

I hope you are having a great summer. As I write this at the start of June its not yet clear when restrictions will end and if foreign holidays without having to self-isolate on return will be possible (I for one certainly hope so after the year and a half we've all had), but being able to once again see friends and family (almost) like we did before has been fantastic. Thank you to everyone involved in the vaccination programme – as well as everyone who has received the vaccine – for getting us this far.

Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37

The latest draft of the emerging Charnwood Local Plan has been published and will go to a further round of consultation between 12th July and the 23rd August before being submitted to the National Planning Inspector for examination (all comments received in the consultation will be collected by Charnwood but passed to the National Inspector for consideration). Every Planning Authority in the country is legally required to have a Local Plan which plays a significant role in the growth strategy of the Borough, affecting development of employment areas, investment in infrastructure, and housing.

In order to be approved by the National Inspector, the Local Plan has to account for the number of houses the government thinks an area will need per year to meet its growing population – in Charnwood's case 1,111 homes per year from 2021 to 2037. In 2015, the previous Local Plan put the required housing growth into three very large areas known as sustainable urban extensions (SUE's) on the edges of Leicester and Loughborough which developers haven't advanced as fast as was planned (although Charnwood Borough Council makes the Local Plan, it is completely in the control of developers if/when they actually built the houses). The result of this is that Charnwood can no longer demonstrate it has a 5 year supply of housing land (the current figure is 3.34 years) which in turn results in the Council's development policies being considered out of date (a Council needs to be able to show it has more than 5 years supply of housing land for its policies to have full weight in decision making). When that happens the only way the Council can refuse a planning application is if it can be demonstrated that 'substantial harm' would be caused by the development proceeding – a very high bar to hit. This is the reason there are so many planning applications right across Charnwood at the moment, and in all likelihood we will not regain our 5 year land supply (and with it development control) until a new Local Plan is passed.

In order to avoid the problem of the previous plan (relying so heavily on a few very large developers to keep our 5 year land supply) the strategy behind this new Local Plan is to have a larger number of smaller sites across the Borough to make delivery of the plan more achievable (as a sites can be brought forward by much smaller companies). The main downside of that though is that nearly every town and village in Charnwood faces at least some development and unfortunately we're no exception. The emerging Local Plan calls for 47 houses off Gaddesby Lane, along with much larger allocations in Thrussington, East Goscote, Queniborough, Syston and Cossington (amongst many other places). Its important to note though that even if these sites are included in final Local Plan applications will still have to go through the usual planning process and so its absolutely not a given that a particular site will be developed (the Local Plan is strategic across the Borough, planning applications are site specific). I will keep you updated about the Local Plan in future articles.

New scheme launched to boost skills, training and employment

With the pandemic having changed the working lives of so many, Leicestershire County Council is launching a scheme to help residents get back on track, with help available to those seeking paid work or training for a new role. Work + is a free one-to-one service offering support, advice and information to people looking for secure paid employment the chance to learn new skills or to find out more about volunteering or becoming self-employed.

Work + is open to everyone – from those who have never been employed to those who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, been furloughed or who are at risk of redundancy. It will also help college leavers, graduates and agency staff on zero hour or temporary contracts. Qualified personal advisers will offer impartial and professional advice to people from all backgrounds and support people on a one-to-one basis.

Appointments will initially be offered online due to the pandemic but later in the year face to face meetings will be held in local libraries and adult learning centres. Everyone who signs up to the scheme will have the opportunity to have a tailored work plan drawn up for them, including clear targets and steps to achieve their

goal. Help will be given with CV and letter writing skills, job searches, interview techniques and digital training, self-employment advice and business support.

The Work+ team will also work directly with employers who may be in the unfortunate position of making redundancies and want to support their staff to find new employment. To find out more or to register your interest contact the Work+ team on 0800 988 0308 or visit: www.leicestershire.gov.uk/jobs-and-volunteering/skills-for-jobs/work

If you need my help with anything please do get in touch.

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