

# **Council Examination Hearing Session**

## **Opening Statement**

I will begin by saying a few words about the Borough as it is now, I will then go on to set out the broad overall strategy of the Local Plan as well as its key objectives.

The Borough of Oadby and Wigston is a unique single tier local authority area that is very small, compact and highly urbanised, albeit it does benefit from important areas of green open spaces, comprising urban parks, green wedges and areas of open countryside. According to statistics, out of 406 United Kingdom Local Authority Districts, the Borough of Oadby and Wigston is the 11<sup>th</sup> smallest local authority area in the United Kingdom and the 3<sup>rd</sup> smallest local authority area when the 8 inner London Borough's within the 11 are discounted.

The Borough shares its boundaries with the City of Leicester, Blaby District and Harborough District. The entire urban area of the Borough sits within an area known as the Leicester Principal Urban Area (or PUA for short). The Leicester PUA is defined as the built up area that is centred on Leicester City. With the Borough area being situated directly adjacent to the City of Leicester, the two share a strong spatial relationship, despite the differences in size and population. As well as sharing administrative boundaries, the Borough also shares its green wedges with both the City of Leicester and Harborough District.

Looking wider than the Leicester PUA, the Borough is part of a collection of 7 single tier local planning authorities and 2 unitary authorities,

Leicester City and Leicestershire County Council. Leicestershire County Council is the highway and education authority for the Borough area.

Highway wise, the Borough area is crossed by three main arterial transport routes that connect the City of Leicester and other authority areas to the south, such as Harborough District and Blaby District. Due to this the Borough's three main routes; the A6, the A5199 and the B5366 suffer from significant congestion, particularly at peak times.

The urban area of the Borough comprise of 3 main settlements; Wigston, Oadby and South Wigston; each with their own main centre. Wigston centre is the Borough's main, and only town centre and contains the largest variety of shops, services and facilities. Wigston centre also fulfils an important wider town centre function as it is one of only a small number of town centres located within the Leicester PUA. Oadby is a large district centre, with a smaller, but nevertheless good range of shops, services and facilities. The centre is particularly influenced by the presence of three out of centre supermarkets situated along the A6. South Wigston district centre is the smallest of all three centres and has a mix of uses. Many of its properties and retail units clearly date back to the origins of the settlement in the 1880's. In addition, to the main urban areas, the Borough has the single rural settlement of Kilby Bridge which is located to the very south of the Borough, adjacent to the Grand Union Canal.

The University of Leicester also has a presence in the Borough. In addition to its Botanical Gardens, the University has its main student residential and sporting campus and a large part of its office and conferencing facilities situated within Oadby. The Oadby campus is

home to nearly 2,000 students and as well as a number of University staff.

The Council's Submission Local Plan sets out a number of key focus areas, a Vision and a number of key spatial objectives that form the very heart of the Plan up to 2031. The Vision and Spatial Objectives focus on providing;

- a Borough that makes its local residents and local businesses proud to be a part of;
- a Borough that is a safe, clean, and attractive place in which to live, work and visit;
- a Borough that is accessible to all through sustainable modes of transport and actively encourages walking and cycling;
- a Borough that has a resilient, strong and prosperous economy, a secure environment, vibrant and regenerated centres and healthy empowered communities;
- a Borough that conserves and enhances its rich natural environmental assets as well as its more urban open and green spaces;
- a Borough that conserves and enhances its distinct heritage assets as well as its important areas of historical significance;
- a Borough that positively contributes to improving people's health, happiness and well being;
- a Borough that delivers growth in a timely, balanced and well designed high quality manner that meets the needs of its residents and visitors; and,
- a Borough that continues to provide important services and facilities for everyday life.

To achieve the Borough's Vision and Objectives, the Local Plan sets out a Spatial Strategy as well as a number of other policies that seek to influence, manage and deliver the development and growth needed by the Borough's local communities. The scale of development set out within the Local Plan is justified by robust and up to date evidence base.

Due to the predominant urban nature of the Borough, the Spatial Strategy sets out that the Council will always seek the reuse of previously developed land and will concentrate development within the Borough's 3 key centres, the Leicester PUA, as well as 3 Direction for Growth Areas. The Spatial Strategy also sets out the required levels of growth to meet the Borough's housing, employment and retail needs up to 2031.

Over the Plan period, 2011 to 2031, the spatial strategy will deliver at least 2,960 new homes; at least 8 hectares of new employment land; and, up to 2,974 square metres of new additional retail floorspace. To ensure that these levels of growth are fulfilled, the Local Plan identifies and allocates sufficient land within the most appropriate and sustainable locations, to meet all of these identified needs.

In relation to provision of new homes, as set out within the Local Plan, as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, the Council had administered delivery of 578 new homes since the beginning of the Plan period and had extant planning permissions for 768 further new homes. Summing these meant that, as of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, the Council had a residual new home requirement of 1,614 new homes up to the end of the Plan period. Of these required new homes;

- 205 have been allocated to be provided within the main town centre of Wigston and the 2 district centres of Oadby and South Wigston;
- 250 have been allocated to be provided on smaller scale development sites; and
- at least 1,159 have been allocated to be provided on the 3 Direction for Growth Areas situated within Wigston and Oadby.

I would like to highlight that the Council has very recently published its annual monitoring documents relating to the provision and supply of new homes as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. These documents illustrate that the supply of new homes has become even healthier in the year since the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, on which the submitted Local Plan is based.

In relation to the provision of new employment land, the Council has allocated land at the Wigston Direction for Growth Area, land adjacent to an existing Identified Employment Area in Oadby, land adjacent to an existing Identified Employment Area in South Wigston, and land within the Borough's main town and district centres.

New additional retail floorspace has been identified and allocated within the main town and district centres, as well as other smaller local centres throughout the Borough.

Further to the spatial strategy, the Local Plan sets out a number of other policies that seek to fulfil the Vision and Spatial Objectives. These include;

- policies that conserve and enhance the Borough's history and heritage assets;

- policies that conserve and enhance the Borough's two green wedges as well as the important countryside areas;
- policies that conserve and enhance the more formal open space areas, such as the urban parks; and,
- policies that seek to improve residents health and wellbeing as well as the design of all new development.

In conclusion, the Council considers that it has produced a Local Plan that not only meets the local communities needs in a sustainable and appropriate way, but it seeks to develop a Borough area that its local residents and local businesses are proud to be a part of now and in the future.

Thank you.