

# **Examination of the Leicester Local Plan 2020 to 2036**

## **Matter 6 - Central Development Area**

Wednesday 09 October 2024

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**Client**

De Montfort University

**Our reference**

01127

September 2024

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared on behalf of De Montfort University ('DMU'), who have land interests within Leicester.
- 1.2 This Statement builds on the representations that DMU submitted to the Leicester Local Plan – Publication Draft 2020 - 2036 (Regulation 19 Consultation), in February 2023.
- 1.3 This Statement addresses **Matter 6 'Central Development Area'**, which is due to be heard on Wednesday 09 October 2024 (Week 2).
- 1.4 The Statement is set out as a response to the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions for the Examination (MIQs).

## 2. Matter 6 - Central Development Area

**Issue 6: Has the Plan been positively prepared and is it justified, effective and consistent with national policy in respect of its policies and proposals for the Central Development Area in Leicester?**

### **General Questions on Central Development Area**

**263. Do the CDA Policies set out an effective and positive approach to the growth, management and adaptation of the centre that reflects its distinctive character(s)? In particular:**

**(a) What is the approach to the re-use of empty buildings within the CDAs and how is the approach (if any) guided by the Character Area Assessments?**

**(b) Do the CDA Policies identify sufficient opportunities to ensure that anticipated needs for retail, leisure and other main city centre uses over the next ten years will not be compromised by limited site availability?**

- 2.1 DMU support the proposed growth within the CDA. However as currently drafted, there is no clear approach for the re-use of empty buildings. At present, the Character Area Assessments only refer to development on vacant plots. As such the Character Area Assessment cannot be considered to be 'justified', given there is no suggested approach for the re-use of empty buildings.
- 2.2 The policy should be amended to provide clarity as to whether student residential accommodation would be supported through the conversion of existing buildings and highlighting any conditions that would need to be addressed as part of such a development.

### **Policy CDA01 – Central Development and Management Strategy**

**267. How is it intended to bring the sites forward for development? What mechanisms will there be to ensure a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to development, ensuring that infrastructure requirements are provided?**

- 2.1 At present, Policy CDA01 requires development to 'improve opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport' (amongst others). This is further supported by Policy CHA06 which requires that new development is expected to enhance the connectivity across the area.
- 2.2 However, these policies should be amended to recognise that these requirements need to be relevant and proportionate to the scale of the development proposed. For example, it may not be feasible, relevant or viable for a proposed change of use of one building to enhance connectivity across the surrounding area.

### **Policy CDA02 – New Development within the Character Areas**

#### ***Q270. Would Policy CDA01 benefit from addressing the ‘agent of change’ principle rather than relying on the supporting text at paragraph 9.20?***

- 2.3 Yes. It is currently unclear what the Council means when referring to the Agent of Change principle nor how the Council propose to assess such proposals and to determine whether mitigation is required.
- 2.4 To address the Agent of Change principle within the Policy wording, based on an appropriate strategy, would ensure complete clarity and enable the Policy to be considered ‘sound’ and ‘justified’.

#### ***Q271. Is Policy CDA02 consistent with national policy and the statutory duty in respect of heritage assets?***

- 2.5 No, the wording of the second and third bullet points in Policy CDA02 are inconsistent with the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the heritage policies of the NPPF. It is recommended that the following bullet points (taken from Policy CDA02):

- *Nationally and locally listed buildings, other identified heritage assets, including the protection of key views will be protected and enhanced*
- *Non-listed buildings which have been identified as making a positive contribution to the townscape should also be retained where possible*

Are replaced with the following bullet points:

- *The significance of Designated heritage assets, and their settings will be conserved or enhanced. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.*
- *The significance of non-designated heritage assets should be conserved where possible, including any positive contribution they make to the townscape.*

### **Policy CHA06 – Leicester Royal Infirmary and De Montfort University**

#### ***313. This character area contains many ‘destination’ buildings/facilities which would be accessed by the wider community and by people located outside of the City. How does Policy CHA06 ensure that the area will be connected to the wider City and legible to those accessing it by whatever transport mode?***

- 2.6 DMU would welcome further clarification on how developments are expected to enhance connectivity across the area. For example, it is currently unclear whether this relates to all developments, for example, whether a proposed change of use would be required to enhance connectivity.
- 2.7 In order to be considered ‘sound’ and specifically ‘justified’, additional information is required as to how improved connectivity will be sought.

**Policy CHA09 – New Walk**

***329. Given the limited opportunities for development, and therefore financial contributions, how will the area’s vision be achieved?***

- 2.8 As alluded to in response to Question 263, the policy is currently unclear as to whether student residential accommodation would be welcomed through the conversion of existing buildings. This is a key matter to be resolved given the limited opportunities for new development within the character area.

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