

## Delivering Sustainable Communities - Defining A Charnwood Settlement Hierarchy

### Background

- 4.1 The development strategy seeks to deliver the vision and objectives outlined in Chapter 3. The strategy needs to reflect the Regional Plan and in particular deliver the new homes and jobs required over the period to 2021.
- 4.2 The strategies of the Regional Plan and the adopted Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan reflect national planning policy which promotes sustainable patterns of development and a "sequential approach" to choosing the appropriate locations for new development by making best use of previously developed land and buildings. Both adopt locational strategies which promote urban concentration.
- 4.3 The Regional Plan seeks to direct most development to the largest urban centres in the East Midlands- the Principal Urban Areas, with a smaller amount of development directed to smaller Sub Regional Centres. Within the Three Cities sub-area the Principal Urban Areas are Derby, Leicester and Nottingham, and the Sub-Regional Centres are Loughborough, Coalville and Hinckley. Within Leicestershire other Sub-Regional Centres include Melton Mowbray and Market Harborough. The strategy for rural areas is to sustain villages and reverse the decline in rural services. The strategy sets a regional target of 60% of new homes being provided on previously developed land and through the conversion of buildings.
- 4.4 The Structure Plan also aims to secure sustainable development by directing new development to the main urban areas. Leicester, as the main urban area in the County, is the focus of this strategy. The Plan defines a "Central Leicestershire Policy Area" as a way of helping to direct development towards Leicester. This policy area is made up of the City, Oadby and Wigston, and parts of Hinckley and Bosworth, Blaby, Harborough and Charnwood districts. The Plan identifies Leicester as an urban conurbation made up of the City and settlements on its boundaries including Birstall and Thurmaston. This is called the Leicester and Leicestershire Urban Area.
- 4.5 Outside this Central Leicestershire Policy Area development is directed to the main towns- for Charnwood, Loughborough and Shepshed. Rural Centres can be identified for small scale growth to help safeguard important rural services. The Structure Plan's approach is to direct development to the Leicester conurbation and the main towns and then to Rural Centres or other settlements well served by public transport. In all these locations the aim is to make the best use of previously developed land before releasing greenfield land for development. The Structure Plan aims for at least 50% of new homes in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland being provided on previously developed land.
- 4.6 The Core Strategy needs to reflect this strategic guidance and establish a clear settlement hierarchy as the basis of our locational strategy for the period to 2021.

## Identifying the Charnwood Settlement Hierarchy - The Preferred Approach

4.7 In establishing the settlement hierarchy for the Core Strategy we have sought to reflect the national, regional and strategic policy context. We have analysed the key characteristics of Charnwood settlements in terms of the availability and accessibility of services and facilities, size and function, geography and interactions between settlements. This assessment is available on our web site. The key local influences are:

- The main urban centres of Leicester in the south of the Borough and the Loughborough urban system in the north as well as the other nearby towns and service centres such as Coalville, Melton Mowbray, Groby, Markfield and East Leake in adjoining districts;
- The small town of Syston and other large villages concentrated along the Soar and Wreake valleys have well established service bases able to serve local residents and surrounding areas, including the more rural parts of Charnwood;
- The proximity of strong urban influences across most of the Borough suggests that no settlements in Charnwood function as Rural Centres for a wider rural catchment

4.8 These features make Charnwood's settlement pattern quite unique in Leicestershire. The Borough is characterised by its proximity to the city of Leicester- the main urban centre, the influence of the County Town of Loughborough- the sub-regional centre and the ribbon of larger settlements extending along the Soar and Wreake Valleys- the service centres. For the rural communities in the Wolds and Charnwood Forest, residents tend to look to the service centres for their services and facilities rather than one of the rural settlements within these areas meeting these needs.

4.9 Whilst it is considered that no settlements in Charnwood should be defined as Rural Centres, some limited small scale development might be appropriate in those smaller rural settlements with a reasonable range of services and facilities providing for the day to day needs of the local community. Development could help meet local needs, in particular for affordable housing, support existing services and facilities and sustain local community life. Key facilities and services include:

- A primary school;
- A general store selling groceries and basic provisions;
- A post office outlet open at least 3 days a week;
- A village or community hall;
- A public house;
- A significant Class B employment site within 3km walking distance of the village;
- An hourly weekday daytime return bus service to at least one main urban or sub-regional centre.



4.10 On this basis the preferred settlement hierarchy for South and North Charnwood is set out below:

South Charnwood	North Charnwood
<b>MAIN URBAN CENTRE</b> <b>LEICESTER PRINCIPAL URBAN AREA</b> Includes: Birstall and Thurmaston	<b>MAIN URBAN CENTRE</b> No equivalent settlement
<b>SUB REGIONAL CENTRE</b> No equivalent settlement	<b>SUB REGIONAL CENTRE</b> Loughborough / Shepshed
<b>SERVICE CENTRES</b> Anstey, East Goscote, Rothley, Syston	<b>SERVICE CENTRES</b> Barrow upon Soar, Hathern, Mountsorrel, Quorn, Sileby
<b>OTHER SETTLEMENTS</b> Barkby, Barkby Thorpe, Beeby, Cossington, Cropston, Queniborough, Rearsby, Thurcaston, Wanlip	<b>OTHER SETTLEMENTS</b> Burton on the Wolds, Cotes, Hoton, Newtown Linford, Prestwold, Ratcliffe on the Wreake, Seagrave, South Croxton, Swithland, Thrussington, Ulverscroft, Walton on the Wolds, Woodhouse, Woodhouse Eaves, Woodthorpe, Wymeswold.

4.11 This settlement hierarchy will guide the scale and distribution of new development in the Borough to secure the most sustainable pattern of development. In accordance with Government guidance, in seeking to direct development to the main urban areas, priority will be given to the development of previously developed land and buildings. Over the period 1996 to 2021 it is estimated that around 52% of new homes will be provided on previously developed land. This represents a realistic assessment of urban capacity potential in the Borough. The government target of 60% of dwellings being provided on previously developed land is a national one which recognises that some areas will achieve substantially higher or lower percentages.

## The Other Options

4.12 We consider the preferred option reflects strategic guidance and the policy of urban concentration. Other possible settlement hierarchies considered involve new settlements or major expansions to smaller villages, or an approach that would result in a more even spread of development between villages. Responses to the Issues and Options paper consultation have also promoted the specific identification of Rural Centres.

4.13 The option of a new settlement or a large freestanding single use development away from existing settlements, even those able to make use of previously developed land, do not perform well against the sequential test and sustainability criteria. The Regional Plan and Structure Plan do not promote new settlements. They would not be consistent with established

strategic policy for the region and County of directing development to the existing main urban centres. Such an option would be likely to require substantial investment in supporting infrastructure that might be better used in existing urban areas.

- 4.14 A number of new settlement options have been considered in the past, including east of Loughborough at Cotes, west of Hathern, east of Rearsby, Wymeswold Airfield and east of Cossington. In response to the Issues and Options consultation, Wymeswold Airfield has also been suggested as a possible location for the proposed Second Science Park for Loughborough.
- 4.15 A new settlement/ freestanding development would not be in keeping with the strategy of urban concentration established in regional and strategic guidance. From the assessment of possible options there appears to be sufficient land available in higher priority locations to meet our development needs.
- 4.16 A settlement hierarchy which allowed for a more even spread of development between settlements would again not be consistent with a strategy which seeks to focus development in those centres where most services and facilities are available.
- 4.17 There have been suggestions that we should define Rural Centres in the proposed settlement hierarchy. As has been explained above, because of the particular geography of Charnwood, it is not considered that any of the more rural settlements function as a rural centre. It is also considered that it would be inappropriate to direct development to a rural settlement so that it can become a rural centre. The proximity of the main urban areas and the larger Soar and Wreake valley settlements and centres just outside the Borough means that there is no need to develop one of the more rural villages as a Rural Centre. This approach would be likely to be damaging to the form and rural character of the settlement.
- 4.18 This does not mean that rural settlements will not accommodate any more development. The strategy should allow for limited small scale development in keeping with the level of services and facilities and the character of these rural communities to meet local needs for affordable housing and to support rural services.
- 4.19 The principle of the settlement hierarchy is to identify those settlements best able to support sustainable development and growth due to the range of facilities and services available and the accessibility to public transport. Smaller settlements with few services and facilities are less sustainable locations and should only accommodate limited new development.
- 4.20 Targets for development on previously developed land must be realistic. Other options would be to strictly limit the amount of greenfield land released for housing or alternatively to take a more conservative estimate of the potential contribution from previously developed land. Too strict a control of greenfield land release could mean housing supply is constrained if previously developed sites do not come forward. Greenfield release without control would also be unsustainable. The proposed target coupled with the suggested phasing policy represents a realistic assessment of the potential contribution from previously developed land in Charnwood and would provide sufficient control over future land release to enable the Council to respond to changes in circumstances.



## The Preferred Policy Option

### 4.21 Draft Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy

In order to create and maintain sustainable communities in Charnwood, the Borough Council will guide the scale and distribution of new development based on the following settlement hierarchy:

#### North Charnwood:

- i) **Loughborough/ Shepshed as the primary Sub-Regional Centre with the Three Cities sub area;**
- ii) **Service Centres- Barrow upon Soar, Hathern, Mountsorrel, Quorn and Sileby;**
- iii) **Other settlements having three or more key facilities/services.**

#### South Charnwood:

- i) **Birstall and Thurmaston and other locations adjoining the Leicester Principal Urban Area;**
- ii) **Service Centres- Anstey, East Goscote, Rothley, Syston;**
- iii) **Other communities having three or more key facilities/ services.**

The majority of new development will be directed to locations within or adjoining Loughborough/ Shepshed, Birstall and Thurmaston and other locations adjoining the Leicester Principal Urban Area.

Development that cannot be accommodated within or adjoining these areas will be directed to locations within or adjoining the Service Centres.

Small scale development to meet an identified local need may be accommodated within or adjoining other settlements with 3 or more key facilities/ services.

In all cases priority will be given to the development of previously developed land and buildings and where appropriate the provision of mixed use developments. The strategy will seek to achieve a target of 52% of all additional housing to be developed on previously developed land and buildings.

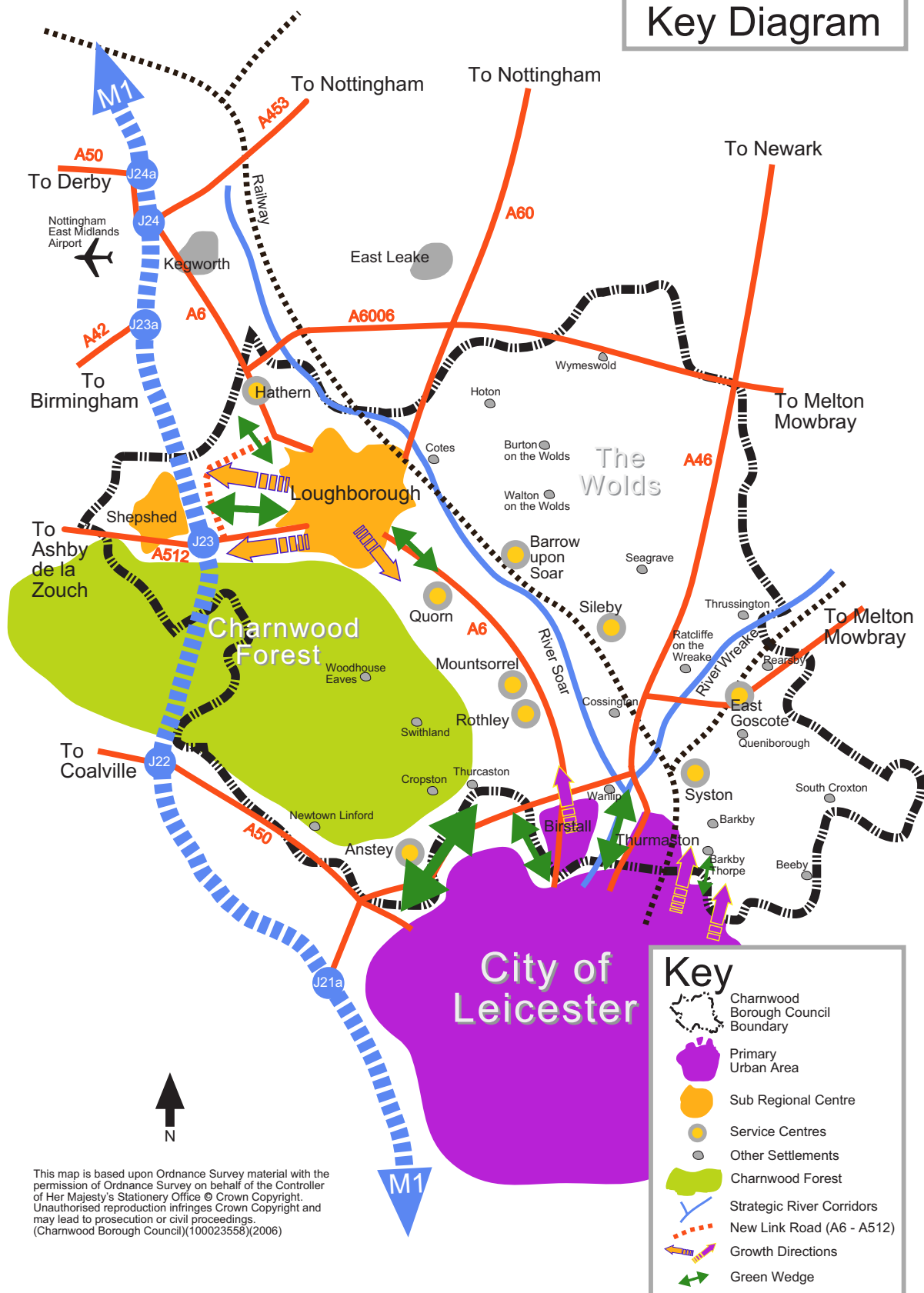
Please see Question 5 on the Response Form

### Reason for Preferred Option:

To reflect government objectives for the development of sustainable communities and reflect the strategy of urban concentration set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy and Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan.

The Development Strategy is illustrated on the Key Diagram opposite.

# Key Diagram



# Directions for Growth

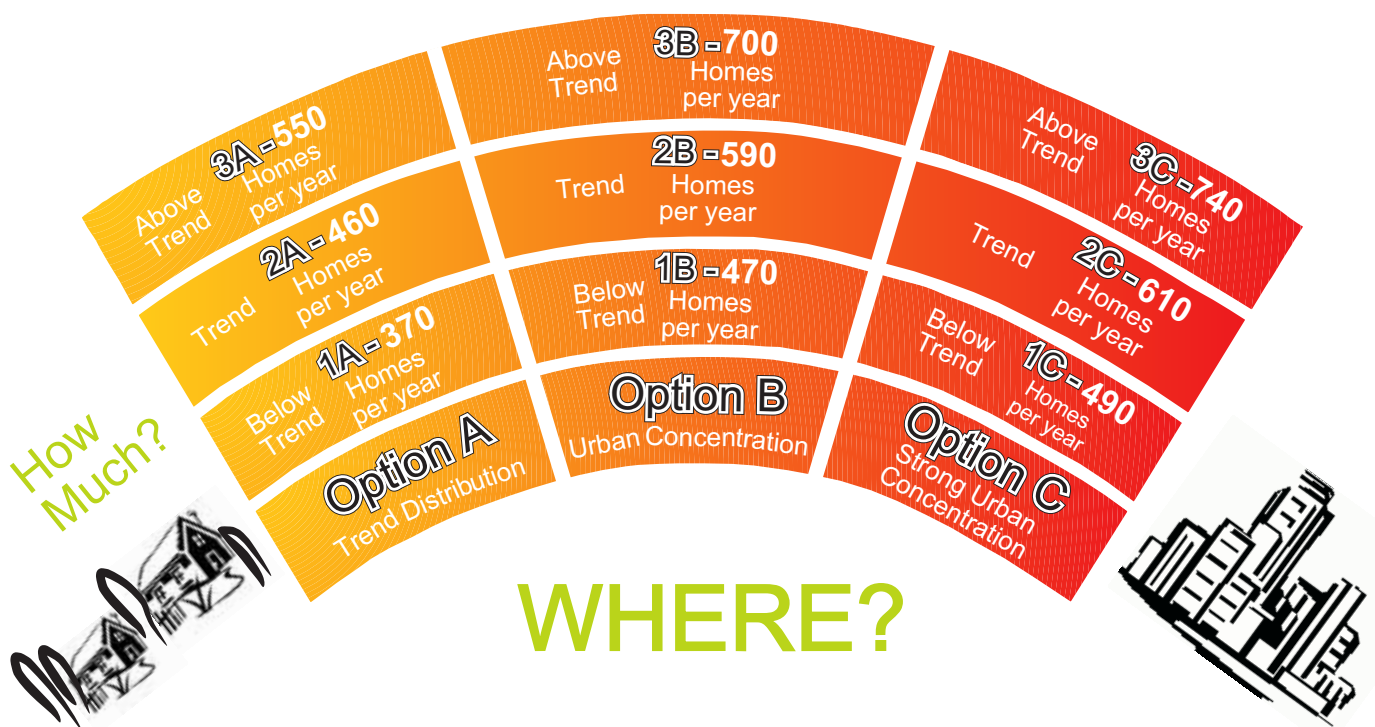
## Background

- 4.22 The Charnwood 2021 Core Strategy needs to be in conformity with the Regional Plan and also needs to take account of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan. The Structure Plan provides relevant strategic guidance pending the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. In particular it establishes the scale of development for new homes and jobs that we need to plan for over the period up to 2016.
- 4.23 This strategic guidance sets some clear "ground rules" in relation to the locational strategy which we must follow. This strategy for urban concentration is reflected in Draft Core Policy 1 above which establishes the Charnwood settlement hierarchy. The Core Strategy needs to make some key decisions about the most sustainable approach locally to accommodate future development.
- 4.24 There are a limited number of realistic options that would fit with the established national, regional and strategic policy and reflect the characteristics of the Borough. The identification of the preferred directions for growth has been based on the following principles:

- The application of the sequential approach set out in the Regional Plan and Structure Plan;
- Making the best use of previously developed land within urban areas;
- Safeguarding the separate identities of Charnwood's settlements;
- Considering the suitability of possible directions for growth in terms of their transport and accessibility, physical constraints, impact on resources and environmental assets, development viability and costs and the need to develop balanced communities;
- The potential for larger allocations to offer the best prospects for securing significant planning contributions towards services, infrastructure, open space and high quality design;
- The suitability of smaller towns and larger villages as locations for modest development to support service provision and meet local needs.

- 4.25 Pending the review of the Regional Plan for the East Midlands there is some uncertainty about the scale of additional homes and jobs that will need to be planned for over the period to 2026. The current Regional Plan sets out an annual housing requirement of 3,150 dwellings for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland over the period 2001 to 2021 but does not set a figure for new employment growth. It does not include figures on district level housing and employment requirements- this is the purpose of the Regional Plan review. Indicative figures for Districts have been set out in the Regional Plan Review Options for Change paper, published for

consultation in October 2005. The paper outlines 9 housing growth options based on alternative growth and locational strategies but does not identify a preferred regional option. For Charnwood these options indicate a requirement ranging from 370 to 740 new homes each year (the current strategic requirement is 470). The various options and their implications for the Borough are illustrated below.



4.26 These housing figures have been used as a guide to give an indication of the likely scale of development we need to plan for. We have formed a view on our preferred regional growth option based on an assessment of the local implications of the 9 options. In terms of location, we consider growth should be distributed in line with the current strategy of concentrating development in the Principal Urban Areas and Sub Regional Centres and in areas in need of regeneration. This represents the most sustainable approach to the location of future growth. If an urban concentration strategy is pursued, a level of growth above ODPM trends would have significant environmental implications for the Borough and is not supported. A strategy of limiting growth would be more sensitive to local environmental constraints but could mean people's needs for homes and jobs are not met. Whilst a lower rate of growth would mean less land would need to be released up to 2021, additional land would need to be found to meet strategic requirements to 2026. In essence this approach would merely postpone strategic decisions that need to be made about the most sustainable options for longer term development in Charnwood.



- 4.27 It is our view that we should plan for a level of growth that reflects the latest Government population and household projections and that this growth should be distributed in line with the current strategy of concentrating development in the Principal Urban Areas and Sub Regional Centres and in areas in need of regeneration. The Regional Plan Options for Change Paper suggests that this strategy could mean a development rate of around 590 new homes a year for Charnwood. We do not support this assessment. In our view the way district housing figures have been derived for the Options for Change Paper is over mechanistic. We will be encouraging the East Midlands Regional Assembly to develop a more robust assessment of future housing requirements for Charnwood and other districts which produce housing figures more consistent with the most recent ODPM projections. In the absence of this more robust assessment, for the purposes of Consultation on the Core Strategy Preferred Options, we have applied the Regional Plan Options for Change figure of 590 homes per year. There may be revisions to these figures as the Regional Plan review progresses. There is a need therefore for some flexibility in the Core Strategy to take account of possible changes to Regional Plan guidance.
- 4.28 The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan sets out the requirements for new homes and jobs in Charnwood up to 2016. Until the Regional Plan review is complete the Structure Plan provide the clearest strategic guidance on the scale of development we need to plan for. For Charnwood the Structure Plan splits the housing and employment requirements between:

- **South Charnwood**- that part of Charnwood falling within the Central Leicestershire Policy Area. This covers the parishes of Anstey, Birstall, East Goscote, Queniborough, Rearsby, Rothley, Syston, Thurmaston, Thurstaston and Cropston, Barkby, Barky Thorpe, Beeby and Wanlip;
- **North Charnwood** - the rest of the Borough outside the Central Leicestershire Policy Area. This covers Loughborough and the parishes of Shepshed, Hathern, Barrow upon Soar, Quorn, Mountsorrel, Sileby, Cossington, Ratcliffe on the Wreake, Cotes, Hoton, Prestwold, Wymeswold, Walton-on-the-Wolds, Seagrave, South Croxton, Burton-on-the-Wolds, Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves, Ulverscroft, Newtown Linford, Swithland and Thrussington.

- 4.29 Over the period 1996 to 2016 the Structure Plan requires the provision of 2,950 dwellings and 72 hectares of employment land in South Charnwood and 6,450 dwellings and 134 hectares of employment land in north Charnwood. The employment figure for north Charnwood includes the requirement to provide for a second Science Park of up to 50 hectares in Loughborough close to the University. In identifying future general employment land requirements the Structure Plan concluded that overall there was a sufficient supply of employment land but it was not necessarily in the most appropriate location or of the right quality to meet modern needs. The Structure Plan employment land allocations in Charnwood are intended to provide a better balance between homes and jobs provision.

## Scale of Future Growth - The Preferred Approach

- 4.30 Whilst there is currently some uncertainty about the future scale of housing and employment requirements beyond 2016, it is considered appropriate for the Charnwood 2021 Core Strategy to establish the long term directions for growth within Charnwood. This will provide certainty for developers, key stakeholders and local residents about the planning strategy for the Borough. The Government have recently published guidance on planning for housing provision which indicates that local planning authorities should plan for a 15 year period. A 15 year time horizon from the expected 2008 adoption date for the Core Strategy would be to 2023. However, to be consistent with the Regional Plan review and provide a clear long term strategy for growth, it is considered appropriate for the Core Strategy to look ahead to 2021- a 13 year period from adoption. This will provide the flexibility to take account of any further housing and employment land requirements emerging from the Regional Plan review. This approach will allow comprehensive planned development to take place on a phased basis to provide for the homes, jobs, transport and social and community needs of the population.
- 4.31 To identify the broad scale of future development we need to plan for, the Structure Plan housing and employment requirements to 2016 and emerging revised Regional Plan guidance have been used to project the rate of growth required to 2021. This has been based on our preferred regional strategy option of trend housing growth coupled with a locational strategy of urban concentration and regeneration. It should be emphasised that whilst we do not support the Regional Plan review figure of 590 homes per year, this figure has been applied in the absence of a more robust assessment of future district housing requirements.
- 4.32 Future employment requirements are harder to predict other than the need for high quality employment sites which can help companies compete in a global marketplace. Work undertaken for the Regional Plan predicted relatively low levels of demand for additional employment land region-wide but stressed the need to take account of losses of employment land to other uses. The Structure Plan employment land allocations are intended to balance the proposed strategic housing requirements to provide for sustainable mixed use urban extensions. Further work has been commissioned to identify future employment land requirements in Charnwood. This will help to inform the submission version of the Core Strategy. For the purposes of the Preferred Options paper, the annual employment land requirement implied by the Structure Plan has been used to give an indication of the likely scale of additional employment land required in the period to 2021.
- 4.33 On this basis the housing and employment requirements over the period 2001 to 2021 have been estimated as follows:



Housing	South Charnwood	North Charnwood	Total
Annual Requirement from Structure Plan	147	323	470
Assumed Annual Requirement from Revised Regional Plan	185	405	590
Requirement 2001-2008 (using Structure Plan Annual rate)	1033	2257	3290
Requirement 2008-2021 (using Regional Plan rate from Regional Plan adoption date)	2407	5263	7670
Total Requirement 2001-2021	3440	7520	10960
Completions 2001-2005	554	2078	2632
Expected completions from Large Site Permissions & remaining allocations at March 2005	1762	1963	3725
Small Site Allowance	320	720	1040
Windfall Allowance	320	960	1280
<b>Balance to be found</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>2285</b>

Employment	South Charnwood	North Charnwood	Total
Annual Requirement from Structure Plan	3.6 ha	4.2 ha	7.8 ha
Projected Requirement 2001-2021	72 ha	84 ha	156 ha
Starts 2001-2005	18.6 ha	9.6 ha	28.2 ha
With Permission or Allocated at 2005	16.55 ha	32.22 ha	49 ha
<b>Balance to be found</b>	<b>37 ha</b>	<b>42 ha</b>	<b>79 ha</b>

Requirement for Second Science Park in Loughborough Close to University

Up to 50 ha      Up to 50 ha

4.34 In addition to the general employment requirements for North Charnwood there is a strategic requirement to provide a second Science Park of up to 50 hectares close to Loughborough University.

## The Other Options

- 4.35 The Options for Change consultation paper for the Regional Plan outlines a range of options for the scale and broad distribution of future growth. Alternative approaches would be to plan for a scale of growth below or above the Government's projections, and to either distribute development more widely or to concentrate it more in the largest urban centres.
- 4.36 The Sustainability Appraisal accompanying the Regional Plan Options for Change Paper sets out an assessment of the regional implications of these options. Many of these issues would be relevant for Charnwood.
- 4.37 A strategy seeking to limit growth below trend would not meet forecast needs for new homes. The above trend or "going for growth" option would result in significant levels of development, particularly with a strategy of strong urban concentration.
- 4.38 A locational strategy spreading development widely would not be consistent with strategic policies for urban concentration and could result in less sustainable forms of development.
- 4.39 Seeking to focus more development in and around Leicester as one of the Three Cities would mean significant additional growth in South Charnwood. This approach would mean more of Charnwood's housing and employment requirements being directed to South Charnwood and the edge of Leicester. This was broadly the approach recommended by the independent panel when they considered the Structure Plan in 2003. They recommended more of Leicestershire's growth should be directed to Leicester as the main urban area in the County.
- 4.40 This approach was rejected by the Structure Plan Authorities as it would mean the release of substantial amounts of greenfield land which could undermine attempts to maximise urban capacity in Leicester and frustrate regeneration initiatives. At this scale there would be significant loss of greenfield land in South Charnwood and pressure on the existing transport infrastructure and local services and facilities. This approach would involve limited development in North Charnwood and would not reflect the important role played by Loughborough as the main sub-regional centre within the Three Cities sub-area.
- 4.41 Another option would be for the Core Strategy to only make provision for the housing and employment requirements to 2016 as set out in the Structure Plan. Over this timeframe it is calculated that the strategic housing requirement could be met through the expected release of previously developed land within the main urban areas. There would not be the need to release additional Greenfield land for housing until after 2016. However, there would still be a need to make significant employment land allocations and it is likely that this will need to involve the release of Greenfield land.
- 4.42 It is considered that this approach is unlikely to provide the most sustainable solution for longer term growth. Planning just for employment land requirements may mean that more sustainable opportunities for mixed use development are missed. Recent government guidance indicates that local planning authorities should plan for housing provision over a 15 year



timescale. Planning to a 2016 time horizon would only provide for some 8 years of housing land. This shorter term approach would also mean that the Core Strategy would need to be reviewed sooner once the Regional Plan review is completed. Establishing the future long term directions for growth now will provide the flexibility within Charnwood 2021 to provide any future needs arising from the Regional Plan review without the need for an early review of the Core Strategy.

## Directions for Growth - The Preferred Approach

- 4.43 The Regional Plan and Structure Plan strategies of urban concentration establish the broad focus for future growth within Charnwood. The role of the Core Strategy is to apply these strategies locally to identify the most sustainable option for growth that meets our vision for the Borough. The Regional Plan and Structure Plan strategies direct development to the main urban centres, in Charnwood's case Loughborough/ Shepshed and the edge of Leicester, including the settlements of Birstall and Thurmaston. The Structure Plan aims to provide for a balance of new homes and jobs within and outside the Central Leicestershire Policy Area. The Core Strategy needs to identify the most sustainable growth option within these broad locations.
- 4.44 The Issues and Options paper outlined possible directions for growth in north and south Charnwood. The feedback from the consultation has been considered and the options have been subject to a sustainability appraisal which has compared the relative merits of the options in terms of their likely social, economic and environmental impacts. Full details are set out in the Sustainability Appraisal report which can be viewed on our web site ([www.charnwood.gov.uk /charnwood2021](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/charnwood2021)). The following summarises the conclusions of this assessment.

### North Charnwood:

- 4.45 In the light of these assessments we consider it appropriate to concentrate most of the new development required in North Charnwood within or adjoining Loughborough / Shepshed. This approach will help strengthen Loughborough's role as the primary Sub-Regional Centre outside the Three Cities. Whilst the strategy seeks to maximise the potential for development on previously developed land, to meet the predicted long term growth requirements provision will need to be made for greenfield urban extensions. It has been concluded that the most sustainable option involves comprehensively planned sustainable urban extensions to the west of Loughborough towards Shepshed and south towards Quorn.
- 4.46 The fundamental principle is to move away from the rather piecemeal approach to growth in the past, which often involved the incremental addition of estates of housing on the edge of towns with few additional services and facilities. Instead, the preferred approach is to set the context for longer term growth through substantial, carefully planned urban extensions providing an appropriate mix of uses including work, homes, shopping, leisure and community facilities, in tandem with the necessary

green infrastructure essential for quality of life. "Green infrastructure" describes the network of multi-functional greenspace which contributes to a high quality natural and built environment and is required to deliver "liveability" for new communities. It can include parks and recreation areas, more informal areas including wildlife habitats, green corridors, natural and semi-natural habitats, cemeteries, country parks, and historic parks and gardens.

- 4.47 A westward expansion between Loughborough and Shepshed will allow provision for the new Science Park along with general employment and longer term housing requirements to meet the needs of Loughborough and Shepshed. A key element of this preferred option involves securing a new Country Park to meet identified green space needs for the town. Based on the historic Garendon Park this could secure the retention and restoration of the historic park and garden and provide for public access to a Country Park of the highest quality for the benefit of Loughborough and Shepshed residents. Through a remodelled Green Wedge there is a real opportunity to establish a sustainable long term strategy for further growth of the town which safeguards the separate identities of Loughborough and Shepshed, provides for future development needs, and secures a significant recreational asset for the benefit of the town.
- 4.48 It is likely that a westward growth option will require the provision of a new road linking the A512 to the A6 north of the town. This will be needed to serve future development in the area. It could also provide improved links between industrial areas north of the town and the motorway.
- 4.49 Coupled with a westward expansion, any further development requirements should be accommodated to the south between Loughborough and Quorn. In particular a southern expansion incorporating employment uses provides the opportunity to rebalance the distribution of homes and jobs within the town to encourage more sustainable patterns of movement. At present the majority of employment opportunities are focussed to the north and west of the town, with major areas of new housing development to the south.
- 4.50 The Sustainability Appraisal has assessed the social, economic and environmental implications of these preferred growth options. As greenfield developments there will inevitably be effects on environmental interests. Land west of Loughborough towards Shepshed, south of the A512 forms the northernmost edge of the Charnwood Forest and also falls within the National Forest. It is an undulating landscape with views southwards towards the rising landscape of the Outwoods. Land to the north of the A512 is an attractive area with distinctive landscape features focussed on the historic park and garden. However, these areas are set within and influenced by a number of urban influences including the motorway and the urban areas of Shepshed and Loughborough.
- 4.51 Similarly land south of Loughborough is influenced by the Epinal Way extension, the southern edge of Loughborough and Quorn to the south. It is important that, through sensitive master planning, the environmental impacts are mitigated wherever possible. West and south Loughborough are well served by public transport, cycling and walking. With these available facilities and the proximity to Loughborough and Shepshed with their wide range of shops, local services, community facilities and services,

Please see Questions 7 & 8 on the Response Form



there is real scope to reduce car use and encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking. The preferred growth options are also well located in relation to employment opportunities available in Loughborough at the Derby Road Industrial Estate, the University and in the Town Centre.

## South Charnwood

4.52 In South Charnwood the opportunities for sustainable longer term growth are constrained, in particular by existing highway capacity in and around Leicester. The Structure Plan strategy is to direct development within Central Leicestershire towards the Leicester urban area and adjoining settlements in surrounding districts. For Charnwood this means the priority locations for development involve:

- Land within and adjoining Birstall and Thurmaston as settlements adjoining Leicester; and
- Land within Charnwood adjoining the Leicester urban area. This includes land north of Hamilton and Glenfield;

4.53 Possible directions for growth were identified in the Issues and Options Paper and have been assessed as part of the sustainability appraisal. For South Charnwood the Structure Plan requires a significant allocation of land for employment purposes with a smaller amount of residential development. As a possible future direction for future housing growth, land within Charnwood north of Hamilton and east of Thurmaston represents the most sustainable option.

4.54 Within south Charnwood locations for further employment development attractive to the market will be well related to the trunk road network, along the A46 and A6 corridors.

4.55 In view of the above the preferred strategy for future growth within South Charnwood is to meet the future need for housing and employment primarily through a northern expansion of Hamilton and an eastern expansion of Thurmaston. Further employment development should be directed to the A6 corridor north of Birstall.

4.56 Again as greenfield sites there will inevitably be environmental implications associated with development. Land east of Thurmaston and north of Hamilton is not subject to any special landscape designation. Further growth could be contained within the landform defined by the ridgeline north east of Thurmaston. At Birstall the Hallamfields development and associated park and ride facility will change the character of the landscape south of the A46 Leicester Western bypass. Land to the north is more sensitive, being more elevated and prominent to views in the wider landscape. Archaeological interests may be a constraint, particularly north of Hamilton where the presence of the abandoned medieval village of Hamilton would need careful treatment.

4.57 Growth east of Thurmaston and north of Hamilton would be well related to existing education, health, shopping and other facilities in Leicester and more locally at Hamilton and Thurmaston District Centres. A comprehensively planned urban extension would need to provide necessary

additional educational, health, shopping and community facilities. There are highway constraints in the area that would need to be addressed in order to mitigate the impact on rural settlements to the north and in Leicester. Expansion of existing public transport, cycling and walking facilities would offer the potential to reduce car use and encourage the use of other modes.

- 4.58 Growth north of Birstall would provide the opportunity to balance new housing development with further provision for jobs necessary to meet strategic requirements. The area enjoys good access to the A46 and M1 and is located on a high frequency bus route. It provides the opportunity to secure the provision of a high quality employment development in an accessible location. The provision of good quality employment land in locations attractive to the market is important for the local economy.
- 4.59 As with North Charnwood these preferred growth options would involve comprehensively planned sustainable urban extensions providing an appropriate mix of uses either through new provision or by building on and complementing existing uses and facilities in the area.
- 4.60 Initial discussions have been held with key service providers to identify the necessary community, recreational and other infrastructure that would be required to support the proposed urban extensions in the most sustainable way. Provision will need to be made for additional school facilities and health facilities to serve these areas along with local shopping facilities. Comprehensive green infrastructure will need to be provided incorporating children's play space and more formal recreation facilities in line with the Council's adopted open space standards. These detailed requirements will be set out in the Allocations DPD.

Please see Questions 13 & 14 on the Response Form

## The Other Options

- 4.61 The alternative directions for growth outlined in the Issues and Options Paper or presented in response to consultation have been assessed as part of the sustainability appraisal. The Sustainability Appraisal report presents the findings of this assessment and demonstrates that the preferred directions for future growth represent the most sustainable options.
- 4.62 For the other options, the reasons why they have not been selected as our preferred approach can be summarised as follows:

**North of Loughborough:** Could potentially exacerbate flood risk in the Soar Valley and threaten the separate identity of Hathern. There is less scope here to accommodate development and retain an effective Green Wedge. Additional employment development would not address the locational imbalance between homes and jobs in the town. Compared with the preferred western and southern growth options, this option is less well served by public transport and access to shops, local services, leisure and community facilities are more limited.

**East of Loughborough:** This option could have implications in terms of flooding and could mean the loss of higher quality agricultural land. An urban extension of sufficient size to meet the strategic requirements would be difficult to accommodate without jumping the floodplain. This approach



would result in significant urban intrusion into an open rural landscape. Again public transport and access to shops, local services and facilities are more limited than the preferred options.

**Shepshed:** As part of the preferred growth option west of Loughborough there may be some potential to accommodate development, particularly for employment purposes east of Shepshed. Expansion elsewhere around Shepshed is not preferred due to the potential impact on the Charnwood Forest, and more limited access to shops, local services and other facilities available in Loughborough.

**Adjoining Glenfield/ Leicester:** In south Charnwood the options for the expansion of the main urban areas are more limited. This is the main alternative to the preferred option of urban expansions at Birstall, Thurmaston and Hamilton. Land between Anstey and Glenfield/ Leicester is an elevated landscape and a critical part of the Green Wedge between Anstey and Glenfield. Again available land is limited and the scale of additional development required would make it difficult to accommodate development and maintain an effective green wedge.

**Service Centres:** In North and South Charnwood an alternative option would be to direct development to the identified Service Centres. This approach would not be consistent with the Regional Plan strategy of concentrating development in the larger urban areas such as Leicester and its adjoining settlements and Loughborough and Shepshed. The preferred strategy does not rule out limited further development in Service Centres to meet identified local needs for affordable housing or to support local services and facilities.

## The Preferred Policy Option

### 4.63 Draft Core Policy 2: Development Strategy for North Charnwood

The spatial strategy for North Charnwood is to:

- i) Allocate sufficient land for the homes and jobs required to meet strategic requirements and enable Loughborough /Shepshed to fulfil its role as the primary Sub-Regional Centre in the Three Cities Sub-area;
- ii) Prioritise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings;
- iii) Provide for the development of around 5,440 homes and associated infrastructure over the period 2005-2021 at an annual rate of 340 dwellings per annum. This includes:
  - 1,963 homes already permitted or identified for release;

- a target of at least a further 1,680 homes on small sites and previously developed land and buildings within Loughborough / Shepshed and the designated Service Centres;
  - around 1,800 homes as the first phase of comprehensively planned urban extension west of Loughborough;
- iv) Maintain the existing supply of employment land by safeguarding key employment sites and provide for the development of around 124 ha of additional employment land over the period 2005-2026. This includes:
- 32 ha already permitted or allocated;
  - up to 50 ha for a Second Science Park as part of the proposed urban extension west of Loughborough;
  - around 42 ha of general employment land as part of the comprehensively planned urban extensions west and south of Loughborough;
- v) provide for the growth needs of Loughborough University for academic space, student accommodation and recreational facilities primarily through an expansion of the existing Campus;
- vi) work with Loughborough University and other partners to make provision for additional recreational and support facilities necessary for Loughborough to play a key role in the build up to the London Olympics 2012;
- vii) as part of the proposed urban extension west of Loughborough secure the provision of comprehensively planned green infrastructure including a new County Park based on the historic Garendon Park, and a redefined Green Wedge to safeguard the separate identities of Loughborough and Shepshed;
- viii) Support the vitality and viability of Loughborough town centre and support its development and enhancement for retail, office, commercial, entertainment and leisure facilities



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in keeping with its role as a primary sub-regional centre;

- ix) Regenerate those areas of relatively higher need, particularly in Loughborough and Shepshed through the safeguarding of existing and provision of new employment opportunities, improved community and recreational facilities and improved access to jobs and services;
- x) Support the further improvement of transport infrastructure, public transport and other alternatives to car use as part of an integrated sustainable land-use and transport strategy;
- xi) Ensure the provision of facilities, services and infrastructure required for the creation of sustainable communities, including the provision of a new link road between the A512 and the A6 north of Loughborough as part of the proposed urban extension west of Loughborough;
- xii) Introduce a flood management strategy for the River Soar and its tributaries;
- xiii) Provide for limited small scale development within or adjoining Service Centres and Other Settlements to meet identified local needs, particularly for affordable housing or to support local services and facilities;

#### 4.64 Draft Core Policy 3: Development Strategy for South Charnwood

The spatial strategy for South Charnwood is to:

- i) Allocate sufficient land for housing and employment to meet strategic requirements to assist Leicester fulfil its role as one of the Principal Urban Areas within the Three Cities sub area;
- ii) Prioritise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings;
- iii) Provide for the development of around 2,880 homes and associated infrastructure over the period 2005-2021 at an annual rate of 180 dwellings per annum.

This includes:

- 1,762 homes already permitted or identified for release;
  - a target of at least a further 640 homes on small sites and previously developed land and buildings within Birstall and Thurmaston and the designated Service Centres;
  - around 485 homes as the first phase of a comprehensively planned urban extension north of Hamilton and east of Thurmaston;
- iv) Maintain the existing supply of employment land and provide for the development of around 53 ha of additional employment land over the period 2005-2026. This includes:
- 16.55 ha already permitted or allocated;
  - around 20 ha of general employment land
  - north of Birstall and 17 ha east of Thurmaston;
- v) as part of the proposed urban extensions north of Hamilton and east of Thurmaston, and north of Birstall, secure the provision comprehensively planned green infrastructure to provide a network of multi-functional greenspace including parks and recreation areas, informal areas, natural and semi-natural habitats and green corridors;
- vi) Support the vitality and viability of the existing District Centres at Anstey, Birstall, Syston, and Thurmaston and support their development and enhancement for retail, office, commercial, entertainment and leisure facilities in keeping with their role as District Centres;
- xiv) Regenerate those areas of relatively higher need, particularly in Syston and Anstey through the safeguarding of existing and provision of new employment opportunities, improved community and recreational facilities and improved access to jobs and services;
- xv) Support the further improvement of transport infrastructure, public transport and other



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alternatives to car use as part of an integrated sustainable land use and transport strategy;

xvi) Ensure the provision of essential facilities, services and infrastructure;

xvii) Introduce a flood management strategy for the River Soar and its tributaries;

xviii) Provide for limited small scale development in the Service Centres and Other Settlements to meet identified local needs, particularly for affordable housing or to support local services and facilities;

Development within the proposed urban extensions west and south of Loughborough and north of Hamilton and east of Thurmaston will be based upon the principles of development set out the Allocations Development Plan Document;

The strategy provides firm guidance of the directions for growth in north and south Charnwood up to 2021 with flexibility to take account of the outcome of the review of the Regional Plan on housing and employment land requirements.

### Reason for Preferred Option:

To reflect government objectives for the development of sustainable communities and reflect the strategy of urban concentration set out in the Regional Plan and Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan and help deliver the vision of the Core Strategy.

# Housing and Employment Land Supply and Phasing

## Background

- 4.65 Government guidance set out in PPG3 indicates that local planning authorities should manage the release of land for housing. The Government has consulted on recent guidance on the provision of land for housing recommending that local planning authorities should provide for 15 years supply of land for housing. The Regional Plan requires the release of housing land to be monitored and managed. The Structure Plan includes policies to phase the release of additional housing and employment land on Greenfield sites. Housing Policy 2 of the Structure Plan phases the release of further greenfield sites in the Borough until after 2011.
- 4.66 The adopted Borough of Charnwood Local Plan did not include a policy to phase the release of land for housing. The issue of phasing was debated at length during the preparation of the plan. We had sought to introduce a phasing policy through modifications to the Plan. However, the modifications Inspector reporting in August 2002 concluded that in order to meet the strategic housing requirements to 2006 it was necessary to release additional land for housing and, given the limited period of the plan then remaining, it was not possible for the Council to manage the release of housing land.

## A Strategy of Managed Release- The Preferred Approach

- 4.67 Our predictions of future housing supply for the Borough as at March 2005 indicates that the strategic housing requirement to 2016 set out in the Structure Plan is likely to be met through the existing supply made up of existing planning permissions, remaining local plan allocations and allowances for small and windfall sites.
- 4.68 The draft revisions to the Regional Plan outline a range of options for future housing growth. These options indicate a possible additional housing requirement for Charnwood of between 370 and 740 dwellings per year. To meet this additional requirement it would be necessary to make provision for the further release of greenfield land towards the end of the period covered by the Core Strategy.
- 4.69 Whilst the future housing requirement for Charnwood likely to emerge from the Regional Plan review is uncertain at the moment, it would be appropriate for the Core Strategy to include a phased approach to the release of further housing land. This reflects the fact that through strategic allocations in the adopted Local Plan the Borough has a generous supply of housing land to meet known requirements at least till 2011. Beyond 2011 it is likely that further greenfield release will be required. This release should be on a phased basis to provide the necessary control and flexibility and to enable us to manage the release of housing land and to respond to changes in the rate of supply from permitted, allocated and windfall/ urban capacity sites.



## The Other Options

- 4.70 PPG3 requires Councils to apply a plan, monitor and manage approach to housing provision. It is important that policies are in place to manage the release of housing to ensure the best use is made of previously developed land. The larger allocations in the adopted Local Plan will continue to make a significant contribution to housing supply over the next five years or so.
- 4.71 Without a policy on phasing we would have no control of the release of housing or employment land and would not be able to respond to changes in supply, for example the release of previously developed land being higher or lower than expected.

## The Preferred Policy Option

### 4.72 Draft Core Policy 4: Housing and Employment Land Supply and Phasing

The Borough Council will monitor and manage the release of land for new housing and employment development in three phases, 2005-2011, 2011-2016, 2016-2021 in order to prioritise the re-use of previously developed land.

The release of further greenfield land within the identified strategic directions for growth will be phased as follows:

	2005-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021
<b>North Charnwood</b>	0  50 ha of employment (including up to 30 ha on the Science Park)	900 dwellings  32 ha employment (including up to 20 ha on the Science Park)	900 dwellings  10 ha employment
<b>South Charnwood</b>	0 20 ha employment	200 dwellings 10 ha employment	285 dwellings 7 ha employment

The Borough Council will monitor the supply of housing and employment land on an annual basis and adjust the phasing of site release in order to maintain a 5 year supply of housing.

### Reason for Preferred Approach

To reflect Government guidance regarding plan monitor and manage and ensure appropriate control over the rate of development and release of greenfield land.

# Affordable Housing Provision

## Background

- 4.73 It is important that future developments proposed as part of the Core Strategy provide for a mix of housing sizes, types and tenures to meet the varied needs of the local communities. National guidance on the provision for affordable housing through the planning system is set out in PPG3 Housing and Circular 6/98. This indicates that affordable housing can be sought on sites of 25 dwellings or more or sites of 1 hectare or more. The Government has consulted on revisions to this guidance which, amongst other changes, would lower the site threshold to 15 dwellings or 0.5 hectares.
- 4.74 The Regional Plan indicates that LDFs should include policies seeking the provision of a mix of dwellings in terms of size, type, affordability and location. The aim is to create inclusive communities providing wider housing opportunity and choice. The Regional Plan sets an indicator of 3,950 affordable units per annum for the East Midlands. The Structure Plan indicates that the level of provision should reflect the results of local needs surveys and assessments. It suggests that the appropriate indicator for Leicestershire is 30% of housing provision being affordable.
- 4.75 The Charnwood Housing Needs Study 2005 identified real problems of affordability within both urban and rural locations in Charnwood. Work at the regional level highlighted Charnwood as one of the areas within the region where, as at 2004, average house prices were more than 4 times average incomes. The study confirmed that affordability was an issue throughout the Borough.

## A Policy for Affordable Housing Provision - The Preferred Approach

- 4.76 The updated Housing Needs Survey 2005 establishes the overall scale of affordable housing need across the Borough. It identifies an annual affordable housing shortfall of 279 dwellings. On the basis of this need assessment the study concludes that a target of at least 30% of affordable housing on qualifying sites is justified. This approach has regard to issues relating to the economics of provision.
- 4.77 Our Housing Strategy 2005-2010 aims to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes for people in housing need as part of a co-ordinated approach to regeneration. A priority action is to increase affordable housing targets on new developments to 30%. In rural settlements of less than 3,000 population the strategy recognises that the supply of affordable housing is limited. Amongst other measures it supports the release of "exception sites" and the preparation of Village Housing Need Surveys.
- 4.78 For the adopted Borough of Charnwood Local Plan, affordable housing provision was sought on sites of 25 dwellings or more or over 1 hectare in accordance with government guidance at the time. The Government has consulted on changes that would reduce this threshold to 15 dwellings or 0.5 hectares. We will seek to secure affordable housing provision on sites in



accordance with the relevant thresholds set out in national planning policy statements.

- 4.79 This approach has meant that the opportunities to secure affordable provision in rural settlements have been limited. Analysis of permissions for housing in the smaller settlements has shown that the majority of new housing that has come forward has been on smaller sites of less than 10 dwellings. For the rural settlements a lower site threshold for the provision of affordable housing should therefore apply. The strategy will seek the provision of elements of affordable housing on sites on 5 dwellings or more or 0.15 hectares in those rural communities with a population of 3,000 or less.

## The Other Options

- 4.80 The identified level of affordable housing need in the Borough provides clear justification for a policy to seek to secure affordable housing provision on sites in accordance with national and strategic planning policies. Options relate to the target for provision and the site thresholds to be applied.
- 4.81 A lower target would not reflect the scale of identified need in the Borough or make most use of the scope to secure affordable provision as part of new housing developments. A target in excess of 30% is likely to threaten the viability of sites, particularly previously developed sites in urban areas.
- 4.82 In terms of the site threshold, lower or higher thresholds could be applied if supported by evidence from the Housing Needs Assessment. For the rural villages a higher threshold would mean many of the opportunities to secure affordable provision on sites would be lost. A lower threshold below the suggested 5 dwellings is not considered realistic.

## The Preferred Policy Option

### 4.83 Draft Core Policy 5: Affordable Housing Provision

The Borough Council will seek to negotiate the provision of an appropriate mix of new housing in terms of dwelling size, type, tenure and affordability to meet identified local needs.

The Council will seek to negotiate a minimum of 30% affordable housing units on all sites meeting the thresholds set out in national policy.

In settlements with a population of 3,000 or less the threshold will be sites of 5 dwellings or more or sites of 0.15 hectares or more.

## Reason for Preferred Approach

To secure the delivery of affordable housing on new housing sites and help sustain rural communities.