

## Core Strategy Issues and Options

June 2005

# ISSUES & OPTIONS

## Foreword

Planning helps shape the places where we live and work. In 2004 a new planning system was introduced that has changed the way Charnwood and other local councils plan their areas. The old system of Structure Plans prepared by county councils and Local Plans prepared by district councils has been replaced by a new document- the Local Development Framework. This will be a folder of documents that will set out how an area will change looking ahead 10 years or so.

We have started work on the Charnwood Local Development Framework- the Charnwood LDF. One of the first documents we need to produce is a **Core Strategy**. This will set out our spatial strategy to help us guide and manage future development in the Borough in the most sustainable way.

This **Issues and Options paper** is the first stage in preparing the Core Strategy. It outlines our vision for the Borough and sets out some initial ideas about possible options that could form part of the Core Strategy. It also looks at possible options for providing a new Science Park in Loughborough. This is a key proposal which we are keen to progress.

But we want to know what you think. Please take some time to look at the paper and answer the questions at the end. Your comments will help us to decide on the best way forward for Charnwood. We will consult again on our preferred approach later in the year before we finalise the Core Strategy early in 2006.

Nothing has been decided so now is the time to get involved.



Councillor Cameron MacLeod,  
Lead Member for Planning.

Please complete the questionnaire and return it by the **29<sup>th</sup> July 2005** to:

Planning Policy Services, Borough of Charnwood,  
Southfields, Southfield Road, Loughborough,  
Leicestershire, LE11 2TN or by email to  
[localplans@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:localplans@charnwood.gov.uk)

If you would like to obtain copies in Braille, on audio tape or large print, please contact us by telephoning 01509 634769 or email [localplans@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:localplans@charnwood.gov.uk)

If you would like to have the content of any part of this document explained to you in your own language, please ring 01509 634769

### Gujarati

આ દસ્તાવેજના સમાવેશમાથી જો તમને કોઈ પણ ભાગની તમારી ભાષામા સમજણ જોઈતી હોયતો, મહેરબાની કરી અને 01509 634769 પર ફોન કરશો.

### Hindi

यदि आप चाहते हैं कि आपको इस दस्तावेज के किसी भी भाग का विवरण आपकी अपनी भाषा में बताया जाए, तो कृपया 01509 634769 पर फ़ोन कीजिए।

### Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের (document) যেকোন বিষয়ের ব্যাখ্যা আপনার নিজস্ব ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 01509 634769 নাম্বারে টেলিফোন করুন।

# ISSUES & OPTIONS

## ***What has Happened So Far?***

Since adopting the current Local Plan in January 2004 the Council has started work on the Charnwood LDF. We have prepared a **Local Development Scheme**- this is a work programme giving details of the documents that will go in to the LDF folder. We have also been gathering background information to help us make some of the key decisions we now need to make.



In May 2004 we published an Issues Paper and asked local community groups, businesses and other bodies what they thought were the main issues in Charnwood. A wide range of comments were received and they can be viewed on the Council's web site ([www.charnwood.gov.uk](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk)). These comments have informed the preparation of this Issues and Options paper.

## ***What Must We Take into Account?***

We are not preparing the Charnwood LDF in a vacuum. We must take account of national planning policy and planning guidance for the East Midlands prepared by the East Midlands Regional Assembly. For the time being the Structure Plan also provides guidance on the numbers of new homes and jobs we need to plan for. This guidance sets some "ground rules" that the Charnwood LDF must follow. But we have some important decisions to make about how we want to see Charnwood 10 years on.

Many of the issues facing the Borough are to do with its geography. The Borough extends southwards to the northern edge of Leicester and the proximity of Nottingham and Derby also exert strong influences. In developing our strategy we need to think about the impact of the Borough's location between the Three Cities at the heart of the East Midlands.

## ***What is a Spatial Strategy?***

The LDF will be the spatial strategy for the Borough. This means it will take a wide view of the issues affecting Charnwood. It will:

- consider the economic, social and environmental issues facing Charnwood – transport, education, employment, health and how these affect different parts of the Borough in different ways;
- take account of other strategies prepared by other bodies and how these affect different parts of the Borough;
- encourage partnership and engagement with public and private bodies that influence the development of the area;
- look at how the Council can help to deliver good quality development on the ground.

## ***Sustainable Development- What is it?***

Sustainable development is a commonly used term. It basically means that we should plan for a better quality of life for everyone, now and in the future. A well used definition is:

*Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

Delivering sustainable development is at the heart of the new planning system. "Securing the future-Delivering UK Development Strategy" is the national strategy for sustainable development. It sets out a new purpose for achieving sustainable development and some guiding principles:

**The Purpose:** The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

This should be pursued in an integrated way through:

- a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment; and
- a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal wellbeing;
- this will be done in ways that protect and enhance the physical and natural environment, and use resources and energy as efficiently as possible.

### **The Priorities for UK Action:**

- **Sustainable consumption and production-** achieving more with less;
- **Climate change and energy-** tackling the effects of a changing climate;
- **Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement-** understanding environmental limits;
- **Sustainable communities-** embodying the principles of sustainable development at the local level.

This national strategy sets the context for the Charnwood LDF. The LDF must set the local strategy to secure sustainable development.

## ***The Community Strategy***

The Charnwood Strategic Partnership, a partnership involving the Borough and County Councils, public service providers and statutory agencies, local businesses, voluntary organisations and the local community produced a Community Strategy for Charnwood in 2003. This aims to improve public services and promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Borough. The Charnwood LDF must take account of the Community Strategy and set out land-use proposals to help deliver its aims.

## ***The Council's Corporate Plan***

The Issues Paper 2004 looked at the Community Strategy themes and how the Charnwood LDF could help to deliver them. Since the Community Strategy was produced the Borough Council has published its Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan takes forward many of the Community Strategy themes and outlines the Council's vision for the Borough up to 2015:

### **Our Main Priority:**

***To ensure that the Borough is recognised as Leading in Leicestershire for the quality of its living environment for all.***

### **Our Six Aims:**

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

**A Clean, Safe and Healthy environment:** Working with the community to ensure that waste is minimised or recycled, litter, graffiti and refuse is removed and our neighbourhoods are enjoyable and safe places to be.

**Leisure and Cultural Opportunities for all:** Providing leisure and sports facilities, parks, playgrounds, allotments, museums, the arts, youth sport programmes which will provide a healthy living environment for all.

# ISSUES & OPTIONS

**Decent Homes and Neighbourhoods:** Raising the standards of homes, and the surrounding environment. Fostering sustainable communities and providing quality advice to those in housing need.

**An Economically Prosperous Borough:** Regenerating areas in decline, developing industries and businesses, and ensuring vibrant commercial and retailing sectors.

**An Excellent Council:** Running an efficient and effective Council administration, sensitive and responsive to customers' needs and providing access to all services. Operating to an excellent standard that is endorsed by improving customer satisfaction across all our activities to become "Leading in Leicestershire".

**The Charnwood LDF will be a key tool in helping to deliver these objectives.**

As well as the Corporate Plan, the Council has produced a number of other strategies which will help to inform the Charnwood LDF. These include:

- The Charnwood Economic Development Strategy 2004- outlines a 10-year vision for Charnwood's economy. The principle of "growth through quality" underpins the strategy;
- The Green Space Strategy 2004- assesses current green space provision, identifies areas deficient in green space and establishes a strategy for future management and improvement of green space in the Borough;
- The Housing Strategy 2003- outlines the Council's strategy for dealing with a range of housing issues. Consultation on an updated strategy is about to take place;
- The Climate Change Strategy 2005- sets out the Council's commitment to working towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Borough;
- The Draft Air Quality Action Plan 2005- outlines a range of options to improve air quality in parts of the Borough;

- The Biodiversity Action Plan 1998- identifies the contribution Charnwood can make to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan- the national strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

These strategies have helped to inform this issues and options paper and will be taken into account as we put together our preferred options.

## *Issues and Options*

To help us decide on our preferred option for the future planning strategy for Charnwood, we have a number of questions we want to discuss with key stakeholders, local community groups and residents:

- *What are the key issues facing Charnwood?*
- *What should be the main objectives of the Charnwood Local Development Framework?*
- *How far ahead should we plan- 10 years, 15 years or more?*
- *What scale of new development for homes and jobs should we plan for?*
- *How can we direct development to the most sustainable locations in the Borough?*
- *How can we protect the Boroughs valued natural heritage?*
- *Should we continue to safeguard areas of open land between our settlements? If we do what is the best way to do this?*
- *How can the strategy help to regenerate the more deprived parts of the Borough?*
- *What can we do to make sure that Loughborough Town Centre and other District and Local Centres remain successful and attractive destinations for shopping, culture and recreation?*
- *How can we tackle the impact of traffic and provide for a sustainable transport system that encourages the use of public transport, cycling and walking?*
- *The Council sees the provision of a new Science Park in Loughborough as a priority. What would be the best location for a Science Park?*

# ISSUES & OPTIONS

This paper looks at some of the options that may be available. Nothing has been decided. The comments received will help us identify our preferred option.

We would welcome your comments on the options. Which do you think is best? Is there one that we have not thought of?

So the first question:

## ***What Are The Issues We Need To Address?***

In May 2004 we invited local residents, businesses and other stakeholders to tell us the issues we needed to address in putting together the new planning strategy for the Borough. We have also engaged consultants to undertake a “baseline assessment” of the Borough to identify key sustainability issues. The consultant’s findings are set out in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. This can be viewed on the Council’s web site. In putting together the Corporate Plan the Council has worked with a panel of local residents to identify the issues of greatest local concern.

Looking at the response to the Issues consultation and the baseline study, a number of key issues for the Borough can be identified.

### ***Decent Homes and Neighbourhoods:***

1. the lack of affordable housing. With increasing house prices this is an issue which increasingly affects communities throughout Charnwood;

2. the need for new homes to meet the needs of existing and future residents. The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan requires the provision of 9,400 houses in Charnwood between 1996 and 2016;

3. providing “balanced communities” through a better mix of types and tenures of housing and help meet the future needs of an ageing



population. Particular issues associated with the concentrations of student accommodation in parts of Loughborough also need to be addressed;

4. areas of poorer quality housing. There are areas of poorer quality housing in the Borough where improvements are needed to not just the houses but the wider neighbourhood.

### ***A Sustainable Environment***

5. ensuring that green wedges of open land are incorporated within any new development around Loughborough and Leicester;

6. safeguarding the separate identities of settlements in the Soar and Wreake Valleys;

7. ensuring the particular character of the varied Charnwood landscapes are retained. Charnwood covers a diverse range of landscapes from the rolling landscapes of the Charnwood Forest and the Wolds to the more populated river valleys of the Rivers Soar and Wreake;

8. the impacts of climate change, particularly in relation to flooding along the Rivers Soar and Wreake;

9. parts of the Borough suffering from poor air quality;

10. protecting and enhancing important wildlife habitats and areas of biodiversity interest;

11. congestion, pollution and traffic impact, particularly in Loughborough;

12. harmful impacts of heavy goods vehicle movements, particularly on the rural Wolds communities;

13. limited real travel choices by public transport, cycling and walking;

14. problems of access in the rural communities in the Borough.

# ISSUES & OPTIONS

## ***An Economically Prosperous Environment***

15. need for additional employment land to meet strategic requirements, including a new Science Park at Loughborough;
16. loss of existing employment areas to housing. The decline of traditional employment, such as textiles and manufacturing, has resulted in the loss of significant employment opportunities in some villages;
17. making best use of areas of unused redundant land where there is scope for new development;
18. pockets of deprivation within the Borough, particularly in Loughborough;
19. strengthening Loughborough's role as an important shopping and cultural destination and safeguarding and improving existing local shopping centres in the main villages;
20. how to make use of the advantages brought by Loughborough University, with its reputation as a centre of research and sporting excellence, for the wider benefit of the Borough.
21. rural employment needs.

## ***Leisure and Cultural Opportunities for All***

22. lack of sport, leisure and cultural opportunities accessible to all;
23. tackling the identified deficiencies in green space provision in the Borough. The Council's Greenspace Strategy identifies a need for further Country Park facilities, district parks in Loughborough, Birstall, Shepshed and Syston and smaller parks and recreation grounds across the Borough.

## ***A Clean, Safe and Healthy Environment***

24. poor air quality in parts of the Borough;
25. flood risk within the River Valleys;
26. the need to minimise waste and increasing recycling;

27. crime and the fear of crime in local communities.

**SEE QUESTION 1**

# ISSUES & OPTIONS

## ***Our Vision For Charnwood***

Our vision for Charnwood over the next 10 years or so is set out in our Corporate Plan. The Charnwood LDF will be a key tool in helping to deliver this vision on the ground. Fast forward to 2015- this is our vision for Charnwood:

### ***LEADING IN LEICESTERSHIRE***

Charnwood's positive reputation in the East Midlands Region and further afield is firmly established as "Leading in Leicestershire". The Borough is widely regarded as an excellent place to live, work and visit. Well-founded and clearly articulated policies preserve the essential characteristics and diversity of the Borough's landscape, ecology, heritage and built environment. The variety of lifestyle choices, from urban to suburban and from larger village to rural isolation makes the Borough attractive to established residents and new arrivals alike.

### ***KEY BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL CENTRE***

Loughborough is an important sub-regional centre for shopping, leisure and entertainment. It is also a key business and commercial centre, offering a clear alternative to the cities of Leicester, Nottingham and Derby. This is complimented by the local facilities and employment opportunities available in many of our other towns and villages.

### ***MEETING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS***

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

### ***QUALITY, INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT***

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

### ***A GREEN AND WALKABLE TOWN***

In Loughborough pedestrianisation has been extended and Loughborough's reputation as a "green" and "walkable town" has been secured with the inner relief road taking traffic out of the centre. The quality and coverage of public bus services has improved alongside integration with rail services. Loughborough railway station and its forecourt have been enhanced as part of the redevelopment of the eastern gateway of the Town, and there are regular mainline rail services from Loughborough and frequent local services serving Loughborough, Barrow upon Soar, Sileby and Syston. The road network is in good condition.

### ***DECENT HOMES***

The population is decently housed and a good variety of housing types and tenures is available, making living in the Borough more achievable for people of all ages and incomes. In Loughborough the student population is making positive contributions to the Borough's economy and diversity. Steps to manage and reduce adverse impacts on particular parts of the town, in conjunction with Loughborough University and other partners have been successful in achieving a more balanced residential mix and a consequent improvement in those environments.

### ***A SAFE ENVIRONMENT***

Across the Borough anti-social behaviour is dealt with firmly and levels of crime and the fear of crime continue to decrease. Through effective policing, effective regulation of public spaces, public involvement in neighbourhood watch and strong partnerships between key agencies, people feel safer in their neighbourhood and further afield. The effect of designing out crime principles as a matter of routine has also reduced the opportunities for criminals. Partnerships with the other Councils have played a big part in improving the quality and regulation of public spaces.

# ISSUES & OPTIONS

## ***A VIBRANT LOCAL ECONOMY***

The economy of Charnwood is strong and is a key contributor to the East Midlands Regional economy. Unemployment remains below the national average and those pockets of higher than average unemployment in 2004 are now close to the rate for the Borough as a whole. Strong regional initiatives have placed us in the prosperous heart of the East Midlands with our airport providing an important passenger and freight facility as well as employment and business opportunities.

## ***A CENTRE FOR HIGH TECHNOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGED BASED INDUSTRY***

Decline in the traditional manufacturing sector has been more than offset by expansion in high added value manufacturing, hi-tech and knowledge based industry and the development of sports and cultural industry clusters. The presence of Loughborough University plays a pivotal role in the local economy through education, research, and dynamic business initiatives. Large companies such as FKI, AstraZeneca, Lafarge and 3M continue to thrive alongside a wide range of small and medium enterprises and the priority given to new business and inward investment has enabled new talent to become established.

## ***A SHOPPING AND LEISURE DESTINATION***

Our strategic approach has boosted the Borough's shopping and leisure facilities enhancing its attractiveness to residents and visitors alike. Improved conference and hotel facilities draw people to the Borough. High-speed Internet access throughout the Borough has boosted flexible working and the attractiveness of more rural locations for small-scale business.

## ***LEARNING AND HEALTH***

Children of Charnwood attend schools that are highly rated and integrated with lifelong learning opportunities for all our citizens. Everyone in the Borough, young and old, has some opportunity of enjoying the healthy lifestyle offered by quality leisure and sporting activities, as well as national health care facilities and treatment. The availability of diverse and exciting cultural opportunities in towns and rural areas contributes to healthy living. Our parks and public spaces are beautifully maintained, safe, highly regarded, and well used by everyone. The achievement of Green Flag status for our parks confirms our top quality provision.

## ***COMMUNITY BASED CARE***

Community based care and support for our elderly people encourages active independence, enabling them to stay longer in their own homes. Older people are also key participants in many community and voluntary sector organisations providing vital support, information and services to other parts of the community as well as active participation in leisure and cultural activities. Children and young people are engaged in decision-making to ensure their needs and expectations are reflected in decisions about facilities and services which affect them.

## ***WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP***

Community Partnerships demonstrate that success can be achieved by working together and thereby improve the well-being of everyone. People relate to Charnwood as "Leading in Leicestershire" and embrace that aspiration. Public services are excellent and high levels of satisfaction support this. They are accessible, reliable, show value for money and use innovative methods of delivery where appropriate. The Council has maintained a sound financial position, balancing its ambitions with affordability. Goals for improved services by telephone, Internet and face to face have been exceeded. The diversity of the Borough is celebrated in responding to community needs and priorities. The specific needs of individuals and groups are included in all mainstream services. Charnwood still remains a Borough with great ambitions.

# ISSUES & OPTIONS

## ***Spatial Objectives***

To help deliver this vision possible objectives for the Charnwood LDF could be:

- to create safe, healthy, accessible and distinctive places for local people by encouraging quality and sustainable design and construction;
- to address social exclusion and reduce deprivation in those parts of the Borough identified as areas of relatively higher need including Loughborough, Shepshed, Soar Valley villages and south Charnwood;
- to reduce the need to, and distance of, travel by car and increase use of walking, cycling and public transport. In particular to improve access by bus to key services and facilities, including Loughborough hospital and peripheral employment areas;
- to develop integrated transport schemes and measures to improve safety and reduce the adverse environmental and other impacts of traffic, especially in and around Loughborough;
- to promote prudent use of resources through patterns of development, transport measures, reducing the use of minerals, energy and water and minimising waste;
- to concentrate most new development in the main urban areas of Loughborough, Shepshed and the settlements of Birstall and Thurmaston on the edge of Leicester giving priority to previously developed land;
- to meet needs for homes, including affordable housing, and jobs, including a new science park, in line with strategic requirements;
- to promote mixed balanced communities, in particular to address the extent and distribution of student accommodation within Loughborough;
- to sustain and enhance Loughborough town centre as a successful, attractive and

vibrant destination for shopping, entertainment and leisure as well as a place to live;

- to ensure that there is a network of vibrant 'local' centres so residents have access to a range of shops, services and facilities;
- to ensure residents have access to an interlinked system of parks and greenspaces, the countryside and built facilities for sport, recreation and community activities;
- to protect the built heritage and identity of the Borough's locally distinctive towns and villages;
- to reduce the risk to life and properties through flooding in vulnerable locations such as Loughborough and the Soar and Wreake valley villages;
- to protect distinctive landscapes, in particular the Charnwood Forest;
- to maintain and enhance a diverse range of habitats and the biodiversity of wildlife in line with the Charnwood Biodiversity Action Plan;
- to raise the profile of Charnwood to attract local and inward business investors;
- to provide local job opportunities by safeguarding key employment sites;
- to support thriving and diverse sustainable rural enterprise and farming.

***SEE QUESTIONS 2 AND 3***