

Harborough Local Plan 2020 – 2041 Examination
Stage 2 Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs)
Hearing Sessions November 2026
Leicestershire County Council (ID: 7111)

Matter 10: Design of Developments and Management of Impacts

Issue 1: Development Standards

Policy DM06 Transport and Accessibility

1. *Transport is a strategic matter. Has effective and on- going joint working taken place between the District and neighbouring local authorities as well as the two relevant Local Transport Authorities and National Highways? If so, what are the outputs? If not, what is the significance given the most recent statements of common ground between Leicestershire County Council and Warwickshire County Council as Local Transport Authorities and the Council, where there are clear fundamental disagreements [HDC15] and [HDC9]? How have strategic cross boundary impacts related to transport matters including road safety, congestion and the prioritisation of walking, cycling and public transport been addressed?*

Leicestershire County Council has engaged constructively with Harborough District Council to seek to resolve the transport concerns that is expressed in its Regulation 19 consultation response. Whilst the work undertaken by the district council has been welcomed by Leicestershire County Council, it has not been sufficient at this time to resolve Leicestershire County Council's transport concerns.

2. *The strategy of the Plan has been influenced by the Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) [HDC5]. The SGP is a non-statutory plan but has nonetheless been central to the spatial distribution of development in both the District and the wider area, including Leicester, and is widely referenced within the Plan. The SGP includes a proposed 'A46 priority growth area'. However, the actual extension to the A46 is no longer supported, albeit the distribution of proposed housing remains for Land South of Gartree Road (SA02), Scraptoft (S1 and S2), and Thurnby and Bushby (TB1). Following PN6 [ID7], the Council has confirmed [HDC6] that the potential for an orbital route to the south and east of Leicester is not constrained, albeit the route is not being actively promoted by the Council, whilst the extension of the route remains an aspiration of Leicester County Council as the Local Transport Authority. Could the Council confirm the status of the route, how it relates to the policies map, and whether the Plan includes policies which would ensure that the route could be developed in the future,*

beyond the Plan period? If not, would this be justified, and consistent with national policy?

It is the view of Leicestershire County Council that the South Leicestershire Joint Transport Evidence (JTE) work [TRP-NLP3, TRP-NLP4A and TRP-NLP5] demonstrates that a key cause of existing issues across the area is a lack of strategic orbital connectivity. In contrast to the west and north of Leicester, where the M1, A46 and the A563 provide for orbital movements to navigate around the edge of the City of Leicester, there is no such equivalent to the east and south of the City of Leicester. The A47, A6 and A426 radial corridors have no equivalent direct high standard/quality linkages between them orbitally.

Accordingly, the JTE work shows that growth in Harborough district combined with proposed growth elsewhere across the south of Leicestershire, most notably in the district of Oadby and Wigston, will have a significant impact on the district's road network. This includes cumulative and cross-boundary impacts, most notably:

- Adding to existing traffic issues on the A6 (and other routes) through the Kibworth's (1); but perhaps more significantly
- Congestion on the A6 corridor through the Kibworth's and in Oadby is leading to a 'haloing effect' of (relatively longer-distance) trips, whereby traffic is avoiding routes through the Leicester Urban Area by using lower class rural routes around the east of the Area, including the B6047 (2); via Stoughton (2a); and routes north of the A47 towards the Thurmaston Syston area and the A46(N), including through communities such as Houghton on the Hill, Keyham and Barkby and Beeby (2b); and
- Likewise, a similar effect to the south of Leicester, including impacting on lower class rural routes through communities such as Saddington and, via Shearsby Crossroads, Gilmorton across towards Lutterworth and M1 J20 (3).

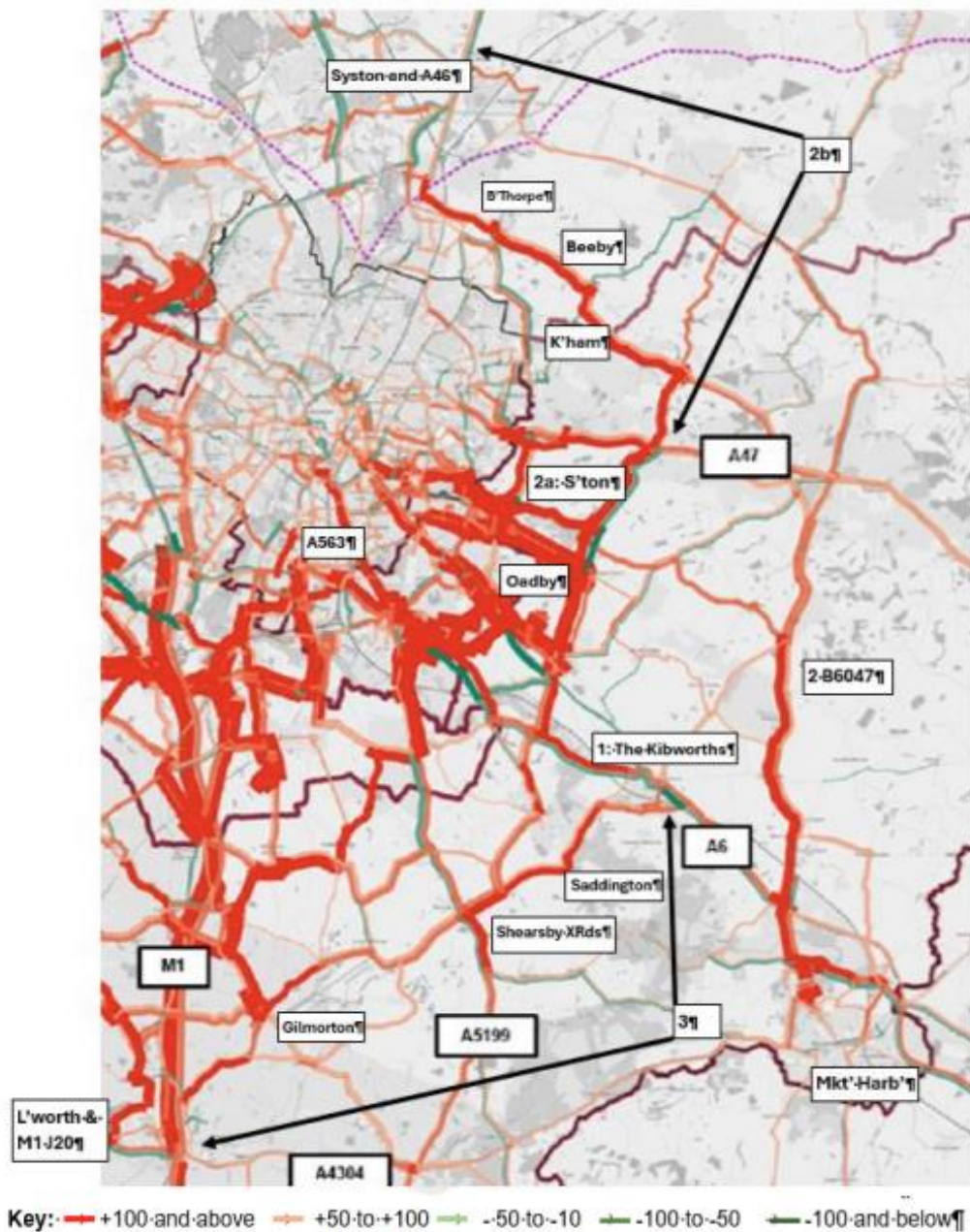


Figure 1: Flow differences (2041)

It is Leicestershire County Council's view that this provides prima facie evidence of the need for enhanced strategic orbital connectivity in the south Leicestershire area, this to tackle existing problems being experienced by local communities and to enable the delivery of further, future sustainable development growth to meet the needs of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's growing and changing population.

In response to evidence such as the JTE, in December 2025 Leicestershire County Council's Cabinet

[<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s193694/Final%20Strategic%20Spatial%20and%20Transport%20Planning%20Report%20-%20Cabinet%20161225.pdf>] approved

the undertaking of a strategic spatial and transport planning project. This project includes an initial set of scheme identification and development work has been identified. Whilst listed separately, there are overlaps between the pieces of work:

- a) To develop a multi-modal, mapped strategic vision for the HMA's future transport system.
- b) To examine options for improving strategic transport orbital connectivity around the east and south of the Leicester Urban Area. It is intended that this work will consider options (such as in terms of route and design standards) for a new multi-modal route running from the A47 East to at least a new junction on the M1 (J20a) somewhere to the south of Junction 21.
- c) To examine options for the A6 corridor to the south of the City of Leicester, including the Kibworth villages, including to consider options for a road around the Kibworths.
- d) To explore options for the use of the Eastern District Distributor Road (EDDR) reservation in Oadby.

This is a fundamentally different premise to the work undertaken by Midlands Connect (MC) that resulted in the concept for an 'A46 Express Way'. At one time, MC viewed this as being a potential solution to addressing existing congestion problems in Leicestershire on the A46 'Trans-Midland Trade Corridor'. However, judged on traditional transport metrics alone (that is particularly in respect of the cost of time) MC eventually concluded that there would not be a sufficiently strong business case to justify an 'A46 Express Way' being included in a future national programme for investment in the Strategic Road Network. Instead, there was a far stronger case for investment to existing routes, including the M1 to the west of the City of Leicester and the A46 to its north.

Crucially MC noted that its findings only held true based on a distribution of growth as per the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan and neither did it rule out the need for a new route to the east and south of the City of Leicester to serve other purposes.

Leicestershire County Council's project is expected to be completed in the autumn of 2027, and it is anticipated that it will provide evidence to inform the development of a Spatial Development Strategy for the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland area (LLRSDS). In the meantime, so as not to fetter options for the development of a LLRSDS, through its Regulation 19 consultation response Leicestershire County Council sought to see modifications proposed to the Plan as submitted.

In that regard, Leicestershire County Council is content with the proposed Main Modifications in respect of Policy SA02: Land South of Gartree Road Strategic Development Area and its accompanying paragraphs, and in respect of Appendix 6 Masterplanning Requirements, as included in the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Submission of the Harborough Local Plan 2020-2041 and Policies Map April 2026 [S-NLP 15].

- 6. *Is it appropriate to defer transport impacts such as consideration of the impact of developments on the SRN to planning application stage? For example, with reference to allocations MP1 and MP2, there is a clear issue of existing congestion on the A5 with the Gibbet Road Roundabout working at 98% capacity [INF-NLP2].***

Leicestershire County Council does not believe that it is appropriate to defer transport impacts such as consideration of the impact of developments on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) to the planning application stage. This is in the light of existing and forecast conditions on the SRN, including at the A5 Gibbet Hill roundabout, and Leicestershire County Council's view that strategic scale improvements are required to at least that junction to enable the Plan's effective delivery.

- 8. *The evidence suggests that many of the junctions within the District are operating close to capacity [TRP-NLP5] with particular issues highlighted along the A5 and A6, and with further impacts forecast on roads lower in the hierarchy as the Plan period unfolds. To what extent are the policies of the Plan, including site allocations consistent with paragraphs 108-117 of the NPPF?***

Leicestershire County Council has not raised an issue with the Plan's spatial strategy. It generally agrees that by proposing to allocate significant levels of housing growth in places close to the edge of the City of Leicester and its adjoining suburbs, and on the edge of the town of Market Harborough, places that in theory are or can be made sustainable, limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.

To seek to ensure that theory becomes a reality, that is future occupiers actually do have a genuine choice of travel to access the services, facilities and jobs they need (that is a site is not sustainable simply because it is served by a bus service if that service does not operate at times occupiers will require it and/or does serve the places that the occupiers need to access), Leicestershire County Council's Cabinet in October 2026 approved the Authority's Enabling Travel Choice Strategy (ETCS) [<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=8311&Ver=4>].

Amongst other things, the ETCS sets out how Leicestershire County Council, as the Local Transport Authority, expects a 'vision-led' approach to be applied in Leicestershire so as to deliver sustainable development, including through the development of Local Plans and through the development management (planning application) process.

The ETCS was not in place at the time the district council commenced work to develop its new Plan. However, Leicestershire County Council is pleased to see and is content with the proposed Main Modifications to the Plan in respect of the ETCS, including the new sub-section in respect of Leicestershire County Council's Local Transport Plan, in respect of Policies DS05, SA01, DM06, and in respect of Appendix 6, as included in the

Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Submission of the Harborough Local Plan 2020-2041 and Policies Map April 2026 [S-NLP 15].

Whilst these proposed Main Modifications should be helpful in promoting sustainable transport, so that the potential impacts of the Plan's proposed development on transport networks can be addressed it is Leicestershire County Council's view that a clear and coherent transport strategy is required. However, it is also Leicestershire County Council's view that the Transport Topic Paper [Part 1 HDC10, Part 2 HDC14] fails to set out with any clarity a strategy for seeking to address the transport impacts of the Plan, particularly in respect of cumulative impacts on corridors such as the A6, and even at this late stage in the Plan's preparation the position remains in doubt as to how much funding might be available from sites allocated in the Plan towards the delivery of any such strategy.

13. Does Policy DM06, and other policies of the Plan ensure it is clear to decision makers, developers and the local communities what is required in terms of the Transport Assessments and Travel Plans and the mitigations required as part of development proposals? Does the evidence which has supported the plan making process adequately demonstrate that the allocations will be able to realistically be accessible to alternatives to the private car, and such alternatives will be attractive and not be treated as a form of transport for leisure activities? How does the wording of the policy ensure that it seriously implements NPPF paragraphs 114 and 116 and prioritises pedestrian and cycle movements, then access to public transport and private vehicles?

The Council has not raised an issue with the Plan's spatial strategy. It generally agrees that by proposing to allocate significant levels of housing growth in places close to the edge of the City of Leicester and its adjoining suburbs, and on the edge of the town of Market Harborough, places that in theory are or can be made sustainable, limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.

To seek to ensure that theory becomes a reality, that is future occupiers actually do have a genuine choice of travel to access the services, facilities and jobs they need (that is a site is not sustainable simply because it is served by a bus service if that service does not operate at times occupiers will require it and/or does serve the places that the occupiers need to access), Leicestershire County Council's Cabinet in October 2026 approved the Authority's Enabling Travel Choice Strategy (ETCS) [<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=8311&Ver=4>].

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The ETCS was not in place at the time the district council commenced work to develop its new Plan. However, Leicestershire County Council is pleased to see and is content

with the proposed Main Modifications to the Plan in respect of the ETCS, including the new sub-section in respect of Leicestershire County Council's Local Transport Plan, in respect of Policies DS05, SA01, DM06, and in respect of Appendix 6, as included in the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Submission of the Harborough Local Plan 2020-2041 and Policies Map April 2026 [S-NLP 15].

Whilst these proposed Main Modifications should be helpful in promoting sustainable transport, so that the potential impacts of the Plan's proposed development on transport networks can be addressed it is Leicestershire County Council's view that a clear and coherent transport strategy is required. However, is also Leicestershire County Council's view that the Transport Topic Paper [Part 1 HDC10, Part 2 HDC14] fails to set out with any clarity a strategy for seeking to address the transport impacts of the Plan, particularly in respect of cumulative impacts on corridors such as the A6, and even at this late stage in the Plan's preparation the position remains in doubt as to how much funding might be available from sites allocated in the Plan towards the delivery of any such strategy.

17. In Part One of the Transport Paper [HDC10] the Council has stated without significant changes in behaviour there are limitations in the efficacy of mitigation of development, and in the case of Harborough there will be inevitable further issues on the road network. If that is the case, on what basis will developments be determined and funding demanded and what level of congestion will be deemed acceptable?

Leicestershire County Council's own transport evidence work, the South Leicestershire Joint Transport Evidence (JTE) work [TRP-NLP3, TRP-NLP4A and TRP-NLP5] and evidence underpinning other emerging Local Plans around the County all paint a consistent picture. That is if as a society we continue to behave in the future as we have hitherto, then whilst there are forecast traffic reduction benefits to enhancing active and sustainable modes of transport, they are not of a sufficient magnitude to offset the additional demand for vehicular travel generated by a growing population.

It is Leicestershire County Council's view that this is an issue that no single Local Plan can address, as research suggests that despite the concept of sustainable development being embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework from its first publication in 2012, the Car Dependency Index of new homes has risen steadily since 2009 and new builds have become more and more car-dependent relative to existing homes, and this trend is present in all regions outside London.⁽¹⁾

(1) Extract from 'Trapped Behind the Wheel' report [https://new-economics.files.svdcdn.com/production/files/NEF_Trapped-Behind-The-Wheel-updated.pdf?dm=1733314267], prepared by New Economics Foundation, commissioned by the Go-Head Group, November 2024.

In response to the national challenge that such evidence presents, Leicestershire County Council supports the move to a 'vision-led' approach as first incorporated into National Planning Policy in December 2024. One of the key reasons why the Council

has developed its Enabling Travel Choice Strategy (ETCS) [<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=8311&Ver=4>] is to set out how it, as the Local Transport Authority, expects a ‘vision-led’ approach to be applied in Leicestershire, including through the development of Local Plans and through the development management (planning application) process.

The ETCS was not in place at the time the district council commenced work to develop its new Plan. However, Leicestershire County Council is pleased to see and is content with the proposed Main Modifications to the Plan in respect of the ETCS, including the new sub-section in respect of Leicestershire County Council’s Local Transport Plan, in respect of Policies DS05, SA01, DM06, and in respect of Appendix 6, as included in the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Submission of the Harborough Local Plan 2020-2041 and Policies Map April 2026 [S-NLP 15].

Going forward Leicestershire County Council intends to use the ETCS to inform the advice that it gives to developers as they prepare their proposals, including through any pre-application discussions and the advice that it gives to the local planning authorities on planning applications. In accordance with national policy, every application will still continue to be considered on its merits and assessed against prevailing transport network conditions and evidence provided by transport assessments (prepared in accordance with the ETCS). In such circumstances it is not possible to provide a single, prescriptive definition of ‘acceptable congestion’.

18. In overall terms, is the approach of the transport related policies of the Plan justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy?

Leicestershire County Council has engaged constructively with Harborough District Council to seek to resolve the transport concerns that is expressed in its Regulation 19 consultation response. Whilst the work undertaken by the district council has been welcomed by Leicestershire County Council, it has not been sufficient at this time to resolve Leicestershire County Council’s transport concerns.

It is the view of Leicestershire County Council that the Transport Topic Paper [Part 1 HDC10, Part 2 HDC14] still fails to set out with any clarity a strategy for seeking to address the transport impacts of the Plan, particularly in respect of cumulative impacts on corridors such as the A6. The absence of an overall coherent policy approach to dealing with the Plan’s transport runs a significant risk that this will likewise result in the delivery of piecemeal, uncoordinated active and sustainable transport measures that are not sufficiently attractive to encourage and enable modal shift away from the car in reality. Thus, Leicestershire County Council still questions the extent to which the Plan as it currently stands is consistent with the NPPF in terms of the delivery of sustainable development.

Furthermore, even at this late stage in the Plan’s preparation the position remains in doubt as to how much funding might be available from sites allocated in the Plan towards the delivery of any strategy transport. Leicestershire County Council therefore continues to have concerns that the Plan is deliverable in its current form.

However, Leicestershire County Council remains of the view that through suitable modifications, adoption of this Plan will provide the best overall outcomes for the communities of Harborough district and wider Leicestershire. So, Leicestershire County Council remains committed to engaging as positively as possible through the Plan's Examination in Public to seek to secure the ultimate successful adoption of an effective Harborough Local Plan.

19. Are there any MMs required for the Plan to be found sound?

Whilst Leicestershire County Council is generally content with the transport related proposed Main Modifications as included in the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Submission of the Harborough Local Plan 2020-2041 and Policies Map April 2026 [S-NLP 15], it remains of the view that further Main Modifications are required to the Plan as submitted to ensure that it is effective and consistent with national policy. However, before these can be identified in the circumstances that exist now Leicestershire County Council considers that the following work would be necessary:

- a) Further viability work to be undertaken to establish what levels of potential funding might be available from sites allocated in the Plan towards the delivery of a transport strategy. Any further viability work would need to reflect Leicestershire County Council's position that contributions towards education provision would need to be prioritised ahead of contributions towards transport measures.
- b) On the basis that there is a sufficient and realistic potential level of funding, to significantly redraft the Transport Topic Paper [Part 1 HDC10, Part 2 HDC14] so that it provides a coherent strategy (including the approach to funding) for addressing the Plan's transport impacts.

Leicestershire County Council remains of the view that through suitable modifications, adoption of this Plan will provide the best overall outcomes for the communities of Harborough district and wider Leicestershire. So, Leicestershire County Council remains committed to engaging as positively as possible through the Plan's Examination in Public to seek to secure the ultimate successful adoption of an effective Harborough Local Plan.