



Council

**Tuesday, 08
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Matter for Decision

Title: North West Leicestershire Local Plan

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 North West Leicestershire District Council has published a draft Local Plan. This report sets out the comments of the Borough Council in relation to the Local Plan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members approve the comments set out in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.7 of this report as Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's formal response to the draft North West Leicestershire District Council Local Plan.

3. Information

- 3.1 North West Leicestershire District Council is preparing a new Local Plan. The Plan will cover the period to 2031 and will identify new sites for housing and employment.
- 3.2 The 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment which was undertaken across Leicester and Leicestershire identified an objectively assessed need of 350 new dwellings per annum in North West Leicestershire district. However, in having regard to other evidence, North West Leicestershire District Council does not believe that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment makes sufficient allowance for jobs in the storage and distribution sector in the district – in particular, a strategic rail freight interchange near to East Midlands Airport and Junction 24 of the M1 which could create 7,400 jobs. Therefore, North West Leicestershire District Council has concluded that additional housing needs to be provided to maintain the balance between jobs and homes. Consequently, the draft Local Plan makes provision for a housing requirement of 535 dwellings. This is 185 dwellings per year more than the objectively assessed need for the district identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- 3.3 To date, the objectively assessed need identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment has been taken as the housing requirement for each of the councils within the Housing Market Area. For example, the current Memorandum of Understanding between Leicester and Leicestershire councils is directly based on the objectively assessed need identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- 3.4 If the housing requirement in North West Leicestershire is to be set at a level higher than its objectively assessed need, it is important that the effect that this could have upon the objectively assessed need for other council areas within the Housing Market Area is considered and agreed under the duty to co-operate. This is because the Inspector is likely to pursue this issue as a line of

enquiry at Examination. For example, it is unlikely that all of the 7,400 jobs will be filled by people who live outside of Leicester and Leicestershire and therefore it would be expected that some to the jobs will be filled from within the Housing Market Area. If this is the case, if the housing requirement is increased in North West Leicestershire district, then it might be expected that the housing requirement would fall in other district areas within the Housing Market Area. To date, no work along these lines has been undertaken although North West Leicestershire District Council has indicated that it may be able to undertake some work to explore this issue.

- 3.5 Any future updates to the Housing Market Area wide housing and economic needs assessments would also provide an effective way to undertake such a piece of work. This would enable the issues that have led North West Leicestershire District Council to increase its housing requirement above its objectively assessed need to be considered in the context of the objectively assessed need for all of the council areas in the Housing Market Area.
- 3.6 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment also identifies affordable housing need per annum. For North West Leicestershire, this equates to about 60% of its objectively assessed need of 350 dwellings per annum and about 40% of its housing requirement of 535 dwellings per annum that is identified in the draft plan.
- 3.7 The draft plan does not consider the effect that a higher housing requirement would have on affordable housing need either within North West Leicestershire district or the wider Housing Market Area. Rather, paragraph 6.24 of the draft plan states:

‘it is important to note that the affordable housing need figure identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is not in any way related to or influenced by the overall housing need figure, but is simply an estimate of the need for affordable housing having regard to a range of factors including the number of emerging households, housing waiting list demand, house prices and income levels’.

- 3.8 Affordable housing, insofar as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is concerned, has come under particular scrutiny in the Borough of Oadby and Wigston during a planning appeal relating to land at Cottage Farm, Oadby (the decision of which is currently being challenged through the Court of Appeal). The affordable housing need per annum in the Borough, which equates to 163% of the objectively assessed need of 100 dwellings per annum, is significantly different to that of North West Leicestershire district. As such, the Borough Council would wish to be assured that the approach taken by North West Leicestershire District Council in setting a housing requirement that is higher than its objectively assessed need will not increase the affordable housing need per annum in the Borough. The statement at paragraph 6.24 of the draft plan could usefully be amended in order to provide this necessary level of assurance in relation to other district areas in the Housing Market Area.

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Implications	
Legal	None
Financial	None
Equalities	None
Risk	None