

**OFFICER COMMENTS ON THE SUBMISSION VERSION OF THE  
BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL CORE STRATEGY  
REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY  
DIRECTION)**

**WARDS AFFECTED: WARDS ADJACENT TO BLABY DISTRICT**

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1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform Members of the consultation on the proposed submission draft of the Blaby District Council Core Strategy and associated Planning Officer comments. The document is available on Blaby District Council's website at:

<http://www.blaby.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/planning-and-building/planning/local-development-framework--ldf--core-strategy--submission-version---january-2012-/>

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

That Members:

- i) Acknowledge the consultation draft of the Blaby District Council Proposed Submission Core Strategy; and
- ii) Agree that the recommendation below be sent to Blaby District Council as the formal response to their consultation on the document.

3. **BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT**

As part of their Local Development Framework, Blaby District Council are currently consulting on their Core Strategy (Submission Version 2012) from 19 January – 1 March 2012, before submitting to the Secretary of State. Once adopted, the Core Strategy will partly replace the current Blaby District Local Plan (adopted 1999) and sets out the strategic policies which will guide the future development of Blaby District up to 2029.

The proposed submission version of the document is the final opportunity for comments to be made on the soundness of the document before it undergoes an Examination in Public with the Planning Inspectorate.

The areas of this document that hold relevance to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough are highlighted below:

**Sustainable Urban Extension**

Blaby District Council state that 5,520 new dwellings are to be provided within and adjacent to the Leicester Principle Urban Area. This includes the settlements of Glenfield, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester Forest East, Braunstone Town and Glen Parva. The vast majority of these dwellings will be delivered through a Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) at Lubbesthorpe, south of Leicester Forest East. This SUE will be comprised of:

- 4,250 dwellings, 30% of which will be affordable;
- Employment;
- 2 primary schools and a secondary school;
- District and Local centres;
- Green infrastructure;

- New and improved transport links; and,
- Other general infrastructure required to ensure the delivery of key services.

Blaby District Council's approach to the majority of housing delivery is in accordance with the adopted East Midlands Regional Plan which promotes urban concentration and a SUE to the west of Leicester. Should the Core Strategy be adopted, a Masterplan will be produced in order to detail the structure and design of the SUE.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council do not object to the location of the proposed SUE, however, Blaby District Council should be made aware that:

- HBBC raises significant concerns over the potential impact that this site may have on the A47;
- HBBC support the inclusion of new and improved transport links that could alleviate this impact; and,
- HBBC would ask to be consulted on any future developments with the Sustainable Urban Extension.

### **Strategic Employment Site**

The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Employment Land and Premises Study and the District of Blaby Employment Land and Premises Study have both identified a need for a Strategic Employment Site (SES) to be provided within the District.

The preferred location for a 21 hectare Strategic Employment Site lies south of the M69 motorway, close to where it meets junction 21 of the M1 (see attached proposals map). It is unlikely that an extensive employment allocation at this location would have an adverse impact on the Borough of Hinckley and Bosworth.

### **Recommendation**

That Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council raise no objections to the allocation of a Strategic Employment Site at this location.

### **Housing Distribution**

As part of its settlement hierarchy and locations for new development, Blaby District Council proposes to allocate 105 dwellings adjacent to Earl Shilton. When HBBC have been consulted by Blaby District Council on earlier versions of the Core Strategy, no objections were raised by the Borough Council to this providing that;

- This would respect the timeframes for development of Earl Shilton as set out within the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy;
- Discussions are held regarding the potential for a passenger rail service at Elmesthorpe; and,
- That any financial contributions that arise from the development should contribute to facilities in Earl Shilton.

These points remain valid and will be reiterated in the consultation response.

As the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy is adopted, it is considered that any development at this location should have the utmost regard to policies within that and the emerging Earl Shilton and Barwell Area Action Plan to ensure the most appropriate dwellings are developed for Earl Shilton along with appropriate associated infrastructure.

This proposed allocation has recently been subject to a planning application to Blaby District Council. The Borough Council made Blaby District Council aware that the impact that this development will have on the infrastructure of Earl Shilton, particularly in the case of highways, education, health and utilities, should be a significant material consideration when assessing any planning application for the development of this site.

### **Recommendation**

That Blaby District Council be made aware that:

- As the new residents at this location would utilise the facilities within Earl Shilton as opposed to locations within Blaby District, any financial contributions from the development of these dwellings should contribute to new and existing facilities within Earl Shilton;
- Development here should be at a similar timescale to the proposed Sustainable Urban Extension;
- Development at this location should respect the policies on the range, mix and design of housing contained within the HBBC Core Strategy in order to ensure a consistent standard throughout Earl Shilton;
- Development at this location should reflect, and contribute towards the required infrastructure that will be set out within the Earl Shilton and Barwell Area Action Plan; and,
- Blaby District Council should continue to explore the opportunity to re-open a passenger rail service at Elmesthorpe in conjunction with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

### **Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers**

The Core Strategy states that, as a minimum, 26 permanent residential Gypsy and Traveller pitches, capacity for 10 transit Gypsy and Traveller caravans and three plots for Travelling Showpeople will be made between 2006 and 2026. Beyond this date an assumed increase of 3% compound growth per annum will be assumed for Gypsies and Travellers and 1.5% per annum for Travelling Showpeople.

The Core Strategy states that although Blaby District Council has identified sufficient sites to satisfy this requirement, it acknowledges that new sites may need to be found in the future. In anticipation of this, its Core Strategy includes a criteria based policy regarding the location of future sites. No specific sites are mentioned within its Core Strategy for the location of gypsy and traveller accommodation.

As part of this policy, Blaby District Council also state that their preference for gypsy and traveller accommodation would be on a larger number of small sites, as opposed to a small number of larger sites.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that in the response to Blaby District Council, HBBC should:

- Support the notion of providing a larger amount of smaller sites as opposed to fewer larger ones; and,
- Support the omission of any mention of extending the Aston Firs caravan site in the Core Strategy

## **Retail**

Blaby District Council identifies that, as Blaby is the only true town centre within the District, any new significant retail development should be provided within it. Blaby District Council also state that the expansion of existing retail or leisure development, including the motorways retail area and Meridian Leisure, outside of established town and village centres will be discouraged in line with national policy. They state that the expansion of existing out of centre retail and leisure uses will be unacceptable unless:

- There would be no unacceptable adverse impact on existing centres within or outside the District;
- There are no suitable sites available within or on the edge of existing centres.

## **Recommendation**

As this policy is likely to reduce the potential impact on the retail viability of Hinckley town centre, it is recommended that HBBC support this policy.

## **Green Infrastructure, Bio-diversity and Geo-diversity**

As part of these policies, Blaby District Council encourage the protection and enhancement of Aston Firs and Burbage Common, both of which lie within or adjacent to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough.

## **Recommendation**

As this policy will encourage the protection and enhancement of sites of importance to Hinckley and Bosworth borough It is recommended that HBBC support these policies.

## **Green wedges**

The Core Strategy includes a policy relating to the management of Green Wedges within the District. Hinckley and Bosworth share a Green Wedge with Blaby District in two locations:

- Between Glenfield, Kirby Muxloe, Kirby Fields and towards Ratby, Groby and Leicester; and,
- From Elmesthorpe towards Barwell and Earl Shilton.

The Core Strategy states that these Green Wedges are to be maintained with their exact boundaries being formally reviewed through the forthcoming Allocations, Designations and Development Management DPD.

Blaby District Council identify acceptable uses within the Green Wedge as being:

- Agriculture (including allotments and horticulture – not garden centres);
- Outdoor recreation (where associated buildings are small in scale);
- Forestry;
- Footpaths;
- Bridleways and cycleways; and,
- Burial grounds.

The Core Strategy also states that, in circumstances where the development would not be harmful to the functions of the Green Wedges, the following uses will be allowed:

- Wind turbines (and other renewable energy facilities that are not within buildings);
- Park and ride schemes;
- Transport infrastructure (including new roads); and,
- Mineral extraction

A Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology (July 2011) has been agreed by the following six local authorities of Charnwood, Harborough, Hinckley and Bosworth, Leicester, North West Leicestershire and Oadby and Wigston, which form part of the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area. Blaby District Council and Melton Borough Council are also part of the Housing Market Area but are not part of the joint methodology. Melton Borough Council does not have a green wedge within their administrative boundary. Blaby District Council is the only authority within Leicestershire with green wedges that decided to opt out of the Methodology in July 2011.

The Methodology was established following the Examination in Public of the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy in 2009. At the Inspectors request, the Borough Council inserted a reference to a review of the green wedges as part of the site allocation process. An Officer Steering Group was set up in 2009 and was attended by all Leicestershire Districts and Leicester City. Melton Borough Council opted out at that stage due to their being no green wedges within their area.

The Joint Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Methodology was first produced in August 2009 in accordance with the East Midlands Regional Plan and was consulted upon as part of its preparation. On the 6th July 2010 the Government announced that it was to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and in light of this the Methodology was amended and republished in July 2010. Due to the ongoing changes to the planning system it was necessary to amend the Methodology further in light of the outcome of the CALA Homes High Court Judgement (February 2011) and the emerging Localism Bill (December 2010). The revised version was published in July 2011 where partner local planning authorities agreed a local definition and developed this methodology to interpret the role and function of existing green wedges and to assess candidate green wedge areas. It was at this stage that Blaby District Council chose not to be part of the partnership. No reasoning was provided for this.

The Green Wedge Review Methodology can be used to assess the green wedge at a macro scale (in its entirety) for the purposes of a Core Strategy, or a micro scale for the purposes of the site allocations process. The Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology has been considered by Inspectors through the Core Strategy examinations of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, Leicester City Council and Harborough District where all documents were found sound.

Although Blaby District Council has have not followed the Joint Methodology, the reasons for designation are in line with the functions of the green wedge used in the Joint Methodology. Blaby District Council have chosen not to utilise the locally agreed explanation of these functions which, if used, would demonstrate that uses such as park and ride schemes or mineral extraction are not identified as being conducive with the functions of the green wedge. It is not clear why these uses have been identified as being potentially acceptable.

Green wedges span administrative boundaries and a coordinated approach is essential. This is reflected in the Green Wedge Methodology which states *'having a consistent approach to such a review is considered vital to ensure the soundness of each DPDs prepared by each local authority'*. This statement has been included in

the Methodology since its original adoption in 2009 which Blaby District Council signed up to.

It should be noted that the Green Wedge Review produced by Blaby District Council in 2009 (prior to the establishment of the joint methodology) for the purposes of their previous Submission Core Strategy has recently been criticised through a planning appeal at Glenfield Park where a number of flaws were identified in the Blaby District Green Wedge Review Methodology. Blaby District Council is continuing to use this Green Wedge Review (2009) as the evidence base for the Core Strategy even though shortcomings have been identified and there is an established Joint Methodology which the District Council were in agreement with until recently.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the soundness of Policy 16 is questioned as it is not considered to be found on a robust or credible evidence base, unlike the sound Leicester and Leicestershire Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology (July 2011). This is because Blaby District Council are relying on an evidence base produced in 2009 which has previously been criticised.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [DMe]**

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [EP]**

As a local planning authority Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council is under a duty by virtue s.110 the Localism Act 2010 to co-operate in relation to the preparation of development plan documents of Blaby District Council where it would have a significant impact on two or more planning areas. By responding to the consultation the Council is ensuring the duty is met.

It should be noted that, if adopted and, where the location of an application dictates, the proposed Core Strategy would potentially be a material consideration in relation to a planning application.

#### **6. CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

None

#### **7. CONSULTATION**

As a bordering local authority Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council are considered a statutory consultee for Blaby District Council and have therefore been notified throughout the production of their Core Strategy up until this point.

#### **8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

It is the Council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) Risks		
Risk Description	Mitigating actions	Owner
The interests of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council are not taken account of in the preparation of the Blaby District Core Strategy.	Submit comments to the Blaby District Council Core Strategy Alternative Options consultation.	Simon Wood

9. **KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

Growth in districts adjacent to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough could have an impact on rural areas within the Borough.

10. **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community Safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset Management implications
- Human Resources implications
- Planning Implications
- Voluntary Sector

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Background papers: Blaby District Council Core Strategy Submission Version – January 2012

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