

# HOUSING (STRATEGIC CHALLENGES)

Housing need  
Housing density  
Affordable housing  
Gypsy and traveller need  
Older persons housing



***Oadby and Wigston  
Borough Council  
Leicestershire***

## Housing Need

### What the Government says:

- 4.1 NPPF states that in order to *‘support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay’.*
- 4.2 Further, the NPPF suggests that *‘to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for’.*

### What the Council says:

- 4.3 Across Leicester and Leicestershire, the local planning authorities are working collaboratively to plan for long term housing needs of the Leicester & Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA). A Strategic Growth Plan looking forward to the year 2050 has been produced and signed up to by each of the Leicester and Leicestershire local authorities.
- 4.4 Leicester City Council has indicated that it will be unable to deliver its full housing need. All local authorities within Leicester and Leicestershire are working together to produce a Statement of Common Ground that will address the issue of Leicester City’s unmet need. Due to the nature of the Borough area, it is not expected that any of Leicester City’s unmet need could be provided within the Borough area, however this has yet to be determined.
- 4.5 The Council’s current Local Plan sets out a housing requirement of 148 new homes per year within the Borough area. Currently the Council has sufficient land available to meet the need of 148 new homes per year. However, due to the urban compact nature of the Borough, it is a consistent challenge for the Council to provide sufficient housing to meet local community needs.
- 4.6 Over recent years, the Council’s annual housing requirement has increased from circa 50 new homes per year, to 90 new homes per year, to 148 new homes per year. These increases equate to an approximate percentage increase of 196 per cent. Each of the previous requirement figures have been evidenced by a Leicester and Leicestershire local housing need evidence base.
- 4.7 Currently the Council is working with all local authorities within Leicester and Leicestershire to produce a local housing needs assessment, in the form of a Housing and Employment Needs Assessment (HENA). Currently no housing need information is available from this project, however when complete, the HENA will set out the local housing need for each of the local authorities within Leicester and Leicestershire.
- 4.8 Using the Government’s standard method for calculating housing need, the need for the Borough area is 180 new homes per year. This standard method output figure is a further 22 per cent increase to the Borough areas current housing need of 148 new homes per year.



4.9 As mentioned earlier, the Council has consistent struggles to meet its housing requirement in full. Any further increase to the current housing requirement figure will significantly impact the Council's ability to meet its need, as well as significantly impact the Borough areas green open areas. In addition, assessment work relating to highway capacity and infrastructure would need to evidence that the levels of growth required could be accommodated on an already congested highway infrastructure network.

Potential options:

- continue to use the current housing requirement of 148 new homes per year
- use the housing need figure of 180 new homes per year calculated by the Standard Method
- use the outputs of the HENA before making any firm decisions on housing need

Questions:

- Is there any robust evidence to suggest that the Council should continue to use the current housing requirement of 148 new homes per year set out within the current Local Plan?
- Should the Council use the housing need figure of 180 new homes per year calculated by the Standard Method?
- What should the Council do if the HENA outcomes suggests that there should be a diversion from the Standard Method?
- What do you consider is the evidenced housing need for the Borough area?
- Should the Borough area be taking any of Leicester City's declared unmet housing need?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also, if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.



## Housing density

### What the Government says:

- 4.10 The NPPF states that *'planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land...where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities'*.
- 4.11 Further, the NPPF suggests that *'plans should contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible...and should include the use of minimum density standards for city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport'*.

### What the Council says:

- 4.12 The Borough area is one of the smallest in the UK. It is compact and urban in nature, with very little 'surplus' land. Due to this, the Council has always sought development to be built at a high density, however still respecting the local vernacular and character of the area in which it is built.
- 4.13 The Council's current Local Plan sets out a split minimum density target depending on the location of development. Local Plan Policy 12 – Housing density states that –

*'The Council is committed to delivering new homes in an effective and efficient manner. The Council is also committed to locating people close to much needed services and facilities as well as jobs. To ensure that the Borough provides the required number of homes for its communities, the Council will adopt the following density targets on all new development sites that involve the provision of new homes.*

*Proposed development sites that have a gross site size of 0.3 hectares and larger and are located within the town centre boundary of Wigston or the district centre boundaries of Oadby and South Wigston will be required to achieve an average density of at least 50 dwellings per hectare.*

*Proposed development sites that have a gross site size of 0.3 hectares and larger and are located outside of the town centre boundary of Wigston or district centre boundaries of Oadby and South Wigston, but within the Leicester PUA will be required to achieve an average density of at least 40 dwellings per hectare.*

*Proposed development sites that have a gross site size of 0.3 hectares and larger and are not situated within any of the above locations will be required to achieve an average density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare.*

*Where a development is otherwise acceptable but an independent viability appraisal and / or an independent character and design appraisal demonstrates that the required density cannot be achieved, the Council will work with the applicant to ascertain whether there are alternative approaches. If the Council requires its own independent viability assessments to verify outcomes of the applicants assessment, it will be at the applicants cost'.*



4.14 Since the adoption of the current Local Plan in April 2019, the Council has been successful in achieving development that meets the prescribed minimum density targets. Because of this, it is expected that the current Policy relating to housing density, will be 'rolled forward' to the new Local Plan. It is envisaged that minor wording amendments will be made, to ensure that it is up-to-date with national planning policy and guidance. However, should the Council be applying a single density across the entire Borough area?

Potential options:

- 'roll forward' the current minimum density targets set out in the current Local Plan
- Decrease or increase the minimum density targets depending on location
- Have a single density target that applies consistently across the Borough area

Questions:

- Should the Council 'roll forward' the current Local Plan policy relating to housing density ensuring that it is up-to-date with national policy and guidance?
- Should the Council be seeking to increase the minimum density targets in the new Local Plan?
- Should the Council be seeking to decrease the minimum density targets in the new Local Plan?
- Should the Council be applying a single density target across the Borough area? If so, what is the evidence to suggest this is the case?
- Should the Council be applying maximum density targets?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also, if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate, please explain.

## Affordable housing

### What the Government says:

- 4.15 The NPPF suggests that local authorities, through strategic policies, *‘should set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for...housing (including affordable housing)’*. The NPPF goes on to suggest that Local Plans should *‘set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required’*...such policies however should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.
- 4.16 Further, the NPPF goes on to state that *‘where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required’*.

### What the Council says:

- 4.17 The provision of affordable housing is a key priority for the Council and the Borough area. Ensuring that the local communities within the Borough area are catered for, in every sense, is imperative. The provision of affordable housing ensures that those people who cannot necessarily afford to purchase a market home, have a well-equipped, safe and high quality home.
- 4.18 The Council’s current Local Plan, at Policy 13, sets out a split target for affordable housing provision depending on the developments location. Currently on qualifying developments (those of 11 or more new homes), 30 per cent of the total number of new homes should be affordable for developments located in Oadby, 20 per cent of the total number of new homes should be affordable for developments located in Wigston, and 10 per cent of the total number of new homes should be affordable for developments located in South Wigston.
- 4.19 The main reason for the split target is the vastly different land values apparent in each of the Borough areas settlements. Since the adoption of the current Local Plan in 2019, a good number of affordable homes have been delivered across the Borough. However, the Council wishes to continue to provide affordable homes for its local communities. Bearing this in mind, the Council is proposing to retain the split provision target across each settlement in relation to affordable home targets, however will assess whether or not it would be appropriate to have a single Borough wide target.
- 4.20 The current qualifying threshold set out in the Local Plan, reflected government policy and guidance at the time, for example ‘major development’ was defined as 11 new homes or more. However, the NPPF has amended the definition of ‘major development’ to 10 or more new homes. It is expected that the Council will amend the qualifying threshold to reflect the current NPPF definition of ‘major development’.
- 4.21 It should be noted, that any developer contributions sought by the Council through the new Local Plan will be subject to Whole Plan Viability testing to ensure that they are appropriate and do not render development proposals unviable.

### Potential options:

- Maintain the current split target for the three settlement areas of Wigston, Oadby and South Wigston.
- Increase each of the targets in an attempt to increase further the provision of affordable housing within the Borough.



- Remove the split targets for each settlement area and introduce a single Borough-wide target and policy approach.
- Reduce each of the split targets if viability evidence suggests a need to do so.

Questions:

- Should the Council 'roll forward' the current Local Plan policy relating to affordable housing ensuring that it is up-to-date with national policy and guidance?
- Should the Council be applying a single Borough wide percentage target and policy approach?
- Should the Council be seeking to increase the minimum affordable housing percentage targets in the new Local Plan?
- Should the Council be seeking to decrease the minimum affordable housing percentage targets in the new Local Plan?
- Is the Council correct in amending the qualifying threshold to reflect the current definition of 'major development' as set out in the NPPF?
- What do you consider to be the most appropriate affordable housing target(s) for the Borough area?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also, if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.



## Gypsy and traveller need

### What the government says:

- 4.22 The NPPF suggests that Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS, 2015) sets out how gypsies and travellers and travelling show peoples housing needs, in line with the policy in the PPTS, should be assessed. It also acknowledges that a five year supply of deliverable sites for those covered by the definition in Annex 1 of the PPTS is assessed separately to the mainstream five year housing land supply. The PPTS states that *'for the purposes of this planning policy, "travellers" means gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople'*.
- 4.23 Although Local Authorities now have a duty to ensure a 5 year land supply to meet the identified needs for Traveller sites, the PPTS also notes in Paragraph 11 that *'where there is no identified need, criteria-based policies should be included to provide a basis for decisions in case applications nevertheless come forward. Criteria-based policies should be fair and should facilitate the traditional and nomadic life of Travellers, while respecting the interests of the settled community'*.
- 4.24 In addition, the Housing and Planning Act (2016) makes provisions for the assessment of need for those Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople households living on sites and yards who do not meet the planning definition – through the assessment of all households living in caravans.

### What the Council says:

- 4.25 The Council's current Local Plan, at Policy 16, sets out the Council's current policy approach to Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. In 2017, a Gypsies' and Travellers' Accommodation Needs Assessment was prepared in partnership with other authorities in Leicester and Leicestershire to help understand the latest accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople within the Leicester and Leicestershire local authorities involved. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council was one of the local authorities involved in the assessment of need.
- 4.26 The needs assessment identified a need for the Borough of 0 (zero) at that time, both for static and transit pitches. Therefore, in line with Paragraph 11 of the PPTS, the current Local Plan Policy (Policy 16) is a criteria based policy seeking to ensure that sites, if needed, are accommodated in sustainable locations with access to a range of essential services, such as education, healthcare, welfare, shops, water and sewerage facilities, where possible.
- 4.27 It is expected that the Council will continue to utilise the criteria based policy set out within the current Local Plan, as there is currently no change to the Borough areas housing need in relation to gypsy and travellers.

### Potential options:

- 'Roll forward' the current criteria based policy set out at Local Plan Policy 16 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- Seek to understand if there is any current housing need in the Borough for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Show People who meet the definition for planning purposes.



Questions:

- Should the Council 'roll forward' the current Local Plan policy relating to Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Show People with minor wording amendments ensuring that it is up-to-date with current national planning policy and guidance?
- The most up-to-date assessment of gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople in the Borough area is 0 (zero). Do you have any evidence to suggest that there is a housing need for gypsy, travellers and travelling showpeople within the Borough area?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.



## Older persons housing

### What the government says:

- 4.28 Government states that the need to provide housing for older people is critical. It goes onto suggest that people are living longer, and that older people need better choices of accommodation.
- 4.29 The NPPF suggests that Local Authorities should assess and determine the minimum number of homes that are needed for its local communities. It states that *‘to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment...within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to...older people...)*’.
- 4.30 In terms of the NPPF definition of older people, it states - *‘Older people: People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs’*.

### What the Council says:

- 4.31 The Council is committed in providing sufficient homes that are of the right type, tenure and size for its local communities.
- 4.32 According to population projections, the over 65 year old age group within the Borough area is to increase by nearly 45 per cent up to the year 2039. It is by far the largest population age group increase within the Borough area. Put in context, the 0 – 19 year old age group is to increase by 11 per cent, the 20 – 44 year old age group decrease by 1.5 per cent, and the 45 – 64 year old age group decrease by over 5 per cent.
- 4.33 Over the past 5 – 10 years, the number of homes (and / or accommodation) provided for the older population age groups, has been relatively low within the Borough area. Previous plans and strategies have been effective in providing the right homes and accommodation for the Borough’s communities at the time, and therefore did not necessarily seek to provide large number of homes (and / or accommodation) for the older population.
- 4.34 With the Government push for more (and better) homes for the older populations and evidence suggesting that the Borough area is to see a significant increase in the numbers of people within the over 65 age group, the Council seeks to provide more older persons housing (and / or accommodation) within the new Local Plan.

### Potential options:

- Set out in new Local Plan Policy that all residential developments that meet the ‘large site’ threshold of 10 or more dwellings, must provide homes and / or accommodation for the Borough’s older population.
- Set out in new Local Plan Policy that all residential developments that meet the ‘large site’ threshold of 10 or more dwellings, will be encouraged to provide homes and / or accommodation for the Borough’s older population.
- Introduce a new Local Plan Policy that requires the provision of an off-site contribution from all sites that meet the ‘large site’ threshold of 10 or more dwellings.



- No policy wording encouraging or requiring the provision of homes and / or accommodation for the Borough's older population.

Questions:

- Should the Council require applicants to provide older persons housing and / or accommodation, on all development sites regardless of size?
- Should the Council require applicants to provide older persons housing and / or accommodation, on only large development sites that meet the NPPF definition of major development?
- Which option from the above set of potential options would be the most appropriate for the Borough area?
- Should the Council be considering the housing needs for younger persons as well as the housing needs for older persons?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.

