

Charnwood Borough Council

Local Development Framework

Core Strategy Further Consultation
Background Papers

September 2008

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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document contains a collection of topic papers that provide background information to the further consultation report for the Core Strategy development plan document. This document was considered by Cabinet on 25th September 2008 and published for further consultation on 24th October 2008.
- 1.2. The background papers consider the policy approach in the 2006 Preferred Options Report for the Core Strategy and Science Park Development Plan Documents, explain what people said in response, identify any new evidence or national and regional policy and then set out the Council's preferred way forward.
- 1.3. The Background papers do not include topics on the Location of Development or Directions for Growth as these are dealt with in detail in the consultation document. The Settlement Hierarchy is dealt with in a separate topic paper available from the website at: <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/evidencebase>

The National and Regional Context

- 1.4. The Council has been preparing its Core Strategy and Science Park development plan documents for some years and had reached the Preferred Options stage in February 2006.
- 1.5. Since then, the government has announced new household projections which show a substantial increase in the forecast need for houses in the East Midlands. Lying within the influence of the Three Cities¹ growth area, Loughborough has been identified in the draft Regional Plan as an area expected to accommodate household growth.
- 1.6. The draft Regional Plan prepared by East Midlands Regional Assembly takes account of the forecast increase in households. It was subject to an Examination in Public during the summer of 2006 and changes to the plan were proposed by the Secretary of State in July 2008. The draft Regional Plan is now expected to be approved by the Secretary of State early in 2009. When it is approved, it will replace the current Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS 8)² and will become part of the development plan for Charnwood Borough.

¹ Nottingham, Derby and Leicester

² Adopted by the Secretary of State in March 2005

- 1.7. The Core Strategy must be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy and so progress has slowed whilst the draft Regional Plan was subjected to an independent Examination in Public and its policies reached a sufficient level of maturity to give certainty to local policies. Meanwhile the Council has used the time to gather further evidence to support the level of growth now being proposed and to align the vision and spatial objectives with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The 2006 Preferred Options Reports

- 1.8. The Preferred Option Reports published in 2006 were prepared under Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and Planning Policy Statement 12: Creating Local Development Frameworks (September 2004)³. The format and style of the Preferred Options documents was formal and draft policies were put forward with detailed wording.
- 1.9. In the summer of 2008, the Government issued new Regulations⁴ and a revised Planning Policy Statement 12 setting out a new streamlined process of plan making. The requirement to prepare a formal preferred option report was removed and instead local authorities are to prepare 'pre-submission consultation' documents in advance of preparing draft plans for submission to the Secretary of State. Whilst the process was simplified there is still a requirement for local planning authorities to identify options and to consult on them. There is also a requirement to show how options have been rejected.
- 1.10. The changes also provide for the inclusion of site allocations in the Core Strategy where they are essential to the delivery of the strategy. This change has led the Council to consider the specific site allocations for two sustainable urban extensions and a site for a new science park. These allocations are intrinsically linked to the creation of sustainable new communities and the timely delivery of housing in the borough.
- 1.11. As such, the Core Strategy further consultation report is one of a new breed of consultation documents that seeks to gauge public views on a range of policy approaches whilst identifying those that have been considered but rejected. It is therefore quite different from the 2006 Preferred Options report. Detailed policy wording, targets and implementation information is specifically avoided so that the focus of consultation is centred on principles and approach. Detailed policy wording will be prepared later in the plan making process when a draft plan is prepared.

³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps12lsp>

⁴ The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (July 2008)

- I.12. It is important to stress that the 2006 Preferred Options report and the comments made to it remain relevant in the plan making process and form an essential component of our evidence base. To see more detailed summaries of the comments submitted to the Core Strategy and Science Park development plan documents please follow this link to our web site:

<http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/uploads/summaryofcomments-corestrategyand.pdf>

- I.13. The 2008 further consultation report is not intended to be a redraft of the 2006 Preferred Options report. Rather, it takes account of those topic areas that require revision as a consequence of new evidence, national or regional policy. As such, new topics are introduced in the 2008 further consultation report on subjects including Green Infrastructure and Gypsies, travellers and Show People, and some approaches previously covered in 2006 and which are not proposed to be altered (such as the science park), are not covered in detail again.
- I.14. This Background Paper does not include papers for the Directions for Growth as this is covered in detail in the main Core Strategy consultation document. Settlement Hierarchy and Location for Development are dealt with in a separate study⁵ available from our website.

⁵ <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/settlementhierarchyassessment>

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

What is the Issue?

- 2.1 There is a lack of affordable housing within the Borough to meet the current and future needs of the community. Increasing house prices in recent years has meant that affordability issues are affecting an increasingly large proportion of the community. The lack of affordable housing is a particular issue for the smaller rural communities where the potential for additional provision has been more limited.

How did the 2006 Preferred Options Report respond to the issues?

- 2.2. The need to provide affordable housing within the Borough was outlined as part of the development strategy. It highlighted the evidence from the Charnwood Housing Needs Survey (2005) of an annual shortfall in affordable homes of 279 dwellings. It also points to the Housing Strategy (2005-2010), which aims to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes as part of a co-ordinated approach to regeneration and need to increase the overall supply of affordable homes.
- 2.3. The preferred option was for the Council to negotiate a minimum of 30% affordable housing units on all sites meeting the thresholds set out in national policy. In addition it proposed for settlements with a population of 3,000 or less a threshold of 5 dwellings or more or sites of 0.15 hectares or more.

What did you say?

- 2.4. The consultation on the Core Strategy Preferred Options 2006 highlighted concerns about the lack of a target in the policy, the need for clear evidence and the need for a definition of local need and affordable housing. There were also comments about integrating affordable housing with general housing, accommodation for the ageing population and considering market housing in villages to secure affordable housing. Concerns were also raised about the impact on the viability of schemes, particularly those that do not attract grant funding and smaller schemes and the strength of the policy. There were also suggestions to ban the ownership of second/third homes, restrict student accommodation, reduce the amount of single occupancy homes and stop the current stock of Council houses being sold through 'Right to Buy'.

What has happened since preferred options in 2006?

- 2.5. Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3)⁶ was published in November 2006 following the 2006 Preferred Options Report. It requires Local Authorities to include within their policy a target for the amount of affordable housing to be provided during the plan period, an indication of the size and type of affordable housing and an approach to seeking developer contributions. In relation to rural communities, PPS3 requires a clear target for rural affordable housing and consideration of allocating and releasing sites solely for affordable housing.
- 2.6. The Draft Regional Plan proposed interim affordable housing targets for each Housing Market Area as a percentage of the total housing requirements proposed in the Plan. The Proposed Changes to the Regional Plan published in July 2008 moves away from percentages and instead sets out indicative target numbers of affordable homes for each Housing Market Area explaining this is for monitoring purposes. For Leicester and Leicestershire the indicative target is 32,000 dwellings between 2001 and 2026. The Proposed Changes also require local authorities to include affordable housing targets within their Local Development Framework, on the basis of the most up to date Housing Market Assessment.
- 2.7. Over the last year Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities have been working together to prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the area. Initial findings of this assessment suggest there is a higher level of affordable housing need than was identified in the Regional Plan Proposed Changes. For Charnwood the study identifies an annual shortfall of 309 dwellings and provides a broad analysis of the current and future housing market in the Borough related to a number of smaller sub-markets within Charnwood. The assessment is due to published in full in November 2008.
- 2.8. Charnwood Borough Council is also working with two other authorities in Leicestershire to commission work on the economic viability of affordable housing. In September 2008 the consultants undertaking the study held a workshop with developers, landowners and Registered Social Landlords to discuss the impact of affordable housing on the viability of developments. This study and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment will be used to inform the Submission Core Strategy document.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 2.9. The Council is considering two alternative approaches to meeting the significant shortfall in affordable housing. The first is to increase the requirement for affordable housing uniformly across the Borough. The second is varying the requirements for different parts of the Borough based

⁶ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing>

on the sub-areas identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment to help target areas in most need. These approaches will need to be tested as part of the Affordable Housing Economic Viability Assessment commissioned by the Council.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 2.10. The estimate of affordable housing shortfall is significantly greater than the number of affordable homes that have been built in recent years. The Council currently require sites of 15 or more dwellings to include 30% affordable housing and it is proposed that this requirement is reviewed. This review will consider increasing the current requirement for the proportion of new homes that must be affordable and also consider reducing the threshold for when affordable homes are required.
- 2.11. The sustainability appraisal suggests that varying the requirements for different parts of the Borough is the most sustainable approach, but at this stage it is the preferred approach to firstly research the financial viability of providing affordable housing on the sites being proposed in the Borough. The Council's Affordable Housing Economic Viability Assessment will therefore be an important source of evidence to inform the approach.
- 2.12. Detailed wording amendments received in response to the 2006 Preferred Options Report will inform detailed policy wording of the submission draft of the Core Strategy, together with the most up-to-date policy context and evidence base.

BIODIVERSITY

What is the Issue?

- 3.1 Compared to other parts of the East Midlands, the Borough contains significant areas of ecological interest mainly focussed on the Charnwood Forest and the river valleys of the Soar and the Wreake. Some of these areas, including nationally designated sites, are in a poor state and face continued pressure from future development. 4% of Charnwood's area has been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), this compares with around 2% for Leicestershire. National planning policy encourages the safeguarding and enhancement of biodiversity interests.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 3.2. There was a separate policy entitled 'biodiversity' which included detailed policy wording for conserving and enhancing biodiversity interests within the borough. The policy referred to species and habitats protected through legislation and to habitats featured within the Charnwood Biodiversity Action Plan. The policy stated the need to work jointly with other agencies, and specifically identified the river corridors as strategic wildlife corridors.

What did you say?

- 3.3. One of the main comments received on the Core Strategy Preferred Options 2006 was that the policy should be informed by specific actions and targets.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

- 3.4. Since 2006, a Phase I Habitat Survey and a Species Report has been completed for the directions for growth being considered for potential Sustainable Urban Extensions. This has helped inform the assessment of the options in the sustainability appraisal.
- 3.5. In March 2008, we met with the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and Natural England to discuss the biodiversity policy approach. This meeting highlighted the need to secure net gain in biodiversity not just protection of biodiversity. We discussed the need for a policy which sets out precisely what is required from developers and encourages additions to existing wildlife sites by adding to existing biodiversity networks. We also discussed the importance of long term management of new green infrastructure provided as part of major developments such as the proposed sustainable urban extensions.

- 3.6. Stakeholder workshops took place in July and August 2008 to test out possible approaches to 'green infrastructure'. Biodiversity is a component of green infrastructure and was considered as part of these workshops. These workshops highlighted the need to have a sound evidence base to ensure there is a good understanding of habitat loss, fragmentation and connectivity.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 3.7. The Council is considering two alternative options to address the protection and enhancement of biodiversity within Charnwood. The first is to not have an overall Green Infrastructure policy, but to have separate policies for the National Forest, Charnwood Forest, Countryside and Landscape, Settlement Identity, Biodiversity/ Geodiversity and Leisure and Recreation
- 3.8. The second option is to integrate the policy approach to biodiversity within a wider approach to green infrastructure. This would deal with the policy areas above, but these would be integrated together as part of an overall approach to Green Infrastructure.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 3.9. The proposed approach for biodiversity is to include it within a broader strategic approach towards green infrastructure, as this aims to develop a comprehensive network of multi-functional green space across Charnwood within which connected green spaces for wildlife can be created, protected and enhanced and biodiversity encouraged. To achieve this there will need to be a net increase in biodiversity across the borough, but particularly to the east of the borough where biodiversity is poor. This will mean ensuring existing wildlife sites are adequately protected; improving connectivity between habitats within areas of strong biodiversity and ensuring weaker areas of biodiversity are better connected with the wider biodiversity network.
- 3.10. Detailed wording amendments suggested in response to the 2006 Preferred Options Report will inform detailed policy wording of the submission draft of the Core Strategy, together with the most up-to-date policy context and evidence base.

BUILT HERITAGE

What is the Issue?

- 4.1 National guidance stresses the importance of identifying and protecting historic buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains and other features. The historic environment can make an important contribution to strategies for economic development, regeneration and tourism.
- 4.2. Whilst the Borough contains a number a historic and cultural assets, there is not a marked difference in Charnwood from other districts locally or nationally. Likewise, the Borough has a number of buildings which are 'at risk', but this is not markedly different from other districts. There are over 1000 listed buildings, 36 conservation areas, 21 scheduled ancient monuments and 3 historic parks and gardens that reflect the Borough's rich built heritage. There are problems resulting from development pressures and neglect. 50 buildings are "at risk".

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 4.3. The approach taken in 2006 indicated that the borough's built heritage will be conserved and enhanced. The policy referred to statutorily and locally listed buildings, conservation areas, ancient monuments, archaeological sites and historic parks and gardens.

What did you say?

- 4.4. A number of representations on the Preferred Options in 2006 were made. English Heritage suggested amendments to correct terminology and to refer to preservation. It made the point that there are only 3 entries on the National 'at risk' register as it covers only Grade I and II* structures and so an amendment to the monitoring indicator should be made. It also highlighted that there are in fact 4 historic parks and gardens – Bradgate Park, Garendon Park, Prestwold Hall and part of Whatton House. Others suggested that the report should refer to the settings of the designated features and the policy approach should have a target.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

- 4.5. Government guidance on the content of Core Strategies and other Development Plan Document is clear that policies should respond to the unique characteristics of the area, and there should not unnecessarily duplicate national or regional policy. National guidance provides detailed policy framework for planning in the historic environment.

- 4.6. National planning guidance, namely Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, sets out guidance which can be used in development control decisions for statutorily listed buildings, archaeological sites, Conservation Areas and Historic Park and Gardens. PPG15 indicates that it is open to local planning authorities to draw up lists of locally important buildings, and to formulate local plan policies for their protection through normal development control procedures. But policies should make clear that such buildings do not enjoy the full protection of statutory listing. Charnwood has a list of locally important buildings and it is important that there is a policy framework in place which supports their protection.
- 4.7. Policy 26 of the draft Regional Plan is a scene setting policy for the protection and enhancement of the region's natural and cultural heritage. The policy indicates that damage to historic assets or their settings should be avoided wherever and as far as possible, recognising that such assets are irreplaceable.
- 4.8. Conservation Officers are working through a programme of appraisals to examine the condition of all designated Conservation Areas and provide clear guidance for their preservation and enhancement. The Conservation and Landscape Team are also providing support to secure the adoption of Village Design Statements as Supplementary Planning Documents.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 4.9. No alternative approaches have been identified. The preferred approach is to encourage a higher standard of design which maximises sustainability benefits.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 4.10. Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15) 'Planning and the Historic Environment'⁷, sets out guidance which can be used in development control decisions for statutorily listed buildings, archaeological sites, Conservation Areas and Historic Park and Gardens. The preferred approach is to apply national planning policy for these aspects of Charnwood's built heritage, and this could be outlined in either the policy or the reasoned justification for a policy. Although the issue of the historic environment may not be distinctive from other local authorities, it is important to have a local policy framework in place for locally listed buildings. The preferred approach is to have a Core Strategy policy on built heritage which sets out the Council's approach to locally listed buildings.

⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppg15>

- 4.11. Detailed wording amendments received in response to the 2006 Preferred Options Report will inform detailed policy wording of the submission draft of the Core Strategy, together with the most up-to-date policy context and evidence base.

CHARNWOOD FOREST

What is the Issue?

- 5.1 Charnwood Forest is of importance for its landscape, its ecology, its archaeology and its geology. There is a proposal within the Draft Regional Plan for a Charnwood Forest Regional Park which justifies a special designation in the Core Strategy. The Forest covers a large area within the Borough, but also extends into the neighbouring districts of Northwest Leicestershire and Hinckley and Bosworth. Because of this importance, there are real benefits to managing the area in an integrated way with neighbouring districts, and with other agencies.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 5.2. The 2006 Preferred Options Report included a separate policy on the Charnwood Forest. The policy predated proposals in the emerging Regional Plan for a Charnwood Forest Regional Park. The policy stated that development within the Forest area will only be acceptable where it is appropriate to a countryside location and the special character of the area in terms of its landscape, ecology, cultural and built heritage and recreational value is conserved and enhanced. The policy stated that development which could adversely affect these special qualities will not be permitted unless a clear over-riding need can be demonstrated and appropriate compensation works are proposed.

What did you say?

- 5.3. Representations on the Core Strategy in 2006 highlighted a tension between the policy on Charnwood Forest and other policies for the countryside and for the National Forest.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

Draft Regional Plan Policy

- 5.4. Charnwood Forest's importance is recognised within the Draft Regional Plan (December 2006), which required initiatives to protect and enhance its particular character, and set out a priority to create a Charnwood Forest Regional Park.
- 5.5. The report of the Examination in Public of the draft Regional Plan (November 2007) considered the issue of regional parks. The report stated:⁸

⁸ Paragraph 7.6 page 76 of the EIP Panel Report

“We consider that the regional parks have been appropriately recognised as a part of the region’s green infrastructure. It is apparent that the concept of regional parks is in the early stages of development in the East Midlands, but the allusion to them in the supporting text brings them recognition that will allow flexibility for their development locally. As the concept develops, we expect that there will be more detailed information about regional parks to be considered in future revisions of this strategy”.

- 5.6. In terms of the Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Plan, the Charnwood Forest Regional Park is not closely defined. A proposal for a Charnwood Forest Regional Park remains part of the plan and is featured within Three Cities SRS Policy 5. Charnwood Forest (not the Regional Park) also features within Policy 31 (Regional Landscape Priorities) which indicates⁹ “Co-ordinated action is required to ensure that such [landscape] distinctiveness is retained”. Whilst the role and purpose of a Charnwood Forest Regional Park is not well defined within the Regional Plan, this allows the flexibility for this to be determined at a local level through more detailed consultation. Other policies in the Regional Spatial Strategy including Policies 29 and 30 which deal with Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Managing Woodland cover provide guidance which ensures that the role and purpose of the Regional Park, when it is determined at a local level, protect the distinctive qualities of the Charnwood Forest.

Evidence Gathering and Stakeholder Consultation

- 5.7. In June 2007 Leicestershire County Council held a conference on the Future of the Charnwood Forest involving a wide range of stakeholders. A small working group made up Leicestershire County Council, Charnwood Borough Council, Northwest Leicestershire District Council, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, The Government Office for the East Midlands, The East Midlands Regional Assembly and Natural England was established to take forward ideas from the initial stakeholder consultation. The working group at that time considered that the regional park should have the core objective of protecting and enhancing the landscape of the Charnwood Forest. The working group considered a number of ways in which the objective of protecting and enhancing the landscape of the Charnwood Forest could be achieved by placing different priority to protecting landscape, protecting biodiversity, promoting visitor orientated development, and extending National Forest planting guidelines into the Charnwood Forest.
- 5.8. The working group reported back to the wider stakeholder group at a conference held in December 2007. This conference was also used to consult on boundaries for landscape character area for the Charnwood Forest, as well as the possible boundaries of the Regional Park.

⁹ Paragraph 3.3.21 page 80 of Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes (July 2008)

- 5.9. Charnwood Borough Council held stakeholder workshops on the issue of green infrastructure in July and August of 2008. During these workshops the issue of Charnwood Forest Regional Park was discussed and, in particular, its role and purpose and its relationship with other aspects of strategic green infrastructure. One of the messages from the stakeholder workshops was that a Charnwood Forest Regional Park had a wider importance beyond the districts in which it is situated, and should be seen as a green infrastructure asset for the wider sub-region.
- 5.10. Leicestershire County Council commissioned consultants in 2008 to carry out a landscape and settlement character assessment of the Charnwood Forest. The consultant's study considered responses to the December 2007 consultation, and provides evidence about the boundary of Charnwood Forest landscape character area as well as recommendations about the boundary of the regional park. The consultants study had not been published by October 2008.
- 5.11. During the latter part of 2008, the working group has been developing a vision statement for the Charnwood Forest Regional Park which would set down principles to guide types of appropriate development within the Regional Park as well as to the define principles for the Regional Park boundary to be defined at a local level. A working draft of the vision statement was available in October 2008. However a further meeting of the wider Charnwood Forest stakeholder group is due to be held in November 2008 to consult on the wording of this vision statement.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 5.12. The Sustainability Appraisal considered two broad policy approaches to this policy area. The first option is to have separate policy approach to Charnwood Forest and the second approach is to integrate the approach to Charnwood Forest within an overall approach to Green Infrastructure.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 5.13. The proposed approach for the Charnwood Forest Regional Park is to include it within an overall approach to green infrastructure, and to protect and enhance its natural features delivering complementary development which maximises the benefit to those living in the area. The strategy would be achieved through positive spatial planning and land management under two broad themes:

Creating linkages

- Habitat creation and enhancement will be prioritised to those areas where it would maximise biodiversity benefits and reverse habitat fragmentation.

- A network of strategic green spaces and access routes will be created to address gaps in current provision, maximise access to and from the settlements surrounding Charnwood Forest, and to link to other assets in the Green Infrastructure Network.
- Appropriate new developments within or just beyond the boundary of the Regional Park will act as gateways to the Park, with their layout, built design, landscape treatment, access arrangements and Green Infrastructure provision reflecting local landscape and settlement character and integrating with the wider Regional Park.

Complementary Development

- 5.14. Sustainable leisure and tourism related development will be focussed on those areas which best complements growth, are linked to areas of population by Green Infrastructure networks and are accessible by sustainable (non-car) transport modes, whilst protecting the natural and cultural features of the Regional Park.
- 5.15. The establishment and development of a Charnwood Forest Regional Park will be a long-term project. It will incorporate large and small schemes, public and private landowners, and existing and new projects. Given these factors, and in order to maximise potential benefits, the definition of the Park needs to incorporate a degree of flexibility. A Regional Park Plan will be required to provide the framework for the long-term development of the two themes proposed for the park.

COUNTRYSIDE AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

What is the Issue?

- 6.1 The main issue is to ensure the development of prosperous, cohesive and diverse rural communities without harming the character and appearance of the Borough's countryside, the diverse local landscapes of Charnwood Forest, the Wolds, the Soar and Wreake Valleys and High Leicestershire and the distinct identities of local settlements which are all much valued features.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 6.2. The policy approach evolved from guidance in Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) Sustainable Development in Rural Areas¹⁰ (August 2004) to protect the character of the countryside for its own sake and to minimise the number of special designations that can undermine policies to protect other non designated areas. The criteria based policy approach was to be complemented by subsequent landscape character assessments.
- 6.3. Given the special qualities of the Charnwood Forest landscape to the west of the Soar valley a specific designation and safeguarding policy was included. Further guidance recognised the local importance of the National Forest initiative in the west of the Borough.
- 6.4. The Charnwood Forest and The National Forest are considered under separate topic papers within this document.

What did you say?

- 6.5. Representations on the Core Strategy in 2006 indicated that the policy was generally supported. On matters of detail the Government Office for the East Midlands suggested references were needed to support for:
- energy installations (including wind turbines) in line with the draft Regional Plan;
 - gypsy and traveller development; conversion of existing buildings to alternative uses including residential;
 - farm diversification; and
 - appearance of the landscape.

¹⁰

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps7>

- 6.6. References should be deleted to: 'views' which are not material planning consideration and to 'enhancement' of local character' as this is not a reasonable requirement for all developments. Finally the policy lacked a target/monitoring indicator.
- 6.7. Other respondents sought the inclusion of specific references to woodland related businesses supporting the rural economy; heritage aspects of the landscape; the need to exclude noisy and light polluting developments; local needs for meeting places for communities; and the importance of the countryside for agriculture and leisure.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

- 6.8. Since the Preferred Options Report was published in February 2006, there have been changes to the regional planning policy context, and there has been a development of the evidence base supporting the policy.
- 6.9. The Draft Regional Plan included policies on:
- Regional Priorities for Rural Diversification (Policy 23);
 - Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Heritage (Policy 26);
 - Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure (Policy 27); and
 - Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape (Policy 30).
- 6.10. Policy 23 indicated that local authorities should work with partner organisations to promote the continued diversification and further development of the rural economy, where this is consistent with a sustainable pattern of development. Landscape issues were encompassed within the supporting text to Policy 26. Policy 27 highlighted the need for landscape issues to be integrated with 'green infrastructure plans' based on character assessments. The policy also referred to the need for Local Development Frameworks to be informed by Landscape Character Assessments and also referred to initiatives to protect the landscape qualities of areas such as Charnwood Forest.
- 6.11. The Panel in the draft Regional Plan Examination In Public Report (November 2007) recognised development in rural areas beyond that essential to the delivery of local needs can be quite unsustainable notably in terms of commuting patterns. They were content there were no circumstances in the region to justify deviation from national policy in PPS7. They recommended local development documents should develop rural diversification policies tailored to local circumstances embracing diversification in the widest sense.

- 6.12. In the Secretary of State's proposed changes document (July 2008), the Policy 'Regional Priorities for Rural Diversification' remains unchanged apart from the inclusion of an additional statement that local development documents should develop further diversification of the rural economy according to local circumstances (and a renumbering to Policy 24). The supporting text notes that farm diversification is but one way and all other options should be considered when developing policies.
- 6.13. Three Cities Sub Regional Strategy Policy 5 is unchanged and includes amongst the strategic priorities for enhanced and new green infrastructure the National Forest, a proposed Charnwood Forest Regional Park, green wedges and community forest proposals and greenways around Leicester.
- 6.14. The Secretary of State proposed minor wording changes to the following policies:
- Policy 26 Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Heritage;
 - Policy 27 Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure, (renumbering it to become Policy 28); and
 - Policy 30 Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape was amended to include recognition of the value of tranquillity and dark skies (renumbering it to become Policy 31).
- 6.15. At the start of 2008, Charnwood Borough Council started work on a borough wide landscape character assessment, which covers all rural areas up to the edge of settlements. Survey work was carried out during the summer of 2008. The landscape character assessment will identify local landscape character areas within the borough. One of its aims are to provide a greater level of detail about the landscape impacts of the alternative directions for growth within Charnwood. The landscape character appraisal will also inform the more detailed master-planning of sustainable urban extensions. It will also inform more detailed policies in later local development documents which will encourage landscape character to be reflected new development. The landscape character appraisal will also provide wider management guidelines which inform tree planting, land management and management of ecological sites.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 6.16. Options considered are to have a separate approach to countryside and landscape character or to integrate the approach within an approach to Green Infrastructure.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 6.17. The proposed approach is to continue to protect the countryside for its own sake and to integrate the approach to countryside and landscape character within an overall approach to Green Infrastructure. Detailed wording amendments received in response to the 2006 Preferred Options Report will inform detailed policy wording of the submission draft of the Core Strategy, together with the most up-to-date policy context and evidence base.

DESIGN

What is the issue?

- 7.1 Many settlements have traditionally had strong building styles that are locally distinctive as a consequence of local materials and building techniques. However, some recent developments have not reflected this local distinctiveness. More can be done to ensure that new developments also incorporate sustainable design principles. Design in its broadest sense is a cross cutting theme, and successful design contributes to a number of social, environmental and economic objectives. It is important that the policy makes it clear that Charnwood Borough Council will require a higher standard of design, due to its importance in delivering many of the objectives of the Core Strategy.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 7.2. The policy approach in 2006 sought to encourage good quality design and set out a series of 16 criteria required from new development. These criteria related to: reflecting local context, ensuring appropriate mix of uses, ensuring a hierarchy of spaces for all types of people, providing walkable development with transport choice, providing safe and comfortable development, integrating existing access routes, providing for the need of all, adopting designing out crime principles, providing clearly designed public and private realm, incorporating comprehensive landscaping, securing the retention of features of biodiversity, maximising energy efficiency, providing urban drainage systems, incorporating appropriate waste management facilities, fostering a sense of place, and reinforcing local character.

What did you say?

- 7.3. Representations on Preferred Options in 2006 indicated that the Design Policy should encourage sustainable design as it is wider than just design quality. You also said that the policy approach to design should be in line with Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS 9): Biology and Geological Conservation (August 2005)¹¹, which states that 'Plan policies and planning decision should aim to maintain, and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests' Paragraph 1 (ii). It was also recommended that officers should not delegate authority to as yet unpublished supplementary planning documents.

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<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps9>

- 7.4. It was highlighted during the 2006 consultation that the policy wording in terms of renewable energy requirements should be less onerous and should only apply to appropriate developments over a certain size. It was suggested that the design policy should address all forms of flood risk to bring it inline with Planning Policy Guidance 25 (PPG 25): Development and Flood Risk (please note that this guidance has now been replaced by Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS 25): Development and Flood Risk¹², published in December 2006). It was also recommended that the design policy should encourage a hierarchy of transport choice e.g. pedestrian's first, and then cyclists, public transport and finally, private traffic.

What has happened since 2006?

- 7.5. Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS 3): Housing; was published by Communities and Local Government in November 2006. This national policy document sets out a strong emphasis on improving the design quality of new homes. It also requires land to be used more efficiently setting 30 dwellings per hectare as a national indicative minimum density.
- 7.6. Also in December 2006, The Department of Communities and Local Government launched the Code for Sustainable Homes¹³, providing a national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new housing. Whilst this Code is enforced through the Building Regulations, the planning system has a role to play in ensuring that opportunities to meet the Code are maximised in a land use context.
- 7.7. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) is the Government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space. CABE's national housing audit looks specifically at new developments in the East Midlands, West Midlands and the South West and also completes an assessment of the quality of new homes in England as a whole. It uncovers evidence about the poor quality of some schemes, but also highlights some inspiring examples of what good design can achieve. In the East Midlands, over half the developments were assessed as poor. No schemes rated 'good', and only one was 'very good'.
- 7.8. 'Building for Life'¹⁴ is the national standard for new homes and neighbourhoods. It is led by CABE and the Home Builders Federation to guide Local Planning Authorities and developers to assess design quality of housing schemes at a planning stage. They are also the measure by which local authorities report to government on the design quality of the housing they deliver through the Annual Monitoring Report.

¹² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps25floodrisk>

¹³ http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/code_for_sust_homes.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.buildingforlife.org>

- 7.9. Building for Life sets out 20 questions upon which new housing schemes can be judged, within the four categories of:
1. Character;
 2. Roads, parking and pedestrianisation; e.g. does the building layout take priority over roads and car parking, so that the highways do not dominate?
 3. Design and construction; e.g. is the design specific to the scheme?
 4. Environment and community; e.g. does the development have easy access to public transport?
- 7.10. Schemes that meet 14 of the 20 questions are eligible to apply for 'silver' standard, whilst if a scheme meets 16 or more it will be considered for 'gold' standard.
- 7.11. Promoting better design is integral to the draft Regional Plan and is highlighted as core objective as well as being the subject of Policy 2.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 7.12. No alternative approaches have been identified. The preferred approach is to encourage a higher standard of design which maximises sustainability benefits.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 7.13. The policy will make it clear that Charnwood Borough Council will expect a higher standard of design than it has required in the past.
- 7.14. For residential schemes the 'Building for Life Criteria' standard will be used as the basis to audit the quality of new developments. The Council will work with CABI and neighbouring authorities to train staff and carry out audits in an objective way. Gradually increasing targets for design quality for development will be phased over the period of the 3 years from the adoption of the Core Strategy, in recognition of the fact that there are a number of residential schemes that have planning permission and which predate 'Buildings for Life' criteria. The aim would be to ensure all major new housing developments achieve a good standard of design as defined by the 'Buildings for Life' standard.

- 7.15. For non-residential developments, the approach will be to set out a series of key design criteria to guide the determinations of planning applications. These will be based upon those principles in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Leading in Design'. The policy will set out key strategic design principles including concise statements appropriate for a Core Strategy and avoiding duplication within the policy and avoiding duplication with other policy areas such as biodiversity and sustainable design and construction. Detailed wording amendments received in response to the 2006 Preferred Options Report will inform detailed policy wording of the submission draft of the Core Strategy, together with the most up-to-date policy context and evidence base

EMPLOYMENT PROVISION

What are the Issues?

- 8.1 The Borough is not unique in the East Midlands in suffering from the decline in traditional employment sectors, such as textiles and manufacturing. This trend has resulted in the loss of a significant number of employment sites in some settlements, mostly to housing development, and a growing pattern of commuting to employment opportunities elsewhere.
- 8.2. The Borough is comparatively prosperous and benefits from a number of key blue chip employers such as Astra Zeneca and IBM who benefit from the locus of Loughborough University. The University is not only a key employer in the Borough; it also has an international reputation as a centre for research and development in environmental sciences and bio sciences as well as sporting excellence.
- 8.3. Capitalising from the University's research and development activity, a Science Park has been developed on adjoining land providing a high quality campus style environment for firms with a connection or synergy to the university. This site is largely committed and opportunities exist to expand the park to provide further land for similar employment uses.
- 8.4. An important role for the Core Strategy is to ensure that there is enough new employment land in the right places in the Borough so as to provide a foundation for future economic prosperity and to provide jobs. It also has to consider if existing land used for employment purposes is of the right quality and location to ensure that the Borough is well-placed to meet the economic challenges over the plan period.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 8.5. The preferred policy approach to the amount of employment and its distribution was guided by the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan. This was because the Regional Spatial Strategy provided insufficient guidance as to the amount of employment needed in the borough.
- 8.6. The preferred approach was to identify the broad scale of future development from the structure plan requirement to 2016 and to project the future needs to complement rate of housing growth up to 2021 using the emerging draft regional plan. It was noted that further work would be required to support the requirement set out in the submission version of the preferred options report.

- 8.7. The employment requirement 2001-2021 was:
- North Charnwood – 37 hectares
 - South Charnwood – 42 hectares
- 8.8. With an additional requirement in North Charnwood for up to 50 hectares of land for a second science park close to the University.
- 8.9. Employment was to be brought forward in north Charnwood in association with sustainable urban extensions to the west of Loughborough towards Shepshed and south towards Quorn. In South Charnwood housing and employment development were to be delivered through a sustainable urban extension involving a northern expansion of Hamilton and eastern expansion of Thurmaston. Any further employment was to be focussed along the A6 corridor north of Birstall.
- 8.10. It was also proposed to safeguard existing, and provide new, employment sites over the plan period particularly in areas of higher need like Loughborough, Shepshed, Syston and Anstey; provide for the growth of the existing University campus; and limited small scale development to support local services and facilities in service centres.
- 8.11. It was proposed to phase the release of the employment supply in three plan phases 2005-2011; 2011-2016; and 2016-2021.
- 8.12. The science park was considered in a separate development plan document. This document identified a preferred site to the west of Loughborough University, and set out the detailed policy requirements for its delivery. It sought to restrict the type of employment to University uses, offices and general and light industrial uses associated with the university or other research facilities elsewhere in Loughborough. It also set out the principle for splitting the site to provide a “ladder” of available property types to meet the needs of firms as they grow.

What did you say?

- 8.13. In terms of the approach to employment in the Core Strategy you said there is not enough variation in the employment offer beyond factories and call centres. There were also questions about the need for a new Science Park, how the preferred location can make better advantage of its proximity to the Charnwood Forest area and traffic issues. It was suggested that there needed to be greater reference to the university in terms of driving forward the local economy. Finally, you considered that there should be no phasing of employment land release to allow a continuous and readily available supply.

What has happened since preferred Options in 2006?

8.14. There has been a significant amount of work undertaken since the 2006 Preferred Options report was published. This can be broken down into three main areas: progress on the draft Regional Plan; evidence arising from local and sub regional studies and changes to the way site specific allocations are treated in the local development framework.

Regional Planning

8.15. In terms of identifying specific employment sites, the draft Regional Plan underlines the need to work in partnership with East Midlands Development Agency and other organisations with responsibilities to encourage and foster the economy through implementing the Regional Economic Strategy. It highlights the importance of maintaining economic competitiveness through the development of the service sector, innovative business, and raising skill levels. It requires local authorities to allocate a range of sites in sustainable locations that are:

- Responsive to market needs and the requirements of potential investors including the needs of small businesses
- Encourage priority sectors like transport equipment, food and drink, healthcare and construction and those with specific local economic significance
- Help to improve the regeneration of urban areas
- Provide for the needs of high technology and knowledge based industries
- Promote the diversification of the rural economy
- Assist the development of sites in priority areas for regeneration
- Be of a scale consistent with the essential policy of urban concentration

8.16. In addition to these more general requirements, sub regional priorities for employment land require local planning authorities in the three cities area to: consider the housing distribution and the sustainable urban extensions in particular; support regeneration of deprived communities; serve the needs of high technology sectors; promote local employment opportunities that will reduce out-commuting; and provide opportunities to address green infrastructure deficit.

8.17. The draft Regional Plan also requires local authorities and its partners to consider bringing forward sites for rail-served strategic distribution in broad locations including in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market area. Charnwood is not likely to present opportunities for this.

8.18. 'A Flourishing Region', the Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2020 considers the scope to develop a dynamic region founded upon innovative and knowledge focused businesses competing successfully in a global economy.

New evidence

- 8.19. New evidence on employment supply and demand has been prepared at regional level since the 2006 preferred options report was published. The purpose of this is to provide consistent and robust advice to local authorities in planning for future employment land requirements from a regional perspective. In addition to this there has been study of employment land at a local level.
- 8.20. The Charnwood Employment Land Study was published in September 2006. The study was commissioned in 2005 by Leicestershire County Council, on behalf of the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership and its partners, to assess the balance of demand and supply for employment land in Charnwood Borough.
- 8.21. The Regional Employment Land Study (RELS)¹⁵ was commissioned by East Midlands Regional Assembly in 2006 to update and extend the quantitative element of the original Quality of Employment Land Supply (QUELS)¹⁶ study published in 2002. This study considered employment growth projections commissioned by East Midlands Development Agency, current employment land supply and levels of past take-up.
- 8.22. Generally speaking all of these studies have found that there will be a decline in demand for industrial floorspace and a significant increase in demand for office space over the next 10-15 years in the East Midlands. Jobs are expected to move away from traditional employment space into retail, education and health. Within traditional employment uses jobs are shifting from factories to offices which occupy space at higher densities. The requirement for employment land is therefore forecast to remain static. However, this pattern hides a more dynamic picture across the region in which there is a mismatch between the location of sites to demand, poor quality of some sites and a shortage of high-tech sites. Employment land lost to other uses should be replaced.
- 8.23. A further employment land study¹⁷ was commissioned by the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership in February 2008 for the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area. The brief required the study to: provide an evidence base for joint employment land planning to 2026; to support employment land policies and allocations in LDFs; and identify investment priorities and targets for Local Area Agreements and the Multi Area Agreement. The study concludes that:

¹⁵ <http://www.emra.gov.uk/search-results?taosFileStreamId=4303>

¹⁶ <http://www.emra.gov.uk/publications/housing-planning-and-transport/studies-and-initiatives/quality-of-employment-land-supply-quels-study>

¹⁷ <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/employmentlandstudy>

- There is an oversupply of office space in the Borough in terms of projected need. Some of this supply is on one site at Watermead, West of Thurmaston and much of the remaining balance is accounted for by the existing Science Park, which should be deducted from the overall supply because:
 - It is addressing a regional requirement for Science Park uses.
 - These uses are subject to the university's estate management requirements.
 - Advance infrastructure is likely to be needed to make much of this site investment-ready.
- There is little need for industrial and warehousing provision in the Borough as the supply of land is in balance with demand.
- There is a substantial requirement for new employment sites within the Leicester PUA in Charnwood arising from demand for employment land in Leicester
- There is a need for a further science park in Loughborough to help support the aspiration in the Region for an innovative and creative knowledge-based economy.

8.24. To address these issues the study suggests:

- Providing 20 hectares of employment in association with the sustainable urban extension in North Charnwood to provide choice and balance the supply of office development in South Charnwood and to supplement the supply of industrial and warehousing land towards the end of the plan period;
- Providing 50 hectares of employment in association with the sustainable urban extension in South Charnwood to meet the forecast demand arising from firms in Leicester;
- Providing an extension to the existing science park at Loughborough
- Reusing the poorer quality employment sites in the borough for alternative uses and identifying new sites to ensure no net loss in employment provision.

Science Park Development Plan Document

8.25. Changes in the scope of development plan documents following government measures to streamline the planning system now mean that Core Strategies can include strategic level site allocations where these help to deliver the fundamental strategy of the plan. Such allocations include the Science Park and sustainable urban extensions. The measure will be instrumental in helping to make early progress on delivering the government's growth agenda. The Council has therefore decided to stop work on the Science

Park DPD and instead incorporate its content within the Core Strategy process.

What are the Reasonable Options?

1. Do nothing – allocate no further employment land. Since there is an oversupply of offices in the Borough and industrial and warehousing supply appears to be in balance with forecast demand, it could be argued there is no need for further employment land;
2. Allocate land and distribute it as recommended by the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA Employment Land Study;
3. Allocate land as recommended by the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA Employment Land Study and distribute it within existing settlements concentrating it in urban areas; and
4. Allocate land as recommended by the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA Employment Land Study and distribute it within all existing settlements.

What is our preferred approach?

- 8.26. The evidence base and the results of the Sustainability Appraisal suggest that Option 2 presents the most reasonable way forward in terms of making provision for future employment needs.
- 8.27. The Core Strategy will therefore show the requirements for employment provision setting out the overall amount required up to 2026 and its distribution. Evidence in the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA Employment Land Study suggests that there is little need for further industrial land in the Borough as the existing supply is in balance with forecast demand. However, it points out that most of the supply is located in South Charnwood with limited provision in Loughborough. It argues that in order to provide choice and competition in the Borough's employment land market 20 hectares of land should be brought forward in or adjoining Loughborough to serve the latter half of the plan period. This land should be marketed for high value offices, industrial and small scale warehousing.
- 8.28. In South Charnwood, the report argues that the demand for employment land in Leicester is such that it cannot be entirely satisfied wholly within the City and as such there is a forecast demand for a 50 hectare employment area within or adjoining the northern fringe of the principal urban area.
- 8.29. In order to help support the realisation of the Leicestershire Economic Strategy 'Vision 2020' and its three strategic principles of economic competitiveness, low carbon development and new patterns of growth, the employment requirement for north and South Charnwood should be focused in sustainable urban extensions with the southern Charnwood

requirement providing for the first zero carbon employment development in the Housing Market Area.

- 8.30. Elsewhere in the borough, employment sites identified as poor quality in the 2005 Charnwood Employment Land Study will be considered for reuse for alternative uses. New sites will be identified where necessary for allocation in the Site Allocation development plan document to bring the employment land supply back into balance. The objective will be able to meet local needs for employment and provide high quality employment development, where this will help to support or create sustainable communities.
- 8.31. Complementing this approach is the desire to make provision for a new science park. Having considered the responses received to the Science Park DPD preferred options report, the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA Employment Land Study, the Secretary of State's proposed changes to policy in the draft Regional Plan and the Science Park DPD process and sustainability appraisal, a site to the west of the university is still the Council's preferred location for a new science park.
- 8.32. Considering the strength of evidence for a new science park the Council has decided to maintain a commitment to its provision. A specific policy will therefore provide for a new science park in the Core Strategy and its site boundary will need to be shown on the proposals map.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

What is the Issue?

- 9.1 The Borough of Charnwood has a wealth of natural resources and physical features including a range of landscapes, ecological sites and places for recreation and leisure. Together these features comprise 'green infrastructure' and can have a number of social benefits in terms of health and well-being, and are an essential element of sustainable communities. There is therefore a need to ensure that the population of Charnwood has access to good range of green infrastructure. Many of the natural elements of green infrastructure are a finite resource and there is a need to manage them so that they are protected or enhanced for future generations.
- 9.2. Dealing with green infrastructure in a more holistic way recognises that many of the elements of green infrastructure has multiple benefits, for example a park provided as part of development can be a part flood prevention scheme, can be an area of recreation, can help off set effects of climate change by providing summer cooling and can also be a wildlife resource.
- 9.3. There are benefits in managing elements of green infrastructure as a part of a linked network. The elements that comprise green infrastructure in Charnwood need to be managed in a way which recognises the inter-relationships between them and which secures a net increase in the network.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 9.4. The 2006 Preferred Options Report did not have a policy on green infrastructure, rather it had separate policies on: Biodiversity, Countryside and Landscape Character, Leisure and Recreation, Charnwood Forest The National Forest and Settlement Identity.

What did you say?

- 9.5. There was no Green Infrastructure policy in the 2006 Preferred Options Report, however representations were received on the policy areas named above and these are discussed in their respective sections in this topic paper document.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

- 9.6. Since the Preferred Options Report was published in 2006, the concept has green infrastructure has emerged and evolved through regional policy and in local planning practice. Models of how green infrastructure can be planned and managed at the sub-regional level include the River Nene Regional Park

in Northamptonshire. Charnwood also sits within wider area which has designated as area of major growth and where there is major funding available to support this; the delivery of Green Infrastructure is integral to the delivery of this increased growth.

- 9.7. Charnwood Borough Council has developed its evidence base for such areas as biodiversity and landscape character and these are explained in more detail in the policy areas of the sections of this topic paper on biodiversity and countryside and landscape character respectively.
- 9.8. In September 2006, Leicestershire County Council published a detailed Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Draft Regional Plan Policy

- 9.9. The Draft Regional Plan (September 2006) included policies on:
 - Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Heritage (Policy 26);
 - Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure (Policy 27); and
 - Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape (Policy 30).
 - Policy Three Cities SRS 6 dealt with Green Infrastructure and The National Forest.
- 9.10. The draft Regional Plan also proposes a Charnwood Forest Regional Park, sets a policy context for The National Forest and for the region's landscape. These policy areas are all relevant to Green Infrastructure, and are explained in more detail in the respective sections of this topic paper document.
- 9.11. Policy 27 of the Draft Regional Plan really sets the scene for how Green Infrastructure should be planned for at the local level. Requirements include (amongst others):
 - Assessing the capacity of existing environmental infrastructure to accommodate change to inform decisions on the scale, location and phasing of development. Account should also be taken of deficits and likely future demands;
 - Develop 'green infrastructure plans based on character assessments of existing natural, cultural and landscape assets and the identification of new assets required to meet the needs of existing and expanded communities;
 - Increase access to green space that can be used for formal and informal recreation, educational purposes and to promote healthy lifestyles; and
 - Identify delivery and funding mechanisms for the creation and future management of Green Infrastructure, including from the planning system

and other funding sources such as EU funded Environmental Stewardship Schemes.

- 9.12. The report of the examination in public of the draft regional plan in November 2007 recommended that Policy 27 above be amended so that it was clear which policy level was responsible for developing green infrastructure plans. The recommendation was that the measures in Policy 27 be amended to reflect this.
- 9.13. The Secretary of State's proposed changes to the draft Regional Plan accepted the panel's recommendations and added within the supporting text reference to waterways being included within the green infrastructure network.
- 9.14. Policy Three Cities SRS 5 is unchanged and includes amongst the strategic priorities for enhanced and new green infrastructure the National Forest, a proposed Charnwood Forest Regional Park, green wedges and community forest proposals and greenways around Leicester.

National Growth Point Funding

- 9.15. The Three Cities/Three Counties (6Cs) Growth Point is one of 29 areas nationally proposed under the Sustainable Communities Plan for significant growth, where the Government has invited local authorities and other partner organisations to bid for funding to help meet the aims of the Plan locally. It is envisaged that around 10% of the total Growth Point funding from the Government will be allocated for strategic GI investment. In the 6Cs area some of this money has towards a Green Infrastructure Co-ordinator's post and the commissioning of a Sub-regional Green Infrastructure Strategy. Consultants have now been appointed to carry out the sub-regional Green Infrastructure Strategy and evidence gathering will take place up to end of 2008, there will follow a period of consultation with partners and reporting is due in the second half of 2009.

Other Sub-regional Studies

- 9.16. (Stepping Stones Project Creating a Green and Prosperous future: A Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan for Central Leicestershire)
- 9.17. The Stepping Stone Project was born out of the Leicestershire Urban Fringe Countryside Management Project established in 1992. The initial purpose of the project was to encourage the pro-active management of the countryside surrounding Leicester City, addressing the needs of both people and wildlife within the central Leicestershire area.

- 9.18. During 2005 an opportunity arose with the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) to submit a proposal for the development of a regional exemplar project for their 'Countryside In and Around Towns' funding programme. The Stepping Stones Project was successful in its application for funding and in October 2005.
- 9.19. The growth point designation of the 3 cities sub area together with an emerging approach to Green Infrastructure planning gave the opportunity to promote the Stepping Stones Project as the primary green infrastructure delivery and advocacy body within the central Leicestershire area. A Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan for Central Leicestershire has been developed and proposes a spatial framework for green infrastructure identifying broad areas of priority.

Stakeholder Consultation

- 9.20. In July and August 2008, Charnwood Borough Council carried out two stakeholder workshops to test and refine a policy approach to green infrastructure prior to further consultation on the Core Strategy in October 2008. Some of the main outcomes of this consultation were:
- The need to define strategic green infrastructure and local green infrastructure and agree an approach with 6Cs coordinator;
 - The role and function of strategic areas of green infrastructure need to be expressed in the round as well as on specific Sustainable Urban Extension locations;
 - The need to understand the public benefits that can arise from improving green infrastructure in terms of social and economic gains;
 - The need to understand how strategic areas of green infrastructure benefit the whole borough and can help influence the development strategy;
 - The need to understand how the proposed Charnwood Forest Regional Park benefits the 6Cs area;
 - The requirement for a clear policy to explain the green infrastructure approach detailing the amount, type and location; and
 - The need to understand access issues across the Borough as a whole

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 9.21. Options considered in the Sustainability Appraisal are to:
- have separate policy approaches to Biodiversity, Countryside and Landscape Character, Leisure and Recreation, Charnwood Forest The National Forest and Settlement Identity; or
 - to have an integrated policy approach to Green Infrastructure encompassing the elements above

What is our Policy Approach?

- 9.22. The proposed approach is to have an integrated approach to green infrastructure encompassing approaches to biodiversity, countryside and landscape character, leisure and recreation, Charnwood Forest, The National Forest and settlement identity. The benefit of this approach is being able to address conflicts between different aspects of green infrastructure, such as between some recreational activity and the impact upon biodiversity. A co-ordinated approach also recognises that different elements of green infrastructure can perform a number of functions including providing wildlife habitats, promoting well-being amongst local people and helping to mitigate against the effects of climate change.
- 9.23. Significant funding is available for the provision of green infrastructure for areas where there is major growth proposed. Being able to access this 'New Growth Point' funding will be more effective if a co-ordinated approach is taken towards green infrastructure, rather than treating each element in isolation.
- 9.24. The approach defines the strategic elements of green infrastructure within the Borough and defines them on a key diagram. These include:
- Charnwood Forest Regional Park;
 - Strategic River Corridors of the Soar and the Wreake, including the Grand Union Canal and Watermead Country Park;
 - Rothley Brook Corridor; and
 - Green Wedges
- 9.25. The approach explains the role and function of each strategic element in the green infrastructure network and their relationship to one another. The proposed approach is to set out more specific opportunities for enhancement of the green infrastructure network in the description of each option for sustainable urban extensions.
- 9.26. The overall aim is to develop a comprehensive network of multi-functional green space across Charnwood for people and for wildlife.
- 9.27. The approach highlights the major strategic issues for Green Infrastructure including where there are priority areas for recreational open space, where there are priority areas for biodiversity, where there are gaps in the rights of way network and what the main issues are in relation to landscape character across the Borough of Charnwood.
- 9.28. The approach acknowledges that the evidence on Green Infrastructure is still evolving and further work on open space provision, landscape characterisation and habitat surveys will inform and approach

GYSIES, TRAVELLERS & SHOW PEOPLE PROVISION

What is the issue?

- 10.1 There is a need to provide sites for gypsies, travellers and show people within Charnwood. This is a legal requirement and need has been identified through a detailed county wide accommodation assessment, which has been translated into a pitch requirement in the draft Regional Plan. Planned provision will help to avoid the conflict and controversy associated with unauthorised development and to provide greater certainty about the location of future sites.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 10.2. The needs of gypsies, travellers and Show people were not specifically addressed in the 2006 Preferred Options Report.

What did you say?

- 10.3. The Government Office for the East Midlands identified that the lack of reference to gypsies and travellers was contrary to Circular 1/2006 'Planning for Gypsies and Travelling Caravans', which was published just prior to the publication of the Preferred Options report on 2nd February 2006.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

- 10.4. Since the Preferred Options Report was considered by the Cabinet, two new statements of government policy have been issued:

Circular 1/2006 – Planning for Gypsy & Traveller Caravan Sites (February 2006)¹⁸

- 10.5. This states that Development Plan Documents will identify the location of appropriate sites for gypsies and travellers in consultation with gypsy and traveller groups. It points to the Housing Act 2004, which requires Local Housing Authorities to include gypsies and travellers in their accommodation assessments and to take a strategic approach to meeting the needs of gypsies and travellers as part of their wider housing strategies.
- 10.6. The Circular states that gypsy and traveller accommodation assessments will identify gypsies and travellers accommodation needs and feed into the Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Framework. In this context, development plan documents must set out site specific allocations to meet the Regional Spatial Strategy requirement for pitches. The core strategy should set out criteria for the location of gypsies and travellers sites

¹⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/circulargypsytraveller>

which will be used to guide the allocation of sites in the relevant development plan document. These will be used to guide unexpected demand.

- 10.7. Where there is a lack of affordable land to meet gypsies and travellers needs (as demonstrated by up to date accommodation assessment) Local planning Authorities in rural areas should consider using a 'rural exception policy'. Mixed use sites are not appropriate in rural areas.
- 10.8. In sensitive areas, planning permission should only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the objectives of the designation will not be compromised by the development. Landscape and local nature conservation designations should not be used in themselves to refuse planning permission for sites.
- 10.9. The Circular explains that sites on the outskirts of built up areas may be appropriate as well as in rural or semi-rural settings. Rural settings not subject to special planning constraints are acceptable in principle. In assessing the suitability of sites it requires local authorities to consider access to local services without the need to rely on the car, the scale of nearby community and a need not to place undue pressure on existing local infrastructure.
- 10.10. Five sustainability criteria are given to consider the location of sites:
- peaceful and integration between the site and local community;
 - access to GP and health care;
 - access to schools;
 - provision of a base which reduces the need for long-distance travelling and unauthorised encampment; and
 - avoiding land liable to flood.
- 10.11. Local planning authorities should consider sites in or near existing settlements with access to local services. Sites should be considered as part of sustainability appraisal process.

Circular 4/2007 – Travelling Show people (August 2007)¹⁹

- 10.12. This Circular highlights the differences between gypsies and travellers and travelling show people:
- Showpeople have a different culture and traditions to gypsies and travellers
 - Sites for showpeople are normally for mixed use to enable storage and repair of equipment
 - Maintenance and repair can have a visual and noise impact

¹⁹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/circulartravellingshow>

- 10.13. The Circular requires a gypsy and traveller accommodation assessments to include assessment of the needs of travelling show people. Conclusions about plots must be translated into site allocations in development plan documents. The Core Strategy should contain criteria to guide the allocation of sites in development plan document and on windfall sites.
- 10.14. Identifies four ways that local authorities can specify sites and make land available:
- Disposal of council owned land
 - Reference to registers of unused land and underused land in public ownership
 - The use of CPO to acquire sites
 - Cooperation and joint work with neighbouring local authorities
- 10.15. Sites on the outskirts of built-up areas may be appropriate and in rural and semi rural settings. New development in the countryside away from existing settlements should be strictly controlled. Rural areas may be appropriate for show people who operate circuses where land is required for the upkeep of animals
- 10.16. Identifies six sustainability considerations similar to Circular 1/2006 above but also recognising that showpeople living and working on the same site can be inherently sustainable.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (November 2006)

- 10.17. Explains that Regional Spatial Strategies should set out the region's approach to achieving a good mix of housing. Local Planning Authorities should plan for a mix of housing on the basis of the different types of households that are likely to require housing over the plan period. This will include having particular regard to:
- Current and future demographic trends and profiles.
 - The accommodation requirements of specific groups, in particular, families with children, older and disabled people.
 - The diverse range of requirements across the area, including the need to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers.

The Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (GTAA) (April 2007)²⁰

- 10.18. Providing for gypsy and travellers will need to be addressed in the local development framework. Since the last preferred option report, Charnwood Borough Council has worked with other local authorities in Leicestershire

²⁰ <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/gypsyandtravellerneedsassessment>

and Rutland to produce a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, which identifies the type and number of sites that need to be provided in Charnwood.

- 10.19. The assessment identified a need to provide further pitches in the Borough up to 2016. The assessment found that there is a local need to provide some sites for the gypsy and traveller communities to reside (residential pitches) or stop over (transit pitches) within the Borough. The assessment also found a local need for travelling showpeople sites within the Borough. These requirements are set out below:

2006-2011	- 9 pitches, - Transit sites with capacity for up to 10 caravans. - 4 plots for show people
2011-2016	- 2 pitches - 5 plots for show people.

- 10.20. These requirements have been translated into a policy requirement in the draft Regional Plan, as a consequence of the proposed changes made by the Secretary of State. This is expressed as a minimum requirement for provision to be made by 2016.

- 10.21. Discussions that took place between the Council and gypsy and travelling community in 2007 highlighted the urgency to deliver gypsy and traveller sites.

- 10.22. The Council ran a workshop for key stakeholders in August 2008 to consider a range of alternative options for meeting the pitch requirement set out in the draft Regional Plan and to identify a preferred policy approach for the local development framework.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 10.23. The workshop in August 2008 considered the following options:

- Option 1 – do nothing.
- Option 2 – make provision as part of significant growth areas in the borough
- Option 3 – Defer the identification of sites to later development plan documents but seek to concentrate provision in urban areas
- Option 4 - Defer the identification of sites to later development plan documents but consider sites anywhere in the borough.

NB: Options 2, 3 and 4 all require a specific policy in the Core Strategy that provides criteria for the location of specific sites.

What is our preferred approach?

- 10.24. Our preferred approach is Option 2. This will see the provision of sites for gypsies, travellers and showpeople as part of sustainable urban extensions. This will be accompanied by a specific policy in the Core Strategy setting out the criteria against which further gypsy, traveller and showpeople sites will be considered. These further sites may be specific allocations in the Site Allocations development plan document or windfall sites.
- 10.25. The outstanding requirement for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople identified in the gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment should be provided as part of sustainable urban extensions. This will ensure that they have good access to main roads and services, and can be designed from the outset to ensure that they contribute to the creation of balanced communities. In line with best practice, government guidance and the desires of gypsy and traveller communities, smaller residential sites are preferred. This approach provides certainty to the travelling community that sites will be provided which will address their accommodation needs.
- 10.26. The Council will seek the provision of a residential site (between 5 and 10 pitches), a transit site (between 5 and 10 pitches) and accommodation for travelling showpeople (sufficient for up to 5 families) in each of the sustainable urban extensions. This provision should be considered as a minimum level to fulfil the requirement set out in the draft Regional Plan although the Council will review its requirement in light of any new evidence.
- 10.27. In addition to allocating land for gypsies, travellers and show people through the Sustainable Urban Extensions, the Council will review its own portfolio of land assets to assess if any sites might be suitable for allocation in the Site Allocations document.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

What is the Issue?

- 11.1 Responses to consultation on the issues for Charnwood highlighted concerns that in some settlements improvements to infrastructure has not kept up with the pace and scale of new development. It is important that the necessary physical and community infrastructure is delivered to support the new development proposed in partnership with other agencies.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 11.2. The importance of securing the improvement or provision of new physical and community infrastructure necessary to support the development was recognised in the 2006 Preferred Option Report. The report included detailed draft policy wording requiring reasonably related infrastructure or community facilities to be secured through legal agreements with the owners, applicants or developers involved. The draft policy included a list of the infrastructure for which contributions will be sought.

What did you say?

- 11.3. The consultation on the Core Strategy Preferred Options 2006 highlighted concerns about new facilities being built when existing ones are closing down, for example local schools. There were also a number of detailed comments about the need to include contributions to green infrastructure, the need to consider the maintenance as well as the provision of drainage infrastructure and the need to have a clear target for this policy. It was also raised that the policy should provide a level of certainty about what developers will be required to contribute to. It was also suggested that the policy should ensure infrastructure is phased for larger sites along with development.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

- 11.4. Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council are co-ordinating the preparation of an Infrastructure Plan for Leicestershire. This will pull together information on both planned and committed infrastructure provision in the area and requirements for new infrastructure to support development. It is being prepared with input from a range of service providers including the Primary Care Trust, Severn Trent Water and the Highways Authority. This infrastructure plan for the County and City will inform the Core Strategy and other elements of the Local Development Framework.

- 11.5. Since February 2006, the Local Government White Paper²¹ ‘Strong and Prosperous Communities’, published in October 2006, identified the need for local authorities to play a positive co-ordinating role in the delivery of infrastructure. More recently the Government has introduced provisions in the Planning Bill for a new Community Infrastructure Levy, a standard charge set by the charging authorities taking account of land value uplift.
- 11.6. The proposals set out in ‘The Community Infrastructure Levy’ Report²² published by the Department of Communities and Local Government in August 2008, aim to ensure the timely delivery of infrastructure and intends to move away from site specific planning or infrastructure delivery to a more strategic and holistic view, which takes infrastructure decisions on roads alongside those of, for example, schools, hospitals, cultural and community facilities.
- 11.7. If legislation is brought into effect, the Community Infrastructure Levy will be a new charge which local authorities in England and Wales will be empowered, but not required, to charge on most types of new development in their area. Community Infrastructure Levy charges will be based on simple formulae which relate the size of the charge to the size and character of the development paying it. The proceeds of the levy will be spent on local and sub-regional infrastructure to support the development of the area. The current approach of using Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be retained for negotiated agreements between developers and local planning authorities as the new proposed approach will be optional.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 11.8. No alternative approaches have been considered as the Council needs to include policies to maintain and improve the Borough’s physical community infrastructure and ensure the necessary contributions associated with proposed new development are secured. It is too early to consider whether a Community Infrastructure Levy would be appropriate for Charnwood as the provisions for such a levy are still going through Parliament.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 11.9. It is proposed that the Council will seek to secure provision of infrastructure by negotiating a legal agreement with the owners, applicants or developers involved including agreement about the programme for the delivery of any provisions sought. Consideration will be given to the need for the provision or contribution towards a range of benefits including:

²¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous>

²² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/communityinfrastructurelevy>

- Affordable or special needs housing
 - Schools
 - Sustainable transport
 - Improvements to the natural and built environment
 - Drainage infrastructure including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
 - Green infrastructure including maintenance where appropriate and encouraging the provision of multi functional spaces and buildings
 - Social and community facilities
 - Recreation and sports facilities
 - Mitigation to offset impact on any existing green infrastructure.
- 11.10. It is proposed that detailed requirements will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document on developer contributions. This information is currently set out in the Borough Council's 'Section 106 Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document'. This approach provides flexibility to update requirements on a regular basis and to consider the implications of the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy and whether it would be appropriate for Charnwood.
- 11.11. Detailed wording amendments suggested in response to the 2006 Preferred Options Report will inform detailed policy wording of the submission draft of the Core Strategy, together with the most up-to-date policy context and evidence base.

LEISURE AND RECREATION

What is the Issue?

- 12.1 Access to leisure facilities and areas for recreation can improve health and well-being and are essential parts of sustainable communities. Evidence indicates that some existing communities within Charnwood do not have adequate access to open space and leisure facilities. There is a need to ensure that communities in new developments have access to areas for leisure and recreation, and that deficiencies in provision for the existing community are addressed.
- 12.2 The Greenspaces Strategy²³ indicates that the north of the Borough is not well served by large open spaces (100 ha or more). There is a need for more medium sized (district) parks in Loughborough, Shepshed and Syston. The more rural parts of the borough have limited access to formal public open spaces.
- 12.3 Whilst Charnwood has generally a good level of playing pitch provision, gaps in junior playing pitch provision needs to be addressed.
- 12.4 The Borough has a large network of public rights of way, including the 'Leicestershire Round' long distance footpath and parts of the National Cycle network. More than 75% of households in the county are within 250m of a right of way. However, within Charnwood, there are significant numbers of properties more than 500m from any path, and these areas lie in Birstall, Mountsorrel, and parts of southwest Loughborough. Within the Borough the Charnwood Forest has a lower density of footpaths.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 12.5 The 2006 Preferred Option Report indicated that improved formal and informal recreational facilities to meet needs identified in Green Space Strategy would be secured as part of preferred directions for growth and in association with regeneration initiatives. The policy identified 4 key priorities for new recreational facilities and these were:
- A new Country Park west of Loughborough based on Garendon Historic Park and Garden;
 - The expansion of recreational facilities at Loughborough University associated with its role as a centre of sporting excellence;
 - New recreational facilities to serve the communities of east Loughborough;
 - A new District Park at east Thurmaston/ north Hamilton.

²³ http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/green_spaces_strategy/greenspacesstrategy.pdf

- 12.6. The policy also indicated that existing leisure facilities and open spaces will be safeguarded and where appropriate improved.

What did you say?

- 12.7. The responses to the 2006 consultation highlighted concerns about the lack of recreation land in Sileby and the need to reconsider the recreation site at Lane's Close, Sileby. The consultation highlighted the need to strengthen the reference to improving leisure and recreation facilities given that there is a deficit of open and green, particularly wooded, space in the Borough. There were also detailed comments that country parks should retain their natural appearance, without alien features such as public art and concern over football clubs in inappropriate locations in the countryside.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

Draft Regional Plan

- 12.8. Policy 40 of the Draft Regional Plan set out Regional Priorities for Culture, Sport and Recreation and stated that:

“Local authorities and strategic sub-regional partnerships should work with local communities to develop ‘cultural infrastructure plans’ to inform Local Development Frameworks and other strategies. These should specify:

- *key elements of cultural provision, including assets needing refurbishment, relocation of existing facilities and new provision;*
- *standards and costs for provision, including quality standards;*
- *the sources of and potential funding sources of funding, including from the planning system.”*

- 12.9. Policy 40 remained largely unchanged as a result of the report of the examination in public of the draft Regional Plan and of the Secretary of State's proposed changes.
- 12.10. In November 2006, Charnwood Borough Council published the Charnwood Play Strategy. The strategy provides a framework for the local authority's relationship with others by measuring the quality play, capitalising on funding opportunities, and maximising opportunities through the planning system.
- 12.11. In July and August 2008, Charnwood Borough Council held workshops to test and refine its approach to green infrastructure in which issues of leisure and recreation were discussed. This workshop highlighted the need to understand where there is a need for leisure and recreation provision, what that need is and what the means for addressing needs are.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 12.12. The Sustainability Appraisal considered two broad policy approaches to this policy area. The first option is to have separate policy approach to Leisure and Recreation and the second approach is to integrate the approach to Leisure and Recreation within an overall approach to green infrastructure

What is our Policy Approach?

- 12.13. The proposed approach is to integrate the approach to Leisure and Recreation within an overall approach to green infrastructure. Detailed wording amendments suggested in response to the 2006 Preferred Options Report will inform detailed policy wording of the submission draft of the Core Strategy, together with the most up-to-date policy context and evidence base.

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY & LOUGHBOROUGH COLLEGE

What is the Issue?

- 13.1 Loughborough University and Loughborough College are important contributors to the local economy, both in terms of the number of people they employ and the investment they attract to the town. Their reputation for excellence in research and education ensures particular recognition for Loughborough in the national and international arena. However, that success has imposed additional demands and pressures on the 'host' community that surrounds them.
- 13.2. The Core Strategy needs to support the development of Loughborough University and Loughborough College as important contributors to the local economy. This policy and other policies in the Core Strategy need to ensure that this growth takes place in a way which promotes balanced, sustainable communities.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 13.3. The 2006 Core Strategy Policy approach recognised the importance to the economy of Loughborough and Charnwood that the University retains its reputation for excellence in research and education and that growth would be required to support this. However, it considered it essential that any growth in the size of the University:
- Does not have further impact on housing areas in Loughborough
 - Can be accommodated without making it difficult to meet Charnwood's other land use needs; and
 - Can be achieved without putting additional adverse strain on the transport network in Loughborough
- 13.4. It also created a link between the provision of new purpose built student accommodation and further development at the University for additional academic and ancillary accommodation. Draft policy 13 indicated that additional academic development will only be granted planning permission if it were matched by an increase in purpose built student accommodation in line with the increase in student numbers. The policy approach also indicated that where appropriate, the Council will seek to negotiate for the resolution of traffic and car parking problems, and for measures to encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking.

What did you say?

- 13.5. Representations on 2006 Preferred Options raised concerns that the University is becoming over-dominant and that the proposed policy is not based on sound evidence. There was also concern about that the wording of the policy would result in student accommodation on the Science Park. Concerns were also raised that students may decide not to live in purpose built accommodation.
- 13.6. Consultees were also keen that any new development must use sustainable design and construction techniques and that reference to creating additional improved facilities should be deleted in place of make more efficient use of land. It was also recommended that the University adopts a Green Travel Plan.
- 13.7. The University welcomed the support for new University facilities but was concerned about the uses specified. The University was also concerned about the link between new floorspace and the need to provide student accommodation, which they considered to be unsound. Further more detailed issues were raised.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

- 13.8. The University has continued to expand since the 2006 consultation. Planning permission has been granted on car park seven on the north side of the campus for the creation of 1,300 brand new study bedrooms in three new halls of residence for undergraduates and an additional block with 300 bedrooms for post-graduates. Two halls will be ready for their first students in October 2008, with the third taking students in January 2009 and the fourth in October 2009.
- 13.9. The University has received planning permission for the next phase of development of Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park with the objective to create an expanded Science and Enterprise Park of international standing.
- 13.10. The University's research function has been rated world class by the Sunday Times and the University has won an unprecedented five Queen's Anniversary prizes for excellence in a variety of research fields.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 13.11. The Sustainable Appraisal examined three options for student housing provision and these are explained in the topic paper entitled 'Student Housing Provision in Loughborough'.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 13.12. The preferred approach to Loughborough University and College is to recognise its wider role within a number of policy areas.
- 13.13. Loughborough University and Loughborough College are important to the Borough's and to the wider region's economy and this is dealt with as part of the preferred approach to employment provision. Please see the separate topic paper on this subject within this document.
- 13.14. The physical size and scale of the University and College campuses will be a matter for more detailed development control policies, which can be prepared in later development plan documents. The principles guiding growth set out in 2006 will be carried forward:
- Does not have further impact on housing areas in Loughborough
 - Can be accommodated without making it difficult to meet Charnwood's other land use needs; and
 - Can be achieved without putting additional adverse strain on the transport network in Loughborough
- 13.15. Loughborough University has a leading role in the research and use of renewable and low carbon energy generation, and the proposed approach is reflected in our approach to renewable and low carbon energy generation. Please see the separate topic paper on this subject within this document.
- 13.16. The preferred approach to student housing provision is set out within the further consultation on the Core Strategy, and is also explained under a separate topic paper within this document. One of the main changes in the preferred policy approach is to remove the link between further academic development at the University, and the University providing further purpose built student accommodation on campus. The reason for the removal of this link is that such a regulatory approach is likely to be unworkable through the planning process, particularly as it would be difficult to demonstrate for some individual schemes how they would directly result in an increased requirement for student accommodation. Further explanation of this issue is provided in the accompanying topic paper on student housing provision in Loughborough.

MANAGING ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

What is the Issue?

- 14.1 Sustainability has become a key concern of people and governments around the globe, particularly with the increasing evidence of systematic climate change. The planning system and policies for development are at the forefront of efforts to minimise resources use and adverse environmental impacts. It is important that the Borough of Charnwood plays its part meeting global environmental challenges.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 14.2. Draft Policy 16 'Managing Environmental Resources' covered a variety of subject areas including pollution, water quality, flooding, minimising the loss of best and most versatile land, avoiding sterilisation of mineral resources, and using sustainable design and construction technologies to reduce water use and minimise the use of energy. The policy included a requirement to incorporate on-site renewable energy equipment to reduce predicted CO² emissions by at least 10%. The policy also stated that the Borough Council will promote the development of a Combined Heat and Power Scheme (CHP) as part of a western expansion of Loughborough.

What did you say?

- 14.3. Representation on Preferred Options in 2006 indicated that:
- The policy overlaps with other policy areas within the 2006 Core Strategy Preferred Options Report;
 - The policy should not duplicate building control standards;
 - The policy is too onerous to automatically require all developments to incorporate renewable energy and energy saving technology;
 - The policy should be made less restrictive;
 - The proposal for a Combined Heat and Power scheme may not be the correct solution for West of Loughborough;
 - The policy should not be passive;
 - The target to reduce CO² emissions is potentially ambiguous and too conservative;
 - Planning permission should only be granted where the policy is adhered to;
 - The impact on water quality is better located with emissions and pollutants.
 - It is not acceptable for development to minimise flooding;
 - There should be more specific consideration to soil quality and to cleaning up contaminated sites;
 - There is a need to consider the micro generation and sustainable energy bill; and

- There should be reference to wood fuel initiatives.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

14.4. Since 2006 there have been changes to national planning policy and policy in the draft Regional Plan. The Borough Council has also carried out its own study to inform this policy area and carried out focussed consultation with key stakeholders in July and August 2008.

National Planning Policy

14.5. PPS 25 (Development and Flood Risk) was published in December 2006. The aims of PPS 25 are to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas at highest risk. Where new development is exceptionally necessary in such areas, policy aims to make it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible, reducing flood risk overall.

14.6. 'Building a Greener Future' was published in July 2007²⁴ and confirms the Government's intention for all new homes to be zero carbon by 2016 with a major progressive tightening of the energy efficiency building regulations. Government has also published a document entitled 'Cost Analysis of the Code for Sustainable Homes' in July 2008²⁵.

14.7. Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change - Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1²⁶ was published in December 2007. PPS 1 is clear that local authorities must have an evidence base to justify their policies on renewable energy. The supplement to PPS1 'Planning and Climate Change' sets out evidence requirements needed to support policies on low-carbon and energy sources in paragraph 26:

14.8. Local authorities need to:

- i. set out a target percentage of the energy to be used in new development to come from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources where it is viable. The target should avoid prescription on technologies and be flexible in how carbon savings from local energy supplies are to be secured;
- ii. where there are particular and demonstrable opportunities for greater use of decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy than the target percentage, bring forward development area or site-

²⁴ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/buildinggreener>

²⁵ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/codecostanalysis>

²⁶

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/ppscclimatechange/>

- specific targets to secure this potential; and, in bringing forward targets,
- iii. set out the type and size of development to which the target will be applied; and
 - iv. ensure there is a clear rationale for the target and it is properly tested.
- 14.9. The PPS I Supplement sets out the how local requirements for sustainable building should be dealt with in local planning policy. Paragraph 32 indicates that alongside any criteria-based policy developed in line with Planning Policy Statement 22 (PPS 22) Renewable Energy²⁷ (August 2004), local authorities should consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting such infrastructure.
- 14.10. Paragraph 31 of the PPS I Supplement indicates that there will be situations where it could be appropriate for planning authorities to anticipate levels of building sustainability in advance of those set out nationally. When proposing any local requirements for sustainable buildings planning authorities must be able to demonstrate clearly the local circumstances that warrant and allow this. Two examples are given of such local circumstances.
- 14.11. Paragraph 32 PPS I Supplement also indicates that when proposing any local requirement for sustainable buildings planning authorities should:
- Focus on development area or site-specific opportunities; and
 - Specify the requirement in terms of achievement of nationally described sustainable buildings standards, for example in the case of housing by expecting identified housing proposals to be delivered at a specific level of the Code for Sustainable Homes
- 14.12. The PPS I Supplement states: “Any policy relating to local requirements for decentralised energy supply to new development or for sustainable buildings should be set out in a development plan document, not a supplementary planning document, so as to ensure examination by an independent Inspector”²⁸.
- 14.13. Paragraph 33 also indicates that local authorities should ensure that targets for renewable low carbon technology do not adversely affect development viability.
- 14.14. Paragraph 3.61 of the companion guide to Planning Policy Statement I sets out 9 examples of ways to ensure targets do not affect development viability.

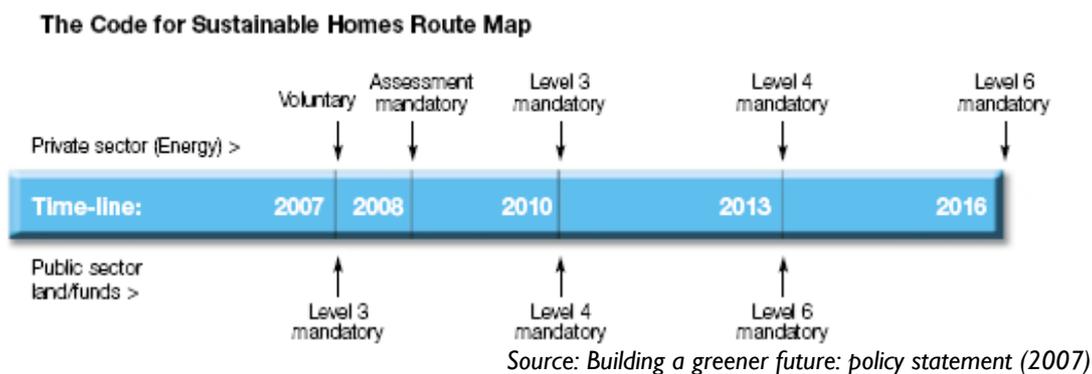
²⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/codecostanalysis>

²⁸ (Paragraph 33).

14.15. Planning Policy Statement 12 indicates that Core Strategies should allow for a degree of flexibility to allow for different circumstances along the plan period. The need for frequent updating may be reduced by taking a long-term view and providing some flexibility.

Code for Sustainable Homes

14.16. Paragraph 32 of the PPS 1 Supplement indicates that local standards for sustainable building should be in the form of The Code for Sustainable Homes. The Code for Sustainable Homes will be brought forward through the Building Regulations, and the timeline for the introduction of these standards is set out in the table below. There is a separate, more demanding, timeline for social and publicly funded housing schemes.



14.17. The PPS 1 Supplement is clear that controls under the planning, building control and other regulatory regimes should complement and not duplicate each other (paragraph 11).

14.18. The Draft Regional Plan was published in September 2006. Policy 3 ‘Promoting Better Design’ stated that new development should be constantly improved by construction that minimises energy use, uses sensitive lighting, improves water efficiency, reduces waste and pollution, incorporates renewable energy technologies and sustainably sourced materials wherever possible and considers building orientation at the start of the building process.

14.19. The Draft Regional Plan also included a policy setting out regional priorities for energy reduction and efficiency (Policy 38) and a policy setting out regional priorities for low carbon energy generation (Policy 39). Policy 38 indicated that local planning authorities should develop policies and proposals that contribute to a reduction in energy demand in new development and promotes ‘carbon neutrality’ wherever practical. Included within Policy 39 was a requirement to identify suitable sites for Combined Heat and Power plants well related to existing or proposed development.

- 14.20. The Examination in Public (EIP) of the Draft Regional Plan took place in the summer of 2007. At the EIP the Panel considered a ‘Merton’ style²⁹ approach for Policy 39 requiring a minimum a percentage of the energy requirements of new development to be met from renewable or low carbon energy sources. On this subject the Report of the Examination In Public concluded that was not adequate justification for such a requirement and that the guidance in national planning guidance (PPS 22) provides the opportunity for this type of policy to be included and encouraged at the local level.
- 14.21. The Secretary of State published Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Plan in July 2008. A notable inclusion within the supporting text to Policy 2 ‘Promoting Better Design’ is that “before development plan documents are in place, all new developments of more than 10 dwellings, or for other uses exceeding 1,000m² floorspace, should secure at least 10% of their energy from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, this is not feasible or viable”.³⁰
- 14.22. With regard to Policy 39 (Regional Priorities for Low Carbon Energy Generation). The policy wording in the Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes is as follows:

*“[The target for] renewable energy mix by 2020 can only be achieved by adopting improvements and challenging micro-generation targets as well as a mix of large scale grid connected renewable energy”.*³¹

*“The scale of the need to provide for more opportunities for renewable energy generation also indicates the pressing need for micro-generation schemes to be implemented as widely as possible. Local development documents should encourage such schemes taking into account the advice in PPS22, the Companion guide to PPS22 and the supplement to PPS 1”.*³²

*“The technologies that are appropriate in each Sub-area will vary according to local resources and constraints. Micro-regeneration can be applied anywhere, either grid linked or with battery back-up. The opportunities for non-electricity generating renewables should not be underestimated”.*³³

²⁹ <http://www.themertonrule.org/>

³⁰ Paragraph 1.4.2 page 16

³¹ Paragraph 3.3.74 page 100

³² Paragraph 3.3.77 page 101

³³ Paragraph 3.3.78 page 101

14.23. In terms of the potential within the Three Cities Sub-area the Policy the wording in the Secretary of States Proposed Changes states:

*“The scale of development in the sub-area offers opportunities for local distribution networks for electricity and heat using CHP. Micro-generation also has the biggest potential here. Large scale wind generation is limited, but there are opportunities for smaller scale at business park level, contributing to carbon neutral developments”.*³⁴

Evidence Gathering and Stakeholder Consultation

14.24. Other Leicestershire districts commissioned consultants to carry out a study into the renewable and low carbon energy potential for their respective areas. This study also produced recommendations for energy efficiency for new development.

14.25. Since 2006 the Borough Council has also published a Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Feasibility Study covering the whole borough, and which was published in October 2008. The study looked at the potential for different forms of large-scale renewable and low carbon energy generation across the borough. The energy generating technologies considered included, small-scale hydro, large scale wind, wet biomass (residue from livestock farming) and dry biomass (woodland and energy crops). The feasibility study also looked at the specific opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy generation for alternative locations which are being considered for significant development.

14.26. As part of a process of refining a policy approach to renewable and low carbon energy generation, two stakeholder workshops were held: one in July 2008 and the second in August 2008. Themes which emerged from these workshops included:

- The need for climate change to be an integrating theme across the whole Core Strategy;
- The role of micro/ on-site renewable energy generation;
- The need to understand the potential for renewable and low carbon energy generation across the Borough; and
- The need to exploit opportunities to improve energy efficiency of the existing housing stock.

³⁴ Paragraph 3.3.78 page 102 (Three Cities Sub Area)

- 14.27. There has been on-going discussion between Loughborough University and officers at the Borough Council to discuss how the development strategy of the University can have a positive relationship with the approach the Borough Council takes with regard to renewable and low carbon energy generation. The University has Combined Heat and Power within the existing campus, and has interests in using and developing this technology further.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 14.28. The Sustainability Appraisal considered policy options for large-scale renewable energy installations and policy options for standards of sustainable design and construction. The options were to have a positively worded policy for large scale renewable energy installations or not to have a positive policy approach. The policy options for standards in sustainable design and construction are to have minimum standards based upon the Building Regulations and Regional Plan policy, or to introduce increased requirements for sustainable design and construction which capitalise on opportunities around the Borough.

What is our Policy Approach?

Wider Environmental Resources

- 14.29. Paragraph 15 of Planning Policy Statement 23 (PPS 23) Planning and Pollution Control³⁵ (November 2004) provides guidance on development control decisions with respect to the emission of pollutants. Similarly, paragraphs 28 and 29 of PPS 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) provide guidance on development control decisions regarding the loss of the best and most versatile land. The criteria in the 2006 Preferred Options for these areas effectively duplicate national planning policy, and so the preferred approach is not to duplicate these criteria.
- 14.30. The policy approach is to set out flood prevention measures within the development strategies for north and south Charnwood. The policy approach for the location of development takes account of flooding and the provisions of PPS 25 (Development and Flood Risk). PPS 25 also provides specific requirements in the determination of planning applications, and the policy approach is not to duplicate them.

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<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps23/>

On-site Micro-renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation

- 14.31. With regard to the proposed approach to micro-renewable technology, it is considered that the Secretary of State's proposed changes to the East Midlands Regional Plan justify a 'Merton style' requirement for residential and non-residential development. Policy 2 sets out a 10% requirement for renewable/ low carbon technology for all development. Policy in the regional plan also indicates a pressing need for micro-generation schemes to be implemented. In terms of the Three Cities sub-region, the Regional Plan indicates that micro-generation also has the biggest potential.
- 14.32. In the case of residential development and the Code for Sustainable Homes, zero-carbon homes will be a requirement after 2016. In the stage leading up to 2016 homes will be required to meet level 4 of the Code. The nature of the Code for Sustainable Homes is that it does not prescribe an approach as different levels can be achieved by improving the energy efficiency of buildings or by introducing renewable energy, or by a combination of both. Evidence indicates that code Levels 3 and 4 can be achieved by improving the energy efficiency of dwellings, without the need for renewable energy³⁶.
- 14.33. The requirements for renewable/low carbon energy generation in Policy 2 of the Regional Plan go further than the requirements of the Code for Sustainable Homes, and this would remain the case up until 2016 when zero-carbon homes becomes mandatory. In terms of non-residential development there is clear support through national and regional policy for a requirement to reduce carbon emission through on-site renewable energy provision. Although the Regional Plan is part of the development plan, it is considered necessary to have a Core Strategy policy for renewable/ low carbon technology for non-residential and residential development to remove any ambiguity of partners about the relationship between different levels of planning policy, and to provide certainty to developers.
- 14.34. Regarding opportunities for renewable/ low carbon energy associated with potential areas for growth, a report by the Department for Communities and Local Government highlights the costs involved in meeting different levels within the Code for Sustainable Homes³⁷. The report modelled different scenarios based on the whether it is a market town or city infill development, the site's level of ecological value and level of flood risk. The report indicates high unit costs for houses/ flats for meeting code level 6 ranging from 24% increase in building costs for a best case scenario for flat to 52% for a worst case scenario for detached dwelling. Importantly the study assumes that no wind power can be used.

³⁶ Report by IT Power Energy Efficiency Recommendations for New Development, May 2008. A Report for Rutland County Council, Melton Borough Council, Northwest Leicestershire District Council, Blaby District Council, Oadby and Wigston District Council, Harborough District Council, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

³⁷ Cost Analysis of the Code for Sustainable Homes, Communities and Local Government, July 2008

- 14.35. The opportunities for renewable and local carbon energy generation associated with the proposed directions for growth indicate that there is justifiable local circumstance to require development to be zero carbon in the locations for sustainable urban extensions. Opportunities for sustainable urban extension to be exemplar zero-carbon development exist through the use of growth point funding.

Large-scale Renewable Energy Installations

- 14.36. With regard to opportunities for large-scale renewable energy across Charnwood, stakeholders at the workshop on 25th July indicated that there needs to be more emphasis on large-scale, grid connected renewable energy, and that there should be positively worded policies which support such schemes to come forward. The proposed approach is to include a positively worded policy on large-scale renewable energy.

Other Opportunities for Low Carbon Energy Generation

- 14.37. The proposed approach is also for the Council to continue to work with Loughborough University on the feasibility of a decentralised energy network that could be used beyond the boundaries of the university campus and science park.
- 14.38. The preferred approach is to for renewable and low carbon technology to be understood in the context of the energy hierarchy, which seeks to reduce carbon emissions from development by a sequence of steps. The first step should be to reduce the need for energy in a building's design, secondly to use energy more efficiently, and then finally through supplying energy from renewable or low carbon energy sources.

MANAGING TRAVEL DEMAND AND WIDENING TRANSPORT CHOICE

What is the Issue?

- 15.1 Local land use-transportation solutions will need to support the Borough's growth and prosperity but, in order to help cut carbon emissions and minimise transport's adverse environmental and social impacts, solutions will need to be designed to reduce the need for travel and distances travelled especially by car. Charnwood's central location between the three cities, the densely settled character of much of the Borough and reasonably well developed existing provision point to significant potential to develop high quality, sustainable transport solutions locally.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 15.2. The development strategy directed most development to locations on the northern edge of Leicester and west and south of Loughborough in comprehensively planned sustainable urban extensions. The preferred options were considered to have most scope to reduce car use and encourage use of public transport, cycling and walking. New road provision was limited to that necessary to serve development.
- 15.3. The general policy approach sought to promote transport solutions that would help reduce traffic growth and congestion in most sustainable ways whilst ensuring good accessibility to jobs and services and developing real transport choices that might persuade people to travel less by car.

What did you say?

- 15.4. Representations on the 2006 Preferred Option Report indicated that:
- the policy lacked targets
 - the policy dealt with travel and demand management in a measured way.
 - Whilst broadly supported the policy was considered aspirational, with uncertainty as to how some elements could be implemented. The approach seemed to plan for most people using cars in the absence of good alternatives notably public transport
 - Congestion needs to be addressed. Much better public transport, walking and cycling provision is required.
 - Whilst there was some support for new roads and car parking as part of solutions it was recognised developments based on road infrastructure could undermine sustainability.

What has happened since the 2006 Preferred Option Report?

a) General transport policies

- 15.5. The Government has further developed national guidance. The 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System' framework document³⁸ (October 2007) responded to the Eddington Transport Study³⁹ and Stern Review of the Economics of Climate Change⁴⁰. The framework aims to meet peoples' mobility needs in a sustainable manner supporting economic growth and reducing carbon emissions. It advocates a multi-faceted approach including technological innovation, promotion of behavioural change and smart investment decisions.
- 15.6. Technical guidance on Transport Assessments (March 2007)⁴¹ established principles to ensure transport solutions are sustainable and environmentally sound. In spring 2008 best practice transport guidance was published for Growth Points and Eco-Towns promoting measures for real changes in the way people travel. The aim is that new development areas should be designed to ensure cycling, walking and public transport become modes of choice more convenient than the car using necessary management and regulatory measures. The new 'Manual for Streets'⁴² recognises the need to transform the quality of residential streets giving prime consideration to pedestrian and cyclists. Streets need no longer be designed primarily to accommodate traffic movements.
- 15.7. In the Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Plan published in summer 2008 the Secretary of State confirmed an urban concentration development strategy. She accepted the Panel's conclusion the Regional Transport Strategy was unsound but that it should stand on an interim basis to allow publication of the Regional Plan. Reappraisal will be undertaken as part of the next Regional Spatial Strategy review. For the interim she updated and strengthened the national policy context, in particular to make clear traffic growth should be managed to achieve a reduction in the rate of increase, rather than aiming for zero growth.

³⁸ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/transportstrategy/pdfsustaintranssystem.pdf>

³⁹ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/transportstrategy/eddingtonstudy/>

⁴⁰ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stern_review_climate_change.htm

⁴¹ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/transportassessments/guidanceonta>

⁴² [Department for Transport - Manual for Streets](#)

b) Transport implications of growth options

- 15.8. During 2006/07 Leicestershire County Council undertook highway and transport assessments for countywide growth options⁴³. The work supported County's case at the draft Regional Plan Examination in Public (summer 2007) seeking inclusion of specific Strategic Urban Extension proposals. For Loughborough, of the options tested using the Loughborough Traffic Model, the preferred option was one Strategic Urban Extension of 8,000 dwellings and 25ha of employment land east of Loughborough. It was argued that this could help fund an eastern relief road and related package of measures. Despite substantial costs and technical difficulties the Eastern Relief Road was seen as the best highway solution to resolve general traffic problems in the town.
- 15.9. Adjoining Leicester, of the options tested using the multi modal Central Leicestershire Transport Model, an Strategic Urban Extension of 4,875 dwellings plus 25ha of employment in the vicinity of Thurmaston/Hamilton was preferred. This could fund a package of measures focussed on a new road corridor into north east Leicester bypassing Syston and Barkby.
- 15.10. The draft Regional Plan Panel Report (November 2007) did not support the County Council's case⁴⁴. Whilst fully accepting concentrated developments should reduce traffic levels they found transport issues should not drive land use allocations. Rather developments should be assessed in terms of overall sustainability including transport. They found transport issues were given undue weight by the County Council in identifying development locations at Loughborough.
- 15.11. In the light of the Panel's findings, the evolution of government guidance and best practice the Borough Council commissioned further work from MVA Consultancy to provide broad assessments of the transport implications of all potential growth options in Charnwood on a consistent basis.
- 15.12. MVA's Delivering Strategies: Transport Assessments for the Charnwood 2026 LDF Report⁴⁵ was received in September 2008. MVA aimed to establish broad transport implications by developing a strategic transport model for the whole Borough. This enabled assessments of growth options on an equal and consistent basis. The model took account of congestion levels along all routes and their capacity to accommodate traffic; and gave priority to behavioural change measures, public transport, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure over highway solutions.

⁴³[http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00001530/AI00014372/\\$GRegionalPlantransportassessmentAppendixI.doc.pdf](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00001530/AI00014372/$GRegionalPlantransportassessmentAppendixI.doc.pdf) (Report to County Council Cabinet 21st November 2006, item 317) and [East Midlands Regional Plan \(RSS8\) Review](#) evidence

⁴⁴ Paras 12.7, 12.12, 12.16, 14.39 and 14.40

⁴⁵ <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/transportassessment>

- 15.13. The Report focuses on the growth options for North Charnwood, as the main impacts of options in the south of the Borough are on Leicester requiring separate assessment. For North Charnwood, options closest to the existing urban areas (ie Loughborough/Shepshed) tend to produce less congestion than options further away due to more potential for interaction with existing adjacent facilities and the shorter travel distances to reach them; better existing bus, cycle and pedestrian facilities and more traffic routing options to and from a location.
- 15.14. Overall congestion impacts were lowest west of Shepshed and a combined option for south and south west of Loughborough. West of Loughborough option comes next. All these options were found to have a lower congestion impact than any eastern option. The findings suggest more development may be accommodated for the same level of congestion to the west of the town than to the east.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 15.15. Any transport policy option must include measures to help reduce car use if national climate change targets are to be met. Previous consultation exercises show some recognition of the need to do more to reduce current high levels of car use.
- 15.16. A reasonable option would be to continue to focus on changing travel choices primarily by persuasion, the promotion of alternatives and upgrading the quality of provision. The evidence to date locally is that such approaches have had limited success and that traffic levels continue to grow.
- 15.17. A more rigorous application of measures to manage car use such as travel plans, restrictions on parking in new developments, alongside high quality provision of non-car modes is another option. It is evident from the recent period of high oil prices that levels of car use fell significantly contrary to the established trend of continuing traffic growth.
- 15.18. The option of giving greater priority to new roads to build our way out of congestion is not considered to be a reasonable option. It would be unsustainable as it would most likely induce even more car use, higher levels of congestion and longer journeys.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 15.19. The guidance included in the 2006 Core Strategy preferred option report continues to be relevant and no significant changes are required. A package of measures maximising the potential of non car modes and applying more effective demand management before considering more highway capacity should help engender real behavioural changes locally. This will help deal with local transport problems in a sustainable manner that minimises carbon

impact. It is anticipated that such an approach would be applied iteratively to address local circumstances in innovative ways with no assumptions being made that a certain approach is needed from the outset.

- 15.20. The potential role for stronger constraints on car use should be kept under review although they are unlikely to be feasible locally until alternatives to car use have been significantly improved.
- 15.21. Given longstanding constraints on funding and implementing major transport schemes it would be helpful to indicate that transport schemes should only be considered favourably where they also demonstrate good value for money and deliverability.

NATIONAL FOREST

What is the Issue?

- 16.1 The National Forest is a key environmental asset, which is expanding over time and which has wider environmental, social and economic benefits to the Borough of Charnwood and the wider sub-region.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 16.2. The 2006 Preferred Option Report included a separate policy approach to the National Forest which stated that development in the National Forest would not be permitted unless appropriate provision is made for creation of a woodland setting reflecting the National Forest context. The policy approach that was set out was to resist leisure and tourism related development within the National Forest in Charnwood.

What did you say?

- 16.3. Comments received on the 2006 Core Strategy Preferred Options Report indicated that there are a number of policy areas that overlap, and it is confusing how policies on the countryside, Charnwood Forest and the National Forest relate to one another. Comments also indicated that the policy should give explicit support to the National Forest Strategy, and indicate the uses that are acceptable within it. Other comments were that it should be made clear why there is resistance to tourism development, and that the policy lacks targets.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

- 16.4. The Draft Regional Plan (September 2006) referred to the National Forest in a number of policy areas.
- 16.5. The National Forest was featured within the supporting text to Policy 24 Regional Priorities for Tourism as a key attraction within the East Midlands. Regional Policy 29 Regional Priorities for Managing and Increasing Woodland Cover indicates that through opportunities including the National Forest woodland should be increased as part of new development and by using other mechanisms. Three Cities SRS Policy 6 Green Infrastructure & The National Forest confirms the role that National Forest has as part of the Green Infrastructure of the sub-region. The policy indicates that Local Authorities and implementing agencies will coordinate the provision of enhanced and new green infrastructure.
- 16.6. There was little change in the policy approach to the National Forest in the Report of the Panel into the Regional Plan (November 2007) and in the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes in July 2008.

- 16.7. Between June and September 2008 the National Forest Company consulted its partners and all those who wish to comment on the next five years for The National Forest up to 2014. The National Forest Company has also held discussions with key stakeholders about how the National Forest can be developed in a cohesive and integrated manner, particularly in relation to those areas which have been designated as National Growth Points and which will see substantial development in coming years.
- 16.8. In July and August 2008, Charnwood Borough Council held two stakeholder workshops on the subject of Green Infrastructure. There was some debate about the assets which made up the strategic green infrastructure network in Charnwood. In particular it was considered whether the strategic green infrastructure network should be restricted to features which were purely natural, physical landscape features, or those, such as the National Forest, which have arisen through government intervention.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 16.9. The Sustainability Appraisal considered two broad policy approaches to this policy area. The first option is to have separate policy approach to National Forest and the second approach is to integrate the approach to National Forest within an overall approach to Green Infrastructure.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 16.10. The proposed approach is to include the National Forest within an overall approach to green infrastructure. The proposed approach is to promote activities linked to the woodland economy in the National Forest and which would be complementary to other parts of the Green Infrastructure network such as the Charnwood Forest Regional Park. Suggestions for detailed amendments to the wording of the policy will be addressed in the Submission Draft of the Core Strategy.

REGENERATION

What's the Issue?

- 17.1 Whilst Charnwood is a relatively affluent borough on the whole there are pockets of severe deprivation and in certain wards there are super output areas that are within the top 20% most deprived in England. In order to improve the quality of life for all, there is a need for concerted and targeted action to help address deprivation and to overcome disadvantage.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 17.2. Regeneration was seen as part of the strategy for social inclusion, addressing deprivation that exists in pockets in places around the borough. It identified the main issues to be addressed including:
- Lack of community facilities particularly for young people
 - Lack of open space and recreational facilities
 - Limited access to local job opportunities
 - Areas of vacancy and dereliction
 - Low skills levels and educational attainment
 - Poor quality housing
- 17.3. The 2006 Preferred Option report focused measures to achieve sustainable regeneration in Loughborough and Shepshed due to their high and concentrated levels of deprivation at that time. Priority was also afforded to areas in Anstey, Syston, Thurmaston and Mountsorrel.

What did you say?

- 17.4. This policy was generally supported. The main issues raised were:
- Library services can contribute to this agenda.
 - Safeguard existing employment areas.
 - Take account of SureStart objectives.
 - Have regard to the Community Strategy.
 - Consider an Area Action Plan for Hastings ward to deliver quality of the environment, employment, parks, meeting places and community infrastructure through partnership working.
 - Indicate what action will be achieved, where it will be concentrated or what effect it will have on affected communities (Government Office for the East Midlands).
 - Place greater emphasis on regenerating Shepshed.

What has happened since the Preferred Options in 2006?

Sustainable Community Strategy

17.5. Many of the issues around social inclusion remain and have been highlighted in the review of the Sustainable Community Strategy as key issues to be addressed. Four Priority Neighbourhoods have been declared as part of the Local Area Agreement and which will benefit from targeted multi-agency action. These are:

- East Loughborough
- West Loughborough
- Mountsorrel
- South Charnwood (Thurmaston & Syston)

17.6. The specific needs previously identified in Anstey are no longer considered to be a priority action. Shepshed and Sileby are identified in the Economic Development Strategy as having particular needs around their town centres and these will be prioritised during the plan period.

The draft Regional Plan

17.7. The draft Regional Plan is proposing a significant increase in the scale of growth that must be accommodated in the borough. Planning this new development in a positive way that supports efforts to address social exclusion and deprivation will remain an important priority.

17.8. The draft Regional plan sets out clear objectives that seek to specifically reduce social exclusion through the regeneration of disadvantaged areas, to reduce inequalities in the location and distribution of employment housing, health and community facilities and services and to respond positively to the diverse needs of communities. It also seeks to protect and enhance the quality of the environmental quality of the urban and rural settlements and improve the economic prosperity, employment opportunities and regional competitiveness. Emphasis is also given to reducing the causes of climate change and their impacts.

17.9. The draft Regional Plan goes on to say that regeneration activity should be focused on areas of greatest priority need including sub regional centres that exhibit very high and concentrated levels of deprivation. Employment provision is expected to assist in addressing regeneration in the sub regional centre. It calls for concerted action across the whole spectrum of local governance and for planning documents to translate this into the action required locally.

- 17.10. The government's growth agenda presents significant challenges to the Borough, not least in terms of planning substantial new communities and ensuring they have an appropriate level of services and facilities and they do not place an undue burden on existing social infrastructure. The Draft Regional Plan has proposed a significant increase in the level of housing required in Charnwood since 2006 to reflect the Borough's location within the Three Cities Growth Area. Funding is available from the New Growth Point Agreement to assist the Council in delivering the scale of development required up to 2026.

Climate Change

- 17.11. The recognition amongst experts that climate change is happening presents a significant challenge in seeking to reduce the impact of new development on the climate through more energy efficient buildings and greater use of renewable energy sources. Given the growth agenda and the work of the university in the field of environmental sciences, the Borough is seen as being particularly well-placed to take a lead in bringing forward zero carbon development. This presents opportunities to extend the borough's lead through the provision of exemplar demonstrator development projects.

Town Centre Masterplan

- 17.12. Recognising that Loughborough is at a key point in its growth and development, and a need to maintain the vitality and viability of town centre in the face of increasing competition from the three cities of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham, the Council published a masterplan for Loughborough town centre in August 2007. This masterplan considered the quality of the town centre environment, its accessibility and opportunities and sets out a bold vision for improvement and development.

Employment land studies

- 17.13. Recent studies into the supply and demand of employment land indicate that the type of jobs needed in the borough is changing. There is a decline in traditional industrial and manufacturing sectors and an increase in office based jobs (such as in education, health care, services and administration), high tech research and development and cleaner industrial and small scale warehousing. Offices require much less land than is needed for industrial based jobs. However, not all of our office space is in the right locations in the Borough or is freely available for open market uses. There is also a demand in the south of the Borough arising from firms in Leicester that will need to be met. Providing for jobs in the future is fundamental to the Council's strategy for well-being, economic prosperity and growth.

17.14. The main areas of employment in Loughborough are currently concentrated on the northern and eastern edge of the town in traditional industrial estates. The restructuring of the employment base presents opportunities for renewal of some of these sites to ensure that they can continue to provide opportunities for future employment needs. On the Eastern edge of Loughborough, former rail sidings provide an opportunity for an eastern gateway to the town centre. The Great Central Railway, the Grand Union Canal and land at Windmill Road present further opportunities. The Council considers that these opportunities on the eastern edge of Loughborough should be considered together as part of a comprehensive strategy for regeneration.

Other regeneration studies

17.15. Elsewhere in the borough, it is recognised that there are particular structural and physical issues in Shepshed and Thurmaston which limit their potential economic and social prosperity. At Shepshed a number of studies undertaken in the past have recognised issues with the way the town functions and its public realm. Thurmaston has difficult issues with connectivity within the village, due to the physical barrier presented by the A607 and the Midland Mainline railway, and of a poor physical environment as a result of unsympathetic or poor quality development over the years. It is also identified as a Priority Neighbourhood with particular issues of deprivation. Recognising these problems, the Parish Council led a partnership in 2006 to prepare a masterplan for environmental enhancement in Thurmaston. The Council has committed resources to a number of schemes identified by this study. The issues in Mountsorrel and Sileby are as important as any other of the priority areas but can be addressed through multi-agency action and allocations of land in the Site Allocations development plan document.

Institutional changes

17.16. Changes to the way government administers economic development proposed in the Sub-National Review are expected to be implemented in the next year. This is likely to lead to the creation of an Economic Development Company for Leicester and Leicestershire, which will superseded a number of existing bodies and coordinate regeneration at a sub regional level.

What are the reasonable options?

17.17. There are no reasonable options

What is our Policy Approach?

- 17.18. The Council's preferred approach will be to extend its regeneration reach in the Core Strategy from that set out in the 2006 Preferred Options Report to emphasise the role new development can play in addressing deprivation and to recognising the benefit that new development brings as part of a more comprehensive and balanced regeneration strategy.
- 17.19. The Council will therefore continue to work with partners, other agencies and the local community to achieve sustainable regeneration in the Priority Neighbourhoods of East Loughborough, West Loughborough, Mountsorrel, South Charnwood (Thurmaston, Syston). It will also extend this effort to include Shepshed and Sileby as settlements identified as having particular issues identified in the Council's Economic Development Strategy.
- 17.20. To complement this, the Council will identify a range of public realm, environmental and economic priorities that will help to deliver the vision and strategic objectives of the Core Strategy.
- 17.21. General priorities include:
- Support for the role and function of the Borough's district and local centres: to re-instil confidence in the larger towns and villages of Charnwood that serve as service centres by a variety of public realm improvements.
 - Retention and creation of small employment centres within Service Centres to improve their sustainability and to replace local industrial employment that has been lost;
 - To restructure existing employment space to facilitate the movement from traditional employment sectors to new high tech and knowledge based sectors and industrial floorspace to the provision of office space;
 - To provide premises for, and support to, business start-ups and micro-businesses (including those in the creative sector) across the Borough; to ensure that Charnwood can provide a spectrum of business property sizes of good quality and connectivity to accommodate growing businesses;
 - To support existing businesses, and to ensure that Charnwood is seen as a business-friendly environment that encourages inward investment;
 - to work with partners to improve the image of Charnwood and to positively market its economic potential;
 - to develop Charnwood as an exemplar centre for low carbon living, working and travelling;
 - To exploit the potential of Loughborough for the 2012 Olympics and use this as a catalyst to drive local regeneration and environmental improvement;

- To address the skills gap at both the lower and higher ends of the skills spectrum to meet changing requirements created by both business needs and climate change / sustainability drivers;
- To promote and link the Borough's tourism assets to provide a tourism destination / offer; to connect with and exploit regional links such as the National Forest, Greater Great Central Railway, Grand Union Canal;
- To exploit Charnwood's waterfront (rivers, canal, Watermead Country Park) and open spaces (Charnwood Forest and possible linear park) better as an amenity for both residents and visitors and to provide better access for local residents;
- Target New Growth Point funding to assimilate growth within host communities to help address issues of social exclusion and improve community cohesion;

17.22. Priorities in North Charnwood include:

- To maintain the vitality and viability of Loughborough town centre in the face of increasing competition from the three cities of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham;
- To support the early delivery of the Town Centre Masterplan and completion of the Inner Relief Road;
- To encourage the regeneration of East Loughborough by building upon both private and public sector mixed use investment. The Loughborough Eastern Gateway, Windmill Road and Greater Great Central Railway schemes will be linked by an overarching vision and planning framework agreed with local people to drive this high priority regeneration initiative;
- To cement the reputation of Loughborough as a centre for advanced and clean environmental technology: building upon the reputation of the University; the major employers; and Energy Technology Institute;
- To support the University in its role as an international leader in sport, bioscience and environmental sciences; the successful implementation of the Science Park is seen as key to the town's future;
- To work with partners and other agencies to address particular issues of deprivation in the west and east of Loughborough and Mountsorrel Priority Neighbourhoods
- To work with partners and the local community to prepare a masterplan for the West Loughborough sustainable urban extension
- To consider the preparation of an Area Action Plan for Shepshed and East Loughborough

Priorities in South Charnwood include:

- To exploit the opportunity created by major regeneration in Leicester City and to create new employment and prosperity in the south of Charnwood;
- To consider opportunities to improve the vitality and viability of Syston District Centre;
- To work with partners and the local community to prepare a masterplan for the East of Thurmaston/north of Hamilton sustainable urban extension; and
- To consider the preparation of an Area Action Plan for Thurmaston

SETTLEMENT IDENTITY

What is the Issue?

- 18.1 Whilst much of Leicestershire is rural in character Charnwood has a mixture of urban and rural influences with significant parts of the Borough more densely developed alongside the valleys of the rivers Soar and Wreake. As a number of settlements have expanded closer to their neighbours safeguarding settlement identity has become a significant issue for local communities.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issue?

- 18.2. The preferred approach recognised the value of green wedge and local separation policies to help mould and direct future urban growth. It was recognised that these policies should not be used to frustrate growth or redirect growth to less sustainable locations. As part of an urban concentration development strategy green wedges would be carefully planned as part of sustainable urban extensions. This would safeguard important areas of open land and at the same time provide for public access and recreation and maintaining links with nearby communities.

What did you say?

- 18.3. A number of representations indicated that Green Wedges and Areas of Local Separation should be retained to maintain the separate identity of settlements. Some respondents felt that clear criteria were needed to review Green Wedges and that new development should not necessarily act as a trigger to create a Green Wedge. Government Office for the East Midlands and the House Builders Federation commented that Green Wedges around Loughborough were questionable as they did not extend into the town directing growth, preserve wildlife corridors or maintain separate identity. As a result they appeared to act as unofficial green belt.
- 18.4. Government Office for the East Midlands also considered that Areas of Local Separation should be deleted as the policy duplicated Green Wedge and countryside policy. There were comments that the policy should refer to the protection and enhancement of natural and historic assets. Government Office for the East Midlands were concerned that the Policy lacked a target.

What has happened since the 2006 Preferred Options?

- 18.5. Green Wedges are not a statutory designation in the same way as Green Belts. The draft Regional Plan Examination in Public Panel Report (November 2007) found green wedges to have a lesser policy status than green belt and that they should not be regarded as unduly restrictive. They

felt they should be subject to review in order to accommodate new development⁴⁶. They considered green wedges to be a local policy tool helpful in defining the structure of urban areas for possible use in Core Strategies in the context of meeting development needs and green infrastructure. The Panel recommended⁴⁷ deletion of a regional green wedge policy.

- 18.6. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Plan (July 2008) accepted the Panel's recommendation. Green Wedges are however mentioned in the supporting text to policy on Green Belt Areas (Policy Three Cities SRS 2). The Secretary of State indicated that Green Wedges serve useful strategic planning functions in preventing the merging of settlements, guiding development form, and providing a 'green lung' into urban areas, and act as a recreational resource. A review of existing Green Wedges or the creation of new ones in association with new development will be carried out through the local development framework process.
- 18.7. In March 2008, the Secretary of State issued a Direction identifying policies of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Joint Structure Plan to be saved pending completion of the Regional Spatial Strategy review. Policies relating to green wedges were not saved.
- 18.8. The proposed approach to Green Wedges in the Core Strategy further consultation document⁴⁸ reflects the approach in the draft Regional Plan and the original intention behind the Structure Plan, which seeks to promote Green Wedges not just as a negative policy tool preventing development, but as a positive policy which contribute towards the quality of life of people living in and around urban areas.
- 18.9. Importantly the proposed approach in the Core Strategy recognises the positive role that Green Wedges can perform as part of a wider Green Infrastructure network. By Green Wedges being included as part of a broader approach to Green Infrastructure allows greater scope for their positive management, so that their potential as a wildlife and recreational resource is maximised.
- 18.10. The contribution separation makes to settlement identity has been an issue in recent local planning inquiries. As an example, in 2007 Inspector's reported on separation issues relating to the Northstowe new settlement in Cambridgeshire. They concluded that retention of swathes of countryside between existing settlements and new development was not necessary to maintain settlement character; and that an approach based on minimum or standard distances of separation was too inflexible. Rather, consideration should be given to the character and form of the settlements affected

⁴⁶ See para 14.48

⁴⁷ Recommendation R14.13

⁴⁸ at paragraph 4.69

including degrees of visual self-containment, townscape, social characteristics etc; as well as the treatment of areas between settlements. Such an approach might achieve better integration and inclusion between communities.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 18.11. In the light of the Secretary of State's proposed Modifications to the draft Regional Plan and the 2008 Structure Plan Direction, the preferred approach set out in the next section appears to be the only reasonable option.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 18.12. The preferred approach to Green Wedges reflects the draft Regional Plan and the original intention behind the Structure Plan - seeking to promote Green Wedges not just as a negative policy tool preventing development, but as a positive policy which contribute towards the quality of life of people living in and around urban areas. Green wedges are defined as part of the Development Strategy in order to ensure structurally important areas of open land in and around urban areas are protected as the urban areas of Leicester and Loughborough expand. Detailed definitions in subsequent development plan documents will establish the extent to which physical separation contributes to the separate identities of adjoining communities
- 18.13. Importantly the proposed approach recognises the positive role that Green Wedges can perform as part of a wider Green Infrastructure network. Including Green Wedges as part of a broader approach to Green Infrastructure allows greater scope for their positive management, so that their potential as wildlife and recreational resource is maximised.
- 18.14. The current intention is that there should not be a policy to safeguard areas of local separation. It is considered that land in these locations could be adequately safeguarded by policies dealing with the protection of the countryside.

STUDENT HOUSING PROVISION IN LOUGHBOROUGH

What is the Issue?

- 19.1 In Loughborough, concentrations of student households have resulted in unbalanced communities in parts of the town. Some wards close to the University are made up of more than 20% student households.
- 19.2. Whilst acknowledging that there are a great many considerate students and landlords within the community, there are problems that are impinging upon the 'host community' indicative of the social stress and imbalance occasioned by the concentration of a substantial number of essentially transient residents within relatively small neighbourhoods.
- 19.3. Issues that result include the impact on public facilities such as schools arising from low rates of children in the area, property price increases limiting access to affordable homes for first time buyers, out of term time housing vacancies, poor housing management and maintenance providing student population with poor quality accommodation, high levels of car ownership and low level anti-social behaviour.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

- 19.4. The approach to student housing provision in Loughborough taken in 2006 was to state that Loughborough University Campus/ Science Park will be the primary location for additional student accommodation. The approach indicated that supplementary accommodation may be provided within the town centre or other locations where the proportion of student households is low. The policy also included criteria setting out occupancy conditions, appropriate management controls for such issues as car parking and referring to the amenities of local residents.
- 19.5. In the 2006 Preferred Options report, there was a link between the policy on student accommodation in Loughborough and the policy referring to Loughborough University and Loughborough College. This latter policy sought to create a link between further academic development at the University and the University providing further purpose built student accommodation on campus

What did you say?

- 19.6. Responses to the 2006 Preferred Options Consultation indicated that there was an apparent contradiction between the policy wording and the recently published Supplementary Planning Document on Student Housing Provision. It was considered inappropriate to indicate that the University campus and

new science park should be the primary location for new student purpose built accommodation. In particular it was felt that the term 'primary location' was not clear and needed to be defined/quantified. It was also considered that the wording of the policy could give rise to unacceptable risk to contractors and some points were raised that the policy wording may not lead to sustainable forms of transport.

- 19.7. It was also suggested that affordable housing should be given priority in the town centre with limits on student housing provision. It was considered that it should be clarified whether purpose built student accommodation will be directed to the University campus, Loughborough sites or both. Other responses suggested that consideration should be given to working in partnership with Loughborough University and others to address issues of anti-social behaviour. Consideration was also requested to be given to ensure that there is additional provision for healthcare for extra student numbers.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

- 19.8. There have been on-going discussions between The Council, the University and other stakeholders to refine the policy approach for the Core Strategy.
- 19.9. The University has continued to expand since the 2006 consultation. Planning permission has been granted on car park seven on the north side of the campus for the creation of 1,300 brand new study bedrooms in three new halls of residence for undergraduates and an additional block with 300 bedrooms for post-graduates. Two halls will be ready for their first students in October 2008, with the third taking students in January 2009 and the fourth in October 2009.
- 19.10. The Council published a 'Student Housing Provision in Loughborough' Supplementary Planning Document in December 2005⁴⁹ to enable the local authority to control the scale and distribution of student housing. The document has been recognised as good practice by the Department of Communities and Local Government in its paper, Evidence Gathering – Housing in Multiple Occupation and Possible Planning Responses⁵⁰ (September 2008).
- 19.11. Loughborough University published and implemented the Loughborough Off-Campus Community Service Delivery Strategy in September 2007 following recognition that there needed to be a common and co-ordinated response to deal with local service issues arising from high numbers of student residents. The strategy covers mandatory licensing and regulation of

⁴⁹ <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/studenthousingprovision>

⁵⁰ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/evidencegatheringresearch>

privately rented accommodation and on street parking control and enforcement.

- 19.12. The County Council are currently working with the University, local members and residents to develop a West Loughborough Parking Study. The intention is start introducing a managed parking strategy from 2009 to address on-street parking problems in the area.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 19.13. The Sustainable Appraisal examined three options for student housing provision and these are set out below:
- 19.14. Option 1- Under this option the university would be the primary location for new purpose built student accommodation. One means that this could be achieved would be to require the university to develop student accommodation in proportion to the development of academic and ancillary floorspace.
- 19.15. Option 2 - Under this option the university is not the primary location for new purpose built student accommodation. This would mean that a greater proportion of student accommodation would be provided outside the campus (both purpose built and unmanaged accommodation). There would be no specific locational requirement for new purpose built student accommodation.
- 19.16. Option 3 - Under this option the university is not the primary location for new purpose built student accommodation. This would mean that a greater proportion of student accommodation would be provided outside the campus (both purpose built and unmanaged accommodation). Any new purpose built student accommodation not provided by the University would be focussed on the town centre where it is part of a mixed use scheme, which contributes to the regeneration of the town centre.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 19.17. The preferred approach is to set out Loughborough University Campus and the town centre as the only appropriate location for new purpose built student accommodation. The Council would therefore work with the University and other partners to maximise new purpose built student accommodation on the campus. Within the town, purpose built student accommodation will be acceptable where it contributes to the regeneration of the town centre and where it is part of a mixed use development.

- 19.18. This approach seeks to promote balanced communities whilst allowing for the development of Loughborough University and Loughborough College. The approach will be dealt with in the Core Strategy Policy on Student Housing Provision in Loughborough. The policy will include criteria which enables the Council to negotiate improvements for the resolution of traffic and car parking problems and for measures to improve walking and cycling.
- 19.19. The proposed approach is to remove the link between further academic floor space and student accommodation. Instead, the preferred approach is to set out Loughborough University Campus and the town centre as the only appropriate location for new purpose built student accommodation.

SHOPPING & LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE

What is the Issue?

20.1 Loughborough is the main shopping and cultural destination within the Borough and continues to be relatively buoyant. Loughborough's catchment and market share is affected by the sustained growth of competing larger centres of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. All these centres have seen significant increases in quality retail floorspace in recent years. Without improvements to Loughborough town centre trade diversion to these larger centres could increase with a resulting detrimental impact on the town centre. Local shopping and other facilities are provided in the larger settlements. Some like Shepshed and Sileby have suffered a decline in recent years in part associated with the loss of local employment. Other centres like Thurmaston have expanded. The key issue is how the role these centres play in providing for local shopping, cultural and leisure needs can be supported. In the smaller rural communities of the Forest and Wolds there has been a loss of local services and facilities increasing the difficulties of access to services and facilities for these communities.

How did the 2006 Preferred Option Report respond to the issues?

20.2. The approach in the 2006 Preferred Options Report stated that Loughborough Town Centre would continue to be the main focus for retailing, leisure, cultural and business activities in the Borough.

20.3. The policy identified each District Centre and stated that they would provide for the retail, leisure and cultural opportunities to serve their immediate communities. The approach included:

- permitting development of new retail proposals of a scale appropriate to the centre;
- applying a sequential approach to development for development outside defined centres;
- controlling non-retail uses in Town and District Centres; using the Council's Compulsory purchase powers to bring forward sites where necessary;
- effective town centre management;
- integrating planning and licensing controls;
- working with the police and Chambers of Trade to ensure a safe environment;
- improving access by a variety of transport modes; and
- supporting the provision of short-stay car parking in Loughborough Town Centre District Centres and Local Centres where is necessary to safeguard their vitality and viability.

What did you say?

20.4. Representation on Preferred Options in 2006 indicated that:

- The policy does not define Local Centres
- Local community services should be in centres close to communities not just in town centres
- The policy should refer to role of Loughborough town centre for office development and criteria to direct such development there
- The policy should take account of the significance of the Library service to centres
- There were questions of whether the retail needs of the Borough are clearly understood – no locations are identified for compulsory purchase and no indication of the scale of need for food and non-food retail
- Planning controls should not duplicate the role of the Licensing Act
- There may be scope for crime reduction proposals and targets in policies
- Loughborough needs a new bus station to allow easy interchange between services
- Must welcome the car and make car parking convenient
- The policy lacks targets
- There is a need to consider the potential of Loughborough for tourism, particularly, refer to Great Central Railway and National Forest
- Comments also stated the need to maximise general housing in Loughborough town centre to increase the sense of security at night
- The policy should rebalance the needs of students and local residents and avoid excessive student housing in Loughborough town centre.

What has happened since Preferred Options in 2006?

20.5. Since the publication of the Core Strategy Preferred Options Report in 2006 there has been consultation on potential changes to the Planning Policy Statement 6, and changes to regional planning policy context with the draft Regional Plan. Charnwood Borough Council has published Supplementary Planning Documents for town centre opportunity sites and has undertaken studies which inform the approach taken for town centres. Below is a summary of the main changes in the context for the town centre policy since February 2006.

National Planning Policy

20.6. In May 2007 the government consulted on potential changes to national planning policy. The White Paper, Planning for a Sustainable Future, suggests that there will be a review of Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) Planning for

Town Centres⁵¹ (March 2005) so as to “replace the need and impact tests with a new test which will have a strong focus on our town centre first policy, and which promotes competition and improves consumer choice avoiding the unintended effects of the current need test”. In addition to consultation on the White Paper, The Competition Commission published the findings of its investigation of the UK grocery market in April 2008 which has a bearing on the revisions to PPS6.

- 20.7. The review of PPS 6 was published in July 2008 for consultation. The revisions to PPS 6 are at a very early and so no weight can be attached to it in the context of this policy approach. A summary of the broad changes is however provided below.
- 20.8. The objective is to refine the policy approach to planning for town centres in PPS 6, rather than make significant policy changes. It is proposed to strengthen the Government’s policy on positive planning for town centres. There is no proposed change to the requirement for planning authorities to assess the need for new town centre development or to take account of scale, impact and accessibility considerations or the sequential approach in selecting sites for development in development plans.
- 20.9. The main changes relate to how some planning applications should be considered and tested. The proposals remove the requirement for an applicant to demonstrate ‘need’ for a proposal which is an edge of centre or out of centre location and which is not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan strategy. The policy replaces the existing impact assessment with a new impact assessment framework which applicants for proposals outside town centres need to undertake in certain circumstances.

Emerging Regional Plan

- 20.10. The Draft Regional Plan (published December 2006) repeats the conclusion in the approved regional spatial Strategy that there is ‘no clear retail hierarchy in the East Midlands which could be used as a basis for regional policy’. For the Three Cities sub-area, it is recommended that Nottingham, Derby and Leicester should be encouraged to develop their roles, but that there is also ‘potential for complementary growth in the surrounding Sub-Regional Centres to retain a higher proportion of local income and reduce pressure on strategic transport infrastructure’.

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<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps6/>

- 20.11. The report of the examination in public of the draft regional plan, and the Secretary of State's proposed changes supports the conclusion that there is no clear retail hierarchy in the East Midlands which could be used for the basis of regional policy. The Secretary of State's proposed changes to the draft Regional Plan states:

"In the absence of a clear hierarchy, the distribution of additional retail floorspace to town centres in the region should be in line with Policy 3 [Concentrating Development in Urban Areas]. The focus for major growth is to be on maintaining the role of the existing principal urban areas which function as the main retail and service centres and are already well served by transport and other infrastructure. There are also opportunities for some sub-regional centres and rural market towns to consolidate and develop their roles in their sub-areas. Below this level, some local centres and rural towns will also need through positive action to ensure they continue to serve the needs of local communities".⁵²

- 20.12. For the Three Cities Sub-area the Secretary of State's proposed changes supports the approach of the Draft Regional Plan for sub-regional centres and allows for "complementary growth to retain a higher proportion of local income and reduce pressure on strategic transport infrastructure".

Evidence and Local Planning Policy

- 20.13. In 2006 BMG research undertook customer satisfaction surveys across 17 town and village centres across Leicestershire, including four in Charnwood – Loughborough, Shepshed, Syston and Thurmaston. A summary of findings is set out below:

- 20.14. For Loughborough the BMG research found that respondent had a generally positive view of the town centre environment and its facilities, with well-maintained shop fronts and parks, and sufficient seating town centre; however areas stated as in need of improvement included the need for a greater range of and more specialist shops, as well as improving the cleanliness and tidiness of the town centre.

- For Shepshed the BMG research found that that area in need of improvement included the need for a greater range of a more specialist shops, as well as more leisure facilities.
- For Syston the BMG research found that areas in need of improvement included the need for a greater range of a more specialist shops, as well as the cleanliness and tidiness of the town centre.

⁵² Paragraph 3.2.14 page 3.2.14

- For Thurmaston the BMG research found that areas in need of improvement included the need for a greater range of shops and more public facilities such as seating and improved parking provision.
- 20.15. In March 2007, The Borough Council adopted Former General Hospital and Aumberry Gap Development Briefs as Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 20.16. In August 2007, The Borough Council published the Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan⁵³. The Masterplan presents an overall vision that “Loughborough Town Centre will provide a successful, attractive and vibrant Town Centre and improve its relative position in the hierarchy of shopping centres year on year”. To achieve this vision, four ‘Key Objectives’ are identified:
- An Accessible Town Centre’ – Loughborough will be an easy centre for people to get to, with ‘public transport at its heart’ and clear safe links into the centre for pedestrians and cyclists’;
 - Achieving High Quality Design and Development’ for buildings and public spaces, including a mix of quality retailers – both national and independent’ and the ‘redevelopment of poor quality buildings and sites’;
 - Based on Sustainable Development Principles’ – including encouraging mixed-use developments on all sites and adaptable building design; and
 - Creating a Distinctive Character’ including ‘retaining the Town’s unique assets- its scale, compactness, mix of uses and distinct character areas.

Charnwood Retail and Town Centre Study

- 20.17. The Borough Council published a Retail and Town Centre Study⁵⁴ in September 2008. The study had a number of broad aims:
- To establish the current roles of centres, their hierarchy and future roles;
 - To assess the current and future need for additional comparison and convenience retail floorspace in Charnwood;
 - Provide advice on the most appropriate locations for accommodating identified floorspace requirements, in accordance with the sequential approach in Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6);
 - To provide information to assist in the evaluation of alternative locations for growth and to provide specific information about retail need that might arise for each of the alternative locations; and
 - To inform planning strategies in relation to future retail opportunities and regeneration needs

⁵³ <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/loughboroughtowncentremasterplan>

⁵⁴ <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/retailandleisurestudy>

- 20.18. The Study found that retail provision in Charnwood reflects trends in shopper behaviour and patterns of development which have occurred across the UK in recent years, resulting in significant changes in the appearance and role of town centres. The continued increase in the proportion of shopping food and 'convenience goods' (everyday essential items) which takes place in supermarkets, often in out-of-town locations, has reduced the viability and representation of the smaller traditional independent food shops in town centres and so reduced the footfall of shoppers. At the same time, spend on 'comparison good' (clothing, footwear, household and recreational goods) has grown significantly but is increasingly concentrated in the larger town centres where modern shop units, larger stores and "high street" names provide a greater draw.
- 20.19. Loughborough is clearly established as the largest centre within Charnwood, with an attractive a lively core retail area which includes a range of shops and other facilities. Positively a significant proportion of visits to Loughborough town centre are made on public transport or by foot. This and the survey data also indicates that the majority of shoppers are local to Loughborough, and their immediate catchment is limited to the area surrounding it. This is appropriate for its role as Main Town in the retail hierarchy.
- 20.20. Loughborough has a strong convenience and comparison goods offer but the centre performs below the national average in the service sector largely as a result of lack of food and drink establishments. The study notes that there is considerable scope over the period of the Core Strategy for Loughborough to develop activities in the commercial leisure sector (e.g cinemas, cafes, bars, and bingo). The study also notes that Loughborough has an above average number of vacant units.
- 20.21. The Districts Centres vary in size and function and complement the main centre fulfilling a valuable role at lower end of the retail hierarchy. They are all functioning reasonably well and the vacancies are low. Shepshed and Sileby are in need of some investment.
- 20.22. The Charnwood Retail and Town Centre Study sets out floorspace requirements for convenience shopping. Calculations are based upon forecast expenditure and population growth, as well as making an allowance for the 'overtrading' of existing stores. (Overtrading is where stores are trading above the capacity expected for a store of a particular size). The calculation of new convenience floorspace based upon forecast expenditure and population growth indicates a very modest floorspace requirement up to 2011 (less than 100m²). However, factoring in over-trading of existing stores this convenience floorspace requirement rises to between 3,353m² and 5,883m² up to 2011. After 2011 the floorspace requirements are as follows:

622 m² – 1,092m²
2016- 2021 1,492 m² - 2,626 m²
2021- 2026 1,611 m² - 2,826 m²

20.23. The total convenience floorspace requirement over the period 2008 to 2026, taking into account population growth, expenditure growth and current overtrading is between 7,079 m² and 12, 419 m². The study notes (paragraph 10.5) that existing over-trading of some of the convenience floorspace generates a significant expenditure requirement which equate to a requirement for a major new food store which should be provided to serve Loughborough. In addition as a result of population and expenditure growth, there will be a requirement for at least one further store over the study period although the provision of this store is less pressing as most of the need does not arise until post 2016 period. The Study provides guidance on potential locations for this second convenience store taking into account the alternative locations for growth.

20.24. In terms of comparison goods the study indicates that there is a modest requirement (626 m²) for new retail floorspace up to 2011. Below is a summary of comparison floorspace need after 2011.

2,752 m² -5,546 m²
2016- 2021 7,315 m² - 14,745 m²
2021- 2026 8,878 m² - 17,895 m²

20.25. The study illustrates that there is a need for additional comparison floorspace up to 2026 in the range of 19,409 m² and 39,122 m², but provides what is a more realistic mid-range figure of 25,975 m².

20.26. The retail study recommends that the majority of the forecast new retail floorspace should be directed to Loughborough to ensure that it maintains its current market share, particularly in the light of the new retail developments in Derby, Leicester and Nottingham.

20.27. In the first instance the letting of vacant units in the Rushes development will accommodate the need up to 2011. Up to 2016 opportunity sites identified in the Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan will provide the scope to address the forecast need. Beyond 2016 further floorspace may need to be accommodated outside the existing Town Centre Core Area.

20.28. With regard to District Centres the study notes that the critical issue is ensure that these are attractive and lively, using existing floorspace to support patterns of local shopping and providing diversity and choice. In general, therefore it is not expected that there would be significant increases in the total amount of floorspace in these centres, but there would it is encouraged that there are measures which strengthen the existing retail areas.

What are the Reasonable Options?

- 20.29. One of the options that the Sustainability Appraisal considered in relation to this policy area was where new retail development should take place within the Borough of Charnwood. The options around new retail floor space need to be understood in the context of the retail hierarchy. At the top of the retail hierarchy in Charnwood is Loughborough Town Centre; this would then be supported by a series of District Centres and which are in turn supported by a series of Local Centres. The definition of which centre falls within which category of the hierarchy is set within the consultation document, but is subject to further evidence gathering.
- 20.30. For new comparison floorspace the options are either to focus the majority of new floorspace towards Loughborough Town Centre, or to have a more wide distribution between Loughborough Town Centre and District Centres.
- 20.31. The sustainability appraisal also considered options in relation to non-retail uses within Loughborough Town Centre. These options are to maintain the current approach keeping the proportion of non-retail uses broadly the same as at present, or to allow a greater proportion of non-retail uses within Loughborough Town Centre.

What is our Policy Approach?

- 20.32. The proposed approach is to define all centres in the retail hierarchy including Loughborough town centre, district centres and local centres.
- 20.33. The majority of new comparison retail floor space would be focussed within Loughborough town centre, whilst allowing for limited development within District Centres. New comparison floorspace in Loughborough would be met in the short term by filling vacancies in the Town Centre, up to 2016 need would be met on sites identified in the Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan and post 2016 need may need to be met through the expansion of the Loughborough Core Area. Requirements for new food and groceries over the period of the Core Strategy will be met by provision within or on the edge of the Loughborough Town Centre and by provision within sustainable urban extensions in north and south Charnwood.
- 20.34. The proposed policy approach would encourage the diversification of Loughborough town centre to enable it's continued its vitality and viability, and would support improvements to the public realm. The proposed approach is to support improved access to town centres by public transport, cycling and walking. Short stay car parking facilities serving Loughborough Town Centre, District and Local Centre would be supported where necessary to safeguard the vitality and viability of these centres.