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

COUNTSTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS FOR 205 PROPERTIES OFF WILLOUGHBY ROAD – DAVIDSON DEVELOPMENTS – PLANNING APPLICATION 24/0001/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 references Blaby District Council's Residential Land Availability Document 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> 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 impassible 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 for Countesthorpe**

- The Parish Council notes on page 6 of the Planning Statement that the applicant refers to Core Strategy Policy CS5 Housing Distribution in that Countesthorpe should accommodate 520 dwellings. As mentioned previously, the Parish Council has exceeded this over the plan period with 602 dwellings.
- Relating to this application, referring to Blaby District Council's assessment of the proposed Willoughby Road site the proposed 205 dwellings exceed the District Council's assessment of the site of potential 148 dwellings (30dph) and therefore is overdevelopment of the site. 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.

### **Highways and Access to the Site**

- The nature of the isolation from the village by this proposal will inevitably result in access to the local facilities via a vehicle journey. Therefore, it will further worsen the issues around off-street parking at the centre of the village, as referred to earlier.
- As per the previously approved development at Lord Close, Countesthorpe Parish Council asks that the Highways Authority ensure that, should the proposed road within the site not conform to standards for adoption and the conditions set out in respect of the Lord Close development apply to this application and the appropriate maintenance agreements are made between the developer and the Highways Authority.
- The Parish Council refers to Leicestershire County Council's correspondence in a separate application number 2022/9488/01/P/HEN, in that it states 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 it therefore does not consider the proposals to be acceptable.
- As mentioned by the applicant that they have been in consultation with regard to the scope of the extent of their contribution to mitigations on the highway network, the Parish Council reminds the Highways Authority of the need to consider the accumulative effect of not only this but also other potential future developments within the vicinity when considering the impact on the highway.
- The Parish Council notes that the applicant has referred on page 6 of the Travel Plan that they are intending to introduce a pedestrian link via Beechings Close. The Parish Council would expect this should be a condition of any planning approval. Also, Leicestershire County Council confirms the feasibility of such a link and it is a condition of approval at this stage. The applicant has used this link to enforce its case of reducing walking distances to a bus stop ie 650m. Should the applicant fail in securing the land to complete this, the recommended threshold of 800m would be exceeded.
- The Parish Council asks that the residents of Beeching Close are fully consulted at this planning application stage as this has previously enjoyed being a cul-de-sac with limited pedestrian activity in the area. There is also a risk that this pedestrian route could become an 'escape' route by foot for anyone involved in anti-social behaviour or crime.
- The Parish Council objects to the fact that there is only one proposed vehicular access to the site which is insufficient to the number of proposed properties. This is another example of

lack of long term planning when submitting applications for housing developments in a piecemeal way.

- The Parish Council would therefore expect to see evidence on any proposed future access routes and insists that the District Council not grant outline planning approval until any potential access routes are submitted by the applicant.
- It is noted that at the pre-planning application stage, the applicant had indicated that the pedestrian link would be via Lord Close, therefore, this makes it all the more necessary to consult with the residents of Beechings Close, as those residents may not be aware of any change in plan.
- Parish Council is aware that, at peak times vehicles trying to head out of Countesthorpe at the Cosby Road/Willoughby Road/Winchester Road junction have to turn left on to Willoughby Road and make a u-turn at Stonecroft to then turn back on themselves to head back along Winchester Road. That area of the village is not only hazardous for vehicular traffic but also pedestrians. Therefore, the Parish Council considers that safety improvements to both pedestrians and vehicular traffic should be considered at that location.
- The proposed drawings for the double mini-roundabout included in the Travel Plan are noted, however, it does state that the auditor of the proposals is questioning the viability of this arising from concerns for safety for cycle users. The Parish Council also doubts whether the proposed double roundabout will be able to accommodate HGVs, including buses. Therefore, the Parish Council would expect that any design for proposed improvements to that junction are submitted to the Highways Authority prior to any outline planning approval being granted for them to evaluate the safety aspect of any proposal. The Highways Authority should also take into considerations the concerns raised by residents in terms of pedestrian safety as referred to in this document.
- The applicant has stated in their Travel Plan, page 22, that it is expecting there to be around 272 car movements per day. The Parish Council considers this to be underestimated and more realistically be around 400 additional vehicles travelling towards the Cosby/Willoughby Road/Winchester Road junction at peak times, which will also include pedestrian footfall for students accessing the Countesthorpe Academy.
- 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 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.
- Whilst the Parish Council appreciates the applicant's intention to improve the pedestrian and vehicular safety at the point of access/egress, it does have concerns with the applicant's perception and description of the nature of Willoughby Road. Not only are there currently issues of speeding vehicles entering the village from Willoughby Road, on a blind bend, which has resulted in the Parish Council purchasing a Mobile Vehicles Speed Activation Sign (due to lack of funds for the Highways Authority to install more enforceable speed restrictions), it should be reminded that there is a potential for a significant increase in vehicle traffic, both residential and commercial, should the Whetstone Pastures development proceed. As yet, the Parish Council has received no indication from the

Highways Authority of intended mitigation measures on the highway to respond to the impact on Countesthorpe should the Whetstone Pastures development proceed.

- Also, the proposed vehicular access to the site is positioned close to the bends in the road leading into the village from Willoughby Road. On top of speeding vehicles, there are also vehicles parked on the highway that increase the risk. The Parish Council has previously raised its concerns about road and pedestrian safety from that point into the staggered junction at Cosby Road/Station Road due to vehicles accessing the village at a high speed rate.
- Whilst the Parish Council would support any improvement for safety pedestrian access in that area of the village, it does question the feasibility of the proposal to widen the road and pavement to provide a pedestrian access, particularly at the location crossing the redundant railway line. The existing pavement in this area is less than 1m wide and it is unlikely that the developer would contribute to cover the widening the bridge. Therefore the viability of the proposed road and pavement layout should be endorsed by the Highways Authority prior to any approval of outline planning permission. The Parish Council also stresses that at this location in the village, it is difficult for larger vehicles to pass, therefore the Parish Council questions whether any proposals by the developer will be viable, and also the concerns about how the area will cope with any construction traffic.
- Any proposed improvements should take place prior to the completion of any development.
- It is not indicated in the Travel Plan how these improvements are intended to be funded, ie fully or partially by the developer, so it cannot be assessed whether there is a risk that the proposals may not go ahead.
- Should the application be approved, the Parish Council welcomes the proposal for a pedestrian footpath, Parish Council re-iterates its concerns over the isolated nature of this proposal both in terms of pedestrians and vehicles. The fact that residents would have a long walk round due to no cut throughs to the centre of the village will further encourage vehicle use.
- The Parish Council notes that Blaby District Council's site assessment report scores the proposed site poorly for access to a range of the key services that are situated to the east of the village, and that there are limited employment opportunities in Countesthorpe. Therefore, the 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.
- In general, the feedback from residents living to the west of the village have expressed their concerns about road and pedestrian safety in the vicinity of the Cosby/Winchester Road staggered junction and further along onto Willoughby Road with a lack of suitable pedestrian crossings. They are particularly concerned at peak times the conflict of vehicular traffic with the high numbers of young people and children access both the Academy and the walking to Greenfield School. In fact, residents stressed that they would more likely to take a car journey to Greenfield School to avoid the risk of the busy roads in the village.

#### Off-street parking

- The Parish Council insists that, should the development be granted, that the District Council ensure that sufficient off-street parking is provided per property, also in anticipation of potential expansion of the property owner in the future.

### 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.
- Should the application be approved, consideration should be given by the applicant to ensure that the properties to the north of the site do not overlook or have an overbearing effect on the existing properties to the north of the site including Maurice Drive and Mennecy Close.
- Consideration should be given to the visual appearance from the street scene.
- 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.

### Open Spaces

- The Parish Council has concerns about a proposed play area being located to the rear of existing properties and would consider it best placed further to the south, in the vicinity of the existing Willoughby Road Playing Fields.
- The Parish Council asks that the developer ensure that any hedgerows are maintained. It should be noted that the hedgerow to the south includes trees and hedging owned and maintained by the Parish Council and therefore the Parish Council should be consulted on any potential trees works to the south of the site. It should also be noted that the Parish Council will have no legal requirement to remove any of its boundary trees to suit the proposed neighbouring properties, therefore it strongly advises the developer to bear this in mind when considering the positioning of the properties to the south of the site.
- Likewise, there are pieces of play equipment within the Willoughby Road Playing Field site that the Parish Council would be under no obligation to move and therefore recommends that any proposed residential properties are positioned appropriately.
- The Parish Council notes the indication for additional allotment sites. The Parish Council would seek clarification as to who would be responsible for the management of proposed allotments prior to any planning approval.

### Biodiversity

- The applicant indicates that this site does not contain any locally designated wildlife or nature conservation, though Blaby District Council indicates in its site assessment report that the site scores poorly for biodiversity due to the presence of a Local Wildlife Site, therefore, should the application be approved, the Parish Council asks that necessary mitigation measures are introduced to the proposals.
- The Parish Council has been provided with evidence from the local Allotment Society that indicates the presence of badgers, red kites and buzzards in the area which it is recording with wildlife cameras.
- 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.

- The Parish Council notes that in 2021 the District Council removed the TPOs to the trees to the south boundary of the site and those at the boundary of Lord Close and would therefore have concerns about the removal of the trees.
- The Parish Council is concerned that this application is being submitted early to avoid giving consideration to the Biodiversity Net Gain directive that is due to be introduced. The Parish Council considers that, as the applicants should be aware of this forthcoming legislation, it should give this consideration in their applications and therefore requests that the application demonstrate a biodiversity net gain and create natural habitat enhancement of the environment either within the site or on neighbouring land to counteract any negative impacts from their development.

### 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.

- Whilst the application itself does not sit within a mapped flood zone, it is still prone to 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.

Moreover, the Parish Council here insists that it is noted and reflected upon, that in January 2024, existing residential areas to the north of the proposed site, in particular Mennecy Close, Waterloo Crescent, Beechings Close and Maurice Drive, were overwhelmed with excessive rainwater run-off, resulting in flooding to properties.

- It should also 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.
- During the recent flooding, residents of Willoughby Road also suffered the sewage systems to their properties not being usable until the surface water flooding had receded. Many residents also reported significant flooding around their properties on Willoughby Road.

The residents of above-named roads have also expressed their frustrations that the existing drainage system on the road network in their area is not sufficient to take the surface water from the existing properties and therefore would not be able to cope with any further surface water run off resulting from further development.

- The Leicestershire County Council Preliminary FRA (LCC PFRA) 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.

- Consideration should also be made to ensure that there is no surface water run off flooding onto the neighbouring Willoughby Road Playing Fields. The open space itself is also starting to suffer with standing water. This space should not be considered by developers as an easy option for disposing of surface water run-off.
- Additional development will further exasperate surface water flooding and sewage problems, unless appropriately attenuated. The Parish Council therefore insist that it is made a condition that specific detailed Sustainable Flood and Drainage Mitigation Strategies, adequate to cope with the level of potential run-off water, are finalised and approved at the outline planning permission stage before development can be considered further.

### 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.

### 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.