

# ISSUES & OPTIONS

## ***How Should We Safeguard Important Areas Of Open Land?***

Under current planning policies, open land outside the existing built up areas is defined either as countryside, Green Wedge or Areas of Local Separation. Whilst they may all look the same on the ground, different planning policies apply to these different areas.



### ***Green Wedges***

For the last 20 years green wedges have been 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. The Regional Spatial Strategy recognises the value of this long established Green Wedge policy.

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.

Nevertheless there are tensions between a strategy of urban concentration, which directs development to the main urban areas, and green wedge policies designed to safeguard open areas of land on the edge of these areas. As locations green wedge land may often be the most sustainable location for new development. The Core Strategy will need to resolve these tensions.

### ***The Local Picture***

The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan identifies Green Wedges as structurally important areas of land which help to maintain the physical separation between communities, protect their individual identities and contribute towards the quality of life of all people living in the urban areas.

Green Wedges help 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 physical identity of settlements adjoining the main urban areas.

Some development is considered acceptable in a Green Wedge such as forestry, agriculture, outdoor recreation, mineral uses etc provided development does not permanently damage the open and undeveloped character of the Green Wedge. However, any land use or associated development in the Green Wedge is required to:

- retain the open and undeveloped character of the Green Wedge;
- retain and create green networks or “green lungs” linking the countryside and open spaces within the urban areas; and
- retain and enhance public access to the Green Wedge, especially for recreation.

In planning to meet future development requirements existing green wedges will need to be reviewed. New areas of green wedge may also be needed alongside proposals to extend urban areas.

There are currently 7 Green Wedges identified in the adopted Borough of Charnwood Local Plan. They are between:

- Leicester (Beaumont Leys)/ Birstall/ Thurcaston /Anstey / Cropston
- Birstall/Leicester/ Thurmaston (Soar Valley North)
- Beaumont Leys/Glenfrith/Anstey/Groby
- Syston/Turmaston (East of Melton Road)
- Loughborough/Shepshed
- Loughborough/Quorn
- Loughborough/Hathern

Green Wedges remain a key planning tool that will help to ensure that as urban areas expand, settlements do not merge and open areas or “green lungs” are retained. The policy enjoys strong public support.

Around Loughborough the existing Green Wedges are quite extensive. Together the Green Wedges between the town and Shepshed, Hathern and Quorn throw a “green curtain” around the town. In contrast Green Wedges around Leicester provide for “green fingers” of open land penetrating the urban area between the “brown spokes” of expanding development.

## ***Urban Concentration and Green Wedges: Resolving The Tensions***

In pursuing a strategy of urban concentration some development options will require a review of the extent of existing Green Wedges. Some of the directions for growth options detailed earlier will impact on existing Green Wedge areas.

We need to identify the scope to review the precise boundaries of Green Wedges to allow for sustainable extensions to the main urban areas where necessary.

**SEE QUESTION 7**

## ***Areas of Local Separation***

In tandem with Green Wedges, planning policies have also been applied in Leicestershire to protect the separate character and identities of other settlements outside the larger urban areas. These policies, designed to safeguard smaller more local areas of separation between communities, have strong public support. This is the case in Charnwood where the concentrated settlement pattern, particularly along the Soar and Wreake valleys, means towns and villages are close together with little open land between them.

## ***The Local Picture***

Under the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan we can identify “Areas of Local Separation” between smaller communities where other policies in the plan would not provide enough protection on their own to prevent settlements joining up. The intention is to avoid the unacceptable reduction in the separation between settlements that could contribute to a loss of character and identity.

The Structure Plan sees these areas of separation as land which is not green wedge but nevertheless performs an important role in maintaining separation between settlements.

In Charnwood quite extensive areas of land have been identified as Areas of Local Separation in various planning documents since the early 1980’s. This is in part a reflection of the strong local concern over this issue. The current local plan defines nine areas of separation, mostly between villages in the Soar and Wreake Valleys.

This approach has worked well and has helped to protect important open areas of land between settlements.

**SEE QUESTION 8**

## ***Countryside Character***

A feature of Charnwood is the diversity and contrast in its landscapes, from the rolling higher land of the Charnwood Forest to the river Valleys of the Soar and Wreake. There are no National Parks or AONBs in Charnwood or Leicestershire. Charnwood does form part of The National Forest, a national initiative to create a new forest for the nation linking the ancient forests of Needwood and Charnwood. The National Forest covers 200 square miles of countryside across Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire. The Charnwood Forest forms its eastern edge.

National planning guidance requires us to ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and where possible enhanced. Whilst the government accepts that there are locally valued landscapes outside the nationally designated areas, it considers that sufficient protection can be provided without the need for rigid local landscape designations. It sees criteria based policies using tools such as landscape character assessments as the best approach.

Existing local designations should only be maintained where it can be shown that criteria based policies would not provided the necessary protection. We need to review our local landscape designations and consider whether there is any justification for retaining them.

## ***The Regional Picture***

There are two nationally designated landscapes in the East Midlands- The Peak District National Park and the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB. The RSS also recognises that there are a number of areas, including the Charnwood Forest, where the distinctive landscape character and the scale of ecological, historic and woodland interest combine to create areas that are special in the regional context. The RSS encourages coordinated action in these areas to ensure that the distinctive character of these areas is retained. Outside these areas guidance suggests that understanding the importance of all landscapes and reducing the emphasis on local landscape designations will ensure that the character of one area is not protected at the expense of another.

## ***The Local Picture***

The Structure Plan identifies one specific countryside character area- the Charnwood Forest. It states that Charnwood Forest is Leicestershire's most distinctive landscape and is highly valued. The plan indicates that development within the Charnwood Forest Policy Area will be acceptable where it can be demonstrated to conserve or enhance the character of Charnwood Forest including its landscape, ecology, cultural heritage, built heritage and recreational value.

Charnwood has a number of substantial areas of attractive countryside, which in previous local plans have been considered worthy of specific protection. The adopted Local Plan identifies these areas as the Charnwood Forest, including Bradgate Park, Beacon Hill and The Outwoods, the Wreake Valley, Soar Valley and part of High Leicestershire in the south eastern part of the Borough. Within these areas there are likely to be continuing pressures for change. We need to review these designations in the light of national and regional guidance and decide whether any should be retained.

Too many local countryside designations could be seen to undermine general countryside policy and implies that some areas of countryside are more important than others. Having a single countryside policy outside the Charnwood Forest would mean that all Charnwood's countryside would enjoy equal protection.

***SEE QUESTION 9***

## ***A Strategy For Regeneration***

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.

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.

The Charnwood LDF should promote development that creates socially inclusive communities, including suitable mixes of housing. It should:

- ensure that the impact of development on the social fabric of communities is considered and taken into account;
- seek to reduce social inequalities;
- address accessibility (both in terms of location and physical access) for all members of the community to jobs, health, housing, education, shops, leisure and community facilities;
- take into account the needs of all the community, including particular requirements relating to age, sex, ethnic background, religion, disability or income;
- deliver safe, healthy and attractive places to live; and,
- support the promotion of health and well being by making provision for physical activity.

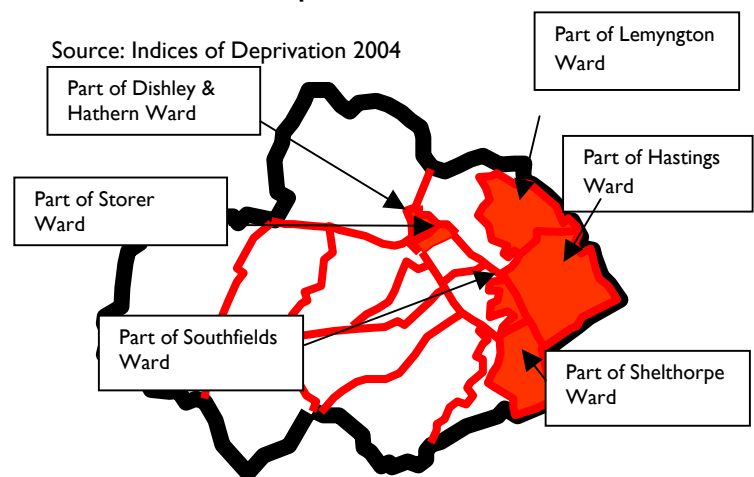
The RSS highlights the regional priorities for regeneration including the Principal Urban Areas and Sub-Regional Centres that exhibit very high concentrated levels of deprivation. The Structure Plan indicates that measures will be taken to improve the quality of life within those areas suffering relative deprivation. Pockets of deprivation particularly in Loughborough are identified as priority areas.

## ***The Priorities***

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 (Primary)
  - Secondary areas: South Charnwood villages and Soar valley villages (Secondary)

### **Loughborough & Shepshed The 10% Most Deprived Areas in Charnwood**



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 some of the highest levels of deprivation in the County outside Leicester are found in parts of Charnwood and that the areas of greatest need are in located in Loughborough.

It is useful for the Council's priority areas for regeneration to be identified. However, there is a concern that too many priority areas can weaken this approach or that small pockets of deprivation are missed. The alternative is to have a more flexible approach based on up to date data that does not identify priority areas.

**SEE QUESTION 10**

## ***Creating Balanced Communities***

A key objective of planning is to promote sustainable development. Through the Sustainable Communities Plan the Government has defined what a sustainable community looks like.

Policies should promote mixed use developments in locations that allow links to be created between different uses and so creating more vibrant places.

The Government intends that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home. PPG3 advocates creating balanced and mixed communities and emphasises the need to plan to meet the housing needs of the whole community, including those in need of affordable housing.

Affordable housing is a key issue in the Borough because recent increases in house prices have placed buying or renting a home on the open market out of reach of many new households. The building of new affordable homes is significantly below the rate identified by the latest housing need survey.

Student housing in Loughborough is of concern to local residents who live close to the University. The concerns relate to the impact of students whose behaviour is anti-social, the effect on the local housing market and the decreasing local community.

New development, particularly where new housing is proposed, raises the issue of linked social and community facilities to serve the new communities. Planning applications are often granted subject to the landowner/developer contributing to the provision of community facilities such as open space, schoolplaces or affordable housing that benefit the whole community.

Access to open space is a key contributor to well-being and health enabling people to have a place

to exercise and play. The Greenspaces Strategy identified a number of deficiencies in the green spaces network - 'district parks' are needed in Loughborough, Birstall, Shepshed and Syston as well as smaller local parks and recreation grounds elsewhere.

**SEE QUESTION 11**

### ***A Sustainable Community***

*'Places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.'*

### ***Rural Areas***

The national planning objectives for rural areas are to raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas through the promotion of thriving, inclusive and sustainable communities where there is sustainable economic growth, good quality, sustainable development that respects and protects the countryside.

The spatial strategy set out in both the regional and county level promotes urban concentration with limited development in rural areas to meet local needs.

Much of Charnwood is close to the existing urban centres of Leicester, Loughborough or larger villages in the Soar and Wreake valleys. The Wolds and parts of Charnwood Forest are remoter areas where there is lack of a range of local facilities such as convenience shops and health facilities are of concern especially where public transport is limited.

There is a question, therefore, about whether the Core Strategy should promote improved facilities in rural areas or whether improved access to facilities in larger settlements is made by better public transport. The Structure Plan gives the opportunity to identify rural centres. Rural centres are discussed earlier in the section on 'what should be the directions for growth?'

**SEE QUESTION 5**

## ***Tackling Climate Change***

Climate change is one of the most serious environmental problems the world faces. With the Rivers Soar and Wreake running through the Borough, parts of Charnwood are particularly susceptible to one of the effects of climate change-increased flood risk. As with the rest of the UK, we are also likely to experience other effects of global warming- summer heatwaves and wetter winters.

Tackling climate change is one of the priority areas for action identified in the Government's sustainable development strategy. The strategy highlights the need to make a profound change in our use of energy and other activities that result in the emission of greenhouse gases, but also to prepare for the changes in climate that are already unavoidable.

Managing the development and use of land through the planning system can promote the use of renewable energy in new development and reduce the use of non-renewable resources by locating development where it can be accessed by means other than the private car. The RSS recognises the need to take action to reduce the scale and impact of future climate change, in particular flood risk, through the location and design of new development in the East Midlands.

## ***The Local Picture***

The Borough Council recognises the need to develop policies locally to tackle the issue of climate change. In March 2005 the Council signed up to the Nottingham declaration on Climate Change. The declaration demonstrates signatories' commitments to develop strategies to reduce their impact on climate change.

The Council has recently published a Climate Change Strategy for Charnwood, which is a statement of the Council's commitment to working towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Borough. The adopted Local Plan seeks to address the issue of climate change by directing development to the main urban centres with good access to public transport, cycling and walking, safeguarding areas of floodplain, and encouraging sustainable design and construction.

## ***The Options***

There are a number of things that the Charnwood LDF could do to address the issue of climate change. The locational strategy we choose to guide future development in Charnwood will have the biggest impact on climate change locally. A strategy which is successful in directing new development to the most sustainable locations will help to ensure that people don't need to travel too far and that walking, cycling public transport provide real practicable alternatives to the car.

We can safeguard existing floodplain areas so that development is not at risk from flooding. Where appropriate we can seek contributions from new developments towards flood mitigation measures. We can include policies to secure energy efficient design in new development and the use of sustainable urban drainage systems. We can also encourage the sustainable energy developments such as wind turbines.

***SEE QUESTION 12***

## ***A New Science Park***

One of the strengths of Charnwood's economy is the presence of a number of high technology employers, particularly in the Loughborough area, many taking advantage of links with Loughborough University for research and development. The University has the highest spin-out rate of companies relative to research funding and provides the best value for money research of any UK University. It currently provides space for some 45 start up businesses on the Campus.

It is important that the strategy for the Borough takes full advantage of these strengths. Building on the success of the existing Loughborough Science Park, the Structure Plan proposes that land for one substantial Science Park, up to a maximum of 50 hectares should be allocated in Loughborough close to the University.

The Council supports the principle of a new Science Park and sees it as a key proposal vital to sustain and enhance the local economy. It is intended that alongside the Core Strategy a Science Park allocation document will be produced to identify a specific site for this development.

This paper explores the locational options for the Science Park. These include suggested locations presented to us following consultation on the earlier Issues Paper in May 2004.

## ***The Regional Picture***

The Regional Economic Strategy for the East Midlands sets the ambition for the region to be one of the top 20 European regions by 2010. One of the key drivers for success is seen to be developing a strong culture of enterprise and innovation within the region. The strategy recognises that improving the levels of innovative business activity in the region depends upon the cultivation of good relationships between the universities and business and industrial users.

The Regional Spatial Strategy identified a particular shortage of sites suitable for science and technology users within the Three Cities sub area.

## ***The Local Picture***

The existing Loughborough Science Park covers about 34 hectares of land west of the University and was originally promoted in the early 1980's through the Loughborough Local Plan. The bulk of the site was occupied by the Advantica Gas Research and Training Centre, formally British Gas. This has now been acquired by the University and is called Holywell Park. There remains about 5 hectares of Science Park land on the A512 which is yet to be developed.

The Charnwood Economic Development Strategy 2004 establishes an economic vision for the Borough of "Growth through Quality". To achieve this vision the strategy gives priority to business innovation and advanced technology; business creation and survival; education, research and knowledge based industries; the creative/cultural industry; Loughborough as a retail/commercial centre.

Work undertaken by the County Council in preparing the Structure Plan identified a need for a hierarchy of sites for high technology firms in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland including:

- incubator facilities to encourage start up;
- ready-built small units for existing high technology small and medium size enterprises (SME);
- at least one substantial science park development.

The Structure Plan requires the Charnwood LDF to provide for a substantial Science Park of up to 50 hectares close to Loughborough University.

## ***What are the Locational Requirements?***

In identifying the most sustainable location for the Science Park we need to consider how the locational requirements of potential occupiers can best be met in the most sustainable way to ensure that the provision of the Science Park is a success.

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In developing its strategic proposals for the Science Park, Leicestershire County Council identified the need for a hierarchy of high technology sites from incubator facilities to one substantial science park. They considered the best site options would be those that could secure the involvement of a university and offer the best opportunities for clustering and improved linkages between firms and related universities. Incubator and SME units should be as close as practicable to the universities. For businesses looking for larger sites the County considered these could be accommodated on the proposed science and technology park. While these larger firms may have less need to be very close to a university, proximity would help to establish or reinforce links. Sites would need to be in accessible locations with nearby sources of technically qualified labour.

It is likely that the Science and Technology Park would include a mix of incubator, SME and larger business provision to allow firms to move within the site as they grow.

## ***What are the Options?***

The locational requirements for a Science Park would suggest that a location west of the existing Science Park is likely to be the best option. The Structure Plan's requirement that the site is located close to the University suggests an area of search west of the University.

What are the other options? Responses to the 2004 Issues Paper promoted some other options. Other suggested locations were:

- land north of the A512 between Loughborough and Shepshed;
- making use of brownfield opportunities in Loughborough;
- sites outside Loughborough- suggested sites were Wymeswold Airfield and land south of Sibleby.

### **Option 1: Land West of Loughborough, South of A512**

#### ***The Pros:***

- would be compatible with strategic guidance in RSS and Structure Plan;
- close proximity to University and existing science park would maximise benefits of clustering and linkages with the University;
- sufficient land available to provide for the long term development of a site of up to 50 hectares in accordance with the Structure Plan requirements;
- involvement of University as part landowner would help to secure success of project;
- well located close to Motorway with good access to existing public transport routes and cycle network;
- landscape would provide setting for a prestige development;
- could incorporate other development requirements including recreational provision, University expansion needs, park and ride.

#### ***The Cons***

- would involve development of Greenfield site rather than sequentially preferred brownfield land;
- impact on landscape which forms part of Charnwood Forest;
- the extent and location of Green Wedge between Loughborough and Shepshed would need to be reviewed;
- impact on existing ecological interests on site;
- possible traffic impact on A512 and J23 of M1.

### **Option 2: Land west of Loughborough, north of A512**

#### ***The Pros***

- would be compatible with strategic guidance in RSS and Structure Plan;
- proximity to University and existing science park would allow benefits of clustering and linkages with the University;
- sufficient land available to provide for the long term development of a site of up to 50 hectares in accordance with the Structure Plan requirements;
- well located close to Motorway with good access to existing public transport routes and cycle network;
- landscape would provide setting for a prestige development;
- could incorporate other development requirements including recreational provision, University expansion needs, park and ride;
- could provide the opportunity to secure a new Country Park and/ or District Park for Loughborough in accordance with the Council's Green Space Strategy.

#### ***The Cons:***

- would involve development of Greenfield site rather than sequentially preferred brownfield land;
- the extent and location of Green Wedge between Loughborough and Shepshed would need to be reviewed;
- challenge to accommodate development within the Garendon Estate with minimal impact on the historic Garendon Park
- impact on existing ecological interests on site;
- possible traffic impact on A512 and J23 of M1.

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<b>Option 3: Brownfield Site in Loughborough</b>
<b>The Pros</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Would be compatible with strategic guidance in RSS and Structure Plan;</li><li>• Would involve development of sequentially preferred brownfield land;</li><li>• Likely to be some benefits due to proximity of University and existing high tech businesses in town;</li><li>• Depending on location could be well related to existing public transport facilities including Loughborough station.</li></ul>
<b>The Cons</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No brownfield site of sufficient size to meet requirements available;</li><li>• Clustering benefits may be more limited;</li><li>• Unlikely that other development needs could be incorporated;</li><li>• Depending on location could have significant traffic implications.</li></ul>

<b>Option 4: Locations Outside Loughborough (Wymeswold Airfield, South of Sileby)</b>
<b>The Pros</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wymeswold airfield would involve brownfield land;</li><li>• Could be economic benefits in providing local employment opportunities.</li></ul>
<b>The Cons</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• would not be in accordance with search sequence of RSS and Structure Plan;</li><li>• clustering benefits likely to be limited;</li><li>• depending on location may not be well located to the major highway network;</li><li>• could have significant traffic implications;</li><li>• south of Sileby would involve development of Greenfield land.</li></ul>

**SEE QUESTION 13**

## ***Planning for Town Centres***

Loughborough is the main centre within Charnwood and an important sub-regional centre providing a wide ranging of shopping, cultural and leisure opportunities. The larger towns and villages in the Borough all have their own centres providing more local shopping, cultural and leisure facilities. Because of the Borough's location between the Three Cities, Loughborough has to compete with Derby, Nottingham and Leicester to attract shoppers to the town. In Loughborough there are also a number of retail warehouse parks outside the town centre and two District Centres serving the north and south of the town.



National planning policy aims to promote the vitality and viability of town centres by planning for the growth and development of existing centres, focusing development in these centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment. A key objective is to enhance consumer choice by providing for a range of shopping, leisure and local services which allow real choice to meet the needs of the whole community. In our planning policies we need to identify a local network or hierarchy of centres and ensure a more even distribution of town centre uses so that people's everyday needs can be met at the local level.

## ***The Regional Picture***

Lying at the heart of the East Midlands in the centre of the Three Cities triangle, the retail picture in Charnwood is strongly influenced by the presence of Leicester, Nottingham and Derby. The RSS aims to encourage the Three Cities to develop their pre-eminent roles for the region. Loughborough is identified as a centre where public sector support is needed to encourage further private sector investment.

## ***The Local Picture***

The current Local Plan sets out the planning strategy for Loughborough Town Centre and other centres within the Borough. For

Loughborough the strategy focuses on the provision of an Inner Relief Road to take traffic off the A6 to provide a more pedestrian friendly town centre and facilitate development on 3 "opportunity sites". Parts of this strategy have already been delivered- the pedestrianisation of Market Place and Market Street, and the development of The Rushes shopping centre.

To take the strategy forward, the Council has engaged consultants to produce a masterplan for the town centre. A Town Team, involving key partners and interests, has been established to support the production of the masterplan.

Outside Loughborough a range of District Centres provide for the day to day needs of local communities. In recent years the loss of employment in villages associated with the decline of the local textile industries has also had an impact on District Centres. Some local centres have struggled as a result. At Thurmaston the development of ASDA along with the redevelopment of the former Co-op building is likely to mean that the District Centre attracts shoppers from a wide area. This could have implications for nearby centres such as Syston.

In the rural parts of the Borough it is important that local village services are maintained.

## ***The Issues and Options***

The Charnwood LDF will need to develop a strategy to ensure the continued vitality and viability of the range of retail centres from Loughborough to the more local centres. The current planning strategy for Loughborough Town Centre is being progressed. We need to consider whether further opportunities for expansion of the centre should be identified, and look at what else can be done to ensure its continued success.

The existing District Centres are important local facilities. We need to consider how we can sustain and enhance the role of these centres.

**SEE QUESTION 14**

## ***An Accessible Borough***

National planning policy aims to promote more sustainable travel choices and to reduce the need to travel and distances travelled by planning for the things people need to be close to them. The emphasis is on improving sustainability and accessibility.

The RSS aims to locate development in ways that reduce the need to travel, with emphasis on greater use of sustainable travel modes including public transport, cycling and walking, whilst recognising the need to meet the needs of rural areas.

## ***The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) and Local Transport Plans (LTPs)***

A key objective of the RTS is to support sustainable development in the Principal Urban Areas and Sub Regional Centres. In the Three Cities sub area in which Charnwood is located the objectives include:

- reducing use of the car in and around the main urban centres and promoting a step change in public transport provision;
- improving bus links within and between the Three Cities and Sub Regional Centres such as Loughborough and meeting local needs in rural areas;
- improving the accessibility of people living in deprived areas to jobs and services;
- improving public transport access to Nottingham East Midlands Airport.

Our approach should also complement the emerging proposals in the reviews of the Leicestershire and Central Leicestershire LTPs by the County and City Councils. The main elements are to:

- reduce congestion by making alternatives to the car more attractive, reduce the need to travel and make best use of roadspace;
- improve access to essential facilities such as work, education, healthcare and shopping especially for those without a car available;
- reduce road accident casualties;



- Improve air quality and reduce the impact of traffic on communities.

Transport schemes under consideration of relevance in Charnwood are:

- improved bus provision in Loughborough and main corridors into Leicester;
- safe, cycle networks in Loughborough and Central Leicestershire;
- adequate parking which does not encourage car commuting;
- filling the gaps in access by bus, walking and cycling to key destinations;
- introducing measures to reduce the worst air quality problems related to traffic.

Potential major transport schemes to help meet the stated objectives include:

- an integrated transport scheme for Loughborough which could include a relief road of the town centre, pedestrianisation of the A6 through Market Place, improved bus facilities and improvements to bottlenecks on Epinal Way;
- quality bus corridors on main roads into Leicester;
- bypasses for communities where heavy lorry traffic is causing significant environmental problems if this can be achieved at modest cost.

These schemes would be in addition to existing commitments for M1 Widening between junctions 19 and 30 by the Highways Agency.

## ***The Local Picture***

Transport and communication links are essential to Charnwood's continuing prosperity. They need to be improved but 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.

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.

Traffic growth is adding to noise and air quality problems. The Council recently consulted on its Draft Air Quality Action Plan. The Plan highlights options and measures that may be available to improve air quality in parts of the Borough where we are concerned about the levels of air pollution. We have declared three Air Quality Management Areas, two in Loughborough and one in Syston. The Draft Action Plan outlines possible measures for tackling the pollution problems in these areas.

In a number of Charnwood's communities good quality alternatives to the car are not available. People without access to a car may be isolated from family and friends, services and facilities.

Our current approach aims for a better balance of provision by, for example, making alternatives to the car more attractive and planning developments to be accessible by a choice of good quality travel modes. Despite efforts over the past ten years travel by non-car modes has not increased significantly.

Much remains to be done. The Charnwood LDF has a key role to play in developing a sustainable land use and transportation strategy for the Borough. This Issues and Options stage provides the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of our approach, to review it and develop an appropriate way forward.

## ***Transport Options***

### ***Option 1***

Continue to apply measures that will gradually increase the share of travel by walking, cycling and public transport, make more effective use of existing infrastructure but apply few constraints on car use.

The likelihood is that the pace of change will be slow and the quality of alternatives not good enough to counter the negative impacts of continuing traffic growth on the economy, the environment and quality of life.

### ***Option 2***

Develop and apply a more sustainable and inclusive approach using stronger measures to reduce the need to travel, reduce distances travelled, and significantly increase travel by walking cycling and public transport.

This could reduce traffic related problems and is more likely to bring overall environmental, economic and social benefits. It would require the rigorous application of measures to manage car use such as travel plans, restrictions on parking in new developments, and the development of park and ride as part of high quality provision for non-car modes. There would be selective highway improvements appropriate as part of the integrated strategy.

In both Options 1 and 2 the LDF could help by siting new developments in locations likely to reduce travel or be accessible by a choice of transport, by applying parking standards as maximum, by safeguarding routes / sites for new transport facilities, for example, roads, rail stations or park and ride sites.

The only other option seems to be to attempt to meet demands for increased car use.

### ***Option 3***

Try and build our way out of congestion and pollution problems by improving the road network and increasing parking provision significantly.

Previous experience suggests that this would make car use easier adding to rather than reducing congestion and pollution problems, especially in main urban centres.

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This would be unsustainable with significant adverse environmental, economic and social impacts. If even more people travel by car then public transport could be expected to decline adding to exclusion problems.

This approach would conflict with established guidance and be unlikely to attract public funding.

***SEE QUESTION 15***