



Housing density submission to the Oadby and Wigston Local Plan consultation from Climate Action Leicester & Leicestershire, Feb 2024.

In order for this Local Plan to be sound and mitigate and adapt to intensifying climate change, as required in paragraphs 157, 158 and 159 of the 2023 National Planning Policy Framework, it is essential that all new housing is designed and built in ways which:

- Minimise energy use and maximise renewable energy generation.
- Is safe, affordable and fit to live in as climate change becomes more extreme.
- Support people to live sustainably by giving them community connections, enabling them to use active and public transport, and ensuring that expensive, resource intensive, and carbon intensive retrofitting will not be needed in the future.
- Improve the Borough's infrastructure and enhance its green spaces, improving biodiversity, food supplies and people's mental and physical health while reducing the impact of heatwaves, flooding and storms.
- Is affordable to rent, buy and live in. People living on low incomes typically contribute the least to climate change, but they are also the people who suffer first and most severely as climate change takes hold bringing extreme weather and higher food prices. Housing should not require expensive retrofitting or increased energy bills in order to adequately heat, cool and ventilate.

Since developers are not currently choosing to build in these ways, and the building regulations do not yet require them to do so, this leaves the responsibility with local planning authorities to put in place - and enforce - planning policies which require new development to both mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The NPPF makes it clear that Councils should be developing plans which both minimise and mitigate climate change. In urban areas, the high concentration of people - and therefore tarmac and concrete - makes overheating and flooding particular problems as climate change intensifies.

Climate Action Leicester and Leicestershire strongly support the climate measures included in this Local Plan. However, given the increased flooding, heatwaves and storms, and food prices we are already seeing locally as well as across the world due to climate change, we need these policies to be strengthened and far more detailed, with specific requirements rather than hopes and ambitions.

In order to be a solution to housing and climate needs, the three suggestions below need to be acted on jointly.

We submit that Oadby and Wigston's Local Plan should:

- **Require substantially higher levels of energy efficiency through fabric first measures in new developments.**
- **Require higher minimum housing densities than currently proposed.**
- **Require these higher densities be paired with public access on-site climate-enhanced green spaces.**

Requiring higher minimum housing density does not reduce the ability of developers to optimize land - it does ensure that land, and especially our very important green spaces and greenfield sites, are used more efficiently. Low density housing not only results in fewer units of housing per hectare, it also results in more expensive housing - and Oadby and Wigston has a substantial need for affordable housing. Higher housing density requirements can result in the development of more housing units on any given area of land and makes such housing more likely to cost less and be affordable for more households.

By ensuring that new housing is built to higher densities, as well as to high standards of energy efficiency and next to climate-enhanced green spaces, Oadby and Wigston could:

- Substantially reduce our carbon emissions, thus mitigating climate change;
- Address our affordable housing shortage (as higher density housing also tends to cost less to buy or rent) with less loss of green space;
- Reduce fuel poverty;
- Increase the resilience of everyone, and especially of vulnerable, lower income communities to the effects of climate change, by making the remaining green spaces more effective in both adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

Higher densities of housing in Leicester are important when tackling climate change for many reasons.

- They allow us to build on less of our green spaces and greenfield sites. Green spaces are key to reducing the impacts of heatwaves and flooding. They also help to support people's mental and physical health which is damaged and strained by climate change. When planted with trees they also help to absorb carbon emissions.
- High density housing encourages and enables people to walk and cycle rather than drive, reducing the city's carbon footprint and improving air pollution and health, especially when designed with this as a priority. Low density housing locks people into car dependency because it covers larger areas means one has to travel further to get anywhere. This exacerbates climate change, discriminates against people without cars, and isolating people from their jobs, families and services.
- Higher density housing tends to be more affordable and can enable higher percentages of social housing to be built economically as more units are sold per hectare.

50-80 dwellings per hectare, which are the minimums we propose for Oadby and Wigston Borough would involve small groups of terraced housing with potentially a few 3-4 story flats mixed in.

Private outside space can vary from balconies and roof gardens to various size of gardens—not everyone wants a garden, which is why so many end up paved over.

Housing of higher density than currently in an area can also be designed to fit in visually with the characteristics of different areas. Such dwelling can be designed different colours, shapes and ornamentation.