

Countesthorpe Parish Council
Countesthorpe Village Hall
Station Road, Countesthorpe LE8 5TB
Telephone:- 0116 2779518
Email:- manager@countesthorpeparishcouncil.co.uk

Countesthorpe Parish Council **OBJECTS** to the application.

COUNTSTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS FOR 170 PROPERTIES AT FOSTON ROAD/LEICESTER ROAD - DEVELOPER: CATESBY ESTATES – PLANNING APPLICATION 23/1071/OUT

Whilst the Parish Council acknowledges that it needs to respond to the planning matters directly relating to this application, it should be noted there are also two further applications for additional housing in Countesthorpe, therefore the Parish Council feels strongly that it is necessary to take this information into account when considering its response.

You will read a lot of comments from residents about lack of school places, inability to get an appointment at the health centre, the long queues to get in and out of the village at peak times, lack of leisure facilities, flooding, sewage problems, the strength of roads, the width of the pavements, the danger on the roads. They are real, lived consequences of Countesthorpe's infrastructure being already overloaded.

Housing Supply in Local Plan

Countesthorpe has met its requirement as identified in the Local Plan for housing supply and should not be required to provide additional housing.

Countesthorpe Parish Council notes that this applicant's main reason for resubmitting the application at the current time is based on Blaby District Council's Residential Land Availability Document 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 in that it refers to the District Council only achieving 3.69 years of its 5-year supply. However, the Parish Council notes that the shortfall for the 5-year supply falls within the PUA area and in fact the non-PUA has overachieved its 5-year supply. Within the same report, it is also clear that Countesthorpe has achieved one of the highest levels of supply including committed development overall over the plan period.

The applicant refers to the shortfall of at least 548 homes against the 5-year requirement. The Parish Council notes that this shortfall is predominantly resulting from a slowing of the Lubbesthorpe Development, which could be for reasons including the Covid pandemic and the current financial climate. It is therefore likely that, if granted in the current plan period, these developments could also be considered non-deliverable and hence, block other development within the District. It should be noted that there are currently three other large-scale planning applications currently being processed and awaiting further decision by Blaby District Council, which would total 515 dwellings if approved, and therefore meet the District Council's housing supply needs.

The Parish Council does not consider, in balance, that the current shortfall in the 5-year housing supply within the District justifies the loss of the open countryside and the adverse impact on the character, appearance and amenity of the village.

The Parish Council notes the amendments in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 in that planning authorities are no longer expected to report their five-year housing supply, however the Parish Council notes that this only applies to Local Plans that have been produced in the last five years.

Whilst the Parish Council acknowledges that all parishes within the district may need to accept additional housing, with the potential for increased numbers to accommodate for a shortfall in the provision by the City Council, it would stress the need for the priority of any decision made to be based on its sustainability within the existing settlement. Therefore, the Parish Council would object to Countesthorpe being used as an opportunity to make up any shortfall in Blaby District's housing numbers in such an ad-hoc fashion.

The Parish Council therefore would expect the District Council to consider the cumulative effect of this application along with other proposed imminent applications which, should they all be approved, would result in an additional 426 dwellings. Likewise, the Highways Authority should consider the cumulative impact on the road network based on the potential that all the applications are granted planning approval.

Sustainability – CS1 and CS24, CS4 and CS6

Unless the issue of the inadequate infrastructure is addressed, then no development will fulfil the stated policy objectives of sustainability.

The inadequacy of the existing infrastructure, in its current form, cannot be resolved, therefore any remedial works to the infrastructure proposed by the developer will not fulfil the stated policy objectives of sustainability.

The Parish Council has significant concerns about the adverse impact on local services and facilities, if the cumulative effect of this and other potential developments are not given consideration, with the potential increase in the population of Countesthorpe by a third. The continual growth from the development on the edge of settlements is not the most sustainable form of development and not in the interests of the local community.

Therefore the Parish Council's preference would be that, should there be additional development to Countesthorpe, long-term consideration be given to the wellbeing and meet the needs of the population of Countesthorpe in terms of house types, access to local facilities, meaningful open spaces, local shopping, road network, transport needs and parking so that it can continue to be a sustainable community, as referred to in Planning Policies CS1 – Strategy for locating new development and CS24 – the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Regarding sustainable development, there are no long-term employment opportunities for the village, which would further exacerbate vehicle movement. The strategic objectives of policy CS4 and CS6 will not be met.

The Parish Council is minded of the District Council's ongoing work in progressing the proposed Whetstone Pastures development, which would result in a further 3500 to 6000 dwellings and commercial space of approximately 372,000sqm, which is not included in the current Local Plan period. Should the Whetstone Pastures development go ahead, there would undoubtedly be a time lag until the triggers are met which would require the developer to make provision of health care and primary/secondary school places, which will result in the immediate term, in pressure being put on the existing infrastructure of Countesthorpe. It is the Parish Council's opinion that no further large-scale development should be permitted for Countesthorpe until a decision on the Whetstone Pastures development is made and the new Local Plan is published so that there is a clearer picture of the future services needed to support Countesthorpe, including the local road network.

Infrastructure, services and amenities – CS5

Countesthorpe Parish Council refers to Planning Policy CS5 in which Blaby District Council considers Countesthorpe as a 'larger central village' containing a good range of services and facilities and access to a range of transport modes. Countesthorpe has in fact lost valuable services such as a local bank, a post office and shops and losing its ability to be self-sufficient. It has an over stretched health centre and no NHS dentist.

The District Council itself acknowledges in its Local Plan Core Strategy that Countesthorpe's services and facilities may need improvement. It also acknowledges that Countesthorpe has no key employment sites. There are minimal opportunities for employment in Countesthorpe and a proportion of local employment is filled by a workforce from outside the village. The Parish Council refutes the suggestion that this development will provide employment for local builders.

There are no leisure facilities within the village. It is two and a half miles to Wigston swimming pool and fitness centre, four and a half miles to Parklands Leisure Centre, five miles to Enderby Leisure Centre and six miles to Huncote Leisure Centre, none of which can easily be reached by public transport.

The Parish Council argues the accuracy of the applicants' statements that Teddies Nursery (based at Countesthorpe Academy) is in easy walking distance. Foxfield Academy on Hospital Lane is a specialist school for students with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Parish Council would strongly argue against developer opinion that Countesthorpe has a range of transport options to access these facilities out of the village. It does not have a bus service to higher order centres with a frequency of 20 minutes or better as claimed by the applicants, it is 30 minutes or more. The bus service has become unreliable since the closure of the South Wigston Depot, leaving people trying to access work, or residents reliant on public transport stranded.

With regard to the developer statements, in general, the Parish Council is concerned about their accuracy and the collection of their data as to whether it gives an unbiased view and therefore asks that the District and County Councils check the validity of this data.

Planning Obligations and Developer Contributions – CS12

How will the issues of the existing poor infrastructure be addressed?

The Parish Council has concerns that these smaller developments from different developers will avoid triggers to necessitate the developer having to provide health and educational facilities, road network improvements, etc as part of the application process. There is a risk that Countesthorpe could have ever increasing pressure on its infrastructure from these imminent planning applications but with no substantial financial contributions to make necessary improvements to the infrastructure.

It should also be necessary to provide financial support to ensure that there is an adequate and reliable bus service to support additional development with a view to reducing commuter traffic to access employment and retail facilities out of the village.

Utilities

The present infrastructure does not meet the needs of existing demands, Countesthorpe cannot cope with the proposed large increase in the population without drastic change.

The Parish Council is concerned that the infrastructure for the village, including sewage, water supply and electricity supply, is not sufficient to accommodate an increased housing supply in its current state. As an observation from the Parish Council and those living and travelling through it, there are frequent road works in and around the village (evidence of which can be corroborated by Notices issued by the Highways Authority) where it is evident that the service supplies to Countesthorpe, such as water, gas and electric, are in need of updating to accommodate its existing customers so it is therefore questionable whether they would support further development.

The feedback from residents within the vicinity of all proposed developments is that they have noticed a drop in water pressure subsequent to developments taking place in the village over the past few years.

Schools and Education

Local schools may not be able to accommodate the potential increase in school places needed. If there is a large increase in the number of children and students attending local schools, the increased congestion would exacerbate the already dangerous situation for pedestrians and cyclists.

It is the Parish Council's view that Countesthorpe's education and healthcare services are already overstretched with its current population. The Primary School is already one of the largest in the County. It is a 3 form entry school and in recent years has been full with over 630 children, which together with a Nursery provision of 50 children, already has a severe impact on pedestrians, including parents and children, residents and traffic (including the emergency services), at the start and end of the school day. It would not be a realistic option to expand the school further as to do so would create an extremely large primary school and would exacerbate the risks from a lack of parking and the impact on the surrounding area.

Due to the complex nature of the school admissions system, simply living in Countesthorpe does not guarantee a place at a school in Countesthorpe. Blaby Thistly Meadow Community Primary School, Hospital Lane, Blaby is the closest school to Greenfield Primary School, Countesthorpe and the two schools share an Executive Head Teacher. Thistly Meadow is not within walking distance of any of the proposed developments and will result in more journeys by vehicle. There are no pavements or cycle paths for safe walking or cycling and as Hospital Lane regularly floods, access during inclement weather would be even more problematic.

The educational campus on Winchester Road includes Countesthorpe Academy, Birkett House Special School and Teddies Nursery with over 1200 pupils attending daily. This creates another area of concern with regard to traffic and pedestrian safety.

Countesthorpe Health Centre

Residents are currently reporting a difficulty in accessing appointments and other agencies at the Health Centre. The site restrictions would make it difficult to expand facilities.

Countesthorpe Health Centre is a valued, well-run facility in the village. It is considered, by the Parish Council, to be an essential resource for the village. However, residents are currently reporting a difficulty in accessing appointments and other agencies at the Centre. This would be exacerbated by the proposed increase in population. Based on previous formulas used by the Health Centre, a development of this size could generate an increased population of over 1000 which would necessitate them providing an additional consultation room. Countesthorpe Health Centre has a wide catchment area, extending far beyond Countesthorpe and, therefore, any development locally also adversely affects the Health Centre.

Parking at the Health Centre and in the surrounding area at the centre of the village is already very limited causing considerable anxiety for often frail and vulnerable patients. Any extension of the Health Centre would probably be into the existing car park and would only exacerbate those issues for patients.

Countesthorpe Parish Council has recently met with Countesthorpe Health Centre to discuss ways that parking problems can be resolved, but no solution could be found. At this meeting, Countesthorpe Parish Council was told that there was no room for expansion to the current building.

Transport

Countesthorpe is a commuter village with poor public transport.

The three developments would all access the main roads through the village at points of particular pressure due to commuter traffic travelling from East to West across the South of the County.

The Parish Council would strongly argue against developer opinion that Countesthorpe has a range of transport options. It does not have a bus service to higher order centres with a frequency of 20 minutes or better, as claimed by the applicants. The No. 85 is the only bus

service running through Countesthorpe, and it has become unreliable since the closure of the South Wigston Depot, leaving people trying to access work or residents reliant on public transport stranded. Buses run every 30 minutes (at best) and are frequently late or cancelled, especially when flooding occurs at Crow Mills which forms part of the bus route through to Countesthorpe.

There are limited long-term employment opportunities locally. Due to unreliable and infrequent public transport, people travel to their place of work by car, therefore further exacerbating vehicle movement. The strategic objectives of policy CS4 and CS6 will not be met.

Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety

Countesthorpe does not offer safe pedestrian and cycling routes, nor could this be improved due the width of many roads and pavements throughout the village.

The central road through the village is narrow and bordered by narrow pavements, some of which do not attain the recommended minimum of 1.2 metres. There is already a high density of traffic through the village at peak times, particularly at times where children are accessing Schools. The pavements are generally not wide enough for a parent/carer with a pram/pushchair and toddler or certainly not for a wheelchair or mobility scooter. This is deleterious to health and dangerous to pedestrians. Any further increase would worsen the air quality and increase the possibility of road traffic accidents.

The Parish Council notes that developers refer to there being access to a cycle network within the village. It is aware of the proposals contained in Blaby District Council's Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan, however it has doubts as to whether these proposals are feasible, particularly down to the limitation of narrow roads and pavements through the village. Also, there is limited opportunity to provide secure cycle parking within the vicinity of the local shopping centres. Many cyclists use the pavements instead of the road. This is dangerous for pedestrians given the narrowness and poor condition of the pavements. This concern has been reiterated by residents who are reluctant to let their children cycle in the village, or to cycle to school.

Public Parking

The present capacity for public parking in the village does not meet the existing demand and there are no feasible options to improve this.

Public parking in the village currently does not meet demand and there is no obvious solution to accommodate an increased population. There is insufficient public parking for those visiting the local shopping and other facilities, and particularly for people with mobility problems. Therefore, there is risk that the current facilities within the centre of the village will lose custom arising from the lack of parking. Shops located on The Bank have indicated that they have lost custom due to the inadequate parking with customers choosing to shop out of the area. The parking problems have been exacerbated by the extension of retail, hospitality and other businesses in the centre of the village.

Whilst the Parish Council supports there being a thriving central area within the village giving access to shop, community facilities and health services, the Parish Council has already been expressing its frustrations to the District Council with regard to the parking issues.

Open Spaces and Recreation – CS14

Where a developer is proposing to provide an on-site open space, the Parish Council asks that the District Council carry out an assessment to determine the appropriateness of the provision. Should it be deemed that on-site open space is not appropriate, suitable off-site open spaces should be provided as new or developer funding obtained to improve existing neighbouring or nearby open spaces. Where possible, any new open space should provide access to adjacent areas of countryside. The Parish Council refers to Planning Policy CS14 – Green Infrastructure and would welcome discussions with the District Council on how these open spaces could be secured.

Ongoing maintenance of Open Spaces

The Parish Council insists that, should the application be granted, the District and County authorities continue to liaise with the developer to ensure that all lands, including those allocated to the dwellings and open spaces, are registered appropriately with the Land Registry and formal agreements between the Highways Authority in terms of responsibility of the highways and ad hoc open spaces such as greens, verges, boundaries treatments etc are clearly defined to eliminate future issues with lack of maintenance, as currently exists. Accordingly, any open spaces provided should remain as open space in perpetuity.

The parish council notes that it is now common practice for developers to charge an annual maintenance fee to the property owners for the maintenance of open spaces within the sites. The Parish Council would wish to see evidence at this stage as to what the plans are for the future ongoing maintenance of any proposed open spaces, in light of the dissatisfaction engendered by the level of service in maintaining the open spaces to an acceptable specification at more recent developments in Countesthorpe.

Environment and Carbon Neutral – CS21

If the District Council is working towards becoming a carbon neutral Council, how will the integrity of this policy be ensured through these proposed developments?

The Parish Council is participating in a pilot scheme to aim towards being a carbon neutral council by 2030. This is in line with the District Council's own policy. The Parish Council therefore asks that the District Council follow this policy through, and the contents of Planning Policy CS21, by only approving applications that can demonstrate that they are environmentally sustainable in design and aim to reduce carbon emissions and this will be enforced should approval be granted. In particular, in line with the recommendations of the new National Planning Policy, all properties should be provided with a charging point for electrical vehicles, and the properties designed to be able to accommodate solar panels.

Should developments be granted planning permission, the District Council consider that the design and layout of the site, particular the individual properties, to give the opportunity in the future for property owners to adapt their properties to introduce facilities to reduce carbon emissions, this can include the installation of heat pumps as an alternative to gas boilers.

The District Council refers in its Local Plan Core Strategy to the fact that it seeks to protect existing and provide new and multi-functional green spaces, for formal open space, recreational green areas for informal recreation and areas valuable for their biodiversity. Therefore, the Parish Council would wish to see the maintaining of areas of land throughout the village to support the creation of wildlife corridors.

Flooding (CS21 and CS22)

The potential increase in local vulnerability to flood risk must not be ignored.

Serious consideration needs to be given to flood risk when reviewing potential development in Countesthorpe. Countesthorpe and its surrounding access routes regularly experience problems with flooding. Many villagers expressed their feelings of helplessness and 'being stranded' when Countesthorpe was completely cut off by recent flooding events.

There is significant concern that the increased impermeable footprint introduced by the proposed new developments, is likely to further exacerbate surface water and groundwater drainage problems in this already highly problematic area, and thus increase local vulnerability to flood risk.

The Blaby District Council (BDC) Joint Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) reports that flood risk associated with both surface water runoff and groundwater flooding are a potential threat in the Countesthorpe area. Countesthorpe and its surrounding access routes frequently experience significant flooding events, indicating that this is a site already at or close to its natural hydrological carrying capacity.

The low permeability clays and mudstones which underlie the proposed developments and surrounding areas struggle to drain current precipitation and groundwater through-flow, leading to existing issues of standing water, and swelling of the clay-rich ground.

This slow infiltration rate is particularly problematic during periods of increased rainfall and fluvial discharge, when local rivers are regularly observed to burst their banks. At such times, adjacent areas can remain flooded for prolonged periods, including those mapped as Flood Zone 1. It is also noted that the frequency of such events is expected to increase due to climate change.

The addition of further impermeable surfaces by the proposed developments will cause an increase in surface water runoff from the sites, adding pressure to existing drains and sewers, and reducing the available natural soakaway needed by nearby fluvial systems; unless appropriately attenuated.

In addition to the new developments' potential to impact local flood risk and vulnerability, the impact of existing and ongoing flood risk on the safety of the developments and their future residents must also be considered. This is a serious factor which appears to have been overlooked in the planning applications.

National Planning Policy Statement PPS25 states that developments must be able to "remain operational and safe for users in times of flood." And "A route can only be completely 'safe' in flood risk terms if it is dry at all times". Blaby District Council Local Plan (BDC-LP), additionally states "Proposals are also required to demonstrate that safe access and egress to the development can be maintained during an extreme flooding event".

Countesthorpe regularly suffers considerable disruption from road closures due to flooding, which limit access in and out of the village. This primarily occurs at Foston Road, Hospital Lane, Countesthorpe Road/Leicester Road including Crow Mills, Welford Road (A5199) including Kilby Bridge, and Leicester Road (A426) just north of Blaby (County Arms); often simultaneously. More recently in January 2024, Cosby Road at its junction with A426, Hill Lane and Winchester Road were also impassible due to flooding.

Safe access and egress to the developments cannot be guaranteed at all times when during such Flood Events these roads are impassable to residents and Emergency Services. Additionally, as these roads are observed to flood, they cannot be considered to be "dry at all times" and thus are excluded as being considered 'safe' routes in Flood Risk terms (PPS25).

Furthermore, at the periods of these road closures, vehicular traffic, including buses, must take lengthy diversion routes. In addition to the movement of villagers, it should be noted that Countesthorpe is a through-route for commuting travel. Restricted access routes during Flood Events will put extra traffic pressure on the reduced number of alternative 'safe' roads available. With the above-mentioned roads excluded, access routes will be restricted to through Countesthorpe Village, along Cosby Road and Station Road, or from the south.

The Parish Council therefore insists that the Highways Authority recognise this, and source developer contributions to carry out works to the highway outside of the development site to alleviate this problem. The Highways Authority itself must also ensure the ongoing maintenance of its drainage systems.

In light of the above concerns, we expect that serious consideration be given with regards to flood risk and the potential increase in local vulnerability to flood risk, when reviewing this application.

National Planning Policy Statement PPS25 states that the surface water runoff rate after development should not exceed the previous undeveloped Greenfield runoff rate. Given the local soil/geology it is unlikely that adjacent undeveloped areas alone will be able to accommodate the excess surface water runoff resulting from the proposed new developments. Infiltration drainage methods would also be considered unsuitable.

Should development go ahead it would therefore need to be a condition at outline planning permission stage for appropriate flood mitigation methods, including Sustainable Drainage Systems, to be incorporated into the site. The Parish Council would additionally insist to see evidence that such mitigation measures are fully appropriate, and subject to long term inspection and rigorous maintenance, and they must be finalised and approved by the relevant authorities.

Planning Policy CS21 indicates that development should minimise vulnerability and provide resilience to climate change and flooding by supporting sustainable drainage systems and planting, rain water harvesting, multi-functional green spaces and green infrastructure networks. The Parish Council would therefore ask that each individual property within the development be built with these options in mind, particular in terms of garden design, including the provision of front gardens and rain water harvesting.

Referring to Planning Policy CS22 – Flood Risk Management, in terms of layout and design of any development shall allow for natural drainage within the site itself, including the provision of natural forms of drainage. There should be control of surface water run-off to minimise the increase in the surface water discharge into the public sewer system, and more importantly, avoidance of overdevelopment of the site.

A further condition of planning permission should be that surface water is not to drain into the Public Highway or add surface water to its drainage system.

It should be noted that Winchester Road at the access to Blaby, flooded in January 2024 due to the balancing pond installed at that new housing development not having sufficient capacity to cope with heavy rainfall. The Parish Council insists that future developments must not be similarly allowed to fall short of their duties to ensure no increase in off-site flooding.

Sewerage

The sewerage system in the village is not sufficient to meet current need.

Residents living in the streets that run southwards from Station Road up to and including Willoughby Road have reported that they have issues with sewage coming up into their properties and problems flushing toilets, during incidents of excessive rain. Moreover, in Hallcroft Avenue, this is an ongoing issue due to the age and capacity of the sewerage system which was only constructed to serve the original properties on that road. The Parish Council recognises that new development will meet current regulations for sewerage installation, however, the impact on the existing system would first need to be considered.

ISSUES RELATING TO THIS PARTICULAR APPLICATION

Specifically relating to this application, in general, the Parish Council does not see that there has been any material change in Countesthorpe's situation as to when the application was originally dismissed in 2017. The Parish Council recalls that when the application was previously submitted there were 670 objections so would expect that there would be the same level of objection from local residents to the application.

Highways

- Referring to the Transport Assessment for this application; Appendix F, TRICS Output (used to quantify the trip generation of new developments), the statistical information is dated May 2016.
Appendix D, The Road Safety Audit included in the Transport Assessment is dated September 2016.
The Parish Council request that up-to-date data is provided.
- It is proposed that a new full-sized roundabout will replace the current mini roundabout. Whilst it seems generally accepted that the mini roundabout needs upgrading, the proposed design full size roundabout is excessively large and out of character for the edge of the village and current residential area. The Parish Council would welcome a design capable of managing the traffic but more in keeping with the residential area.
- A primary concern with regard to the proposed roundabout is that it has potential to encourage more commuter traffic through the village, including HGVs. Also, that it can result in the danger of vehicles travelling through the roundabout at speed, due to it having a smoother turning point.
- The proposed roundabout could also include a risk to cyclists.
- The application states that all amenities including employment are within walking distance, however the proposed road layout does not allow for safe pedestrian movement and will be hazardous for pedestrians from both the existing and proposed estate due to the volume of traffic. It was noted that, as there are no cycle paths, the volume of traffic will also be hazardous to cyclists.
- Whilst there are proposed tactile paving to encourage pedestrian crossing points at the roundabout, the Parish Council has previously raised concerns about the lack of pedestrian crossing points at the junction of Station Road with Central Street, however, it has been advised by the Highway's Authority that it is not safe for pedestrians to be crossing at this

point. The Parish Council therefore queries whether the same would not apply to this proposed roundabout and would suggest suitable alternative pedestrian crossing points, preferably with the use of a traffic light system.

- Similarly, the Parish Council notes on the drawing for the proposed Foston Road access that there is tactile paving to indicate a pedestrian crossing point. The Parish Council would argue whether this would be a safe place to cross the road, particularly at peak times with conflicts of vehicular movements from Rosebank Road, Foston Road and the development itself, which therefore enforces the need for a suitable traffic light operated crossing point for pedestrians.
- The Parish Council asks that the Highways Authority seek developer funding for adequate designated pedestrian crossing points.
- There is no pavement on the development side of Foston Road to enable pedestrians to walk to the Garden Centre. The Parish Council requests that this is given consideration to avoid pedestrians having to cross the busy Foston Road twice.
- There is a potential for conflict of traffic at peak times for traffic wishing to access Foston Road from Rosebank Road and the proposed access road from the new estate. Likewise, the vehicles from the existing cottages on Foston Road will have difficulty accessing the new road.
- The access point from Foston Road should provide a turning point adequately wide enough for larger vehicles to turn left onto Foston Road without crossing into the path of oncoming traffic.
- The complexity of the proposed junctions on Foston Road does not take into account increased numbers of customers to the Cherry Lane Garden Centre, bearing in mind that they are currently carrying out expansion works and will be offering a facility for function hire which will generate more traffic.
- The Parish Council will assume, should the application be approved, that imminently there will be an application from the owner of the agricultural land to the rear of proposed development to request for an access out onto Foston Road via the strip of land running between the development and the Cherry Lane Garden Centre.
- A further three access/egress points onto Foston Road will be created as a result of this development.
- The proposed plans illustrate an entrance on Foston Road, which will result in a proliferation of entrances on the Foston Road. Within the short distance between the proposed roundabout, should this development be approved and an agricultural access agreed as above, there will be a total of 7 access/egress points up to and including Glebe Garden Centre, these being - the new cul-de-sac for residents on Foston Road, Rosebank Road, the new access/egress road for the development, Cemetery, Crematorium, Agricultural access and Garden Centre.
- There is potential for traffic wishing to access Leicester Road from Foston Road or vice-versa to use roads on the proposed estate to avoid the roundabout and therefore the proposed estate roads will likely to become a 'rat run'.
- Rosebank Road and Skye Way are already used as a rat run during busy times for traffic going to Station Road wanting to avoid road humps and queuing traffic along Wigston Street, which is narrow due to parked cars on the roadside. There is concern that the proposed Foston Road access point will increase this problem.

- The Parish Council re-iterates its previous request to Leicestershire County Council for the 30mph speed limit to be extended to further out of the village past the Cherry Lane Garden Centre.
- The Parish Council would seek clarification from the Highways Authority with regard to the data provided in relation to vehicular collisions etc within Countesthorpe over the past five years as the figures contained in the Transport Assessment are inaccurate, as there are locations within the village where are known to have been collisions. The data provided, therefore does not seem a realistic representation on the potential for vehicular collisions. These notable locations within the village are also the same points where there are high levels of pedestrian movement to the schools.
- The Parish Council considers that the applicant has underestimated the increase in two-way vehicle flow for light vehicles, estimating around an increase in 140 vehicles. As it could be anticipated that on average there will be at least two vehicles per property then this would at least be getting toward 300 extra light vehicle movements. In light of other submitted planning applications, the cumulative effect of vehicle movements should be taken into account by the Highways Authority.
- The Transport Assessment indicates the most vehicular movements for accessing work would be to Leicester or to the Blaby Direction, via Crow Mills and Hospital Lane, both of which are prone to flooding. Therefore, the majority of the vehicles would be expected to use the Leicester Road access to the site. There is concern however, whether that proposed junction will be able to accommodate the number of vehicles.
- In general, the volume of commuter traffic towards South Wigston and Hospital Lane from Foston Road and vice versa will make egress from the proposed estate extremely difficult, if not impossible, at peak times. The traffic lights at Hospital Lane will not alleviate this.
- A nursery, situated on the corner of Foston Road and Leicester Road, will be re-opening in the near future, under a new name Hunny Comb. This is shown as shown as 'works' on the roundabout plan. Increased traffic flow across the new roundabout will make the access and egress more hazardous for parents attempting to cross Foston Road from the new development as the proposed crossing points are inadequate. With reference to this premises, the Parish Council notes that there will vehicular movements at peak times that have not been included in the developer's statistics.
- The Parish Council notes the drawings indicating improvements to the Foston Road/Welford Road Junction and would welcome these improvements. The Parish Council would wish to receive more clarification as to whether these improvements are to be covered fully financially by the applicant or are they contributing to a Highway's Authority budget.
- The Parish Council notes that the applicant is intending to carry out a five-year monitoring of the traffic impact and vehicular movements. The Parish Council would welcome receiving information with regard to this initiative, by receipt of the results on an annual basis, including dates that any readings were taken, and that monitoring is not to be taking during the local school holidays. The Parish Council notes that there is the possibility that the development will not be at its capacity by the end of the five-year period and therefore the readings could be unrealistic.
- Countesthorpe is primarily a commuter village with vehicles moving both in and out of Countesthorpe for employment and shopping. In terms of commuting into Countesthorpe for employment, together with day to day activities such as collecting children from school, visiting shops and the Health Centre. Parking problems cannot be overstated.

Countesthorpe Parish Council has aimed to be proactive in finding solutions to parking problems.

- Visitors to the Crematorium on Foston Road travel by car from outside of the village. This can create congestion on Foston Road from vehicles turning into the crematorium and on many occasions, have caused severe parking problems along Foston Road and neighbouring Rosebank Road as the Crematorium has limited space for parking.
- Countesthorpe Parish Council supports the Environmental Services' concerns with regard to a lack of clarity with regard to the positioning of the waste bins, in particular the number of properties within the site that will not be served by an adopted road. The Parish Council foresees longer term problems with developments of this scale being unadopted.

On-site parking

- The Parish Council asks, should the development be granted, that the District Council ensure that sufficient off-road parking is provided per property, also in anticipation of potential expansion of the individual property owners in the future.
- The Parish Council notes that the parking provision for the individual properties will fall within the curtilage and behind building lines, therefore there is the risk of future extensions to properties and as a consequence for vehicles to park on the road. The road layout design should also give consideration for visitor parking.
- The Parish Council requests that Rosebank Road is not used by construction vehicles for parking or travelling to the site throughout the construction period.

Land Quality

- The agricultural land is graded "Good". *'Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.'* This area is part of the best and most versatile agricultural land. (BMV). *Natural England should be consulted where 'development which is not for agricultural purposes and is not in accordance with the provisions of a development plan involves the loss of not less than 20 hectares of grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land which is for the time being used (or was last used) for agricultural purposes' or where the loss of less than 20 hectares of BMV agricultural land 'is likely to lead to a further loss of agricultural land amounting cumulatively to 20 hectares or more' (bullet point 'y' of Schedule 4).* BMV land is identified in national planning policy as worthy of protection (paragraph 112 of the NPPF).
- The Parish Council requests that the use of Brownfield sites in the District is considered before development takes place on valuable/good agricultural land.

The Applicant's Design and Access Statements

- 3.3 and 3.4 Key settlements mentioned here (South Wigston and Leicester) lie to the north, as does junction 21 of the M1. However, most routes south necessitate travel through the length of Countesthorpe. Residents in this development are unlikely to use junction 21 if they are going south on the M1. Even going north (M1, Fosse Park) they have a choice between going through Countesthorpe or using Hospital Lane.
- 3.7 The Parish Council notes that the only youth centre in the village is owned by the local Scouts group and is only open for the Scouts' use. Also, the document is out of date as it still lists Countesthorpe as having a Post Office, which is no longer the case. The Parish

Council therefore reiterates its concern that the applicant has not carried out an up-to-date assessment.

- The Parish Council refers to the applicant's Design and Access Statement Document 2. *"5.1 This planning application seeks approval for use and means of access only. All other matters including layout, scale, appearance and landscape will be reserved for subsequent approval."* The Parish Council has concern that this will give the applicant carte-blanche for the design of the interior of the development, for example relating to the Lighting Assessment item 10.1, the applicant's concerns with regard to the site presenting a number of challenges which would need to be address during the detailed design process.

Visual Impact – CS2

- The Parish Council disagrees with the applicant's comment that the proposed development would not have a significantly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. Countesthorpe is an attractive village and the proposal at the junction of Foston Road, Leicester Road is on a route that is frequently used by commuters travelling across the south of the county and offers an attractive landscape with views over to Wigston, so therefore could be considered a benefit to the District as a whole. Should the application be approved it will result in the loss of a valuable visual amenity that contributes to the character of the village.
- The applicant's Design and Access Statement 2 document states, *"4.10 The application was refused in 2016. Part of the reasons for refusal was that: '...the residential development of this greenfield site would represent an unwarranted intrusion of urban development beyond the existing well defined edge of settlement and would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the landscape and character of the village."* Parish Council therefore reiterates the District Council's previous refusal reason in that the development of this greenfield site would represent an unwarranted intrusion of urban development beyond the existing well-defined edge of settlement and would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the landscape and character of the village, therefore being contrary to Policy C2 of the Local Plan.
- The proposed development will be on designated open countryside and would be detrimental to the village's natural environment, landscape and geology which is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CS18.
- Urbanisation of the village: the village character will be destroyed by the modern housing at the village entrance. In particular, in line with Planning Policy CS2, as the development is a prominent area of the village both for those living in the village or those travelling through it, should the application be approved, the Parish Council asks that particular consideration should be given to the design of the proposed properties that would look out onto Foston Road to be in keeping and complementary to the existing street scene.

Open Spaces

- Agreement should be made with Leicestershire highways with regard to ownership of grass verges to ensure that there are no disagreements in future years with regard to maintenance responsibility.
- The Parish Council is concerned that, with any proposed development sites to the south of the village being under different ownership, there is the loss of opportunity to achieve open space and would ask that the District Council take this into consideration with the

long term planning of future developments to the south of the village that there be collaborative approach to the provision of open space and pedestrian routes to the existing settlement of Countesthorpe.

Environment and Carbon Footprint – CS21

- The Parish Council does not see the relevance to the comment that the proposal will provide employment to local builders. There are no local building companies within Countesthorpe or the neighbouring villages that could carry out such works therefore it is inevitable the construction will be carried out by external businesses resulting in additional vehicular traffic.
- Whilst the annual mean figures for Nitrogen Dioxide do not exceed government limits, the Parish Council questions the applicant's view that there will not be an increase. As the normal wind direction is south westerly, it could be argued that once the development has taken place, that there will be a reduced ability for the Nitrogen Dioxide from the junction area to dissipate.
- The Parish Council notes applicant's proposals for the new dwellings to be provided with infrastructure and sustainable design to achieve a 31% reduction in carbon emission. The Parish Council asks, should the application be approved, that the District Council ensure that these are a condition at the outline planning application stage.
- It is noted that the applicant states that there will be provision of electric vehicle charging points for each property, however in the Transport Policy it states 'Each dwelling to include appropriate provision for future electric car charging points'. The Parish Council asks that it be a requirement for these to be installed at the time of building the property.
- Likewise, in the Sustainability Plan proposals the document notes that it will be intended for the roof lines to be designed to promote solar gains, however it does not indicate that it intends to install solar panels in any of the developments.
- In general, the applicant has listed several options for reducing carbon emissions within the development however states itself that it cannot specify these at the current time and they would be considered to be reserved matters. Therefore, the Parish Council does not see any evidence of commitment within the proposals to respond to the issues of climate change or showing any initiative in promoting the reduction of carbon emissions. Therefore, there is the potential that this development could be given approval by the District Council based on its sustainability, yet none of this could come to fruition.

Biodiversity

- The Parish Council will note the proposals contained in the Biodiversity Plan to compare against any future detailed planning applications for the site. The Parish Council would wish to see the detail of the anticipated management plan for the biodiversity of the site as proposed by the applicant. The Parish Council would ask that the District Council ensure that the proposed measures included in the Biodiversity Policy are adhered to and are maintained in perpetuity. Whilst the Parish Council welcomes the 'green corridor' to the north of the site, it should be noted, if the applicant extends the development site further north to the remaining agricultural land, that a vehicular access would cut across this green space.

Ecological Appraisal

- The Parish Council refers to the appeal decision to the previous application, *“The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; Whether the appeal site is sustainably located to local services and facilities such that they can be reasonably reached by means other than by private motor car; The effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of occupiers of surrounding residential properties having specific regard to noise, disturbance and privacy; and Whether the proposed development makes adequate provision for local facilities, services and infrastructure made necessary by the development.* The Parish Council does not consider that this issue has adequately been addressed in the current application.

Sustainability

- The proposed development does not meet the strategic objectives of policy CS1, the use of more sustainable forms of transport (including walking, cycling, other forms of non-motorised transport and public transport), as there are no cycle ways through the village. The main road through the village does not comply with the recommended design for public transport and the footways are below one metre width on a large portion of the road. Buses, for public transport, already give rise to hazardous conditions.
- The Parish Council would welcome further information from the applicant with regard to its proposed walking and cycling events as specified in the Transport Policy.

Flooding

- In addition to the comments on Flooding made above, there are a number of site-specific issues which raise further concern for potential increased flood risk and vulnerability associated with this development.
- The proposed development site itself includes areas mapped as medium and high risk from surface water flooding. The east of the site is located within an area with >75% susceptibility to groundwater flooding, and the remainder of the site has 25-50% susceptibility to groundwater flooding. (See BDC joint SFRA, EA maps, and applicant’s FRA).
- It is noted in the applicant’s FRA, that on their site visit, areas of standing water were observed across the proposed development site.
- Residents living on Foston Road have additionally reported that, since the development of the Redrow estate on the opposite side of Leicester Road, the field in which the development is proposed does not clear of surface water and they are therefore concerned that any further development will worsen this and cause further flooding onto Foston Road.
- The Parish Council also notes that the Cherry Lane Garden Centre, adjacent to the proposed development site, was forced to cancel its annual firework display in 2023 due to waterlogged ground. Whilst that area of the village falls within a Flood Zone 1, it is still prone to frequent flooding from surface water. We therefore highlight the Environment Agency guidance that Flood Zone Maps should not be the only investigation into flooding, and site observations and historical records of Flood Events must also be considered.

- The Highway drainage for Foston Road (adjacent to the development site) and the public service sewers discharge surface water directly into a ditch, which in turn discharges into the river just to the east. This river already experiences regular flooding, affecting adjacent land and often resulting in road closures (as discussed above). Any additional contribution of surface run-off into this river drainage system resulting from development, will further exasperate these fluvial and surface water flooding issues – both locally and downstream. This in turn could increase local vulnerability to flood risk, and adversely impact village access routes.
- The developers state that they will endeavour to mitigate against surface water flooding issues and off-site run-off; However, they have not provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate how/if this is achievable.
- The Parish Council notes particular concern that the Drainage Strategy in their FRA proposes that surface water from the site “will outfall to the drainage ditch located to the east of the site”. As mentioned with the Highway drainage system (above), adding water to this ditch has the potential to exasperate already problematic off-site flood risk.
- No mitigation methods are proposed to address other flood risk sources, particularly groundwater and sewer flooding, despite the recognised potential risks.
- The Leicestershire County Council Preliminary FRA (LCC PFRA) reports 8 locations in the County which have been affected by “Flooding from foul and surface water sewers, affecting domestic dwellings, gardens and highways” on five or more occasions (DG5 register of sewer flooding: Severn Trent Water). Rosebank Road, located within the vicinity of the development site, is included in this ‘Top 8’. The LCC PFRA additionally states “sewers are not designed to accommodate extreme rainfall events, so it is likely that flooding will occur from sewers and drains during such events.”. Sewer flooding can therefore not be ignored by the developers, and a specific mitigation strategy must be included.
- A condition of planning permission must be that surface water from the development is not to drain into the Public Highway or add surface water to its drainage system. It cannot currently be stated with confidence that such a condition could be met.
- With reference to the proposed ‘Attenuation Basin’: the Parish Council notes the proposed maintenance in the Flood Risk Management Document and would expect that this be enforced. However, it notes that the applicant only intends to remove sediment from the big ponds every 25 years. It is the Parish Council’s view that this should be carried out more frequently.
- Whilst the developer has acknowledged some of the site’s flood risk issues in their FRA, the Parish Council note that these and their mitigation strategies have not all been adequately addressed by the applicant. It is particularly noted that the Conceptual Drainage Strategy and supporting calculations provided by the applicant’s FRA are only preliminary, require the results of further tests, and have not been approved by the relevant authorities.

- The Parish Council therefore insist that it is made a condition, that specific detailed Sustainable Flood and Drainage Mitigation Strategies are finalised and approved at the outline planning permission stage before development can be considered further.

Housing Numbers

- Relating to this application, referring to Blaby District Council's assessment of the proposed Foston Road, Leicester Road site, the proposed 170 dwellings exceed the District Council's assessment of the site of potential 145 dwellings. Therefore, should the application be granted, the Parish Council asks that the District Council ensure that the proposed description of housing in terms of numbers, size of properties, etc do not alter throughout the development resulting in overdevelopment of the site. Also, as part of assessment of the proposed site, Blaby District Council itself acknowledges that Countesthorpe has limited employment opportunities. Therefore, unless future development incorporates employment areas, any additional residential dwellings will only increase the commuter traffic within the village, not just in the immediate vicinity of the site but at all key junctions throughout the village.

SUMMARY

As the Parish Council wishes to reflect the feedback it has received from local residents in its response, because of the overall strong feeling about the adverse effect on the village's existing infrastructure and services arising from any future development and increased population of the village, in addition to increased commuter traffic, unless there is firm commitment from the developers, Blaby District Council and Leicestershire County Council for the supporting infrastructure (referred to throughout this document) to be in place prior to further development, the Parish Council would therefore need to express its **OBJECTION** to the application. Without this infrastructure, the Parish Council does not consider that the application complies with CS11 – Infrastructure, services and facilities to support growth.

As the Parish Council is not privy to the District and County Council's long-term plans for sustainable development, the Parish Council does not feel that it is in a position to make a judgement on the suitability of each individual application for development within the village and reiterates its objection to further piecemeal development without clear evidence of sustainable planning from the District and County Councils, or if it could give reassurances that sufficient developer funding can be sourced to cover costs towards alternative infrastructure for vehicular traffic to by-pass the village.

To reiterate, the Parish Council would therefore expect to see commitment of timescales for appropriate improvements to infrastructure, local and surrounding road networks, utility services, school and health services, as referred to throughout this document, prior to further development taking place and would welcome discussion with the District and County Councils.

The Parish Council also reiterates its view that the Highways Authority should consider the cumulative effects of the proposals in terms of impact on the highway and vehicle movements, including that of commuter traffic, when considering whether the proposed highway improvements are adequate, also taking into account the long-term future of development that may impact on the village.

The National Planning Policy Framework stresses that new housing should be granted “unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits”. Therefore, taking into consideration the above comments, the Parish Council strongly feels that any additional development within Countesthorpe without the provision of adequate supporting infrastructure or services, would adversely impact on the Village.

With regard to Neighbourhood Priority Statements in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, whilst the Parish Council understands that these are not applicable to the current Local Plan, however, the Parish Council asks that District Council honour the intentions of the government in the Act when considering this application.

For information, the Parish Council held two consultation events with local residents with regard to this application. Both were well attended and the feedback with regard to concerns about the impact on infrastructure and services was consistent amongst residents and the Parish Council’s own views.