

Syston Public Meeting

Workshop notes

Syston Community Centre 31st October 2008

(Attendance 20)

This report provides a summary of the key issues raised by members of the public at Syston Community Centre 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 (10 participants)

- Concern was raised about the capacity of schools and pressure development would put on schools such as Barkby Primary. It was highlighted that the Barkby School had already changed with the pressure from the new development at Hamilton. It was felt that even with new schools provided within the development; people will seek to send their children to Barkby School.
- There was particular concern about the lack of information about transport infrastructure. Concern was raised about the traffic passing through Barkby.
- It was asked whether the city boundary will change to include the proposed development and how the development will relate to the recent development at Hamilton.
- It was highlighted that they would like more information about the alternative options, which was provided within the later presentation.
- It was generally felt that development should be delivered as smaller sites, rather than one large urban extension. It was highlighted that the countryside east of Thurmaston and south of Syston was highly valued by residents and there is concern about the city gradually extending outwards towards Barkby and Syston.
- There was concern that the development will increase flooding issues in the area.

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape			
Protect settlement identity			
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests			
Managing travel demand and improving transport choice			
Reduce flood risk			
Protect good quality agricultural land			
Access to services and jobs			
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households			
Access to the countryside and			

leisure facilities			
Attractiveness to investors			

NB: The participants at this table did not want to take part in the workshop exercise.

Table 2 (5 Participants)

- The group felt that traffic was a key issue in deciding where to locate development. It was felt that the majority of traffic would not go towards Leicester but would come through Syston and Barkby.
- The impact of flooding was considered to be a very important factor. Specific concerns were raised about the impact of surface water run-off and increased flood risk from development into Barkby Brook. Offices explained that a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out to inform the Council's decision on the location of development, and that the way that new development would be designed would be to discharge surface water run-off in a far more gradual way than is in current developments.
- The group also considered that wildlife and agricultural land were important factors when considering the possible location of development.

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

Table 3 (5 Participants)

- Charnwood Forest is precious and must be protected
- If all this development has to be accommodated then the identity of some settlements will inevitably be compromised. Green wedges will be needed to ensure damage is contained as far as possible
- Transport systems need to enable people to go where they need to but provide a choice of modes. This requires new investment in transport provision and putting development in the right places that can minimise travel
- Need to keep farmland for food production and locally produced food to reduce unnecessary food miles
- Settlements should develop to a size where they can provide better services and facilities without them getting overstretched

- The South Charnwood swimming pool facilities at Syston are difficult to get use of at certain times of day
- There is a strong correlation between improving transport and providing good access to services

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape		5	
Protect settlement identity	1	3	1
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests		2	2
Managing travel demand and improving transport choice	4		
Reduce flood risk	2		
Protect good quality agricultural land	4		1
Access to services and jobs	4		
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households		2	2
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	2	1	1
Attractiveness to investors		3	3

Notes from the Question and Answer Session

Q In what way does building houses help a deprived area?

A The proximity to deprived communities was just one factor in considering the relative merits of the different locations. Development provides an opportunity to bring benefits to a wider area, for example new schools can provide the wider the community with better access to education and training, development can improve access to affordable housing; it can create new jobs opportunities and new recreational facilities and spaces.

Q Syston residents have been told this before, this was the reason given for previous developments and so shouldn't these issues have been overcome by previous development? You can't keep giving this as the reason that we need more development in this area.

A There are two ways of funding improvements to an area, the first is public funding and the second is capturing the uplift in land values when development is allowed. It is important that developer contributions are maximised as there are limited public resources. It is also important to consider that investment will chase development. It was highlighted that Syston had benefited from developer contributions to the improved health centre and could have lost a school without the increase in population development has brought.

Q Are building rates going to increase or decrease from what they are at the moment?

A *There will need to be a significant increase in the build rates required between now and 2026.*

Q It has been stated that we have to accept the housing figures and that 5,000 houses would be best located east of Thurmaston and north of Hamilton. When will you be able to put before us a scheme showing the schools, shops and roads? How can we say what is important without this detail?

A *We understand the frustration but we do not currently have any more detail to provide you at this stage. It is intended that more information will be provided in June/July 2008 when the Council publishes a Submission version of the Core Strategy for a further six week consultation before it is submitted to the Secretary of State. This consultation will include a boundary to the proposed site, details of access points and details of the requirements for employment, services and facilities. There will also need to be a masterplanning exercise undertaken in consultation with the local community once an Inspector has considered the Core Strategy proposals about the location and requirements.*

Q How do we go about telling you that we don't think you have picked the right location without information about the other options?

A *The leaflet provided to you includes details of the full consultation document, which sets out all the options we have considered and the pros and cons of each location. We are inviting your views on these options and the whether you feel we have identified the best locations. We have summarised during this meeting the pros and cons of each of the options and have directed you to where to find out more about the options and the evidence base we have used to inform our proposals. No decision has been made. This consultation is also an opportunity to set out on what terms you would accept development as well as set out why this is not in your view the best location.*

Q Unfortunately we find ourselves in the same situation as our parents, they fought against Hamilton development and as tenant farmers we are now fighting against this. What about the settlement identity of Barkby and Barkby Thorpe? We have watched development come right up to the boundary of Leicester City and feel let down that Charnwood are now proposing development on the edge of Leicester.

A *These proposals are based on regional and national requirements for development to be directed to the edge of urban areas. Charnwood Borough Council is required to provide over 6,500 homes within and adjoining the Principal Urban Area of Leicester. There will be an impact on the landscape. If we went ahead in this location we would ensure the natural bowl in the landscape is used to mitigate the impact.*

Q When you look at the other options, there are major routes of either A roads or motorways. New homes and businesses are going to need

infrastructure and the option suggested doesn't have the road infrastructure.

A *There will be significant traffic implications of this scale of development and the road infrastructure that is required is being considered. It is important that we do not focus too heavily on road infrastructure and consider whether large scale road infrastructure is needed as part of an integrated package of measures covering all modes. We also have to ensure we give people the best opportunities to choose to live where home, work and access to services and facilities are close together and access is easy without cars.*

Q It would be better to go with smaller developments as people will not stay within a development and will use the schools outside the development, this is what has happened with Hamilton and new residents sending their children to Barkby School and putting pressure on the school.

A *The development will include a secondary school and two primary schools and whilst parents have a choice about where their children go to school we are liaising with the County Council about what is needed to do our best to provide for the needs of new and existing residents. Smaller developments will not bring with it as much investment in things like transport and schools.*

Q But surely smaller developments of 2,000 would need less infrastructure and therefore cost less?

A *There would still be significant transport infrastructure costs for a development of 2,000 homes. All the locations would need investment in the infrastructure. The issue remains that we can not accommodate the full requirement for homes in the locations north of Birstall or south of Anstey and would therefore need to build in more than one location. Spreading development would not maximise the benefits in terms of what can be secured from developer contributions.*

Q Is the proposal dependent on the landowner being prepared to sell land?

A *It is important that the landowner is interested and willing to provide the land for development.*

Q The more I have heard and read, the more I feel that the south of Anstey and north of Birstall options satisfy far more of the concerns than the east of Thurmaston option. Infrastructure is a key element and there are no major roads in this area, so the infrastructure investment will be enormous. I can not believe that the impact on wildlife at Rothley will be greater than here. I feel that the other two options would have less impact and save money on infrastructure. The money saved could be spent on facilities and services. Why hasn't an option been considered which combines south of Anstey with the north of Birstall?

A *We have looked at that possibility and weren't able to demonstrate that we could provide the same level of facilities and services that are needed if we took that approach. But that is our officer view and we are putting that forward for consultation and want to hear your views if you disagree, please put your views in writing to us.*

Q You must have looked into the costs of the road infrastructure needed? We are concerned about the impact on Syston, which will be the gateway to the motorway.

A *At this stage we are talking about principles and have not got detailed costing for road proposals. We are considering if we need major roads and what other forms of transport can be provided. It is possible that the price of oil will mean we can not afford to drive in the future and we need to consider this possibility and give people the choice to not use their cars. It is important that we provide homes close to and accessible to jobs and services and also provide good public transport.*

Q It is hard to get hold of land for Places of Worship, how will this be considered?

A *It will be important that community facilities are provided as part of the sustainable urban extensions proposed. Places of Worship are an integral part of the provision of community facilities. Through the Local Plan adopted in 2004 we have secured the provision of community facilities including Places of Worship.*

Q What about other locations where you are not proposing development?

A *This is more an issue about how detailed development control policies are applied. For example in terms of what approach is taken to old industrial sites and whether they can be considered for different land uses.*

Q Glenfield has seen growth over the years and there have not been facilities added in this area? Would it not be better to locate the development south of Anstey and north of Glenfield so that a secondary school could be provided for an area that doesn't have one?

A *This is an example of somewhere that has grown gradually and incrementally over a period without the facilities it needs such as secondary school. The issue here is that there is not enough land to accommodate the scale of housing that would be needed to bring a secondary school; this means there would be a shortfall in funding. This is part of the reason we are proposing a single site because otherwise you lose the opportunity to require the developers to provide a secondary school.*

Q How are you going to afford public transport to take children to school?

A *There are limited resources available, which is why it is important to consider whether major new roads are needed and whether money is better spent on public transport and considering the opportunity to provide a railway station.*

- Q** You set out in the leaflet that this is about protecting wildlife, protecting the landscape and agricultural land and flood risk. But your proposals are going to make flooding worse, take away agricultural land and wildlife.
- A* We have set out our views and we are asking for feedback, please make your comments in writing to us.
- Q** How accurate is the red area showing the proposed sustainable urban extension at Loughborough?
- A* It is diagrammatic. We are working with landowners on a number of sites but we do not have detailed plans at this stage.
- Q** Have you considered the impact on people and that this will swallow up Queniborough, Scraptoft and Barkby into Leicester? If you haven't costed the roads, how can you weigh different locations against each other?
- A* We will be looking to protect the settlement identity of villages close to the proposed development by making use of natural landscape bowls and landscaping. In terms of costing of roads, we have already explained this, but invite your comments as part of this consultation exercise.
- Q** How are you going to create a community, communities take years to develop.
- A* This is a difficult task and highlights the importance of play facilities, community buildings, places of worship and schools, which bring people together as a community.