

Introduction

- 5.1 In the last three chapters we have identified the key issues facing the Borough, our vision for Charnwood to 2021 and our preferred strategy for accommodating new development including the new homes and jobs we need to plan for over the next 15 years and beyond.
- 5.2 This chapter sets out the key strategic policies or "building blocks" that need to be in place to ensure that this new development is provided in the most sustainable way and helps to make Charnwood's communities more sustainable tomorrow than they are today. These policies, amongst other things, are about securing quality, sustainable design, safeguarding our natural and built heritage, ensuring everybody has equal opportunity and making sure that the necessary educational, community, shopping, recreational, transport and other facilities are planned and provided alongside new development.

Quality in New Development

Background

- 5.3 PPS1 emphasises the importance of ensuring good quality development through good and inclusive design and ensuring that development contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable mixed communities. It sees good design as a key element to achieving sustainable development, and notes that good design is not just about aesthetics. Good design is about addressing the connections between people and places, integrating new development into the existing urban form and natural and built environments, securing successful, safe and inclusive communities where everyone can access and benefit from the full range of opportunities. It stresses that local planning authorities should not accept design proposals which fail to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area.
- 5.4 The joint ODPM/ CABE publication "By Design- Design in the Planning System, Towards Better Practice" outlines 7 key design objectives:

- **Character** - a place with its own identity- reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture;
- **Continuity and enclosure** - public and private spaces clearly distinguished;
- **Quality of the public realm** - attractive and successful outdoor areas that are safe, and work effectively for all in society;
- **Ease of movement**- a place that is easy to get to and move through;
- **Legibility** - a place with a clear image;
- **Adaptability** - development that can easily respond to change;
- **Diversity** - variety and choice through a mix of uses that respond to local needs.

- 5.5 Both the Regional Plan and Structure Plan recognise the importance of good design and include policies seeking to encourage and promote good design within the region and County. The adopted Local Plan included a general policy on design. We have produced a Supplementary Planning Document- Leading in Design, to provide further guidance on the implementation of this policy and encourage good design in all new developments in the Borough. The biennial Design Awards Scheme recognises examples of good design as a way of encouraging the application of good design principles.
- 5.6 A number of Parishes have or are intending to produce Village Design Statements to identify those locally distinctive aspects of local building styles and materials that should be reflected in new development. Village design statements have been adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents for four villages to date. We will actively engage with other community groups in the preparation of additional village design statements which will be adopted as SPD to help inform the consideration of planning applications.
- 5.7 Much of the new development that has taken place in the Borough has been of a high quality, but it is recognised that there is room for improvement. The implementation of the Local Plan allocation at Hallam Fields north of Birstall, shows how, through partnership working between the local planning authority, developer and local community, high quality design can be achieved in large new developments.

Good Design- The Preferred Approach

- 5.8 Charnwood is an attractive and vibrant Borough with an impressive and diverse legacy of architecture, settlements and landscapes. Good design can make a real difference in shaping our built environment, the sustainability of development and quality of life. The Charnwood 2021 Core Strategy needs to set out the key strategic principles in order to ensure that development protects and enhances the local distinctiveness of settlements in Charnwood and the quality of life. More detailed guidance will be provided in the General Development Control Policies DPD and through the supplementary guidance in Leading in Design.
- 5.9 Good design is central to delivering the vision of Charnwood 2021 and delivering more sustainable communities in Charnwood. The principles of good design will run through the various Charnwood 2021 documents from the Core Strategy to more detailed DPDs and SPDs guiding the detail of new development and the approach to conservation. The suggested policy sets out our approach to securing design quality in new development. For major and more sensitive proposals, design statements and the use of the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) to demonstrate sustainable environmental performance will be important. Developers will be encouraged to seek to achieve a "very good" rating against the BREEAM standard.



The Other Options

- 5.10 Good design is a key Government objective and central to the delivery of sustainable communities. It is important that the Core Strategy includes a statement relating to this key principle. Therefore no other options have been identified.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.11 Draft Core Policy 6: Design Quality

The Borough Council will encourage good quality design which provides usable, durable and adaptable places, secures the efficient use of land by building to higher densities and protects and enhances the form, local character and distinctiveness of Charnwood's built and natural environment.

New development will be required to:

- i) reflect a clear understanding of the local physical, social, economic and environmental context for the proposed development;
- ii) provide for a compatible mix of uses where appropriate, particularly in town and village centres and main movement routes;
- iii) help secure a hierarchy of usable spaces providing for all ages and accessible to all, including people with disabilities;
- iv) provide walkable developments offering real transport choice, favouring walking, cycling and public transport;
- v) provide streets that are safe and comfortable spaces for all users;
- vi) integrate with existing routes to provide linked up places connecting with the wider area, in particular public facilities;
- vii) provide for the needs of all including the young, elderly and people with disabilities;
- viii) create safe places through the adoption of designing-out-crime principles to provide natural surveillance, visibility, and well lit environments;

- ix) provide clearly defined public and private realms with active frontages which reinforce and define streets and public spaces;
- x) incorporate comprehensive landscaping within and around the development appropriate to the scale and impact of the development;
- xi) secure the retention of features of biodiversity interest including habitats, buffer areas and wildlife corridors;
- xii) maximise energy efficiency through siting and design, and the use of sustainable materials;
- xiii) incorporate renewable energy facilities and energy saving technologies;
- xiv) provide sustainable urban drainage systems where appropriate to limit waste water and water pollution and reduce flood risk;
- xv) incorporate appropriate waste management and recycling facilities;
- xvi) foster a sense of place and reinforce local character and distinctiveness through appropriate design detailing, use of materials and provision for public art.

In developing their proposals the Borough Council will expect applicants to take account of Village Design Statements, Landscape Character Statements, Conservation Character Statements and other design statements illustrating important features of local distinctiveness.

For major and sensitive developments applications should be supported by a Design Statement and BREEAM assessment to demonstrate environmental performance.

Reason for Preferred Option

To ensure high quality developments that reflect the principles of good quality design.



Landscape Character

Background

- 5.12 Charnwood contains a mix of quite distinct landscapes, the most well recognised being the Charnwood Forest, from which the Borough gets its name. This largely unspoilt rolling upland now defines the eastern extent of the National Forest. Other areas include the river valleys of the Soar and Wreake, the Wolds and the western edge of High Leicestershire which extends into the Borough around South Croxton and Queniborough.
- 5.13 The Regional Plan notes that the East Midlands has the lowest area of nationally designated landscapes of all the English Regions and also has a relatively poor level of tree cover when compared to the UK as a whole. It seeks to secure the protection, appropriate management and enhancement of the region's natural assets, and an increase in woodland cover. Outside the nationally designated landscapes of the Peak District National Park and the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB, it seeks to promote initiatives to protect and enhance the region's natural and heritage landscape assets, in particular the Sherwood, Charnwood and Needwood Forests.
- 5.14 The importance of the National Forest project is recognised in the Structure Plan, which includes a policy supporting further woodland planting with public access within the National Forest. The policy indicates that proposals for leisure and tourism should be provided in the National Forest area beyond the boundary of the Charnwood Forest. The Charnwood Forest is the only landscape area in Leicestershire specifically recognised in the Structure Plan. The plan aims to strictly control development within the Forest area.
- 5.15 The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy assessed the nature of Leicestershire's landscapes applying Countryside Commission Landscape Assessment guidance. It identifies 18 character areas within Leicestershire, 7 falling within Charnwood. These landscape character areas are:

- Charnwood Forest;
- The Wolds;
- Langley Lowlands (area north west of Shepshed);
- Soar Valley;
- High Leicestershire;
- The Wolds;
- Wreake Valley.

- 5.16 National policy guidance in PPS7 discourages the designation of different areas of landscape character, indicating that local planning authorities should adopt a character area approach instead.

Safeguarding Charnwood's Landscapes - The Preferred Approach

- 5.17 The special character and variety of Charnwood's landscapes are much valued. They help to define much of the special character and identity of the Borough. The adopted Local Plan identified a number of landscape character areas to which different policies applied. These included three Areas of Particularly Attractive Landscape- the Charnwood Forest, Wreake Valley and High Leicestershire, and one Area of Local Landscape Value- the Soar Valley. This plethora of designations is potentially confusing and undermines the importance of other areas of countryside not subject to special designation. The Wolds was not subject to special designation in the Plan but is still an area of countryside with its own special character worthy of protection.
- 5.18 Government guidance in PPS7 emphasises the importance of protecting the character of the countryside for its own sake and notes that too many special designations can undermine policies to protect other non-designated areas of countryside. It recommends a criteria based policy approach based on an understanding of the particular character of the landscape through landscape character appraisals.
- 5.19 The Charnwood Forest area has a particularly special character which justifies a special designation in the Core Strategy. This approach would reflect the approach set out in the Structure Plan. The Core Strategy will establish the broad principles for safeguarding the character of Charnwood's landscapes. More detailed policies will be developed through the General Development Control Policies DPD. The National Forest is an initiative of national significance and needs to be reflected in the Core Strategy policies.

The Other Options

- 5.20 The alternative approach would be to continue with the adopted Local Plan strategy and identify a number of "special" landscape areas. PPS7 suggests that this approach may be acceptable where there is sufficient justification. It is considered that the criteria based approach, supported by landscape character assessments would offer clearer policy guidance and would ensure that all of the countryside in the Borough is recognised as important for its own sake. The exception to this is the Charnwood Forest where the long established strategic approach recognising its intrinsic qualities and the need to manage the pressures for change in the area justifies a special policy designation.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.21 Draft Core Policy 7: Countryside and Landscape Character

Land lying outside the defined limits to development, proposed areas for growth and areas of Green Wedge will be defined as countryside and will be protected for



its own sake. Planning permission for development will be not be granted unless:

- i) the appearance and character of the landscape, including features such as biodiversity, views, settlement pattern and local character is safeguarded and enhanced; and
- ii) built development is well integrated with existing development and existing buildings are re-used where appropriate; and
- iii) the development is limited to:
 - a. small scale development for employment, tourism, recreation or leisure that will help to support a sustainable rural economy;
 - b. agricultural or forestry buildings including dwellings for workers with an essential requirement to locate in the countryside;
 - c. affordable housing in accordance with the rural exceptions policy;
 - d. land extensive outdoor recreational uses that do not involve substantial built development;
 - e. telecommunications and energy installations, transport infrastructure and minerals extraction and waste management development where an overriding need for the development to be located in the countryside can be demonstrated, and appropriate mitigation works are proposed.

Proposals will be judged against more detailed policies and landscape character assessments included in the General Development Control Policy DPD and the Landscape Character Areas SPD.

5.22 Draft Core Policy 8: The National Forest

Within that part of the National Forest within Charnwood, development involving new buildings, significant structures or other operations will not be permitted unless appropriate provision is made for the creation of a woodland setting reflecting the National Forest context.

Proposals for the creation of new forest related leisure and tourism facilities within the National Forest in Charnwood will be resisted.

5.23 Draft Core Policy 9: The Charnwood Forest

Within the Charnwood Forest Policy Area defined on the Proposals Map, development will only be acceptable where it is appropriate to a countryside location and the special character of the area in terms of its landscape, ecology, cultural and built heritage and recreational value is conserved or enhanced.

Development which could adversely affect these special qualities will not be permitted unless a clear overriding need can be demonstrated and appropriate compensation works are proposed.

Reason for Preferred Option

To reflect national and strategic policy guidance and ensure the special character of the Charnwood landscapes is safeguarded and enhanced.

Settlement Identity

Background

- 5.24 Charnwood is characterised by a relatively concentrated settlement pattern. Around Loughborough the settlements of Shepshed, Hathern and Quorn all lie within 5 kilometres of the town centre. In the south of the Borough Anstey, Thurstaston, Cropston, Birstall and Thurmaston are all close to the edge of Leicester. Within the Soar and Wreake valleys the larger settlements are all close to one another. It is only in the more rural parts of the Borough, in the Charnwood Forest, the Wolds and High Leicestershire where we find a more dispersed settlement pattern.
- 5.25 This has meant that issues of settlement identity have long been important for local residents and have been reflected in planning policy. Previous local plans have sought to protect the separate identity of existing settlements through the application of policies to protect "green wedges" of open land



around the main urban areas of Leicester and Loughborough and "areas of local separation" between other villages.

5.26 Green wedges are an important planning tool in Leicestershire helping to ensure that, as the main urban areas (in our case Loughborough and Leicester) have expanded to meet development needs, important areas of open land have been incorporated in any new development. Green wedges are not Green Belt by another name. They are not intended to provide a blanket restriction on development. Rather they help to guide and direct urban development and provide "green lungs" penetrating the urban area, preserving and enhancing links between urban areas and the countryside. In this way they are an important tool in shaping urban growth so that as urban areas expand open land is incorporated. The main function of green wedges are to:

- protect structurally important areas of open land which influence the form and direction of urban development;
- ensure that areas of open land extend outwards between the existing and planned development limits of the urban areas;
- preserve landscape and wildlife links between the countryside and urban open spaces; and
- prevent the coalescence and maintain the separate physical identity of settlements adjoining the main urban areas.

5.27 Areas of local separation have also been important in safeguarding the separate identities of other settlements. The adopted Local Plan identifies areas of local separation between the larger settlements in the Soar and Wreake Valleys.

5.28 The Structure Plan emphasises the importance of Green Wedges as a tool to guide and direct urban development in accordance with the strategy of urban concentration. It indicates that in allocating land for new homes and jobs in accordance with the strategy of urban concentration and the sequential approach to development, the defined boundaries of existing green wedges will need to be reviewed. Where urban extensions are planned, new or extended green wedges may need to be defined. The Plan recognises the potential for properly managed green wedges to improve the quality of life for residents of adjoining urban areas by providing opportunities for public access to open space, countryside and the National Forest. In tandem with the Green Wedge policy, the Structure Plan supports the identification of areas of local separation to maintain the separate character and identity of other settlements not covered by Green Wedge policy.

Safeguarding Settlement Identity - The Preferred Approach

5.29 Both the Regional Plan and Structure Plan establish a strategy of urban concentration as the most sustainable solution to accommodate future development needs. This recognises that the expansion of existing main urban areas are likely to represent the most sustainable development

option by reducing the need to travel longer distances from home to work, shops and services, securing the most efficient use of existing infrastructure, conserving the countryside, and ensuring the socially excluded benefit from development activity.

- 5.30 Green wedge and local separation policies are a valuable tool to help mould and direct future urban growth. It is not the purpose of these policies to frustrate urban growth or to redirect growth to less sustainable locations. Through the careful planning of green wedges in conjunction with proposals for development, more sustainable urban extensions can be provided which incorporate areas of open land which provide for public access and recreation and maintain links between the urban areas and countryside and thus contribute to the quality of life for all people living in the urban areas.
- 5.31 The adopted Local Plan established quite extensive areas of Green Wedge around Loughborough and in the south of the Borough around Leicester. In order to accommodate the preferred directions for growth, the existing areas of Green Wedge to the west and south of Loughborough will need to be reviewed. An expanded green wedge will need to be defined in association with the planned urban extension east of Thurmaston and north of Hamilton. This review will be informed by a detailed landscape assessment to identify those structurally important areas of open land extending between the existing and planned areas of development that will preserve strategic landscape and wildlife links to the countryside and prevent coalescence and maintain the physical identity of settlements. The opportunities to secure appropriate public access and recreational facilities for the benefit of urban residents will also be a key consideration.
- 5.32 Our strategy to accommodate most of our future development requirements through comprehensively planned sustainable extensions to the main urban areas means that areas of local separation between the villages can be safeguarded.

The Other Options

- 5.33 The alternative options considered would be to dispense with the green wedge and separation policies or alternatively to maintain the existing designations without any amendment.
- 5.34 Without policies for the safeguarding of green wedges and areas of local separation, the separate identities of settlements could be threatened and urban growth that did take place would be likely to be less sustainable by not incorporating appropriate green infrastructure. The retention of existing areas without review would lead to less sustainable patterns of development contrary to the locational strategy of the Regional Plan and Structure Plan. The existing areas of Green Wedge provide limited opportunities for public access and recreation and therefore, other than their visual qualities, make a limited contribution towards the quality of life of urban residents. Using the Green Wedge policy as it was intended, as a tool to influence the form and direction of urban growth in association with a long term direction of growth option, has the scope to secure real and lasting benefits in terms quality of life by securing public access and recreational facilities.



The Preferred Policy Option

5.35 Draft Core Policy 10: Settlement Identity

In association with the planned directions for growth detailed in Draft Core Policies 2 and 3, areas of Green Wedge will be defined between:

- i) Loughborough and the adjoining settlements of Shepshed, Hathern and Quorn;
- ii) Thurmaston/ Syston/ Hamilton/ Barkby Thorpe;
- iii) Birstall/ Thurmaston/ Leicester

Existing areas of Green Wedge in the following locations will be safeguarded unless an identified local need for development justifies a review of boundaries:

- iv) Beaumont Leys/ Birstall/ Thurmaston/ Anstey/ Cropston;
- v) Beaumont Leys/ Glenfield/ Anstey/ Groby.

The defined areas of Green Wedges should:

- a) Protect structurally important areas of open land influencing the form and direction of urban development;
- b) Ensure open land extends outwards between existing and planned development;
- c) Preserve strategic landscape and wildlife links between the countryside and urban open spaces; and
- d) Prevent coalescence and maintain the physical identity of settlements adjoining Leicester and Loughborough.

The provision of appropriate recreational facilities in Green Wedges will be supported to ensure the positive management of these areas and their enhancement as key components of green infrastructure contributing to the quality of life of urban residents.

Elsewhere, existing areas of local separation will continue to be safeguarded unless an identified local need for development justifies a review of boundaries. Any review will need to ensure that those predominantly open areas of land essential to maintain

the separate identity of settlements are retained.

The detailed boundaries of Green Wedges and Areas of Local Separation and policies guiding the uses appropriate in these areas will be set out in the Allocations DPD.

Reason for Preferred Option

To ensure that important areas of open land between urban areas are safeguarded without prejudicing the Regional Plan strategy of urban concentration or leading to less sustainable patterns of development.

Infrastructure Provision

Background

- 5.36 Ensuring adequate infrastructure provision is an important feature of a sustainable development strategy. This includes necessary physical infrastructure such as roads, cycleways, water supply and reclamation, flood prevention and drainage, waste disposal, electricity, gas, telecommunications and ICT, and community infrastructure such as schools, healthcare, public transport, community buildings, sport and recreation facilities and open space.
- 5.37 PPS12 highlights the important role of the planning system to coordinate new development with the infrastructure it demands. The Core Strategy should look to establish a clear picture of the future shape of communities over a reasonable period of time to enable the bodies responsible for infrastructure provision to plan with some certainty. They also have an important role in influencing the Core Strategy so that it takes account of infrastructure constraints and needs. The current approach to securing contributions to necessary infrastructure through the planning system is set out in Circular 05/05. Where appropriate contributions to necessary facilities can be sought either by agreement or conditions attached to planning permissions. The approach to securing contributions is currently being reviewed and new guidance is awaited.
- 5.38 The Structure Plan indicates that developers should meet the requirements for and costs of relevant infrastructure and facilities required to support development. Where further Greenfield land is required for development the Structure Plan promotes developments of sufficient size to be able to support significant developer contributions towards transport and other infrastructure. The adopted Local Plan included a policy indicating that appropriate contributions would be sought in association with new development. Through the application of this policy significant contributions to physical and community infrastructure have been secured in association with new development. This has included contributions to new transport infrastructure including roads, park and ride facilities, bus and cycle facilities, schools and other community facilities, recreational and leisure facilities and affordable housing.



A Planned Approach to Infrastructure Provision- The Preferred Approach

- 5.39 Representations on previous local plans and comments received on the Issues and Options paper have highlighted concerns that in some settlements in Charnwood improvements to the physical and community infrastructure have not kept up with the pace and scale of new development. Over the past 10 years or so a number of Charnwood's settlements have experienced quite significant expansion. In some locations this has added to pressure on existing services and facilities. Whilst contributions can be sought from developers to compensate for the additional pressures on local infrastructure and facilities arising from their developments, they cannot be expected to make good existing deficiencies.
- 5.40 Most of the physical and community infrastructure in Charnwood is focussed on the main urban areas. As the main County Town, Loughborough is home to a range of facilities and services meeting the needs of the Borough and beyond, including the Epinal Way Hospital, fire and ambulance services and a wide range of educational facilities.
- 5.41 In taking a long term view to 2021 and beyond and establishing the broad directions for future growth, the Core Strategy should help the various service providers to plan future provision with some certainty. Concentrating most of the development required in strategic urban extensions will make best use of existing infrastructure and enable significant contributions to any necessary improvements to the existing physical and community infrastructure to be secured.
- 5.42 Discussions with key stakeholders have identified a range of requirements for additional infrastructure. The Strategic Health Authority have identified a need for a mental health unit. There is also a need to identify additional cemetery land in a number of communities. Sites for additional community facilities will be identified in the Allocations DPD.

The Other Options

- 5.43 No other options have been identified as Charnwood 2021 needs to include policies to maintain and improve the Borough's physical and community infrastructure and ensure the necessary contributions associated with proposed new development are secured.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.44 Draft Core Policy 11: Infrastructure Provision

Planning permission will be granted for proposals which meet the identified requirements for the improvement or provision of new physical and community infrastructure necessary to support the development.

When granting planning permission for new development which would not be acceptable without

reasonably related infrastructure or community facilities, the Borough Council will seek to secure their provision by entering into a legal agreement with the owners, applicants or developers involved and will negotiate accordingly. Developers may be invited to provide and contribute towards:

- i) the provision of off-site sustainable transport and drainage infrastructure; and/or
- ii) the provision of on or off-site facilities to secure necessary provision for the social, educational, recreational, sporting and community needs of the development; and/or
- iii) the provision of affordable or special needs housing; and/or
- iv) the provision of facilities or amenities to offset or mitigate the impact of the development on existing green infrastructure including recreation resources, protected habitats and species or recognised heritage sites.

Reasons for the Preferred Option

To secure the provision of necessary infrastructure and contribute to the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities.

A Strategy for Social Inclusion

Background

- 5.45 A key objective of national planning policy is the development of strong, vibrant and sustainable communities and promoting community cohesion in both urban and rural areas. This means meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion and creating equal opportunity for all citizens.
- 5.46 Regeneration of the built environment alone cannot deal with poverty, inequality and social exclusion. These issues can only be addressed through the better integration of all strategies and programmes, partnership working and effective community involvement.
- 5.47 The Regional Plan highlights the regional priorities for regeneration including the Principal Urban Areas and Sub-Regional Centres that exhibit very high and concentrated levels of deprivation. The Structure Plan indicates that measures will be taken to improve the quality of life within those areas suffering relative deprivation. Pockets of deprivation particularly in Loughborough are identified as priority areas.



5.48 Recent work undertaken as part of the government sponsored Community Cohesion Pathfinder initiative has confirmed that there are areas of relatively higher need within the Borough. A key output from the Pathfinder Initiative in Charnwood was a Renewal Framework. Through an analysis of statistical data, local consultations, key national, regional and local policy and strategy the framework identifies primary and secondary priority areas in Charnwood for developing programmes to tackle pockets of deprivation:

- Primary areas: Loughborough and Shepshed;
- Secondary areas: South Charnwood villages and Soar valley villages.

5.49 Recent information provided by the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 confirms many of the Renewal Framework's findings, but highlights the particular problems in Loughborough. It shows that the areas of greatest need are in located in Loughborough and are ranked within the 30 most deprived areas in the County (outside Leicester).

A Focus for Regeneration - The Preferred Approach

5.50 The Charnwood Renewal Framework has confirmed that the communities in Loughborough and Shepshed continue to suffer high and concentrated levels of deprivation. These problems have been recognised for some time. Previous planning strategies for Loughborough going back to the early 1970's put forward policies to tackle these problems. Although some progress has been made, the problems remain. Recent closures in the local textile industry have added to the problems. The loss of local employment opportunities has made it harder for residents in these communities to access job opportunities. These problems are exacerbated by language barriers within the ethnic minority communities.

5.51 A spatial strategy to tackle these problems will depend on coordinated action by a range of public and private partners and the targeting of resources to the areas of greatest need. The Core Strategy can establish the framework for this coordinated action. It can also identify the scope to address some of the identified problems through policies for the development and use of land.

5.52 The main issues in the area that need to be addressed include:

- Lack of community facilities particularly for young people;
- Lack of open space and recreational facilities;
- Limited access to local job opportunities;
- Areas of vacancy and dereliction;
- Low skill levels and educational attainment;
- Poor quality housing.

The Other Options

5.53 A do nothing strategy with Charnwood 2021 not seeking to regenerate areas of relatively higher need is not an option. Promoting social inclusion is a key objective of sustainable development and an important element in helping to deliver urban renaissance in line with government objectives.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.54 Draft Core Policy 12: A Strategy for Regeneration

Working in partnership with other agencies and local communities the Borough Council will take action to improve the quality of life for residents living in areas of relative deprivation by:

- i) securing local opportunities for employment through the safeguarding of existing employment areas and the allocation of land for new employment development where appropriate;
- ii) supporting the provision of improved open space and recreational opportunities;
- iii) supporting improved access to education, learning and skills training;
- iv) in conjunction with the relevant agencies securing the provision of improved community facilities;
- v) improving public and community transport, cycling and walking links to local facilities and services;
- vi) supporting a programme of environmental improvements targeting the areas of relative deprivation as a priority;
- vii) prioritising the areas of relative deprivation for grants under the Council's private sector Housing Improvement programme.

The primary focus of measures to achieve sustainable regeneration will be those areas in Loughborough and Shepshed suffering high and concentrated levels of deprivation. Priority will also be given to areas in Anstey, Syston, Thurmaston and Mountsorrel.

Reasons for Preferred Option

Securing the regeneration of areas of identified need will support government objectives for social inclusion.



Loughborough University and College

Background

- 5.55 Loughborough University and Loughborough College are important contributors to the local economy, both in terms of the number of people whom they employ and the investment that they attract into the town. Their reputation for excellence in research and education ensures for Loughborough particular recognition in the national and international arena. However, that success has imposed additional demands and pressures upon the 'host' community.
- 5.56 Over recent years those demands and pressures have been manifest in the degree to which increasing numbers of students have fuelled the buy for rent housing market, primarily in locations conveniently located in relation to the two main institutions. Local communities increasingly have become frustrated by the impact of those trends upon the quality of life enjoyed by the residual resident population. Frequently cited concerns include:

- The erosion of the sense of community and social interaction normally engendered in a stable, balanced community;
- Exclusion of first time and young family buyers to the detriment of the social balance and community facilities, especially schools;
- Congestion and disturbance during term time, sharply contrasted with an air of abandonment during vacations;
- Higher incidence of anti-social behaviour, particularly at unsociable hours;
- Increased levels of crime and the fear of crime;
- Poorer standards of property maintenance and repair;
- Accumulations of waste and rubbish, particularly towards the end of the academic year;
- Littering and fly-posting;
- The proliferation of letting signs, adding to the impression of transience and detracting from the character of the street scene.

Loughborough as a University Town - The Preferred Approach

- 5.57 While acknowledging that there are a great many responsible and considerate students and landlords within the community, the problems impinging upon the 'host community' are indicative of the social stress and imbalance occasioned by the concentration of a substantial number of essentially transient residents within relatively small neighbourhoods.
- 5.58 The relatively small scale of Loughborough in relation to the size of the University suggests strongly that existing solutions designed to encourage balanced communities in large cities simply could not successfully be

transplanted here. Loughborough needs its own local solution tailored to local circumstances and flexible enough to keep up with the pace of change.

- 5.59 "Leading in Leicestershire" – the Council's Corporate Plan to 2011/12, under the strategic aim of a "Sustainable Environment" sets out as a priority the need to work through the Loughborough University / Loughborough College Community Joint Liaison Committee in developing a multi agency approach to manage the environmental and social impact of the student population with the intention of achieving a more balanced residential mix and consequent environmental improvements. That commitment is reflected also within the aims set out under "A Clean, Safe and Healthy Environment," where actions linked to "Improved Community Cohesion" include working with Loughborough University and other partners to actively address the effects of a large body of students on the Borough.
- 5.60 In recent years the University has grown both in terms of student numbers and floorspace. It is important for the economy of Loughborough and Charnwood that the University retains its vitality and reputation for excellence in research and education. This may mean some growth over the period to 2021. However, it is essential that any growth in the size of the University:

- Does not have further impact on housing areas in Loughborough;
- Can be accommodated without making it difficult to meet Charnwood's other land use needs; and
- Can be achieved without putting additional adverse strain on the transport network in Loughborough.

- 5.61 The Core Strategy will introduce a mechanism to manage the growth of the University and the provision of student housing. To manage the impact on the 'host community' where the University or College expands their academic or administrative space, there should be a matching increase in student bedspaces on campus.
- 5.62 The Council wishes to restrict the level of unmanaged student accommodation in the private rented sector to current levels, around 6,400 bedspaces, in the short term and to seek a reduction of some 1,000 bedspaces in the longer term.
- 5.63 In order to reduce the impact of students living in Loughborough, the University Campus will be the focus for additional purpose built student accommodation.

The Other Options

- 5.64 Possible alternative options would be either to do nothing or seek to limit the growth of the University. The real concerns of local residents about the impact of the University on the town make it clear that a "do nothing" option is not appropriate.
- 5.65 The Council acknowledges the significant economic benefits the presence of the University brings to the town and Borough. A strategy to limit further growth would have significant implications for future economic



prospects. The preferred approach is to work in partnership with the University and College through a strategy to manage future growth and their impacts on the town.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.66 Draft Core Policy 13: Loughborough University

Further development for academic and ancillary uses (Class D1) and for student accommodation (classes C1, C2 and C3), including redevelopment of existing buildings, will be permitted on Loughborough University Campus/ Science Park where this will allow additional improved facilities to be provided and make more efficient use of land will be supported.

Proposals for additional academic and ancillary accommodation will be matched by an increase in purpose built student accommodation in line with the increase in student numbers. Planning permission will only be granted for additional academic and ancillary accommodation where the number of full-time Loughborough University students living in unmanaged accommodation does not exceed 6,400 students up to 2011 and 5,400 from 2016.

Where appropriate the Council will seek to negotiate:

- i) to ensure that student numbers only increase commensurate with additional purpose built student accommodation; and
- ii) for the resolution of traffic and car parking problems including the improvement of pedestrian, cycling and walking facilities; and
- iii) measures to encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking.

Draft Core Policy 14: Student Housing Provision in Loughborough

Loughborough University Campus/ Science Park will be the primary location for additional purpose built managed student accommodation. Supplementary accommodation may be provided in the town centre and other locations where the proportion of student households is low.

Development involving purpose built managed student accommodation will:

- i) be subject to occupancy restrictions or other arrangements to ensure the accommodation is only available to those in full-time education;
- ii) secure appropriate management controls, including no car agreements where off street parking is not available;
- iii) not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of local residents.

Reason for Preferred Option

To reflect government objectives for the development of sustainable communities by reducing the impact of large numbers of students living in unmanaged accommodation in parts of Loughborough.

Leisure and Recreation

Background

- 5.67 Good access to leisure facilities and open space is a key contributor to well-being and health, enabling people to have a place to exercise and play. It is a key feature of sustainable communities. Charnwood has a wide range of leisure and recreation facilities. Loughborough University is world renowned as a centre of sporting excellence and is likely to play an important role in the lead up to the 2012 Olympics. The Regional Plan recognises the regional importance of the clustering of sporting excellence in Loughborough, in particular as a catalyst for economic development associated with sport.
- 5.68 Loughborough, Mountsorrel and South Charnwood Leisure Centres are well used facilities much valued by the local communities. We are investigating options to transform South Charnwood Swimming Pool in Syston into a new leisure facility. This would complement the existing centres at Loughborough and Mountsorrel to provide 3 quality leisure hubs easily accessible to all Charnwood residents. The Charnwood Forest provides for informal recreational opportunities and most settlements in the Borough have reasonable recreational and open space provision.
- 5.69 PPS17 requires local planning authorities to undertake regular assessments of the available recreational facilities and open spaces to understand the needs of local communities. The Structure Plan includes a range of policies dealing with different aspects of leisure provision.
- 5.70 Our Green Spaces Strategy assessed the level of recreational space provision within the Borough. It identified particular deficiencies in District Park provision north and south of Loughborough, and in Shepshed, Birstall and Syston. It suggests that further country park facilities should be sought where opportunities and funding permit. The strategy also suggests that greater green space provision should be considered in the Soar valley area to provide easy access to facilities for residents in the adjoining villages.



- 5.71 More detailed assessment of space provision has identified particular deficiencies of local open space facilities in eastern Loughborough. The lack of easy access to local open space in this part of town is an issue that has been raised by local residents. It is one aspect of the problems of deprivation experienced in this area.
- 5.72 We support a programme of physical improvements to parks and open spaces and also run a series of successful activities and events to promote sport and recreation within the local community. Recreational Support officers have been appointed to work with the more disadvantaged communities to promote greater participation in sport.

A Strategy for Leisure and Recreation - The Preferred Approach

- 5.73 There are significant opportunities to improve leisure and recreational provision in the Borough and take full advantage of the economic benefits associated with the clustering of sporting excellence around Loughborough University. The London Olympics will take place in the middle of the Charnwood 2021 plan period. There are likely to be significant spin-off benefits for the local economy arising from the role the University will play in the build up to the Olympics in 2012, as a centre of excellence and training centre for Olympic teams. Charnwood 2021 can help to maximise these benefits through a planning strategy which makes appropriate land-use provision to support Loughborough's role as an important Olympic centre.
- 5.74 Whilst overall recreational facilities are good and Charnwood residents enjoy access to areas such as Bradgate Park, the Outwoods, Beacon Country Park and Swithland Wood in the Charnwood Forest, and Watermead Country Park providing for more informal recreational opportunities, the Green Spaces Strategy has identified gaps in provision. For a town of its size, Loughborough lacks a larger District Park facility. The Green Spaces strategy also noted the opportunity to provide a Country Park facility to serve North Charnwood. The preferred long term growth option west of Loughborough provides the opportunity to secure the provision of a new Country Park facility within a restored Garendon Park that would not only serve Loughborough and Shepshed residents but also provide a recreational facility of District wide importance. This option could incorporate the need for a District Park facility identified in the Green Spaces Strategy. The western growth option could also allow for any expansion of the University recreational facilities necessary in the build up to the Olympics and to take advantage of the economic opportunities associated with sport.
- 5.75 As part of a strategy for regenerating eastern Loughborough opportunities for improved recreational provision need to be identified. The adopted Local Plan included a proposal for the restoration of the derelict Allsopps Lane site. In association with supporting development this may provide the basis for an expanded recreational facility to serve eastern Loughborough.
- 5.76 In South Charnwood the identified long term option for growth should incorporate appropriate recreational facilities to meet the needs of future residents. Our Green Spaces Strategy identifies the need for additional District Park facilities in the Syston area. Elsewhere in the Borough it is important that existing Leisure and recreational facilities are safeguarded, and where possible improved.

The Other Options

- 5.77 A strategy to secure improved recreational provision is fully consistent with government policy and the objective of developing sustainable communities. The alternative do nothing option would involve no provision for improved facilities. This approach would mean Garendon Park would remain as it is, private land with very limited public access with the important historic features deteriorating further. It could also mean the spin-off benefits associated with the role Loughborough University will play in the build up to the Olympics would be lost.
- 5.78 Further development for housing and employment will take place in the period to 2021. Loughborough University will play an exciting role in the build up to 2012. Through an agreed long term spatial strategy Charnwood 2021 needs to use these opportunities to secure real and lasting benefits for the town and Borough. This involves directing growth to locations that can deliver more sustainable communities and local urban renaissance, and supporting the University and the regionally significant role it plays as a centre of excellence for education, sport, sports science, research and management.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.79 Draft Core Policy 15: Leisure and Recreation

In association with the identified preferred directions for growth and regeneration initiatives, improved formal and informal recreation facilities will be secured to meet the needs identified in the Green Space Strategy and provide for the recreational needs of future residents. In particular the Council will seek to negotiate the provision of:

- i) a new Country Park west of Loughborough based on Garendon Historic Park and Garden;
- ii) expansion of recreational facilities at Loughborough University associated with its role as a centre of sporting excellence;
- iii) new recreational facilities to serve the communities of east Loughborough;
- iv) a new District Park at east Thurmaston/ north Hamilton.

Existing leisure facilities and open spaces will be safeguarded and where appropriate improved.

Reason for Preferred Option

To ensure sufficient accessible green space is provided to meet the needs of residents



Managing Environmental Resources

Background

- 5.80 A fundamental principle of sustainability is seeking to manage environmental resources for the benefit of future generations. Vital environmental resources upon which the population depends for basic needs include air, water, soil, fossil fuels, and minerals. Development can have direct and indirect impacts on these critical environmental resources. Direct impacts can be the release of pollutants from industrial activity. Indirect impacts involve increased needs for power requiring the burning of fossil fuels.
- 5.81 Government guidance in PPS10 Planning for Sustainable Waste Management, PPS22 Renewable Energy, PPS23 Planning and Pollution Control, PPG24 Planning and Noise and PPG25 Development and Flood Risk seek to secure the effective protection of the environment and the prudent use of resources. The Energy White Paper (2003) sets out the Government's commitment to ensuring that renewable energy sources make an increasing contribution to UK energy supplies, with a target of seeing renewable energy resources supply 10% of UK electricity by 2010.
- 5.82 The Regional Plan sets out a policy framework for managing the water environment and flood risk, energy reduction and use of renewable energy and waste reduction management. It indicates that local planning authorities should take water related issues into account at the earliest stages in developing their planning strategies and should seek to protect and improve water quality, manage supply and demand and take account of flood risk and the implications of global warming.
- 5.83 The Regional policies for energy are informed by the Regional Energy Strategy which recommends that policies should seek to reduce the need for energy, significantly increase Combined Heat and Power (CHP) capacity in the region and set minimum regional targets for renewable energy. The regional strategy indicates that a package of policies should be promoted that result in zero growth in all forms of controlled waste by 2016.
- 5.84 The Structure Plan includes a number of policies addressing resource management issues. The objective is to manage and enhance the quality of the environment upon which the population depends for basic needs in order to maintain or improve quality of life. Policies address issues of pollution, energy efficiency, energy installations, the water environment and agricultural land.
- 5.85 We have adopted a Climate Change Strategy to guide our response to the issues of global warming. In March 2005 we signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change demonstrating our commitment to reduce our own impact on climate change and to help raise awareness of the issues locally. The strategy sets out a series of actions to seek to tackle the local implications of climate change.

A Strategy for Environmental Quality - The Preferred Approach

- 5.86 Because of its geography there are a number of environmental resource issues that the Core Strategy needs to address. The implications of climate

change have global and local implications. We need to adapt some of our ways of life to respond to the changes already occurring and at the same time look to limit future greenhouse gas emissions. With the Soar and Wreake valleys running through the Borough a number of Charnwood communities are vulnerable to flooding. Policies are needed to effectively manage flood risk and ensure that new development does not take place in areas at risk from flooding or lead to increased flood risks elsewhere.

- 5.87 The Borough's geology, with the rocky outcrops of the Charnwood Forest and the river valleys of the Soar and Wreake, means that mineral extraction – gravel and hard rock have long been a feature in the Borough. The County Council is the Minerals Planning Authority for Leicestershire and is preparing a Minerals Development Plan Document to set out the future planning policy for mineral extraction and after use.
- 5.88 There are opportunities to secure greater energy efficient features in new development locally, to promote renewable energy and the use of Combined Heat and Power (CHP). Specific examples are promoted through Leading in Design.
- 5.89 In many parts of the Borough agriculture remains the main activity. The Borough contains significant areas of best and most versatile agricultural land, particularly to the east around the Wolds villages. This agricultural resource needs to be safeguarded from irreversible loss through development.
- 5.90 Whilst air quality in the Borough is generally good, there are locations suffering from poor air quality, primarily as a result of vehicle emissions in the more congested areas. We have declared three Air Quality Management Areas in Charnwood, two in Loughborough and one in Syston. These areas are at risk of experiencing air pollution levels from nitrogen dioxide or sulphur dioxide above those set out in the UK Air Quality Regulations. We are working with partners including the County Highway Authority to develop action plans to tackle air quality in these areas.
- 5.91 With the presence of the M1, the A6 and A46 and Nottingham East Midlands Airport some parts of the Borough suffer some noise pollution. There have been concerns locally about the possible impacts of revised flight paths to and from Nottingham East Midlands Airport which are now routed over the Wolds and south Charnwood villages. More locally concerns have been expressed from time to time over disturbance occasioned by neighbouring noisy activities.
- 5.92 The Core Strategy needs to set out the Council's commitment to manage and enhance the quality of the Borough's environmental resources. The aim is to ensure that air and light pollution, noise and contamination are contained and minimised, energy use is reduced and renewable energy production is increased and waste is reduced and recycled. In particular it is recognised that we need to do more to encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy locally including but not exclusively biomass heating, combined heat and power, photovoltaic cells, solar water heating and wind power. One of the main ways we can encourage greater energy efficiency is through the location of new development in locations that reduce the use of the car and the distances travelled. The preferred growth options



are considered to represent the most sustainable option by directing new development to the main urban centres close to existing services and facilities and locations where public transport, cycling and walking offer real alternatives to the car.

- 5.93 The proposed long term growth options provide the opportunity to develop innovative approaches to energy efficient design and use of renewable energy production for electricity, water and space heating. We will look to tap in to the expertise available locally in planning these new areas for growth.

The Other Options

- 5.94 No alternative options have been identified. It is important that the Core Strategy sets out our commitment to managing and enhancing local environmental resources.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.95 Draft Core Policy 16: Managing Environmental Resources

Planning permission will be granted for development which manages the use and maintains or enhances the quality of environmental resources. Development proposals will:

- i) minimise the emission of pollutants including air, lighting and noise;
- ii) limit any adverse effects on water quality and minimise flooding;
- iii) minimise the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land and incorporate re-use of soil resources;
- iv) avoid the sterilisation of minerals and aggregate resources;
- v) use sustainable design and construction technologies to:
 - a) reduce water use and incorporate facilities for the re-use and recycling of water and waste;
 - b) minimise the use of energy and incorporate energy efficient design solutions;
 - c) incorporate on-site renewable energy equipment to reduce predicted CO₂ emissions by at least 10%.

The Borough Council will promote the development of a Combined Heat and Power Scheme (CHP) as part of the proposed western expansion of Loughborough.

Reason for Preferred Option

To reflect key sustainable principles and ensure that the use of local environmental resources is managed and their quality is maintained and enhanced.

Managing Travel Demand and Widening Transport Choice

Background

- 5.96 Good transport and communication links are essential to Charnwood's continuing prosperity. There is scope for further improvements but they need to be done in ways that minimise adverse environmental and social impacts. Up until the early 1990's new development tended to be planned with the car in mind. Over the last 20 to 30 years car use has grown significantly. Many people have become car dependent and the numbers of people walking, cycling and using buses and trains has declined.
- 5.97 Today the adverse impacts of high levels of car use are readily apparent. Traffic levels on most main roads are high at peak times with more routes congested for longer periods. The Leicester and Loughborough areas have the worst levels of congestion in the County.
- 5.98 Around 19% of households in Charnwood do not have access to a private car. This impacts more heavily in areas less well served by public transport where people without access to a car may be isolated from family and friends, jobs, services and facilities.
- 5.99 PPG13 sets out the Government's commitment to integrating transport and land use policies to reduce the need to travel and the distances travelled, promote public transport use and other alternatives to the car including cycling and walking and only increase highway capacity as a last resort.
- 5.100 The Regional Plan incorporates the Regional Transport Strategy for the East Midlands. For the Three Cities Sub-Area the priorities are to:

- Reduce the use of the car in and around the Three Cities;
- Improve public transport linkages between the Three Cities and London, the rest of the East Midlands and other national cities;
- Develop the transport infrastructure and services needed to improve access to jobs and services from deprived inner urban areas;
- Improve public transport access to Nottingham East Midlands Airport;



- Encourage modal switch away from road based transport in the manufacturing, retail and distribution;
- Reduce congestion and improve safety along the M1 corridor and wider highway network.

5.101 The Structure Plan reflects these national and regional priorities and through its locational strategy seeks to reduce the need to travel, the distances driven and increase the use of public transport cycling and walking.

5.102 The County Council's Leicestershire Local Transport Plan for 2006 to 2011 sets out a range of delivery measures to meet stated objectives:

- to reduce congestion by improving alternatives to the car, maximising use of existing roads, and applying soft demand management measures;
- to improve access to essential facilities by developing an hourly bus route network and community transport solutions;
- to reduce road casualties by road safety schemes and improved speed management;
- to improve air quality using anti congestion measures in problem areas;
- to reduce the impact of traffic by traffic calming and speed management schemes.
- to manage transport assets effectively

5.103 Proposals under consideration in Charnwood include:

- A major Loughborough Integrated Transport scheme to re-route traffic around the town centre and implement improvements for bus users and pedestrians in a safer, less polluted and generally traffic free central area;
- Improved bus corridors serving Leicester notably the A607 from East Goscote;
- Investigation of longer term bypasses for Wymeswold, one of a number of villages where significant levels of through HGV traffic cannot be rerouted, and Syston with continued through traffic nuisance. Already planned are M1 widening, improvements to the A46 Hobby Horse junction at Syston and a number of developer funded schemes.

Managing Travel Demand and Widening Transport Choice - The Preferred Approach

5.104 Consultation on the Issues and Options Paper and work on the Sustainability Appraisal identified a number of transport issues that need to be addressed. Because of its location the Borough enjoys good transport

links to the adjoining main urban centres by road and rail. Residents enjoy easy access to the national motorway network and Nottingham East Midlands Airport lies just over the border in North West Leicestershire. Regular bus services operate along the A6 between Loughborough and Leicester and the main settlements are reasonably well served by local bus facilities.

- 5.105 As a relatively affluent Borough most residents have access to a car. The generally good road access makes car use attractive for many trips. There are regular and increasing problems of traffic congestion in particular in and around Loughborough and on main approaches to Leicester.
- 5.106 The main ways in which this planning strategy can tackle traffic related problems is by influencing the location of development, improving transport choices and widening accessibility. We will continue working with highway authorities, transport operators and developers to develop integrated and sustainable transport solutions using public and private funding.
- 5.107 Contributions may be sought to improve public transport or community based initiatives to enhance accessibility and widen travel choices. Residents of areas of relative deprivation in the Borough with low car ownership can find it difficult to access job opportunities and services.
- 5.108 Real transport choice by bus is only available along bus corridors with high frequency commercial services (every 20 minutes or better), in parts of Loughborough, the old A6 south of the town, the A512 towards Shepshed, plus the corridors from Anstey, East Goscote, Syston and Thurmaston in and out of Leicester. The County Council's hourly daytime bus network along inter urban routes has improved access for most rural areas, and non car users but is not a competitive alternative to the car.
- 5.109 An area of Charnwood's size and settlement pattern could support high levels of bus use. However parts of Loughborough and Birstall have no better than hourly services. In addition services are lacking, for example, between well populated settlements in the Wreake valley, the Soar valley (including the Soar Valley Leisure Centre) and Loughborough (including Epinal Way Hospital); and between settlements on the northern edge of Leicester and the new retail park at Thurmaston. The necessary step change in the quality of bus travel will require substantial public and private investment. In circumstances where bus provision is not viable access needs will be need to met using flexible, community based transport.
- 5.110 Whilst some larger Soar and Wreake Valley communities enjoy access to local rail services between Nottingham, Loughborough and Leicester, the potential is restricted by the infrequent hourly service.
- 5.111 Cycling and walking are realistic transport choices for shorter trips or as part of trips combined with other modes. Development of the local cycling network will continue through private and public funding to help reduce car use and congestion. Because of its size and topography, in Loughborough cycling and walking represent real transport alternatives that need to be promoted. There are also opportunities in areas near Leicester to expand the already well developed urban network.



- 5.112 In order to achieve significant changes in travel habits, effective demand management measures will be needed as part of development proposals likely to generate significant travel. Measures will include travel plans and maximum parking standards. Innovative pricing mechanisms may also be required if other measures fail to stem traffic growth.
- 5.113 Road improvements will be needed in some cases where specific and overriding safety or other reasons are demonstrated. Road-based solutions likely to encourage further car use contrary to the strategy's objectives will not be supported.
- 5.114 Heavy HGV movements through communities present significant environmental problems, notably along the A6006 and B676 between the A46 and A6/ M1 through parts of Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. Speed reduction and traffic calming measures in Wymeswold and Burton on the Wolds help to reduce the impact but are not a long term solution. Further work needs to be undertaken with the highway authorities to identify a suitable alternative route or if none is available, to develop a sustainable package of measures to the benefit of all communities along affected routes for further consideration through Local Transport Plans.

The Other Options

- 5.115 Transport issues, in particular major transport schemes or changes that seek to constrain car use inevitably generate lively debates. Proposals perceived as likely to constrain car use are usually unpopular. However responses to the Issues and Options paper show some recognition of the need to do more to reduce current high levels of car use. The option of using stronger measures than at present attracted more support than applying few constraints to car use. There was no support for an option of trying to meet the ever increasing demands for car use.
- 5.116 Consideration of established policy guidance from national to the local level and the trends of ever increasing traffic growth and modest growth in use of non car modes leads us to believe that efforts must focus on achieving more sustainable solutions to traffic related problems in coming years.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.117 Draft Core Policy 17: Managing Travel Demand and Widening Transport Choice

The Borough Council will work in partnership with Transport authorities and other interests to seek to ensure that future travel demand is managed as part of integrated and sustainable land use and transport solutions that:

- i) provide a real alternative to the car, particularly in areas facing the most serious traffic related problems, by significant improvement of the coverage, frequency and quality of non-car modes, in particular bus travel;

- ii) ensure effective demand management using comprehensive coverage of travel plans, parking policies, and the managed use of road space with consideration of stronger measures to constrain car use if these are not successful;
- iii) restrict road improvements to those needed to resolve particular traffic issues without inducing further traffic growth and pushing problems elsewhere on the network;
- iv) provide well managed on and off street vehicle parking with the scale of provision based on maximum standards for cars and minimum standards for cycle parking;
- v) develop innovative and flexible community transport for unmet needs in urban and rural areas;
- vi) encourage incentives to reduce vehicle emissions by encouraging fleet and private vehicle owners to choose and maintain more efficient vehicles.

Planning permission will be granted for proposals which:

- i) are located to reduce the need to travel and minimise the distances people have to travel to jobs, services and facilities, in particular by car;
- ii) include improved transport provision and demand management measures in line with the overall approach set out in this policy.

Reason for Preferred Option

To conform with established policy guidance at national and regional level to promote a sustainable pattern of development that can help reduce traffic growth and congestion. The proposed approach is more likely than other options to provide good accessibility for people and develop real transport choices that are well used.



Town Centres

Background

- 5.118 Guidance on planning for town centres and town centre uses is set out in PPS6. The guidance sets out the Government's objectives to promote the vitality and viability of town centres by planning for the growth and development of existing centres, and promoting and enhancing them through strategies to focus development and encourage a wide range of uses in an attractive, safe and accessible environment.
- 5.119 Work to support the Regional Plan suggested that there was no clear hierarchy of town centres within the East Midlands on which to base regional policy. For the Three Cities Sub Area the strategy is to encourage the development of the Three Cities as the pre-eminent retail destinations in the region. Loughborough and Hinckley are identified as centres where public sector support is necessary to encourage further private sector investment.
- 5.120 The Structure Plan recognises the importance of existing centres and aims to sustain and enhance the role of Leicester City, and existing town and district centres. Loughborough is one of the existing centres identified as offering a wide range of highly accessible facilities and services.
- 5.121 The adopted Local Plan reflects this national, regional and strategic guidance. It identifies a hierarchy of centres within the Borough from the main town centre in Loughborough to District Centres in the larger villages and smaller local centres.

Town & District Centres- Ensuring Vitality and Viability- The Preferred Approach

- 5.122 The existing town and district centres in Charnwood provide a variety of retail and associated facilities serving local and wider needs. In the sub-area, Loughborough is the principal centre outside the Three Cities providing a mix of retail, leisure and cultural facilities. Elsewhere in the Borough, District Centres in the larger villages provide a range of facilities to meet more local needs.
- 5.123 The proximity of the Three Cities effectively determines the role Loughborough plays in the sub-regional retail hierarchy. The town's role as the primary centre outside the Three Cities brings important economic benefits. With further retail floorspace growth taking place in Derby, Nottingham and Leicester, there is a danger that the town could lose trade to these larger centres. This could have significant implications for the character and vitality of the town centre.
- 5.124 Two retail studies, for Loughborough and Shepshed and the Central Leicestershire area, have helped to inform this preferred options paper. The Loughborough and Shepshed study indicated that there was limited need for additional retail floorspace over the period to 2016. The recent Rushes development has met much of the demand for additional floorspace. We have commissioned consultants to prepare a Master Plan for Loughborough

Town Centre. The spatial implications of this study will be reflected in an Action Area Plan for the Town Centre if appropriate. In the Central Leicestershire Area, floorspace needs have been catered for by the redevelopment of the former Co-op store at Thurmaston District Centre. This redevelopment, along with the ASDA superstore will make the District Centre an attractive retail destination within south-east Charnwood and further afield.

- 5.125 The other District Centres in the Borough provide important local retail and supporting facilities. Some centres have suffered decline in recent years, partly affected by the closure of local factories. Strategies for revitalising some of these centres, particularly Shepshed and Sileby, need to be developed.

The Other Options

- 5.126 A strategy to focus retail, leisure and other uses within the established town and district centres is consistent with national and regional policy. The Regional Plan does not identify a need for further regionally important out of town retail development.
- 5.127 Some respondents to the Issues and Options consultation express the view that Loughborough should stay a market town and should not grow. Because of its role as a sub-regional centre in the Regional Plan, further housing and employment growth will take place in the town. Improvements to the town's services and facilities will be necessary to accommodate this growth effectively. Decline in the town centre through competition from neighbouring larger centres would be damaging to the local economy. The purpose of the Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan is to identify a strategy to safeguard and enhance the vitality and viability of the centre in a way that reflects the town's special character and heritage.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.128 Draft Core Policy 18, Town Centres

Loughborough Town Centre will continue to be the main focus for retailing, leisure, cultural and business activities in the Borough. The existing District Centres in Anstey, Barrow upon Soar, Birstall, Shepshed, Syston and Thurmaston, Gorse Covert and Shelthorpe, Loughborough will provide retail, leisure and cultural opportunities to serve their immediate communities. The vitality and viability of Loughborough Town Centre, District and Local Centres will be maintained and enhanced by:

- i) permitting new retail proposals of a scale appropriate to the centre;**
- ii) restricting the development of town centre uses outside the defined centres through the application**



- of a sequential approach to site selection;
- iii) defining key retail frontages within Loughborough Town Centre to safeguard its core retail function;
- iv) controlling change of use from A1 (retail) to other uses in Loughborough Town Centre and the District Centres;
- v) using the Council's powers of compulsory purchase where appropriate to bring forward sites for further growth in town centre uses where a need has been identified;
- vi) through effective Town Centre Management ensuring Loughborough remains an attractive retail and cultural destination;
- vii) integrating planning and licensing controls in the management of licensed premises;
- viii) working with the Police and local Chambers of Trade to ensure Loughborough Town Centre and the District Centres provide a safe environment for all;
- ix) improving access by public transport, cycling, and walking
- x) supporting the provision of additional off-street public short-stay car parking facilities for shoppers and visitors serving Loughborough Town Centre, District and Local Centres necessary to safeguard the vitality and viability of the centre.

Reason for Preferred Option

To safeguard the vitality and viability of the main centres in the Borough in accordance with government policy.

Built Heritage

Background

5.129 National guidance in PPG15 and PPG16 stresses the importance of identifying and protecting historic buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains and other features. The Regional Plan recognises that the East Midlands has a rich historic environment which is often undervalued and under threat. It notes that the historic environment can make an important contribution to strategies for economic development, regeneration and tourism. The Plan recommends an approach involving the

identification and assessment of assets, consideration of their contribution to local character and diversity and their capacity to absorb change. In identified areas for growth and regeneration the strategy promotes sensitive change retaining local distinctiveness.

- 5.130 The Structure Plan policies aim to conserve natural and built assets, emphasising that listed buildings and other historic features are priceless cultural assets.
- 5.131 In Charnwood there are a wide range of historic features including 20 ancient monuments, 3 historic parks and gardens, and 900 listed buildings. There are 36 designated conservation areas covering the historic cores of the larger settlements. We are preparing Conservation Area Character statements for all designated conservation areas. We have also adopted a local list of buildings of historic or architectural merit. A successful grant scheme has also helped the refurbishment and improvement of a number of listed buildings. The Great Central Railway is a local example of the successful use of the areas built heritage for tourism.

Safeguarding the Borough's Built Heritage - The Preferred Approach

- 5.132 Charnwood is an area of development pressure and this has meant that some historic features could be threatened by insensitive development. Some historic features are in decline. English Heritage has identified 50 listed buildings and structures at risk in the Borough. The Core Strategy needs to safeguard and enhance the Borough's built heritage. Detailed policies to deal with proposals affecting listed buildings or in conservation areas or affecting other aspects of the Borough's built heritage will be included in the Development Control Policies DPD.

The Other Options

- 5.133 No other options have been identified. National, regional and strategic policy emphasises the importance of safeguarding and enhancing the historic built environment.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.134 Draft Core Policy 19, Built Heritage

The built heritage of the Borough will be conserved and enhanced, with particular regard to statutory and locally listed buildings of historic or architectural importance, conservation areas, ancient monuments and archaeological sites and historic parks and gardens.

Reason for Preferred Option

To ensure the local character and distinctiveness of the Borough as reflected in its rich built heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.



Biodiversity

Background

- 5.135 Biodiversity is the variety of life among plants and animals and is a key feature of sustainability. It is important that development does not cause irreversible damage to biodiversity interests.
- 5.136 The Regional Plan seeks to secure a major step change increase in the level of the region's biodiversity. This challenging strategy is a recognition of the fact that of all the regions the East Midlands has the lowest coverage of nature conservation sites. The Plan sets out four key objectives:
- No net loss of habitats;
 - Delivering large scale habitat creation;
 - Addressing isolation and fragmentation;
 - Providing semi-natural green spaces in urban areas.
- 5.137 The Structure Plan establishes a series of policies to protect the hierarchy of sites from international and national to local sites designated Local Wildlife Sites (also known as Sites Important for Nature Conservation (SINCs)).
- 5.138 Both the Regional Plan and Structure Plan highlight the key role played by strategic river corridors, including the Soar and Wreake, as an important biodiversity resource providing opportunities to restore and enhance lost habitats and wetland landscapes, improve access and provide recreation and tourism opportunities.
- 5.139 We have long recognised the importance of nature conservation and we have commissioned survey work to provide accurate information on the extent and quality of biodiversity resource in the Borough. With the Charnwood Forest and the River corridors, Charnwood has a rich variety of wildlife habitat. Again the pressures for development means that some of these areas are under threat. The Core Strategy needs to look at how necessary development can be harnessed to safeguard and enhance local biodiversity interests.

Safeguarding and Enhancing Local Biodiversity - The Preferred Approach

- 5.140 The Charnwood Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) identifies key priorities in relation to both habitats and species. Charnwood 2021 needs to reflect these priorities.
- 5.141 Although there are a fairly large number of identified Local Wildlife Sites in the Borough, there are problems of fragmentation and isolation. The Charnwood Forest has a wide variety of biodiversity interests, some of which are unique to Leicestershire. The river valleys are key wildlife corridors and also comprise important sites acting as "stepping stones". The river valleys are a key component of the Borough's biodiversity infrastructure, also providing opportunities for informal recreation for many of Charnwood's communities. We have worked with Leicestershire County Council, and Leicester City Council in the development of Watermead

Country Park as an important leisure and recreation facility and assisted the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust in the acquisition of Cossington Meadows nature reserve.

5.142 In urban areas more could be done to provide for semi-natural habitats in association with new development. As part of the proposed directions for growth the opportunity should be taken to secure the provision of significant areas of nature conservation interest and restore and enhance biodiversity networks.

The Other Options

5.143 None identified. National planning policy encourages the safeguarding and enhancement of biodiversity interests.

The Preferred Policy Option

5.144 Draft Core Policy 20, Biodiversity

The rich biodiversity of the Borough will be conserved and enhanced through the protection of habitats, species and sites of ecological value, with particular regard to designated wildlife sites of international, national and local significance, ancient woodland and species and habitats of principal importance identified in Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and in the Charnwood Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Borough Council will seek to maintain and strengthen networks of natural habitats. Working in partnership with other agencies, the Borough Council will seek to conserve and enhance the form, local character and distinctiveness of the river corridors of the Soar and Wreake as natural floodplains and important strategic wildlife corridors. Proposals for improved access, recreation and tourism along the corridors will be encouraged where they are compatible with biodiversity aims.

The Borough Council will seek to maximise biodiversity opportunities in and around new developments through the adoption of good development design.

Reason for Preferred Option

To safeguard and enhance biodiversity interests in accordance with national planning policy guidance.

Please see Question 19 on the Response Form



