

What councillors think about plan to build thousands of homes across Leicestershire

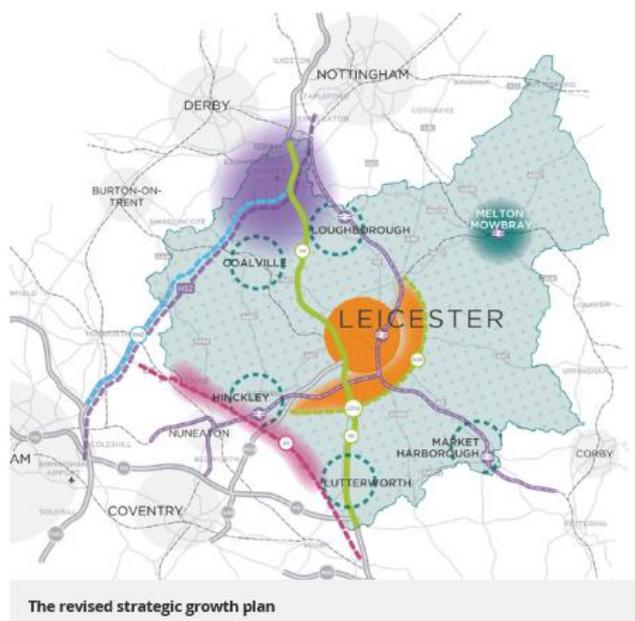
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Councillors have had their say on the document which outlines where tens of thousands of new homes across Leicester and Leicestershire will be built between now and 2050.

Officials say some 96,500 new homes need to be built by 2036 to cope with population growth estimates - and then a further 90,500 by 2050.

The newly revised [strategic growth plan \(SGP\)](#) is a vision drawn up by the city and county council as well as the seven Leicestershire district authorities intended to best manage the major changes that lie ahead and guide key decisions.



It will be discussed by councillors on all of the authorities involved in drawing up the document before Christmas.

This week it was the turn of Leicestershire County Council's scrutiny commission at [County Hall](#) .

Here are some of the issues councillors raised.

Low response to consultation

Councillor Alan Pearson said he was worried that not enough people had responded in a recent consultation event.

He said: "I'm concerned that an awful lot of this has been based on 500 people out of 700,000 responding to a consultation.

"We've got to get better at this. The views of 500 people is not enough evidence for a plan of this importance.

"If we were a marketing company we wouldn't act on this because the information just isn't good enough."

A 17-week consultation period took place from January - May. A total of 588 responses were received. Some 79 per cent were from members of the public. The others came from stakeholders and businesses.

Some changes were made to the plan in response to residents' feedback including 2,000 less homes in Harborough District.

The alteration means that instead, there will be 800 more in the Melton Borough Council area and 1,200 more homes in the North West Leicestershire area.

'Meaningless' document and lack of infrastructure

Councillor Michael Wyatt slammed the plan and said it lacked detail on infrastructure that would be needed to support the number of planned homes.

He said: "In North West Leicestershire we've got thousands of houses being built, resulting in a loss of character and a lack of infrastructure.

"All these nice words in these documents don't reflect what's going on on the ground.

"All it is is chaos and congestion. It's a mess.

"Loading an additional 1,200 houses on to the area will only add to the chaos and congestion.

"With respect, and I know you're only doing your jobs, you're on another planet.

"This report is meaningless to people. I don't know what world you're living in."

Coun Terri Eynon agreed with Coun Wyatt that more infrastructure and better planning is needed.

She said: "I have to share Councillor Wyatt's scepticism.

"In Hugglescote, 4,500 houses are being built next to the Amazon warehouse.

"They are three and four bedroom houses that people earning minimum wage working in the Amazon warehouse will not be able to afford.

"Only 7.5 per cent of that development will be affordable homes, we're not providing what people need.

"It's more of the same. Building massive estates with no public transport links, people can't get to and from Coalville to work in the evenings or on Sundays.

Large numbers of new homes are needed in Leicestershire. Where will they go? (Image: PA)

“We need to do something about affordable homes and public transport.”

Dave Nash, interim joint strategic planning manager for the county and districts of Leicestershire, Leicester city and the LLEP, said: “Councillor Wyatt eloquently described the mess we’re in in some areas.

“That is why we we need to come away from adding on to existing areas in an ad hoc basis bit by bit.

“The aim here is to shift that completely so that we’re planning for larger settlements.

“Most of the problems at the moment, and there are problems, is there is a lack of infrastructure to support the number of houses being built.”

Transport and road networks

Coun Simon Galton quizzed officers on what he said were the ‘three critical transport’ issues relating to the SGP.

He outlined them as the [A46 expressway](#) and the location of 38,000 houses, improving roads in and out of the city in order to deal with the sheer volume of traffic that will be generated as a result of new housing and the international gateway and HS2.

Ian Vears, assistant director of environment and transport at the county council, explained that the majority of work surrounding the A46 expressway will be undertaken by Midlands Connect - an organisation which works in collaboration with central government and brings together local authorities and local enterprise partnerships from across the Midlands.

Results of a study are set to be released on November 7.

Speaking about improvements to road networks. Mr Vears explained that technological advances would have an impact.

He said: “In the last 100 years transport has been the same. We replaced the horse with the car and since that there have been more and more of them on the roads.

“Automated cars are becoming a possibility, if that’s the case, will we need more infrastructure? No one knows at the moment.

“There are some real unknowns coming into the picture over the next ten years.”

Speaking about the international gateway and HS2, Mr Vears said: “There is major growth in the area, HS2, the M1 motorway and the surrounding infrastructure.

“If you sit back and expect things to happen, they probably won’t.

“If you get involved you can mitigate the impact but you also get the benefits for the local area as well.”

Market towns and communities

Councillors raised concerns that new developments lack community and detract from existing market towns.

Coun Pearson: “There is a real problem with our market towns and local shops.

“If they go, if they close down, then people will move out of those areas.

“We need to look in detail at what is happening out in the grass roots of our communities.

“I don’t feel we have done that so far.”

Coun Rosita Page added: “We are looking at building houses but we aren’t looking at building communities and that should be the caveat.

“Communities are what we need, not just housing developments.

“The emphasis on long term infrastructure isn’t addressed.

“When we are talking long term strategically, we need to look at strategic infrastructure and strategic road networks.”

Tom Purnell, assistant chief executive, said: “This is a framework, this absolutely isn’t a local plan for the whole area.

“No decisions have been made.

“Market towns are something that will be looked at in more detail and dealt with at local plan level.”