



TOWARDS A CHARNWOOD LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK:

Response to Issues Paper

In May/June 2004 we published an Issues Paper as the first stage in the production of revised planning policy for Charnwood. The Paper was circulated to local groups and organisations and a roadshow and exhibition toured the Borough. Some 500 comments have been received. In addition to the roadshow we also held a one day event where representatives from local groups and organisations were invited to talk around some of the key themes and issues. We also met with the Youth and Health Forums to explain the changes to the planning system and introduce the Issues Paper.

This paper presents an overview of the comments received in relation to the 9 Community Strategy themes. The format follows the broad headings of the key issues as identified in the Issues Paper and the Community Strategy. Detailed summaries of the individual comments received have been placed in local libraries, the Council Offices at Southfields and on the Council's web site (www.charnwood.gov.uk)

Some groups have expressed concern about the arrangements for publicising the Issues Paper. These comments have been noted and we will be talking with Town/ Parish Councils and other groups about how we can improve on our consultation arrangements. We are producing a statement of our proposals for future consultation on the Local Development Framework and we will be inviting comments on this later in the year.

A number of responses relate to specific sites and include suggestions for new housing and employment developments, revisions to Limits to Development and areas people feel should be protected. Individual response can be viewed at the Council Offices, Southfields (please telephone 01509 634769).

What Next?

The comments we have received will be taken into account as we identify issues and options. Changes to the planning system will come into force in September with the introduction of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. The Council is working to produce initial preferred options documents setting out the Core Strategy for the framework and proposals for community involvement and will be consulting on these early in 2005.

General Comments

A number of general comments on the issues paper were made, with some respondents feeling that the consultation arrangements were inadequate. Some respondents feel there needs to be an improvement in public consultation with more time for comments to be made on consultation exercises. Others welcomed the approach taken, particularly the positive links to the Community Strategy.

The importance of Parish Plans and Village Design Statements was also mentioned. The need to recognise rural issues in the Borough was also highlighted.

Other comments related to the need for joined up thinking to tackle the issues identified, that public opinion should be a top priority when dealing with planning applications, and the need for a Loughborough Town Council. Some general concerns were expressed that important decisions are to be made regionally- there needs local decisions because local people have local knowledge.

A number of suggestions were put forward for amendments to existing settlement limits. Concerns were also raised over the need for the LDF to address the shortage of cemetery land across the Borough.



A Sustainable Environment

There were a number of suggestions relating to the approaches to sustainability, including the need to adhere to national guidance, the sequential approach, and to take into account local initiatives and views, such as Parish Plans. The general themes of solutions to achieving sustainability through the LDF relate to the provision of facilities within settlements, retention of employment, transport links and good quality design and energy efficiency.

A number of settlements were identified as being able to accommodate new development sustainably. Generally the suggested approach to identifying suitable sites are those with good transport links, close to existing communities and utilising brownfield sites. Loughborough and Shepshed were seen as the most sustainable locations by a number of respondents.



It was also highlighted that the LDF needs to define a clear settlement hierarchy to guide decisions on the location of development. The role of settlements such as Quorn, Mountsorrel, Rothley, Barrow upon Soar, Sileby and Anstey, falling between the main urban centres and smaller rural centres, needs to be considered. It was felt by some that these settlements' capacity for sustainable growth should be recognised.

There was a concern that a definition of Rural Centres is required, but that the clustering of services in rural areas is supported. There was a view that they should not undermine the sequential approach and the viability of larger settlements. Suggested Rural Centres included Anstey, Barrow upon Soar, Birstall, East Gosote, Hathern, Mountsorrel, Rothley, Shepshed, Sileby and Syston.

There were a number of settlements that some respondents felt should remain as they are, including some of the smaller rural settlements. The justification for their retention are varied, but in general relate to concerns over the loss of greenfield sites and the countryside, loss of village and rural feel to settlements, and inadequate infrastructure. However, there was concern raised that if settlements remain the same then it could undermine benefits such as local employment and affordable housing.

Generally the aspects of Charnwood's environment that respondents want to protect in broad terms are existing green areas and open spaces, the Charnwood Forest, natural habitats, floodplains and rivers, historic buildings and landscapes, and small villages.

A Prosperous Borough

General Comments:

There were comments that too much emphasis is placed on development rather than sustainability issues.

There was also a view that there was a need for smaller start up units and local employment so that villages do not become dormitories.

A substantial science park of up to 50 hectares close to the university in Loughborough:

A number of suggestions were submitted with regards to possible sites for a science park including:

- Land west of existing University campus, either side of Snells Nook Lane;
- Looking at brownfield site opportunities within Loughborough;
- Wymeswold airfield;
- Garendon Park;
- Rothley or Woodhouse.

A strategic employment site of some 20 hectares close to Loughborough:

Sites suggested include:

- Land to west of Loughborough;
- Southern side of Loughborough near A6;
- On brownfield land to north-east of Loughborough close to railway;
- Adjacent Dishley Grange;
- Rear of Shepshed lorry park on northern side of Ashby Road East;
- Wymeswold airfield;
- Lodge Farm, Quorn Fields;
- Rothley or Woodhouse.

A strategic employment site of some 30 hectares close to Leicester:

Sites suggested:

- Land at Anstey;
- In the vicinity of A46/A5630 junction near Anstey;
- Land north of Syston- the unused strategic freight site;
- Around Syston and Thurmaston;
- Extension of Rothley Lodge.

It was commented that the sites should meet the principles of sustainability, including not being sited on greenfield, and be accessible by a range of transport modes, with cycle and pedestrian facilities provided. Also that the sequential approach should be followed.

A number of employment sites were identified to be retained including sites in Anstey, Shepshed and Loughborough; and more specifically the Brush, Belton Road and around Derby Road in Loughborough. There was concern that if employment sites were retained it would restrict housing opportunities and therefore alternative housing sites would have to be provided. There was also considered to be a need to support rural businesses in terms of expansion and diversification

A number of respondents stated that there are enough shops in Loughborough. Some felt that the target should be niche shops, whilst others felt that there should be bigger named stores. There was a concern that Loughborough should not aim to compete with the cities, and that big named stores do not stop people from shopping elsewhere. Others felt that as a University town more shops could not be attracted, and that there are too many licensed premises and take away shops. There was disappointment raised about The Rushes development.

It was generally felt that there were not enough shops to serve local needs, such as communities within Loughborough and in villages. Furthermore, that out of town shopping facilities should be resisted as they threaten the shops in existing communities.



A Safer Borough

There were a number of suggestions related to how the LDF can contribute to making Charnwood safer, and broadly they were transport or flooding matters.

Suggestions relating to transport included the speed and volume of traffic, safe cycleways and footpaths.

Particular areas of flood concern included the impact of Wood Brook, Black Brook, Burleigh Brook, Rothley Brook and Barkby Brook. It was suggested that a strategic flood risk assessment be carried out and that in line with PPG25 leisure, recreation and tourist developments should still be allowed in floodplain areas.

Other suggested means of contributing to a safer borough included mixed use developments, designing out crime, safe play areas, CCTV, police patrols, and minimise 'to let' signs. A concern amongst respondents is the level and type of crime, the night time environment, and anti-social behaviour.

A Healthy Borough

Suggestions on how the LDF can contribute to making Charnwood a more healthy borough mainly covered transport and recreational matters.

Suggestions relating to transport included reducing the need to travel, making the car more difficult to use in town, keeping HGV's out of villages, and the creation of Home Zones. Improved public transport, cycleways and footpaths, and greater publicity of these facilities. Better access to countryside, parks, sporting and recreational facilities.

Comments highlighted the importance of green spaces and sport and recreation for healthy living. Recreational issues related to the provision of green and wildlife areas in urban areas, encouraging sport development, safe well-equipped play areas and facilities for equestrianism.

Other suggestions included health facilities, reducing number of licensed premises, reducing number of students, and stop building houses.

There was a concern that the LDF should seek to reduce health inequalities in the Borough and that health impact assessments of proposals should be undertaken.

A Borough with Decent Homes

A number of sites were suggested for housing development:

North Charnwood:

Loughborough:

- Brownfield sites including derelict buildings on High Street, sites on Clarence Street, Nottingham Road, Cumberland Road, Great Central Road and around Beacon Road/ Parklands Drive;
- Moat Farm, edge of Loughborough;
- Bramcote Road;
- Bull in the Hollow Farm, Leicester Road;
- Land west of Grange Park and Park Grange Farm;
- Land to north west of Loughborough;
- Garendon Park;



Other:

- Mountsorrel- Manor Holt, Loughborough Road.
- Quorn- Buddon Lane.
- Shepshed- Tickow Lane; off Brick Kiln Lane.
- Sileby- Kendal Road.
- Walton on the Wolds- Land off Loughborough Road.
- Wymeswold- airfield; Pinfold/Rempston Road.
- Woodhouse Eaves- possible brownfield sites identified within the village.
- rural areas between Loughborough and A6, such as Burton on the Wolds, Wymeswold, to reduce impact on the trunk road network.

South Charnwood (CLPA):

- Anstey- Land west of Gorse Hill; northern edge of Anstey;
- East Goscote- Land at Melton Road;
- Rothley- East of Mountsorrel Lane;
- Syston;
- Land at Scraftoft, on edge of Hamilton;
- Wanlip;
- Edge of Thurmaston/Syston, near Barkby Thorpe Lane.

Housing Figures

A number of respondents raised queries relating to the housing figures. Comments included the perception that the figures are outdated, need more sites due to low completions rate, and a buffer incorporated to ensure needs are met. There were suggestions that further assessments should be made of small sites allowances and brownfield opportunities.

Types of Housing Required, and Suggested Locations:

The broad issues that were identified were the need for more affordable dwellings and an increase in the rental sector, in Loughborough and villages. Provide family housing and housing suitable for retired people so that they can remain in their communities, particularly as the trend is an ageing population. There is also concern that there is an imbalance between 'executive' dwellings and modest 'family' homes in the rural areas, it is expected that the LDF will redress this imbalance. Key worker housing should be considered.

Concerns were raised over impact of students occupying private housing within Loughborough, and the desire to accommodate them within purpose built accommodation.

The need to promote mixed use developments to minimise travel, and to ensure health care and education facilities are catered for was also mentioned.

Better quality housing and residential developments to have a better mix of housing types that is safe, dwellings that can respond to occupiers changing needs (flexibility), and ultimately providing choice and meeting the housing needs of the communities.

In terms of rural housing it is suggested that rural exception sites are proactively sought, and that sites for Social Diversity are allocated to provide affordable housing for local people.

Other Issues:

Comments were made that houses should be planned to meet strategic need not local need. Figures quoted in Issues Paper should be regarded as the minimum requirement. The Barker report highlighted the difficulties created from shortage of housing.

It is suggested that it is misleading to imply that the only housing that will be provided will be affordable housing, and that seeking affordable housing on sites less than 0.5 ha or less than 15 dwellings conflicts with Circular 06/98 and proposed changes to PPG3. It is suggested that in order to provide affordable housing the best sites are edge of urban greenfield, it is difficult to achieve on previously developed land in urban areas.

Some mentioned that there are enough brownfield sites which can meet the housing needs and that the urban capacity study should be utilised to meet the housing need, whilst others believe there is a need to release greenfield sites.

The desire of some to develop smaller sites to offer choice, respect local characteristics, and meet local needs.

In terms of delivering houses it is considered that the tools as advocated by the Countryside Agency should be utilised, that only sites that do not increase floodrisk or damage the landscape should be considered, and that higher densities should be achieved. It was suggested that the council assists developers in overcoming problems which prevent the development of a site, and that the construction of development should be mitigated to reduce impact on people, e.g. phasing.

An Inclusive Borough

Suggestions were made on how the LDF can contribute to improving the quality of life particularly in run down, deprived or remote areas. In broad terms the suggestions related to public transport access and safety; the involvement and participation of communities; provision for services for the ageing and multi-ethnic populations; redressing community imbalances, such as students; access to education, health care, community centres, employment, recreation, countryside and green spaces; and supporting local shops.

In order to achieve an inclusive borough a number of responses suggested the use of developer contributions to provide facilities, and the building of partnerships to ensure derelict and contaminated land is redeveloped, which could also be used for employment land to stimulate investment.

Better management of the urban fringe for recreational uses and tackling health inequalities were also seen as ways of achieving a more inclusive Borough.

A Learning Borough

There were strong concerns expressed over the impact of students on parts of Loughborough. Impacts such as binge drinking, noise, litter, cars, upsetting natural balance and sustainability of community were highlighted. Suggestions about what should be done to minimise the impact include provision of 'areas of student housing restraint'; stop buy to let; strictly control the growth of student numbers; Council should have a register and control student housing; no more growth of the University; enforce landlords to keep maintenance of houses; dispersal strategy; and cap student lets.

There were a number of suggestions on how to provide purpose built student accommodation, broadly these were build on land on west of campus towards the MI which the University own; on campus; restrict only to University owned land; locate away from town centre; and encourage housing associations to build student housing.

The University has responded stating that it is keen to build upon its businesses and business partnerships. It is aware of the concerns of off-campus students, but mindful of the needs and requirements of students. A residential strategy will be finalised by the University, which envisages new student residences on campus or on adjacent land in the ownership of the University.

The Loughborough College has raised concern that parking restrictions at the college, coupled with poor public transport access, is affecting student education and the chances of the growth of the college.

A need to provide educational facilities in all new developments was raised.

An Accessible Borough

Reducing Congestion and Car Use

There is support for mixed use developments to limit the need to travel, and new parking standard limits to be introduced as a way of reducing traffic. Although there was concern expressed that parking should be provided as it does not stop visitors, which causes more pressure on street parking.

Comments related to new developments which should be required to accommodate other modes of transport than the car, and payments should be made towards provision and improvements of public transport by developers. Furthermore, development should only be targeted in areas where there is a realistic chance that it will be used. Existing rural villages need good public transport to gain access for health care, libraries, etc.

There were views that there is a need for enforcement of parking offences. A number of concerns related to students bringing in cars to Loughborough and the need to introduce measures to prevent this. Also car sharing should be introduced and encouraged for the school run, and the introduction of safer routes to schools. Other measures included- the introduction of more home zones (20 mph in residential areas); quiet lanes in rural areas; safe play spaces for children away from traffic hazards; off-road facilities, particularly for rural and semi-rural areas are seen as important; and equestrianism as an alternative to car use.

Park and Ride

There was support expressed for a Park and Ride scheme, however many questioned the feasibility. A suggestion was that car parks which serve industry could be utilised to serve Saturday shoppers. Suggestions for sites were:- Wymeswold Airfield; Syston, through Thurmaston, to the city; Brush; British Gas/Junction 23; Bishop Meadow; and Belton Road.

Public Transport

A need to publicise public transport services that are available, people are not always aware. Many suggested that a bus station in Loughborough should be provided to make it easier and provide transport hub. Plus, consideration to the introduction of travel cards. Buses should be seen as a network not as routes to ensure proper coverage of Borough.

Need a bus service that goes through and around the town, including stops at University, town centre, rail station and employment sites, and bus services to serve all the rail stations. In providing a bus service for rural areas it was suggested that a flexible service is provided which operates a standard route, but on demand serves other areas. It was suggested that minimum standards should be set for rural transport to ensure they are properly served. Concern of lack of bus services were expressed:- Lack of service at Thurmaston (in particular to Loughborough); Sileby/Barrow to Syston has been axed; buses from Loughborough to Leicester are being cut back.



Cycling and Walking

Many respondents highlighted a need for big improvements to existing cycling facilities including better signing, more cycle parking and more cycle lanes, improved safety at crossings. Cycling is seen by some as too dangerous. Suggested cycle routes included- A60, Anstey, main estates, to the rail station, town, University, employment centres, Woodhouse to Loughborough, towards Swithland Woods and Reservoir, Bradgate Park, from the Wolds to Loughborough.

To promote walking need to have direct and safe and attractive routes, avoiding the use of difficult crossings and resolving issue of pedestrian/vehicular conflict. Furthermore, footpaths in some areas are perceived as too narrow and some are overgrown.

Rail

There was concern that there is inadequate parking at rail stations, which leads to commuters driving to their destination. Some felt that the GCR and Ivanhoe Lane should be promoted for meeting the needs of commuters and shoppers. Consideration should also be given to expansion of these services and/or bus services to link up with these.

Some welcome a new East Goscote rail station, although it is questioned whether it is feasible. Also, a need for a rail station at Thurmaston. In terms of freight there is a concern in new developments that their impact is not fully considered. There is also a recommendation that rail should be promoted to carry freight. Suggested new rail schemes included- new light rail system that served Shepshed-science park- university- town- and rail station; a tram route; and the use of a Parry People mover.

New Road Schemes

Suggested new Roads schemes included- Epinal Way widening to ease congestion; acceleration of relief scheme around railway station; road to ease congestion from Ashby Road/M1 through Garendon to Derby Road; an alternative link to A6 in association with development promoted at Mountsorrel Lane, Rothley; the need for a flood free link through the Soar Valley to ease congestion at times of flood; access to A46 at Thurcaston to take strain and stop rat-running traffic at Green gate Lane. Bypasses have been mentioned by some respondents for Syston, Sileby, the Wolds Villages, and an 'Eastern bypass' for Loughborough.

Suggestions also included improvements to existing roads - The Nook, Anstey- reduce vehicular/pedestrian conflict; junction in Hathern to Long Whatton and Sutton Bonington; closure of Thorpe Hill Road if surrounding network is improved; Rupert Brooke Road is unsafe due to parked cars; better traffic management at Storer/Radmoor/Ashby Road junction and Cumberland/Ashby Road; improve the A6006, which has had traffic increases; .

However, some suggested that there should be no new road schemes, particularly if wanting to achieve use of alternative modes. If road schemes were allowed then it should be only with improvements in the alternative modes. Loughborough is perceived as congested, and the respondents welcome an inner relief road for measures such as pedestrianisation and the relief of traffic from the historic core.

A Culturally Rich Borough



Strengths

Respondents suggested that the strengths in the Borough that should be built upon and encouraged are: tourism; waterways; the historic and natural heritage; the diverse cultures; supporting work undertaken as part of the Rights of Way Act; utilise existing facilities such as schools and education buildings for use by community; and build upon the strengths of the National Forest and create new woodlands to alleviate pressures on other attractions.

Some respondents commented on the promotion of principles such as diversification to meet needs, but with

proper assessment of the impacts; smoke free public places; use of volunteer sector to improve existing facilities and to use people within communities to provide ownership of the facility.

Access

There was concern expressed that there is unequal access to facilities, and that transport links are needed. Resources and finance for leisure facilities, etc. should be directed towards more rural areas, rather than polarised on Loughborough.

Facilities

A number of responses reflected on what they perceive as shortfalls in provision and so highlighted the following facilities that need to be created or addressed- more fishing facilities; lack of youth recreational facilities; more swimming facilities; need to consider horse riding; small independent shops; a new community sports facilities, and the provision of badminton and bowls in Anstey; and some requests for expansion of recreation and leisure facilities in Syston and Sileby due to the increase in population. A need for churches and faith schools was expressed, and facilities to be provided in general, such as community centres and village halls. It was felt that there should be a tougher stance on developers to provide the contributions for leisure and recreation facilities.

One respondent however perceives that there is not a shortage of facilities, and that the Borough Council should stop subsidising leisure facilities.

Green Spaces

A number of respondents want Garendon Park as a country park. Comments also related generally to the creation of urban parks as gateways with good linkages, and the protection of allotments as important green community spaces.