

ISSUES & OPTIONS

How Far Ahead Should We Plan?

Guidance suggests that the timeframe for a Core Strategy should be at least 10 years and that it should aim to look ahead to the timeframe set by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RSS provides a broad development strategy up to 2021. A review of the RSS has just started which will see it rolled forward to 2026. The Structure Plan sets out planning policy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland up to 2016.

Ten years from the proposed adoption date would take the Charnwood LDF Core Strategy to 2017, which is similar to the Structure Plan timeframe. To be consistent with the RSS, we would need to look beyond this to 2021. Both have advantages and disadvantages.

A Plan to 2016	2021 and beyond
The Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing and employment land figures up to 2016 are set out in the Structure Plan. 	The Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matches RSS timeframe; Would allow for longer term planning for growth needs and give certainty about future plans for Charnwood.
The Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not cover RSS timeframe; Piecemeal approach to planning for the short term; May require the Core Strategy to be reviewed once housing and employment figures emerge from the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. 	The Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimation of development needs by rolling forward the Structure Plan requirement; Uncertainty about the retention of the "Central Leicestershire" Policy Area and possible split of housing and employment requirements; Uncertainty about the growth and location strategies at the regional level to 2026.

What Scale Of Development Should We Plan For?

There is no national guidance on the quantity of development for homes, jobs or other development types. The scale of development is set at regional and county level.

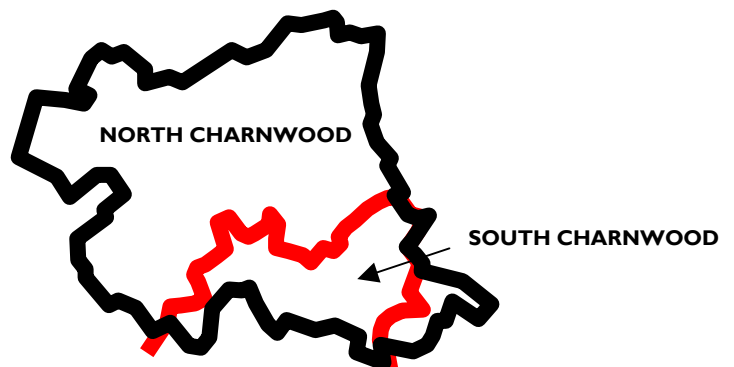
The RSS indicates the scale of new housing development for Leicestershire up to 2021 but it does not provide a figure for new employment growth. It does not include any figures on district level housing and employment growth. This level of detail will emerge through the review of the RSS.

New figures are likely to be based on the most recent national Household Projections produced by the Government. The 2002 Interim Projections show a rate of growth similar to the current rate for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland included in the current RSS. This rate is also reflected in the Structure Plan. However, in recent years actual build rates in the County have been higher.

So what do we know at the moment about future requirements in Charnwood?

The Structure Plan includes requirements for new homes and jobs in Charnwood up to 2016. The figures are split between:

- the Central Leicestershire Policy Area:***
 the southern part of the Borough close to Leicester including Anstey, Rothley, Syston, Birstall and Thurmaston - we will call this area **South Charnwood**; and
- the rest of Charnwood:***
 where Loughborough is the main urban area - we will call this area **North Charnwood**.



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We can expect new housing and employment land figures to come out of the RSS review over the next three years. This is the same timescale for preparing the Core Strategy. It may therefore make sense if the general principles set by the Core Strategy to guide the location of development are sufficiently flexible to allow for the possibility of a higher rate of growth than set out in the Structure Plan.

To give an indication of the level of growth, housing and employment figures up to 2021 have been worked out by projecting the rate of growth set by the Structure Plan.

Housing:

	South Charnwood	North Charnwood	Total (dwellings)
Structure Plan Requirement 1996-2016	2,950	6,450	9,400
Projected Growth 1996-2021	3,700	8,050	11,750

Employment:

	South Charnwood	North Charnwood	Total (ha)
Structure Plan Requirement 1996-2016	72	134	206
Projected Growth 1996-2021*	78/90	150/155	228/245

The Structure Plan indicates that in meeting our employment land requirement up to 2016, land should be found in Charnwood for a:

- 30 hectare Strategic Employment Site in South Charnwood, close to Leicester;
- 20 hectare Strategic Employment Site in North Charnwood, close to Loughborough;
- substantial science park, up to a size of 50 hectares, in Loughborough, close to the university.



How Much Extra Land Do We Need To Find?

Some of our requirements for new homes and jobs to 2016 have already been met either through development that has already taken place since 1996 or planning permissions already granted. Taking this into account means we do not have to find as much land for development as it first appears.

In terms of housing, the table below gives an indication of how many new homes are needed to fulfil requirements:

Dwellings	South Charnwood	North Charnwood	TOTAL
Required up to 2016	2,950	6,450	9,400
Required up to 2021	3,700	8,050	11,750
Built 1996-2005	1110	4011	5,121
With permission or allocated	1779	2195	3974
What is left to find up to 2016?	61	244	305
What is left to find up to 2021?	811	1844	2655

Some of this housing will be found on small sites coming forward in existing settlements. In the past, about 65 dwellings a year have been assumed but the actual rate has been higher. An urban capacity study to identify potential sites for housing on brownfield land within settlements was undertaken in 2004. This showed extra potential for about 900 dwellings, 200 in South Charnwood and 700 in North Charnwood, (taking account of those sites that have gained planning permission since the study) within a number of defined settlements.

Taking account of these opportunities, it would appear that there is a sufficient stock of land for housing to meet the Structure Plan requirement up to 2016 in North and South Charnwood.

If we look towards 2021, allowing for some development on small sites, about 1,000 dwellings, and around 1,300 dwellings on potential urban capacity sites, there is likely to be a need for Greenfield sites to accommodate around 350 dwellings (equivalent to about 10 hectares.)

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In terms of employment land, the table below gives an indication of how much land is needed to meet strategic requirements:

Hectares	South Charnwood	North Charnwood	TOTAL
Required up to 2016	72	134	206
Required up to 2021	78/90	150/155	228/245
Built 96-04 (Starts)	11	29	40
With permission or allocated	29	37	66
What is left to find up to 2016?	32	68	100
What is left to find up to 2021?	38-50	85-90	122 - 139

The loss of existing employment sites and premises is a continuing concern in both Loughborough and other settlements in Charnwood. Between 1991 and 2001, at least 27 hectares of land were lost to employment use in the Borough. The Structure Plan states that key employment sites should be identified and protected from development to other uses. The RSS indicates that gains and losses of employment land and floorspace should be monitored. This raises the issue of whether additional employment land/floorspace should be allocated to compensate for these losses.

So:

up to 2016- there appears to be little need for additional land to be found for housing but there is a need to find about 100 hectares of employment land that is likely to have to be located on greenfield sites.

2021 and beyond- there will be extra housing and employment land requirements and it is likely that some of this will have to be on greenfield sites. At the moment this longer term requirement is difficult to predict. The review of the RSS could result in a larger or smaller requirement.

The Structure Plan indicates that where greenfield sites are necessary to accommodate growth these should be strategic in nature. This is because larger land allocations offer the best prospects to incorporate good quality mixed use development. They also offer the best prospects for securing significant planning contributions for transport, open space, and other local and community services.

If we plan up to 2016 we may not need to make difficult decisions now about the release of greenfield sites for housing but we will need to identify sites to meet our employment needs. But the strategy would need to be reviewed in a couple of years when the new Regional Spatial Strategy is published. Planning just for our employment needs may mean that we miss the opportunity to identify more sustainable options for mixed use development to meet the Borough's longer term needs.

Planning for the longer term, to 2021 and beyond, could allow comprehensive development to take place on a phased basis on larger sites to provide for the homes, jobs, transport, and the social and community needs of the population. But it would mean making difficult decisions now about the best option for sustainable long term growth. At the moment there is no clear guidance about what scale of development we should be planning for in Charnwood beyond 2016.

SEE QUESTION 4

Where Should New Development Go?

We want to direct the new homes and jobs we have to provide to the most sustainable locations in the Borough. In deciding where development should go we have to take into account national and regional policy and guidance provided by the Structure Plan.

National planning policy promotes sustainable patterns of development and a “sequential approach” to choosing locations for new development. This means that development is concentrated on sites within existing urban areas. Previously developed or “brownfield” land should be used first before urban extensions on greenfields or at nodes in good public transport corridors. New settlements may be an option where there are no more sustainable alternatives.

The RSS vision for the East Midlands is to secure sustainable patterns of development making efficient use of land, resources and infrastructure, reducing the need to travel, incorporating sustainable design and construction and enhancing local distinctiveness.

Urban renaissance is the key to achieving sustainable development in the region. The RSS sets out a sequential approach to make the best use of land and to make the best use of previously developed sites in urban areas. The RSS splits the region into five sub areas. Charnwood lies at the centre of the Three Cities Sub Area. The aim of the strategy is to direct most development to the largest urban centres- The Principal Urban Areas, with a smaller amount of development directed to smaller Sub Regional Centres.

The Principal Urban Areas: Derby, Leicester, and Nottingham;

The Sub-Regional Centres: Loughborough, Coalville, Hinckley.

In rural areas the aim is to sustain villages and reverse the decline in services. Rural settlements can be identified for local needs housing including affordable housing and to provide most other services.

The Structure Plan also aims to secure sustainable development by concentrating new development

in existing urban areas. To do this the Plan defines a “Central Leicestershire Policy Area” to help direct development towards Leicester as the main urban centre in the County. The Plan identifies Leicester as an “urban conurbation” made up of the City and settlements on its boundaries including Birstall, Thurmaston, and Glenfield. This is called the ***Leicester and Leicestershire Urban Area***.

Outside this area development is directed to ***Main Towns*** to safeguard their future economic and social wellbeing. In Charnwood the main towns are Loughborough and Shepshed.

The sequence outlined in the Structure Plan means that in Charnwood we should look to locate new development in:

- Loughborough and Shepshed Town Centres, particularly on brownfield land; and then
- locations within Loughborough and Shepshed and the Leicester and Leicestershire Urban Area (including Birstall and Thurmaston), particularly on brownfield land; and then
- land adjoining Loughborough and Shepshed and the Leicester and Leicestershire Urban Area (including Birstall and Thurmaston), particularly on brownfield land; and then
- locations within and adjoining Rural Centres or other settlements well served by public transport, particularly on brownfield land; and lastly;
- in other locations subject to the consideration of green wedge and countryside policies.

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A Locational Strategy For Charnwood: What Are The Options?

The RSS and Structure Plan both adopt locational strategies which promote urban concentration.

In developing our strategy for Charnwood we need to reflect this strategic guidance. Other possible locational strategies, for example spreading development more widely between existing settlements, or developing a wholly new settlement, would not be consistent with this strategic guidance.

We therefore need to consider the options available for pursuing a strategy of urban concentration in Charnwood in accordance with the RSS and Structure Plan.

To do this we need to:

- define a settlement hierarchy for Charnwood;
- identify possible broad directions for growth.

A Charnwood Settlement Hierarchy

To develop the Core Strategy we need to establish a settlement hierarchy using the national, regional and county policy context and key characteristics of Charnwood settlements in terms of availability and accessibility of services and facilities, size and function, geography and interactions between settlements. In defining the hierarchy regional policy has been given most weight. The key local influences are:

- the main urban centres of Leicester in the south and the Loughborough urban system in the north as well as other nearby towns and service centres such as Coalville, Melton Mowbray and East Leake in adjoining districts.
- the small town of Syston and other large villages concentrated alongside the Soar and Wreake Valleys, have well established service bases able to serve residents and surrounding

areas, including the more rural parts of Charnwood;

- the proximity of strong urban influences suggests no settlements in Charnwood function as Rural Centres for a wider rural catchment.

One possible hierarchy is set out below.

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

SEE QUESTION 5

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SOME KEY TERMS

LEICESTER PRINCIPAL URBAN AREA (LPUA)

The LPUA as identified in RSS8 is considered to be equivalent to the Structure Plan's Leicester and Leicestershire Urban Area made up of Leicester and its adjoining settlements including Birstall and Thurmaston in Charnwood. Birstall and Thurmaston offer residents a reasonable range of jobs, services and facilities. Bus links to main urban centres are frequent, especially to Leicester, and there are hourly services to some nearby villages during weekdays.

SUB REGIONAL CENTRE (SRC)

The SRC identified in RSS8 is considered to cover the urban system of Loughborough / Shepshed, the two settlements in Charnwood identified as Main Towns in the Structure Plan. Loughborough/ Shepshed are centrally located between the Three Cities and the two towns are close together either side of the M1 corridor. The SRC offers a good range of jobs, services and facilities to a wide catchment. Loughborough and Shepshed are well linked by bus and have public transport links mainly via Loughborough to cities and other main towns at half hourly or better frequency. Most of the SRC's catchment has reasonable bus links of hourly or better frequency during weekday daytime.

SERVICE CENTRES

In general terms Charnwood's small towns and large villages offer a good range of jobs, services and facilities for residents and a local catchment. They are usually well served by bus and / or rail with half hourly or better links to main urban areas. Catchments are served by more limited bus services.

OTHER COMMUNITIES

The majority of the remaining small villages, hamlets and dispersed communities are located in the more rural parts of the Borough but a few are very close to Leicester and Loughborough. These are mainly residential communities offering a restricted range of services and facilities for residents, and, in most cases, at best hourly weekday daytime bus links to nearby urban centres.

What Should Be The Directions For Growth?

Having looked at how long we should plan for and how much development we have to find, we need to consider possible broad directions for growth to accommodate new development needs.

There are a limited number of realistic options that would fit with the established national, regional and strategic policy and reflect the characteristics of the Borough. Given this policy background and the strong urban influences locally, the emphasis for the foreseeable future is likely to be on a strategy of urban concentration.

At this stage we are only considering possible directions for growth and assessing them in general terms against known environmental, technical, infrastructure and service constraints.

The identification of possible directions of growth is based on:

- the application of the sequential approach set out at regional and county level to Charnwood;
- considering the suitability of these locations against a range of criteria relating to:
 - transport and accessibility,
 - physical constraints,
 - the impact of development on resources and environmental assets,
 - development viability and costs,
 - the need for balanced developments and
 - the contribution development could make to strengthening and supporting a local community.
- making the best use of previously developed land within urban areas;
- small towns and larger villages are not appropriate locations for large scale growth but may be suitable for modest provision to support service provision in line with sustainability objectives.

- larger land allocations are considered to offer the best prospects for securing significant planning contributions towards services, infrastructure, open space and high quality design.

New freestanding developments located away from main urban centres, even those able to make use of previously developed land, do not perform well against the sequential test and sustainability criteria, and would not be consistent with established strategic policy for the region or county. They also need substantial investment that might be better used in existing urban areas.

A number of new settlement options have been considered in the past including east of Loughborough at Cotes, west of Hathern, east of Rearsby, Wymeswold Airfield and east of Cossington.

A new settlement option would not be in keeping with the strategy of urban concentration established in regional and strategic guidance. There appears to be sufficient land available in higher priority locations to meet our development needs. For these reasons this options paper does not consider new settlement options as possible broad directions for growth.

We have identified two possible timescales for the Core Strategy:

- plan for growth up to 2016;
- plan for growth up to 2021 and beyond.

Taking these two options, a number of broad directions for growth can be identified.

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The Options

The options below are possible broad directions for growth in Charnwood. Between them they contain significantly more land than would be needed to meet requirements up to 2016 or even 2021. We are gathering data on which broad locations would be the most sustainable options for development and would like your views.

South Charnwood

URBAN CAPACITY IN THE MAIN URBAN CENTRES:

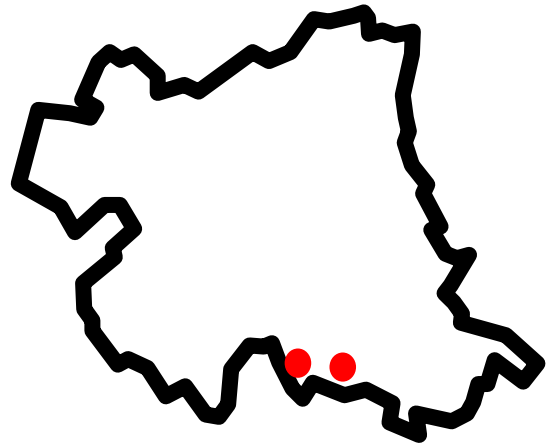
Option S1- Maximise use of urban capacity potential within the Leicester Principal Urban Area, including Birstall and Thurmaston.

The Pros

- supports social inclusion and regeneration initiatives;
- highest priority locations in search sequence and more likely to meet sustainability objectives;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan.

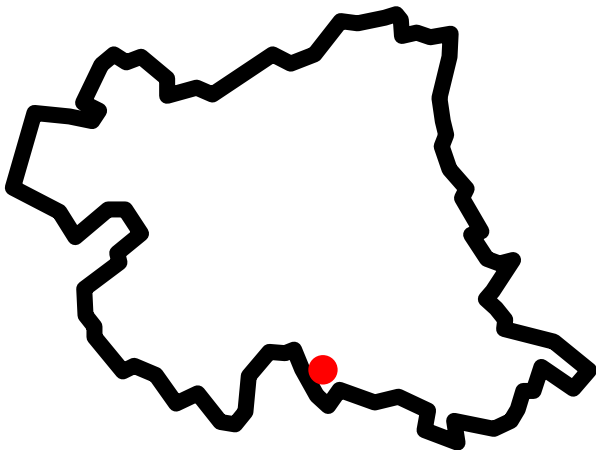
The Cons

- potential adverse traffic impact if good public transport access is not available;
- potential loss of employment land to housing;
- available brownfield sites likely to be insufficient to meet future needs for homes and jobs;



URBAN EXTENSIONS AROUND LEICESTER

Option S2 - Adjoining Birstall



The Pros:

- potential for good access to principal road network and scope for good bus access building on existing high frequency daytime bus service between Leicester and Loughborough/ Coalville and proximity to park and ride facility to be provided north of Birstall;
- close to major housing areas;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan;
- could help deliver a new District Park in accordance with the Council's Green Space Strategy.

The Cons:

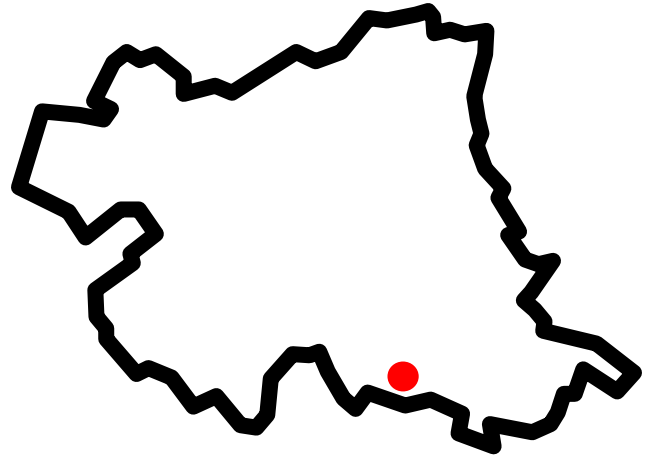
- scope to accommodate employment land only;
- possible significant impact of additional traffic on road network around A46/A6 junction;
- encroachment into countryside north of A46;
- development located to the south east of A46/A6 junction could harm setting and identity of Wanlip village.

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Option S3 - Adjoining Thurmaston/ Leicester

The Pros:

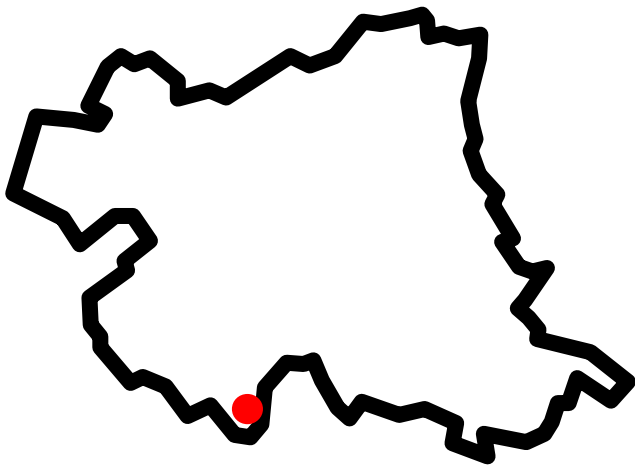
- scope to accommodate employment land and/or housing;
- scope for sustainable extension of Leicester urban area;
- good potential for access by bus and or other public transport links;
- potential to improve balance between housing and employment in locality;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan.



The Cons:

- the extent and location of green wedge between Thurmaston, Syston and Hamilton would need to be reviewed;
- encroachment into countryside east of Thurmaston;
- traffic generated would add to highway problems caused by congestion on major routes and use of unsuitable minor roads through Barkby and Barkby Thorpe at peak times;
- may be implications of proximity to Melton Brook, Barkby Brook and local watercourses.

Option S4 - Adjoining Glenfield/ Leicester



The Pros

- scope to accommodate employment land and/or housing;
- potential for good access to principal road network and scope for good bus access building on existing high frequency daytime services;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan.

The Cons

- amount of land potentially available for development is small;
- possible significant traffic impact on congested road network;
- the extent and location of green wedge between Anstey, Glenfield and Leicester would need to be reviewed;
- may be implications of proximity to floodplain of Rothley Brook and local watercourses.

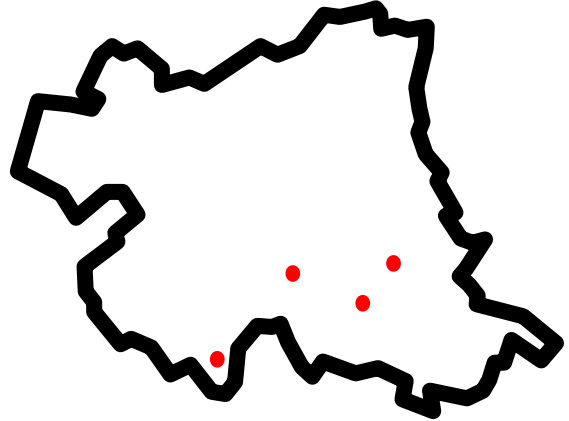
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DEVELOPMENT IN SERVICE CENTRES

Option S5 - Within and adjoining the Service Centres of Anstey, East Goscote, Rothley and Syston

The Pros:

- scope to accommodate employment land and /or housing;
- additional employment land could improve local balance between jobs and homes in settlements where numerous employment sites have been lost;
- additional employment land could help meet social inclusion and regeneration objectives;
- part of any additional housing could meet any identified affordability issues;
- could help deliver a new District Park to serve the Syston area in accordance with the Council's Green Space Strategy.



The Cons:

- not identified in RSS or Structure Plan as priority locations for development;
- potential adverse impact on the form, character and setting of villages and surrounding open land;
- potential adverse traffic impact;
- planning contributions from smaller scale developments likely to be more limited.

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North Charnwood

URBAN CAPACITY IN LOUGHBOROUGH / SHEPSHED SUB REGIONAL CENTRE

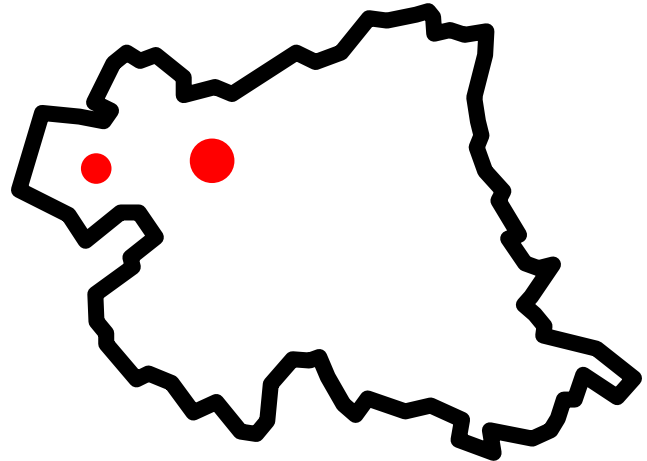
Option N1 - Maximise use of urban capacity potential for mixed use developments in Loughborough / Shepshed

The Pros:

- would support social inclusion and regeneration initiatives especially in eastern Loughborough and Shepshed;
- highest priority location in search sequence and more likely to meet sustainability objectives;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan.

The Cons:

- available brownfield sites likely to be insufficient to meet future needs for homes and jobs;
- potential adverse traffic impact if good public transport access is not available;
- potential loss of employment land to housing.



URBAN EXTENSIONS AROUND LOUGHBOROUGH AND SHEPSHED

Option N2 - North of Loughborough



The Pros:

- scope to accommodate employment land and /or housing;
- good access to highway network and existing public transport routes and cycling and walking;
- would allow for expansion of existing major employment areas;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan;
- could help deliver a new District Park in accordance with the Council's Green Space Strategy.

The Cons:

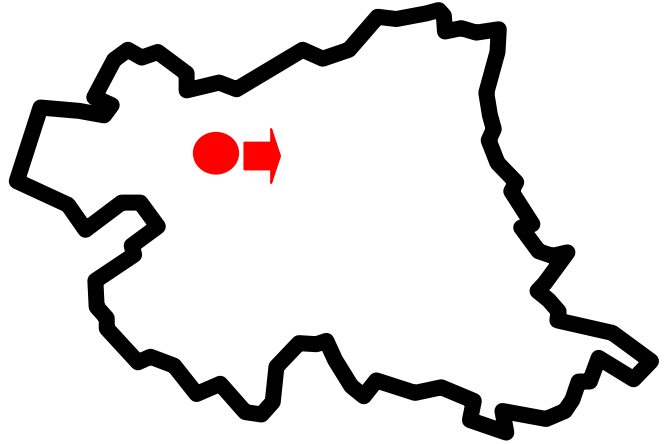
- the extent and location of green wedge between Loughborough and Hathern would need to be reviewed;
- potential traffic impact on J24 of M1;
- increased imbalance between employment areas located north and east of Loughborough and housing to the south and west;
- may be implications of proximity to Blackbrook and floodplain of the River Soar;
- encroachment into countryside north of Loughborough.

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Option N3 - East of Loughborough

The Pros:

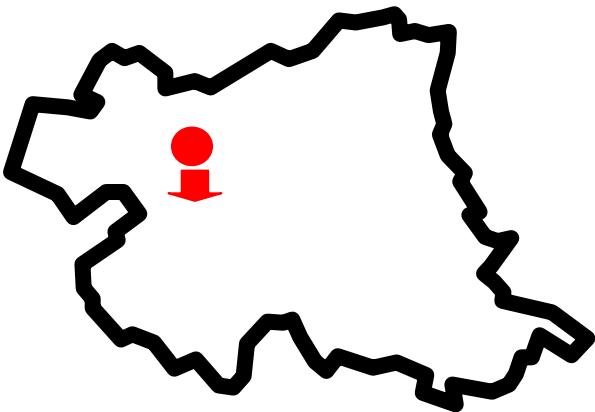
- good access to highway network and existing public transport routes and cycling and walking. Close to Loughborough rail station;
- scope for improved highway links to improve accessibility to trunk road network;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan;
- could help deliver a new District Park in accordance with the Council's Green Space Strategy.



The Cons:

- majority of land adjoining eastern side of town is in River Soar floodplain and contains significant areas of ecological importance;
- employment land on its own east of river valley would not be well related to main housing areas;
- increased traffic congestion on Meadow Lane/ A60;
- encroachment into countryside east of the river valley;
- impact on the identity and setting of Cotes.

Option N4 - South Loughborough



The Pros:

- Scope to accommodate employment land and /or housing;
- good access to highway network and existing public transport routes and cycling and walking;
- a significant employment land allocation would redress imbalance between housing and employment in south Loughborough, Quorn and Barrow;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan;
- could help deliver a new District Park in accordance with the Council's Green Space Strategy.

The Cons:

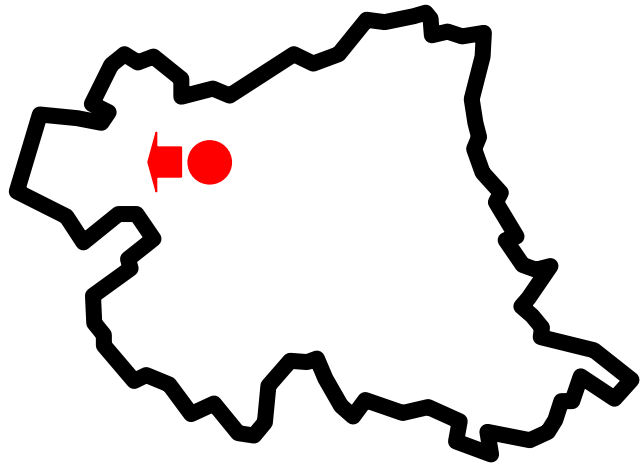
- the extent and location of green wedge between Loughborough and Quorn would need to be reviewed;
- encroachment into countryside and Charnwood Forest south west of Loughborough;
- may be implications of proximity to River Soar, Woodthorpe Drain and Poulteney Brook. Also in relation to watercourse draining into Wood Brook. Investigation under way of potential to use part of this area for balance and storage to reduce flooding problems in Loughborough alongside the Wood Brook.

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Option N5 - West of Loughborough

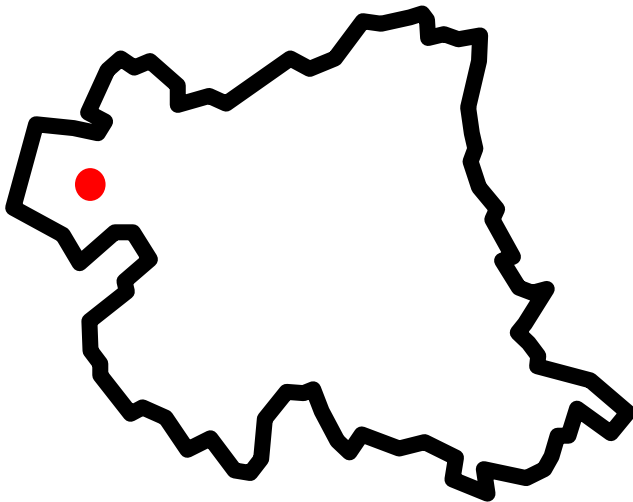
The Pros:

- Scope to accommodate employment land and /or housing;
- good access to highway network and existing public transport routes and cycling and walking;
- good access to M1 and scope for improved highway links;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan;
- could help deliver a new Country Park and/or District Park in accordance with the Council's Green Space Strategy;
- could provide for a link between the A512 and A6 north of the town to access the main industrial areas.



The Cons:

- the extent and location of green wedge between Loughborough and Shepshed would need to be reviewed ;
- encroachment into countryside and Charnwood Forest south of the A512;
- challenge to accommodate development within the Garendon Estate with minimal impact on the historic Garendon Park;
- possible traffic impact on M1 J23;
- may be implications of proximity to Burleigh Brook and Shortcliffe Brook.



Option N6 - Adjoining Shepshed

The Pros:

- Scope to accommodate employment land to the east and housing to the west;
- population growth could support regeneration of Shepshed's service base;
- supports regeneration of Shepshed and redresses loss of employment sites and;
- in general transportation terms appears acceptable and there is good bus access via A512, particularly on the eastern side of Shepshed;
- would be consistent with RSS and Structure Plan.

The Cons:

- western Shepshed is a rather remote location with adjoining narrow and substandard road network. Difficult to serve by public transport;
- possible traffic impact on M1 J23;
- land to east may be affected by motorway widening;
- encroachment into countryside and Charnwood Forest;
- may be implications of proximity to Black Brook and upper reaches of Shortcliffe Brook.

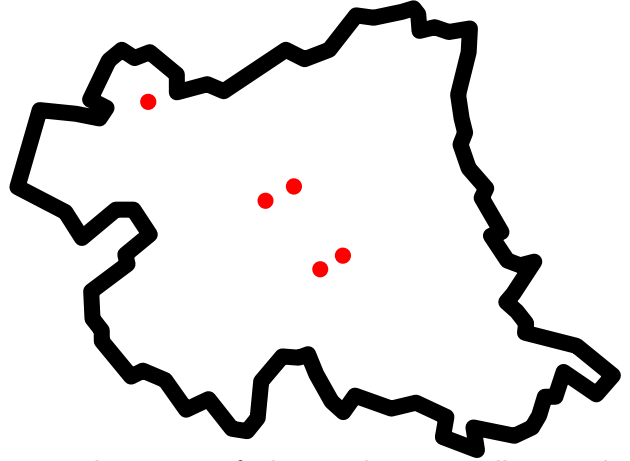
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DEVELOPMENT IN SERVICE CENTRES

Option N7 - Within and adjoining the Service Centres of Barrow upon Soar, Hathern, Mountsorrel, Quorn and Sileby

The Pros:

- scope to accommodate employment land and /or housing;
- additional employment land could improve local balance between jobs and homes in settlements where numerous employment sites lost;
- additional employment land could help meet social inclusion and regeneration objectives;
- part of any additional housing could meet any identified affordability issues.



The Cons:

- not identified in RSS or Structure Plan as priority locations for development;
- potential adverse impact on the form, character and setting of the settlements village and surrounding open land;
- potential adverse traffic impact;
- planning contributions from smaller scale developments likely to be more limited.

SEE QUESTION 6