

Leicester Local Plan Examination – Matter 2: Site SL04 – Land north of A46 Bypass Statement on Behalf of Thurcaston Against Development (TAD)

TAD continues to express serious concerns about the Suitability Assessment for Site SL04 (formally site 261). The plan performs poorly in the Sustainability Appraisal, offering only vague mitigations for key issues like topography, land use, and access to essential services.

The plan fails to provide sufficient resources for schools, instead speculatively depending on Ashton Green's school, which is still awaiting approval, and overlooks the needs of primary-aged children. Healthcare is similarly neglected, and with services already under strain, the addition of more housing will only exacerbate the problem.

The transport assessments are outdated, relying on a flawed 'predict and provide' model that contradicts current strategies aimed at reducing car dependency. Despite a green rating for bus access, there is insufficient information on public transport viability, cycling infrastructure, and pedestrian access, leading to increased car use. This will exacerbate traffic on Thurcaston's inadequate road network, with cumulative impacts ignored. The Duty to Cooperate Statement (2022) highlights incomplete strategic transport and growth assessments. Site SL04 is not included in the current transport assessment plan, indicating insufficient cooperation between stakeholders.

The plan does not align with national climate policies, failing to address greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, or sustainable transport and green infrastructure. Flood risks are inadequately addressed, and mandatory climate change mitigation measures are absent.

Furthermore, the loss of the Castle Hill Green Wedge undermines its role in preventing urban sprawl by merging Ashton Green and Thurcaston, violating the National Planning Policy Framework and threatening unique historical character of Thurcaston, which must be preserved. There is already a precedent set in the separation between Thurcaston and neighbouring village Cropston. Therefore, this site should not be any different.

One final point to consider is a smaller development of 19 dwellings situated directly adjacent to SL04, which falls under the jurisdiction of Charnwood Borough Council. This smaller site is set to become the gateway to SL04, should it receive planning approval. Parker Strategic Land is currently working through their application, but it is vital to recognise that these two sites are interconnected and must be assessed together rather than in isolation. The outcome of SL04's planning application is intrinsically linked to the development and integration of the neighbouring site, making a thorough review essential to grasp the full impact and potential of the area. Charnwood Borough Planning REF: P/22/1252/2

<https://planningexplorer.charnwood.gov.uk/Assure/ES/Presentation/Planning/OnlinePlanning/OnlinePlanningOverview?applicationNumber=P%2F22%2F1252%2F2>

In summary, the Thurcaston Against Development group raises serious concerns about the Suitability Assessment for SL04. The plan neglects crucial issues related to highways, flood risk, school and healthcare provisions, and the removal of the Green Wedge. Promoting these sites for development would negatively impact already overstretched services in Charnwood and eliminate vital green space and separation within the borough.

TAD: A response to the questions posed in the 'Matters, Issues and Question's

57. Is the land north of the A46 at Thurcaston, as identified in Policy SL04, justified for 420 new homes, given its low score in Table 7.2 of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) [SD/4] as one of the least sustainable strategic sites?

Based on the low score of 7.2, the location of SL04 is not justified. Specifically:

The Impact on the Green Wedge: The Green Wedge prevents urban sprawl and maintains openness between the city and county. Developing Site SL04 would merge Ashton Green and Thurcaston, violating the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and undermining prior policies aimed at preserving these settlements' separation.

Sustainability: Identified as one of the least sustainable sites, the plan lacks concrete mitigation measures for poor Sustainability Appraisal scores. Critical issues like site topography, accessibility, and public open space have not been addressed, unlike proposed neighbouring developments.

58. Is the housing allocation in Policy SL04 justified, effective, and consistent with national policy?

(a) Effect on Green Infrastructure: The housing allocation is not justified due to the loss of the Green Wedge, which protects against urban sprawl and supports biodiversity. This loss could worsen air quality, increase traffic, and heighten flood risks, with insufficient consideration of these impacts in the plan.

(b) Relationship to Settlements: The site would merge Ashton Green and Thurcaston, contradicting NPPF goals to maintain distinct communities. Its poor accessibility to local services further undermines the justification for development.

(c) Deliverability and Developability: There is insufficient evidence of how the site will be developed, including addressing infrastructure needs and constraints. Without this, the allocation lacks justification.

(d) Viability Considerations: The financial feasibility is uncertain given infrastructure costs, affordable housing, and biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements. Without a viability assessment, the allocation remains unjustified.

59. What evidence shows the historic environment has been fully considered in the allocation of this site?

The allocation of Site SL04 has not sufficiently considered the historic environment, particularly the Thurcaston Conservation Area. The planning process lacks a thorough assessment of how development will impact key views, the area's rural character, and its architectural heritage, undermining the conservation area's historical value.