

Statement from Leicestershire County Council
By Helen Harris, Town Centre Coordinator

Appendix C – List of key matters and issues

Matter 1: Legal compliance

1.1 Does the AAP meet all its legal requirements, especially in matters such as: the Local Development Scheme (LDS); the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS); the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI); the Oadby and Wigston Core Strategy; Habitats Regulations; the Duty to Co-operate; and the Local Development Regulations 2004, as amended in 2008?

1.2 Are there any differences of emphasis between the AAP and the Core Strategy?

1.3 How does the AAP relate to the main recommendations of the Sustainability Appraisal? A situation update from the Council is required, to give a brief explanation of the reasons for selecting the alternatives which are being supported in the AAP.

1.4 How does the AAP relate to the recent Localism Act, the Government's Growth agenda and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)?

Matter 2 – Relationship to other areas

2.1 Neighbouring plans and strategies: How does the AAP relate to the plans and strategies of the City of Leicester and other neighbouring local planning authorities?

The AAP complements the surrounding neighbourhood plans and strategies.

2.2 How far has the plan taken on board the plans and programmes of statutory providers and regulatory agencies, such as transport companies, the Environment Agency, the utility companies, and local businesses and community groups and agencies?

Highways

2.3 Beyond the boundaries: Is there a strong contextual relationship between the town centres and neighbouring areas?

Matter 3 – Wigston Town Centre

3.1 How robust are the spatial vision and objectives for Wigston town centre (paras 4.18-4.28), for example in relation to any reasonable alternatives, and in the face of the current economic climate? What is the economic justification for the scale of the proposed retail provision

in policy 13, in view of factors such as the proximity of rival centres, eg Highcross and Fosse Park, the growth in internet shopping and the number of existing empty retail units in the town centre? How much comparison retail floorspace has been completed over the last decade? What would happen if the retail growth set out in policy 13 failed to materialise? Would it not be cheaper and more cost effective to focus on bringing into use empty shop units in the town centre?

Wigston has a high number vacant units compared to its neighbours of Oadby, Market Harborough and Blaby and has a poor offer in terms of convenience and comparison shopping with Sainsburys being the main anchor store and the Co-op Department store.

It is difficult to access adjoining centres by public transport (Oadby and Wigston), so in sustainability terms the centre needs to improve its offer in order to retain a greater amount of leakage and attract more borough residents to use it. At present the centre supports local needs, but is unlikely to attract visitors, because of the poor comparison offer.

3.2 Relationship of the town centres: In what ways should Wigston and Oadby town centres complement and not compete with each other?

The catchment area of each centre is very different in terms of spending power. Niche independent stores are more likely to be attracted to Oadby town centre than Wigston and would complement existing stores such as Marks and Spencer Food. Wigston has more of a cheap and cheerful image, but could benefit from a wider range of independents and multiples especially in the clothing sector to attract more users - Wigston does have a higher number of services as the principal centre and does have the better comparison offer.

3.3 How does the plan address the night time economy?

Wigston has little to attract people into the centre in the evening- there are a number of cafes, an abundance of fast food outlets but few restaurants. With no street markets or events being held, there is no attractor for people into the centre - with the proposed creation of the town square a space suitable for the holding of events will be created, so the evening economy could grow.

3.4 Para 4.93, in relation to Chapel Mill (policy 16) refers to a proposed range of shop unit size, based presumably on the master plan. Is the desired range of retail unit size important to the viability and vitality of other parts of Wigston town centre as well, and if so, should policy 13 provide more direction, eg on a desired range of shop sizes/development plates to help the town centre maintain or enhance its distinctive retail offer?

At present there appears to be a large number of vacancies in smaller sized units, there is a need to attract a number of larger multiples into the town centre who usually require a larger store footprint and this investment would increase confidence amongst existing retailers and hopefully lead to other vacant units being occupied.

3.5 New parking provision: Is the provision of at least 500 new parking spaces (policy 13) justified in relation to national/Leicester CC sustainable transport policy and the highway authority's car parking standards? Would the impact of a new multi-storey car park at Burgess Street on the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers be acceptable? Would traffic congestion be a likely result of the proposal?

Highways

3.6 Existing parking provision: What would be the economic and social impact on the reduction of parking spaces in the Paddock Street car park, which several representations point out are used by local residents due to the shortage of on-street parking spaces, and by the disabled and elderly who use the nearby Age Concern facilities? How does the loss of these spaces link to the creation of additional spaces elsewhere in the town centre? A situation update from the Council is required, outlining the resources required for the implementation of the proposals for new parking in both Wigston and Oadby, when these sources are likely to become available, especially in relation to the loss of the existing spaces, whether any delivery partners have been signed up (or are likely to be), and the impact of the loss of existing spaces on current users, particularly in relation to the elderly and mobility impaired, and affected local residents.

Highways

3.7 Gateway site: What is the reason for the location of the gateway site in the AAP? Should policy 13 refer to the proposed gateway improvement at the junction of Leicester Road/Frederick Street, as shown on the Proposals Map, and specify clearly what improvements the Council has in mind?

Highways

3.8 Has the potential for increased pedestrian priority (policies 13-16) been maximised? Should the proposed new shopping street (para 4.39) be clearly identified on the Proposals Map and in a policy? A situation update from the Council is required on pedestrian priority in Wigston town centre, in relation to pedestrian flows, focal points, development phasing and the quality of the public realm.

The current quality of Wigston Town Centre is poor in terms of; it is not aesthetically pleasing however it is not a hazard.

3.9 Are the proposed changes to any of the road layouts justified? Although policy 12 refers generally to highway works, should the specific highway schemes be included in relevant policies? Are there land use implications in any of these schemes?

Highways

3.10 Do policies 13-16 provide sufficient focus and direction to enable the potential for enhancing the public realm to be maximised?

Should be emphasised that the public sector is unlikely to contribute towards the creation of the areas of public realm such as "new public town square to the west of the library in the current economic climate with reduced budgets so there is a need to attach conditions to any of the development sites that contributions towards a wider area of public realm works will be sought from any private sector development that moves forward.

3.11 What is the justification for the proposal for new health provision in policy 14, in view of the representation by the Primary Care Trust that they are interested in another site?

No comment

3.12 Is the amount and type of housing provision in Long Lane (policy 15) appropriate for local needs? Is there any housing potential in other parts of the town centre? Some concern is expressed that the proposed apartments, forming part of the mix in areas such as the Long Lanes, may continue to be unattractive in the current difficult market conditions. Is a proportion of affordable housing appropriate within the AAP and if so, how much?

No comment

3.13 In all other respects are the proposals for development in the key development sites at Burgess Junction, Long Lanes and Chapel Mill (policies 14, 15 and 16 respectively) justified and effective?

Other than retail there is little employment in Wigston town centre because of the lack of office space and light industry. Provision of this, would bring more people into the town centre attracting new businesses and increasing retail spend therefore increasing the vitality and viability of the centre.

Highways

3.14 How much guidance does the plan provide to ensure that the development of town centre sites pays special attention to conservation and archaeological implications?

Town centre environment is currently poor and suffers from a plethora of 1960's poor quality buildings. Any buildings that are of architectural note such

as the church off Frederick Street are hidden. Creation of the public square and pedestrian movements along the Lanes will mean these buildings become more prominent.

3.15 Are there any other development opportunities in Wigston that the plan should be addressing, eg public amenities such as toilets?

The public toilets in the town centre require upgrading. Having public toilets available to shoppers/visitors to a town can be a key priority and a reason or not for returning to the town.

Highways

3.16 Is the relationship between Wigston town centre and the developments associated with Direction for Growth to the south east sound?

Wigston town centre is the nearest town centre to the Direction of Growth - there is a need to emphasis pedestrian and cycle links between the two when built and ensure only small amount of retail provision is proposed within the direction of growth.

Highways

Matter 4 -Oadby Town Centre

4.1 Although there is recognition from some groups that Oadby town centre needs to move forward, several representations argue for keeping Oadby as it is and that the plan will lose rather than gain jobs. What is the economic justification for the scale of the proposed retail provision in policy 17, in view of factors such as the proximity of rival centres, eg Highcross and Fosse Park, the growth in internet shopping and the number of existing empty retail units in the town centre?

Very few empty units within the existing town centre, good range of independents and some multiples including Costa Coffee, M&S Food, Boots and Coop but still need to attract more to increase the amount of comparison shopping. The town has most high street banks and a post office which are easy to access with the free parking available.

Allendale Road/ Queens Road and Highcross are more of a threat than Fosse Park; the latter is difficult to access via public transport.

Good range of convenience shopping with Sainsbury's, Waitrose and ASDA on the outskirts of the town centre, but the danger is these shoppers will simply do their shop and drive home again without visiting the centre. Oadby Town Centre needs to become a destination - not just for shopping but for events and to access services e.g. banks, post office, NHS Walk in Centre and library to ensure its sustainability.

4.2 A situation update from the Council is required on the plans for Oadby town centre, including justification of the proposed schemes, how, where and when they would be implemented, and public and private sector resource implications. Would proposals for and to the north of Brooksby Square, and for Baxter's Place, distract from the core of Oadby, which several representors consider to be The Parade?

No comment.

4.3 What type of retail provision? What evidence is there that the lack of modern sized units is preventing investment, especially in view of the statement (in para 5.22): "the town's strength will lie in its interesting mix of shops, cafes, bars and restaurants, focused on the independent offer"? Are anchor stores the answer? How does the plan relate to the Core Strategy spatial objective 3, which is to establish Oadby as a small town centre catering for smaller independent and specialist shops?

Oadby's strength does lie in the large number of independents that exist but people still like to see a mix of multiples as well and in order for Oadby to grow it has to attract these retailers. Very few people work within the town centre at present which is why it is vital to move the development sites forward in order to attract new footfall into the town centre and hence maintain vitality.

4.4 How does the plan address the night time economy?

The Plan does not specifically address the night time economy but by improving the environment in the town centre through public realm improvements it is hoped to attract encourage the cafe culture. Oadby does have some high quality restaurants which lay just outside of the Parade in the conservation area around the church a few pubs in the town centre. With the number of students living in Halls of Residence adjacent to the town centre Oadby has more potential to develop the night time economy more than Wigston.

4.5 Para 5.67, in relation to Baxter's Place (policy 19), refers to a range of retail floorspace sizes size to accommodate modern retailer requirements, based presumably on the master plan. Is the desired range of retail unit size important to the vitality and viability of other parts of Oadby town centre as well, and if so, does policy 17 need to provide more direction, eg on a desired range of shop sizes/development plates to help the town centre maintain or enhance its distinctive retail offer?

Need to include in the plan the appropriate mix of retail uses in order to stop the dominance of fast food outlets that is happening in other town centres. Unlikely to attract major multiples because of the low footfall and proximity to other large centres of Highcross and Fosse Park despite the spend catchment being affluent. Masterplan needs to try and be flexible to accommodate what uses they can in the current economic climate.

4.6 Planning to meet ethnic and religious demands: Why does the AAP single out Oadby for provision to meet the ethnic/religious demands of the Borough?

Catchment area diverse unlike other areas of the borough and is immediately adjacent to Leicester City with its diverse cultural mix.

4.7 Is the proposal for a community use building (policy 17) justified and effective?

Yes, there are some community buildings around the outside of the town and the Methodist Church in the town, all of which are very well used.

4.8 Has the potential for increased pedestrian priority been maximised?

Highways

4.9 Is the severance effect of the A6 main road on Oadby a perception, or is there robust evidence? If so, how can the AAP address this issue?

Many shoppers (including students) using ASDA and not using Oadby town centre during their shopping trip. Shoppers who are parked in the ASDA car park do not find it easy to move across the A6 into the town centre car park or walk across the A6 to use the other services available in the town centre. The AAP can address these issues by suggesting more/larger retail units in the town centre because with a wider range of comparison shopping people will be more tempted to come into the centre.

Highways

4.10 New parking provision: Is the provision of at least 370 new parking spaces (policy 17) justified in relation to national/Leicester CC sustainable transport policy? Would the impact of a new two-storey car park at Baxter's Place on the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers be acceptable? Would traffic congestion be a likely result of the proposal? Should policies 18 and 19 be more specific on the design and environmental mitigation aspects of the proposed car parks in order to address some of the concerns raised by representations?

Highways

4.11 Existing parking provision: What would be the economic and social impact of the reduction of parking spaces in the East Street/Brooksby Drive car park, which several representations point out are used by significant numbers of the disabled and elderly?

Representations in particular point out impact on the well used Methodist Church and the increased likelihood of people changing to

out of centre retailing, such as the nearby Asda superstore and further a field. Would the loss of easy access (referred to positively in the Core Strategy para 3.14) to and from the A6 significantly add to vehicle congestion in the town centre? How would the loss of these spaces link to the creation of additional parking spaces elsewhere in the town centre? A situation update from the Council, as outline in para 3.6 above, is required for Oadby as well as Wigston.

No Comment

4.12 Has the potential for enhancing the public realm been maximised?

As already mentioned in the AAP document section 106 monies or commuted sums from developers will be insufficient to enable public realm schemes to be carried out and hence the public sector will need to be involved to find alternative funding sources. A scheme is currently being developed for Oadby and Wigston Town Centres utilising small amounts of Highways match funding to lever in ERDF funding. It is anticipated that delivery on the ground will commence in 2013 when funding is secured.

4.13 In what ways will the plan be making provision for civic functions? (para 5.26). In view of the Primary Care Trust's representation, should there be a proposal for a health centre in Oadby town centre?

No comment

4.14 Why does the reduction of office development due to changing economic times not equally refer to retail development?

No comment

4.15 Is the amount and type of housing provision appropriate for the needs of Oadby? Is the proposal for 35 units, 3/4 storeys high on the part of the existing East Street car park appropriate in streetscape terms? Is a proportion of affordable housing appropriate and if so, how much?

No comment

4.16 In all other respects are the proposals for development in the key development sites at Brooksby Square, Baxter's Place and The Parade (policies 18, 19 and 20 respectively) justified and effective? If the AAP proposals for Brooksby Square were deleted, would the AAP be out of conformity with the Core Strategy?

No comment

4.17 What other development opportunities in Oadby should the plan be addressing, eg public amenities such as toilets?

Matter 5 – Development management policies

5.1 Are the town centre boundaries for Wigston and Oadby appropriately drawn (policy 1)?

5.2 Are policies 2 and 3, setting out permitted levels of ground floor uses in Primary Frontages and Secondary Frontages respectively, justified and effective?

5.3 Is policy 9, dealing with hot food takeaways, justified and effective? In particular, how is ‘cumulative effect’ to be determined and how will the effect of impacts such as noise, litter, smell and opening hours be assessed?

5.4 Is policy 10, dealing with taxis justified and effective? In particular, how will proximity to the core of the town be assessed, and how is the core defined? Would there be any provision for taxi waiting areas in Oadby?

5.5 Is policy 11, covering the public realm, justified and effective? Should the policy make reference to the use of sustainable urban drainage systems, as suggested by the Environment Agency?

5.6 Are policies 4 and 5, covering proposals for development within the town centre boundary and within other areas within the AAP boundary respectively, justified and effective? Why have the SA recommendations aimed at avoiding or offsetting potential impacts on green spaces and biodiversity been omitted from policy 4?

5.7 Are policies 6, 7 and 8, dealing with shopfronts, security shutters and use of upper floors respectively, justified and effective?

5.8 Is policy 12, covering the transport and movement, justified and effective? Has the potential for public transport been realised? Should the plan provide more detailed direction in relation to the location of new and improved bus waiting facilities?

Matter 6 – Implementation and monitoring

6.1 Are the key infrastructure providers signed up to the Local Infrastructure Plan (LIP) in Appendix D? (There is support for the LIP from a housing developer.)

6.2 Are there any showstoppers in the Local Infrastructure Plan?

6.3 What is the critical path for securing the effectiveness of delivery of the AAP?

6.4 Is the high number of phase 1/2 schemes indicative of lack of confidence, uncertainty or lack of realism in the plan? A situation

update from the Council is required on phasing and implementation in both town centres, in order to establish clear priorities in relation to resources and the phasing of retail and commercial development, car parking and improvements to pedestrian movement and the public realm.

6.5 How realistic is implementation of the Burgess Junction multi-storey car park (£32.6 million) within phases 1/2? Or are all these schemes programmed to start in phase 1 and then continue into subsequent phases?

6.6 What is the cost of the Town Square and who will pay?

6.7 Which schemes are likely to require compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) and/or Section 106 contributions?

6.8 Should provision for policing be included in the LIP, based on developer contributions?

6.9 How will the monitoring arrangements work? Should Appendix E include reference to changing crime rates, as suggested by the police?

6.10 When is it envisaged that a CIL will be part of the LDF?

6.11 Appendix G, the monitoring framework, is repetitive and could be simplified; why does it need to include references to plan objectives?

6.12 What is the status of the master plans in the AAP (Pages 38 and 63)? Is the Proposals Map sufficiently detailed and clear to provide a site-specific framework for development over the plan period?