coalville market and that it was pleasing to see that the

investments that had been made helped to increase the footfall along with many traders using social media to advertise their stalls.

Councillor R Blunt stated that he had fully supported the investment and that it was making a difference and hoped that future investments would allow it to continue.

Councillor R D Bayliss highlighted that there the target for average re-let time was still not being met, but assured Members that it was being worked on and highlighted that the service was carrying out more work to the void properties before they were handed over which contributed to the delay in time.

Councillor T J Pendleton stated that he was happy with the way Development Control was performing and that it was well above the national standard.

Councillor A V Smith highlighted that the Leisure Centres continued to exceed their targets and were going from strength to strength. She advised Members that the recycling material technology was now fully operational and drew Members' attention to the compliment that Environmental Health had received from Iceland Air on the service that the team had provided in assisting them to import fish through East Midlands Airport.

The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to paragraph 2.4 and advised that the Portfolio Holder was working with Officers to look at the future options should the County decide to review the dry recycling credit payments and advised that a report would be brought to a future meeting.

Councillor R Blunt advised that the budgets were being managed effectively and that it was projected that there would be additional income by the end of the year and took the opportunity to welcome the newly appointed interim Director of Resources to the meeting. He highlighted that there had been an increase in sickness during quarter two however the human resources team were looking at options to improve the management of absence.

The Chief Executive added that the authority had an excellent record in sickness management and it was very supportive to short term illnesses, providing assistance and counselling if required, however it was more difficult to manage long term illness as it often required the support of external health providers that often hindered the support that could be given and that the Council was working on options to improve the management.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

The Quarter 2 Performance Report (July – Sept 2015) be received and noted.

**Reason for decision:** The report is provided for members to effectively monitor the organisation's performance.

#### **54. MINUTES OF THE COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES WORKING PARTY**

The Community Services Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

She advised Members that she was delighted to present the minutes of the working party and highlighted how hard the party worked to bring forward the projects.

Councillor A V Smith provided Members with updates on the opening of the new peace garden at Coalville Park and urged anyone who had not visited to do so, that the Owen Street changing rooms were now under construction and that the Annual Christmas lights

switch on would be held on Saturday, 21 November and that Sheena McHugh would be switching the lights on. She informed Members that there was one recommendation from the meeting that was to reinstate the Christmas tree in Memorial Square, which she fully supported as there was now CCTV in the area.

Councillor R Blunt took the opportunity to advise Members that following a request from Councillor M B Wyatt for a new flagpole in front of Stenson House, the pole was now in position and that the flag would be raised at 11.30am the next day following the service in Memorial Square. He highlighted that it had been agreed to raise the flag on a very poignant day.

It was moved by Councillor A V Smith, seconded by Councillor R Blunt and

RESOLVED THAT:

The recommendations made by the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party as detailed within the minutes be noted and the recommendations as summarised at 3.0 be approved.

**Reason for decision:** To progress Coalville Special Expenses projects and programmes.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.40 pm

**This page is intentionally left blank**



**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 8 DECEMBER 2015**

Title of report	<b>GENERAL FUND AND SPECIAL EXPENSES REVENUE BUDGETS 2016/17</b>
Key Decision	a) Financial Yes b) Community Yes
Contacts	Councillor Nick Rushton 01530 412059 <a href="mailto:nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>  Chief Executive 01530 454500 <a href="mailto:christine.fisher@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">christine.fisher@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>  Director of Resources 01530 454501 <a href="mailto:steve.barrett@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">steve.barrett@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>  Head of Finance 01530 454520 <a href="mailto:ray.bowmer@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">ray.bowmer@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>
Purpose of report	For Cabinet to approve 2016/17 General Fund and Special Expenses revenue budget proposals for consultation.
Reason for Decision	Required to complete 2016/17 budget process.
Council Priorities	The budget assists the Council to achieve all its priorities.
Implications:  Financial/Staff  Link to relevant CAT  Risk Management  Equalities Impact Screening  Human Rights  Transformational Government	As contained in the report.  The budget is relevant to all Corporate Action Teams (CATs).  The budget will be monitored throughout the year to ensure savings are achieved and services delivered as planned.  The requirement for equalities impact screening and assessments is being assessed during the consultations and details if required will be provided as part of the management responses.  None identified.  Not applicable

Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	As report author the report is satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory
Consultees	None
Background papers	None
Recommendations	<p><b>CABINET IS RECOMMENDED TO :</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. AGREE THE 2016/17 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR STATUTORY CONSULTATION.</b></li> <li><b>2. AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO CONTINUING THE PAYMENT OF LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT (LCTS) GRANTS TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY CABINET WHEN IT SETS THE COUNCIL TAX BASE IN JANUARY 2016.</b></li> </ol>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Cabinet approved the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 – 2019/20 at its meeting on 22 September 2015. A budget shortfall of £260,000 was projected for 2016/17.
- 1.2 This report provides details of the 2016/17 Base Budget and other changes since the MTFS was approved.
- 1.3 The projections of the budget position for 2016/17 in this report reflect our current understanding but is likely to change when the Government issues its Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement expected around 17 December 2015.
- 1.4 Under the revised Business Rates retention mechanism the level of Government funding is not ultimately confirmed until after the end of the financial year when the actual level of Business Rates is reported. This is a significant change from having grant settlements fixed before the start of the financial year and means that the Council's financial planning is impacted on by the volatility of local business rates income.
- 1.5 The approved budget is rigorously monitored during the financial year through quarterly performance monitoring so that any potential overspendings can be identified at an early stage and remedial action taken to deal with them. The monitoring also checks that the required savings are being achieved. Similarly any forecast underspendings can be taken into account when allocating resources.

## **2.0 GENERAL FUND 2015/16 – PROJECTED OUTTURN**

- 2.1 The second quarter Performance Report presented to Cabinet in November presented outturn projections for the current year which have now been updated with the benefit of Period 7 (November) budget monitoring information. An underspending of £442k is forecast. The main reason for this is additional Planning Fee income in excess of £0.5m.
- 2.2 There is no guarantee that the levels of increased Planning income seen this year and the last two years will continue at these levels in the future. Cabinet's budget proposals for next year do however include an increase in the target for Planning income of £250k next year.
- 2.3 A prudent view of the year end position for Business Rates has been taken. Our projections assume that this will be in line with our budget but it is likely as the financial year progresses we will be able to project additional Business Rates income.
- 2.4 Ordinarily any in-year under spendings would be transferred to the General Fund balance at the year end. The General Fund Balance is at an adequate level and our strategy for utilising any projected savings in 2015/16 will include a number of options. These will be outlined as part of the budget report to Cabinet in February 2016 and confirmed as part of the Outturn Report in the Summer.

## **3.0 FUTURE UNCERTAINTIES**

- 3.1 The Cabinet will already be aware of the volatility which the localisation of Business Rates brings to the Council's finances. Under the new arrangements district councils are allocated 40% of increases and decreases in Business Rates. There is also a system of levies and safety nets which reduces our share of increases to 20% but at the same time provides a safety net which limits our losses to 7.5% of our funding baseline which for this authority works out at approximately £165k in 2015/16.
- 3.2 Future levels of income projected from New Homes Bonus cannot be guaranteed. The Cabinet will recall that during the last Parliament the Government consulted on top slicing a significant proportion of New Homes Bonus from 2015/16 to support infrastructure spending by the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). Whilst this proposal did not go ahead, it had the potential to reduce the Council's annual funding by around £500k at a stroke. Our MTFS currently assumes a levelling off in the growth of New Homes Bonus from the seventh year of the scheme in 2017/18. New Homes Bonus payments are made for six years so in Year 7 of the scheme Year 1 payments will stop. It is likely that Year 7 payments will be higher than Year 1 so some increase can still be expected. There is however always a risk that changes could be made to the scheme, or it could be discontinued altogether. The MTFS assumes that all our New Homes Bonus will continue to be used to support the Revenue Budget and this means that in 2016/17 £2.78m, over a quarter of our net budget for mainstream services will be funded in this way.

## **4.0 2016/17 REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) showed a funding shortfall in the General Fund budget of £2.2m by 2019/20 with projected shortfall of £260,000 for 2016/17.
- 4.2 The level of New Homes Bonus for next year is determined by returns which have now been made to the Government. Assuming that there are no changes to the scheme the

Council will receive £2.78m next year. This is £358k higher than assumed in the MTFS and assists in closing the £260k projected shortfall for next year.

- 4.3 The income the Council receives for the sale of its recycling materials is forecast to be approximately 25% lower in 2016/17. The reduction of £221,000 (from £896,000 to £675,000) is mainly due to the global reduction in demand for commodities along with a number of fixed term sales contracts coming to an end in August 2016. The global reduction in demand has seen some sale prices reduce significantly such as plastics and steel and this in turn is forecast to lead to lower prices being offered through our material sales tendering process. All commodity prices are tracked through the material sales index [www.letsrecycle.com](http://www.letsrecycle.com) and variations reported through monthly financial monitoring.
- 4.4 The Local Plan will reach a critical, and particularly expensive, stage during 2016 / 17. This is the Examination in Public, which is a statutory requirement, and which has a substantial cost that is set externally. This is the Inspector's fee, which is set by the Planning Inspectorate. We are legally required to pay for the Inspector that the Secretary of State decides to appoint. The fee is non-negotiable. Currently, this is set at an amount per day, and it is therefore estimated that £100,000 should be made available to cover this specific cost. The actual amount will depend on the length and complexity of the Examination. In addition to the Inspector's fee, we are required to pay for a Programme Officer. We estimate a cost of up to £25,000 for that, again the amount will depend on the length and complexity of the Examination. Given these uncertainties, it is advisable to set aside a contingency amount of £20,000. Finally, we know that we will have to update some technical reports to support the Examination, namely Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment, and Viability Appraisal. A total cost of £15,000 is assumed for these. The total amount of these costs is £160,000, however £30,000 is already included in the base budget, so the total additional one-off spend needed is £130,000.
- 4.5 The Council Tax Collection Fund is monitored throughout the year and we are confident that an additional £318,000 income will be available from the fund towards next year's budget.
- 4.6 The base budget for next year is also now substantially complete and gives a better picture of resources needed for next year than the MTFS. Indications are that there would be an overall improvement of around £115k in addition to the changes above.
- 4.7 In summary the impact on the budget shortfall has been as follows:

Assumption in MTFS	(£260k)
Additional New Homes Bonus	£358k
Additional Planning Income	£250k
Reduction in Recycling Income	(£221k)
Additional Costs of Local Plan	(£130k)
Improvement in Collection Fund	£318k
Other Base Budget Changes	<u>£115k</u>
Projected Surplus	£430k

- 4.8 Based on this updated information it provides the Council with the opportunity to provide around £430k additional resources in the Revenue Budget for next year, subject of course to the Government's Local Government financial settlement

4.9 The Council will submit its projections of Business Rates for 2016/17 to the Government by the end of January 2016. The work in preparation for this may give us confidence to increase the budget for this income before our final budget is presented for approval.

## **5.0 GENERAL FUND RESERVE**

5.1 The uncommitted balance on the General Fund was £2.4m when the Cabinet approved the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2015. A forecast underspending in the current year would also increase the balance temporarily until the resources are allocated to projects.

## **6.0 COUNCIL TAX**

6.1 In line with the Cabinet's MTFs, approved in September, the Council is not planning to increase the District's share of the Council Tax in 2016/17. This will be the seventh year without an increase.

6.2 Based on information provided by the Government in January 2015 the Council will be eligible for a Council Tax Support Grant equivalent to a 1% increase in its Council Tax if there is no increase and is gross of Council Tax Support payments. The Government will have provided grants to cover at least a proportion of the lost income for six of the Council's seven years' Council Tax freezes.

6.3 Under current rules the Council could increase its Council Tax by up to 2% without the need for a referendum. In this case there would be no Freeze Grant and the Council would have to meet the cost of paying Council Tax Support on the extra 2% to eligible people. It is estimated that this maximum increase would provide an additional £38k of resources a year. Increasing the Council Tax, even modestly, permanently increases the local tax base and generates additional guaranteed income in the future.

## **7.0 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT (LCTS) GRANT**

7.1 From April 2013 the Government abolished Council Tax Benefit and replaced it with locally determined Council Tax Support Discounts. Giving people discounts on their Council Tax reduces the Council Tax income which all the preceptors including Town and Parish Councils receive.

7.2 The District and the major preceptors (County, Police and Fire & Rescue) receive Government grant which compensates, at least in part, for this loss of income. The Government does not provide this grant support to Town and Parish councils. Since the start of the new scheme this Council has given an element of its Council Tax Support Grant to Towns and Parishes to allow them to maintain their existing level of income.

7.3 The Government's Council Tax Support Grant is now incorporated within mainstream grants which have already fallen significantly and are expected to continue to fall significantly throughout the period of our Medium Term Financial Strategy. Providing the grants to Town and Parish Councils is costing the District Council around £100,000 in 2015/16. The Cabinet is proposing in principle to continue the scheme and will confirm the LCTS grants when it approves the Council Tax Base at its meeting on 12 January 2016.

7.4 The Cabinet has no plans to change the maximum eligibility for Council Tax Support from its current level of 85%.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The Council's continued sound financial management puts it in a position where it does not have to consult on budget reductions. This offers the opportunity for a positive consultation on the Council's financial management, maintaining service levels, Council Tax freeze and the proposal to maintain the level of grants to Town and Parish Councils. Consultation is required with the business community, through the North West Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce, in compliance with the Non-Domestic Ratepayers (Consultation) Regulations 1992. There will also be consultation with Staff, Unions and Town & Parish Councils.
- 8.2 The Policy Development Group will be asked for its comments on the specific budget proposals during the consultation period at its next meeting on 6 January 2016.
- 8.3 The Cabinet will receive details of the consultations at its meeting on 9 February 2016 where it will make its final budget recommendations for approval by Council on 23 February 2016.

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 8 DECEMBER 2015**

<p>Title of Report</p>	<p><b>CAPITAL PROGRAMMES – GENERAL FUND, COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (H.R.A). PROJECTED OUTTURN 2015/16 AND DRAFT PROGRAMMES 2016/17 TO 2020/21</b></p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>a) Financial Yes b) Community Yes</p>
<p>Contacts</p>	<p>Councillor Nick Rushton 01530 412059 <a href="mailto:nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Councillor Roger Bayliss 01530 411055 <a href="mailto:roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Chief Executive 01530 454500 <a href="mailto:christine.fisher@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">christine.fisher@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Director of Resources 01530 454501 <a href="mailto:steve.barrett@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">steve.barrett@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Head of Finance 01530 454520 <a href="mailto:ray.bowmer@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">ray.bowmer@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Financial Planning Manager 01530 454707 <a href="mailto:pritesh.padaniya@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">pritesh.padaniya@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Purpose of Report</p>	<p>To advise Members of the likely Capital Outturn and the relevant financing for 2015/16 for the General Fund, Coalville Special Expenses and the H.R.A.</p> <p>To seek approval to the Draft General Fund, Coalville Special Expenses and H.R.A Capital Programmes for 2016/17 and to note indications for future years and associated funding for consultation.</p>

Reason for Decision	To enable projects to be included in the Programmes for consultation.
Council Priorities	The projects in the Capital Programmes help the Council achieve all its priorities.
Implications	
Financial / Staff	As contained in the report.
Links to relevant CAT	The Capital programmes are potentially relevant to all Corporate Action Teams (CATs).
Risk Management	The Capital Programmes are monitored at project level to ensure they are delivered on time and within budget.
Equalities Impact Screening	No impact at this stage.
Human Rights	None identified.
Transformational Government	The Programmes attached are integral to delivering better services.
Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory
Consultees	CLT and Budget Holders.
Background Papers	<a href="#">“Capital Programmes – General Fund, Coalville. Special Expenses and Housing revenue Account (HRA). Projected outturn 2013/14 and Proposed Programmes 2014/15 to 2017/18”</a> – Cabinet 11 February 2014



Recommendations	<p><b>A. THAT THE ESTIMATED GENERAL FUND, COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES AND H.R.A. CAPITAL OUTTURN FOR 2015/16 AND PLANNED FINANCING BE NOTED.</b></p> <p><b>B. THAT CABINET APPROVES FOR CONSULTATION THE DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMMES IN 2016/17 DETAILED IN:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>APPENDIX “A” GENERAL FUND AND SPECIAL EXPENSES CAPITAL SCHEMES</b></li> <li>• <b>APPENDIX “B” FOR HRA CAPITAL SCHEMES</b></li> </ul> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>AND IN 2017/18 THESE SCHEMES ONLY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>£630,000 FOR THE VEHICLE REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME, AS DETAILED IN PARAGRAPH 3.2</b></li> </ul> <p><b>C. THAT CABINET NOTES INDICATIVE CAPITAL PROGRAMME SCHEMES FOR 2017/18 TO 2020/21.</b></p> <p><b>D. THAT CABINET NOTES THE PROPOSED PROCUREMENT ROUTES AND DELEGATES THE AUTHORITY TO AWARD THE CONTRACTS, AND ANY ASSOCIATED AGREEMENTS IN FURTHERANCE OF THE PROJECTS, AS DETAILED IN SECTION 7 (PROCUREMENT ROUTES) OF THIS REPORT SUBJECT TO FINAL APPROVAL OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMMES IN FEBRUARY 2016.</b></p>
-----------------	--

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Appendix “A” shows the proposed General Fund and Special Expenses Capital Programme for 2016/17 to 2020/21.
- 1.2 Appendix “B” shows the H.R.A. proposed Capital Programme for 2016/17 to 2020/21.
- 1.3 The Appendices also present the estimated outturn for the current year for approval.

## 2.0 GENERAL FUND - ESTIMATED OUTTURN 2015/16

- 2.1 The projected outturn for 2015/16 on General Fund schemes totals £2,762,090. This is a managed increase of £632,090 on the original budget for the year of £2,130,000.
- 2.2 This managed increase is caused by the following:

<b>Schemes carried forward from 2014/15</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Network Upgrade,	89,360	
Improving Customer Experience (ICE),	5,000	
Disabled Facilities Grant,	165,000	
Refuse Vehicle and Refuse Kerbsider,	168,000	
Car Park(Retention Element)	1,585	
South Street Car Park Ashby - Resurfacing	19,900	
Hermitage Recreation Grounds – AWP access area	11,500	
Coalville Market Upgrade (Phase 1a)	1,500	

Coalville Market Upgrade (Phase 2)	100,000	
Materials Separating Technology – Linden Way Depot	8,018	
<b>Total</b>		569,863
<b>Additional Approved Schemes 2015/16</b>		
Improving Customer Experience (ICE 2),	200,000	
Information Management	100,000	
Additional Disabled Facilities Grant	62,000	
<b>Total</b>		362,000
<b>Planned Slippage 2015/16</b>		
Disabled Facilities Grant – Slippage into 2016/17	(283,000)	
Hermitage Recreation Grounds – AWP access area – Slippage into 2016/17	(11,500)	
Various small Underspends identified	(5,273)	
<b>Total</b>		(299,773)
<b>Total Managed Increase</b>		<b>632,090</b>
<b>Funded by:</b>		
Disabled Facilities Grant	62,000	
Value for Money Reserve	309,518	
Other Reserves	(18,000)	
Internal Borrowing	278,572	
<b>Total</b>		<b>632,090</b>

The total planned financing of the General Fund expenditure totalling £2,762,090 in 2015/16 is as follows:

	<b>£</b>
Disabled Facilities Grant	298,050
S106 Contributions	400,000
Revenue Contributions to Capital	149,330
Value for Money Reserve	378,018
Other Reserves	206,620
Internal Borrowing	1,330,072
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,762,090</b>

- 2.3 There were sufficient funds identified prior to this capital spend being committed.
- 2.4 The carried forward schemes shown in paragraph 2.2 above represents expenditure which was originally expected and budgeted for in 2014/15 but which has slipped into 2015/16 and for which the budgeted financing has also been carried forward.
- 3.0 GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17 TO 2020/21 – INDIVIDUAL SCHEMES**
- 3.1 The programme for 2016/17 to 2020/21 detailed in Appendix A provides for a continuation of the current Disabled Facilities Grants Scheme and the Vehicle

Replacement Programme. The following new schemes are included in the programmes for approval to commence in 2016/17:

3.1.1 Desktop Equipment Upgrade (£42,000)

The Council's desktop PCs are currently on average over 5 years old and reaching the end of their economic life. Some work has been done in 2015-16 to replace the oldest equipment and to extend the life of existing equipment through investment in a virtual desktop computing environment. The virtual environment reduces the load on the desktop equipment and simplifies management by running software on high-power servers in the computer room instead of on the desktop PCs.

This scheme will further extend the virtual desktop environment and replace 100 of the oldest PCs with solid state thin client devices. As well as providing a more stable and reliable desktop computing environment, this investment will simplify any future move to remote or home working since the solid state thin client devices are easily supported remotely.

3.1.2 ICT Security Infrastructure (£63,000)

The Council's network is currently secured using separate products from three different resellers. This scheme will replace the Council's security infrastructure with a single unified threat management solution which is scalable to support the Council's future demands. A direct cost saving in the ICT revenue budget of £19,000 per annum from 2017-18 onwards will be realised as a result of this investment.

3.1.3 HR / Payroll System (£50,000)

The current HR/Payroll system contract (Selima) is due to expire in March 2017. This scheme and purchase of a new/upgraded system will require time for implementation, testing and dual running. The potential timescales for this project requires that we go out to tender in Jan/Feb 2016 with contract award likely to be around July/August 2016.

3.1.4 Access Road, High Street Car Park, Measham - Resurfacing (£25,000)

Proposed resurfacing of the NWLDC-owned part of the private access road serving NWLDC's public car park situated off High Street, Measham – to address defects and maintain an acceptable surface condition.

3.1.5 Hermitage Recreation Grounds – Surface Dressing (£11,500)

This scheme was originally agreed as “Hermitage Rec Grounds AWP Access Area, Whitwick - Resurfacing” in the 2014/15 Capital Budget presented to Cabinet on 11 February 2014. The original scheme was to resurface selected parts of the access area. The scheme has been expanded to incorporate surface dressing of the Lakeside Pavilion access and car park, the (original) access road leading to the All Weather Play Area and the access road leading to the slipway at Hermitage Lake – to seal and protect the surfaces from the weather, extend their life and improve their appearance.

3.1.6 Hood Park Leisure Centre Car Park, Ashby - Resurfacing (£15,000)

Resurfacing of the main vehicular route / traffic aisle through the long axis of the car park. Resurfacing is required to address the defects and maintain an acceptable surface condition.

3.1.7 North Service Road Car Park, Coalville (£32,250)

Proposed improvements to the site to address defects, maintain the vehicular and pedestrian surfaces in an acceptable condition and to potentially improve the layout and appearance (subject to detailed design).

3.1.8 Coalville Park – Reconfigure Depot and replace building (£95,000)

As part of the annual Property Services building survey, a garage at the Coalville Park depot has reached its end of life and requires urgent replacement. In addition, following annual increases in business, the size of the team, vehicles and equipment it is necessary to reconfigure and create more space and appropriate working environments at the depot. The cost at this stage is an estimate awaiting formal costings.

3.1.9 Hood Park Leisure Centre Fitness Suite Air Conditioning (£15,000)

Replacement of three 10 year old wall mounted Air Conditioning Units within the fitness suite. The units use refrigerant R22 which from the end of 2015 will be illegal to use. Consequently, within 6 months the units will effectively become obsolete and unusable. The three new units will not only use the legal, non ozone depleting refrigerant R410a, but they will also have internal inverters thus reducing energy consumption and significantly improving efficiency.

3.1.10 Fleet Replacement Programme

With regard to the Fleet Replacement Programme, each year a number of vehicles either come to the end of their lease period or their lease extensions are reviewed. Each vehicle is reviewed based on its age, condition, mileage, potential risk of major repairs (due to being out of warranty) and a decision is made whether to extend the lease or replace the vehicle.

These decisions are made in the previous year in order to allow a suitable lead-in period from order to delivery in April, particularly for large items such as refuse vehicles. Many of these vehicles are built to order and these orders have to be placed before October for delivery the following April. Therefore, although they are actually acquired in April a commitment has to be made in the previous year.

Approval is sought to amend the 2016/17 Fleet budget from £984,000 to £1,039,000, an increase of £55,000. This is to be offset by a decrease in the 2017/18 fleet budget of £172,000 (an overall saving of £117,000).

The original approval for 2016/17 was granted by Cabinet on 11 February 2015. This amendment has arisen due to a number of factors. Four small vans were originally due to be purchased. After reviewing the overall fleet position, this was reduced to two and released £30,000 of the budget. Savings of £87,000 have been generated from the procurement of vehicles. These budget reductions / savings will be offset by the acceleration of a new kerbsider (originally budgeted in 2017/18 at £172,000).

It is essential to accelerate the replacement of this vehicle due to the rapid increase in housing growth over the last two years in particular. The new kerbside recycling vehicles provide additional capacity through its compaction process so recyclable material from housing growth can be absorbed without adding extra vehicles or staff. This acceleration will also ensure that all waste collections can be made on schedule using existing rounds and to maintain the high reliability rates of the service. It is envisaged that a more

competitive price may be obtained for each vehicle by undertaking a procurement exercise for three vehicles rather than ordering one at a time.

The changes in the 2016/17 budget are reflected in the table below:

<b>Vehicle</b>	<b>Original Budget</b>	<b>Revised Budget</b>
Refuse Kerbsider ( End of Lease )	172,000	344,000
Refuse (2x refuse vehicles. End of Lease and End of Life )	350,000	325,000
Market Vehicles/Cars ( End of Life )	15,000	19,000
Vans - Small ( 4x End of Lease but Reduced to 2)	60,000	22,000
Vans - Medium ( 2x End of Lease )	32,000	28,000
Vans - Pickup ( End of Life )	25,000	19,000
Bin Lifter ( New for refuse vehicle )	20,000	20,000
Tractor Plant ( End of Life Baler, loading shovel and Tractor )	250,000	215,000
Mowing Machines ( 2x End of Lease )	60,000	47,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>984,000</b>	<b>1,039,000</b>

- 3.2 In order to progress with the 2017/18 purchases approval is sought for the following vehicles:

	£
Refuse (1 x refuse vehicle. End of Life )	170,000
1 x HGV mechanical sweeper (End of lease)	120,000
1 x 7.5T caged vehicle (End of life)	40,000
2 x mini-sweepers (End of life)	130,000
Vans Medium – 12 x transit, 1 x caged (end of life or lease)	170,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>630,000</b>

3.2.1 Waste Services HGV's and LGV's (approx £460,000)

The existing Heavy Goods waste vehicles, including one waste collection vehicle, one mechanical sweeper, one 7.5 tonne caged tipper and two mechanical mini-sweepers are to be replaced as part of the annual vehicle replacement programme to ensure reliability of waste and street cleansing service delivery.

3.2.2 Medium Vehicles (approx £170,000)

Thirteen medium / small vehicles are to be replaced across the fleet for 2017/18 as part of the annual vehicle replacement programme. These include three transit vans for the Waste Services Team and nine transit vans and one caged vehicle for the Housing Team. These are essential for service delivery and to control maintenance costs of increased repairs to ageing vehicles.

3.3 The General Fund Capital Programme (2016/17) will be funded by:

	£
Disabled Facilities Grants	298,050
Revenue Contribution	135,920
Reserves	282,790
Internal Borrowing	1,387,750
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,104,510</b>

#### 4.0 COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES – ESTIMATED OUTTURN AND INDIVIDUAL SCHEMES

4.1 The Projected outturn for 2015/16 is £172,563. This is all slippage from 2014/15 on the following projects

	£
Cropston Drive BMX Track	9,783
Thringstone Miners Social Centre	4,913
Urban Forest Park - Footway & Drainage Improvements	39,025
Owen Street – Floodlights	779
Owen Street – Changing Rooms	115,563
Thringstone Bowls Club – Toilet Block	2,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>172,563</b>

4.2 There are no new schemes agreed at present for 2016/17.

#### 5.0 H.R.A. CAPITAL PROGRAMME – ESTIMATED OUTTURN 2015/16 AND 2016/17 - 2020/21 INDIVIDUAL SCHEMES

5.1 The HRA Capital programme (Appendix “B”) covers in detail the capital schemes for the period 2016/17 to 2020/21.

5.2 Planned spend in 2016/17 and onwards mainly consists of

##### 5.2.1 Decent Homes Improvement Programme (DHIP)

The Decent Homes standard was introduced by the last Government to drive up the quality of social housing across the country. The standard sets a range of indicators for different elements of tenants’ homes.

Government had set aside £2.1bn, out of which £0.6bn was ring fenced to new Stock Transfer gap funding and the remaining £1.5bn was available for councils, with over 10% of their stock non decent, to bid for. The Council bid was successful and it received £3.7m for 2012/13, with further funding of £8.5m for years 2013/14 and £7.55m for 2014/15. The latter was the last year of grant funding from the Government, and there will be no further grants in the foreseeable future.

The Council is forecast to spend £6.154 million in 2015/16 and will continue to invest in the Decent Homes Investment Programme to maintain the level of decency across the Housing Stock

The Decent Homes Improvement Programme for 2016/17 will invest £2.947 million in improving tenants' homes.

#### 5.2.2 Other Planned Investment Programme

In addition to delivering the Decent Homes Improvement Programme, there are a wide range of other investments required to maintain and enhance the housing stock and associated services and assets, which are outside the Government's definition of Decent Homes works.

#### 5.2.3 New Build/Affordable Housing Programme

In Autumn 2014, the Council commissioned Housing Quality Network (HQN) to undertake an options appraisal on how the Council could increase the number of council-owned homes through new build and acquisitions. The HQN report was concluded in January 2015 and as part of the recommendation in the report, the council has committed to build new homes at 3 different sites –

Brownfield site ( if acquired)	- 12 homes
Greenacres	- 10 homes
Willesley estate	- <u>8 homes</u>
Total	- <u>30 homes</u>

#### 5.2.4 Other Schemes / Miscellaneous

There are various other schemes with brief notes in the Housing capital programme as per Appendix B .

A new line for "High Value Assets Payment to Central Government" has been included in the above section. This is due to the new Housing and Planning Bill introduced in the summer.

The Government has made clear that with the introduction of the Right to Buy for Housing Association tenants it will require contributions from local housing authorities to support the discount to be granted to those tenants.

The Housing and Planning Bill currently requires that a local housing authority must make a payment to the Government based on the market value of high value housing likely to become vacant during the year, less any allowable deductions. The amount will be formula based and payable in advance. There are, as yet, no firm indications of the detailed calculation that the formula will provide and as a result an estimated amount has been included in the capital programme

#### 5.2.5 Future Funding

Since its inception, the long term HRA business plan has had a core assumption that future rents will increase by 2.5% (notwithstanding the annual 1% rent reductions from 2016 for four years) and this was a standard, benchmark assumption across most social housing landlords. In view of government policy and the outlook for inflation, it is now considered prudent to change this assumption to 1.5%. This will have a significant impact on future rental income flows, and additional efficiencies and savings will have to be identified within the Housing Service going forward.

Changing this core assumption will require a fundamental re-modelling of the HRA business plan, and this work is currently underway. It is therefore likely that the final capital programme proposals will change, with a particular focus on identifying areas where expenditure can be reduced, or additional income can be generated (e.g. disposals of sites / properties),

## 6.0 CAPITAL RESOURCES

- 6.1 The resources estimated to be needed to finance the General Fund programme 2016/17 to 2020/21 totals £6,111,560 and is as follows:

	£
2016/17	2,104,510
2017/18	1,175,970
2018/19	1,801,970
2019/20	228,000
2020/21	801,110
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,111,560</b>

- 6.2 Details of the planned funding of the programmes are included in Appendix A. Funding is in place in 2016/17 for the Disabled Facilities Grants Scheme (£716,760) consisting of £298,050 Disabled Facilities Grants, £282,790 of reserves and £135,920 of Revenue Contribution. The remaining schemes (£1,387,750) can be funded through either leasing or borrowing depending on value for money and provision has been made in the 2016/17 Revenue Budget.
- 6.3 The following resources are budgeted to be available for financing the Housing Revenue Account Programme in 2016/17. An estimated surplus of £968,000 can be carried forward to 2017/18.

	£
Usable Balances	2,766,107
Retained Right to Buy Receipts	238,534
Right to Buy Receipts – Attributable debt	658,722
Use of Right to Buy ‘One for One’ reserve	496,919
Major Repairs Allowance	3,995,170
Asset Disposals (Capital Allowance)	1,000,000
<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>9,155,452</b>
Less Budgeted Expenditure	8,187,518
<b>Surplus to be carried forward to 2017/18</b>	<b>967,934</b>

## 7.0 PROCUREMENT ROUTES

- 7.1 Where the authority is required to enter into a contract which has a value of £100,000 or more, Cabinet authority is sought prior to award of the contract. As Cabinet is considering the budgetary implications of the Capital Programmes, it is efficient for Cabinet to consider the award of subsequent high-value contracts at the same time. Cabinet is also asked to address a request for a waiver to the Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) for a particular selection of contract opportunities. Each will be considered in turn.



7.2 Although the procurement processes may be commenced sooner, the contract award will not take place before Council has approved the budget for the Capital Programmes. The authority's procurement documentation gives it a right not to award a contract, should Council not approve the budget.

7.3 **Waste Services, Vans, Cars, Plant and Equipment**  
As part of the Fleet, Plant and Equipment Replacement Programme, replacements will need to be made to some of the Council's vehicles, equipment and plant. Officers will select the most appropriate public sector framework for each item, considering which offers value for money for the Council at the time of procurement.

Cabinet is asked to delegate award of the subsequent contracts for vehicles, equipment and plant to the Director of Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

7.4 **Car Park Resurfacing**  
The Council will need to resurface four car parks/roads in the 2016/17 financial year, Access Road to High Street Car Park, Measham; Hermitage Recreation Grounds; Hood Park Leisure Centre Car Park and North Service Road Car Park, Coalville.

Where we are purchasing similar goods, works or services, we are under an obligation to aggregate the value so as to ensure, where that value is above the thresholds (for services contracts, the threshold is £172,514), the opportunity is advertised to potential European bidders. The aggregate value of these contract opportunities is £83,750, so below the thresholds which would require the authority to advertise the opportunity in Europe. At this value, it is a Band D contract requiring a formal tender process, pursuant to CPR 5.16.

To assist officers with scheduling the pre-procurement work and on-site delivery of the larger resurfacing schemes before winter, Cabinet is requested to grant a waiver to the CPR so the contract opportunities can be disaggregated. Each contract would then be procured in accordance with the CPR, according to its own value. This would bring all four schemes into Band B (Small) Contracts, all requiring three written quotations be sought and opening up the opportunities in the first instance to suitable businesses registered on the Buy Local portal.

Pursuant to CPR 3.2, Cabinet is asked to grant a waiver to CPR 5.16 so that each of the four resurfacing programmes can be treated as individual contract opportunities and procured in accordance with the CPR relevant to their particular value. Cabinet is asked to delegate award of the subsequent contracts to the Director of Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

## **8.0 NEXT STEPS**

8.1 This report will be presented to the Policy Development Group at its meeting on 6 January 2016. Consultation with the business community will be through the Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland Federation of Small Businesses. Any comments received will be included in the report to Cabinet on 9 February 2016 which will make the final recommendations to Council on 23 February 2016.

**This page is intentionally left blank**

DRAFT GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17 to 2020/21

SCHEME	BUDGET HOLDER	FUNDING										REVENUE	LEASING			
		2015/16	2015/16	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	GRANTS/	DFG			VFM	OTHER	APF
		ORIGINAL	Actual @	FORECAST						S106	GRANTS			Reserve	RESERVES	Reserve
		BUDGET	Period 7	(Inc c/f & slippage)						CONTRIBS						
			£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£			
<b>CHIEF EXEC DIRECTORATE</b>																
Network Upgrade	Michael Harding	-	109,568	89,360	-	*	*	*	*						89,360	
SAN and Virtual server replacement	Michael Harding	-	274	274	-	*	*	*	*						274	
Improving Customer Experience Project (ICE)	Ray Bowmer	-	47,190	5,000	-	*	*	*	*						5,000	
>Web and Self Service Improvements	Ray Bowmer	-	43,589	75,000	-	*	*	*	*						75,000	
>Finance Systems and Processes	Ray Bowmer	-	-	25,000	-	*	*	*	*						25,000	
>Line of Business Systems Improvement	Ray Bowmer	-	1,250	20,000	-	*	*	*	*						20,000	
>Communications Technology	Ray Bowmer	-	-	50,000	-	*	*	*	*						50,000	
>Office Experience	Ray Bowmer	-	-	30,000	-	*	*	*	*						30,000	
Waste Management System (ICE)	Michael Harding	-	6,300	-	-	*	*	*	*							
Information Management	Elizabeth Warhurst	-	-	100,000	-	*	*	*	*						100,000	
User workstation monitor replacements	Michael Harding	7,000	-	7,000	-	*	*	*	*						7,000	
Desktop Equipment Upgrade	Michael Harding	-	-	-	42,000	20,000	20,000	*	*						82,000	
Helpdesk software upgrade	Michael Harding	12,000	6,113	12,000	-	*	*	*	*						12,000	
Server and storage additional capacity	Michael Harding	29,000	7,475	29,000	-	*	*	*	*						379,000	
Replacement telephone system	Michael Harding	70,000	-	70,000	-	*	*	*	*						70,000	
ICT Security Infrastructure	Michael Harding	-	-	-	63,000	*	*	*	*						63,000	
HR / Payroll System	Mike Murphy / Anna Wright	-	-	-	50,000	*	*	*	*						50,000	

SCHEME	BUDGET HOLDER	2015/16	2015/16	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	GRANTS/	DFG	VFM	OTHER	RESERVES	REVENUE	LEASING	
		ORIGINAL	Actual @	FORECAST							S106	GRANTS	Reserve	RESERVES	ASSET		OR
		BUDGET	Period 7	(Inc c/f & slippage)	£	£	£	£	£	£	CONTRIBS				PROT FUND		BORROWING
			£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>DIRECTOR OF SERVICES</b>																	
Disabled Facility Grants	Minna Scott	560,000	231,713	504,000	716,760	433,970	433,970				1,192,200		339,410		557,090		
Waste Services	Paul Coates	468,000	471,468	639,468	689,000	460,000	575,000		685,000							3,048,468	
Cars/vans	Paul Coates	117,000	109,262	114,762	88,000	170,000	235,000	148,000	58,000							813,762	
Plant / Equipment	Paul Coates	176,000	45,000	171,000	262,000		140,000	40,000								613,000	
Council Offices Extnsn car park c/ville, Resurfacing	Paul Coates	20,000		20,000												20,000	
Market Hall CP, C/Ville - Resurfacing	Paul Coates		1,585	1,585												1,585	
South Street Car park, Ashby - Resurfacing	Paul Coates		54	19,900												19,900	
Access Road, High Street Car Park - Measham - Resurfacing	Paul Coates				25,000											25,000	
Hermitage Recreation Grounds - Surface Dressing	Paul Coates				11,500											11,500	
Hermitage Leisure Centre Car Park - Resurfacing (section of).	Paul Coates					15,000										15,000	
Hermitage Recreation Grounds, Whitwick, All Weather Play Area Car Park	Paul Coates					2,500										2,500	
Belvoir Shopping Centre, Main Service Road, Coalville - Maintenance.	Paul Coates	12,000		12,000												12,000	
Silver Street Car Park, Whitwick - Resurfacing.	Paul Coates	50,000		50,000												50,000	
Hood Park Leisure Centre Car Park, Ashby - Resurfacing (section of).	Paul Coates				15,000											15,000	
North Service Road Car Park, Coalville - Maintenance & Improvements.	Paul Coates				32,250											32,250	
Bridge Road Car Park, Coalville - Resurface main through route.	Paul Coates					21,500										21,500	
Materials Separating Technology - Linden way Depot	Paul Coates		8,018	8,018								8,018					
Whitwick Business Centre - Central Heating System	Simon Harvey	50,000		50,000									50,000				
Coalville Market Upgrade -Phase 1a	John Richardson		967														
Coalville Market Upgrade -Phase 2	John Richardson		53,259	100,000									100,000				
Market Hall Wall	John Richardson	30,000	5,350	30,000												30,000	
Caravan Site - Appleby Magna, Fire Risk Scheme	Simon Harvey	100,000	6,550	100,000												100,000	
Replace asbestos roof on outdoor pool change at Hood Park LC	Jason Knight	17,000	18,413	18,413												18,413	
Replace external flashing at Hermitage LC	Jason Knight	12,000	10,310	10,310												10,310	
Coalville Park - Reconfigure depot, replace building	Jason Knight				95,000											95,000	
Upgrade Hood Park LC outdoor pool electrics	Jason Knight					20,000										20,000	
Replace Hood Park LC outdoor learner pool boiler and pipework	Jason Knight					10,000										10,000	
Replace Hood Park LC Fitness Suite Air Con	Jason Knight				15,000											15,000	
Regrout Hermitage LC swimming pool tiles	Jason Knight					23,000										23,000	
Replace hot water system pipework, heat emitters & cold water storage tank at Hermitage LC	Jason Knight						18,000									18,000	
New Sportshall floor at Hermitage LC	Jason Knight						16,000									16,000	
Replace suspended ceiling in Hermitage LC main pool hall	Jason Knight							30,000								30,000	
Replacement of outdoor pool filter media at Hood Park LC	Jason Knight							10,000								10,000	
Replace Hermitage LC gym Air Con	Jason Knight						14,000									14,000	
Wellbeing Centre at Hood Park LC	Jason Knight	400,000		400,000						400,000							
Replace General Ductwork, ventilation & all fire dampners at Hood Park LC	Jason Knight								20,000							20,000	
Replace Flat roof cover over plant room at Hermitage LC	Jason Knight								13,110							13,110	
Replace control systems in alignment with plant installations at Hermitage LC	Jason Knight								15,000							15,000	
Replace Squash Court Lighting at Hermitage LC	Jason Knight								10,000							10,000	
<b>TOTAL GENERAL FUND</b>		<b>2,130,000</b>	<b>1,183,708</b>	<b>2,762,090</b>	<b>2,104,510</b>	<b>1,475,970</b>	<b>1,801,970</b>	<b>228,000</b>	<b>801,410</b>	<b>400,000</b>	<b>1,192,200</b>	<b>378,018</b>	<b>489,410</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>557,090</b>	<b>5,856,932</b>	

SCHEME	BUDGET HOLDER	2015/16	2015/16	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	GRANTS/	DFG	VFM	OTHER	RESERVES	REVENUE	LEASING	
		ORIGINAL	Actual @	FORECAST						S106	GRANTS	Reserve	RESERVES	ASSET			OR
		BUDGET	Period 7	(Inc c/f & slippage)						CONTRIBS				PROT FUND			BORROWING
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES</b>																	
Coalville Park Improvements	Jason Knight	-	-	-	-	*	*	*	*								
Melrose Road Play Hub	Jason Knight	-	-	-	-	*	*	*	*								
Cropston Drive BMX Track	Jason Knight	-	2,250	9,783	-	*	*	*	*				2,283	7,500			
Broomleys Allotments	Jason Knight	-	-	-	-	*	*	*	*								
Thringstone Miners Social Centre	Jason Knight	-	-	4,913	-	*	*	*	*					4,913			
Urban Forest Park - Play equipment	Jason Knight	-	-	-	-	*	*	*	*								
Urban Forest Park-Footway and drainage improvements	Jason Knight	-	28,866	39,025	-	*	*	*	*	39,025							
Scotland Recreation Ground	Jason Knight	-	-	-	-	*	*	*	*								
Owen Street -Floodlights	Jason Knight	-	-	779	-	*	*	*	*					779			
Owen Street - Changing Rooms	Jason Knight	-	16,987	115,563	-	*	*	*	*	30,563				85,000			
Thringstone Bowls Club Toilet Block	Jason Knight	-	289	2,500	-	*	*	*	*					2,500			
<b>TOTAL SPECIAL EXPENSES</b>		-	<b>48,392</b>	<b>172,563</b>	-	*	*	*	*	<b>69,588</b>	-		<b>2,283</b>	<b>100,692</b>	-	-	

INDICATIVE

**This page is intentionally left blank**

	2015/16	2015/16 (revised forecast outturn p6)	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>2016 - 2021 Decent Homes</b>							
Decent Homes Programme	4,281,900	5,081,900	2,097,370	1,139,014	3,998,415	2,498,586	817,160
Decent Homes Refusals/Deferrals Provision	222,000	222,000					
Decent Homes Voids	850,000	850,000	850,000	850,000	750,000	700,000	650,000
<b>2016 - 2021 Decent Homes Total</b>	<b>5,353,900</b>	<b>6,153,900</b>	<b>2,947,370</b>	<b>1,989,014</b>	<b>4,748,415</b>	<b>3,198,586</b>	<b>1,467,160</b>
<b>2016 - 2021 Other Planned Investment</b>							
Non Decency Improvements			1,028,124	764,808	555,223	1,563,739	1,213,430
Hard Wired Smoke Detectors	47,000	47,000	47,000	47,000	47,000	47,000	
Fire Risk Assessment Remedial Works	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	
Remedial Works (Damp & Structural)	210,000	210,000	187,500	187,500	187,500	187,500	
Fuel swaps (solid fuel to gas supply)	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	
<b>2016 - 2021 Other Planned Investment Total</b>	<b>322,000</b>	<b>322,000</b>	<b>1,327,624</b>	<b>1,064,308</b>	<b>854,723</b>	<b>1,863,239</b>	<b>1,213,430</b>
<b>New Build / Affordable Housing Programme</b>							
New Build Programme - use of RTB one for one reserve	122,178	33,750	496,919	105,916			
New Build Programme - NWLDC contribution to RTB one for one	285,082	78,750	385,961	1,663,964			
New Build Programme - NWLDC additional provision	319,000						
Support for Acquiring Affordable Housing	559,000		887,000				
Support for Affordable Housing - (Waterloo Hsg Grp, EMH Assoc, Nottingham Com grp)		444,000					
Support for Affordable Housing - EMH Assoc (Pick & Shovel site)		500,000					
Acquisition of sites		400,000					
<b>New Build / Affordable Housing Programme Total</b>	<b>1,285,260</b>	<b>1,456,500</b>	<b>1,769,880</b>	<b>1,769,880</b>			
<b>Other Schemes / Miscellaneous</b>							
Garage Modernisation	100,000		100,000				
Major Aids & Adaptations	450,000	450,000	350,000	325,000	300,000	300,000	280,000
Development Site Preparations	40,000	40,000	-				
Energy Insulation Works	250,000	250,000	-				
Renewable/Replacement Energy Installations Programme	100,000	100,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	
Speech Module	50,000		50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	
Capital Programme Delivery Costs	654,000	654,000	552,900	565,064	577,495	590,200	603,185
Unallocated/Contingency	500,000	500,000	339,744	272,410	310,157	283,091	
High Value Assets payment to Central Government (Provisional)			500,000	600,000	600,000	500,000	500,000
<b>Other Schemes / Miscellaneous Total</b>	<b>2,144,000</b>	<b>1,994,000</b>	<b>2,142,644</b>	<b>1,962,474</b>	<b>1,987,652</b>	<b>1,973,291</b>	<b>1,383,185</b>
<b>Capital Allowances</b>							
Programme to be defined							
<b>Capital Allowances Total</b>	-	-	-				
<b>Total Programme Costs</b>	<b>9,105,160</b>	<b>9,926,400</b>	<b>8,187,518</b>	<b>6,785,676</b>	<b>7,590,791</b>	<b>7,035,116</b>	<b>4,063,774</b>
<b>2016/17 - 2020/21 HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME FUNDING</b>							
	2015/16	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Usable balances held	3,162,000	3,162,000	2,766,107	967,935	26,250	183,750	393,750
Retained Right to Buy Receipts (RTB)	228,344	228,074	238,534	240,655	243,070	245,501	247,956
RTB receipts - attributable debt	438,799	432,353	658,722	408,510	406,108	403,691	401,250
Use of RTB one for one reserve	169,178	33,750	496,919	105,916	133,987	58,928	
RCCO	2,610,160	2,610,160	-	460,531	2,288,152	1,857,873	
Major Repairs Allowance	3,995,000	3,995,170	3,995,170	4,028,380	4,076,974	4,079,123	4,081,326
Asset Disposals (Capital Allowance)	-	-	1,000,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000
S106 Commuted Funds	559,000	887,000					
Grp, EMH Assoc, Nottingham Com grp) & Shovel site)		444,000					
Acquisition of Sites		500,000					
		400,000					
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>11,162,481</b>	<b>12,692,507</b>	<b>9,155,452</b>	<b>6,811,926</b>	<b>7,774,541</b>	<b>7,428,867</b>	<b>5,724,282</b>
<b>Cumulative Over / (Under Resource)</b>	<b>2,057,321</b>	<b>2,766,107</b>	<b>967,935</b>	<b>26,250</b>	<b>183,750</b>	<b>393,750</b>	<b>1,660,509</b>
<b>RTB One for One replacement reserve</b>							
Right to Buy Receipts for reinvestment in One for One	32	32	24	24	24	24	24
	122,178	122,178	432,775				103,917
	46,460	344,347	64,144	105,916	133,987	162,845	192,510
		33,750	496,919	105,916	133,987	58,928	
	168,638	432,775	-			103,917	296,427

**This page is intentionally left blank**



**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 8 DECEMBER 2015**

Title of report	<b>HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2016/17</b>
Key Decision	<p>a) Financial Yes</p> <p>b) Community Yes</p>
Contacts	<p>Councillor Nick Rushton 01530 412059 <a href="mailto:nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Councillor Roger Bayliss 01530 411055 <a href="mailto:roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Director of Resources 01530 454501 <a href="mailto:steve.barrett@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">steve.barrett@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Director of Housing 01530 454819 <a href="mailto:glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Head of Finance 01530 454520 <a href="mailto:ray.bowmer@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">ray.bowmer@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p>
Purpose of report	To seek approval of the draft 2016/17 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget proposals for consultation.
Reason for Decision	To enable the Council to set a balanced Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2016/17.
Council Priorities	The HRA budget assists the Value for Money priority.
<p>Implications:</p> <p>Financial/Staff</p> <p>Link to relevant CAT</p>	<p>As included in report.</p> <p>Delivering a HRA Budget for 2016/17 will allow the Council to achieve the objectives for the service as set out in the Housing Business Plan and Service Team Business Plans.</p>

Risk Management	The Council sets an HRA budget, which is regularly monitored throughout the year to ensure services are delivered within budget. Risks are managed through the corporate risk management process.
Equalities Impact Screening	None identified.
Human Rights	None identified.
Transformational Government	Not applicable
Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory
Consultees	Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)
Background papers	None
Recommendations	<p><b>A. THAT THE ASSURANCE STATEMENT BY THE S151 OFFICER BE NOTED,</b></p> <p><b>B. THAT CABINET APPROVE THE DRAFT HRA BUDGET PROPOSAL AS DETAILED IN THIS REPORT AND ASSOCIATED APPENDICES FOR CONSULTATION</b></p> <p><b>C. THAT CABINET APPROVE THE TRANSFER OF HRA BALANCES TO A SAVINGS RESERVE FOR THE PURPOSES OF REPAYMENT OF LOANS</b></p>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to consult on the draft HRA budget proposals for 2016/17, with the outcome of this consultation exercise being fed back into the subsequent reports to Cabinet and Council to seek approval for the final budget.
- 1.2 The formal consultation process with customers adheres to the same consultation timetable as the general fund and will commence on 9 December 2015 and end on 15 January 2016 in readiness for Cabinet and Full Council approval of final proposals on 9 and 23 February 2016 respectively.
- 1.3 Draft proposals for consultation have been prepared in the context of a revised approach to annual rent increases following announcements made by the Chancellor of the

Exchequer in his Budget statement in July of this year, regarding the four year rent reduction regime which all social housing landlords must adhere to.

- 1.4 The immediate post budget impact of this revised approach to rents was a reduction in rental income of £7.5m over the first 5 years of the HRA business plan, when compared to assumptions when setting the 2015/16 budget and rent increase. As a result, initial efficiency savings needing to be made were envisaged as follows:
- £6m by 2021/22 (when the first £10m and £3m maturity loans fall due).
  - A further £6.2m of savings will be required between 2022/23 – 2024/25.
  - A further £10m funding shortfall arises between years 27 and 30 (2041/42 and 2044/45), taking the total to £22.2m.

## **2.0 2015/16 BUDGET POSITION**

- 2.1 The budgeted position for 2015/16 was a £183k surplus. The overall forecast at period 7 shows a potential surplus of £2k. This is largely as a result of the reduction in expected rent due to a higher than predicted level of empty properties, the loss in Supporting People grant for older persons services, and additional staffing costs in the Repairs team. We will aim to achieve a balanced budget position by year end (i.e. a zero deficit / surplus).
- 2.2 As a result of this the balance on the Housing Revenue Account at 31 March 2016 is estimated to be £5.2m. This balance significantly exceeds our agreed minimum working balance on the HRA of £1m and has been developed as a provision against the future repayment of debts taken out on a maturity repayment basis, within the HRA Business Plan. The first maturity loans of £10m and £3m fall due for repayment on 28 March 2022. It is proposed that these balances be transferred to a savings reserve for the purposes of repaying these loans commitments.

## **3.0 2016/17 BUDGET OVERVIEW**

- 3.1 Budget proposals are based on prices and levels of charges for Council Housing related services at September 2015 plus known increases, for example contractual obligations.
- 3.2 The process of determining the 2016/17 budget includes the capturing of all of the changes required from one budget year to the next within the HRA in the form of a budget “investment” – a request for more funding or a reduction in income collected, or a budget “saving” – an increase in income or a budget saving via reduced expenditure.
- 3.3 The budget investment and budget saving proposals for the 2016/17 budget are shown within Appendix A.
- 3.4 For 2016/17, the level of revenue contribution to capital outlay (RCCO) is proposed to reduce from £2.6m to nil. This is as a result of the inclusion of new build proposals for the brownfield site (Coalville), Greenacres and Willesley sites (as presented to Cabinet on 10 November 2015) that revise the 2015/16 capital programme to cover the cost of land acquisition in 2015/16, and development expenditure spread between 2016/17 and 2017/18 ahead of properties being delivered by Q3 2017/18.

- 3.5 The budget for 2016/17 is estimated to produce an operating surplus of £2.45m, which will increase the estimated balance on the Housing Revenue Account at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 to £7.7m. It is proposed that these balances be transferred to a savings reserve for the purposes of repaying the £10m and £3m maturity loans which fall due in 2021/22.
- 3.6 Savings of £2.45m will therefore be realised in 2016/17, and future predicted savings that will be made are as follows:
- 2017/18 - £1.7m
  - 2018/19 - £0.0m
  - 2019/20 - £0.0m
  - 2020/21 - £1.6m
  - 2021/22 - £2.7m
- 3.7 Future additional savings will be required to be made to address lower than predicted income due to changing assumptions around future rent inflation (see 4.8).

#### **4.0 2016/17 BUDGET – RENTS**

- 4.1 During 2014, the Government announced that from 2015/16 rent guidance required rent increases to be via a formula of September CPI + 1% for the next 10 years.
- 4.2 On the introduction of its new guidance the Government's former rent restructuring policy ceased from 2015/16, with the exception of re-letting properties at the converged rent level ('target rent') on re-let.
- 4.3 Following a review of the number of properties at target rent at that time, Cabinet agreed to adopt an accelerated convergence approach which increased 2014/15 rents following the new guidance of CPI + 1% but also continued to converge rents not already at the target rent at an accelerated rate of up to £4 per week. Cabinet also agreed to the expansion of the approach to letting properties at target rent to include transfers between existing tenants. This approach was approved on the basis of a more equitable outcome with similar rent values being charged for similar properties, and as a result 48% of properties were at target rent at April 2015. In addition, it was proposed that this accelerated convergence be followed for the 2016/17 rent increase which would have seen the number of properties at target rent move to 94% with the remaining 6% by 2019/20.
- 4.4 At October 2015, 51% of properties are currently at target rent.
- 4.5 Government proposals announced in the Summer Budget in respect of the four year rent reduction have confirmed that Local Authorities' must adhere to this regime. As a result, all rents for 2016/17 must be based on the 2015/16 level and reduced by 1%. The ability to converge rents has been removed and properties can only be moved to target rent upon re-let.
- 4.6 The void target included in the budgeted rental income is 1.8%.

- 4.7 As a result of the 1% rent reduction for 2016/17, budgeted rental income is £279k less than budgeted in 2015/16.
- 4.8 Since its inception, the long term HRA business plan has had a core assumption that future rents will increase by 2.5% (notwithstanding the four year 1% rent reductions from 2016) and this was a standard, benchmark assumption across most social housing landlords. In view of government policy and the outlook for inflation, it is now considered prudent to change this assumption to 1.5%. This will have a significant impact on future rental income flows, and additional efficiencies and savings will have to be identified within the Housing Service going forward.
- 4.9 Changing this core assumption will require a fundamental re-modelling of the HRA business plan, and this work is currently underway. It is therefore likely that the final budget proposals will have to change significantly, with a particular focus on identifying areas where expenditure can be reduced (e.g. reductions in the capital programme) or additional income can be generated (e.g. disposals of sites / properties),

## **5.0 SERVICE CHARGES, FEES AND OTHER CHARGES**

- 5.1 Approximately one third of the Council's properties have a service charge, covering a range of items such as communal heating, communal lighting, maintenance of communal areas and the new charge implemented following Cabinet approval in September 2015 in respect of the older persons service. Service charges are covered by Housing Benefit, whilst all other fees and charges are not.
- 5.2 For 2016/17 average weekly service charges are proposed to be increased by 4.92%.
- 5.3 Central heating charges are proposed to be maintained at existing levels, as a result of a forecast freeze on energy prices anticipated for 2016/17.
- 5.4 Garage rent levels are proposed to rise by 0.8% which is in line with the Retail Prices Index (RPI) as at September 2015.
- 5.5 Appleby Magna Caravan Site is a General Fund asset but managed by the Housing Service. Ground rents for the site are proposed to be increased by RPI of 0.8% on the anniversary of each individual rent agreement in 2016/17.
- 5.6 It is proposed that Lifeline Charges are increased by RPI of 0.8% from April 2016.
- 5.7 Shop leases are proposed to rise by 14% as agreed by Cabinet in November 2014.
- 5.8 A table detailing each charge increase can be found in Appendix B.

## **6.0 HRA BUSINESS PLAN**

- 6.1 Significant annual surpluses on the HRA are required in future years in order to meet the loan repayment commitments in the HRA Business Plan. As detailed in 2.3 and 3.6 above, it is proposed that existing balances and future annual surpluses are transferred to a savings reserve for the purposes of repaying these loans. The first maturity loans to fall

due do so in 2021/22 and are for £3m and £10m. Please see Appendix C for a schedule of HRA loans.

6.2 As a result of proposals for 2016/17 and the inclusion of new build proposals which will bring in additional longer term rental income, the overall impact to the HRA Business Plan is to reduce the funding shortfall by £13.4m over the 30 years as follows:

- Savings of £4.4m needed by 2021/22 (when first £10m and £3m maturity loans fall due).
- Further £3.9m of savings will be required between 2022/23 – 2023/24.
- Funding shortfalls in future years to year 30 (2044/45) reduced to nil.
- Cumulative total savings of £8.3m are therefore required up to 2023/24 in addition to the savings already factored in at 3.7 above. However, as per 4.9 above, it is likely that the savings required will increase when the new rent inflation assumption is factored in.

6.3 Revenue contribution to capital outlay is RCCO for 2016/17 is reduced to nil. Future amounts are forecast to be required in order to support new build proposals, as detailed in 3.5 above, as follows:

#### **RCCO**

- 2016/17 – nil
- 2017/18 - £434k
- 2018/19 - £2.1m
- 2019/20 - £1.6m

## **7.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS**

7.1 The contents and appendices of this report will be used to consult with Council tenants on the proposals for the 2016/17 Housing Revenue Account budget.

7.2 This will include consulting with tenant members of the Performance and Finance Working Group (the Council's Resident Involvement technical finance working group) and the Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum (the Council's main consultative body of tenants) to review and comment on the proposals.

7.3 In addition, the contents and appendices of this report will be published on the Council's Housing internet page and available in hard copy format upon request.

7.4 A copy of the consultation timetable can be found in Appendix D.

## **8.0 ROBUSTNESS OF ESTIMATES AND ADEQUACY OF RESERVES**

8.1 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council's Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) to comment on the robustness of the estimates and also on the adequacy of the proposed reserves. Members must have regard to these comments when making a decision on the budget proposals for the forthcoming year.

- 8.2 Taking into account identified risks, the Section 151 Officer considers that the estimates which form the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2016/17 are robust and prudent, and the proposals are deliverable.
- 8.3 The Section 151 Officer also considers that the overall level of Housing Revenue Account reserves is adequate.





## APPENDIX A

### Saving / Increase in Income

Ref	Team	Savings Bid Title	Value
SAV4	Repairs	Reduction in recurring budget provision associated with the Green & Decent pilot project which will cease April 2016	£21,000
SAV14	HRA Business Support	Increase in service charge income, including full year budget provision for new element of charge in relation to the control centre	£153,776
SAV15	HRA Business Support	Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) Reduction in the estimated RCCO required to meet capital expenditure for 2016/17	£2,610,160
SAV19	Housing Management	Increase in lifeline income based on RPI increase for existing tenants & additional income generated via new business	£21,119
SAV25	Housing Management	Reduction in one off funding for the redesign of the Support Service, net of £10k provision for increased social activities for vulnerable tenants	£10,000
SAV28	HRA Business Support	Removal of one off expenditure items included in the 2015/16 budget	
De-min SAV 41	De-minimus (below £5k)	£4,000 Reduction in one off expenditure for Resident Involvement IT requirements (SAV1) ; £5,000 Reduction in budget provision for external communications (SAV3); £5,000 Reduction in water hygiene costs (SAV10); £1,311 Increase in garage rent based on RPI increase (SAV18); £2,837 Reduction in software reporting licence costs (SAV20); £648 Reduction in servicing costs of door entry systems (SAV22); £2,648 Reduction in servicing costs of communal refuse systems (SAV23); £4,647 Savings as a result of control centre maintenance contract (SAV24); £704 Increase in insurance premium collection (SAV26)	£26,795
<b>Total</b>			<b>£3,052,850</b>

### Investment / Reduction in Income

Ref	Team	Investments Bid Title	Value
BI12	HRA Business Support	Reduction in rental income for 2016/17 compared to 2015/16 as a result of 1% rent reduction. Includes voids target of 1.8%	£278,700
BI14	HRA Business Support	Increase in HRA salary provision based on incremental increases, pension costs and 1% pay of existing posts. Provision is net of changes to the existing structure, which include provision for Planned Investment Team	£85,900
BI20	Housing Management	Reduction in income as a result of withdrawal of Leicestershire County Council Supporting People Grant	£328,100
BI25	Planned Investment	Reduction in the value of salary costs charged to the Capital Programme as a result of revised structure	£86,100
De-min BI	De-minimus (below £5k)	£1,100 Increase in annual ICT licence costs (BI15); £2,317 Annual increase in expenditure on cleaning contract (BI16); £2,003 Increase in the cost of grounds maintenance of shared and common parts (BI22); £164 Increase in costs of servicing fire extinguishers (BI24)	£5,584
<b>Total</b>			<b>£784,384</b>

**Net Savings for 2016/17 = £2,268,466**

**APPENDIX B**

<b>DRAFT COMPARISON OF 2015/16 AND 2016/17 HOUSING CHARGES</b>							
	<b>2015/16</b>		<b>2016/17</b>				
<b>Chargeable Service</b>	<b>Actual 2015/16</b>	<b>Charge</b>	<b>Estimates 2016/17</b>	<b>Increase/ (Decrease)</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>	<b>Charge</b>	<b>Basis of Increase (Please see draft report for full details)</b>
Service Charges (before adjustments to income for void loss)	£482,432	Varies per property	£506,190	£23,758	4.92%	Largest increase value: £2.88 pw or 84%; Largest decrease value: £1.36pw or - 98%	Based on assessment of all chargeable services.
Central Heating (before adjustments to income for void loss)	£115,223	0 Bed: £7.75pw 1 Bed: £9.34pw 2 Bed: £10.72pw 3 Bed: £12.32pw	£115,223	£0	0.00%	0 Bed: £7.75pw 1 Bed: £9.34pw 2 Bed: £10.72pw 3 Bed: £12.32pw	Based on market assessment of predicted increase in utility costs during 2015/16 and forecast energy prices for 2016/17.
Garage & Garage Site Rent (before adjustments to income for void loss)	£163,905	Garage: £6.25pw Site: £4.01pw	£165,216	£1,311	0.80%	Garage: £6.38pw Site: £4.09pw	RPI based increase in line with previous years.
Appleby Magna Caravan Site Rent (before adjustments to income for void loss)	£23,213	Site: £30.95pw	£23,399	£186	0.80%	Site: £31.19pw	RPI based increase at anniversary date of each licence in line with previous years.
Shop Leases	£14,300	n/a	£16,302	£2,002	14.00%	n/a	14% increase based on Nov 14 Cabinet Report
Tenants Contents Insurance	£45,883	Premiums from £0.43 to £6.18pw	£51,299	£5,416	11.80%	Premiums from £0.43 to £6.78pw	Minimum increase of 3.5% in IPT, increase in actual premiums unknown still, subject to review on claims made. Also includes 2nd part of stepped increase for policyholders who had accidental damage before April 2015
Lifelines for private customers	£100,726	£43.66 per quarter	£101,532	£806	0.80%	£44.00 per quarter	RPI based increase in line with previous years.

Lifelines (East Midlands Housing Association)	£38,209	Various depending on scheme	£38,515	£306	0.80%	Various depending on scheme	RPI based increase in line with previous years.
Choice Based Lettings Advertising Costs	£28,000	n/a	£28,000	-	0.00%	n/a	No increase proposed.
<b>Total Services</b>	<b>£1,011,890</b>		<b>£1,045,675</b>	<b>£33,785</b>			

**NWLDC Housing Revenue Account Loan Schedule**

**NWLDC - HRA Self Financing loans taken up 26/03/12**  
**PAYMENT PROFILE - PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST**

<b>Loan Type</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Loan Period (Years)</b>	<b>Interest Rate</b>
Maturity	10,000,000	30	3.5
Annuity	10,000,000	20	2.57
Maturity	10,000,000	10	2.4
Maturity	3,000,000	10	2.4
Annuity	10,000,000	15	2.02
Maturity	10,000,000	25	3.44
Maturity	13,785,000	30	3.5
Maturity	10,000,000	30	3.5
	<b>76,785,000</b>		

Note – The above schedule does not reflect the HRA share of existing general fund loans for which the HRA bears an annual charge.

### Consultation and approval of HRA 2016/17 Budget Timetable

Date	Item	Information
9 December 2015 to 15 January 2016	Consultation with customers	Consultation with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All customers via NWLDC website</li> <li>• Tenant members of the Performance and Finance Working Group (17 December 2015)</li> <li>• Members of Tenants and Leaseholder Consultation Forum (via letter)</li> </ul>
6 January 2016	Policy Development Group	Opportunity for members to consider proposals prior to agreement of final budget by Cabinet & Council
9 February 2016	Cabinet Meeting	Recommendations to Council
23 February 2016	Council	Approval of Budget

**This page is intentionally left blank**

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 8 DECEMBER 2015**

Title of report	<b>HOUSING ENERGY STRATEGY</b>
Key Decision	a) Financial No b) Community Yes
Contacts	Councillor Roger Bayliss 01530 411055 <a href="mailto:roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>  Director of Housing 01530 454819 <a href="mailto:glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>  Head of Housing 01530 454780 <a href="mailto:chris.lambert@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">chris.lambert@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>
Purpose of report	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Cabinet for the 2015-2020 Housing Energy Strategy.
Council Priorities	Value for Money Business and Jobs Homes and Communities Green Footprints Challenge
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	Any costs associated with the adoption of the Strategy, including staffing implications, will be met from within existing budgets.
Link to relevant CAT	Not Applicable
Risk Management	A risk register will be developed as part of the action planning process subject to approval of the Strategy.
Equalities Impact Screening	An equalities impact screening assessment will be undertaken subject to approval of the Strategy
Human Rights	None
Transformational Government	Delivering housing in a sustainable way, considering the environmental and social impacts and benefits.

Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees	NWL Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum
Background papers	<a href="#">HRA Asset Management Strategy 2015 -2020</a>
Recommendations	<p><b>IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT CABINET:</b></p> <p><b>1) NOTES THE CONTENTS OF THE REPORT; AND</b>  <b>2) APPROVES THE 2015-2020 HOUSING ENERGY STRATEGY.</b></p>

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The implementation of a Housing Energy Strategy 2015 -20 to support the HRA Asset Management Strategy 2015 -20, approved by Cabinet on 20 October 2015, is key to ensure we deliver our objectives to improve the energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock and to reduce fuel poverty in the area.

1.2 The aim is to ensure that our tenants benefit from homes which meet a good standard of energy efficiency and which can be heated comfortably without excessive cost. This means providing homes that are well insulated and have modern, low cost heating systems which can meet present and future needs.

## 2.0 FUTURE ACTIVITY

2.1 The Strategy, action plan and supporting appendices attached to this report, describe our future activity over the next five years, including how we aim to achieve a minimum energy standard for our homes and our ambitions to maximise the use of renewable energy systems where feasible within our existing capital budgets and investment plans.

2.2 The investment made in improving the energy efficiency of our homes will benefit both the Council and our tenants by:

- Helping to maintain and improve the condition and value of the Council's housing stock;
- Reducing the repair costs associated with cold or unheated homes;
- Reducing energy costs for tenants resulting in greater household income and a positive effect on rent arrears;
- Improving the health and wellbeing of Council tenants;



- Making properties more attractive to let reducing the costs associated with empty homes and re-letting.

### **3.0 CONSULTATION**

3.1 Prior to presentation to Cabinet, there has already been some consultation activity relating to the production of the Energy Strategy, principally with respect to agreeing principles and initial outcomes with tenants' representatives.

3.2 The formal approval process is detailed as follows:

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| • Tenant and Leaseholder Consultation Forum | 26 October 2015  |
| • Housing Senior Management Team            | 29 October 2015  |
| • Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)           | 17 November 2015 |
| • Strategy Group                            | 24 November 2015 |
| • Cabinet                                   | 8 December 2015  |
| • Adoption and implementation               | 1 January 2016   |

3.3 This timetable will allow the Energy Strategy to be used to shape the commissioning decisions for the 2016/17 improvement programme.

3.4 A communications plan will also be developed whilst the Strategy is being approved to ensure that we share the key outcomes from the adoption with tenants, key partners and other stakeholders.

3.5 Delivery of the actions required by the plan (Appendix D) will be overseen by the Housing Services Senior Management Team, with appropriate reference for approval to other groups (CLT/Cabinet etc) as appropriate.

3.6 It is anticipated that specific actions arising from the Strategy will be key drivers in the Team and Service planning processes for 2016/17 and beyond.

### **4.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Implementing the HRA Asset Management Strategy and supporting Energy Strategy will require the right level of skills and experience, to both commission and deliver the works required, both in terms of revenue maintenance / planned cyclical works, and capital improvements, as well as new build and acquisitions.

4.2 A reorganisation and restructure of the Planned Investment Team is proposed to be in place in quarter one of the financial year 2016-17 that will support this, and will be the subject of a further report to Corporate Management Team in February / March 2016. This piece of work has been put back pending the outcome of the VFM study of the reactive repairs service, as it is sensible to consider proposed changes to both service areas together. The trade unions will be consulted as part of any restructuring process.

4.3 There is capacity within the existing Planned Investment Team, of which the Energy Strategy Officer is now a member, to implement the Strategy and associated Action Plan. Any new structure will take account of the need to maintain this capacity, and it is intended that the Energy Strategy Officer post, which will lead on implementation of the Strategy, will remain in its current form.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The financial implications of delivering the proposals within the Energy Strategy were contained within the Asset Management Strategy approved by Cabinet on 20 October 2015. There are no additional financial implications arising from the Energy Strategy



# Housing Service

## Draft Energy Strategy

### 2015-2020



Version 4  
November 2015

# 1 Executive Summary

1.1 This Strategy sets out our approach to improving the energy efficiency of the Council’s housing stock up to 2020 in order to deliver the energy objectives of the 2015-20 HRA Asset Management Strategy and to reduce fuel poverty.

1.2 The aim is to ensure that our tenants benefit from homes which meet a good standard of energy efficiency and which can be heated comfortably without excessive cost. This means providing homes that are well insulated and have modern, low cost heating systems which can meet present and future needs.

1.3 The investment made in improving the energy efficiency of our homes will benefit both the Council and our tenants by:

- Helping to maintain and improve the condition and value of the Council’s housing stock;
- Reducing the repair costs associated with cold or unheated homes;
- Reducing energy costs for tenants resulting in greater household income and a positive effect on rental arrears;
- Improving the health and wellbeing of Council tenants;
- Making properties more attractive to let reducing the costs associated with empty homes and re-letting.

## 1.4 The objectives of this Strategy are to:

<p>Improve the energy efficiency of our homes in order to meet and exceed national targets</p>	<p>Ensure tenants live in homes which are affordable to heat and have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Deliver targeted investment programmes which address inequality</p>
<p>Introduce a minimum standard for the energy efficiency of our homes</p>	<p>Take action to reduce fuel poverty and support those struggling to afford to heat their homes</p>	<p>Focus on improving our most difficult and expensive to heat homes first</p>

1.5 We will aim to deliver value for money by maximising external funding opportunities and incorporating energy efficiency into the day to day operational business.

## 2. Background and Introduction

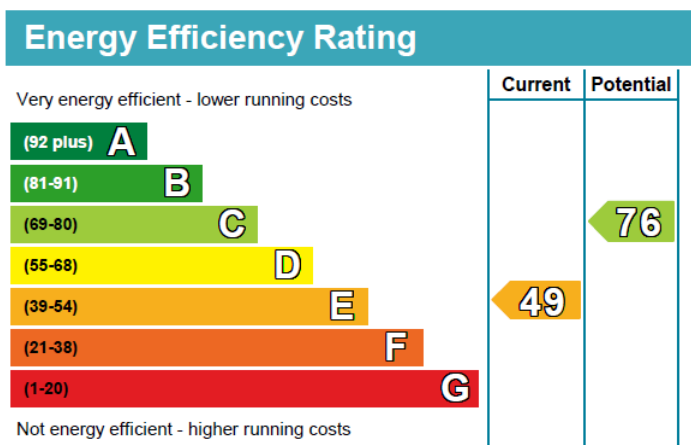
2.1 This Strategy sets out our approach to improving the energy efficiency of our homes and reducing fuel poverty for the five year period from 2015 to 2020. The action plan included in Appendix C outlines how this will be achieved.

2.2 Our approach is driven by the 2015-20 HRA Asset Management Strategy that includes the following objectives:

- To maintain tenants’ homes in line with the Government’s Decent Homes Standard;
- To create successful and sustainable communities;
- To tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency;
- To optimise the balance between planned and responsive revenue expenditure
- To deliver value for money and efficiency savings
- To achieve continuous improvement in property related services
- To promote Equality and Diversity
- To deliver the Council’s new build and regeneration programmes

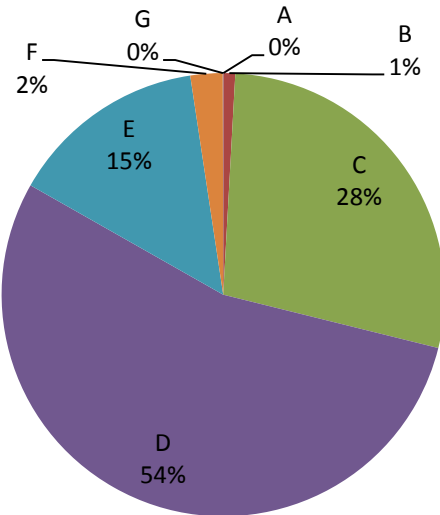
2.3 This Strategy also supports and links to the Council’s vision of North West Leicestershire as “a place where people and businesses feel they belong and are proud to call home” and the Housing Strategy themes of ‘Supply, Standards and Support’.

2.4 It is aligned to the English fuel poverty strategy, “Cutting the Cost of Keeping Warm” which was published in March 2015 and sets out the government’s framework for reducing fuel poverty including introducing a target of as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable to achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of band C, by 2030 with interim milestones of; (i) as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable to Band E by 2020 and (ii) as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable to Band D by 2025.



2.5 The energy efficiency of our housing stock performs at a similar level to other social housing providers with the majority of properties achieving an energy efficiency rating band D<sup>1</sup>. There are however individual properties which will require investment in order to reach the standard of energy efficiency required by the HRA Asset Management Strategy.

**EPC Ratings Aug 2015**



**NWLDC Average SAP rating 2015 = 63 (band D)**

Average UK home SAP rating 2013 = 59.7 (band D)

Average social housing SAP rating 2013 = 65.6 (band D)

*SAP = standard assessment procedure, used to calculate and compare the energy efficiency of buildings*

2.6 As a consequence of the local coal mining history and rural nature of the area there are a number of properties which are not currently served by gas central heating. The majority of these are instead heated by solid fuel central heating or electric storage heaters which are often more expensive and less convenient to run. Investment is needed to provide modern, low cost heating systems for these properties to ensure they can be let successfully in the future and that tenants living in these properties are not disadvantaged.

2.7 The Council is keen to take advantage of the opportunities that renewable energy provides to provide low cost, controllable heating systems for properties where a mains gas connection is not possible or cost effective.



Twelve properties took part in the Green and Decent Pilot between September 2014 and December 2015. Four different renewable technologies were installed into the properties and their performance monitored. The pilot looked at the success of each technology in reducing energy bills, providing adequate heating and hot water and ease of use. The information gathered from the pilot has informed our choices regarding investment in renewable technology.

<sup>1</sup> August 2015

- 2.8 Addressing fuel poverty is a government objective as well as a local objective. The government defines someone as being in fuel poverty if they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level) and were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line. Fuel poverty in North West Leicestershire is on average lower than national levels and similar to the average for Leicestershire<sup>2</sup>. There are however areas in the District where fuel poverty is significantly higher than the national average and there will be individual households who are struggling to afford to heat their homes to a comfortable level due to one or more of the following factors: the energy efficiency of the property (and therefore, the energy required to heat and power the home); the cost of energy; household income. A planned approach is needed in order address these factors and identify and support those affected.

### **Who are the Fuel Poor?**

#### **The government definition of someone in fuel poverty is:**

They have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)  
Were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line

#### **Health impacts of cold homes and fuel poverty *Marmot Review 2011***

- There is a strong relationship between cold temperatures, cardio-vascular and respiratory diseases, which has been associated with fuel poverty and cold housing.
- Children living in cold homes are more than twice as likely to suffer from a variety of respiratory problems than children living in warm homes.
- Mental health is negatively affected by fuel poverty and cold housing for any age group.
- More than 1 in 4 adolescents living in cold housing are at risk of multiple mental health problems.
- Cold housing increases the level of minor illnesses such as colds and flu and exacerbates existing conditions such as arthritis and rheumatism.

---

<sup>2</sup> 2013 figures - DECC

### 3. Energy Strategy

3.1 This Strategy has three main objectives:

- To improve the energy efficiency of our homes in order to meet and exceed national targets
- To ensure tenants live in homes which are affordable to heat and have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing
- To deliver targeted investment programmes which address inequality

#### 3.2 **Objective 1: To improve the energy efficiency of our homes in order to meet and exceed national targets**

##### **Where are we now?**

3.2.1 We know that the majority of our properties have an energy efficiency rating of D with all but 82 properties already meeting the 2020 target contained within the national fuel poverty strategy (band E or higher).

3.2.2 We know that we have an average SAP rating of 63 which is comparable but slightly lower than the overall average rating for social housing providers in England; SAP 65.6 (English Housing Survey 2013).

3.2.3 We know that we have undertaken external wall and cavity wall insulation programmes in the past meaning that the majority of our properties have wall insulation with the exception of those properties which are hard to treat, where work has been refused or where a need has not yet been identified.

3.2.4 We are about to embark on a programme of new house building which offers opportunities to deliver high quality energy efficient housing for our tenants.

##### **Where do we want to get to?**

3.2.5 We want to ensure that all our properties meet a minimum standard with regard to energy efficiency.

3.2.6 The standard we have chosen is for all our properties to reach a minimum SAP rating of 65 (Band D) by 2020. This is an ambitious target which is above the thermal comfort requirements within the Decent Homes Standard and above the 2020 target within the English Fuel Poverty Strategy. In order to achieve this we will need to improve the energy efficiency of 1,600 properties.



3.2.7 As part of reaching this standard we want all our properties to have basic energy efficiency measures. These are shown in Appendix A and include:

- Loft and wall insulation
- Energy efficient components: doors, windows, boilers etc
- Controllable heating

3.2.8 The standard will be achieved through:

- Identifying the specific measures required for each property to achieve our energy standard and determining how and when this will be delivered
- Installing replacement heating systems and controls which deliver high levels of energy efficiency.
- Investing in renewable energy
- Building new properties to high standards of energy efficiency

3.2.9 It is recognised that in some cases the cost of achieving this standard may affect the Net Present Value of a property to a level which triggers a review of financial viability, as determined in our Asset Management Strategy.

Key Objective	Success Measure/Timeframe
Achieve a minimum rate of energy efficiency for our housing stock	All properties SAP 65 or above by 2020

### 3.3 **Objective 2: Ensure tenants live in homes which are affordable to heat and have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing**

#### **Where are we now?**

3.3.1 We have a corporate commitment to addressing fuel poverty and we are successfully delivering programmes which tackle the causes of fuel poverty namely the energy efficiency of the property, the cost of energy and household income. We have identified housing properties which are in areas where fuel poverty is above the national average and where we may need to focus our resources.

3.3.2 We know that through the Decent Homes Programme from 2013 to 2015 over 1,031 new heating systems were installed that include “A” rated gas boilers and upgrades to include modern thermostats and controls. Additionally over 3,188 new doors or windows and 450 new roofs have been installed, significantly improving the thermal properties of the Council homes and ensuring that our properties meet Decent Homes Standards for thermal comfort.

3.3.3 We provide support to our tenants to lower their energy costs and increase their income. In September 2015 we joined a Collective Switching Campaign to access cheaper electricity and gas tariffs for our residents and make it easier for them to switch supplier. We operate a tenancy support service to assist

tenants who have financial or other difficulties enabling them to better afford their basic household bills.

3.3.4 We have delivered affordable warmth training to staff and our involved residents to help them to identify and support those in fuel poverty.

3.3.5 We have supported the delivery of affordable warmth projects in partnership with others such as the Countywide “4 Ways to Warmth” project which was delivered in 2013/2014 and we continue to support and signpost to existing schemes; for example those provided by Leicestershire County Council via the Warm Homes, Healthy Homes Project.

### **Where do we want to get to?**

3.3.6 We want to reduce heating costs for our tenants, better identify and support those in fuel poverty and reduce the impact of cold and unheated homes.

### **We will do this by:**

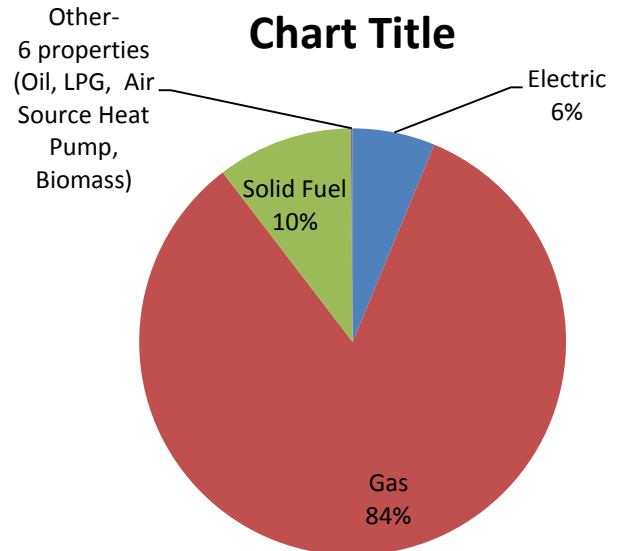
- Delivering programmes which convert heating systems to lower cost fuels (as described in 3.4.6 below).
- Identifying individuals or groups who are at high risk of fuel poverty and prioritising them in the design of our programmes and support packages.
- Delivering further training and awareness raising activities for all front line staff
- Continuing to promote our collective switching campaign
- Deliver advice and information campaigns for tenants on energy efficiency and efficient use of their heating systems.
- Being proactive in securing the benefits of the governments smart meter roll out for our tenants
- Assessing our current response to mould, condensation and cold complaints to ensure that we are effective in tackling these issues in order to reduce health impacts and maintain the condition of our properties.

<b>Key Objective</b>	<b>Success Measure/Timeframe</b>
Embed fuel poverty awareness and support within Housing Service	All front line staff trained in energy efficiency and fuel poverty by March 2017

### 3.4 Objective 3: Deliver targeted investment programmes which address inequality

#### Where are we now?

3.4.1 The majority of our properties benefit from gas central heating and under our Decent Homes Programme 2012-2015 we upgraded over 70 properties to gas central heating from other fuel sources. We do however have around 400 properties in areas where mains gas infrastructure is not immediately available and which are currently heated by solid fuel or electric central heating; which is more expensive and generally less convenient to manage. We also have properties in areas where a gas connection is available but where either historically the properties have been heated with electric heating (in most cases blocks of flats) or tenants have previously refused works to install gas central heating.



3.4.2 We have SAP ratings for the majority of our properties and can identify individual properties, streets and areas where energy efficiency falls below the minimum standard described in paragraph 3.2.6 of this Strategy.

3.4.3 We know which areas have levels of fuel poverty higher than the national average and we know which of our properties and tenants live in these areas and therefore might benefit from additional assistance. See Appendix B.

3.4.4 We record basic information about our tenants which allows us to identify those who are vulnerable or fit the profile of someone at greater risk of fuel poverty.

#### Where do we want to get to?

3.4.5 We want to target our resources in order to deliver the greatest impact and value for money. In order to do this we will focus on:

- Properties not achieving our minimum SAP rating
- Properties with heating systems which rely on expensive fuels
- Properties in areas of high fuel poverty
- Properties with solid fuel heating where the type of heating is anticipated to negatively affect future demand
- Properties where there are opportunities to deliver funded or income generating improvements

3.4.6 We have identified the following areas for investment:

- Replacement of all solid fuel heating systems with gas or renewable heating source (subject to final review of Green and Decent Pilot)
- Replacement of electric storage heating with gas where gas is readily available
- Delivery of insulation programme(s) so properties meet our standard
- Delivery of solar PV to suitable properties (subject to financial viability following government review of Feed In Tariff)
- Investigation of heat network opportunities for “off gas” estates where NWLDC remains the predominate owner

3.4.7 Our approach to the delivery of replacement heating systems to non-gas properties can be found in Appendix C

Key Objective	Success Measure/Timeframe
Deliver a heating replacement programme which prioritises “off gas” areas	Elimination of solid fuel heating by 2020

## 4 Delivery

4.1 We will seek to support the delivery of the aims of Strategy by maximising external funding opportunities. In order to be in the best position to secure funding in an increasingly dynamic and competitive funding environment we will ready ourselves by:

- Recording detailed energy information about our stock and current heating systems
- Recording appropriate profile information about our tenants
- Identifying and keeping a watching brief on potential funding streams and organisations which fund energy initiatives

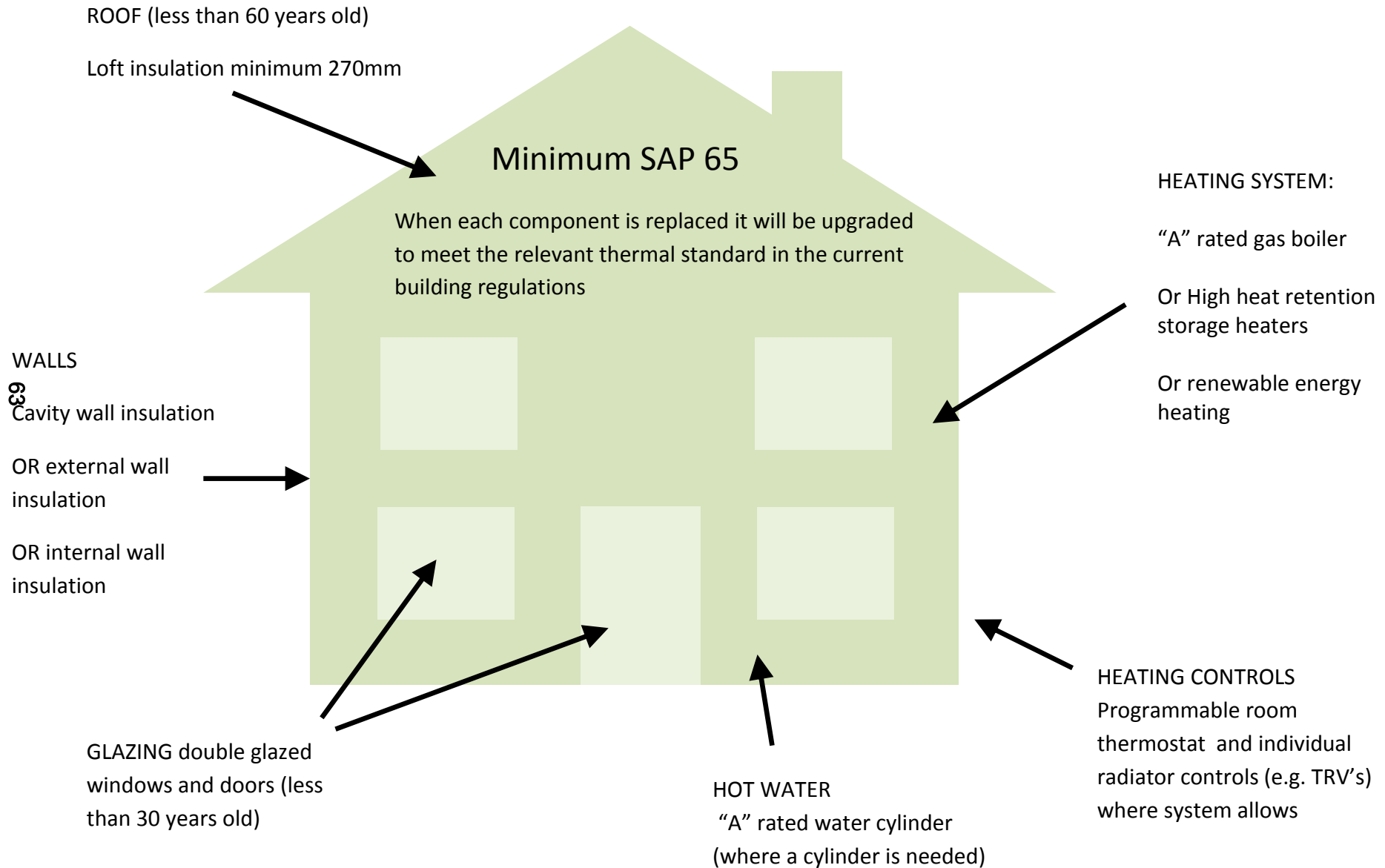
4.2 We will use the opportunities that exist in our day to day work to help us achieve the aims of this Strategy in the most cost effective and efficient way possible. We will do this by:

- Training our staff so they are energy and fuel poverty aware
- Reviewing the specifications we use for materials and components which contribute towards energy efficiency
- Identifying an energy champion for each team with responsibility for driving forward the actions in this Strategy
- Recognising and quantifying the contribution that our planned investment and repairs work makes to improving energy efficiency.
- Reviewing our procedures and processes to maximise opportunities to deliver energy improvements

- 4.3 Almost £25m of capital budget is allocated over the next 5 years for planned improvement work to maintain levels of decency and replace failing elements including heating systems. Within this £250,000 annually has been allocated specifically to deliver programmes which improve the energy efficiency of our homes (equivalent to 5%).
- 4.4 In order to ensure that the energy programme achieves value for money the following approach will be taken:
- An annual programme will be agreed based on delivering the most effective measures to improve the largest number of homes and maximising planned work to deliver this.
  - Demonstration of business case for additional programmes such as Solar PV and heat networks;
- 4.5 The financial implications for the key capital expenditure projects within this Strategy are incorporated within the 2015-20 HRA Asset Management Strategy, the 30 year HRA Business Plan and are detailed in Appendix D of this Strategy.

**This page is intentionally left blank**

## Appendix B: North West Leicestershire Housing HRA Energy Standard



**This page is intentionally left blank**



## Appendix C: Fuel Poverty in North West Leicestershire



### People in fuel poverty, 2013 government estimates

UK = 10.4%

East Midlands = 10.4%

Leicestershire = 8.9%

**North West Leicestershire = 9%**

### Lower super output areas in North West Leicestershire with fuel poverty estimated to be above the national average:

Swannington and Peggs Green = 15%

Kegworth North = 14%

Coalville Centre = 13%

Ibstock Central = 13%

Greenhill North East = 12%

Measham Centre = 12%

**This page is intentionally left blank**

## Appendix D: Energy Strategy Action Plan 2015 - 2020

Objectives and Outcomes	Position at 1 April 2015	Actions required to 31 March 2017 to support delivery of objectives and outcomes	Responsible Officer	Completion Date
<p>To achieve a minimum rate of energy efficiency for all of our homes by 2020 that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a minimum SAP rating of 65 (band D);</li> <li>• loft insulation of 270mm;</li> <li>• cavity wall insulation;</li> <li>• solid wall or internal wall insulation;</li> <li>• double glazed doors and windows that are less than 30 years old;</li> <li>• gas central heating systems with an 'A' rated boiler;</li> <li>• in off 'gas areas' a renewable energy heating system or effective high heater retention storage heaters;</li> <li>• heating controls that include programmable room thermostat and individual radiator controls where systems allow.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,600 properties require investment to meet SAP 65 target;</li> <li>• 1,800 properties require loft insulation top up to 270mm;</li> <li>• 400 properties require cavity wall insulation;</li> <li>• 30 properties require external wall or internal insulation;</li> <li>• An additional as yet unknown number of properties require external or internal wall insulation to one wall (terraced properties with entry wall);</li> <li>• 1,000 previously clad properties including non-traditional properties require surveying to assess thermal properties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a property matrix to identify measures/cost required for each property to reach SAP target and incorporation of required measures into stock database and work programmes;</li> <li>• Review specifications and procedures to maximise contribution of existing work to achieve energy target and maintain accurate and up to date energy information on stock;</li> <li>• Ensure specifications for development of new build properties achieves necessary energy standard;</li> <li>• Upgrade Asset Management Database (PIMSS) to include Energy Module and transfer of key energy data;</li> <li>• Ensure valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is held for all properties and that these are update as appropriate;</li> <li>• Complete survey of 1,000 clad and non-traditional properties to assess thermal properties;</li> <li>• Deliver loft and cavity/external Wall insulation programme;</li> <li>• Deliver external or internal wall insulation programme;</li> <li>• Deliver annual decent homes improvement and other capital investment programmes approved within the 2015-20 HRA Asset Management Strategy.</li> </ul>	<p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Planned Investment Team Manager</p> <p>Planned Investment Team Manager</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Planned Investment Team Manager</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Planned Investment Team Manager</p>	<p>29.02.16</p> <p>31.03.16</p> <p>31.10.15 (ongoing)</p> <p>31.01.16</p> <p>31.03.16</p> <p>31.03.16</p> <p>30.04.16</p> <p>31.03.17</p> <p>31.03.16 (ongoing)</p>
<p>Ensure tenants live in homes which are affordable to heat and have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing and embed fuel poverty awareness and support within the Housing Service to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All front line staff trained in energy efficiency and fuel poverty awareness by March 2017;</li> <li>• Identification of priority neighbourhoods and individuals</li> <li>• Provision of advice and information to tenants on reducing energy costs and effective use of heating.</li> <li>• Maintenance of links with Leicestershire Public Health Partnership and develop opportunities for shared working on fuel poverty</li> <li>• Reduction of the impact of underheated homes by monitoring and controlling condensation and mould identifying and signposting those affected</li> <li>• Creation of a combined Housing and Private Sector Affordable Warmth Strategy in order to maximise opportunities for cross over funding and projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9% of households across all sectors in North West Leicestershire District are estimated to be in fuel poverty (4,576 households).</li> <li>• 1,090 council owned properties are in lower super output areas with fuel poverty rates above the national average.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review tenant profile information to identify and locate groups and individuals "at risk" of fuel poverty and any information gaps</li> <li>• Promote a minimum of two Collective Switching campaigns per year until contract end in 2017</li> <li>• Deliver annual energy advice campaign via In Touch magazine, front line staff and social media</li> <li>• Introduce fuel poverty e-module for front line staff</li> <li>• Inclusion of fuel poverty support and energy efficiency information within revised tenant handbook</li> <li>• Work with Older People's Forum to deliver support and information programmes</li> <li>• Identification of energy/fuel poverty champion for each Housing Team</li> <li>• Analysis and review of cold, damp and mould complaints, procedure and response and development of policy if necessary</li> <li>• Revision of corporate Affordable Warmth Strategy in 2017</li> </ul>	<p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Planned Investment Team Manager</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p>	<p>31.03.16</p> <p>31.03.17</p> <p>31.03.17 (ongoing)</p> <p>31.03.17</p> <p>31.03.17</p> <p>31.01.16 (ongoing)</p> <p>31.01.16 (ongoing)</p> <p>31.03.16</p> <p>30.09.16</p>

<p>Deliver targeted investment programmes which address inequality and a heating replacement programme which prioritises “off gas” areas. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of priority streets and estates for investment and funding</li> <li>• Replace all solid fuel and oil fired heating systems by 2025, prioritising off-gas areas;</li> <li>• Replacement of all electric storage heating with gas heating systems where gas is available</li> <li>• Continue to explore the potential to roll out Solar PV programme to a potential maximum of 1,900 properties by 2017</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 750 properties are not currently served by gas central heating of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 471 have solid fuel heating</li> <li>– 273 have electric storage heating</li> <li>– 6 have alternative heating sources (oil, LPG, Air Source Heat Pumps)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 457 of these properties are thought to be in areas where a statutory gas connection is not currently available or is more than 20m from serviceable main ‘off-gas’</li> <li>• 1,900 properties have been identified as having the best potential for solar energy generation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine feasibility and cost of gas connections for solid fuel and electric properties in “off-gas” areas;</li> <li>• Undertake final review of the Green and Decent Pilot to inform renewable roll out;</li> <li>• Incorporate renewable heating within capital investment programme from April 2016;</li> <li>• Investigate heat network options for “off-gas” estates via HNDU funded project and commissioning of specific feasibility studies. Delivery of schemes which demonstrate a viable business case;</li> <li>• Undertake cost benefit study of high heat retention storage heaters as alternative to standard storage heaters;</li> <li>• Investigation of options and costs for reducing energy use and costs in communal heating schemes through individual metering, improved controls, energy efficient lighting or advice and information. Delivery of programmes which demonstrate a viable business case.</li> </ul>	<p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Planned Investment Team Manager</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p> <p>Energy Strategy Officer</p>	<p>31.03.16</p> <p>31.01.16</p> <p>31.03.16</p> <p>31.03.16</p> <p>31.03.16</p> <p>31.03.17</p>
---	--	--	--	--

## Appendix E: Fuel Conversion Programmes

To achieve our energy efficiency standards and reduce fuel poverty we will need to change the type of heating system used in 722 properties. Specifically we need to:

- Replace 471 solid fuel heating systems with an alternative heating source by 2025;
- Consider replacing 251 electric heating systems with gas central heating where it is available to reduce the energy costs for tenants and remove inequalities in service provision.

These 722 properties fall into three categories of geographical area within the District, as follows:

- Areas where there is a mains gas infrastructure available;
- Areas where there is a mains gas infrastructure available in the relevant village but not currently within 20 metres of our properties;
- Areas where there is not currently a mains gas infrastructure available within the village.

These are broken down in more detail in the tables below.

Mains gas infrastructure available	Number of properties currently on solid fuel or electric heating
COALVILLE	86
MOIRA	17
WHITWICK	48
CASTLE DONINGTON	10
ASHBY	7
MEASHAM	58
THRINGSTONE	7
IBSTOCK	8
RAVENSTONE	7
ELLISTOWN	5
HEMINGTON	9
SNARESTONE	5
BELTON	2
APPLEBY MAGNA	15
DISEWORTH	1
BLACKFORDBY	2
SWANNINGTON	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>293</b>

<b>Mains gas infrastructure available in village but not currently within 20 metres of our properties</b>	<b>Number of properties currently on solid fuel or electric heating</b>
ALBERT VILLAGE	41
COLEORTON	61
DONISTHORPE	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>182</b>

<b>Mains gas infrastructure not currently available in village</b>	<b>Number of properties currently on solid fuel or electric heating</b>
BREEDON	13
CHILCOTE	1
NEWBOLD COLEORTON	16
NEWTON BURGOLAND	19
NORMANTON	5
OAKTHORPE	89
OSGATHORPE	21
OVERSEAL	8
SWEPSTONE	8
TONGE	6
WORTHINGTON	61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>247</b>

The approach for delivering the heating conversion programme is described below:

### **Mains gas infrastructure available**

#### Solid fuel heating to gas

There are 92 properties with solid fuel heating systems to be converted to gas by 2025. Of these 57 are scheduled to be replaced as part of the decent homes improvement programme through standard lifecycle replacements. The remaining 35 will be converted over the next ten years as part of our energy efficiency programme funded from our non decency capital budgets.

#### Electric heating to gas

There are 201 properties currently heated through electric storage heaters to be converted to gas. Of these 98 are scheduled to be replaced as part of the decent homes improvement programme through standard lifecycle replacements by 2025. The remaining 103 will be converted over the next ten years as part of our energy efficiency programme funded from our non decency capital budgets.

## **Mains gas infrastructure available in village**

A feasibility study will be completed by 31 March 2016 to determine the costs of gas mains provision to each of the 182 properties affected, including which it is financially viable to receive gas and which will require alternative solutions.

Of these properties 134 are heated by solid fuel and 48 by electric storage heaters.

## **Mains gas infrastructure not currently available in village**

There are 245 properties heated by solid fuel in these 'off-gas' areas to that will be converted to an alternative heating sources by 2025. The preferred option being renewable energy, with the alternative being electric heating. The most relevant renewable energy choices available to us that are currently being assessed:

- Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) – The least expensive choice for a standalone system and the most flexible in terms of property requirements. This is our preferred renewable energy choice however, a final decision will be made following the conclusion of the Green and Decent Pilot in December 2016.
- Biomass Boiler – Provides a highly efficient controllable heating system and can use existing heat distribution system (radiators), but costs for installation to individual properties are high, manual handling and bulk buying of pellets is required and not all property types would be suitable so a combination with other heating types would be required.
- Groundsource Heat Pumps – These have the potential to deliver the greatest energy cost savings but are the most expensive solution to retrofit to individual properties. The geology of the area and the associated legacy of coal workings also complicates the use of this as a solution. It has therefore not been considered as a suitable option for individual properties but it may prove to be a viable choice as a heat network solution (see below).
- Heat Networks (renewable or non-renewable) – Connection of a number of properties to one heat source can allow more innovative solutions to be used and can provide lower cost energy. We are investigating heat network options for identified estates and streets where we have a high concentration of properties owned by NWLDC.
- Electric Heating - Electric heating is a tried and tested solution for off gas properties. It is significantly less expensive to install over renewable technology and can be installed within the majority of properties. The cost of electricity even at off-peak economy 7 rates is however, more expensive comparatively than gas or renewable energy and electric storage heating is less controllable than these alternatives meaning that householders can have difficulties heating their home how they would like at an affordable cost, particularly with larger or harder to heat properties.

**This page is intentionally left blank**



**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 8 DECEMBER 2015**

Title of report	<b>ASHBY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – PROPOSED RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION</b>
Key Decision	a) Financial No b) Community Yes
Contacts	<p>Councillor Trevor Pendleton            01509 569746  <a href="mailto:trevor.pendleton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">trevor.pendleton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Director of Services            01530 454555  <a href="mailto:steve.bambrick@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">steve.bambrick@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Head of Planning and Regeneration            01530 454782  <a href="mailto:jim.newton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">jim.newton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a></p>
Purpose of report	To determine the District Council's response to a consultation on a draft neighbourhood plan for Ashby de la Zouch.
Reason for Decision	The District Council is a consultee and so it is appropriate to provide comments to assist with the formulation of the neighbourhood plan.
Council Priorities	Businesses and Jobs Homes and Communities Green Footprint Challenge
Implications:  Financial/Staff	<p>The emerging neighbourhood plan for Ashby will incur direct costs to the District Council to support an independent examination of the plan and, should the examination be successful, a local referendum. Grant funding from central government (£30,000 per neighbourhood plan) is payable to the authority to support this agenda.</p> <p>Once the Ashby Neighbourhood Plan is made it will form part of the Development Plan for North West Leicestershire. Should the document be legally challenged, the District Council will be responsible for meeting such costs.</p>
Link to relevant CAT	None

Risk Management	The ultimate decision on how to proceed in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan rests with Ashby Town Council. As currently set out there are conflicts between the draft Neighbourhood Plan and national policies and the adopted Local Plan as well as the District Council's draft Local Plan. These conflicts represent a risk to the success of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is appropriate for the District Council to work with Ashby Town Council to seek to minimise risks to the Neighbourhood Plan.
Equalities Impact Screening	Not applicable
Human Rights	No discernible impact
Transformational Government	Not applicable
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory
Consultees	None
Background papers	<a href="#">National Planning Policy Framework</a> <a href="#">The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.</a> <a href="#">The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.</a> <a href="#">Planning Practice Guidance.</a>
Recommendation	<b>THAT CABINET RATIFIES THE RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT ASHBY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AS SET OUT IN APPENDIX B OF THIS REPORT</b>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Ashby Town Council has published a draft Neighbourhood Plan for Ashby de la Zouch. The purpose of this report is to formulate the District Council's response to the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Neighbourhood planning was introduced under the Localism Act 2011 to give local communities a more hands on role in the planning of their neighbourhoods. It

introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development in their local area.

- 2.2 Neighbourhood Plans can be prepared by a Parish or Town Council (or neighbourhood forums in areas not covered by a Parish or Town Council) once they have been designated as a neighbourhood area by the District Council.
- 2.3 Neighbourhood Plans should consider local and not strategic issues and must be in line with higher level planning policy. A Neighbourhood Plan can be detailed or general, depending on what local people want but they must be in line with European Union obligations and human rights requirements; they must have regard to national planning policy and must be in general conformity with strategic policies in the adopted development plan in force for the local area.
- 2.4 The District Council as Local Planning Authority has an important role to play in the neighbourhood plan process even though the council is not responsible for its preparation. The key stages in producing a neighbourhood plan as governed by The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 together with the District Council's role are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1**

<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Stage of neighbourhood plan process</b>	<b>District Council role</b>
Reg 6A	Designating a neighbourhood area	To agree to the designation of a neighbourhood area
	Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan (the current stage)	To provide advice and assistance
Reg 14	Pre-submission publicity & consultation	To be a consultee
Reg 15	Submission of a neighbourhood plan to the local planning authority	Ensure that the submitted draft neighbourhood plan is accompanied by the following  (a) a map or statement which identifies the area to which the proposed neighbourhood development plan relates; (b) a consultation statement; (c) the proposed neighbourhood development plan; and (d) a statement explaining how the proposed neighbourhood development plan meets the "basic conditions" (requirements of paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act). Basic conditions are: (a) That it has regard to national policies and advice; (b) That it contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;

		<p>(c) That it is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the local Development Plan;</p> <p>(d) That it is compatible with EU obligations; and</p> <p>(e) That it is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site</p>
Reg 16	Publicising a plan proposal	Organise and undertake consultation on the draft neighbourhood plan for a 6 week period
Reg 17	Submit the draft plan for independent examination	<p>Arrange for an independent examination including the appointment of an examiner in consultation with the Parish or Town Council.</p> <p>The examination will normally take the form of written representations rather than formal hearings, although the examiner can undertake hearings if considered necessary.</p>
Reg 18	Publication of examiner's report and plan proposal decisions	<p>To receive the examiner's report and decide to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Decline to consider a plan proposal</li> <li>(b) To refuse a plan proposal</li> <li>(c) What action to take in response to the recommendations of an examiner regarding a NP</li> <li>(d) What modifications if any they are to make to the draft plan</li> <li>(e) Whether to extend the area to which a referendum is to take place</li> <li>(f) That they are not satisfied with the plan proposal</li> </ul> <p>As soon as possible after making a decision referred to above, the District Council must publish on their website and elsewhere as appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The decision and the reasons (the decision statement)</li> <li>(b) Details of where and when the decision statement may be inspected</li> <li>(c) The report made by the examiner</li> </ul>

Para 12, Sch 4B TCPA 1990	Referendum	If the District Council is satisfied that the draft plan meets the basic conditions, a referendum on the plan <b>must</b> be held where this reflects the advice of the Examiner. The District Council is responsible for arranging and paying for the cost of the referendum.
Reg 19	Decision on a plan proposal	As soon as possible after deciding to make a neighbourhood development plan (or refusing to make a plan), the District Council must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Publish on their website or elsewhere as appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) a statement setting out the decision and their reasons (the decision statement)</li> <li>(ii) details of where and when the decision statement may be inspected</li> </ul> </li> <li>(b) Send a copy of the decision statement to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) The qualifying body</li> <li>(ii) any person who asked to be notified of the decision</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Reg 20	Publicising a neighbourhood development plan	As soon as possible after making a neighbourhood development plan, the District Council must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Publish on their website and elsewhere as appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the neighbourhood development plan</li> <li>(ii) details of where and when the neighbourhood development plan may be inspected</li> </ul> </li> <li>(b) Notify any persons who asked to be notified of the making of the neighbourhood development plan that it has been made and where and when it may be inspected.</li> </ul>

- 2.5 In addition to the regulations, guidance has also been published by the Government as part of the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 2.6 To date two Neighbourhood Areas have been designated in the district; Ashby de la Zouch Town Council area (excluding Blackfordby) and Ellistown and Battleflat. These were both designated on 27 February 2014.
- 2.7 The District Council has received some funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government to help towards the cost of supporting the

preparation of these Neighbourhood Plans. A further round of funding will be sought following an examination to help cover some of the costs of the examination.

- 2.8 It is understood that Ellistown & Battleflat will be publishing a consultation on their draft Neighbourhood plan shortly.

### **3.0 THE ASHBY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

- 3.1 Following designation a series of working groups were formed to look at different themed areas (e.g. economy, housing etc).
- 3.2 Each group set out their suggested issues and policies which were used to inform the draft Neighbourhood Plan. A number of council officers attended meetings of some of these working groups to provide advice and assistance, as required by Paragraph 21 of the PPG. However, officers were not involved in writing the draft Neighbourhood Plan or determining its contents as this would be inappropriate given that the plan is intended to reflect the views of the local community.
- 3.3 Ashby Town Council agreed at its meeting on 12 October 2015 to publish the draft Neighbourhood Plan for consultation purposes. A copy of the draft Neighbourhood plan is attached at Appendix A of this report. The draft document contains background information and policies on housing, Ashby town centre, employment and economic growth, transport, education, leisure and well-being.
- 3.4 The consultation period ran from 13 October until 24 November 2015. As part of their consultation the Town Council have held a series of drop-in sessions and workshops to enable people to find out further information and give their views on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.5 It will now be for the Town Council to analyse the responses. It is anticipated that a pre-submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan will be produced in the New Year.

### **4.0 COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

- 4.1 The Director of Services has delegated authority to respond to consultation documents, including Neighbourhood Plans. However, in view of the conflict between the provisions of the draft Ashby Neighbourhood Plan and the draft Local Plan it is considered appropriate for the Council's response to be agreed by Cabinet. In view of the fact that the consultation period closed before the draft Neighbourhood Plan could be considered by Cabinet it was agreed with Ashby Town Council that officer comments would be submitted in response to the consultation but that these are subject to ratification by Cabinet. Officer's comments are set out at Appendix B of this report and the following provides an explanation for these.
- 4.2 In reviewing the draft Neighbourhood Plan it is important to note that a neighbourhood plan must:
- have regard to national policy;
  - contribute towards sustainable development;
  - generally conform with the strategic policies of the local plan and;
  - not breach any EU obligations including those relating to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42/EC.
- 4.3 In terms of the relationship between a neighbourhood plan and a local plan, it is important to note that the conformity required is to the local plan in force (i.e.

adopted) at the time that the neighbourhood plan is examined. In this instance it is the North West Leicestershire Local Plan adopted in 2002. Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been agreed at referendum and been made by the Local Planning Authority it becomes part of the Development Plan for the District and therefore afforded the same weight as the Local Plan in determining planning applications.

- 4.4 The PPG advises that “They [neighbourhood plans] can be developed before or at the same time as the local planning authority is producing its Local Plan” (paragraph 9).
- 4.5 There are a number of examples across the country where neighbourhood plans have been made (i.e. adopted) before a new local plan is in place.
- 4.6 Members will be aware that the District Council has recently completed consultation in respect of its draft Local Plan. It has to be recognised, therefore, that having regard to the advice in the PPG, that there is no reason in principle as to why the Ashby Neighbourhood Plan should not be able to proceed ahead of the Local Plan.
- 4.7 In such circumstances the PPG advises that “*Where a neighbourhood plan is brought forward before an up-to-date Local Plan is in place the qualifying body and the local planning authority should discuss and aim to agree the relationship between the policies. It is important to minimise any conflicts between policies in:*
- *The emerging neighbourhood plan*
  - *The emerging Local Plan*
  - *The adopted development plan*

*with appropriate regard to national policy and guidance”.*

- 4.8 As currently proposed, the draft Neighbourhood Plan clearly conflicts with the District Council’s **draft** Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan proposes that only an additional 58 dwellings should be provided for in Ashby up to 2031, compared to 1,750 dwellings in the draft Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan does not propose the allocation of land north of Ashby (Money Hill) for housing development as proposed in the draft Local Plan.
- 4.9 If both the Neighbourhood Plan and the Local Plan were to go forward in their current form and the Neighbourhood Plan was considered acceptable by an examiner (and for reasons set out later this may not be the case) and it then proceeded to be made, it is likely that this would happen before the draft Local Plan was adopted. Once the draft Local Plan was adopted there would be a clear conflict between the two plans. The PPG advises that where there is a conflict then “*that conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to become part of the development plan*”. In this instance that would mean the Local Plan.
- 4.10 This would, in effect, make the Neighbourhood Plan out-of-date in respect of those matters where there was a conflict with the Local Plan; this could also potentially undermine the rest of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.11 The draft Neighbourhood Plan does recognise that there is a conflict with the draft Local Plan and suggests that changes to the Neighbourhood Plan may be required. As written it is not clear what changes would be required or when such changes would be made, but if it was after the Neighbourhood Plan was made than it would

be necessary to review the whole Neighbourhood Plan as there is no mechanism for reviewing just a part of it.

- 4.12 The issue of housing numbers and housing allocations is considered to be the most significant concern identified by officers in respect of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. However, there are also a number of other areas of concern.
- 4.13 As noted above a neighbourhood plan has to be in conformity with national policies. There are a number of instances where this is not considered to be the case. For example, a key aspect of national policy is to ensure that developments are deliverable. The PPG makes it clear that “*a neighbourhood plan needs to be deliverable*”. Some of the policies, such as the affordable housing policy and the housing mix policy in the draft Neighbourhood Plan would, it is considered, impact upon the viability of development.
- 4.14 The PPG also advises that “*A policy in a neighbourhood plan should be clear and unambiguous. It should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications.*” This is particularly important bearing in mind that the decision maker in most instances will be the District Council as the Local Planning Authority but as the Council is not the author of the neighbourhood plan it would not necessarily be aware of the intention of a policy if it is not clearly set out in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.15 Both of these issues are likely to be addressed at examination stage and whilst an examiner might recommend changes it is considered that it would be better to make changes now, so as to avoid undermining the rest of the plan. Officers have highlighted these concerns and suggested the changes that may be needed to various policies to provide clarity or overcome potential conflicts with national policy.

## **5.0 OPTIONS AND NEXT STAGES**

- 5.1 The next stage of the process will be for the Town Council to consider all of the consultation responses and make changes to the Neighbourhood Plan as they consider suitable.
- 5.2 The overall affect of continuing with the Neighbourhood Plan in its current form would be, in the view of officers, a high risk strategy for the Town Council and potentially the Neighbourhood Plan could represent a waste of time, effort and resource.
- 5.3 The Town Council will ultimately have to decide how to proceed and it has to be recognised that the Neighbourhood Plan represents an expression of the views of the local community. However, the view of officers is that in the interests of trying to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan is supported by an examiner and that it has some longevity to it, it would be appropriate for consideration to be given to delaying the progression of the Neighbourhood Plan until such time as the District Council has agreed the pre-submission Local Plan (currently anticipated to be in March 2016) and for the Neighbourhood Plan to then take account of the provisions of the emerging Local Plan.
- 5.4 Another option open to the Town Council would be for the Neighbourhood Plan not to deal with the issue of housing numbers or allocations and to leave this to the Local Plan. There is no requirement that the Neighbourhood Plan deal with such issues.



- 5.5 Whatever decision is made by Ashby Town Council in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan, the District Council has an ongoing duty to continue to support the Town Council through this process.

**This page is intentionally left blank**

**ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN  
2016-2031**



**PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION DRAFT  
OCTOBER 2015**



## **FOREWARD**

In 2013, the Town Council of Ashby de la Zouch made the decision to commence the process of undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan.

A Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was established with the aim of preparing a Plan that will deliver the long term goals of a balanced and vibrant neighbourhood.

Since becoming established, we have held many public meetings, both general open events and specific discussions with groups of stakeholders; established Focus Groups on the key issues comprising local residents; professionals and representatives of local businesses and voluntary groups.

In preparing this Neighbourhood Plan we have listened very carefully to all the feedback received through all these consultations and have worked hard to ensure that the Plan incorporates and reflects the views of the community.

We are grateful to Officers at North West Leicestershire District Council, Leicestershire County Council, Town Councillors and the wider community for their involvement in the development of this Plan.

We hope that the final document will help to shape development across the Neighbourhood Plan area.

**Leader**

**Ashby de la Zouch Town Council**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>SECTION</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>About Ashby de la Zouch</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>What is the Plan trying to achieve?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Neighbourhood Plan Policies</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>1 Towards a sustainable Ashby</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>2 Housing</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>3 Employment and Economic Growth</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>4 Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre</b>	<b>28</b>
	<b>5 Transport</b>	<b>35</b>
	<b>6 Education and well-being</b>	<b>41</b>
	<b>7 Developer Contributions</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Monitoring and Review</b>	<b>52</b>

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

This document has been prepared by the Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, which has been led by Ashby de la Zouch Town Council.

A Neighbourhood Plan is a community led framework for guiding the future development and growth of an area; it provides an opportunity for local people to directly shape and influence planning policy on matters that affect them.

The Plan provides a vision for the future of the community, and sets out clear policies to realise this vision. These policies must accord with higher level planning policy, at a local and national level, as required by the Localism Act. The Plan has been developed through extensive consultation with the people of Ashby de la Zouch and with others with an interest in the community.

The Plan adds local detail to broader planning policy and once it has been passed through a Referendum the Planning Policies within the Plan will become part of the decision making process for planning applications.

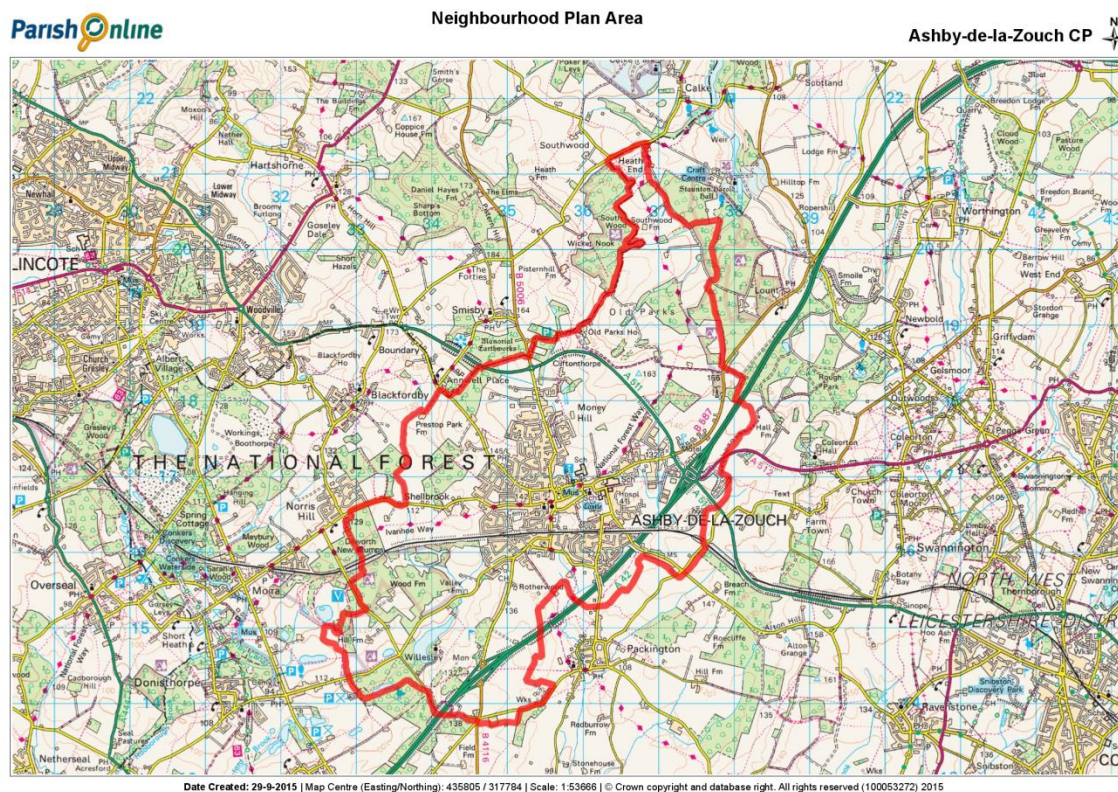
**This Draft Neighbourhood Plan is a consultation document, and your comments and opinions are invited until 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015. Please use the Representation Form that accompanies this document, and return completed forms to Ashby de la Zouch Town Council, Legion House, South Street, Ashby de la Zouch, LE65 2QY. Copies of this document and the representation form are also available on the website:**

<http://www.ashbydelazouch.info/Planning.aspx>

### 1.2 ASHBY DE LA ZOUCHE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan covers a designated area (the Plan area), comprising the Council wards of Ashby Holywell, Ashby Money Hill, Ashby Ivanhoe, Ashby Castle and Ashby Willesley, which covers the town of Ashby de la Zouch and excludes Blackfordby. Designated status was achieved in February 2014.

Figure 1 – Neighbourhood Plan area



### 1.3 HOW A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FITS IN TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

A Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity for local people to create a framework for delivering a sustainable future for the benefit of all who live, work or visit our area.

The right for communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans was established through the Localism Act 2011 and the rules governing their preparation were published in 2012. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that a Neighbourhood Plan gives the community “direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need” (NPPF para 183). It enables us to ensure we get the right types of development in the right locations; and to set planning policies that will be used in determining decisions on planning applications throughout the designated area of Ashby de la Zouch.

A Neighbourhood Plan is part of the statutory Development Plan for the area and this statutory status gives Neighbourhood Plans far more weight than other local documents such as parish plans or village design statements. But a Plan must also comply with European and National legislation and be in general conformity with existing strategic planning policy. Whilst every effort has been made to make the main body of this Plan easy to read and understand, the wording of the actual

policies is necessarily more formal so that they comply with these statutory requirements.

Robust evidence is the foundation on which a Neighbourhood Plan has to be based. This includes evidence of community engagement and consultation and how the views, aspirations, wants and needs of local people have been taken into account alongside stakeholder comment and statistical information to justify the policies contained within the Plan. A detailed Statement of Consultation and a comprehensive Evidence Pack have been produced to support this Neighbourhood Plan.

## **1.4 WHAT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WILL COVER**

The Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan will cover the timeframe 2016-2031; this will ensure alignment with the Local Plan being prepared by North West Leicestershire District Council.

A vision for the future of Ashby will be set out and the following themes will be included in the Plan:

- General principles
- Housing and the built environment
- Town Centre
- Transport and Accessibility
- The Natural Environment
- Employment and Economic Growth
- Infrastructure Investment Priorities

This is the pre-submission draft plan that is being consulted on prior to submission to North West Leicestershire District Council as the local planning authority.

## **1.5 HOW THE PLAN HAS BEEN PREPARED**

The Neighbourhood Planning process has been overseen by a Steering Group consisting of 4 Town Councillors, a representative from Ashby Civic Society, a representative from Ashby Town Team, the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk.

The Neighbourhood Plan was launched in April 2013 with a series of drop-ins and workshops for members of the local community and other interested parties, where participants were asked:

- What they like about Ashby
- What they do not like about Ashby
- What would they want that Ashby doesn't have



From the launch events key issues for the town were identified and these were grouped together in to the following themes:

- Town Centre Vitality
- Economic Growth
- Housing and the built environment
- Accessibility and Transport
- Education and leisure

Five focus groups, consisting of volunteers from the local community and officers from the District and County Councils looked in detail at the issues and prepared emerging objectives and policies. A Reference Group consisting of the Chairs of each Focus Group reviewed the objectives and policies coming from the Focus Groups and agreed the objectives and policies which have formed the basis of the draft plan.

A Consultation Statement detailing the consultation process to date has been produced to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan; and is included as an appendix.

DRAFT

## SECTION 2: ABOUT ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH

Ashby de la Zouch is a historic market town of 12,530 people (2011 census) at the heart of the National Forest and on the borders of Leicestershire and Derbyshire.

Ashby de la Zouch has a vibrant Town Centre that forms the heart of the local community providing the principal focus for the Town’s economic, social and leisure activity.

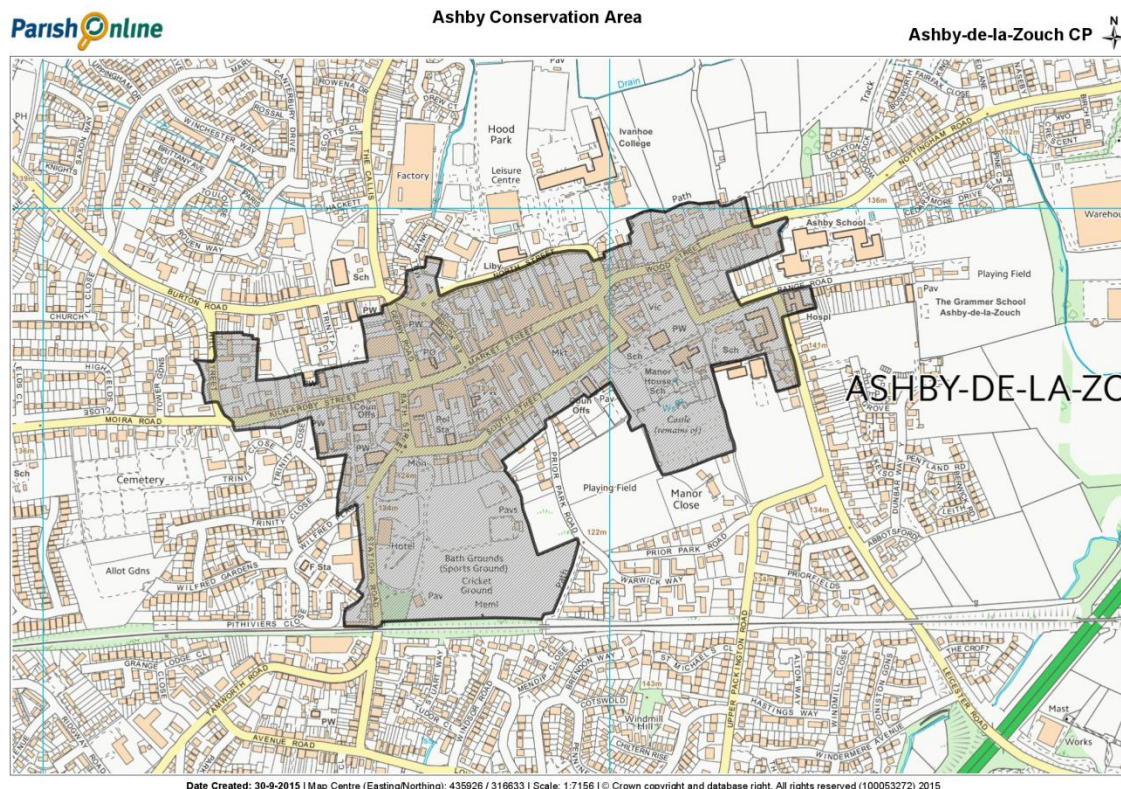
Ashby stands at the intersection of the roads between Nottingham and Tamworth/ Birmingham (A42) and between Leicester and Burton upon Trent (A511).

The first documented record of the town is in the Domesday Book of 1086/87 and the town takes the second part of its name from the La Zouch family whom held the castle and manor from circa 1160 to 1399. Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area was first designated in November 1972.

During the medieval period Ashby Castle was one of the chief influences on the town’s development. The castle was slighted (partial demolition) by parliamentarian troops in March 1646. The character of the Conservation Area (Figure 2) is predominantly Georgian/ early Victorian townscape.

The current conservation area boundaries are:

Figure 2 – Conservation boundary map



A review of 2011 census data shows that:

- There is a high level of home ownership (70.8%), but this is lower than the average in the district (72.5%).
- There are a larger proportion of detached properties (42.6%) than on average district, regionally and in England (22.4% in England) and fewer terraced properties (14.9%).
- There are more 4 & 5 bedroom properties (30.4%) than in the district, region and in England (19% in England).
- There is a high level of car ownership 43.9% of households having two or more cars.
- Over half of households (50.4%) are not deprived in any dimension, compared with 46.2% in the district.
- The proportion of residents aged 16-64 (61.9%) is lower than the proportion in the district, region or England (64.8% in England).
- The majority of residents enjoy good health (82.5%).
- Educational attainment is high with 33.8% of residents over 16 having a level 4 qualification or above, this compares with 27.4% in England.

Note: Census figures based upon the Neighbourhood Plan Area, consisting of the wards Ashby Holywell, Ashby Ivanhoe and Ashby Castle.



## **SECTION 3: WHAT IS THE PLAN TRYING TO ACHIEVE?**

### **3.1 Key issues the Plan will address**

- Protecting and enhancing the towns heritage
- Town Centre sustainability
- Designating settlement development limits
- Housing site allocations and housing mix
- Provision of and protection of green spaces
- Protecting community assets
- Traffic management and road infrastructure
- Promoting walking and cycling
- Promoting employment, business growth and encouraging tourism
- Need for a new community centre
- Priorities for section 106 funding

It is important to note that when using the draft Neighbourhood Plan to form a view on a proposed development all of the policies contained in the plan must be considered together when forming a view.

### **3.2 The Vision**

“Ashby de la Zouch is a prosperous attractive and historic market town at the heart of the National Forest. Our vision is to build on that uniqueness and create a town that meets the needs of local people whilst making the most of its special qualities to attract visitors and shoppers from further afield.

This will be achieved by creating a safe, clean, accessible and attractive town in which people can shop, work, live and pursues their leisure activities. The town should offer something for everyone regardless of their age, lifestyle or status”.

## **Section 4 Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

### **1. Towards a Sustainable Ashby de la Zouch**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council describes the Town on its website as an ‘ancient market town on the borders of Leicestershire and Derbyshire (which) has always been well placed in the centre of a web of roads leading to most of the principal towns and cities in the Midlands’.

Having developed over several centuries, Ashby de la Zouch is an attractive and historic settlement which retains many of its original features and is characterised by a bustling Town Centre with many independent shops.

There are many significant buildings of great importance within the Plan area including the castle, several churches, Rawdon Terrace and a Water Tower. Its economy is varied with a range of employers being based on the employment sites within the Town and recent years has seen a growth in out-of-town retail outlets which pose a threat to the traditional shopping patterns of the Town.

Ashby de la Zouch boasts a good range of recreation facilities including tennis, Hood Park Swimming Pool, football, rugby, cricket and golf as well as parks and play areas.

Ashby de la Zouch is well located being within 9 miles of the East Midlands Airport; having a bypass to serve traffic passing from Birmingham to Nottingham or Leicester to Stoke and frequent bus services to Coalville and Burton-upon-Trent. However the transport system has failed to keep pace with the requirements of a modern Town and there is congestion at peak times and pressure on car parking spaces which can make the roads within the Town Centre difficult to navigate and can diminish the shopping experience for visitors.

#### **1.2 A Presumption In Favour Of Sustainable Development**

The purpose of the UK Planning System as set out in the NPPF is to achieve sustainable development.

This is defined as ensuring that providing for the needs of the current generation does not make life worse for future generations.

This Neighbourhood Plan is a key part of securing sustainable development. It is at its heart. This includes how much new development is required, where it should go and how it should be designed. This encompasses all proposals for development from the very smallest, such as a minor extension to a house, to major housing and employment developments.

The Town Council will take a positive approach to the consideration of development proposals that contribute to sustainable development. This includes working with the District Council, County Council, the local community, developers and other partners to encourage the formulation of development proposals which clearly demonstrate how sustainable development has been considered and addressed, and can be approved without delay.

**POLICY S1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT -**  
When considering development proposals the Plan will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF and North West Leicestershire Local Plan. The Town Council will work proactively with developers to find solutions which mean that sustainable proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the Plan area.

Planning applications or other land-use related decisions that accord with the policies in this Plan should be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies in the Neighbourhood Plan relevant to a planning application or other land-use related decision, the policies contained in the NPPF and North West Leicestershire Local Plan apply.

### **1.3 Directing Development to the most Sustainable Locations**

One of the key ways to achieve sustainable development is to direct development to the most appropriate and sustainable locations.

The area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan comprises the primary urban area of Ashby Town and smaller Villages and Hamlets interspersed with large areas of open countryside. Outside of the primary urban area it is mainly open and rural in nature.

North West Leicestershire has defined a settlement hierarchy to “distinguish between the roles and functions of different settlements and to guide the location of future development”. The general principle being that further up the hierarchy a settlement comes, the more sustainable it is and therefore the more suitable it is for development. As the draft Local Plan states “with the general principle being that those settlements higher up the hierarchy will take more growth than those lower down and that the type of development proposed is appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement and its place in the hierarchy”.

Ashby de la Zouch (with Castle Donnington) is categorised as a ‘Key Service Centre’ in the draft North West Leicestershire Local Plan. This is the second highest in hierarchy (after Coalville which is classed as a Principal Town).

The draft Local Plan describes Key Service Centres as being “Smaller than the Principal Town in terms of population and also the range of services and facilities they provide, they play an important role providing services and facilities to the surrounding area and are accessible by some public transport. A significant amount of development will take place in these settlements but less than that in the Principal Town”.

The Plan has some concerns and reservations with regard to the scale of development envisaged for Ashby De La Zouch as set out in the draft Local Plan. The consultation shows that people are not opposed to new development. They recognise the benefits it brings in terms of creating and supporting jobs and meeting the needs of the community for more affordable housing, for example. There is concern however that too much development will damage the countryside, encourage more (already very high) levels of journeys by car and place additional pressures on already stretched services such as schools and health care as well as local roads. It is also noted that Ashby De La Zouch has been the focus of considerable new development especially housing and employment related, and that there are further commitments in the pipeline.

A key aspect of the Neighbourhood Plan (and draft Local Plan) is to identify the amount of new development (including the provision of new sites) needed in the Plan area and ensure that it is proportionate, sustainable and meets local and district needs and requirements, in support of the draft Local Plan.

#### **1.4. Limits to Development**

The purpose of Limits to Development is to ensure that sufficient sites for new homes and economic activity are available in appropriate locations that will avoid overloading the transport infrastructure and impinging into the local countryside.

Limits to Development were established by North West Leicestershire District Council in 2002 and they made it clear that such a measure was important to clarify where new development activity was best located. They are used to define the extent of a built up part of a settlement. They distinguish between areas where, in planning terms, development would be acceptable in principle, such as in the main settlements, and where it would not be acceptable, generally in the least sustainable locations such as in the open countryside. Such growth would risk ribbon development and the merging of hamlets to the detriment of the community and visual amenity of the Plan area’s surroundings.

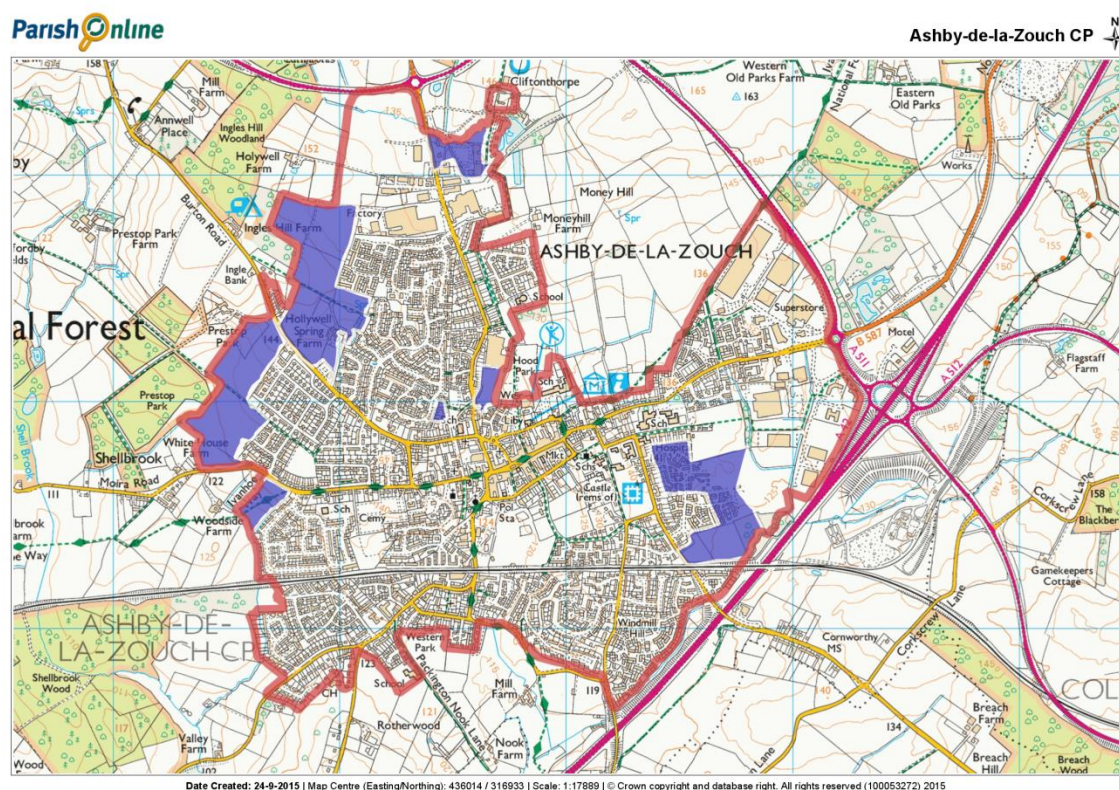
The Neighbourhood Plan proposes to designate Limits to Development for the built up part of the Plan area. This will update and supersede the existing Limits to Development previously used by North West Leicestershire District Council.

Within the defined Limits to Development an appropriate amount of suitably designed and located development will be acceptable in principle.

Focusing development within the agreed Limits to Development will help to support existing services and facilities within the Town Centre and help to protect the countryside and the remainder of the Plan area from inappropriate development.

Their introduction is also in accordance with the draft Local Plan for North West Leicestershire, which recommends that Limits to Development are in place for all the main towns and villages in the District.

Figure 2 Ashby De La Zouch Limits to Development



**POLICY S2: LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT – Development proposals within the Plan area will be permitted on sites and other land within the Limits To Development as identified in Figure 2 where it complies with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan; meets a local need and subject to transport, design and amenity considerations.**



## 1.5 Development outside the Built-Up part of the Plan area

In planning terms, land outside of defined Limits to Development is treated as open countryside. This includes the small villages and hamlets within the Plan area.

It is national and local planning policy that development in the open countryside (and outside of the Limits to Development) will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. This approach is also supported by this Plan in order to prevent urban sprawl and less sustainable form of development, and also to protect the open countryside for its own sake as an attractive, accessible and non-renewable natural resource.

**POLICY S3: DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS OUTSIDE OF THE LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT-** Development proposals in countryside locations outside the Limits to Development will only be approved in exceptional circumstances where it conforms to relevant national and district planning policies.

In all cases, where development is considered acceptable, it will be required to respect the form, scale, character and amenity of the landscape and the surrounding area through careful siting, design and use of materials.

## 1.6 – Design

This Plan seeks to ensure that new building in the Plan area benefits from high quality design so that it blends sympathetically with existing architecture, has a low carbon footprint, avoids excessive use of other resources both during building and operation, and suffers neither from flood risk nor increases the flood risk to other premises. Innovative means of reducing water run-off will be encouraged.

Ashby de la Zouch has always upheld high standards of architectural design, since the Georgian period and its days as a Spa Town. It is apparent that sustainability is increasingly becoming a key criterion in determining planning policy. It is crucial for its future success that Ashby de la Zouch stays ahead of the curve, rather than struggling to catch up as sustainability takes centre stage.

**POLICY S4: DESIGN -** Developers must demonstrate in a Design and Access Statement how their development proposal reinforces Ashby de la Zouch's character and heritage. The statement must set out how the proposals follow the policies and guidance in relevant national and local documents as well as this Plan. The Design and Access Statement must address the following:

a) Context;

- b) Historic character;
- c) Connection with the countryside and the Town Centre;
- d) Quality for pedestrians, cyclists and the physically disadvantaged;
- e) Development density and build quality;
- f) Car Parking;
- g) Landscaping and access to open and green space;
- h) Occupier controlled access to fibre, copper and other home office services;
- i) Environmental footprint;
- j) Play provision;
- k) Flood risk concerns and
- l) Impact on amenity of neighbouring properties

The Town Council reserves the right to require an individual architectural review on any development of 25 houses or more or any single building of more than 3000sqm outside Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area. Within the Conservation Area it reserves the right to require an individual architectural review on any development of 1 house or any single building or extension of more than 100sqm. Such reviews should be carried out by an appropriately qualified independent body and conducted within the design review guidelines established by RIBA or CABE.

## 1.7 Prioritising Development on Brownfield sites

Derelict sites and empty buildings remain across the Plan area and these often create a drag on its vibrancy and attractiveness. The consultation shows that redevelopment of derelict and redundant 'brownfield sites' instead of building on greenfield sites should be a priority.

This is also a core principle of the NPPF (paragraph 17) which is to "encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that is it not of high environmental value".

Policy E36 of the NWLDC Local Plan supports redevelopment on derelict land where it has limited environmental or ecological value.

Development that addresses these issues therefore must be prioritised before other development sites are considered.

**POLICY S5: PRIORITY TO BE GIVEN TO BROWNFIELD SITES – Development Proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of redundant land or buildings should be prioritised.**

## **2. Housing**

### **2.1 Introduction**

According to the 2011 Census, Ashby de la Zouch had a population of 12,530 and 5,422 homes. This represents 13.4% of the dwellings in North West Leicestershire.

Ashby de la Zouch has been the focus of much new house building, and it is reasonable to expect this trend to continue, providing this housing expansion can be sustained by adequate new and improved infrastructure.

This chapter, along with the other chapters in the Plan, sets out the strategy and policies by which the housing needs within the Plan area over the Plan period will be met in a sustainable manner with due attention to good design, appropriate mix, preservation and improvement of the environment and sensitivity to the wider needs of the community. Provision of a high proportion of good quality affordable housing targeted to local demand is a priority.

### **2.2 Sustainable Housing Growth**

The draft Local Plan for North West Leicestershire set outs a need for at least 10,700 new dwellings over the plan period for the District as a whole, a 26% increase.

This overall target is not apportioned to the various communities that make up North West Leicestershire. The draft Local Plan does make it clear however, that as one of the identified Key Service Centres, Ashby de La Zouch will be required to take “a significant amount of development”

In the absence of a District-wide apportionment methodology, a target of 1,434 new homes has been developed. This has been established on a pro-rata split of the 10,700 allocation for the District as a whole and based on the number of dwellings in the Parish. It is reasonable to expect that Ashby de la Zouch should grow proportionately (1,434 new homes).

This target acknowledges the requirement that the Plan should make provision for the needs of its residents and contribute to the overall housing target for North West Leicestershire. This will include the need to meet local housing demand and provide affordable housing opportunities especially for young people as well as considering the growing housing requirements for older people.

Whilst it may be argued that as a Key Service Centre, Ashby de la Zouch should take a higher proportion of development, this needs to be balanced against the consultation findings that have revealed that the growth ambitions of the residents of the Plan area are not significant. People value the historic and compact nature of the Plan area and have been concerned by the increasing amount of development which has occurred over recent years that has reduced the level of open space and

placed pressure on the already overburdened transport network as well as other key services such as Schools and health care, leading also to unsustainable levels of commuting by car. It is also noted that Ashby de la Zouch is expected to take a greater degree of development than Coalville, which is above it in the settlement hierarchy. However, limited housing and employment land would be acceptable in the right location to provide houses and jobs for local people and to help support the vitality of the Town Centre, with associated improvements in infrastructure.

A sufficient supply of suitable land will therefore be designated for new housing to ensure an adequate provision and mix of high quality sustainable homes is available to meet the needs of the community as its size, economic activity and aspirations grow during the period of this Plan.

There have been 1,376 new homes built, permitted or allocated for Ashby de la Zouch between April 2011 and April 2015. This indicates a minimum need of 58 more homes over the period to 2031 to meet the identified growth target of 1,434 new homes.

This target will be more than met by the allocation of a housing site in Policy H2. It is also important to bear in mind here that there has also been a steady supply of 'windfall sites' in the Plan area. Windfall sites are typically small housing sites for less than five dwellings, which have not been specifically identified as available in a planning document, and have unexpectedly become available. This supply can reasonably be expected to continue through the Plan period, potentially providing up to another 100 dwellings.

Also, it must be noted that the Money Hill Site is the subject of a major planning application which if approved would provide another 605 homes. This planning application was refused by the District Council but an appeal has been lodged with the Secretary of State seeking to reverse this refusal. This decision is outside the control of the Town Council, but the planning application if approved would have a significant impact on housing provision in the Plan area.

**POLICY H1: HOUSING PROVISION - Having regard to dwellings already constructed and existing commitments, the remaining housing provision for the Plan area will be a target of a minimum of 58 new dwellings over the period 2011 - 2031, which will be met by the allocation of the housing site in Policy H2.**

Site A22 (the former Arla dairy on Smisby Road) is identified in the 2014 SHLAA as being allocated for housing. This has an estimated capacity of 154 homes. Development on this site will be supported subject to specific conditions being met.

**POLICY H2: SUSTAINABLE HOUSING GROWTH – This Neighbourhood Plan recognises the need to provide new housing to meet the identified needs of the Plan area and contribute to the District wide housing target. Having regard to homes already constructed and existing commitments, the remaining housing provision for the Plan area will be a target of a minimum of 58 houses over the period to 2031 which will be met by development on the former Arla dairy site which will be supported if:**

- (a) A satisfactory scheme to prevent flooding is implemented;**
- (b) A water vole survey is undertaken and its findings and recommendations are adequately incorporated into the design;**
- (c) The stream corridor through the site is retained as natural public open space with a 10m buffer either side. This should be managed as open space, to ensure habitat continuity and to retain connectivity;**
- (d) A scheme to provide a shared use footway/cycle track from the site to the Town centre via Hood Park is provided.**

The Plan acknowledges that the level of housing growth set out in the Neighbourhood Plan is less than that envisaged in the draft Local Plan. In particular, the draft Plan proposes allocating 1,750 homes, plus employment land and other uses on land north of Ashby de La Zouch on the Money Hill site adjacent to the Arla site allocated above. It must be recognised however that this is a proposal which the District Council is currently consulting on. The Local Plan is still a draft. It has not yet been independently examined and formally approved. This proposed allocation may be reduced in scale or indeed removed altogether from the final Local Plan. Whatever the Local Plan finally determines for the former Arla Dairy and Money Hill site the Neighbourhood Plan will acknowledge and reflects this.

It also recognises that the Money Hill site is also the subject of a planning appeal following the refusal by the North West Leicestershire District Council of a planning application for 605 homes on the site. Again, should this appeal be successful (a decision is expected shortly) the Neighbourhood Plan will be amended to reflect this.

The NPPF, paragraph 6 promotes the need for sustainable development and the foreword describes the purpose of planning as being to help achieve sustainable

development. This presumption in favour of sustainable development is reinforced within the draft North West Leicestershire Local Plan policy S1 which sets policies to achieve this. This includes a requirement for Ashby, as a Key Service Centre, to take what is referred to as a 'significant amount of development'. The draft Local Plan identifies the former Arla Dairy site as an appropriate location for new housing.

## 2.3 Housing Mix

Recent housing development in Ashby de la Zouch has been primarily larger homes which meet the needs of a limited section of the community. In order to offer a greater and more balanced range of different housing types, especially smaller homes that meet the present and future housing needs of Ashby de la Zouch, it is necessary to ensure that future housing development should contain a mixture of housing types that maintain the needs of a broad range of the community.

The emerging Local Plan recommends the following housing mix to meet the needs of residents of the District over the Plan period:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Market	5-10%	35-40%	45-50%	10-15%
Affordable	33.3%	35.2%	28.9%	2.5%

The emerging Local Plan also allows for local variation allowing for 'population profiles, location, balancing recent local delivery, rebalancing the current mix and the turnover of properties at the local level as well as the nature of the development site and the character of the area'.

In Ashby, the housing mix since 2011 where approvals are known is as follows:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Market		16 (4.6%)	92 (26.5%)	239 (68.9%)
Affordable	29 (19.6%)	81 (54.7%)	36 (24.3%)	2 (1.3%)

The 2011 Census identified the housing mix in Ashby as being as follows:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Ashby	370 (6.2%)	1222 (20.5%)	2448 (41.1%)	1404 (23.6%)
NWLDC	2210 (5.5%)	9119 (22.5%)	18533 (45.8%)	7419 (18.3%)

This shows that as at 2011 Ashby de la Zouch had a greater proportion of 4 bed houses than the District as a whole. In the approvals since 2011 the proportion of 4

bed homes has increased further, which demonstrates that there is a need for smaller house types (primarily 2 and 3 bed) within future housing developments across Ashby de la Zouch to ensure that the mix of housing across the Neighbourhood Plan area remains appropriate to the needs of the community into the future.

Census data also reveals that Ashby de la Zouch's population is generally older than that across North West Leicestershire as a whole. The proportion of residents aged 65-74 in Ashby, at 9.8%, is only marginally bigger than that of the District as a whole (9.6%). However, in the 75-84 (6.4% Ashby/5.5% District) and 90+ brackets (0.85% Ashby de la Zouch and 0.72% District), the difference is greater and indicates a need for more age-appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of the ageing population within Ashby de la Zouch.

The emerging Local Plan emphasises in policy H6 the need for a mixed and balanced range of accommodation. The NPPF supports this approach. Paragraph 50 promotes a mix of housing based on demographic data and reflecting local demand.

**POLICY H2: HOUSING MIX – In order to meet the future needs of the residents of the Plan area, new housing development proposals must:**

- a) Provide a range of housing suited to local need and appropriate to their location;**
- b) Submit justification for the proposed housing mix in a report accompanying any planning application;**
- c) Ensure that at least 60% of new market housing in developments of 5 or more shall comprise 2 and/or 3 bedroom properties; and**
- d) Provide a balance of accommodation, including bungalows, which meets the needs of people of all ages, including older people.**

## **2.4 Affordable Housing**

The 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) indicates a potential need for 60% of the new housing required across the District to be affordable, however the current District Policy is for a minimum of 30% of new homes in Ashby de la Zouch in developments of 15 or more to be affordable. Continuing this policy would see an increasing gap between need and delivery.

Current District Council policy provides a precedent for requiring affordable homes on developments of 5 or more homes, this being the policy for Measham, Ibstock and Kegworth.

The SHMA indicates that, for the District as a whole, 30-35% of affordable housing need will be for 1 bedroom properties. However for Ashby de la Zouch, there are currently 171 households on the affordable homes waiting list, 86 (50%) of which require 1 bedroom properties.

Analysis shows that in recent years of 148 affordable homes currently negotiated on Ashby de la Zouch sites with planning permission only 29 or 19.6% are 1 bedroom. If this trend continues, it can therefore be expected that there will be a large shortfall in affordable 1 bedroom homes in Ashby over the plan period.

This reflects current District Council Policy for a housing site developed “purely to meet an identified local housing need” and has been applied recently in Ashby de la Zouch for Discounted Open Market Properties.

This policy is aimed at redressing the historic under provision and disproportionate demand for affordable housing in Ashby de la Zouch. 25% of the current social housing waiting list across North West Leicestershire is for homes in Ashby de la Zouch. The objective is to offer more, and a greater range of, affordable housing that meets the present and future needs of Ashby and prioritise the needs of the Town and its residents.

The need for this policy is evidenced by the NPPF, paragraph 50, which requires local authorities to identify the required tenure of housing in specific locations and to plan for meeting this need. Policy H6 in the emerging Local Plan for North West Leicestershire District Council sets specific targets for the delivery of affordable housing across the District, but allows for variations according to locally identified need.

**POLICY H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING – To support the provision of mixed, sustainable communities and meet an identified need within the community:**

- a) At least 40% of homes on developments comprising 5 or more dwellings shall be high quality affordable homes. Only in highly exceptional circumstances will commuted sums be acceptable and any such commuted sums shall be used to provide suitable affordable housing in Ashby de la Zouch;**
- b) At least 50% of the affordable homes provided shall be 1 bedroom properties; and**



- c) Development housing proposals will be expected to contribute to the provision of affordable homes that are suited to the needs of older people and those with disabilities.

Where possible, affordable housing within the Plan area shall be allocated to eligible households with an Ashby connection defined as follows:

- a) Was born in Ashby de la Zouch or;
- b) Presently reside in the plan area and has, immediately prior to occupation, been lawfully and ordinarily resident within the plan area for a continuous period of not less than twelve months; or
- c) Was ordinarily resident within Ashby de la Zouch for a continuous period of not less than three years but has been forced to move away because of the lack of affordable housing; or
- d) Is presently employed or self-employed on a full time basis in Ashby de la Zouch and whose main occupation has been in Ashby de la Zouch for a continuous period of not less than twelve months immediately prior to occupation; or
- f) Has a need to move to Ashby de la Zouch to be close to a relative or other person in order to provide or receive significant amounts of care and support.
- e) Has a close family member who is lawfully and ordinarily resident within Ashby de la Zouch and who has been lawfully and ordinarily resident within the Plan area for a continuous period of not less than three years immediately prior to occupation and for the purposes of this clause a “close family member” shall mean a mother, father, brother or sister.

Only where no households can be found that meet any of the above criteria shall affordable housing within the plan area be allocated to otherwise eligible households from the wider District.

## 2.5 Promoting Self-Build

The NPPF calls for ‘custom build’ opportunities to be included in local plans as part of the housing mix. This is accommodated within the Neighbourhood Plan and referred to as ‘self-build’ opportunities which offer benefits in terms of affordability, local engagement and encouraging bespoke design appropriate to the area. This will ensure the fit within the overall design of the scheme and provide flexibility to meet a range of different needs.

In this type of development, new homes are built either by the future homeowner themselves (self-build), or to their specification by a small developer or local builder (custom build). The Neighbourhood Plan promotes this approach and encourages self-build opportunities to be incorporated into new housing developments.

The national self-build website - <http://www.nasba.org.uk/> - identifies a number of benefits to this type of development model when compared to conventional development:

- Better quality homes.
- More individual and contemporary architecture (but the style must still in accordance with local planning policy).
- Cheaper to build than to buy the equivalent.
- More likely to be undertaken by local residents – thereby enhancing a sense of community.
- More likely to include sustainable and green technology.
- Homes that are tailored to the needs of their owners.
- More likely to involve local tradespeople in the construction.

**POLICY H4: PROMOTING SELF-BUILD – Development proposals for self-build or custom build schemes will be supported where**

**Individuals who wish to purchase a self-build plot must:**

- a) Demonstrate that they have a local connection (definition as per policy H3) and**
- b) Demonstrate that they intend to live in the property once it is complete and**
- c) Complete the building of the dwelling within 2 years of purchase.**

**Plots may be sold to individuals without a local connection if a lack of local need has been demonstrated. This will be deemed to be the case if the plot has been on the open market at a fair market price for more than 6 months without being sold.**

### **3. Employment and Economic Growth**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Employment and economic growth are key to sustainable, vibrant and prosperous communities.

Ashby de la Zouch has a strong and competitive economy and work force as evidenced in the high and growing number of companies based in the Plan area as well as the sustained levels of investment in its economy and low levels of unemployment.

Ashby de la Zouch is a very attractive and supportive location for businesses to be based and grow. It enjoys a strategic location with excellent road, rail and air network. It also benefits from a high quality business infrastructure including a number of purpose built and modern industrial estates. Its distinctive, historic and attractive built and natural environment set within the heart of the National Forest is also a major plus.

As a consequence, it is home to many hundreds of businesses and offers employment and business opportunities not only for the Parish but the wider area. It is also close to key economic growth areas such as East Midlands Airport and Donnington Park. These growth areas provide opportunities for jobs, trade and investment for Ashby de la Zouch residents and businesses, which the Plan seeks to maximise.

The population is skilled with significantly more people, for example, holding higher level qualifications than the District and national averages. The population is also entrepreneurial as reflected in the high number of people self-employed and business start-ups. Many residents, however, who wish work in the Parish struggle to do so - many have been unable to find work and some that have found work have to travel long distances, often by car, to their work place.

Consultation shows that residents, businesses and other stakeholders wish to see Ashby de la Zouch continue to offer a high quality and sustainable business environment and infrastructure that allows business to form, grow and prosper. There should also be a focus on supporting residents to benefit from the employment and investment opportunities, including through self-employment.

The Plan also considers that one of the most effective ways it can support and nurture businesses are to make the planning system more efficient and accessible. It aims therefore to simplify and streamline economic development related planning policies and processes wherever possible, including by reducing their number.

### **3.2 Existing Employment Land and Buildings**

The Plan area is home to many hundreds of businesses spanning a wide and diverse range of sectors including the services sector, manufacturing and a growing number in the warehousing sector. The vast majority of these are small, employing less than ten people, but include some very large employers.

These businesses are generally to be found scattered across the Parish. There are, however, some groupings of business including on purpose built industrial estates such as the Ivanhoe and Ashby Business Parks. Planning permission has also recently been granted for a major (26 hectares) employment area at the site of the former Lounge disposal point.

To make sure that Ashby de la Zouch continues to provide sustainable, accessible job opportunities and to benefit from economic growth, it is important to ensure the continuing availability of a choice of sites and premises. To achieve this we will protect existing viable employment sites.

The Plan adopts the standard definition of employment use (B1, B2 & B8) as set out in planning legislation.

**POLICY E1: EXISTING EMPLOYMENT LAND AND BUILDINGS – Land and buildings in the existing employment use will continue to be used for employment purposes unless it can be shown that it is no longer viable or suitable for the site or building to remain in employment use.**

### **3.3 Small and Start-Up Businesses**

Within the Parish there is a small and growing number of small businesses. They are key to a sustainable, diverse and vibrant economy and community, and the Plan is keen to encourage their establishment and growth in appropriate locations.

Often these can operate in residential areas without causing nuisance or detriment to the environment.

In special circumstances, this could include the conversion of existing or redundant buildings outside of the defined Limits to Development for uses such as agriculture, tourism, and home-working uses that are appropriate to a rural location.

**POLICY E2: SMALL AND START UP BUSINESSES** - Outside of the main employment areas, small scale employment related development proposals (including homeworking) will be supported subject to transport, environmental, and amenity considerations.

**POLICY E3: SMALL AND START UP BUSINESSES** - The Plan will encourage developments and initiatives, which support small and start-up businesses.

### **3.4 Connecting Local People to the new Job Opportunities**

In addition to supporting businesses to create jobs and investment, there is a need to ensure that all local people have the opportunities needed to access jobs and meet the needs of employers. This is key to a sustainable economy and a vibrant community.

To support this, the Plan encourages actions aimed at connecting local people to the new job opportunities and preventing the barriers such as training or transport that restricts them doing so. This benefits both businesses and local people.

**POLICY E4: CONNECTING LOCAL PEOPLE TO THE NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES** - The Town Council will work with partners with the objective that all local people shall have the opportunities needed to access jobs and meet the needs of employers including by

- a) Seeking that major new employment related developments contribute to the provision of education and training;
- b) Promoting local employment opportunities and initiatives aimed at the residents of the Parish;
- c) Developing tailored interventions such as Travel Plans and improved public transport provision to the main employment areas in and near to the Parish and
- d) Developing links between the business community and education providers.

## **4. Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre**

### **4.1 Introduction**

A strong Town Centre is vital for vibrant, sustainable and thriving communities. It is at the heart of a community.

It provides a valuable service in meeting the day to day shopping, social and other important needs of residents as well as providing opportunities for investment and local employment, close to where people live. It also reduces the need to travel, and acts as a focal point for local life and interaction.

The NPPF states that “town centres should be seen as the heart of communities” and that policies should “support their viability and vitality”.

Ashby de la Zouch has a historic, vibrant and attractive Town Centre. It is where the majority of the shops in the Plan area are concentrated, and has a good range of other facilities with a leisure centre, library, museum and very popular primary and secondary schools. These cater well for the everyday needs of local residents as well as making the Town Centre an attractive venue for visitors.

Over the years, the town has retained its traditional character and street pattern. This is reflected in much of it being designated as a Conservation Area reflecting its historic and architectural interest.

In 2015, North West Leicestershire District Council as part of the development of the Local Plan commissioned independent experts to undertake an assessment of the vitality and viability of the main centres in the District, including Ashby de la Zouch. The conclusions were that “Ashby was shown to be performing well, with a low vacancy rate, a well maintained town centre and a good variety of retailers with a mix of national multiples and specialist independents”. This emerging Local Plan has Ashby, alongside Coalville, at the top of the retail hierarchy in the District.

Consultation reveals that ensuring that Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre remains an attractive, vibrant and sustainable place in which to work, live and shop remains a top priority.

Residents, however, have expressed concern over the appearance of new or rebranded shop fronts, which are out of keeping, and transport issues, in particular car parking and congestion. They are also concerned that core shops are being replaced with other uses such as office accommodation and hot food takeaways, and this is having an adverse impact on the role and attractiveness of the Town Centre.

## **4.2 Maintaining and Enhancing the Attractiveness of the Town Centre**

Town Centre boundaries are important, because they help to define the character of an area and control the uses within and outside of the boundary.

Their use is encouraged in the NPPF as well as local planning Policy, including the Draft Local Plan, which proposes that a Town Centre boundary be defined for Ashby de la Zouch to reinforce and protect its key Town Centre role and function.

The existing Town Centre boundary is out of date, having been established over 20 years ago.

The Town Council, in conjunction with the District Council, has reviewed this boundary and a new one is proposed that better reflects the extent of the Town Centre.

The Plan will also support other complementary uses such as food and drinking establishment where they would not adversely affect the key role and function of the Town Centre and the amenities of residents and other people visiting the Town Centre. This includes evening and night time uses. Care however needs to be taken that this would not lead to an over concentration of such uses. The consultation shows that there is a concern that there is already an over concentration of hot food take-aways and this is having an adverse impact on the amenity of the Town Centre.

**POLICY TC1: TOWN CENTRE ATTRACTIVENESS – Ashby de la Zouch is and will remain a primary retail, leisure and service Town Centre.**

**Proposals for shops, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafes, hot food take aways, arts, culture and tourism development will be expected to be located within the Town Centre, as defined on the Town Centre map. They will be expected to:**

- a) Be of a scale appropriate to the character of Ashby de la Zouch and the role and function of its Town Centre;**
- b) Conserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of Ashby de la Zouch in terms of design;**
- c) Protect and enhance its built and historic assets, and its wider setting; and**

**d) Not lead to an over concentration of a particular use such as hot food take-aways that would have a significant adverse impact on the role and amenity of the Town Centre and adjoining and nearby uses.**

**e) Generally would not have an adverse impact on crime and anti-social behaviour, and the amenities of residents and visitors to the Town Centre**

**Such uses outside of the defined Town Centre will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances in accordance with national and district planning policies.**

### **4.3 Establish a Primary Shopping Area for the Town Centre**

The NPPF promotes the separation of Shopping Areas within Town Centre Boundaries through their identification as Primary Shopping Areas.

This is an area where core (A1) shopping uses such as greengrocers; bakers etc. will be principally concentrated.

In Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre, the concentration of retail shopping frontages is along Market Street, in the Market Hall, along Bath Street, Bath Corner and parts of Derby Road and Brook Street.

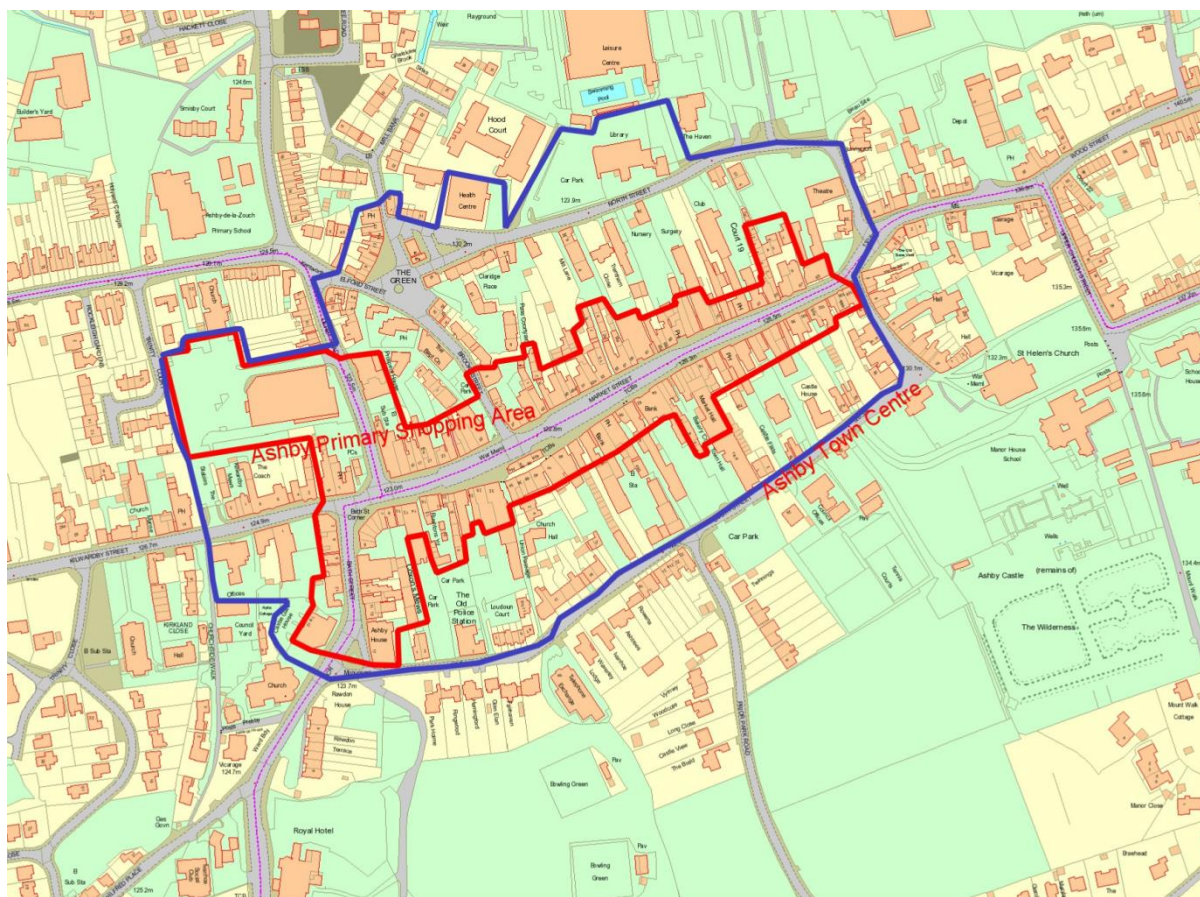
**POLICY TC2: PRIMARY SHOPPING AREA – The Neighbourhood Plan designates a Primary Shopping Area within the Town Centre Boundary within which it will:**

**a) Be supportive of proposals for new (A1) development;**

**b) Resist proposals for change of use of existing retail (A1) premises in the Primary Shopping Area to any other use.**



Figure 3 Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area



Date Created: 11-9-2015 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 435746 / 316732 | Scale: 1:3578 | © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100053272) 2015

#### 4.4 Shop Fronts in the Town Centre

Concern has been expressed that the visual appearance of shops and businesses in the Town Centre has declined, resulting in a less attractive street scene and diminishing the impact of the traditional buildings within it.

Well-designed shopfronts make an important contribution to the character of the Town Centre as well as to individual buildings across it. The retention of historic shopfronts, is particularly important. Alongside high quality contemporary design, they make an important contribution to the special architectural and historic interest of the retail area.

Where existing shopfronts are of indifferent or poor quality design, replacement with shopfronts of high quality design and materials which complement the design and proportions of the host building will be encouraged.

Run down or broken shopfronts should be repaired rather than replaced where they make an important contribution to the distinctiveness of the building or area.

Signage is also an important feature of the Town Centre. All signage should be kept to a minimum and must be designed to fit sympathetically with the local character. Internally illuminated signs are not in keeping and will not be supported.

**POLICY TC3: SHOP FRONTS – Development proposals to alter or replace existing shopfronts, or create new shopfronts within the defined Town Centre will be supported where they:**

**a) Conserve and enhance the special qualities and significance of the building and area; and**

**b) Relate well to their context in terms of design, scale, material and colour.**

**Development proposals that remove, replace or substantially harm shop fronts by poor or indifferent design, including internally illuminated signage, will not be supported.**

#### **4.5 Residential Development in the Town Centre**

The Plan also recognises the importance of residential development within the Town Centre to ensure its vitality and promote sustainable living.

Many people already live within the Town Centre, and the Plan wishes to encourage more people to do so.

It is considered that residential accommodation on the upper floors of retail, commercial and other uses in the Town Centre could make an important contribution. Vacant space over shops and other uses in the Town Centre is common place within Ashby de la Zouch. Their re-use would prove a cost-effective means of creating additional housing in the Town Centre. There would also be wider benefits to sustainability and the vitality of the Town Centre whilst complementing its core role and function. These benefits would however need to be balanced against other considerations such as the amenity of the proposed residential property and adjoining properties, as well as design, access and parking issues.

**POLICY TC4: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT – Development proposals to develop an upper floor of premises within the Town Centre for residential use will be supported subject to access, parking, design and amenity considerations and within the Primary Shopping Area it would not result in the loss of, or adversely, affect an existing retail use.**

## 4.6 Promoting Tourism in the Town Centre

Ashby Town Centre has a shortage of tourist facilities to attract visitors to the rich heritage of the Town. In particular it has a deficiency of hotels to accommodate visitors.

The development of new tourism facilities will help to promote the Town Centre and increase footfall to the shops, strengthening the business community and the Town itself.

This is also in accordance with Section 3 of the NPPF which encourages planning policies that support sustainable rural tourism and section 10 of the emerging NWLDC Local Plan that recognises the role that planning can play in promoting tourism and makes a link between tourism and economic development of an area.

**POLICY TC5: TOURISM - Development proposals for tourism facilities in the Town Centre will be supported provided that:**

- a) The siting, scale and design has strong regard to the local character, historic and natural assets of the surrounding area;
- b) The design and materials are in keeping with the local style and reinforce local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place and
- c) The development is outside the Primary Shopping Area

**The loss of tourism facilities in the Town Centre will not be supported unless they are no longer viable or alternative provision is made available.**

## 4.7 Legible Signage

Signage within the Town has developed in a piecemeal fashion.

As a consequence, it is cluttered and uncoordinated. This means that visitors to the Town Centre often do not understand how to best get around it.

Some of the signage is also unattractive and detracts from the special character of the Town.

A number of towns and cities have introduced 'Legible Signage Policies' to help to reduce the amount of street clutter and better understand how to get between

places; an approach this Plan supports, as well as a general improvement in signage in the Town Centre.

**POLICY TC6: LEGIBLE SIGNAGE – Development proposals should include clear and attractive signage that is in keeping with the local style. The Town Council will work with the District Council, County Council as well as businesses and residents in the Town Centre to introduce a ‘Legible Signage’ Strategy for the Town.**

DRAFT

## **5. Transport**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Transport is primarily a means to an end, and the fundamental purpose of all modes of transport (by foot, cycle, car etc.) is to enable people to access those locations, goods and activities they want or need.

Good quality, accessible and sustainable transport is key to supporting the vitality and viability of a community and of achieving a good quality of life.

The Plan area is relatively well served by transport opportunities. It is strategically and conveniently located on the main transport network with good road connections including to the M1, M5, M42 and M6 motorways. It is also less than 10 miles away from a major airport – East Midlands. It has a good network of footpaths and cycle ways as well as being well served by public transport. Levels of car ownership are relatively high and growing fast.

The traffic situation has, however, been identified as a significant issue for many involved in the development of the Plan, not only residents, but also employers and agencies. In particular, despite significant improvements and investment, the transport infrastructure has failed to keep up with the growth of the Plan area. This has aggravated a transport situation, which was already difficult. The most obvious manifestation of this is the main road network, which is overloaded during peak hours. In addition, further development, if not properly managed and planned, will put the transport infrastructure, especially the road system, under even greater pressure.

It is also noted that HS2 is a national strategic project that the Neighbourhood Plan cannot influence, but if the current proposed route for Phase 2 of HS2 is implemented it will have an impact on the Parish as it will cut through the Plan area adjacent to the A42.

### **5.2 Ensuring New Development Takes Place in the Most Accessible Locations**

The planning of development offers substantial opportunities for ensuring that it is built in the most sustainable locations that reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and are accessible by a range of forms of transport.

National and Local planning policy places considerable emphasis upon ensuring that new development is “located where the need to travel is minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised”. (NPPF paragraph 34)

In planning for development, the Plan will require that priority should be given to locations, such as the built-up part of Ashby de la Zouch, that are capable of

providing or being well integrated into effective public transport, walking and cycling networks.

This also accords with the policies contained in the Sustainable Ashby de la Zouch Section which seeks to reduce the need to travel by locating development in the most sustainable locations.

**POLICY T 1: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – The Plan will require that new development takes place in the most sustainable and accessible locations that are capable of providing or being well integrated into effective public transport, walking and cycling networks.**

### **5.3 Promoting Travel Plans**

Travel Plans are a proven means to reduce travel by car and promote more sustainable means of travel especially by public transport.

They are a package of actions specifically designed by, and tailored to, a particular workplace, school or location such as a new housing development.

It is considered that the particular characteristics of the Plan area including higher levels of congestion at peak times mean that it is especially suited to a Travel Plan based approach to help achieve a shift to walking, cycling and public transport

Travel Plans generally include measures to promote walking, cycling and public transport, but can include car sharing schemes; cycling facilities; a dedicated bus service or restricted car parking allocations.

**POLICY T2: TRAVEL PLANS – The Plan will support and encourage a comprehensive programme of Travel Plans, including School Travel Plans, employer Travel Plans and new housing development Travel Plans. All new major developments which would generate significant amount of travel will be required to be supported by a Travel Plan that is tailored to the specific needs of that development and the wider needs of Ashby de la Zouch including where appropriate a reduction in Town Centre traffic.**

## 5.4 Safer Routes to Schools Scheme

The consultation identified a particular need for school pupils to be encouraged to walk, cycle or use bus services to get to school.

This would help reduce the peak traffic volumes arising at the start and end of the school day and minimise the environmental, safety and transport issues arising from the high numbers of cars parking near schools, including at and close to the school gates.

This could include initiatives such as Safer Routes to Schools Schemes, or similar, which brings together a package of measures such as 20 mph zone, safer crossing points, cycle storage facilities and enhanced signing, lining and lighting in an area.

**POLICY T3: SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOLS SCHEMES – The Plan will support and encourage ‘Safe routes to schools’ schemes and similar initiatives. Where a Safer Route to School would help to address a known traffic problem the Town Council will seek their use. All proposals for new and expanded schools facilities should be accompanied by a Safer Routes to Schools Scheme**

## 5.5 Promoting Walking and Cycling

The reliance on the car in the Plan area is very high, and the majority of the journeys (even short ones) made are by car.

Cycling and walking provide great potential to reduce reliance on the car for trips. The Plan area is relatively compact and has a good network of footpaths and cycle ways. There is some evidence that more people are taking up cycling and walking for leisure and other purposes.

The draft Ashby De La Zouch cycling strategy has been developed in partnership with Leicestershire County Council, North West Leicestershire District Council and the Heart of the Forest Forum ‘Access and Connectivity sub-group’. This sets out proposals for promoting and supporting cycling in Ashby De La Zouch and the wider area; the findings of which this Plan supports.

Further work and analysis have been undertaken as part of the development of the Plan. From this work, gaps in the network have become apparent. In particular, this

has identified the desire for a dedicated footpath/cycle way that circumnavigates the Parish, linking much prized schools, employment, shopping and recreational uses.

**POLICY T4: WALKING AND CYCLING – Support will be given to proposals which would increase or improve the network of cycle ways and footpaths and their use. This includes the provision of a new cycleway/footpath that circumnavigates the Parish. New developments should be well-linked to and by footpaths and cycle ways.**

## **5.6 Supporting use of the National Forest Railway Line for passenger transport**

The National Forest Railway Line is an important train line, part of which runs through the Plan area. It currently serves freight trains and has not carried passengers for many years. However the reintroduction of passenger services would make an important contribution to a reduction in motor vehicle usage and would enhance Ashby's position as a transport hub. This plan seeks to protect the line and its infrastructure so that it can be re-opened for passenger use in the future.

However, it has been suggested that should the line close its route along the Valley adjacent to a number of towns, villages and employment areas, it could make an ideal route for a walking and cycling.

The Plan does not support its closure for rail purposes, but, should it close, would support its use as a footpath, cycleway or for some form of public transport development proposal.

**POLICY T5: NATIONAL FOREST RAILWAY LINE – Proposals that threaten the integrity of the National Forest line and its infrastructure for potential re-use for passenger services will not be supported. However, should the line completely cease being used for rail purposes the Plan supports its possible use as a footpath, cycleway or for some form of public transport development proposal.**

## **5.7 Public Transport**



Public transport, such as buses and taxis, provides a much needed valued service for many residents especially those without access to a car.

The Town is generally well served by public transport, including regular services to the many towns and cities that surround the Parish.

However, consultation suggests that public transport provision is not sufficiently attractive on some routes to persuade especially car owners to make use of public transport. Also it does not meet the needs of all of the community – in particular many of the Plan area's rural settlements which often have infrequent bus services and people with disabilities. More effective publicity of the services available and better coordination of these services was a major theme here.

**POLICY T6: PUBLIC TRANSPORT – The Town Council will liaise with Leicestershire Highway Authority, East Midlands Airport, Network Rail, the bus operators and other relevant bodies to encourage the better planning, and improved provision, of public transport.**

## 5.8 Local Car Parking

Car parking in the Plan area has become a serious problem. Increased car use and more residents and visitors have led to a shortage of available spaces. This is particularly so in the Town Centre but it has become an issue of major concern across the Plan area.

A wide and diverse range of views and ideas have been put forward on how this might be best addressed. There was, however, no emerging consensus.

In addition, some of the issues raised are not best addressed through policies in this document which is essentially concerned with the development of land - for example, car parking charging policy or how long free on-street parking should be limited to.

The Town Council recognises that car parking is a serious issue, and that responses to it need to be explored and developed.

**POLICY T7: CAR PARKING – The Plan will encourage development and other proposals that provide opportunities for improvement in car parking.**

**The Plan supports a major review of car parking provision and policies in Ashby, especially in the Town Centre, and the Town Council will work with the**

**Leicestershire Highway Authority, Leicestershire County Council, North West Leicestershire District Council, the local business community and other relevant bodies to ensure this.**

DRAFT

## **6. Education, Leisure and Well Being**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Education, leisure and wellbeing are major issues both locally and nationally. They are also closely related. Good education and leisure opportunities are strongly associated with good wellbeing, for example. Good wellbeing is also about living in an attractive, healthy and safe environment that encourages pride, physical activity and community interaction.

Residents of the Plan area enjoy better education, leisure and wellbeing than across the country. Levels of ill health are also below the national average.

The Plan area has a rich and attractive built and natural environment. This includes a number of sites and buildings that have been highlighted as being of national significance.

### **6.2 Important Local Green Spaces**

The Plan area has a diverse mix of green spaces that exist around, within and between the Town and the other settlements that make up the Parish.

As well as formal public green space such as parks, recreation and children's playgrounds, the term 'Local Green Space' includes other important open spaces such as woodlands, allotments, and grassed areas.

Collectively, these areas make a significant contribution to the special and attractive character of the Parish and deserve protection for the benefit both of the residents and visitors to the Plan area as well as its wildlife.

In 2008 a study was undertaken by North West Leicestershire District Council looking at the provision of open space such as parks and recreation grounds across the District. This identified that Ashby De La Zouch has a good range of open spaces scattered across the Plan area much of which was popular and well used, such as Western Park. However, the total amount of open space in the Plan area was below recognised national and district standards. The evidence suggests that this relative lack of open space has worsened since 2008 as new provision has not kept pace with new development.

Other studies such as the Ashby De La Zouch Conservation Area Appraisal and Study undertaken in 2001 have also underlined the important and unique contribution green spaces make to the Townscape of Ashby De La Zouch.

The NPPF enables a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan to identify for protection green areas of particular local importance, where they meet specified criteria. The designation should only be used where the green space is in reasonably close

proximity to the community it serves, is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, and where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Based on the criteria set out in the NPPF and following consultation with the local community, a number of important Local Green Spaces have been identified as being especially special to the local community and requiring special protection from development. This includes The Bath Grounds Playing Fields; The Hastings Garden; “Bullen’s Field”; The Memorial Field; Manor House School Playing Field; Ashby Castle Grounds; Hood Park; Western Park; Ashby School Playing Fields and Bath Grounds Green Corridor. Other sites will be identified as part of the consultation process.

**POLICY ELWB 1: EXISTING GREEN SPACES WILL BE PROTECTED - Their development for non-green space purposes will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances in accordance with national and district planning policies.**

### **6.3 Open Space in New Housing Developments**

Ensuring that there is sufficient open space to meet a variety of local needs is a key objective of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This is especially important as studies such as the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Assessment (2008) by North West Leicestershire District Council show that there is a general lack of open spaces in the Plan area especially in regard to recreation ground, allotments and children’s play areas.

Where new housing is developed, providing open space on-site is often the best way to cater for the immediate recreational needs of new residents that could not be met by existing open space and to ensure that the needs of the new residents do not worsen the existing provision. There are also wider benefits, for example, ensuring that open spaces are close to where people live.

Where open space is provided as part of a development, it is important that its provision reflects the local context, needs and priorities. Traditionally the focus has been on provision for children and young people. This remains important.

Recent years however have seen major changes in the population profile within the Plan area. It is important that any open space provision reflects these changes. In

particular, there has been a distinct ‘greying’ in the population with the proportion of the population aged over 50, for example, being about half again the national average.

It is important that any open space provision and associated infrastructure is designed and provided to encourage all age groups to take part in recreation and exercise.

There is evidence that ‘trim trails’ and community gardens are particularly effective in promoting activity and recreation in people across all age groups, and the Plan supports and encourages the provision of these facilities.

**POLICY ELWB 2: OPEN SPACE IN NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - All new housing developments of five or more dwellings will be required to include adequate green space provision. This will include fitness facilities for all ages not just children, as part of this open space requirement.**

**Committed sums will be required to cover the costs of the maintenance of open space for a period of 10 years from the date of their hand over to the Town Council. Alternatively, if an existing open space is located within reasonable walking distance, then a committed sum may be accepted for the enhancement of that area.**

## **6.4 Allotments**

The primary purpose of allotments is to provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce.

There are, however wider benefits, for example, bringing people together and providing a source of recreation and exercise.

Under the Small Holdings and Allotment Act of 1908, a Parish or Town Council has a duty to provide sufficient allotments, where there is evidence of demand. There are currently approximately 100 allotment plots in across Ashby de la Zouch. This represents a shortfall of 29 plots based on national guidelines.

Despite efforts to increase supply with demand by splitting existing plots as they become available, the waiting list has remained stable in recent years.

New development provides an opportunity to meet this demand for allotments by requiring the provision of allotments as part of the development. It is important though that any land brought forward for allotment use meets certain criteria, in terms of suitability for cultivation, convenient access, availability of basic services and potential to be secure against theft or vandalism.

Such criteria are best met by identifying suitable locations rather than relying on piecemeal use of residual or unsatisfactory corners of larger development sites. Sufficient plots should be available on any site to make site acquisition and management viable.

**POLICY ELWB 3: ALLOTMENT PROVISION IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS – Appropriate and suitable allotment provision will be required to be incorporated into new housing developments of five or more homes either through direct provision or via an equivalent commuted sum.**

## 6.5 Biodiversity

Biodiversity includes all kinds of species and plants, from the commonplace to the critically endangered, as well as the habitat, which supports them.

Nationally important bio-diversity sites are protected under national legislation, notably through their designation as Sites of Scientific Interest. There are no Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the Parish though that part of the river Mease and its tributaries which lie within the Plan Area are designated as a Special Area of Conservation

There are however a number of sites of local bio-diversity interest. This is evidenced by studies such as North West Leicestershire Habitat Survey and Report (2006 – 2009).

These are important to the beauty and distinctiveness of the Plan area as well as to the wildflowers and wildlife they support.

Planning policy enables a Neighbourhood Plan to protect and enhance such locally important sites of bio-diversity.

**POLICY ELWB 4: BIODIVERSITY - All new development will be expected to enhance and protect sites of biodiversity or ecological importance.**

## 6.6 Trees and Woodlands

Trees and woodlands form an important part of Ashby De La Zouch's distinctive and attractive character and landscape.

They are also important for promoting relaxation and community activity, as well as supporting wildlife and wild flowers.

Many of the trees and woodlands in the Parish are protected through Tree Preservation Orders and other national designations; but many are not.

New development provides a particular opportunity to extend the provision of trees by requiring their provision as part of the development.

Ashby De La Zouch lies at the heart of the National Forest. This National Forest and the National Forest Partnership, of public, private and voluntary sector bodies provides a focus and opportunity for tree planting and wider environmental regeneration. This includes working with the community on tree planting schemes.

**POLICY ELWB 5: TREES AND WOODLANDS – Development proposals that damage or result in the loss of trees and hedges of good arboricultural, ecological and amenity value will not normally be permitted. Proposals should be designed to retain trees and hedges of arboricultural, ecological and amenity value. Proposals should be accompanied by a tree survey that establishes the health and longevity of any affected trees.**

## 6.7 Historic Buildings and Structures

Ashby De La Zouch has a rich and diverse historic environment. It contains numerous buildings of architectural and historic interest dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century onwards. This environment is highly valued by residents and visitors and makes a major contribution to Ashby De La Zouch's unique and special character

There are over 120 'Listed' buildings within the Parish that have been identified as being of national significance and importance. This includes the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Ashby de la Zouch Castle (and through which the origins of the built development of the Parish can be traced) which is 'Listed' at Grade I as a building of exceptional interest, as well as being designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument as well as six Grade II\* listed properties - buildings of particular importance - including three buildings along Station Road associated with the early nineteenth century spa

development of the Parish. The 'Listing' of these buildings gives them special legal protection and underlines the need to protect and enhance these valuable assets.

In addition, to the Listed Buildings there are also a large number of unlisted buildings and structures of some architectural or historic merit which are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the Parish. These are known as Locally Listed Buildings. Following an assessment undertaken in 2001 as part of the Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area Appraisal and Study a number of such buildings were identified in the Town Centre. These include the substantial brick built (former) Vicarage to St Helen's Church and the Saline Baths Infirmary of 1854 as well as the former Police Station/Magistrates Court all of which are situated along South Street. Other Locally Listed Buildings may come forward over the life time of the Plan.

**POLICY ELWB 6: BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES OF LOCAL HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST - Development proposals that will impact on an identified building of local historical or architectural interest will be required to conserve and enhance the character, integrity and setting of that building or structure.**

## **6.8 Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area**

Ashby de la Zouch's historic assets are concentrated in the Town Centre.

Studies and consultation acknowledge the attractive and prevailing character within the Conservation Area as deriving essentially from the nineteenth century - late Georgian from the Spa era with later Victorian additions.

The special built heritage and character of Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre is underlined and reinforced by much of the Town Centre being designated as a Conservation area.

A Conservation Area is an area defined by law as "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

As part of its responsibility to keep conservation areas under review, the District Council approved a Conservation Area Appraisal in 2001 and adopted it as supplementary planning guidance.



**POLICY ELWB 7: ASHBY DE LA ZOUCHE CONSERVATION AREA –** Development proposals will be expected to conserve and enhance the character, integrity and setting of Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area in accordance with the Conservation Area Appraisal and national and district planning policies.

## **6.9 Archaeological Sites**

Ashby de la Zouch's richness in heritage assets also encompasses archaeological remains.

Important remains within the Parish are likely to range in date from the medieval period to the industrial period.

The best known archaeological site is Ashby de la Zouch Castle and its associated formal garden area 'The Wilderness' to the south. This is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Scheduled Monuments are those sites recognised as being nationally important, and having the highest priority for protection.

As bodies such as English Heritage have highlighted, there is potential for the survival of other important archaeology to be found in Ashby de la Zouch particularly in the Conservation Area, around the Castle site and in the vicinity of St. Helen's Church, especially in view of the level of rebuilding that occurred along the principal streets of the town in the Georgian and early Victorian periods.

**POLICY ELWB 8: AREA OF HIGH ARCHEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL -** The Neighbourhood Plan identifies an ALERT zone which is coterminous with the conservation area boundary where archaeological remains are likely to be present. All major developments should consider their impact upon archaeology but where any proposal falls within the boundaries of the zone, developers or their agents should seek guidance at the pre-application stage and where necessary engage in discussions about what material should be submitted with a planning application in the 'Heritage Statement'.

## 6.10 Important Community Facilities

The Plan area has a good range of community facilities including a post office, Town Council offices, churches, schools and sporting facilities. These generally meet the day to day needs of the community.

However, some of these facilities such as schools and medical facilities are under pressure. The Parish has also seen a gradual decline in such facilities.

Also, with a growing and ageing population and reductions in public transport access to such locally based services will become increasingly important.

Consultation shows that these are highly valued and prized by the local community. They are a key ingredient in the generally high quality of life in the Parish and its strong sense of community and identity. The community wishes to see them protected and, wherever possible, enhanced.

**POLICY CF1 IMPORTANT COMMUNITY FACILITIES – Important community facilities should be retained and wherever possible enhanced. Development proposals involving the loss of or adversely affecting, important community facilities will be resisted unless an appropriate alternative is provided, or there is demonstrable evidence that the facility is no longer required and/or viable and that suitable alternative community uses have been considered. Proposals for new or enhanced community facilities, including medical facilities, will be supported where it meets an identified need, is in the Limits to Development Limit and subject to transport, design and amenity considerations.**

## 6.11 Assets of Community Value

The designation of a community facility as an Asset of Community Value provides an important means to protect important buildings and land, that are important to the local community and which they wish to protect from inappropriate development.

If an asset is 'Listed' the Town Council or other community organisations will then be given the opportunity to bid to purchase the asset on behalf of the local community, if it comes up for sale on the open market.

Whilst there is no requirement to have a policy relating to Community Assets in a Neighbourhood Plan, its inclusion gives any 'Listed' Asset greater protection through the planning system. It also sends out a clear message that the community wishes to protect and retain important buildings and land that are important to them.

A number of assets have already been 'Listed' in the Parish such as the Bath Grounds and the cottage hospital and other designations may come during the lifetime of the Plan.

**POLICY ELWB 10: ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE - Development proposals that will result in either the loss of a designated Asset of Community Value or in significant harm to a designated Asset of Community Value will not be permitted unless in special circumstances such as the Asset is replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in an equally suitable location or it can be clearly demonstrated that it is unviable or no longer needed by the community.**

## **6.12 Provision of a New Arts/Community Centre**

Studies and consultation have identified the need for a new purpose built multifunctional community centre with the focus on the arts to meet the community and arts needs of the Parish and the wider area. This would then provide a hub and focus for community and civic activity.

The Parish lacks such a facility, which is surprising for a community of its size. Work is underway to take this forward.

**POLICY ELWB 11: NEW ARTS/COMMUNITY CENTRE - The development of an appropriately located new Arts/Community Centre will be supported.**

## **6.13 Education**

During the consultation process education provision arose as a major concern.

The Plan Area is home to a range of good and popular secondary and primary schools, which cater for the needs of children from the Parish and the wider area.

There is currently a shortfall in education provision with demand for places outstripping supply. There is concern that this shortfall will worsen as the school provision fails to keep pace with an increase in children requiring school places

arising from the new family homes being built, or planned to be built, in the Parish and the wider area.

There is also concern about the design and quality of some of the existing schools, which were not designed, nor can be easily adapted, to modern educational needs.

The Plan recognises the urgent need to support local schools and plan for their future.

The Town Council, as part of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, has started this process. It will continue to work with the County Council and other relevant authorities and bodies to address the issue of education provision and capacity and work in partnership to develop solutions in response to these.

**POLICY ELWB 12: EDUCATION – The Town Council will work with the County Council and other education providers, especially in response to new housing and other trends and pressures, to promote education provision that reflects changing needs and the population profile of the Parish, is fit for purpose and of a modern standard. New developments will be required to provide adequate financial contributions to provide sufficient good educational provision for the additional demand they generate.**

## 7. Developer Contributions

### 7.1 Introduction

All development has the potential to impact on the environment, and place pressure on local infrastructure and services. It is recognised that the planning system should be used to ensure that new development contributes positively to the local environment, and helps to mitigate against any adverse impacts on infrastructure.

The draft Local Plan confirms that ‘Infrastructure is critical to support the provision of all development ... supporting infrastructure must be in place for new development. This is not only to ensure that the new development is properly served in respect of essential day-to-day infrastructure required by the occupants of any new development ... but also to minimise the impact upon existing infrastructure’.

However, the NPPF stresses that the need for infrastructure accompanying development must have regard for the viability of that development. Planning Policy Guidance (PPG 46) also recognises the ability of Neighbourhood Plans to identify the need for new or enhanced infrastructure, but requires the Plan to prioritise the infrastructure requirements.

### 7.2 Infrastructure requirements

There are a number of infrastructure requirements that have been identified through the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan.

These include:

- Enhanced requirements for affordable housing;
- Travel Plans;
- Improvements to footpaths and cycle ways;
- Open Space contributions;
- Contribution to the provision of allotments;
- Transport improvements.

**POLICY DC1: Prioritisation of infrastructure requirements – The infrastructure requirements accompanying new development will be refined and prioritised through the statutory consultation phase of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and will be set out in order of priority in the final Plan.**

## **SECTION 8: MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The Neighbourhood Plan will last for a period of 15 years. During this time it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council will review the Plan on a regular basis, at least on a five year basis commencing (2021) to make sure that it takes into account changes in National and District Planning Policy and generally ensure that it fit for purpose. If it is considered by the Town Council that changes are necessary to the Neighbourhood Plan it will commence a formal review in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority.

A further review will be undertaken in 2027, at which point consideration will be given, and if necessary processes commenced, to develop a further Neighbourhood Plan for the benefit of the residents of Ashby de la Zouch.

DRAFT

## Appendix B

Page	Policy/Paragraph	Comment	Reason
Throughout		Need to be clear which Local Plan is being referred to. The Draft Local Plan carries no weight; the Neighbourhood Plan should be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan (2002).	For clarity
Throughout		Reference is made to the Plan, the Parish and Ashby, are these one and the same or should it just refer to the 'Plan Area'	For clarity
2		Foreward should be Foreword	Factual
4	1.2	Suggest that reference should be made to the County and Local Authority Area in which the Neighbourhood Plan Area sits to provide context	For clarity
6	1.3, last paragraph	It is not clear whether the Neighbourhood Plan has been screened to assess whether it may have significant environmental effects? If so, has an SEA been produced as part of the evidence pack referred to?	For clarity
6	1.4	The NP refers to the timeframe as 2016-2031 which conflicts with Policy H1 which states that the plan period is 2011-2031.	Consistency
7	1.5	The reference to focus groups and the role of NWLDC Officers is misleading as officers only attended in an advisory capacity and were not involved in preparing objectives or policies in the NP	Factual
10	3.1	As written it is not clear that the key issues are key issues but rather objectives. In addition, it isn't clear how these relate to the Vision. Were the key issues raised by local people through the preparation of the NP, how are they justified? Clarification would be helpful.	For clarity
11	1.1, 3 <sup>rd</sup> paragraph	Query why some buildings are mentioned when there are others equally and/or more important e.g. Royal Hotel, Medieval Buildings on Market Street with Georgian facades. A generic statement relating to heritage assets would cover both designated and undesignated heritage assets.	For clarity
12	Policy S1	As written the final paragraph suggests the NP overrides all other considerations where the NP has a relevant policy. All planning applications have to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan (which would include the NP when it is made) and any other material considerations. Suggest removing 'without delay' as Ashby Town Council doesn't determine	Conflict with national policy

		planning applications.	
13	1.3, 1 <sup>st</sup> paragraph	spelling error Donnington should be Donington	For clarity
13	1.3 (4th Paragraph)	The last part of the last sentence refers to the Neighbourhood Plan supporting the Draft Local Plan. However, later policies do not necessarily do this.	Consistency
14	1.4 (4 <sup>th</sup> Paragraph)	Refers to the Limits to Development in the Draft Local Plan but the proposed Limits to Development in the Neighbourhood Plan are different	For clarity
14	Policy S2 (Limits to Development)	As written the policy conflicts with the NPPF and the adopted LP where it refers to a local need. It is not clear what 'other land' is referring to.	Conflict with NPPF
15	1.5 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Paragraph)	This conflicts with the NPPF which only refers to isolated new homes in the countryside being allowed in exceptional circumstances (NPPF Para 55) not development per se as suggested in the NP (This also applies to NP Policy S3). Should refer to less sustainable forms of development.	Conflict with NPPF
16	1.6, 1 <sup>st</sup> paragraph	This would require a design code to back it up. It is not clear as to whether the innovative means of reducing water run-off is referring to the use of SUDS? If so, are the Town Council taking SUDS for adoption and maintenance? If not, consider removing the last sentence of the paragraph.	For clarity
16	1.6, 2 <sup>nd</sup> paragraph	Consider rewording "high standards of architectural design since the Georgian period". More appropriate wording might be <i>'The built form of Ashby de la Zouch boasts an interesting mix of architectural styles which adds to the town's vibrancy and informs its character'</i> . Second sentence – consider adding <i>'and development proposals'</i> after <i>'determining planning policy'</i>	For clarity
15/16	Policy S4	A Design and Access Statement is only required for major applications and on schemes in Conservation Areas. The criteria in the policy are far more onerous than the legislative requirements.  There is no apparent evidence base for requiring an Architectural Review on any scheme. Who would fund these and who would be the 'independent body'? Requiring an architectural review would have an impact on viability contrary to	Conflict with NPPF  Potential viability issues



		<p>national policies and it would also potentially conflict with Policy S1 which refers to decision being approved without delay (where they accord with other policies within the NP).</p> <p>This policy fails to explain what the Town Council would expect from a new development in terms of its design; it only explains what the Town Council would expect from a development proposal in terms of the information that it should contain.</p> <p>Chapter 7 of the NPPF already expects new development to “respond to local character and history” in terms of its overall characteristics (density, layout, scale, materials etc); the county council’s historic landscape characterisation (HLC) provides evidence to inform this policy. Policy S4 should explain how the expectations of the NPPF would apply in the specific context of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. It could offer specific advice on the density, layout, scale and materials of new development including new site allocations.</p> <p>CABE is now referred to as Design Council since the merger in 2011.</p> <p>Suggest using the District Council’s design policy and Building for Life.</p>	
16	1.7 (1 <sup>st</sup> Paragraph)	Reference is made to derelict sites and empty buildings in the Plan area, it would be useful to identify where these sites currently are.	For clarity
16	1.7 (3 <sup>rd</sup> Paragraph)	Reference is made to Policy E36 of the adopted Local Plan. This is inconsistent as the majority of the NP refers to the Draft Local Plan.	Consistency
16	Policy S5	<p>No guidance is provided as to what type of uses would be preferred on brownfield sites.</p> <p>As worded the policy conflicts with the NPPF as no reference is made in the Policy to brownfield land which may be of environmental value and hence not suitable for development.</p> <p>Suggest ‘prioritised’ should be changed to ‘encouraged’ as it is not clear how the re-use of brownfield sites would be prioritised and over what other</p>	<p>Conflict with NPPF</p> <p>Ambiguous</p>

		development.	
17	2.2 (3 <sup>rd</sup> Paragraph)	The methodology conflicts with the adopted Local Plan which identifies Ashby as being a settlement within the Transport Choice Corridor, where development would be appropriate. The amount of development proposed in Ashby in the NP would, if the same approach were applied to the draft Local Plan, result in the distribution of development being kept at a constant and so result in development in locations which are not as suitable as Ashby, contrary to the principles of sustainable development which the NP seeks to support. In addition, limiting the overall amount of housing development will impact upon the ability to provide affordable housing which the NP recognises is needed.	Conflicts with adopted Local Plan
18	2.2 (1 <sup>st</sup> Paragraph)	Factually incorrect that Ashby is to take more development than Coalville in numerical and/or percentage terms. A housing background paper to the draft Local Plan identifies that Coalville would see about 3,900 new dwellings up to 2031, compared to 3,100 in Ashby which would represent 35% and 28% of all growth respectively.	Factual
18	Policy H1	The minimum need of 58 dwellings will be exceeded by the proposed allocation at Arla Dairy (154 dwellings) and assumed windfalls (100 dwellings). As drafted this policy conflicts with Draft LP. This issue is considered in more detail in the main report. Policy H1 refers to a period 2011-2031 however, Para 1.4 (page 6) refers to a NP period of 2016 to 2031.	Policy in conflict with the draft Local Plan
19	2.2 (1 <sup>st</sup> Paragraph)	The SHLAA does not allocate sites but rather identifies potential sites only.	Factual
19	Policy H2	This repeats Policy H1 to some extent. It is not clear as to why part (b) only refers to water voles and not other protected species. This matter is covered by legislation so is not necessarily required. Part (d) would need to comply with CIL regulations; it is not clear as to whether this is reasonable in scale and would potentially raise viability issues.	Conflicts with NPPF  Potential viability issues
19	2.2 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Paragraph)	It is not clear how the NP will acknowledge and reflect the new Local Plan. Furthermore, it is not clear what stage of the Local Plan is being referred	For clarity

		to. It is not clear how or when the NP would be amended to reflect a successful appeal decision.	
20	2.3 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Paragraph)	The Draft Local Plan does not recommend a housing mix but merely summarises the SHMA	Factual
20	2.3 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Table)	This would benefit from a 'total' row so a comparison can be made between the figures in table 2 and table 3	For clarity
21	Policy H2 (Housing Mix)	Policy numbering (there are 2 Policy H2's). The requirements in this policy would potentially impact on viability contrary to national policies (Para 173 of the NPPF).	Conflicts with NPPF  Potential viability issues
22/23	Policy H3	As worded this policy would conflict with the Government's previously expressed preferred approach which is to restrict seeking affordable housing to developments of 10 or more. Whilst this was successfully challenged in the High Court the government is now appealing to the Court of Appeal to overturn this decision. It will be important to bear this in mind in considering the content of the pre-submission NP. The policy also conflicts with that set out in the draft Local Plan and the adopted Supplementary Planning Document.  The draft Local Plan was the subject of a viability assessment which suggests that 40% in Ashby would be at best marginal. This policy would potentially impact on viability contrary to national policies.  Part (a) of the policy conflicts with the District Council's current policy for commuted sums to be used to meet affordable housing need across the whole district although this may be subject to review. Restricting where commuted sums can be invested increases the risk that they might be lost.  In respect of part (b) it should be noted that the bedroom need on the housing register is based for the main part on minimum requirement based on the Housing Benefit bedroom allowance. Some of this need is attributable to elderly single residents, or elderly couples. Although these households may want to	Conflicts with NPPF  Potential viability issues

		<p>downsize from larger 3 and 4 bed homes, they may need 2 bed homes because of their current or future health / care issues. As worded this policy would reduce the flexibility of affordable housing providers in meeting future housing need in a changing environment.</p> <p>The proposal to restrict affordable homes in Ashby to those with an Ashby connection would conflict with the district council's allocations policy of allocating affordable housing to those in most housing need on a district wide basis.</p> <p>1 bed properties may not be attractive to the RSL's.</p>	
24	Policy H4	<p>The need to have a local connection would contradict what is in the draft Housing and Planning Bill.</p> <p>It is not clear what information would be expected to 'demonstrate' these requirements as part of a planning application. Such requirements could not be secured by conditions on a planning permission, and if they were secured through a Section 106 Agreement they could be changed.</p> <p>Unsure how a period of 2 years for completion would be enforced.</p> <p>Unsure how the provisions of the last paragraph would be enforced as the parish council cannot control the sale of land.</p>	<p>Conflict with national policy and draft legislation (Draft Housing and Planning Bill)</p> <p>For clarity</p>
25	3.1 (3 <sup>rd</sup> Paragraph)	Donnington should be Donington.	For clarity
25	3.1 (final Paragraph)	It is not clear what the second sentence is referring to: what policies can the NP simplify, streamline and/or reduce? How can the NP make the planning system more efficient?	For clarity
26	3.2 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Paragraph)	It should be noted that the Lounge site is potentially affected by HS2	Factual
26	Policy E1	How will it be 'shown' that existing sites are no longer viable? Conflicts with NPPF Para 22 which states that " <i>Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose</i> ". Also that " <i>applications for alternative uses of land or buildings</i>	<p>Conflicts with NPPF</p> <p>Ambiguous</p>

		<i>should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities”.</i>	
27	Policy E3	How will the NP encourage small business and start-ups? Appear to be more an aim or objective rather than a policy? Consider amalgamating with Policy E2 to form one policy.	Ambiguous
27	Policy E4	Part (a) conflicts with the CIL tests in terms of whether it is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and potentially falls foul of ‘pooling’ restrictions. Part (b) refers to Parish rather than Plan Area Part (c) It is not clear who will fund travel plans, they are separate to planning if they are related to an existing use and not to a development proposal.	Conflicts with national policy and with legislation
28	6 <sup>th</sup> Paragraph	In the draft Local Plan for the purposes of town centre policies, Coalville and Ashby are identified as town centres. However the draft Local Plan is clear that priority is for further retail development to be located in Coalville town centre.	For clarity
29	Policy TC1	Reference is only made to some of the main town centre uses as defined in the NPPF, and excludes other uses such as leisure and entertainment uses, for example. As worded Part (d) could also apply to shops (A1 use) which is inconsistent with national policies and is not presumably what is intended. Also not clear as how an ‘over concentration’ is defined/measured? Part e) ‘Generally’ is not definitive, grammatically confusing. How would crime/anti social behaviour be demonstrated/measured? What would be the cut off to make it unacceptable? Last Paragraph – rather than ‘exceptional circumstances’ consider that it may be better to reference the sequential approach in the NPPF	Internal inconsistency
30	4.3 (1 <sup>st</sup> paragraph)	First sentence refers to the NPPF promoting the ‘separation of’ shopping areas within the Town Centre, whereas the NPPF (Para 23) refers to defining the extent of primary and secondary frontages.	Conflicts with national policy

30	Policy TC2	Part (b) is too onerous as it does not allow for other main town centre uses. Shops are allowed under the General Permitted Development Order 2015 to change to a range of other uses (including restaurants and cafes, financial and professional services) without requiring planning permission. Therefore, as worded this policy cannot be implemented and conflicts with the national approach.	Conflicts with national policy and legislation
31	4.4 (Last paragraph)	Suggest inserting 'local' before distinctiveness.	For clarity
32	1 <sup>st</sup> Paragraph	It is not clear as to whether the reference to illuminated signs refers to illuminated signs inside shops which are permitted development, or to internally illuminated box signs which are fixed externally to a building.	For clarity
32	Policy TC3	This policy prohibits the use of internally illuminated signage. This term is not defined; does the Town Council intend to prohibit the use of internally illuminated box signs only, or also the use of (e.g.) 'fret cut' or 'halo' illuminated signs? Should the last paragraph state that illuminated 'external' signage will 'not normally be permitted' – see comment on 1 <sup>st</sup> Para on page 32. Concerns that the policy mixes planning requirements and advertisement consent requirements within one policy. It would be beneficial to look at the District Council's shop front guidance.	For clarity
32	Policy TC4	It is not clear what is meant by 'access'. Changes to the GDPO 2015 mean that conversion of some upper floors to residential where not in the conservation area (but still in the town centre) would not require planning permission	Ambiguous Factual
33	Policy TC5 (Tourism)	It is not clear what is meant by tourism facilities. It is not clear why the last paragraph only applies in the town centre? As worded in the final paragraph a proposal for a new tourist facility would not be supported if it was to result in the loss of an existing tourist facility. It is not clear if this is what is intended.	Ambiguous
34	Policy TC6 (Legible Signage)	Unclear what the 'local style' is? And what the 'legible signage strategy' would consist of? Unsure why and if businesses would contribute to a signage strategy, potential	For clarity

		issues regarding CIL compliance.	
36	Policy T1 (Sustainable Development)	Policy is too ambiguous. Not clear where the sustainable and accessible locations are.	Ambiguous
36	Policy T2 (Travel Plans)	Not clear as to what is meant by 'significant amount of travel'? It would be for the Highway Authority to determine whether a travel plan was required as part of a new development proposal (if one was not submitted). Potential CIL compliancy issues.	Ambiguous
37	Policy T3 (Safer Routes to Schools Schemes)	Not clear what is meant by a 'known traffic problem'.	For clarity
38	Policy T4 (Walking and Cycling)	It is understood that Leicestershire County Council are preparing a cycling strategy for Ashby. It would be useful to include a plan showing the routes suggested in this.	For clarity
39	Policy T6 (Public Transport)	May also need to refer to Highways England.	For clarity
42	Policy ELWB 1 (Existing Green spaces will be Protected)	It would be useful to map the sites referred to for the avoidance of doubt. It is not clear whether the policy is referring to all existing green spaces or just those referenced. It is not clear what 'for non-green space purposes' means?	For clarity
43	Policy ELWB 2 (Open Space in new Housing Development)	Conflicts with National Policy. Approach may lead to viability issues. Ambiguous - how much space would be required? What is adequate? Could end up with very small unusable spaces. Unsure whether it refers to open space and/or equipped space. Consider whether it should be projects for Section 106 inclusion rather than policy as suggested. How is 'reasonable walking distance' defined?	Conflicts with NPPF  Potential viability issues  Ambiguous
43	6.4 (1 <sup>st</sup> Sentence)	Consider adding 'and encourage biodiversity'.	For clarity
44	Policy ELWB 3 (Allotment Provision in new Development)	Ambiguous – would raise viability issues; query how much space would be required? What is the evidence base for the requirement? Would this be in addition to the open space requirements included within the overall total? Suggest an alternative threshold, major applications (10 plus dwellings).	Conflicts with NPPF  Potential viability issues  Ambiguous
44	Policy ELWB 4 (Biodiversity)	Conflict with National policy – would need to show a relationship between the site and the site of ecological interest.	Conflicts with NPPF

		Many sites will already be protected by law (SSSI and protected species)	
45	Policy ELWB 5 (Trees and Woodland)	Consider re-ordering the policy – for example “require surveys to accompany proposals and where hedges etc of value are identified these should be integrated into development” Consider including at the end ‘ <i>and an assessment of impact on the trees</i> ’.	For clarity
46	Policy ELWB 6 (Building and Structures of Local Historical and Architectural Interest)	The character appraisal for the town centre (2001) identifies unlisted buildings of interest to the conservation area. These are not known as locally listed buildings and the District Council has not adopted a local list. Paragraph 135 of the NPPF asks a planning authority to take into account “the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset”. These assets may or may not have been identified prior to the application. In this context it is unfortunate that policy ELWB6 applies only to “identified buildings of local historical or architectural interest”. The legal phrase is “architectural or historic interest”, please note that; ‘historical’ does not have the same meaning as ‘historic’.	Factual
47	6.9 (4 <sup>th</sup> Paragraph)	Refer to Historic England not English Heritage	For clarity
47	Policy ELWB 8 (Area of High Archaeological Potential)	Like policy S4 above, this policy does not explain what the Town Council would expect from a new development in terms of its response to below-ground remains; it only explains what the Town Council would expect from a development proposal in terms of pre-application engagement. The policy identifies an area of high archaeological potential “coterminous with the conservation area boundary”. The County Council’s historic landscape characterisation identifies a “historic settlement core” at Ashby-de-la-Zouch. It appears that parts of the conservation area extend beyond the historic settlement core and vice versa. It is recommended that the Town Council contact the county archaeologist for further advice in respect of this matter.	Ambiguous
48	6.10 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Paragraph)	Reference is made to the decline in services such as medical facilities but no reference is made to the new health	Factual



		centre currently under construction	
48	Policy CF1 (Important Community Facilities)	Policy is ambiguous. What are considered to be important community facilities? This could just be addressed by generic reference e.g. schools. As drafted this policy would potentially prohibit a community facility being developed because it's outside the Limits to Development. Is this the intention?	Ambiguous
49	Policy ELWB 10 (Asset of Community Value)	There is no nationally prescribed requirement for an Asset of Community Value to be replaced. The Owners of listed assets cannot dispose of them without: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letting the local authority know that they intend to sell the asset or grant a lease of more than 25 years</li> <li>• waiting until the end of a six week 'interim moratorium' period if the local authority does not receive a request from a community interest group to be treated as a potential bidder</li> <li>• waiting until the end of a six month 'full moratorium' period if the local authority does receive a request from a community interest group to be treated as a potential bidder</li> </ul> The owner does not have to sell the asset to the community group.	Conflict with national policies
49	Policy ELWB 11 (New Arts/Community Centre)	It is not clear whether any such facility could be outside the Limits to Development. Consider that this is more of a statement/objective than a policy; a policy should set out how it would seek to be achieved.	For clarity
50	Policy ELWB 12 (Education)	Will the need for contributions apply to all developments irrespective of scale? Perhaps need to qualify it with " <i>where a new development will have a demonstrable impact upon education provision in the Plan Area and to comply with CIL...</i> " although this is ultimately up to County Council education to determine.	For clarity
51	7.1	No reference to CIL. The prioritised infrastructure requirements are absent - The Planning Practice Guidance identifies that a NP " <i>should set out the prioritised infrastructure requirements to address the demands of the development identified in the Plan</i> ". It is not clear either how the consultation	Contrary to national policy

		will inform the prioritisation or whether there would be further consultation once the infrastructure requirements have been prioritised.	
51	7.1 (3 <sup>rd</sup> Paragraph)	Should this refer to 'Planning Practice Guidance' rather than 'Planning Policy Guidance'?	For clarity
52	8	Should the further review be in 2026 rather than 2027 as stated	For clarity

## NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

## CABINET – 8 DECEMBER 2015

Title of report	<b>FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS, CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS, COUNCIL TAX, NON DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTOR WRITE-OFFS</b>
Key Decision	a) Financial No b) Community No
Contacts	Councillor Nick Rushton 01530 412059 <a href="mailto:nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">nicholas.rushton@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>  Director of Resources 01530 454501 <a href="mailto:steve.barrett@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">steve.barrett@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>  Head of Finance 01530 454520 <a href="mailto:ray.bowmer@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">ray.bowmer@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>
Purpose of report	To agree write-offs over £10,000 and receive details of debts written off under delegated powers.
Reason for Decision	To comply with proper accounting practices.
Council Priorities	Value for Money
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	There is no additional financial effect as all the debts are met from the Authority's bad debt provision.
Link to relevant CAT	None
Risk Management	Regular reviews of debts for write off mitigates the risk that the Council's accounts do not reflect the true level of recoverable income. It is also part of an effective arrears management strategy.
Equalities Impact Screening	Not applicable.
Human Rights	None discernible.
Transformational Government	Not applicable.
Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is satisfactory

Comments of Section 151 Officer	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory
Consultees	None.
Background papers	All papers used in compiling the report contain exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 to Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972
Recommendations	<p><b>1. THAT CABINET APPROVES THE WRITE OFFS OVER £10,000 DETAILED IN THIS REPORT.</b></p> <p><b>2. THAT CABINET NOTES THE AMOUNTS WRITTEN OFF UNDER DELEGATED POWERS.</b></p>

## 1.0 DOUBTFUL DEBT PROVISIONS

1.1 Provision is made in the accounts as follows:

	As at 1 April 2015	Write offs to date (under delegated powers)	Amounts written off over £10,000 approved by Members	Balance Available
Council Tax	£1,576,011.00	£72,620.55	£0.00	£1,503,390.45
Non Domestic Rates	£602,296.00	£56,110.15	£292,642.72	£253,543.13
Housing Rents	£170,790.00	£5,640.45	£0.00	£165,149.55
Sundry Debtors/Housing Benefit Overpayments	£1,230,487.16	£213,065.62	£0.00	£1,017,421.54

## 2.0 FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS

2.1 There are currently no Former Tenant rent arrears for which we seek approval for write-off. There were no Former Tenant rent arrears written off under delegated powers.

## 3.0 CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS

3.1 There are currently no current tenant rent arrears for which we seek approval for write-off. There were no current rent arrears written off under delegated powers.

## 4.0 COUNCIL TAX

4.1 There are currently no council tax debts over £10,000 for which Cabinet's approval for write off is sought.

4.2 The amounts written off under delegated powers, in accordance with the thresholds outlined in the write off policy, are as follows: One case under £100 which amounts to

£69.94 where the debtor has absconded. There are 25 cases between £100 and £1,000, which amount to £10,976.00. Of these, two are deceased with no assets (£548.39), 18 have absconded (£7,445.36), two are insolvent (£1,210.93) and three are uneconomical to collect (£1,771.32). There are six cases between £1,000 and £10,000 which amount to £10,887.26. Of these, two have absconded (£4,242.16) and four are insolvent (£6,645.10).

4.3 The full list of reasons for writing off debt includes:

- Bankruptcy or a Debt Relief Order is in place
- Deceased – No assets in the estate.
- Debtor Absconded / No Trace
- Company in liquidation/dissolved or ceased trading with no assets
- Severe Hardship and/or Serious health Issues
- Statute barred i.e. we cannot legally pursue the debt as there has been six years since the debt fell due and no action has been taken to collect the debt.
- Uneconomical to collect i.e. it is not financially viable to take further action for e.g. due to the low level of the debt, they have gone abroad etc.

4.4 Writing off debts is only considered where all appropriate recovery and enforcement measures have been taken, or, where the council are legally prohibited from pursuing the debt.

4.5 Each year the council produces a recovery timetable which details the dates on which the statutory Reminders, Final Notices and Summonses are to be despatched. The letters issued are designed to maximise collection by prompting tax payers to pay their missed instalments in a timely manner, thereby avoiding further enforcement action taking place. A leaflet is included with the reminders to explain what happens next should payment not be made.

4.6 For all outstanding debt, the council takes the recovery action outlined in the bullet points below:

- If payment is not received by the instalment due date shown on the bill, a reminder notice is issued.
- If payment is received within seven days the tax payer may continue with their original instalment plan. If they default again within the year, then one further reminder notice is issued. If they do not pay, the following steps are taken.
- If payment is not received by the date on the reminder notice, a court Summons is issued. The Summons advises them of the date and time that the Council will attend a Magistrates Court hearing to apply for the award of a Liability Order against them.
- Once a Liability Order is obtained, the Council has a number of enforcement options open to them in order to secure payment of the debt.

4.7 Liability Order Action

Once a Liability Order has been obtained each debt is looked at and a decision is made as to the most appropriate course of action to take from the list of available options below. It is only after all of these have been considered and/or pursued that the debt is put forward for write off.

1. Apply to the debtor's employer for an Attachment of Earnings.
2. Apply to the DWP for a deduction from the debtor's benefits

3. Instruct an external enforcement company (bailiffs) to collect the debt on the council's behalf.
4. If the bailiff company are unsuccessful, the Council could commence committal proceedings against the debtor.
5. If the debtor owns their own home a Charging Order could be made against the property.
6. If the debt is over £750, bankruptcy proceedings could be commenced against the debtor.

When considering the final three options on the above list, the Council must always be mindful of the individual circumstances of the debtor and the financial impact on the Council of pursuing each option. Additional costs will be incurred when utilising any of these options.

## **5.0 NON DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR)**

- 5.1 There are currently two Non Domestic Rate debts over £10,000 which amount to £130,101.88 for which Cabinet's approval for write off is sought. There is one case where the company has gone into liquidation (£48,057.04) and legally we can take no further recovery action against these debts. The second case is where there is no prospect of payment and consideration has been given to all of the available recovery options with our legal team but the company has no assets (£82,044.84).
- 5.2 The amounts written off under delegated powers in accordance with the policy thresholds are as follows: There are three cases between £100 and £1,000 which amounts to £792.00. Of these, one case has absconded (£562.65) and two cases are insolvent (£229.35). There are seven cases between £1,000 and £10,000 which amount to £29,812.77. Of these, two cases have absconded (£3,409.40), four cases are insolvent (£18,832.68) and one case is uneconomical to collect (£7,570.69).
- 5.3 As with the recovery of Council Tax, for Business Rates, writing off debt is only ever considered as a last resort. Often companies, sole traders or partnerships become insolvent and the Council is prohibited from taking any further action as all of their outstanding debts are included within the Administration, Liquidation or personal bankruptcy.
- 5.4 The Council follows the same recovery process for Business Rates as for Council Tax. However, once the Council has obtained a Liability Order there are only a limited number of enforcement actions that can legally be pursued. In most cases, where a payment arrangement or contact cannot be made, the Council refers the case to external bailiffs. If they are unsuccessful, the Council then has three further options to consider before putting the debt for write off. These options are:
  - Committal (For sole traders and partnerships only)
  - Security for Unpaid Rate (this is the equivalent of a Charging Order on a property but this can only be done with the ratepayers agreement)
  - Insolvency Proceedings

## **6.0 SUNDRY DEBTORS (INCLUDES NON CURRENT HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS PRE 2011)**

- 6.1 There are currently no sundry debtor cases over £10,000 for which Cabinet's approval for write off is sought

6.2 There were no cases that have been written off under the Head of Finance's delegated powers.

6.3 The recovery process varies dependant on the type of debt.  
Generally the debtor will receive a minimum of two reminder letters the final stating that recovery through the county court will take place in the event of non payment.  
Once judgement is obtained the normal recovery methods are available such as attachment of earnings/ benefit etc.

## **7.0 CURRENT HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS**

7.1 There are currently no sundry debtor cases over £10,000 for which Cabinet's approval for write off is sought.

7.2 There is one housing benefit overpayment debt which is under £10,000 written off under delegated power in accordance with the policy thresholds due to Bankruptcy (£1,229.61).

7.3 For all outstanding benefit overpayment debt, the council takes the recovery action outlined in the bullet points below:

- An invoice is issued giving 14 days to make payment, or to contact the council.
- If payment is not received a first Reminder is issued, followed by a second reminder two to three weeks later.
- If payment is not received a 'CIS' (DWP database) check is carried out to assess if an attachment of benefit is appropriate. If benefit cannot be attached the account is sent to an external bailiffs collection team with no cost to the Council. However, they have no powers to enforce the debt at this stage only to collect it.
- If the cases are returned, each case is checked and a decision is made as to whether it is appropriate to start legal proceedings in the County Court.
- If judgement is obtained in the County Court, the following enforcement options are available to consider:-
  1. Attachments of Earnings (deduction of customer's wages, at source by employer)
  2. Warrants Control (the use of County Court Bailiff, or High Court Sheriff)
  3. Third Party Debt Orders (Utilises the customer's bank account to extract payment)
  4. Charging Order (the debt is secured on the customer's house)
  5. Insolvency (petition for bankruptcy)

**This page is intentionally left blank**