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

COUNTSTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS FOR 51 DWELLINGS AT LAND TO SOUTH OF GILLAM BUTTS - DEVELOPER: HAMPTON OAK (CONSULTANT HARRISLAMB) – PLANNING APPLICATION 24/0004/FUL

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 references 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 Parish Council notes that any shortfall in housing in the current 5-year plan 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

Housing Numbers and 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 notes that Blaby District Council's own assessment of the site COU47 was carried out on the basis of the larger area which amounts to 5.15 hectares. For that area, the District Council's recommendation is for a maximum of 96 dwellings. Considering that this section of the site that was assessed is around a third of the total area, the Parish Council considers that the proposed 51 dwellings is overdevelopment of the site.
- As the developer is only submitting an application that covers a third of the land accessible to them, the Parish Council has concerns that, whilst the development may be more achievable in terms of delivery, by the applications for the sites being submitted 'piecemeal',

could be perceived as a developer avoiding triggers to necessitate the contribution of developer funding as part of the application, and also that the full information for the application cannot be considered as a whole in terms of future access and open space provision.

- As stated previously, the Parish Council has considerable concerns that the development in this area is being carried out in a piecemeal manner. The contents of the supporting documents are based on the 51 properties, and not taking into account the previous development and any further. In summary, the Parish Council is dissatisfied with the level of long term planning for the land within the developer's ownership.

Highways and Access

- The Parish Council has significant concern that the only access currently proposed to this development is via Hallcroft Avenue, and likewise, further applications would only have access via the same route. It notes that the applicant's layout document indicates the proposed layouts to lead to further development at a future stage.
- The information provided therefore is not adequate in terms of how access will be provided should there be further development extending from the site, ie how any alternative access route provided. The only realistic option for this would be via Peatling Road, and previous planning applications with access onto Peatling Road have been refused by the Highways Authority. Alternatively, the developer may find an alternative route to an existing road to the south of Countesthorpe through purchase of property, however, the Parish Council would object to the application being approved prior to viable long-term access to the site and any future extensions being clarified. Therefore, the Parish Council feels that it should make comment relating to certain items based on the premise that the remaining area will be submitting for housing development at some point in the future.
- It is noted in Planning Policy CS10 that the recommendation is, where possible for a bus stop to be within 800 metres of new homes.
- Based on the only potential for access via Hallcroft Avenue at its junction with Station Road, the Parish Council has strong concerns at the impact at this junction and suitability of the road network to accommodate the additional vehicular activity at that junction. The junction comes out onto Station Road which is the main commuter route through the village. The vicinity of the area also has heavy pedestrian footfall traffic at peak school drop off/collection times, so there would be major conflict of vehicles and pedestrians at the staggered junction of Hallcroft Avenue, Station Road and Gwendoline Drive.
- The Parish Council has considerable concern about the impact on the existing properties leading via Hallcroft Avenue in terms of construction traffic. By carrying out the developments on a piecemeal basis, this will inevitably lead to disruption to residents in this area being adversely affected for many years to come.
- A condition of the previous application leading from Gillam Butts was that there would be road surface improvements to Hallcroft Avenue and this has not yet come to fruition despite all properties on that development being occupied.
- The Parish Council questions the comments from the Transport Survey item 3.18 in that the parents/guardians' pedestrian access, in particular using the zebra crossing do not have any bearings to the operation of the staggered junction. From experience of vehicle users at that point, there is considerable conflict of safety between pedestrians and vehicles, particularly affected by narrow pavements in the area. Also, at the time of the completion

of the assessment there was an employed school crossing patrol, however, this is no longer the case and therefore the zebra crossing is used as and when pedestrians arrive at the crossing, rather than a control of a number to cross at a time.

- 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 there is known to be collisions. The data provided, therefore does not seem a realistic representation of 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 notes from the Transport Assessment that when the applicant carried out its assessment of the site in terms of number of vehicular movements, that at the same time, it did not record the number of pedestrians or cycle users etc from Hallcroft Avenue, to show evidence to support its claims that it will be expecting the residents from the extended development to walk to local facilities.
- The Parish Council refers to Leicestershire County Council's correspondence 2022/9488/01/P/HEN, in that it states that the resulting number of properties from one point of access is contrary to Table DG1 part 3 of LHDG, which states that no more than 150 dwellings should be served by a single point of access off a residential road, and that it therefore does not consider the proposals to be acceptable.
- Also, referring to the above document, the information provided to Leicestershire County Council at that time was for a proposed 100 dwellings. Therefore, the Parish Council reiterates its objection that by submitting the application piecemeal can be seen as a way of a developer avoiding complying with planning policy, etc.
- The Parish Council notes that the figures contained in the Transport Assessment do not take into account the figures from the other proposed developments and therefore the District Council should consider the cumulative impact from the total additional vehicular movements.
- In recent years, an increase in development in the local shopping area has resulted in a significant detrimental effect on off street parking. The Countesthorpe Health Centre has no capacity to increase its parking facility to accommodate additional patient numbers. Also, there is insufficient off-street parking to accommodate those visiting the local shopping facilities and particularly those 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. The nature of the isolation from the village by this proposal will inevitably result in access to the local facilities via a vehicle journey.
- Parish Council does not consider that the application meets the requirements of Planning Policy CS10, Transport Infrastructure, to reduce the need for residents to require the use of a motor vehicle to access local services including retail and employment.
- The Parish Council asks that, 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 property owner in the future.
- Residents of Hallcroft Avenue express their frustrations about the quality of the construction of the Hallcroft Avenue itself in that it was only designed to accommodate the original housing on that road. The actual road itself is starting to deteriorate with the additional traffic, and that is not taking into account further construction traffic. Vehicles

park on both sides of the road and it is not therefore considered suitable to an increase in vehicular traffic.

- Taking into account residents' comments, the Parish Council would stress the importance of the District Council not permitting piecemeal development in that area in order that the supporting infrastructure is considered as a whole and to therefore limit the time period before the existing properties that lead from Hallcroft Avenue, down to Gillam Butts are upgraded with suitable infrastructure.

Public Transport

- In its assessment of the site, the District Council indicates that the site scores well due to good access to public transport with regular frequency service, however, it should be noticed that the level of service is now unreliable following the recent closure of the Arriva depot at South Wigston. The District Council refers to the negative scores being that there is a lack of open space within the immediate area.

Visual Impact

- Urbanisation of the village: the village character will be destroyed by the modern housing at the village entrance. The proposed site of the development is in an area of countryside and if developed there would be a loss of openness which would be detrimental to the character and appearance of this entrance to the village. It would extend the built up area of the village and compromise the rural character and appearance of this area of countryside
- 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.

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 Parish Council notes that there have previously been problems with flooding in that area of the village. Residents from Mennecy Close report flooding of their properties in January 2024 during the excessive rain.
- The drainage and sewage system along Hallcroft is outdated and inadequate. Residents of Hallcroft Avenue have stressed to the Parish Council that they have issues with sewerage coming up into their properties due to the age of the existing sewage system. There have also been cases of those residents having had to carry out drainage works to their own cost to try and reduce the impact of surface water run-off from Hallcroft Avenue. Surface water run-off often sits in the gullies along Hallcroft Avenue.
- Given that the current local systems cannot accommodate existing drainage and sewage demands, the Parish Council does not consider that they would be adequate to support additional pressure from the proposed new development.

- The Leicestershire County Council Preliminary FRA (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.

It would therefore be required to either update the existing sewage and drainage system in that area of the village or, should further development be granted, provide further drainage systems that are directed via a separate route away from the village.

It would therefore be a necessity for the details for the drainage system to be approved by the District Council at outline planning stage. Furthermore it should be a condition that such mitigation methods be maintained to a satisfactory condition in perpetuity.

- 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.

Open Space Provision

- The Parish Council is concerned that, by the applications from this developer being submitted piecemeal, the opportunity for meaningful open space provision is being avoided.
- 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.

Air Quality

- The Parish Council notes that the applicant has not submitted an Air Quality Assessment of the site.

Environment and Carbon Neutral

- The Parish Council considers that the applicant’s proposals for carbon initiatives are limited to that required by current government building guidelines and only extend further to the proposal for photovoltaic panels on the roofs. There is no inclusion for the Parish Council’s recommendations for consideration in future development as mentioned earlier in this document.

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.