

Loughborough Public Meeting

Meeting and workshop notes

Loughborough Town Hall 28th October 2008

(Attendance 64)

This report provides a summary of the key issues raised by members of the public at Loughborough Town Hall as part of the further consultation on the Core Strategy. The report also provides an analysis of the participant's response to the workshop exercise. The views expressed are those of the participants and are not necessarily shared by the Council. Finally, a summary of the question and answer session held is provided.

Table 1 (13 participants)

- Doubts expressed about people's willingness to change their travel habits especially the high dependence on car use. Alternatives are not adequate and need to be improved significantly
- Concerns that affordable housing is often not affordable by those in need.
- The build rates proposed are far too high and it is doubted whether 19,300 new houses are needed locally particularly in the light of difficult economic circumstances we are currently experiencing
- Flood risk must always be minimised
- Green wedge policy needs to be flexible but care is needed to ensure settlement identity is properly safeguarded
- Settlement identity relates to a lot of issues and not just how close one settlement is to another.
- Agricultural land needs to be safeguarded for food production
- New housing development does not really help with the regeneration of deprived areas. As an example Tescos at Shelthorpe has brought significantly more benefits to local people than the mass of housing built south of the town.

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape	7	3	
Protect settlement identity	5	5	2
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests	5	5	
Minimise the need to travel by car	3	3	7
Reduce flood risk	8	2	
Protect good quality agricultural land	12	1	
Access to services and jobs	5	5	2
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households	9	2	3
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	8	4	

Attractiveness to investors	3	2	5
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Table 2

- Transport issues - traffic congestion; concerns about poor air quality around Nanpanton; and we need new schools but this causes peak time traffic congestion.
- Concern about contaminate land - how are we going to treat contaminants?
- Biodiversity will adapt to new development - be realistic put roads where they need to go. Chop a tree down plant 5 extra
- Perhaps the settlement identity - identity is perhaps more to do about community than boundaries
- Concerns that West Loughborough option has been proposed rather than Wymeswold Airfield

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape	7	3	
Protect settlement identity	2	6	2
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests	5	4	4
Minimise the need to travel by car	6	5	1
Reduce flood risk	9	3	1
Protect good quality agricultural land	7	3	1
Access to services and jobs	8	4	
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households	3	9	
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	4.5	5.5	
Attractiveness to investors	7	4	3

Table 3 (13 participants)

- Wildlife - Vital to protect landscape; Sometimes too much stress on wildlife; wildlife can sometimes be mitigated; and open spaces are valuable parts of new development for wildlife
- Settlement identity not so important for some - important for others
- Historic environment - is already well-protected; old architecture should be retained.
- Cars - develop public transport;
- Mixed developments of housing and industry - car travel is most people's first choice; cycle route designs are currently piecemeal
- Flood risk is very important and a big issue
- Protecting good agricultural land is still an important objective

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape	4	7	
Protect settlement identity	6	3	4
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests	3	6	3
Minimise the need to travel by car	6	5	
Reduce flood risk	7	5	
Protect good quality agricultural land	8	3	2
Access to services and jobs	1	11	1
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households	2	9	
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	6	7	
Attractiveness to investors	1	4	4

Table 4 (15 participants)

- It was felt that the Garendon option is the richest area for wildlife species in whole of Charnwood
- It was suggested that Wymeswold Airfield has the least wildlife and should therefore be the location for development to take place over Garendon Park.
- There was a high level of importance and value placed on wildlife and open spaces as well as agricultural land.
- There are considerable concerns about flooding in the west of Loughborough in relation to the Black Brook.
- It was highlighted that there are problems getting into Loughborough and that services are stretched now. It was therefore felt that new housing adjoining Loughborough is going to make this worse.
- It was felt that the proposed location has a lack of links into existing community.
- There was concern that the unique character of Loughborough, Shepshed and Hathern will be lost when development joins them up.
- It was highlighted that access to green space is very important to residents.
- There was a great deal of support for lower density developments than those that have been seen in recent years.
- There are concerns about achieving the infrastructure needed to support the proposed development.
- It was felt that it is unlikely that the Council will be able to achieve the aim of getting people out of cars.
- There was a question about who was going to be living in these new houses.
- There was a lower level of importance placed on access to services, supporting deprived communities, minimising use of the car and attractiveness to investors.

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape	13	2	1
Protect settlement identity	3	7	4
Protect the historic environment	8	5	3

and archaeological interests			
Minimise the need to travel by car	6	2	5
Reduce flood risk	10	3	2
Protect good quality agricultural land	11	3	1
Access to services and jobs	7	5	
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households	7	3	2
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	11	4	1
Attractiveness to investors	1	4	9

Table 5

(No participants at this table)

Group 6 (10 participants)

- Transport was considered by the group to be an important factor in considering locations for development. It was felt that transport infrastructure, particularly roads, were extremely inadequate in Charnwood and that these should be improved before development takes place.
- Drainage and sewerage infrastructure was also thought to be inadequate and that this too needs to be improved before new development places extra demands upon it.
- The group considered settlement identity to be an important factor.
- There was a general agreement in the group that current approaches to housing design could be changed to reflect what local people wanted. It was suggested that there should be less 3 storey development and more bungalows because this would have less of a landscape impact and would be better suited to residents' needs.
- The point was made that land was a finite resource which couldn't be replaced, and because of this, should be an important factor for deciding where to locate development.
- Finally, the group felt that development should be located near to existing services like shops and schools.

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape	6	2	
Protect settlement identity	5	2	2
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests	3	3	2
Minimise the need to travel by car	5	4	1
Reduce flood risk	3	3	1
Protect good quality agricultural land	7	2	
Access to services and jobs	5	2	1

Enhance the standards of living of deprived households	1	3	4
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	6	3	1
Attractiveness to investors	1	3	3

Notes from the Question & Answer session

Q What is the status of the strategic flood risk assessment and to what extent has it influenced the choice of locations?

A *The final version is now available on line. The conclusions have been taken into account in assessing all potential growth locations*

Q How has the 10,000 dwellings requirement been arrived at and have vacancies in the current stock and the current poor market conditions been taken into account?

A *The overall requirement 2001-2026 of 19,000 dwellings is based on government projections for districts. 9,000 dwellings have already been built or are committed.*

Projections take a long term view allowing for economic cycles, vacancy rates and a whole range of technical factors. More houses are needed because people are living longer and household size is shrinking. National and international migration are allowed for in the projections

Q 10,000 houses will add 25,000 people. Added to Loughborough this would double the size of the town. There would be insufficient jobs even if the Science Park is expanded and roads in Loughborough are inadequate to cope with all the traffic.

A *The houses must be provided as the figures are decreed in the Regional Plan. Our view is that these must be provided in the most sustainable ways in SUEs. The significant need for affordable homes will be addressed by requiring 30% of the overall figure to be affordable.*

For each SUE a package of measures will be developed to mitigate as far as possible traffic impacts and provide for example better public transport, walking and cycling and possibly park and ride.

Q Road infrastructure in the town is inadequate and congestion getting worse. Why is no information available about a possible bypass around the south west of the town?

A *In locating new development the aim is to maximise accessibility to services and facilities so people need to travel less, make shorter trips and use non car modes as much as possible.*

The provision of a bypass whether to the west or east of the town or the upgrading of Epinal way are options for consideration but providing more road capacity could

lead to greater car use contrary to efforts to widen travel choices. In response to consultations people should make case for their preferred solution and how it could be achieved.

Q Building more roads should be seen as an irrelevance. In the future oil will be less readily available and any roads built will not be well used.

A The point is noted.

Q Current experience with Grange Park is that facilities such as the new local centre have been slow in coming forward. How will the planners ensure we build communities in the proposed SUEs?

A The intention is to work with the existing communities nearby and ensure that new facilities are provided gradually as the developments build out. A phased approach means funding is available for the new services, facilities and infrastructure. We will develop a vision for how the SUEs will evolve over the next 20 years or so.

Q Wymeswold Airfield seems able to match or better Garendon on a number of the planning criteria used. This location would be less damaging in terms of taking green fields and could provide new roads. Why is it not the preferred SUE location?

A Officers have objectively assessed the pros and cons of all the planning criteria and come to the view west Loughborough performs best taking account of all the criteria used.

The new road needed to serve a new development at Wymeswold Airfield would be difficult to deliver as it would run through floodplain and be very expensive to provide.

Q Has 'Personal rapid transit' been considered to serve the SUEs? Based on small taxi like vehicles it seems to have advantages over all other personal travel modes and is being considered at Heathrow Airport and Daventry.

A The SUEs are being planned and located to have less reliance on motorised means of travel. Suitable development locations will need to have maximum scope for slower modes and bus travel. We will look at what can be learnt from PRT schemes elsewhere.

Q Is the published Core Strategy 'unshakeable'? And how much consideration was given to the outcome from previous consultations?

A The Plan is not a done deal and can be changed. This consultation will test the content and Councillors are keen to have alternative views or be made aware of fundamental issues that have been missed.

Q The Borough Council should be seeking a sustainable level of population. Is the 19,000 additional houses being provided mainly due to international migration?

A *The 19,000 houses must be provided in the Borough. The LDF cannot change national policies on migration*

Q What is the intended average housing density for the Garendon SUE? Can the Borough Council be more effective than in the past at getting planning gain from developers?

A *The average density sought is 35 dwellings/hectare with higher densities in the middle of the development and lower densities at the edges. It is intended that significant new infrastructure, services and facilities for the SUEs will be funded by developer contributions where it is reasonably and directly related. One reason for going for larger developments is that there are much greater opportunities to secure planning gains for the community.*

The Borough Council has achieved significant provision locally in recent times in the form of for example affordable housing, open space provision and new transport infrastructure. The Hallam Fields development of about 900 dwellings and 5ha employment land north off development is providing about £10m of benefits. The 1000 house Grange Park area south of Loughborough will provide amongst other things the Epinal Way extension, a linear park and a local centre.

Q How will new jobs be provided to meet needs generated by the SUEs?

A *The SUEs include significant new provision for employment land. The Garendon SUE will be next to the proposed Science Park extension. This extension by providing another 50ha (gross) on top of 45ha (gross) already allowed for will help ensure Loughborough's economic base is diverse and able to attract new investment in high tech, blue chip industries. The SUEs are also located near existing employment areas.*

Q What is the proposed balance between industry and public housing in the SUEs? And will support services be increased in parallel? At present this are not sufficient and Loughborough no longer has a proper hospital.

A *The aim is to secure significant new employment land provision as part of the SUEs. The Thurmaston SUE will include 25ha of employment land and this could rise to 50ha if justified to meet needs including those arising in Leicester City. Key service providers are involved in preparing the LDF and also in the local Strategic Partnership to help develop effective local solutions. The north of Birstall development will provide land for a new fire station. 19,000 new houses will give significant Council Tax income to fund better local services.*

Q Why does the settlement hierarchy strangle development in rural communities? There appears to be no scope for development

across much of the Borough. Surely some development will be needed to provide jobs, housing needed for communities to thrive?

A *Rural communities are unlikely to have sufficient population to maintain and improve services and facilities. Very significant provision of housing would be needed to achieve this and it is evident that doing this could merely exacerbate out commuting to nearby towns and cities. The strategy is to concentrate most development in the urban areas as they are the most sustainable locations.*

Q The 10,000 new houses should not be provided until all empty houses are filled, undeveloped committed sites are built and the implications of significant new student accommodation for releasing houses back onto the market are known. Will there be phasing policy to help ensure this and how will affordable houses be delivered?

A *The LDF is a long term plan and the housing figures take account of vacancies and potential fluctuations in housing markets. Phasing new housing could seriously inhibit the delivery of the SUEs which will have long lead in times.*

Whilst the build rates implied by the new housing requirement are much higher than current levels there may be scope to phase building to give priority to brownfield sites. Housing associations rather than the Borough Council will be the providers of new affordable housing schemes. In addition further affordable housing can be secured by market housing 'cross subsidy' schemes.

Q Could Wymeswold Airfield be an attractive option for investors and therefore for inclusion in the LDF?

A *Some house builders would find Wymeswold Airfield an attractive location for housing. However although the various options have been in the public realm for some time we are not aware of any serious developer interest. Whilst our work leads to the conclusion there are better options, people can submit a reasoned case for others they consider better. There are also significant doubts about the viability of being able to build a road between Loughborough and Wymeswold to provide suitable access, as this would have to cross the River Soar floodplain*