

Why are we reviewing the Local Plan?

The North West Leicestershire Local Plan was adopted on 21 November 2017. It sets out a strategy for delivering the homes, jobs and infrastructure needed in the district between 2011 and 2031. The Council committed to start a review of the plan within three months of the date of adoption.

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

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

What has happened so far?

Work on a partial Local Plan review began with an [Issues consultation](#), under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, between 21 February and 4 April 2018. We contacted landowners, developers, local residents, neighbouring authorities, statutory consultees, Parish Councils, local interest groups and other stakeholders. The consultation was also publicised on the Council website and via social media. We received 72 responses from a range of individuals and organisations, and those responses have helped to inform our approach to the current consultation. A report summarising the consultation was prepared for the Council's [Local Plans Committee](#) in September 2018.

Between 25 June and 28 August 2018 we undertook further consultation, this time inviting the submission of potential housing and employment sites (through a call for sites exercise for the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment – SHELAA), as well as Gypsy and Traveller sites and also seeking nominations for potential local greenspace. Although work on assessing the potential housing, employment and Gypsy and Traveller sites is now underway, we are still accepting further submissions via the [‘submit a site’](#) form on the Council website.

We undertook a further consultation between 12 November 2018 and 11 January 2019 in respect of a range of emerging issues. We received 62 responses from a range of individuals and organisations. A report summarising the consultation was prepared for the Council's [Local Plans Committee](#) in June 2019.

Changes since Adoption

The District Council is committed to meeting the future development needs of the district and to do this through a review of the Local Plan. However, the circumstances have changed since the Local Plan Inspector made his recommendations to the district council and since the local plan was adopted.

These changes are summarised below.

The National Planning Policy Framework

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2018 (and there were subsequent further changes in February 2019). This introduced a number of new plan-making requirements which would need to be addressed as part of a review, including:

- Clear distinction between strategic and local policies with strategic policies looking ahead “over a minimum 15 year period from adoption”;
- Guidance on the provision of ‘entry level homes’;
- Specific reference to storage and distribution uses;
- Specific reference to lorry parking; and
- Viability

Uncertain housing requirements

At the time the Inspector’s recommended modifications to the Local Plan were being finalised (winter 2016/17) it had been envisaged that the housing requirements for a review would be based upon the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) and that Leicester City would have declared the full extent of any unmet need and that this would have been agreed with the Leicestershire authorities as would its redistribution. However, Leicester City Council has still not formally declared the extent of its housing need that it cannot meet within its own boundaries.

A further issue in terms of housing requirements is the uncertainty regarding the future housing requirements which should be planned for. The government has introduced a “standard method” for calculating housing requirements. The latest figure for North West Leicestershire when using the 2014-household projections, as the government has advised, is 379 dwellings. This is over 100 dwellings less than that in the adopted Local Plan.

Furthermore, the government has stated that it intends to publish changes to the standard methodology at some point before the next household projections are published in autumn 2020 (these would be 2018 based projections). This is partly to ensure that the outcome from the standard methodology reflects the government’s stated aim of 300,000 new homes annually across England. It is reasonable to assume (based on the fact that the 2016-projections resulted in a housing figure of 529 dwellings) that the housing requirement (irrespective of any unmet need from Leicester City) will be higher than those derived from the 2014-household projections, but it is not clear as to what this is likely to be.

There is, therefore, considerable uncertainty regarding the housing requirement element which the review would need to plan for. In the meantime, the adopted local plan’s requirement figure appears sufficient to meet need arising in North West Leicestershire and a significant contribution to need that arises elsewhere in the HMA.

Uncertain employment requirements

The HEDNA identifies the amount of employment land required to 2031 and 2036, except for strategic B8 uses (i.e. warehouses those of over 9,000sqm in size) which are identified in a separate study.

Since the Local Plan was adopted additional planning permissions which have been granted means that as 1 April 2019 the shortfall was about 19ha compared to 39ha in October 2016 (the figures used at the Examination). However, since 1 April 2019 additional permissions and resolutions mean that the shortfall is only about 9Ha.

Whilst the needs identified in the HEDNA have been nearly addressed, there are concerns about its reliability from an evidence base point of view. In particular, the amount that is identified as being required for office type uses (Use Class B1a/b) is contrary to past trends and also to what the market appears to want which is more warehousing.

For this reason the Local Plan consultation undertaken in late 2018 asked a specific question regarding the suitability of the HEDNA as an evidence base. Whilst there was some support for the HEDNA, there were also some representations which questioned its continuing validity for a number of reasons, including:

- The latest evidence from the Office of National Statistics shows that the overall level of jobs located in North West Leicestershire has increased substantially;
- The HEDNA was based on assumptions that were overly optimistic with the future supply of workers and overly-pessimistic regarding the future demands of employers;
- It over-simplifies the need and demands for employment land and how economic investment is realised;
- It fails to address the relationships with employment land supply, need and demand in the West Midlands with which North West Leicestershire has a functional relationship; and
- The evidence presented in HEDNA on the take-up of employment land is questionable, when compared to Valuation Office Agency data.

Additional evidence has been commissioned to assess the continuing robustness of the HEDNA conclusions and (if necessary) to produce some alternative forecasts.

In terms of strategic B8 requirements, the requirements for this are set out in the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Distribution Study 2014, which was updated in 2016. It has been agreed by the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities to commission updated evidence on this issue.

As with housing there is significant uncertainty regarding the exact amount of employment land which would need to be identified as part of the review.

Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan

The Leicester and Leicestershire authorities have jointly prepared and agreed a Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) covering the period 2011-50. This is a non-statutory plan, but its intended purpose was to provide a framework for future Local Plans. The SGP was formally agreed in late 2018.

The SGP is seeking a step change in the way that growth is delivered; focussing more development in strategic locations and reducing the amount of new development that takes place in existing towns, villages and rural areas. One of these strategic locations lies partly within North West Leicestershire and is known as the 'Leicestershire International Gateway' (The Gateway) which covers the northern part of North West Leicestershire and Charnwood. The SGP estimates that The Gateway could accommodate about 11,200 dwellings to 2050. The split between North West Leicestershire and Charnwood has to be agreed, but is likely to be at least 5,200 dwellings in North West Leicestershire.

Whilst the Local Plan review will not go up to 2050, the scale of development is such that it will need to be planned for well in advance and so will need to be addressed as part of the review. It is likely that some large scale developments will be required, possibly new settlements. Such developments are inherently complex and require time to compile the necessary supporting evidence.

What are we now proposing?

In light of the above, we are now proposing to:

- 1) Amend Policy S1 and some of the supporting text of the adopted Local Plan. This is referred to as the '**Partial Review**'.

- 2) Continue to work on a more **Substantive Review** to address the longer term development needs of the district.

The Partial Review

It is proposed to amend Policy S1 and some of the supporting text of the adopted Local Plan as set out in the box below. Changes that the Council are proposing to policies/supporting text are shown as **bold** and underlined, and proposed deletions are shown as strikethrough.

Policy S1 – Future housing and economic development needs

Over the plan period to 2031 provision will be made to meet the housing and employment land needs of the district as identified in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (January 2017).

This means that:

- provision will be made for the development of a minimum of 9,620 dwellings (481 dwellings per annum) which is the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) and Housing Requirement for the district;
- provision will be made for 66 hectares of land for employment purposes (B1, B2 and B8 of less than 9,000sq metres)
- Provision will also be made for 7,300sq metres for shopping purposes.

The Council will continue to work collaboratively with the Leicester & Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA) authorities to establish the scale and distribution of any additional provision that may be necessary in North West Leicestershire and elsewhere in the HMA as a result of the inability of one or more authority to accommodate its own needs as identified in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment. **This will be done through a Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) dealing with the redistribution of any unmet need from Leicester City and the submission of a replacement Local Plan will take place within 18 months of the date at which the SOCG is agreed by all of the authorities.**

~~The District Council will commence a review of this Local Plan (defined as being publication of an invitation to make representations in accordance with Regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) by the end of January 2018 or within 3 months of the adoption of this Local Plan (whichever is the later). The Plan Review will be submitted for examination within two years from the commencement of the review. In the event that the reviewed plan is not submitted within two years then this Local Plan will be deemed to be out of date.~~

Paragraph 5.8

~~Policy S1 recognises that there is a need to undertake an early review of the Local Plan. This is because whilst the current total provision of employment land is about 291 hectares, there is a mismatch between the type of land identified as being required in the HEDNA and the actual provision. There is~~ At the time of the examination there was a shortfall of about 29 hectares when compared to the HEDNA requirement for Class B1, B2 and B8 of less than 9,000sq metres. This reflects the fact that the HEDNA was completed towards the end of the process of preparing this plan. In addition, it is apparent that not all of the other HMA authorities will be able to accommodate their housing needs within their boundaries. The Council is committed to working with the other HMA authorities to agree how and where this unmet need will be accommodated. It may, therefore, be necessary for additional provision to be made for housing (and/or

employment) when this work is completed.

Local Plans are required to be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) incorporating a Sustainability Appraisal and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to consider the impact of the policies and proposals of the Local Plan on sites of European significance designated for species and habitats (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)) or birds (Special Protected Areas (SPA)). The part of the River Mease and its tributaries which lie within North West Leicestershire are designated as a Special Area of Conservation.

This partial review is therefore accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report includes details of the range of options that have been considered ranging from 'do nothing' (i.e. not making any changes to Policy S1) to that the subject of this consultation.

The Substantive Review

Our proposed approach includes also continuing to work on a more Substantive Review which will extend the plan period beyond 2031, at least to 2036 but possibly longer to ensure that any strategic policies look ahead at least 15 years from adoption as required by the NPPF. This work will continue in parallel to the partial review. The timetable for the Substantive Review is:

Consultation on draft plan (Regulation 18)	Summer 2020
Pre-submission consultation (regulation 19)	Spring 2021
Submission	Autumn 2021
Examination	Winter 2021/22
Adoption	Autumn 2022

What are we consulting on?

This Partial Review represents the District Council's preferred approach and is published in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as Amended).

We are asking for comments on our proposed approach, including the proposed wording to policy S1, the Sustainability Appraisal Report and Habitats Regulations Assessment. We are not asking for comments on other policies in the adopted Local Plan as these issues will be dealt with as part of the Substantive Review.

Responding to this Consultation

Details of the consultation can be found at www.nwleics.gov.uk/localplanmysay

Visit this website to fill in our online response form or to download a MS Word version.

Responses can be sent to planning.policy@nwleicestershire.gov.uk or Planning Policy, North West Leicestershire District Council, Whitwick Road, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 3FJ

Copies of the consultation material can also be found in all Council libraries and at the main Council offices in Coalville during normal opening times.

What happens next?

All comments made in response to this consultation will be assessed. At this point the Council will decide whether to submit the partial review for examination or whether to make further changes. If the partial review is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) for Examination, then PINs will appoint a Planning Inspector who will consider the partial review and determine whether it meets the test of 'soundness'. To be 'sound' a Local Plan must be:

- Positively prepared;
- Justified;
- Effective; and
- Consistent with national policy

The timetable and substance for discussion for an Examination will be determined by the Planning Inspector.

Only when the plan has been through these various stages and a Planning Inspector considers the plan to be 'sound' is the Council able to adopt the Local Plan. Upon its adoption it will replace the adopted Local Plan.

Once adopted this Local Plan together with the Minerals and Waste Local Plan prepared by Leicestershire County Council and any Neighbourhood Plans which have been 'made' will be the Development Plan for North West Leicestershire. The Development Plan provides the basis for determining planning applications.