

**CHARNWOOD
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK:
REPORT ON LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP
FORUM EVENT 11TH JUNE 2004**

FOREWORD

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in Charnwood was invited to a one day session on the 11th June to discuss the Local Development Framework (LDF) which replaces the Local Plan and to participate in a consultation exercise. The event was facilitated by consultants Flying Giraffe Limited.

Officers from the Borough Council were able to give a strategic overview of the LDF and then all participants were invited to join a series of thematic round table discussions facilitated by a member of the LSP and aided by a technical expert.

This report provides the synthesis of all the feedback from the session both to the LSP and to Council staff.

The event was very well attended with over 50 LSP members and several staff from the Council. All participants had the opportunity to attend all the thematic sessions.

The themes were:

- Protecting the natural and built environment
- Economic prosperity
- Neighbourhoods not estates
- Transport and Accessibility

The subsequent sections summarise the main points made in the sessions together with feedback collected by facilitators.

Summary of Day

Transport and Accessibility

- Park + ride ...need for critical mass and the right drop off locations -
- P+R can be on mixed sites –e.g science car park for Saturday shoppers
- Explore light rail –as a flagship scheme?
- New road - Syston bypass?
- Try to co-locate housing and jobs where possible around existing transport routes
- Explore planning gain opps for community transport

Economic prosperity

- What is the changing nature of jobs – to what extent can the LDF influence this and what is Charnwood’s desired vision?
- Is it employment growth or business growth - the need for mix in scale of employment sites – start- up units and larger offices – but not more warehouses...big sites doesn’t mean big jobs!
- Should the employment land allocation be chopped up and spread around?
- Science Park Location – ‘Hobson’s choice’ - University/MI
- ‘Please can we say it’s going to be beautiful’?
- Economic prosperity
- Retain and encourage rural employment where possible...
- ‘Local jobs for local people’ – is the ‘where’ and ‘what’ driven by market or community desire? – train local people for market?
- Do we really need more A3 pubs and clubs – job growth and spend vs quality of life?

Neighbourhoods not estates

- Characteristics of a balanced community...
 - young and old
 - access to core facilities (esp. a school or faith-based facility – broader use of...)
 - safety and ease of movement
 - Build above in as ‘neighbourliness’ to planning appraisal processes
 - Develop a model that describes infrastructure needed to support different sized communities
 - Enforce proposed community facilities on developers
 - Welcome packs for new residents
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Protecting the natural and built environment

- Keep the identity of local villages and area of separation/green wedges – but don't create 'village apartheid'?
- Should areas of separation be classified/segmented?
- Protect Charnwood Forest – 'AONB'?
- Do we need green belts?
- Trade off developments with planning gain for overall benefit e.g. Birstall
- Built environment – 'the most destructive thing is disuse'
- Do we need a new country park and leisure?
- Is incremental development better than large-scale?
- The role of good design...use of design briefs

Graffiti – off the wall issues!

WHY ISN'T LOUGHBOROUGH SEPARATED OUT????

WHY NOT PUT ALL NEW HOUSING IN LOUGHBOROUGH?????

JOBBS OR NO CARS

QUESTIONS...

How does the Ldf deal with cross theme issues?

Challenge the charnwood bubble!

What are the charnwood usps that need marketing + to whom?

Where are the developers and other interests within the lsp family?

Questions asked afterwards...

Should Loughborough consider UDI – should it be separated out?

Largely a no response

All new housing should be in Loughborough

Largely a no response

Jobs or no cars?

Half and half - very split

How should the LDF deal with cross-cutting themes?

Protecting the Natural and Built Environment

The following ideas and discussion points emerged from the day:

How can the best of Charnwood be preserved whilst acknowledging that change is essential?

Protect Charnwood Forest

This may be more difficult because it is not designated as an AONB or National Park. Face this and argue the case rather than just assume its protection. In particular, protect the key features of Forest. Recognise that the Forest serves a wider population.

Classify landscape/separation areas into a hierarchy

- How do you rate a local footpath revered by local people and Bradgate Park which serves a wider population?
- Do we need Green Belt in Leicestershire? Are Green Wedges less effective?
- Consider a **new settlement in the woods area**.
- Make trade offs e.g. Forest Wymeswold airfield to absorb the sound of car use/employment use and use as a public open space resource.
- Make Soar Valley (and Wreake Valley) a new area for leisure – a mini Norfolk Broads for local people and tourists. Extend Watermead Park northwards. Take pressure off existing attractions – Bradgate Park.
- There could be a central tourist attraction for Charnwood around Quorn making use of Proctors park. National cycle route. Accessibility.
- Is there a need for another park. Garendon?
- There were questions about the viability for development of the land to the north of Birstall towards Rothley and the land between the M1 motorway and the east of Shepshed.

Settlements and villages

Retain areas of local separation/Green Wedges to keep the identity of settlements, with physical separation and green spaces between. Preventing spread of villages will keep them more close knit. Villages are a key feature of Charnwood but the edges are slowly being eroded.

Consider why areas of local separation are needed in settlements and villages when Loughborough has many communities not divided by green areas.

Urban areas

These lack a distinct feeling of community and need to improve self esteem and self image- could any of the ideas of settlement separation be translated into the urban community context?

Need transparent criteria to measure potential development sites against

Consider transport links, quality of environment (green space) now, potential for re-use, what would the development add to the area – infrastructure.

Where there is change then the landscape should be enhanced

Loss of green landscape should be traded against improvements to the built environment. E.g. Birtall secured some gains through development of Hallam

Principles of development

Fields but losing attractive green space.

Need to consider how development actually looks

Have more stringent guidelines. Protect sight lines across Soar Valley. Height of Charnwood Forest – should it be protected from wind farms or other development spoiling the view.

What makes a good built environment – design, size, scale, mixed use, green space and art?

Disuse is destructive. It is a target for decay and reduces vibrancy so that the built environment suffers

eg. Leicester Road, Loughborough. The Council should use its enhanced powers of compulsory purchase to overcome land banking.

Elements of good design include:

- Multi-purpose, mixture – serendipity
 - Distinctiveness
 - Style
 - Function
 - Purpose
 - Quality – good sound finish, build quality
 - Sympathetic to its location, context, setting (e.g. Printhouse is appropriate to its location)
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- Energy saving
- Light and noise pollution
- Phase development to incorporate infrastructure and local services early in the development process

Strict design criteria are required that are everyone is familiar.

- Standard designs are bad. Need some **innovation**.
- Consider establishing Design Awards in Charnwood.
- Integrate environment into places that we can look after ourselves. New social housing without individual gardens soon falls into decay and neglect.
- Cannot impose community spirit on a newly built large development. Adding small scale developments to each village to make the villages more viable. This approach goes against the planning gain/infrastructure argument.
- **Incremental development is better than large scale** one-off development. Diversity/mix of scale and design is important. Time is important for things to bed in.
- Shelthorpe was an award winning scheme of its time but it is not working as well as it used to. East Goscote is now beginning to work.
- Hallam Fields – an ideal test?
- Village Design Statements are not just about the design of single buildings. Its about use of space, sympathetic assimilation etc
- The Rushes is considered poorly built, already falling apart, oppressive and Churchgate mews is much better. Bullring, Birmingham is quality. The Rushes could have been a stunning piece of modern architecture. There's not another one like it in Leicestershire.
- Some hideous buildings have been allowed in the past (e.g. Flats on Victoria Street corner) but there are some buildings that should be retained – art deco, the Carillon, Carnegie Library etc. Should not always look to the past - **modern design is important for now and the future**. Should keep the things we love (good design or not) that are part of our history

Co-ordinate development of frontages along A6 in Loughborough. Keep appropriate frontages

Is the gypsum building in Barrow-upon-Soar offensive?
Science Park could be acceptable if well landscaped and disguised.

Economic Prosperity

Transport/Traffic

- There should be a balance between villages and transport.
- The traffic into Loughborough along the A50 is horrendous.
- Rothley Lodge is a bad example of an employment site because of the need to travel by car.
- Need to consider access to transport, need to avoid further car use. However, where employment sites/opportunities involve delivery vehicles then need to consider locations near large roads.
- There was a feeling that hi-tech businesses were good because the impact on roads and traffic were less because they have less deliveries, and so less transport from them.
- Other comments: the rail station needs upgrading; the whole area is very unwelcoming.
- There are not enough transport systems, in areas such as Mountsorrel. There is a danger with the approach that it becomes Loughborough focused, not village focused.
- In assessing suitable sites it is not enough to just look whether there is a bus service, the assessment should include its frequency and reliability.
- It was recognised that a problem is that people change their jobs very often, unlike the past, and that people are travelling further. Also, 24 hour shift patterns cause a problem in terms of accessing jobs, particularly by public transport

What might go where?

- Warehousing developments on the edge of town, is it really what is wanted for Charnwood. The group were generally anti-warehousing because it does not bring many jobs for the area. Concern of warehousing land at Rothley Lodge- do not want it
 - The group thought that a big issues was rural versus town employment
 - The group want to know whether it is employment growth that we are going for, or are we going for business growth. i.e. number of jobs or businesses, because some businesses only bring two or three jobs.
 - It was suggested that of the 30 ha of employment land that there should be a limit on the availability of land for warehousing use.
 - A concern was raised that if we state what and where we want employment and that this was not where businesses want to locate then there is a danger of creating empty, derelict areas.
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- In terms of employment sites the council should not just hang on to them for the sake of it within that use, there should be a clear assessment on the suitability of the site, e.g. roads, and if it is not suitable then allowed to be housing or other development.
 - There was the suggestion that Charnwood would end up as a dormitory village- an exporter of employment.
 - It was suggested that there should be a site in the south of the Borough that is designated for key employees.
 - There was one suggestion that the Burder Street site could accommodate the key employment site in Loughborough, bringing in opportunities for this area.
 - Another suggested that the Science Park should be located close to the M1, but there should be a clear planning framework. Another suggested Dishley Grange.
 - A suggestion for a strategic employment site in the north was the old quarry.
 - Need more start up units, which requires appropriate infrastructure. The capacity to locate in social needs areas would be ideal.
 - 20 ha site should be up the A6 and beyond AstraZeneca- either on the rugby football club and move them out or beyond, or the site could be located the other side of the existing recreational facilities.
 - The 20ha site should be located near the station, it would be a good location in terms of trains.
 - Any out of town centre developments, such as Barkby Thorpe, should have a village feel, rather than being sterile
 - In the south the 30 ha site should be located in Thurmaston. It has to be near a dual carriageway. A big consideration is whether we would want traffic to go through Thurmaston.
 - The 30ha site in the south should be located at the former Rearsby Automotives site.
 - The economy should be kept going/moving it is buoyant, but there are pockets of deprivation who need assistance, should concentrate on those areas too.
 - **Skills**
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- A lot is always said about the graduates of the University, but what about students of the School of Art and Design. They have skills too. This can generate tourism and crafts. More needs to be done to promote arts.
 - Within the Borough more start up units are required which are affordable, in addition within these units it would be good if there could be secretarial skills provided for businesses to utilise on site.
 - Need to understand the skill base. The economy develops over time. We should be educating local people so that they can compete for these jobs.
 - Need to meet the needs of the local economy, companies like AstraZeneca do not use local skills, they draw in the expertise.
 - There was a suggestion that colleges should be doing training apprenticeships.
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Town centre

- When raising the issue of talking about the town- which town, always a Loughborough focus!
- Loughborough was seen as a viable town, but the A6 suffers from car congestion. One suggestion was that it was in reality not that bad and that there were a lot of crossings through the town.
- Syston- has felt the affects of Thurmaston, which has now been elevated to a district centre which is not subjected to strict controls like the town centre. The unregulated planning permissions are causing problems.
- Some town centres are relatively quiet others not. How many different uses can a town centre have before the balance is upset. Is there a threshold, for example can we limit the number of A3 uses in an area, and once that threshold is met refuse all others/have no more. However, on the other hand it is recognised that these uses create jobs, particularly for local people.
- For town centres need to plan for mixed and 24 hour uses, promote lively town centres.
- It is felt in the town centre that there is some difficulty, at least experienced by one member, in recruiting people to work in the shops because Leicester and Nottingham are competing. There was a query as to whether it had anything to do with the high cost of daily parking within Loughborough.
- There is a problem that long term residents are disappearing from Loughborough town centre, but students do help the economy as doors would be closed to A3 uses and other businesses otherwise, which does provide jobs.

Mix and Diversification

- Would like to see lots of sites to split up the amount of employment and share it around all locations, so that people live near employment sites.
 - Should develop Broadband links so that people can work from home and/or set up businesses in villages and other rural locations.
 - It was felt that tourism is a growth sector, and one thing that should be promoted is the celebration of our history and special sites with plaques informing people/visitors of key buildings and locations.
 - Farm diversification should be encouraged to provide start up enterprises and craft businesses.
 - There should be a partnership between the businesses and the council.
 - A demand for a qualitative assessment of what types of businesses are required, e.g. warehousing is any needed.
 - It should be recognised that there are more wards than Lemington and Hastings that are deprived, they are always being recognised, must also acknowledge and assist Shelthorpe, Keates Way and Ashby.
 - The changing nature of the town appears to be a concern, particularly Storer Road.
 - A big concern was whether Loughborough would turn into a Nottingham- this is in relation to the A3 uses, and the trouble that is often associated with these uses
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- A3 uses should be promoted for all the family, not just younger people.
- There are many activities visited by people from all over UK and the world, e.g. Charnwood Water for the model motor boat races, but these are not very well publicised or built on. One concern was the lack of accommodation to accommodate people, as some visitors were finding B&B outside Loughborough, and possibly outside the borough. Needs to be more accommodation within Loughborough to accommodate tourists.

Employment

- Issues that need to be considered for employment locations are parking, transportation links, and housing.
 - Concern raised generally over the amount of employment land lost to housing.
 - The competition of employment opportunities at the airport,
 - Need to take advantage of tourism uses and employment that is associated with the A3 uses.
 - An appreciation that employment is market driven and if there was no strict controls on the Science Park it would not have succeeded.
 - A big concern was that more employment meant the need for more houses and more development.
 - There was a suggestion for further growth around Thurmaston and Syston to accommodate the employment needs in the south of the borough.
 - The Community Enterprise, should talk to them and seek people's needs, one requirement may be the need for micro-businesses in rural areas.
 - A desire to split up the employment sites and share them around the borough.
 - Raised the concern of employment in villages. One suggested that we do need to keep it in the villages, but does it reflect reality
 - Other comment: should promote flexible working homes, and more home working.
 - Premium sites that people want to develop for employment sites should be protected.
 - Sileby should have more employment opportunities and a share of the key employment sites because of the loss of businesses that it has suffered.
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Transport & Accessibility

How do you think the LDF can contribute to reducing congestion and car use? What measures should the LDF concentrate on on?

- Plan for a balance of uses locally so people need to travel less. Housing and employment should be located close together, especially in villages.
 - Employment sites in villages should be retained and not lost to other uses, notably housing. Many villages have lost their sustainable patterns of land uses where people could walk to work. They have become dormitories for urban areas.
 - Large allocation should be split as small employment sites are needed in villages (particular reference to Woodhouse Eaves). Any remaining larger scale development should be located in places reasonably well served by public transport. This is likely to be urban areas and public transport corridors.
 - -Need improved public transport and development directed to locations well served by public transport such as a rail station or good bus corridor; and
 - -In addition to carrots to reduce car use there will also need to be some measures of restraint, notably to help reduce the number of cars trying to get into central areas.
 - View also expressed that will also need good quality car parking and improvements to the road network as many journeys will still be undertaken by car.
 - Need for more rail stations. Particular reference made to Rearsby in addition to stations already proposed at East Goscote and Thurmaston.
 - Develop community rail partnership for the Soar and Wreake valley with potential to use Parry people mover.
 - Place cordon round Loughborough and restrict cars entering town.
 - LDF could help achieve contributions for improvements through new developments: Better public transport, Works buses, community transport, better quality buses etc
 - Still need to plan for car use because public transport is so unreliable
 - Stop building houses on former employment sites in towns and villages. In Shepshed employment sites are now mainly restricted to edge of town near A512 and employees use town centre less at lunchtimes adding to decline
 - Take services to the people living in villages and rural areas.
 - In villages allow housing and employment developments that will support local services, notably schools and post offices and improve local sustainability. Housing needs to relate to local demographic needs
 - Need to significantly improve public transport and apply measures to restrain car use. This could include some restrictions on parking in new developments provided this would not create problems.
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What contribution could park and ride, light rail or other measures make to local transport needs? Are there any specific schemes you wish to be considered? Where?

- Park and ride is good for serving trips to centres of big urban areas, as is the case with the successful Meynells Gorse site in Leicester. However it is very expensive to provide and is less effective in wider needs, such as places of work dispersed across the urban area. Such needs are difficult to serve by public transport.
- Concerns were expressed that P & R could generate extra traffic movements through villages near sites.
- Wider agreement that P & R could have a role to play in Loughborough especially where it is part of, and hopefully funded by, wider development proposals. A512 corridor viewed as offering most potential.
- Reference made to possibility of light rail for Syston/ East Goscote and use of Great Central railway corridor into Loughborough.
- The group felt light rail was desirable in the longer term but that it would be expensive, and in a place like Loughborough there is probably insufficient road space to accommodate it on-street
- Enthusiasm for P & R to serve Loughborough, in particular on the A6 from Quorn to help reduce need for children to be driven to Endowed Schools, and also related to the Great Central Railway.
- P & R on University campus could serve needs for student parking as well as wider needs of the town.
- P & R would have to be cheaper than town centre parking. Higher prices in the centre might adversely impact on the attractiveness of the market as people would be reluctant to carry goods on the bus to a P & R site.
- There is a need for better public transport to serve all the various movements across the Soar valley
- Low cost light rail solution based on Parry people mover as flagship scheme for Charnwood Borough Council either in Wreake valley or GCR into Loughborough then on-street eg to University
- P & R:
 - -on A6 into Loughborough from the south to help reduce numbers of children being driven to Endowed schools; although doubts expressed about viability in a town of Loughborough's size with sites so near the town centre
 - At East Goscote allied to new rail station and bus services in and out of Leicester. This would reduce traffic pressures in Syston.
 - Need more car parking to support Loughborough town centre

What improvements are needed to local provision for walking and cycling? Are there any routes that need to be created or improved?

- There are too many gaps in the existing network of cycle facilities.
 - Need to do more to increase numbers cycling and walking to school, especially in Loughborough where school related traffic is a major contributor to traffic problems, especially the Endowed schools.
 - Greater use of yellow school buses, and potential for cycling buses as well as walking buses mentioned.
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- Need for more on road facilities, e.g. from Wreake Valley college to East Goscote , alongside the A607, but only suggested off-road routes is use of wide footways/ alleyways for dual use with pedestrians where they are wide enough.
- Need to ensure all new developments provide for cycling
- Need to develop more detailed strategies for individual areas such as the Syston Cycling Strategy prepared by the Town Council in consultation with the County Council. This sets out a long term network for the town that could be developed with public funding and other sources including contributions from development.

Are there any new road schemes you feel should be considered for inclusion in the LDF as part of a safe, effective and sustainable transport system?

- Support for the Loughborough Inner Relief Road to enable wider pedestrian priority areas in the town centre and to help ease traffic problems in and around the centre.
 - Support for an eastern bypass of Syston
 - Need for better east to west links across the Borough, notably from A46 to Loughborough. This is not just related to flooding but due to the poor quality of existing links. Problems exacerbated in some areas by opening of the A50 from M1J24 to Stoke. This has generated a lot of HGV movements on lower standard routes across the Borough.
 - Poor road access in the quadrant between A46 and A47 north east of Leicester is creating real problems in Barkby and other villages.
 - Shepshed needs better access to the A512
 - Some concerns expressed that new roads would just attract even more traffic
 - Syston Northern Bypass
 - Loughborough Eastern Bypass
 - Signalisation of roundabouts along Epinal Way
 - Traffic calming measures to reduce speeds on roads across Forest between Loughborough and Coalville/ M1. Specific reference to problems through woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves.
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 - Poor road access in the quadrant between A46 and A47 north east of Leicester is creating real problems in Barkby and other villages.
 - Shepshed needs better access to the A512
 - Some concerns expressed that new roads would just attract even more traffic
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Suggested locations for development

Science Park

- Close to M1, J23 preferably to the west nearer Shepshed as there would be less impact on traffic in and out of Loughborough
- Have a good clearout and put in Loughborough town centre or near rail station
- Shepshed side of M1J23 to maximize access to motorway

20 ha strategic employment site

- In north of Borough: on A6 north of Loughborough to take advantage of Kegworth bypass (some people wanted this broken up and allocated to villages) – without harming green wedges
- Near Woodthorpe / A6 south of town to address imbalance between housing and employment in this area.

30 ha employment site

- Put in north of Borough in area adjacent to M1, J23
- In south of Borough: Rearsby Automotives
- in south of Borough: at Roundhill on A46

General comments

Need to ensure all new developments provide for cycling

Link to good public transport, but also make use of M1 corridor which is to be widened on coming years.

All these sites were chosen because of good road links and need to provide good access for HGVs. View seemed to be that freight unlikely to transfer to rail.

(there was a minority view that all the employment development should go next to M1J23)

Neighbourhoods not Estates

Neighbourhood issues are essentially about neighbourliness.

What makes neighbourhoods work?

- Low fear of crime;
 - Shops/ post office and basic facilities;
 - A mix of house types and styles;
 - Meeting places and village greens;
 - Importance of looking at the needs of the ageing population were raised.
 - There should be an analysis of existing capacity in services e.g. schools to look at where new development could go.
 - Greater use could be made of existing community facilities such as school halls.
 - Design is also an important consideration. Detailed design can make an important contribution to the development of successful neighbourhoods.
 - There are important links between housing and employment issues- providing for mixed uses and for young/ old and families all important parts of planning for neighbourhoods.
 - The concept of neighbourhoods is more problematic for larger urban areas. Again design rose as an important factor.
 - Neighbourhoods need sufficient community spaces and open space to work well.
 - There was discussion about the relative merits of new settlements providing all facilities and the alternative of infill where it is harder to get the facilities in place.
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- Size is a factor- need to develop at the community scale. Development at a smaller scale of broken up into parts so that they can be seen as distinct neighbourhoods.
 - Comments were made that it is vital that contributions are secured from developers towards community facilities.
 - The possible use of school facilities by wider community seen as important.
 - It was suggested we should examine existing settlements and look at what makes them sustainable. This should then be applied to new developments.
 - Should not plan new estates in isolation- needs to be considered in relation to existing settlements.
 - Provision of a primary school was a key factor contributing to developing neighbourhoods.
 - Need to design local centres so that they work in design terms.
 - There was the suggestion that the S106 process needs to be reviewed.
 - We live in a wide range of communities and they exist at a variety of levels.
 - There was a view that traditional neighbourhoods have declined because of car use and modern lifestyles- hard to turn clock back.
 - Neighbourhoods are effectively a group of interacting communities sharing links with shops, recreation work and homes.
 - Walkability is the key- things need to be in walking distance then people will interact.
 - There were suggestions that in new development you need to put the facilities in first so that communities can grow.
 - Point made that people make places not planning . It is possible to plan everything right and there is still no neighbourhood.
 - It is also about management- not just planning something and walking away- need ongoing management and enforcement where necessary.
 - Discussion about how successful the Shelthorpe estate was when originally built and the problems that have occurred since.
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