

Thurmaston Public Meeting

Workshop notes

Elizabeth Park Sports Centre 29th October 2008

(Attendance 70)

This report provides a summary of the key issues raised by members of the public at Elizabeth Park Sports 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 (13 participants)

- The group questioned the need for new houses, especially given out migration patterns from Charnwood that were recently reported in local media. The group also questioned the Borough Council's role at the regional plan influences the borough's housing figures.
- A significant concern that was raised by the group was the loss of identity of Thurmaston and Barkby and Barkby Thorpe.
- There was a concern amongst the group of why it was necessary to take up so much greenfield land.
- The group questioned why the development should be so big and why it was focussed in one area.
- The group questioned why Charnwood Borough Council was catering for Leicester's growth.
- There was concern about the way that infrastructure was proposed to be delivered, and the level of certainty about bringing this about through developer contributions.

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

Table 2 (6 Participants)

- There were concerns about the impact of the proposed development on existing settlements.
- There was a keenness to spread development over the Borough rather than concentrate it mainly into two urban extensions.
- There was a question about how utility companies would be able to establish supplies to areas east of Thurmaston given the barrier afforded by the railway line.
- Participants wanted to see more details of the proposals and found it difficult to make comments without knowing more about what was planned.
- Concern about how settlement identity could be protected.

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

Table 3 (10 Participants)

- We used to live close to where we worked this is important to relieve traffic congestion
- Concern that new development will place further pressure on road network
- Good access by public transport to City but not into Thurmaston
- Flood risk considered important concern about surface water runoff
- Concern about Thurmaston being swallowed by the City

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape	7		
Protect settlement identity	8		
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests	4	2	
Managing travel demand and improving transport choice	6	1	
Reduce flood risk	5		1

Protect good quality agricultural land	4	2	
Access to services and jobs	5	1	
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households	2	4	2
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	5	1	
Attractiveness to investors		3	2

Table 4 (11 Participants)

- The group felt that settlement identity was a very high priority and felt that development at Thurmaston would further segregate the community. A significant concern that was raised by the group was the loss of identity of Thurmaston and Barkby and Barkby Thorpe.
- The group questioned why Charnwood Borough Council was catering for Leicester's growth.
- There was concern about the way that infrastructure was proposed to be delivered, and the level of certainty about bringing this about through developer contributions.
- Flood risk was raised as a major issue and some residents said that Colby Drive had been flooded in the past and the development would make things worse.
- The group felt that no more facilities were required in Thurmaston or the surrounding area. The group was particularly concerned about the additional employment land that would be provided and felt that this would just raise their council tax higher (they said that they were the high council tax area in Borough because of the existing employment land).
- The group felt that the protection of the historic environment was a low priority – the proposed development was not located on the Medieval Village. Some of the group questioned why it was so important to protect the Medieval Village when they did have any access to enjoy it. Some felt that by incorporating it into the development would provide greater access to it.
- The group thought that protection of land in general should have a high priority.

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape	8	2	1
Protect settlement identity	10		
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests	2	3	7
Managing travel demand and improving transport choice	10		
Reduce flood risk	9		
Protect good quality agricultural land	8		
Access to services and jobs	3	2	4
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households			7
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	6		

Attractiveness to investors			8
-----------------------------	--	--	---

The table felt that there was a missing factor that should have been considered:

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Impact on Locals	10		

Table 5 (13 Participants)

- Must maximise use of brownfield sites and the contribution from within Cities
- Village and community life needs to be safeguarded. That means keeping surrounding areas free of development by designating green belts.
- People feel threatened by the sheer scale of the proposed SUE at Thurmaston. This could double the size of the community in just 20 years
- As a lot of traditional built and natural features have been lost the remainder needs to be preserved
- Agricultural land must be kept for food production
- Development must have adequate infrastructure in particular new roads. People have become very car dependent and it will be difficult to change habits
- Much more investment is needed in alternatives to the car. Public transport should be re-nationalised and fares free.
- There must be strong flood prevention and protection. Existing systems in the Syston/ Thurmaston/ Barkby areas cannot cope.
- People would rather commute to jobs elsewhere than have large new employment areas built near their homes. It is difficult to blend housing and employment areas.
- Local facilities in Thurmaston are already overstretched. The reality is that additional housing will just overload them even more.
- New developments must provide for all types of housing and housing needs in particular those of an ageing population and for truly affordable properties

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape	13		
Protect settlement identity	7		
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests	8		
Managing travel demand and improving transport choice		5	
Reduce flood risk	7		
Protect good quality agricultural land	10		
Access to services and jobs		5	
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households	2		
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	9		
Attractiveness to investors			10

Table 6 (12 Participants)

- There was no consensus over the issue of whether there should be large scale concentration of development in one or two locations or a more spread out approach across the borough
- Concerns about the identity of Thurmaston, which was felt to be important to residents.
- Issues were raised about the realism of living and working on a single site
- It was felt that wildlife and countryside are of high importance and priority.
- There was a discussion about how development will affect Thurmaston and whether the proposals are a foregone conclusion.

FACTOR	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Protect wildlife and landscape	2	4	3
Protect settlement identity	6	3	
Protect the historic environment and archaeological interests	1	1	7
Managing travel demand and improving transport choice	11		
Reduce flood risk	10	2	
Protect good quality agricultural land	1	7	3
Access to services and jobs	3	5	2
Enhance the standards of living of deprived households	1		15
Access to the countryside and leisure facilities	4	4	
Attractiveness to investors			7

Notes from the Question and Answer Session

- A point was made that the proposals in the Core Strategy maintained the settlement identities of every settlement except that of Thurmaston.
- It was asked where 50 hectares of employment land would be provided within the proposed urban extension at Thurmaston. At the moment this wasn't known and is subject to further investigation. The proposed urban extension would include 25ha of employment, but possibly include a total of 50 ha of employment, depending upon how the findings of a recent Employment Land Study were applied to the Borough of Charnwood. It may not be necessary to place all 50 ha of employment land into one place, and the delivery of this could be phased over time.
- A question was asked about the presentation given and about how justifiable it was to make a comparison between the size of the proposed development with that of Shepshed. It was clarified that Shepshed had approximately 5000 dwellings, and the comparison was made to give an indication of the large scale of development that is proposed. There would be a difference in the land areas of Shepshed and a proposed urban extension because of the different densities of

housing, and how other facilities were arranged in the development. The same person asked a second question about whether large development in Sileby and Syston were being taken into account in meeting the housing requirement of 19,000 dwellings. It was explained that the housing that has been built and sites with planning permission have been taken into account, but this still left a residual requirement to be found of approximately 10,000 dwellings.

- A representative of Thurmaston Parish Council raised the issue of a railway station at Thurmaston that was promised as part of a scheme called the Ivanhoe Line as long ago as the 1970s, but never actually delivered. The question was asked that the Council has promised many things in the past, but not delivered on its promises, and there was a lack of joined-up thinking between infrastructure and planning new development. It was explained that the Ivanhoe line had delivered stations to Barrow-upon-Soar, Sileby and Syston. A new railway station at Thurmaston is an option that can be considered as part of a package of transport measures as part of the development.
- It was asked whether parts of Watermead Country Park were being sold off, and also what the long term management of country parks would be if the Council would not commit to them in the long-term. It was stated that the Council was not aware of any proposals for country park land to be sold off.
- A question was asked about whether the delivery of promised facilities could be guaranteed, and what would happen if developers ran out of money. It was explained that facilities could not be guaranteed, but of all the developer contributions secured across Charnwood over the years, there had perhaps been one situation where a developer could not fulfil their obligations. A further question was asked about whether ASDA have delivered playing fields as part of their development. It was indicated that legal action was being taken to ensure that playing fields would be delivered.
- It was asked whether the proposed urban extension was viable in terms of transport infrastructure as there are constraints about getting over the mainline railway. The council did not have the detail of all the transport solutions, but development raises the opportunity to address some of these issues. As a general principle, vehicular access would not be encouraged between the urban extension and Thurmaston, but instead walking and cycling would be encouraged. Much more work would need to be done, and planning permission could not be granted if adequate measures weren't taken to resolve transport issues.
- It was asked how realistic the transportation assumptions were, and suggested that proposed approach was along the lines of a 'Bourneville utopia'. Some stark choices would need to be made for future transportation, the likely congestion implications of carrying on with a business as usual road based approach, and the thinking behind the proposed approach.
- It was asked what transport assessments have been carried out, and a specific question about the likely traffic impacts on Barkby Thorpe Lane was raised. It was explained that work done by Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood

Borough Council was outlined, but at this stage details were not available on any detailed solutions.

- A representative of Barkby Parish Council asked about how the Council knows that development will take place, especially given that the UK is in the middle of a recession. It was explained that the need for housing was different from the ability to buy housing. Need arises out of those living in larger family households (e.g. younger people living with parents) expressing a desire to live in their own home. The planning system can only respond to this need by planning for it. It was important to have land in place that could be developed for housing when the economy picks up; the alternative to this would be that future generations couldn't aspire to the same housing standards that current people enjoy.
- It was asked why there was provision for gypsy and travellers within the proposed urban extension. Gypsy and travellers have a housing need like other parts of the community which has been identified in a needs assessment. If people disagreed with the approach to gypsy and traveller provision, then this was a valid concern to respond to within the consultation.
- A Thurmaston Parish Councillor asked why Charnwood Borough Council was providing houses on behalf of Leicester City Council. It was explained that the Council had a duty to provide for Charnwood's needs identified in the Regional Plan and this has identified a need for 6,780 dwellings on the edge of Leicester in South Charnwood.
- It was asked how much notice would be paid to objections to the principle of urban concentration. Urban concentration was set out as a fundamental principle in the regional plan, and there was little room for manoeuvre.
- It was asked how long it would be before there was greater detail. The next stage is expected later in 2009 and would provide all the detail needed for the secretary of state. This stage would also provide another opportunity for consultation before the document was submitted to the Secretary of State.