

MATTER 8 – HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Issue 8: Has the Plan been positively prepared and is it justified, effective and consistent with national policy in respect of its policies and proposals for health and wellbeing in Leicester?

Policy HW01 – A Healthy and Active City

366. Is Policy HW01 justified given that health and wellbeing are cross-cutting issues that are addressed in many other policies? Is there any evidence to support this stand-alone policy, such as locally identified health and wellbeing needs?

The Council believe that policy HW01 is justified and consistent with national policy. Leicester City Council is committed to tackling health inequalities and recognises the importance of the built environment and wider determinants of health in doing so.

Health and wellbeing is a cross-cutting issue and is addressed in many policies and chapters throughout the submission plan. However, this is through subtle references in the text that recognise the benefits of the health and wellbeing benefits of the policy e.g. open space in improving people's mental health or reducing vehicle emissions to contribute to healthier lifestyles.

The benefit of a standalone policy is that it gives the issue prominence and reflects the importance that the Council give to creating built environments that will have a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing.

The evidence to support standalone policy HW01 is available in:

- Living in Leicester - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2023)
- Living in Leicester - infographic summary (2023)
- Leicester's Health, Care and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027

These documents recognise the significant levels of health inequalities in Leicester, including a decade's difference in life expectancy between the most deprived and least deprived neighborhoods. They also include information on physical activity and obesity levels in Leicester, both of which are significantly worse than the national average. Multiple partners have signed the declaration for the 'Whole Systems Approach' to tackling overweight and obesity.

There is a clear need to minimise the obesogenic environment and address this through the design of places. This requires multiple teams and agencies to work together and includes the planning system and its influence on the built environment which impacts physical activity and access to food.

Public Health England have also previously recognised poor air quality as the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. It is therefore also addressed in our local needs assessment and strategy as an area that cannot be improved without joint working across the system, with planning decisions taking this into account.

367. **Does Policy HW01 serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of other policies in the Plan, and would it be evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals?**

The purpose of Policy HW01 is to clearly set out and establish the issue of Health and Wellbeing as a prominent issue in the plan. It is an overarching policy that reflects the corporate aspirations of the Council and the 'Leicester Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health, Care and Wellbeing Strategy'. It also helps deliver Objective 4 of the Plan, which is to "Improve the Health and wellbeing of local residents". The policy links the reader directly to the detailed policies that the strategic policy supports.

The policy is important as it makes clear to the decision maker that creating a healthy and active city is something that needs to be considered and properly assessed as part of the development process. The criteria that are set out in the policy signpost to other policies but does not unnecessarily duplicate them. For example, criterion h) refers to the inclusion of productive trees (including fruit trees) and plants in landscaping proposals for new development where appropriate (DQP04). Policy DQP04, does not specify the type of trees to be planted, including those which may secure health benefits.

In addition, this policy is equally important for developers as it sets out that creating a healthy and active city is important in Leicester and brings all the requirements together in one place and with a health and wellbeing emphasis. Many of the sign posted policies have other aims which are not solely or mainly concerned with health. For example, T03 is a broad accessibility policy whereas HW01 seeks to emphasise the role of transport in relation to health.

The issue of properly incorporating health and wellbeing into Local Plan has moved up the agenda in recent years. The city has not previously had a dedicated chapter or policy to address this issue. The inclusion of HW01 reflects the desire to create a step change in the prominence that this issue is given in the development process with the aim of securing developments that create healthy and active places.

Policy HW02 – Health Impact Assessments

368. **Should paragraphs 7.13 and 7.14 be part of the supporting text to Policy HW02, rather than part of Policy HW01 as shown in the Plan?**

Yes. This is a drafting error. Paragraphs 7.13 and 7.14 are part of the supporting text to policy HW02. They should not be shown as part of the policy.

369. **For clarity and effectiveness, should the criteria in paragraph 7.17 for the forms of development that will require a Health Impact Assessment be included in Policy HW02?**

The Council would be willing to consider a minor modification that moves the criteria in paragraph 7.17 that lists the forms of development that will require a Health and Impact Assessment into Policy HW02.