

## What are the Issues?

- 3.1 To gain an understanding of the key issues the Core Strategy needs to address we consulted on an Issues Paper in May 2004 when we invited local residents, businesses and other key stakeholders to highlight the issues that they felt needed addressing through Charnwood 2021. Subsequently we published an Issues and Options Paper in June 2005, which set out a range of issues which had been identified through this earlier consultation. The June 2005 paper was also informed by work on the Sustainability Appraisal Framework. Consultants were engaged to undertake a "baseline assessment" of the Borough to identify key sustainability issues. The findings are set out in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report which can be viewed on our web site.
- 3.2 Consultation on the Issues papers and work on the baseline assessment for the sustainability appraisal have helped to identify the following key issues for Charnwood:

- i) the lack of affordable housing. Increasing house prices in recent years has meant that affordability issues increasingly affect communities throughout Charnwood;
- ii) the need for new homes to meet the needs of existing and future residents. The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan requires the provision of 9,400 additional homes in the Borough between 1996 and 2016- an annual requirement of 470 homes. The Regional Plan review outlines a range of options that would provide between 370 and 740 new homes each year;
- iii) a concentration of certain types and tenures of housing in some locations. Particular issues are associated with the concentration of student accommodation within parts of Loughborough;
- iv) areas of poorer quality housing. There are areas of poorer quality housing where improvements are needed to not just the houses but the wider neighbourhood;
- v) congestion, pollution and the impact of heavy volumes of traffic. This is particularly an issue in and around Loughborough and in South Charnwood in settlements close to Leicester;
- vi) the adverse impacts of heavy goods vehicle movements on rural communities particularly the Wolds villages;
- vii) real travel choice by public transport, cycling and walking is limited outside the main urban areas, with particular problems in the more rural communities;
- viii) the need for additional employment land to meet strategic requirements, in particular high quality employment sites including a new Science Park at Loughborough;

- ix) loss of existing employment areas to housing and other uses. The decline in the local textile industry has resulted in the loss of significant employment opportunities in some villages. There are also particular issues in relation to rural employment needs;
- x) whilst the Borough is relatively affluent there are pockets of deprivation where residents suffer poor access to housing, jobs and social and community facilities;
- xi) with the close proximity of the Three Cities there is a need to consider how Loughborough's role as an important sub regional shopping and cultural destination can be strengthened. There is also a need to safeguard and improve existing local shopping facilities in the main villages;
- xii) the presence of Loughborough University, with its reputation as a centre of research and sporting excellence, provides the potential for real benefits for the Borough, especially in the lead up to the London Olympics in 2012. We need to make the best use of the advantages brought by the University for the wider benefit of Charnwood;
- xiii) tackling the identified deficiencies in green space provision. The Greenspace Strategy identifies a need for further Country Park facilities, district parks in Loughborough, Birstall, Shepshed and Syston and smaller parks and recreation grounds across the Borough;
- xiv) addressing the potential impacts of climate change, particularly in relation to flooding along the Rivers Soar and Wreake;
- xv) dealing with crime and the fear of crime in local communities;
- xvi) the 900 listed buildings, 36 conservation areas, 20 scheduled ancient monuments and 3 historic parks and gardens reflects the Borough's rich built heritage. There are problems resulting from development pressures and neglect. 50 buildings are "at risk". Clear policies for the protection and enhancement of the built heritage are required;
- xvii) loss of local identity through standard design solutions that don't take account of the local distinctiveness of Charnwood's towns and villages;
- xviii) safeguarding settlement identity- green wedge and local separation policies have long recognised the importance of safeguarding the separate identities of settlements in Charnwood. The Core Strategy needs to demonstrate how the strategic policy of urban concentration can be taken forward in the Borough without threatening the separate identities of existing communities;
- xix) maintaining local landscape character- The Borough is made up of a series of distinct landscapes from the Charnwood Forest to the Wolds. It includes the eastern edge of the National Forest. Policies are needed to ensure that where development does take place, it reflects the character of the Charnwood landscapes.



## Our Vision: Charnwood in 2021

3.3 The Community Strategy vision for the Borough is of an improved quality of life for everyone living and working in Charnwood. Our Corporate Plan takes forward many of the Community Strategy themes and sets out our vision for the Borough up to 2015.

3.4 Six key aims are set out in the strategy to deliver this priority:

■ **A sustainable environment** - designing new public places, based on excellent urban and rural planning, supporting integrated public transport provision, cycling and the interests of pedestrians. Protecting the best of Charnwood's heritage;

■ **A clean, safe and healthy environment** - working with the community to ensure that waste is minimised or recycled, litter graffiti and refuse is removed and our neighbourhoods are enjoyable and safe places to be;

■ **Leisure and Cultural Opportunities for all** - providing leisure and sports facilities, parks, playgrounds, allotments, museums, the arts, youth programmes which will provide a healthy living environment for all;

■ **Decent homes and neighbourhoods** - raising the standards of homes, and the surrounding environment. Fostering sustainable communities and providing quality advice to those in housing need;

■ **An economically prosperous Environment** - regenerating areas in decline, developing industries and businesses, and ensuring vibrant commercial and retailing sectors;

■ **An excellent Council** - running an efficient and effective Council administration, sensitive and responsive to customers' needs and providing access to all services.

3.5 The Corporate Plan's vision needs to be supplemented to provide a clear expression of how we can develop a spatial strategy that makes the best use of future development opportunities to provide real and lasting benefits, and deliver the changes necessary to make Charnwood's towns and villages more sustainable communities. It is about a vision and spatial strategy that moulds and directs future development and growth to transform our main towns and villages into truly sustainable communities fit for the 21st century. This requires a clear and focussed vision, and positive proactive planning to deliver the changes necessary to make the government's vision of an urban renaissance and sustainable communities a reality in Charnwood.

*Corporate Plan  
main objective  
to ensure that the  
Borough is recognised  
as Leading in  
Leicestershire for the  
quality of its living  
environment for all.*

3.6 Our vision for the Core Strategy outlines the key spatial implications of delivering the key Community Strategy and Charnwood Corporate Plan objectives:

*By 2021 Charnwood will be widely regarded as an excellent place to live, work and visit. Well-founded and clearly articulated policies preserve the essential characteristics and diversity of the Borough's landscape, ecology, heritage and built environment. The variety of lifestyle choices, from urban to suburban and from larger village to rural isolation makes the Borough attractive to established residents and new arrivals alike.*

*Loughborough is the primary sub-regional centre for shopping, leisure and entertainment within the Three Cities sub area. It is also a key business and commercial centre, offering a clear alternative to the cities of Leicester, Nottingham and Derby. Pedestrianisation has been extended and Loughborough's reputation as a "green" and "walkable town" has been secured with the inner relief road taking traffic out of the centre. This is complimented by the local facilities and employment opportunities available in many of our other towns and villages.*

*The local environment is clean and safe and a clear emphasis on recycling, sustainable development and energy efficiency means that the Borough is contributing actively to reducing global environmental problems. Our targets for recycling have been met and good progress has been made in implementing our "Zero Waste" strategy.*

*Air quality has improved in those locations where traffic congestion was problematic, the congestion reduced through increased use of quality, integrated public transport and other alternatives to motor vehicle use. There has been a substantial reduction in the incidents of severe flooding across the Borough.*

*The quality and coverage of public bus services has improved alongside integration with rail services. Loughborough railway station and its forecourt have been enhanced as part of the redevelopment of the eastern gateway of the Town, and there are regular mainline rail services from Loughborough and frequent local services serving Loughborough, Barrow upon Soar, Sileby and Syston. The road network is in good condition.*

*The population is decently housed and a good variety of housing types and tenures is available, making living in the Borough more achievable for people of all ages and incomes. In meeting the Borough's housing and employment needs development has been directed to the main urban centres of Loughborough and Shepshed, and locations adjoining Leicester including Birstall and Thurmaston.*

*Whilst full use has been made of available previously developed land and buildings, it has been necessary to identify areas for growth to meet the future requirements for new homes and jobs. The first phase of comprehensively planned mixed use sustainable urban extensions west and south of Loughborough have come forward. In the south of the Borough northern extensions of Hamilton/Thurmaston and Birstall provide for future housing and employment needs. Through these strategic land allocations a clear strategy for longer term growth in Charnwood up to 2021 and beyond has been established.*

*In the smaller towns and villages some small scale growth reinforcing local character and distinctiveness has helped meet local needs for affordable housing and additional community facilities.*

*In Loughborough the student population is making positive contributions to the Borough's economy and diversity. Steps to manage and reduce adverse impacts on particular parts of the town in conjunction with Loughborough University and other partners have been successful in achieving a more balanced residential mix and a consequent improvement in those environments.*



*The effect of designing out crime principles as a matter of routine has also reduced the opportunities for criminals.*

*The economy of Charnwood is strong and is a key contributor to the East Midlands Regional economy. Unemployment remains below the national average and those pockets of higher than average unemployment in 2004 are now close to the rate for the Borough as a whole. Decline in the traditional manufacturing sector has been more than offset by expansion in high added value manufacturing, hi-tech and knowledge based industry and the development of sports and cultural industry clusters.*

*A second Science Park has been provided as part of the western expansion of Loughborough. The presence of Loughborough University plays a pivotal role in the local economy through education, research, and dynamic business initiatives. The growth needs of the University have been accommodated through a western expansion of the Campus. Large companies such as FKI, AstraZeneca, Lafarge and 3M continue to thrive alongside a wide range of small and medium enterprises and the priority given to new business and inward investment has enabled new talent to become established. Improved conference and hotel facilities draw people to the Borough.*

*Everyone in the Borough, young and old, has the opportunity of enjoying the healthy lifestyle offered by quality leisure and sporting activities, as well as national health care facilities and treatment. The availability of diverse and exciting cultural opportunities in towns and rural areas contributes to healthy living. The planned western extension to Loughborough has secured the provision of a new County Park based on the historic Garendon Park providing informal recreational access for the benefit of Charnwood's residents.*

Please see  
Question 1  
on the  
Response  
Form

## Spatial Objectives

- 3.7 In order to deliver this vision we have identified a set of key spatial objectives. The objectives reflect national and regional planning policy and provide the basis for the preferred spatial strategy including core policies. The objectives tackle the key themes of a vibrant local economy, strong, healthy and inclusive communities and protecting Charnwood's unique natural and built environment.

### CHARNWOOD'S ECONOMY - VIBRANT AND DIVERSE

SO1: to sustain and enhance Loughborough town centre as a successful, attractive and vibrant destination for shopping, entertainment and leisure as well as a place to live;

SO2: to ensure that there is a network of vibrant district centres so residents have access to a range of shops, services and facilities;

SO3: to meet needs for homes, including affordable housing, and jobs, including a new science park at Loughborough, through balanced housing and employment provision in North and South Charnwood in line with strategic requirements;

SO4: to raise the profile of Charnwood to attract local and inward business investors and promote tourism;

SO5: to provide access to quality jobs and improved standards of life by safeguarding key sites and creating opportunities for new high quality employment;

SO6: to support thriving and diverse sustainable rural enterprise and farming.

### CHARNWOOD'S COMMUNITIES - STRONG, HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE

SO7: to address social exclusion and reduce deprivation in those parts of the Borough identified as areas of relatively higher need including Loughborough, Shepshed, the Soar Valley villages and south Charnwood;

SO8: to reduce the need to, and distance of, travel by car and increase walking, cycling and public transport. In particular to improve access by bus to key services and facilities;

SO9: to create safe, healthy, accessible and distinctive places for local people by encouraging quality and sustainable design and construction;

SO10: to promote mixed balanced communities, in particular to address the extent and distribution of student accommodation within Loughborough;

SO11: to ensure residents have access to an interlinked system of parks and greenspaces, the countryside and built facilities for sport, recreation and community activities;

### CHARNWOOD'S NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT - SAFEGUARDED AND ENHANCED

SO12: to promote prudent use of resources through patterns of development, transport measures, reducing the use of minerals, energy and water and minimising waste and increasing the use of renewable energy sources;

SO13: to concentrate most new development in the main urban areas of Loughborough, Shepshed and the settlements of Birstall and Thurmaston and other locations adjoining Leicester giving priority to previously developed land;

SO14: to develop integrated transport schemes and measures to improve safety and reduce the adverse environmental and other impacts of traffic, especially in and around Loughborough and settlements close to Leicester;

SO15: to protect the built heritage and separate identity of the Borough's locally distinctive towns and villages;

SO16: to reduce the risk to life and property through flooding in vulnerable locations along the Soar and Wreake valleys;

SO17: to protect distinctive landscapes, in particular the Charnwood Forest and support the National Forest Strategy;

SO18: to maintain and enhance a diverse range of habitats and the biodiversity of wildlife in line with the Charnwood Biodiversity Action Plan.



Please see  
Question 3  
on the  
Response  
Form



