

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY

The Strategic Policy Context

- 2.1 The Borough of Charnwood enjoys the advantages of a relatively buoyant local economy, excellent communications, immediate access to the amenities and facilities of adjacent city centres and pleasant rural surroundings. These advantages have played no small part in ensuring, over recent years, the continued popularity of the Borough among both home buyers and house builders, and in attracting investment in new businesses.
- 2.2 It is apparent that changes in the composition of the population and associated life styles will continue to generate a need for additional housing. Similarly the changing pattern of demand for goods and services requires the further diversification and expansion of the local economy to ensure adequate employment opportunities and economic growth. Any such new development must be supported by appropriate infrastructure, facilities and amenities to ensure adequate provision for transport and to sustain a high quality of life for residents.
- 2.3 As the economy emerges from recession the Local Plan has a major role to play in ensuring that suitable land allocations and infrastructure requirements are set in place to meet development needs and assist economic recovery without serious injury to the qualities and characteristics which combine to create the particular environmental advantages of the Borough.
- 2.4 Difficult choices are unavoidable but the Local Plan must provide the context for resolving competing interests and demands through an overall strategy which aims to achieve the most satisfactory use of land and buildings.
- 2.5 In making these difficult choices the local plan is guided and assisted by a strategic policy context provided by National and Regional Planning Guidance and the Leicestershire Structure Plan.

National Planning Policy Guidance

- 2.6 National planning policy is set out in Government circulars, Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Mineral Planning Guidance Notes (MPGs).
- 2.7 In September 1990 the Government published a White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", setting out its overall environmental strategy and the basis for sustainable growth and development. This commitment was strengthened by the Government's role as a signatory to "Agenda 21" agreed at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 requiring all participating governments to prepare a comprehensive programme of action needed throughout the world to achieve a more sustainable pattern of development into the next century. In response to this commitment the Government published in January 1994 "Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy". The Strategy acknowledges the important role of land use planning and refers to policy guidance already in place in PPGs.
- 2.8 Sustainable development seeks to deliver the objective of achieving, now and in the future, economic development to secure higher living standards while protecting and enhancing the environment. PPG 1 paragraph 4 includes the commonly used definition.

"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

The Council is committed to the principles of sustainable development.

- 2.9 This commitment is echoed in supporting PPGs. PPG4: Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms records:

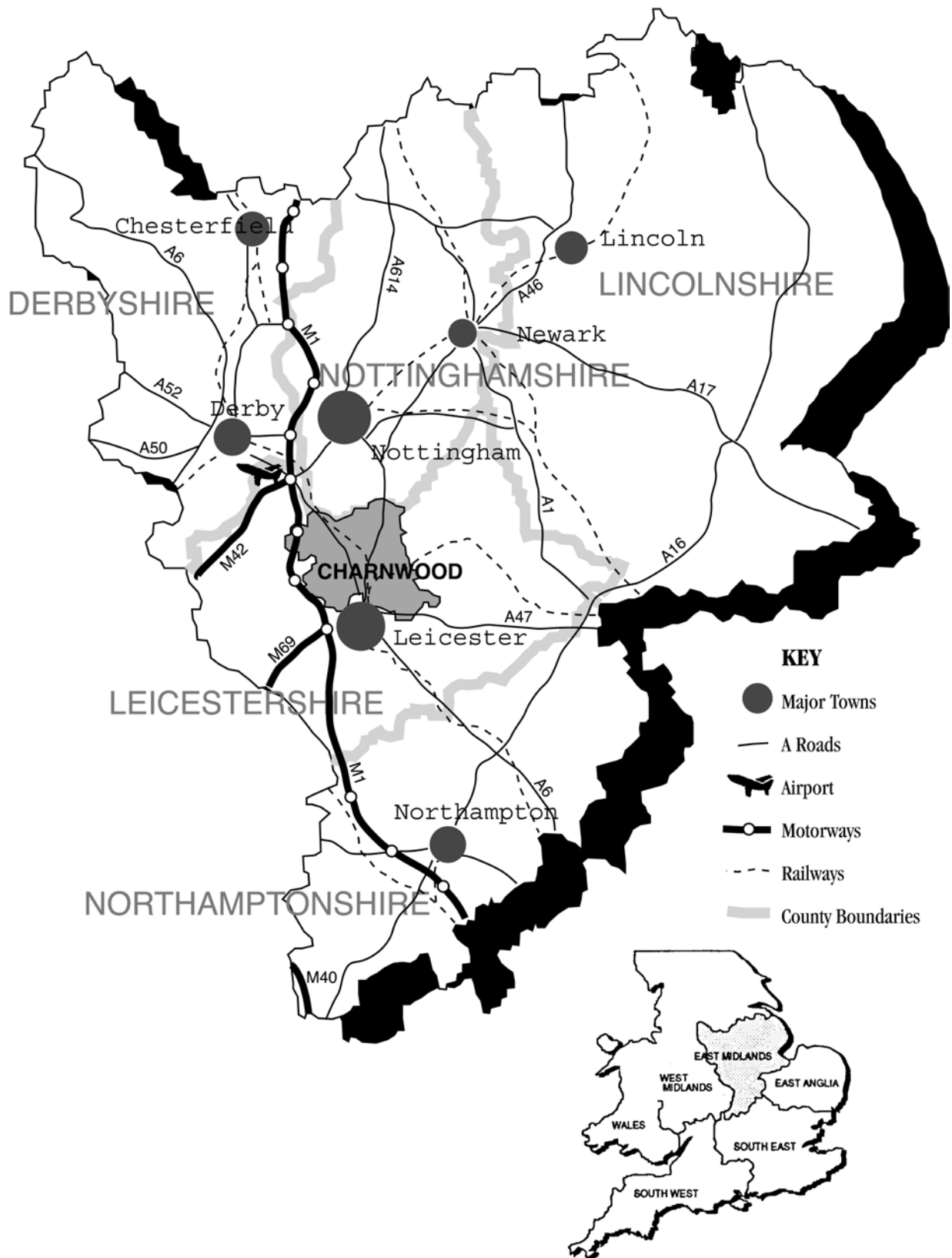
"One of the Government's key aims is to encourage continued economic development in a way which is compatible with its stated environmental objectives. Economic development and a high quality environment have to be pursued together."

- 2.10 PPG13: Transport, further endorses this theme in stating that the key aim of the guidance is to ensure that local authorities carry out their land use policies and transport programmes in ways which help to:
- reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys;
 - encourage alternative means of travel which have less environmental impact, and hence;
 - reduce reliance on the private car.
- 2.11 Where appropriate reference is made to specific aspects of National Planning Policy Guidance in relation to specific policy matters addressed by the local plan.

Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands

- 2.12 In March 1994 the Department of the Environment (East Midlands Region) published RPG 8; Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands. The RPG provides a regional dimension to planning and a framework for the updating of Structure Plans over the period up to the year 2011. The guidance should also be taken into account when formulating local plan policies.
- 2.13 The RPG emphasises the need for sustainable development and requires that all development plans should provide land use policies aimed at achieving four broad objectives;
- a) to meet the basic needs of all the Region's inhabitants;
 - b) to secure and stimulate economic prosperity in all parts of the Region;
 - c) to conserve and where possible to enhance the Region's environment; and
 - d) to maintain a high quality of life throughout the whole Region.
- 2.14 Charnwood lies within the sub area designated "The Derby/Nottingham/Leicester Triangle". The RPG acknowledges in this sub area the advantage of a large labour force, concentration of existing industry, major service centres, the East Midlands Airport, all six of the Region's universities and immediate access to the national road and rail networks (Figure 2).
- 2.15 Accordingly the "triangle" is expected to continue to be attractive to investment, and planning authorities are urged to consider the means necessary to promote the economy of the sub-area and provide suitable opportunities for business to develop. Development plans are therefore required to ensure a ready supply of land for employment and housing including the provision of science and business parks related to existing industrial and research facilities.
- 2.16 The RPG advises local authorities to review their development plans and monitor their effectiveness having regard to a specified list of aims.

Figure 2: Charnwood and the East Midlands Region.



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The Leicestershire Structure Plan

- 2.17 The County Council adopted a replacement Structure Plan for Leicestershire in January 1994, superseding all previous Structure Plan policies. The primary objectives of the Structure Plan are set out in its Strategy Policy 1 which aims to ensure that:
- i) the environment is conserved and where possible enhanced;
 - ii) most new development is located where a realistic choice of transport is or will be made available and which will be maintained or improved;
 - iii) a continuous supply of housing land is released to meet the housing needs of the County;
 - iv) a range of sites is released for employment development including high quality employment sites of County significance for B1 and B2 uses;
 - v) built development in the countryside is minimised and the best and most versatile agricultural land is protected;
 - vi) the re-use of derelict land and use of vacant and underused land and buildings within and adjoining built-up areas is maximised;
 - vii) there is a mix of housing and compatible employment uses in each locality;
 - viii) an overall balance of employment and housing development is achieved across the County;
 - ix) the regeneration of the Priority Areas is pursued;
 - x) the recreational needs of the community are met;
 - xi) the development of the National Forest is successfully pursued.
- 2.18 Specifically in Charnwood the Structure Plan requires land for 8,350 dwellings together with approximately 95 ha (235 acres) for employment purposes to be allocated through the local plan to meet projected development needs over the plan period 1991-2006.
- 2.19 These strategic objectives and requirements and the Structure Plan proposals which flow from them are discussed and expanded in the sections and chapters which follow.

Overall Strategy for Charnwood

2.20 POLICY ST/1

In providing for the development needs of the Borough measures will be taken to:

- i) pursue an overall strategy which generates sustainable patterns of development and remains generally compatible in scale and character with its location and is adequately supported by existing or proposed services, amenities and infrastructure;**
- ii) conserve, protect and enhance those features of the natural, historic and built environment which are particularly valued by the community and encourage patterns of development which minimise the emission of pollutants and promote the conservation of energy;**
- iii) improve the quality of the environment through the achievement of defined standards in the design, layout and landscaping of all new development together with the promotion of selected enhancement schemes in areas of renewal, refurbishment or special attention;**
- iv) promote the beneficial use of all vacant, derelict and underused land;**

- v) identify areas of Green Wedge and other open land necessary to preserve the separate identity of settlements and to ensure that as urban development takes place, undeveloped links to the countryside extending outwards from the urban areas are retained;
- vi) protect the character and appearance of the countryside for its own sake, especially within areas of particularly attractive countryside and other areas of local landscape value;
- vii) ensure that considerable weight is given to the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land, which represents a national resource;
- viii) facilitate the diversification of the rural economy, including the promotion of the National Forest;
- ix) identify sufficient land, in appropriate locations consistent with the Structure Plan, to provide for projected housing needs in the Borough over the period up to 2006 on sites of various size capable of producing the wide range of types and styles which the market requires including elements of rented, shared ownership or low cost housing for those of limited means and access housing specifically designed for the needs of an ageing population;
- x) identify sufficient land, primarily through the retention and extension where appropriate of existing employment areas within the Borough in locations consistent with the Structure Plan to ensure the maintenance, diversification and expansion of investment and employment opportunities in the interests of sustaining a healthy local economy;
- xi) promote an integrated land use and transportation strategy with the aim of enabling the provision of appropriate infrastructure so as to reduce the need for dependence upon the private car and support the viability of existing and proposed public transport services in the interests of encouraging sustainable development and in support of the transport choice strategy;
- xii) support the Government's proposed motorway and trunk road improvements and the Highway Authorities LTP's with a view to securing the implementation within the plan period of particularly those programmed schemes which offer wider benefits through the relief of heavy traffic flows in environmentally sensitive locations;
- xiii) provide for the management of traffic and the extension of traffic calming measures in the interests in particular of pedestrians and cyclists;
- xiv) sustain and enhance the role of Loughborough as the principal centre within the Borough for shopping and allied services;
- xv) maintain the vitality and viability of established town, district and local centres throughout the Borough with additional provision of shops and services to contemporary standards in areas of need;
- xvi) protect and improve urban open spaces for sport, recreation and amenity in accordance with defined standards together with the enablement of new outdoor and indoor facilities for recreation and entertainment in current areas of deficiency and in association with new development;
- xvii) develop and support tourist facilities and attractions appropriate in scale and character to their location for the purposes of diversifying the rural economy and bringing about environmental improvements for the benefit of both residents and visitors to the area;
- xviii) facilitate the provision of the full range of buildings and amenities for education, health, public services, community centres and places of worship necessary for the social and cultural well being of the whole community.

2.21 Rational and openly accountable choices concerning land use planning matters require a coordinated, comprehensive and consistent basis for decision making in the form of an overall

strategy. Such a strategy should provide a clear and concise statement of the plan's main aims, objectives and targets.

- 2.22 The strategic context for the preparation of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan has been set out in previous paragraphs. However in framing the strategy for the Local Plan it is also necessary to take into account the requirements of the Acts and local priorities. Having regard to these considerations the Borough Council approved in September 1992 a Brief containing a series of principal aims to guide the preparation of the Local Plan. These aims provide the basis for policy ST/1 above while the principal themes and issues are developed further in subsequent paragraphs.

Sustainable Development and Growth

- 2.23 The concept of sustainable development and growth is a fundamental principle which underlies all current Government planning advice. In essence the objective is to ensure that adequate provision is made to meet development needs in balance with the need to protect the natural and built environment for the benefit of future generations. PPG12 advises local planning authorities, in preparing their local plans, to have regard to not only the traditional environmental concerns but also more recent issues such as the effect of policies upon global warming and the consumption of non renewable resources. PPG1 paragraphs 4 to 7 give more advice for creating a more sustainable pattern of development. The issue of sustainability therefore provides the foundation for the local plan and its practical application is evident in the aims of the strategy.

Conservation of the Environment

- 2.24 Government and strategic planning policies are directed towards the identification, conservation and enhancement of the best and most important aspects of the built and natural environment.
- 2.25 Previous cultures and generations have left to Charnwood a legacy of archaeological remains, ancient monuments, historic landscapes, buildings and structures. Some 960 features are currently listed as being of special historic or architectural interest while most surviving groups of older properties are protected within designated Conservation Area.
- 2.26 Reference to the particular qualities of Charnwood's rural environment appears in a subsequent section however the overall variety of habitats and landforms contribute to a rich natural heritage recognised in 17 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and numerous other designations.
- 2.27 The environment is a life support system and there is growing public awareness of its vulnerability to over exploitation and abuse evidenced by the exhaustion of resources, generation of waste and pollution. An effective land use strategy has a major role to play in confronting and resolving these key issues, although it must to some extent rely for its success upon the support and cooperation of other agencies and policy making bodies.

Development and the Environment

- 2.28 New development will be both necessary and desirable to provide the homes, jobs and other amenities needed. The strategy aims to ensure that all such development makes a positive contribution to the overall quality of the environment. It is particularly important that development should respect and complement adjacent buildings and land uses, although sufficient flexibility must remain for the encouragement of innovative, and original schemes and layouts. New development must aim to provide a safe, comfortable environment, easily accessible to everyone but having particular regard to the needs of the more vulnerable members of the community. The strategy recognises too the importance which must be attached to the appearance and treatment of spaces between and around buildings through effective landscaping.
- 2.29 Development which has already taken place has occasionally failed to meet modern standards of layout and design and in these areas the strategy recognises the need for improvements to upgrade environmental quality.

Vacant and Derelict Land

- 2.30 Pockets of vacant, derelict and underused land occur throughout the Borough, primarily due to the decline of manufacturing, or former mineral workings. Such land represents a waste of resources and detracts from the quality of the environment. The strategy aims to ensure that neglected land is restored to beneficial use. In particular the development of urban derelict land will reduce the need to build on greenfield sites minimising the urbanisation of the countryside.

Green Wedge and Local Separation

- 2.31 Open land provides a contrast and a foil to areas of urban development. Local communities value their separate identities and view with concern additional building which threatens to bring about the coalescence of settlements. These concerns are felt particularly acutely in Charnwood where incremental growth around the margins of Loughborough and Leicester, and around the tightly grouped settlements along the Soar and Wreake Valleys, has already eroded significantly areas of remaining open land between communities. To arrest this trend the Structure Plan requires the definition of, “structurally important areas of open land” (Green Wedges) around Loughborough and Leicester. The role of Green Wedges is to ensure that as urban development proceeds areas of open land are retained to prevent the coalescence of settlements and to preserve linkages to the countryside, together with the encouragement of their positive management. The inner boundaries of Green Wedges will be reviewed through successive Plan reviews and should not be confused with Green Belts, to which a greater degree of permanence attaches. The Structure Plan further allows for the identification of Areas of Local Separation between smaller communities where the other policies of the Plan would not provide sufficient security to prevent development which would lead to an unacceptable reduction in the separation of settlements contributing to a loss of character and identity.

Countryside

- 2.32 The Borough’s countryside is largely the product of interaction between the underlying geology and centuries of farming which have shaped the pattern of fields, lanes, farmsteads, hedgerows and woodlands. Extensive water features have been added with the creation of reservoirs in the upland areas during the 19th Century, and more latterly through reclaimed sand and gravel workings in the broad river valleys. As a result Charnwood enjoys the benefit of substantial areas of attractive countryside which is worthy of protection for its own sake. In addition the Structure Plan acknowledges the Charnwood Forest and south eastern areas of the Borough as being, “particularly attractive” and therefore deserving of additional policy protection to safeguard their landscape value. The strategy aims to reconcile the protection of the countryside with the needs for new development and increasing leisure demands.

Agricultural Land

- 2.33 Government policy, articulated through PPG7, continues to recognise the importance of protecting agricultural land falling within grades 1, 2 and 3a. Considerable weight should be attached to protecting such land from development because of its special importance. The adopted Structure Plan endorses this approach but acknowledges that in some cases the loss of such land will be unavoidable where there are no other suitable sites for the particular purpose intended.

Rural Diversification

- 2.34 Government policy also recognises the shift in priorities brought about by efficient farming practices and changes in agricultural policy. The emphasis has now moved away from agricultural production necessitating the diversification of the rural economy to provide alternative employment opportunities to sustain viable rural communities. However new rural enterprises must remain compatible with the countryside environment and respect parallel policies directed towards the preservation of amenity and protection of best and most versatile agricultural land. The National Forest currently being fostered in the western parts of

the Borough offers the prospect of diversification into recreation and leisure while promoting commercial and amenity woodland.

Housing

- 2.35 The provision of an adequate and continuous supply of land for housing is a key function of the planning system. PPG3 advises that housing schemes should be well related in scale and location to existing development, be integrated with the current pattern of settlement and land uses and take into account the availability of, or need for, public transport. A wide choice of sites, variable in size and distribution is likely to be required to meet the needs and demands of the local housing market.
- 2.36 The strategy also acknowledges the need for affordable housing for those members of the community with insufficient means to compete in the open housing market. In particular the strategy aims to bring forward initiatives and mechanisms to ensure an adequate proportion of affordable new homes for rent, shared ownership or at low cost.
- 2.37 Demographic trends indicate an increasing proportion of disabled people within the community. Projections also indicate an ageing population structure as modern health care delivers greater longevity. However increasing age is often accompanied by infirmity. The strategy aims to provide adequate housing for people with restricted mobility or other special needs to enable them to live with the dignity afforded by maximum independence. This notwithstanding, policies will need to allow for the provision of residential care homes and other forms of institutional accommodation in response to particular needs.

Employment

- 2.38 The Structure Plan aims to ensure the provision of a range of sites for employment development including high quality sites for B1 business uses. It also aims to encourage a mix of housing and compatible employment uses in each locality.
- 2.39 Charnwood's existing employment areas are generally concentrated within a broad band of development extending from the northern suburbs of Leicester along either side of the Soar Valley, including the lower reaches of the Wreake Valley, towards Loughborough and Shepshed. The existing distribution is already well located in relation to the major concentrations of population, the primary road network and the railway system. Environmental constraints are likely to limit the scope for wholly new employment areas and the strategy therefore aims to provide for additional needs through the retention, reuse and expansion of existing economically viable facilities which already benefit from good communications and close links with local labour resources. These locations are likely to provide for the access requirements of the distribution and service sector, the expansion needs of indigenous business and the high quality landscaped sites demanded by the new business/new technology industries.

Transport Choice

- 2.40 Increasing demands are being placed on the road system and Department of Transport 1997 based traffic forecasts estimate a 60% growth in traffic from 1996 to 2031. Such increases could not be accommodated within the urban areas, and elsewhere would require extensive road building. Additional congestion, delay and resource depletion will be unavoidable unless alternative transportation modes are available.
- 2.41 The Structure Plan relies heavily upon its transport choice strategy which attempts to alleviate the pressure on the roads by promoting patterns of development which will facilitate greater use of rail and bus services or encourage cycling and walking. These objectives are entirely consistent with the approach to sustainable development and are supported through the local plan strategy.

Highway Improvements

- 2.42 However successful the transport choice strategy may be in providing an alternative to the private car, it is still envisaged that traffic will continue to grow resulting in further congestion and delay, with associated increased costs to business and commerce, and undesirable environmental impacts upon residential and other sensitive localities. Accordingly the strategy aims to make provision for and encourage the earliest implementation of those schemes which offer, on balance, wider environmental benefits.

Traffic Management

- 2.43 Local Plans must by law include policies for the management of traffic. The overall strategy acknowledges the need to enable efficient traffic movement but also aims to foster a safe, healthy and attractive living environment for the benefit of the more vulnerable road users and the occupiers of adjacent properties. Resources are likely to be directed primarily to those areas where the risk of vehicular conflict with pedestrians, cyclists and local residents is most acute.

Central Loughborough

- 2.44 The Structure Plan aims to sustain and enhance the role of central Loughborough through increased provision for retailing, allied services, offices, and tourism, supported by transport and environmental improvements. PPG6 also emphasises the role of existing centres and development patterns which minimise the need to travel, promote transport choice and help reduce polluting exhaust emissions.
- 2.45 The strategy therefore aims to build upon the existing strengths, commitments and opportunities present in Loughborough town centre to provide an improved service to the community.

Local Shopping

- 2.46 Local shopping facilities, including district centres and village shops, deliver an important service to their surrounding communities. The strategy aims to ensure that they can retain their vitality and viability through the maintenance of an attractive tenant mix and protection from other development which would serve the community less satisfactorily. However where provision is deficient or otherwise inadequate the interests of the community may be better served by new contemporary facilities able to offer wider choice at competitive prices in more convenient, accessible premises. The strategy aims to provide a context for ensuring a distribution of retailing facilities which best meets the needs of the community while enabling the industry to respond and adapt to changing economic and social conditions.

Sport and Recreation

- 2.47 Government guidance (PPG17) recognises the role of sport and recreation as important components of civilised life and seeks to promote wider participation. Projections indicate increasing demand, particularly amongst older groups, for health related amenities while pressure for countryside recreation is also likely to grow. The strategy aims to protect urban recreation space having regard to the community's long term requirements and to ensure additional provision in step with local needs. However the strategy also acknowledges that limits upon spending are likely to restrict the role of the local authority as a direct provider of built facilities in particular, but the Council will continue to exercise its influence and powers to enable the provision of appropriate amenities.

Tourism

- 2.48 Tourism can make a major contribution to the local economy and act as a positive force for environmental protection and enhancement for the benefits of both residents and visitors. The principal assets of the Borough are the Great Central Steam Railway, the Grand Union Canal, the National Forest, the historic towns and villages and the attractive areas of

countryside, particularly Charnwood Forest. Many proposals of the local plan will support the promotion of tourism but there is also a need to ensure that the best and most attractive aspects of the environment are not damaged by excessive pressure.

Community Facilities

- 2.49 A community is represented by more than a collection of houses. To develop and grow it requires a range of meeting places for various social, leisure, cultural and religious purposes along with schools, health centres, clinics and hospitals. The strategy aims to ensure that sufficient land is allocated to permit the provision of such facilities in suitable locations, in accordance with the needs of the community or the requirements of the funding agency.

Sub Area Strategy

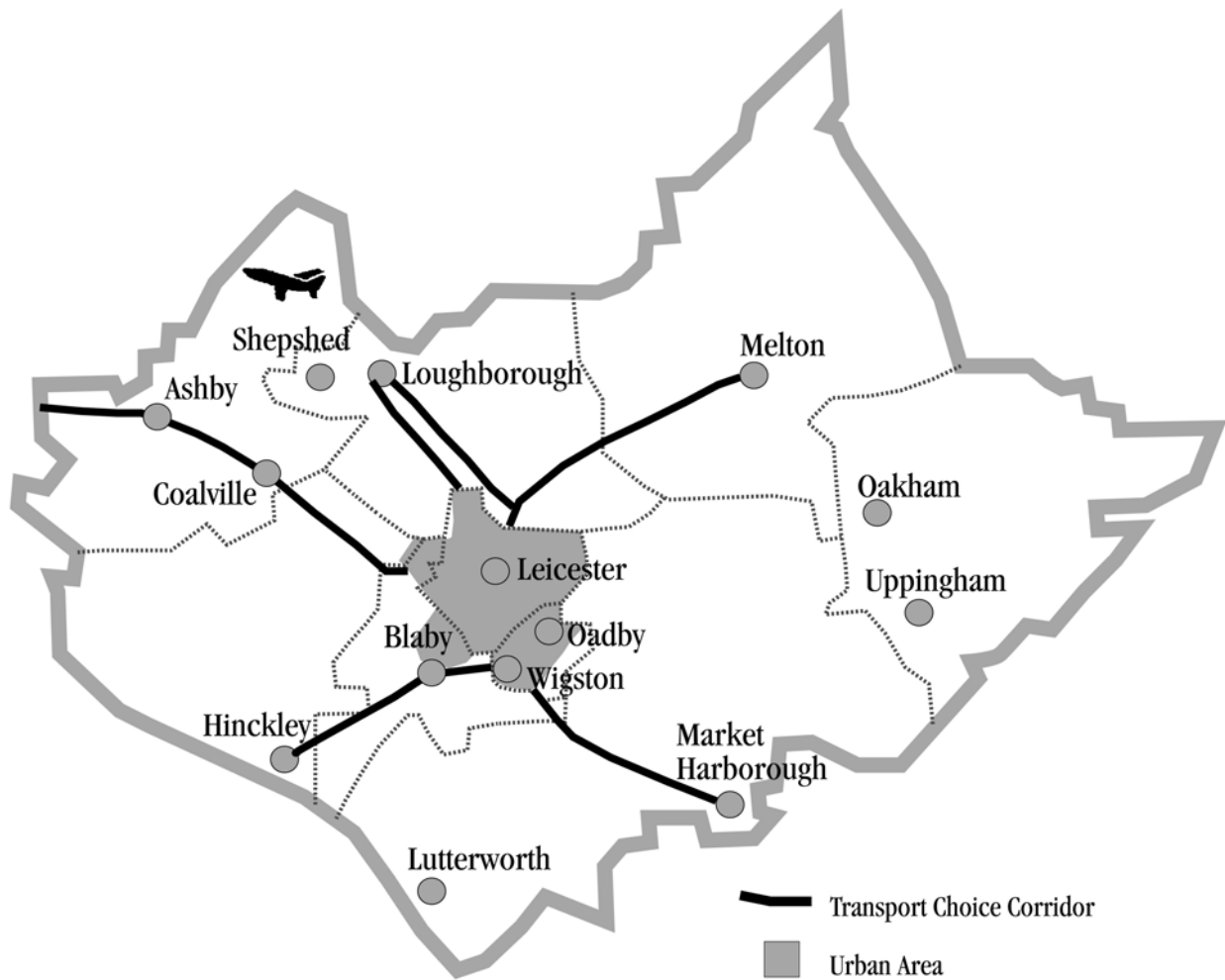
- 2.50 Further to the consideration of representations received upon the Consultation Draft Local Plan the Council undertook a review of its strategy in an attempt to translate the broad aims set out in Policy ST/1, to tackle specific local problems and opportunities. To assist in this exercise a sub area based assessment has been employed.

- 2.51 The sub areas have previously guided local plan preparation in the Borough and have been defined having regard to housing market areas, patterns of journeys to work, community identities and physical characteristics. With minor amendments in recognition of the strategic significance of the transport choice corridors, the sub areas remain relevant to the effective targeting of the local plan policies. The sub areas are shown in Figure 1 and the defined aims for each may be summarised as follows:

- i) **Loughborough**
 - to ensure continuing employment opportunities;
 - to develop and improve the town centre;
 - to reinforce the advantages of concentration;
 - to develop alternatives to the car especially public transport, walking and cycling;
 - to build on the towns advantages for new technology;
 - to tackle inner area problems;
 - to conserve and foster a sense of community supported by appropriate social infrastructure.
- ii) **Shepshed**
 - to improve the town centre;
 - to maintain the good jobs balance;
 - to improve the environment;
 - to promote alternative means of transport;
 - to protect open land;
 - to conserve and foster a sense of community supported by appropriate social infrastructure.
- iii) **Soar Valley (including Birstall)**
 - to improve local facilities;
 - to improve local job opportunities;
 - to develop public transport initiatives, especially along the old A6;
 - to protect open land;
 - to develop cross valley links;
 - to secure environmental improvements;
 - to provide opportunities for the provision of affordable housing;
 - to conserve and foster a sense of community supported by appropriate social infrastructure.
- iv) **Wreake Valley (including Thurmaston)**
 - to maintain/improve local job opportunities;
 - to secure the provision of new stations;
 - to improve the potential of the A607 for buses;
 - to improve Syston/Thurmaston town centres;

- to protect physical separation;
 - to provide opportunities for the provision of affordable housing;
 - to conserve and foster a sense of community supported by appropriate social infrastructure.
- v) **Forest, the Wolds and the rural South East**
- to preserve local jobs;
 - to encourage rural diversification;
 - to protect rural character;
 - to provide for local housing needs;
 - to conserve and foster a sense of community supported by appropriate social infrastructure.
- 2.52 The Structure Plan aims to direct most of the new development needed over the plan period towards the urban area centred on Leicester, the County's main towns and to those settlements capable of offering a realistic choice of transport along specified corridors between the urban areas. It is envisaged that development should normally take place within and at the edges of existing settlements.
- 2.53 Within Charnwood the settlements of Birstall and Thurmaston are specifically defined as being part of the Leicester urban area while Loughborough and Shepshed are identified as the main towns.
- 2.54 The transport choice corridors are based on the principal lines of communication with the capability to provide for attractive, reliable and regular public transport, which radiate outward from Leicester like the spokes of a wheel. (Figure 3). In Charnwood the transport choice corridors are defined as:
- i) the Midland Railway Line between Leicester and Loughborough;
 - ii) the Railway Line from Leicester to Melton Mowbray; and
 - iii) the route of the former A6 between Rothley and Quorn and the A6 between Leicester and Rothley and between Quorn and Loughborough.
- 2.55 Designation as a transport choice corridor does not imply continuous ribbon development along the route but rather identifies the opportunity for concentrating new development, primarily within comfortable walking distance, of a railway halt or bus stop on the corridor. New railway stations have been provided at Barrow upon Soar, Sileby and Syston as part of the "Ivanhoe Line" initiative while, in the longer term stations may be provided at Thurmaston and East Goscote. Regular bus services along the former A6 are already operational while dedicated cycle lanes and paths have also been provided along sections of the route.
- 2.56 The policy acknowledges that should it be necessary to accommodate additional major development outside the specified locations, it should be situated in other corridors offering a realistic choice of transport which will usually require the provision of a dedicated public transport route which penetrates urban areas.
- 2.57 Throughout the remainder of the Borough the Structure Plan envisages that normally only small scale development will be appropriate within and adjoining settlements provided it remains in keeping with their size, form and character. This policy reflects the limited availability of transport choice and restricted level of service provision in the more rural areas of the district.
- 2.58 The Structure Plan also includes provision for the enablement of new settlements without advocating their development. The Explanatory Memorandum advises that it is expected that any such proposals should come forward through the local plan process and remain entirely consistent with the strategy and policies of the Structure Plan. Strategy Policy 6 of the Structure Plan defines the criteria against which new settlement proposals are to be assessed. Criterion (b) relates to the need for the development to be in a location which offers, or will offer realistic choice transport.

**Figure 3: Leicestershire Structure Plan:
Transport Choice Corridors**



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- 2.59 The emphasis of government policy in PPG3 is that if new settlements are to be acceptable they must create the right balance of homes, jobs and services and be in locations that are accessible by good quality public transport services. PPG13 cautions against small new settlements, especially where they are unlikely to be well served by public transport and are unlikely to be capable of being largely self contained.
- 2.60 The government fully expects that all new settlement proposals should either be brought forward through regional planning guidance or the development plan process.

Strategy for the Location of Development in Charnwood

- 2.61 Clearly the availability of or potential for transport choice must be a significant factor in determining the location of new development. However, other factors will need to be taken into account in the justification for the development of particular sites. In all cases there is a need also to ensure that development remains compatible with the wider aims of the local plan directed towards the protection of the environment, provision of safe and efficient highways, conservation of resources and encouragement of satisfactory relationships with existing settlements and other adjacent land uses.
- 2.62 The historical distribution of development in Charnwood has contributed already to a relatively congested settlement pattern as the less constrained development options have been taken. Few sites remain entirely free from established physical or policy constraints and it was evident from the start of the site identification exercise that the preferred options would necessarily be the product of a balanced assessment.
- 2.63 To assist in this process the Council approved in October 1995 the following strategy for development and growth as the basis for the Local Plan's development proposals:
- i) to make provision for necessary development which, on balance, occasions minimum harm to the environment overall, giving due weight to any measures which might compensate or reduce the impact of development;
 - ii) to provide for a distribution of development which reduces the need for car journeys and the distances driven, encourages the use of more energy efficient forms of transport including cycling and walking and exploits the opportunity to secure improved opportunities for efficient and attractive public transport for the benefit of the wider community;
 - iii) to utilise the opportunity to secure through related development, private sector funding for essential public infrastructure, which is directly and reasonably related to that development, the delivery and programming of which would otherwise be uncertain or unachievable, and to address the proven need of different parts of the Borough for affordable housing; and
 - iv) to ensure a balanced distribution of development opportunities throughout the Borough to provide variety and choice broadly in line with market demand and to reinforce and develop those locations which offer the best potential for sustainability.
- 2.64 This strategy is based upon a comprehensive review of national and Structure Plan policy and specific planning issues in Charnwood which concluded that the key aims in locating new development should be:
- i) to make the A6 between Leicester and Rothley and between Quorn and Loughborough, and the former A6 between Rothley and Quorn work as a bus corridor. It is the best opportunity in the Borough for delivering a real choice of public transport with an advantage over the car. It serves 50% of the Borough's population;
 - ii) to concentrate on the most balanced locations in the Borough in terms of jobs, facilities and the potential for alternative forms of transport;
 - iii) to address the need to secure a good homes/jobs balance around the Borough;
 - iv) to exploit the potential for legitimate planning gain through development;

- v) to protect the best of the Borough's open land in terms of agricultural quality, landscape and ecology;
- vi) to develop public transport potential elsewhere in the Borough and to encourage cycling and walking;
- vii) to provide for the needs of affordable housing where they occur throughout the Borough;
- viii) to develop the relationship between the Local Plan strategy and the other areas of Council activity including the cycling strategy, economic development and tourism, housing strategy, town centre promotion, environmental improvements and infrastructure investment.

Limits to Development

2.65 POLICY ST/2

Built development will be confined to allocated sites and other land within the Limits to Development identified on the Proposals Map, subject to the specific exceptions set out in this Plan.

- 2.66 The Limits to Development, identified on the Proposals Map provide clear boundaries to the various settlements and other areas of development in the Borough. They distinguish between areas of development and development potential and areas of restraint. They allow for any new development to be sensibly related to the existing pattern of settlement to ensure that development needs can be met without unwarranted harm to the countryside and other rural interests. The designation of land within the defined Limits to Development does not imply that planning permission will be granted for any particular proposal. Planning applications will still have to be considered on their individual merits having regard to all of the policies of the Local Plan.

Infrastructure

2.67 POLICY ST/3

When granting planning permission for new development which would not be acceptable without reasonably related infrastructure or community facilities, the Borough Council will seek to secure their provision by entering into a legal agreement with the owners, applicants or developers involved and will negotiate accordingly. Developers may be invited to provide and contribute towards:

- i) **the provision of off-site infrastructure to ensure adequate provision for highways, public transport and storm drainage; and/or**
- ii) **the provision of on or off site facilities to secure necessary provision for the social, educational, recreational, sporting and community needs of the development; and/or**
- iii) **the provision of affordable or special needs housing; and/or**
- iv) **the provision of facilities or amenities to offset or mitigate the impact of the development on existing recreation resources, protected habitats and species or recognised heritage sites.**

- 2.68 It is clear that in many areas improvements in provision for highways, public transport other essential infrastructure and community facilities necessary to sustain high standards in the quality of life, have often failed to keep pace with new development. The gap between need and provision has widened as the main providing agencies have had to address competing demands for diminishing resources.

- 2.69 In the face of these trends it is now commonly accepted that the provision of reasonably related infrastructure and community facilities at the expense of the development is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application for development of a substantial nature.

- 2.70 Government policy set out in Circular 1/97 sets out the circumstances in which local planning authorities may enter into negotiations with developers to secure planning obligations (previously known as “planning gain”). Policy ST/3 sets out the type of obligations which the Borough Council will seek to negotiate in relation to new development proposals in situations where planning obligations cannot be overcome by the imposition of a condition.
- 2.71 In conducting negotiations the Borough Council will at all times have regard to the tests of reasonableness set out in the Circular; i.e. that what is being sought must be:
- i) needed to enable the development to go ahead, or, in the case of a financial payment, would meet or contribute towards the cost of providing such facilities in the near future;
 - ii) necessary from a planning point of view and so directly related to the proposed development and to the use of the land after its completion that the development ought not to be permitted without it;
 - iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development and
 - iv) reasonable in all other respects.
- 2.72 Applications for new development that would otherwise be acceptable but would give rise to traffic problems to the detriment of highway safety or occasion unacceptable environmental harm will be encouraged to enter into a planning obligation to secure satisfactory improvements to the local road system and/or facilitate improvements to encourage wider use of public transport, cycling and walking.
- 2.73 In the pursuit of measures to give effect to the Structure Plan’s Transport Choice Strategy the Borough Council will encourage developers to contribute towards the improvement of public transport infrastructure (new or improved bus and rail services) cycleways and footpaths, where facilities are required to meet the criteria for transport choice, necessary to serve adequately their development.
- 2.74 Where new developments would overload the capacity of the existing drainage system the applicants will be encouraged to enter into planning obligations to provide additional capacity and or balancing lagoons as necessary. Implementation will be undertaken in accordance with Policies EV/30 and EV/31.
- 2.75 Where a development would generate the need for new educational or community facilities within or near to the site then the applicants will be encouraged to enter into a planning obligation to secure or enable provision of the facilities.
- 2.76 Where open space cannot be provided on site in accordance with the standards set out in Policies RT/3, RT/4 and RT/5 the Borough Council will encourage applicants to enter into a planning obligation to enable the provision of the space required in an alternative location reasonably accessible from the development site.
- 2.77 Policy H/6 provides for the provision of affordable housing as exceptions to normal policy in rural areas. Policy H/4 provides for the negotiation of affordable housing on allocated sites. In granting planning permission for such schemes, applicants will be invited to enter into a planning obligation to ensure that such housing remains available as affordable housing in perpetuity.
- 2.78 Where development, unavoidably, affects adversely areas of recreation land, protected wildlife habitats or species, regionally important geological sites, archaeological sites, listed buildings or conservation areas applicants will be invited to enter into planning obligations to minimise, mitigate or compensate for any loss or injury occasioned.
- 2.79 Policy ST/3 refers to the main circumstances where the Borough Council would be likely to encourage applicants to enter into planning obligations. The list is not intended to be comprehensive and other situations may arise where the Council will seek the use of planning obligations as part of the development control process. Accordingly to avoid delay and confusion prospective developers are recommended to enter into discussions with the local planning authority at an early stage in the development process, and preferably before the acquisition of the land concerned.

- 2.80 Where it is known already what specific planning obligations the Borough Council will seek to negotiate with respect to the developments proposed in this Plan those obligations are set out under the particular allocations concerned.