



## Welcome to your newsletter

Welcome to the April edition of Planning and Regeneration News, the newsletter of Charnwood Borough Council's Planning and Regeneration Service.

We hope you find it interesting and if you would like us to consider issues in future articles please let us know, email [localplans@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:localplans@charnwood.gov.uk)

## Legal challenge to Core Strategy rejected by High Court

A legal challenge against Charnwood Borough Council's Core Strategy has been thrown out by a High Court judge.

The decision by the Council to adopt the Core Strategy on the November 9, 2015 had been the subject of an attempted Judicial Review challenge by the Rosconn Group, a developer with interests in development at Shepshed who claimed the examination of the Core Strategy had not considered land supply appropriately.

However, Mrs Justice Patterson refused the application by the Rosconn Group and ordered them to pay the Council's legal costs, finding that the supply of homes had been thoroughly examined by the Core Strategy Inspector and noting that the claimant had ample opportunity to take part in that process but had chosen not to do so.

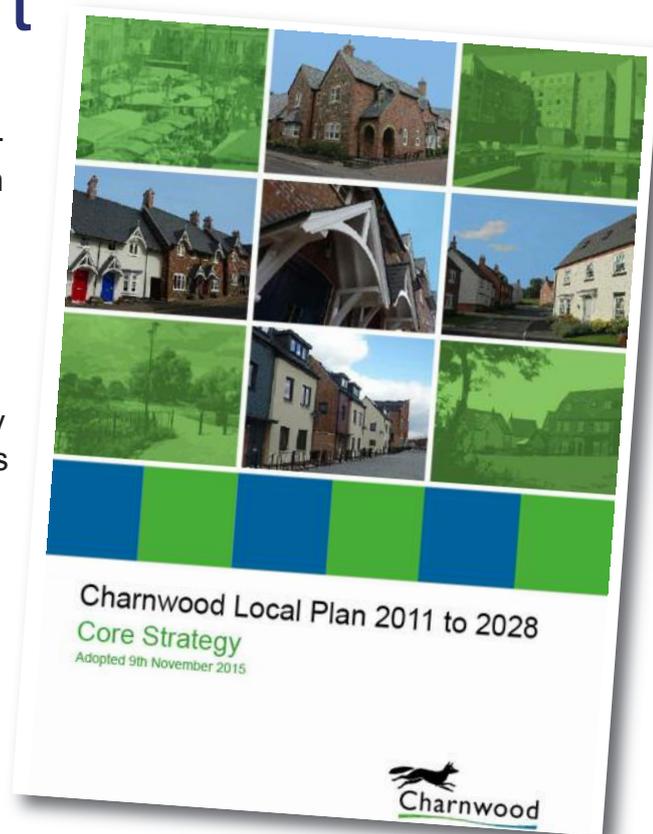
Mrs Justice Patterson noted there was no unfairness.

The Core Strategy sets out where new housing, employment land and infrastructure should go in Charnwood. Adoption of the Strategy by the Council followed extensive consultations and an examination by an independent planning inspector.

Councillor Eric Vardy, Cabinet Member for Planning, said: "I welcome the court's decision."

"This has not had any impact on the Core Strategy nor has it caused any delays. We can hopefully now draw a line under this and continue to carry on with regular business."

The Core Strategy remains part of the Development Plan for Charnwood and continues to provide the basis for determining planning applications.



## Appeal decisions back five-year supply of housing land

The National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to provide a five year supply of land for housing. The Inspector of the Core Strategy concluded that it would meet the need for homes in the Borough and this position has been supported by two recent appeal decisions at Iveshead Road in Shepshed and Bradgate Road in Anstey.

These decisions are important because if the Council was unable to show a five year supply of land for housing it would be much more difficult to control unplanned development in locations that do not support the Council's vision in the Core Strategy.

## Review of housing land underway

We have started a review of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

The SHLAA is a comprehensive assessment of land and buildings within the borough with potential for housing development and is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The assessment will form part of the evidence base for future planning documents, but will not in themselves determine whether a site should be allocated or granted planning permission.



The assessment provides an opportunity for land and property owners to tell the Council about their sites which have potential for housing (five or more dwellings) and/or employment development (0.25ha), or of any factual changes relating to their sites already identified in the previous assessment.

The process of preparing a SHLAA includes a 'call for sites' – an invitation for land owners to tell us about their land, which commenced on April 4, 2016 and runs until May 23, 2016. Alongside the SHLAA we are also undertaking an assessment for employment sites.

Please [click here](#) for more information.

## Changes to social and affordable housing rent formula

Since 2013 social landlords have been able to increase rents by the consumer price index of inflation plus one per cent for 10 years.

However, in July 2015 the government announced changes to the housing rent formula as part of the Summer Budget. Under the proposals, social and affordable rents would be reduced by one percent a year for four years from April 2016 until 2020.

Understanding these changes is important as it affects the way large development proposals are planned and financed and can lead to very different proposals for affordable housing than we have seen in the recent past.

Officers are working closely with housing colleagues to assess and respond to the impacts of these changes and have been speaking to Registered Providers to understand their business plans and interest in individual sites.

# Turning the heat up on... carbon reduction

The Council has invested £50,000 in new heating systems at Woodgate Chambers and Charnwood Museum in Loughborough to help reduce carbon emissions.

At the end of last year the Council set out a plan to cut its carbon footprint by 15 per cent by 2020 under its 2020 Carbon Pledge. The pledge sets out how the Council will reduce its carbon footprint of 2,132 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year by 320 tonnes.

Councillor Eric Vardy, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, said: "Looking after the environment is not something to worry about in the future, it's something to worry about today and that's one of the reasons we're committed to reducing our carbon emission."

"These heating systems were old and inefficient and so we've seized the opportunity to replace them now to reduce our emissions and save money. Using our 2020 Carbon Pledge, we also hope to raise the profile of the need to reduce emissions and encourage others to do the same."

The improvements at Woodgate Chambers will reduce carbon emissions by 22 tonnes and save £4,500 a year on energy bills. The museum improvements will save 10 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year and £2,200 a year on energy bills.

The Council needs to invest around £300,000 by 2020 to reduce emissions. Most would be invested in more efficient heating and LED lighting. Some of the funding is in place, but some stills need to be identified over the five-year period. If all schemes are implemented, the Council could save £85,000 a year and so the investment would pay for itself in three and a half years.

For more information about the 2020 Carbon Pledge, please [click here](#).



Cllr Vardy is pictured with the new heating system at Woodgate Chambers

## Act requires Council to keep self-build register

The government is keen to promote self-build and custom house building as a means of increasing the overall number of dwellings and encouraging the growth of the custom build sector.

The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 requires Councils to maintain a register of people seeking to acquire land to build a home themselves. Councils have to have regard to the information on the register in using their planning functions.

Personal details included on the register will not be made public, but headline data can be extracted from it and published.

This can include for example; overall numbers of registered entries for different types of categories, geographical areas of interest and types of housing sought.

Anybody wishing to register themselves or to see details of interest in self build and custom housing can view the register by [clicking here](#).

# Consultation on Charnwood's first draft Neighbourhood Plan

Thurcaston and Cropston has become the first parish council to publish a draft Neighbourhood Plan. Preparation of the plan has taken 18 months and has involved consultation with the local community and local interest groups.

The plan includes a vision and policies for the use and development of land within the parish boundary. A pre-submission consultation took place between January 11 and February 21, 2016 and the plan has now been submitted to the



Borough Council for a further round of consultation before it undergoes examination.

This will be carried out by an independent examiner who will consider whether the plan and any comments made during the consultation period meet the statutory “basic conditions” and other legal requirements.

For further information on the Neighbourhood Planning process and Thurcaston and Cropston Neighbourhood Plan, please [click here](#).

## New members join the team

Stephen Stray will be joining the Planning and Regeneration Service in April as the Group Leader for Development Management. Stephen has come from Rossendale Borough Council and will take over the leadership of the planning applications, enforcement, building control and customer service teams.

Stephen Dukes has joined the Development Management Team as a planning officer. Stephen has previously worked at Oadby and Wigston Council and will be providing a valuable contribution within the Local Development Team.

Finally, Mick Morley will be taking up a new management role this month at Ashfield District Council in his home county of Nottinghamshire. Mick has provided valued support to a wide range of our Development Management customers since joining the Council from Rushcliffe Borough Council in 2004. We wish Mick well in his new role.

There has been a recent refocus of the Building Control Team, creating a business unit led by Andy Beard. The unit is able to offer a wide range of professional building regulation and ancillary services including the important street naming and numbering facility. This will give our customers a more joined-up approach to getting development on the ground and realising the benefits that quality development brings to the borough.

# What is a material planning consideration

When a planning application is assessed by the Council only certain issues can be taken into account.

These issues are called “material planning considerations”.

The weight that can be attached to a material planning consideration in reaching a decision is a matter of judgement for planning officers and members of the plans committee. As the Local Planning Authority, we need to show that we have considered all relevant matters. The range of considerations and the weight to be given to them will vary in each case.

Generally greater weight can be attached to issues which are supported by evidence rather than solely by assertion or belief. Even if material issues are relevant to a proposal and could be identified as a problem with a proposed development, it is often possible to deal with them satisfactorily through changes to the plans or by using a suitable planning condition, rather than issuing a refusal.

Examples of material considerations include loss of privacy, highways safety and impacts on nature conservation, biodiversity and landscaping. There are also many issues that cannot be taken into account when making a planning decision. These are known as non-material considerations and examples of these include loss of property value, boundary disputes between neighbours and the principle of development when this has already been settled by an outline planning permission.

A list of material and non-material considerations is available on our website and can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

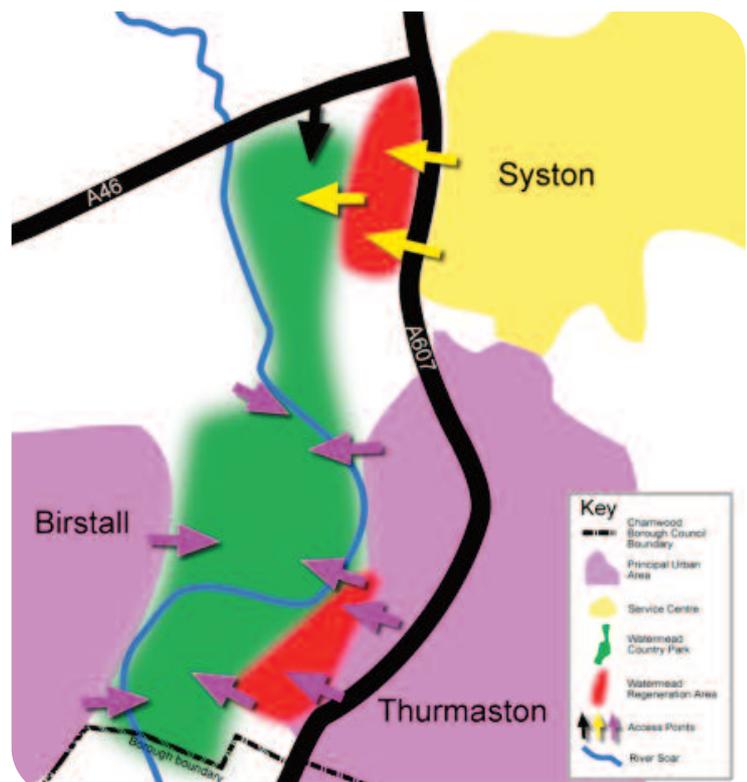
## Directing growth in Watermead corridor

The Watermead Regeneration Corridor is identified in the Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy as a Direction of Growth that will support the regeneration of Thurmaston, restore the remaining mineral workings and maximise the potential of the country park. The corridor begins just over two miles from Leicester city centre and runs along the River Soar to Wanlip.

At its centre is the Watermead Country Park which is a network of old mineral workings and artificial lakes. The Grand Union Canal also runs through the valley providing direct access to the waterfront at Thurmaston.

The Borough Council has commissioned a regeneration framework for the Watermead area. The Council will work with the local community, interest groups, landowners and members to deliver a framework to help deliver the corridor.

For further information please contact the Plans, Policies and Place Making Team on 01509 634 4646.



# New protocol to help improve planning of community infrastructure

The Council has prepared a protocol that sets out an approach to planning for community infrastructure and facilities like village halls, play spaces and sports pitches across the borough.

The protocol has been prepared following recommendations by a Council Scrutiny Panel and reinforces the role of councillors as well as parish and town councils, as representatives of their local communities.

A significant amount of funding for community infrastructure comes from contributions made by developers through Section 106 agreements.

The Council can only require developers to help manage the impacts of the development they are proposing either through the provision of new infrastructure and community facilities or by paying for improved facilities.

Officers have been working closely with colleagues across the Council to gain a better understanding of community needs.

Involving the community more closely in the process will:

- help identify issues early on
- help community representatives to lead on community issues
- help to secure agreement on the package of community infrastructure required to support new development.

Developers will also benefit by understanding what types of community provision may be necessary to mitigate the impact of their development and can shape their plans accordingly. A launch of the protocol is planned for early April.

For more information please contact the Development Management Team on 01509 634731.



## Pre-application service improved

Together with the new Community Infrastructure Protocol we are updating and improving our pre-application advice service to encourage engagement and discussion on proposals before formal planning applications are made.

The improved service will include pre-application comments being published when planning applications are received. The service also encourages developers to engage with the community on more significant proposals when proposals reach a stage where this can happen openly and for details of public meetings held by the developer to be made available.

Starting this month we will also be sending out weekly updates on planning applications to ward Councillors and town and parish councils.

We hope this additional communication will help our customers keep up to date with proposals as they go through the application process.

# System upgrade will improve efficiency

An upgraded back-office system to manage planning and building control applications and enforcement case work is being implemented and is planned to go live from May 2, 2016.

This will bring much-needed improvements to the efficiency of the service and later in the year, will see a new-look to the Planning Explorer online service. The switchover will involve some down time of our online services in the days immediately prior to going live and while we are working to manage risk and minimise disturbance, customers are asked to be patient during this process.

For further information please contact the Customer Support and Performance Team on 01509 634753.

## Sweet taste of supporting Fairtrade event



The Planning and Regeneration Service has taken part in a Fairtrade breakfast as part of Fairtrade Fortnight to support

sustainability and climate change.

Each year the Fairtrade Foundation runs a campaign called 'Fairtrade Fortnight' to increase awareness of Fairtrade products.

Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers. It's about supporting the development of thriving farming and worker communities that have more control over their futures and protecting the environment in which they live and work. Fifteen members of staff from across the Planning and Regeneration Service took part by:

- Looking out for the Fairtrade logo on products
- Organising a bring and share Fairtrade breakfast which included the following items; cereal bars, muesli, bananas, orange juice, coffee, tea, herbal tea, honey, golden syrup, chocolate spread, marmalade, strawberry jam, chocolate bars and homemade Fairtrade chocolate and banana muffins
- Wearing an item of coloured clothing to reflect the variety of Fairtrade food
- Helped to update the Charnwood Fairtrade directory with outlets in Charnwood that stocked Fairtrade items

For further information please contact the Sustainability Officer on 01509 634802.



**If you have any feedback about this newsletter, possible future articles or the Planning and Regeneration Service in general, then please email [localplans@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:localplans@charnwood.gov.uk)**