

P & R News

Planning and Regeneration



December 2015

Welcome to your newsletter

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

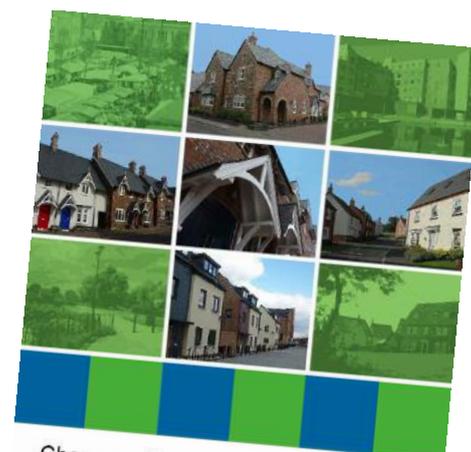
This is a bumper edition featuring a spotlight on the recently adopted Core Strategy so that you can find out more about the plan and what it means for Charnwood moving forward.

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

Core Strategy adopted after 11-year journey

Charnwood borough councillors agreed to adopt the Charnwood Core Strategy on November 9. The Core Strategy sets out the Council's vision of where new housing, employment land and infrastructure should go.

Adopting the strategy marks the end of an 11-year journey and follows extensive consultations with residents and interested parties. An independent Planning Inspector recently completed his examination of the Core Strategy, concluding that it was sound and could be adopted provided some amendments were made.



Charnwood Local Plan 2011 to 2028
Core Strategy
Adopted 9th November 2015



Councillor Eric Vardy, Cabinet Member for Planning

"This is a significant moment for us as a council and I am delighted that the Core Strategy has finally been adopted.

"This document not only says where significant new developments should go, it also says to developers where they should not go.

"I know some elements of the strategy are not universally supported, but I hope people will accept that we have taken every step to consider all views before reaching a conclusion.

"I am confident the Core Strategy will help control future growth and preserve the character and beauty of the borough as a whole."



What does the Core Strategy say?

The Core Strategy outlines where new homes will be built, identifies employment land and proposes health centres, parks, schools and other amenities which will boost local communities while enabling the Council to protect the borough from unwanted development.

The strategy plans for 13,940 homes and around 12,000 new jobs between 2011 and 2028.

The majority of these homes and jobs will be at the edge of Leicester and the main towns of Loughborough and Shepshed on large development sites:

- ❑ 3,000 homes and 16 ha of employment to the west of Loughborough
- ❑ 4,500 homes and 13 ha of employment to the north of Hamilton/east of Thurmaston
- ❑ around 1,500 homes and 15 ha of employment on land to the north of the A46 at Birstall

The Core Strategy also sets out how the Council aims to help boost economic recovery in the area with plans for the regeneration of the Watermead corridor within the Thurmaston and Syston area, support for further development of the Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park and a regeneration plan for Shepshed.

The Core Strategy recognises how important the Charnwood Forest, Great Central Railway and River Soar and Grand Union Canal are for Charnwood and how new development should be considered.



What will the Core Strategy be used for?

If you talk to the Council about a planning matter it is likely that officers will refer to the Core Strategy. This is because all planning decisions are taken having regard to the development plan for the area unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

We will explain what the policies mean and how they relate to a planning application, including why we think a development will be refused or approved.

We encourage anyone who is thinking about developing a site to take advantage of our pre-application advice service which allows early discussion with planning officers. This can help proposals be shaped towards an approval where possible.

For more information visit http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pre_application_planning_advice or phone 01509 634929.

Find out more

The Core Strategy is available on the Council's website at www.charnwood.gov.uk/corestrategydpd

The website includes a lot of background information including the evidence used by the Council to write the document and for its examination by the Planning Inspector.

It all started back in 2004. . .

Here's a brief look at how the Core Strategy has been developed over the years:

Important dates

- Started in 2004
- Major consultations in 2006, 2008, 2012, 2013
- Submitted to government in 2013
- Examination hearings March & Dec 2014 & Jan 2015
- Inspector's Report - September 2015

Engagement

- Sent 47,000 letters and emails

- Over 80 workshops and public meetings
- Received over 6,000 formal responses
- 7 Scrutiny sessions (2008 - 2013)

Examination facts and figures

- 17 sitting days, 30 sessions
- 16 Matters identified by the Inspector
- 14 Council officer witnesses
- 19 witnesses on behalf of council
- 44 witnesses on behalf of other organisations
- Around 500 interested people in the public gallery

What happens next?

The Core Strategy forms part of the development plan for Charnwood, largely replacing the Local Plan from 2004. However, there are some detailed policies, like those which define the boundaries around settlements and the areas of separation between settlements, which need to be updated. The Council is turning its attention to these detailed policies now and expects to share a programme for preparing them in the New Year.

The Core Strategy identifies three large areas of housing growth which are being brought forward as sustainable urban extensions:

North East Leicester Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE)

The Plans Committee resolved to grant planning permission for the SUE in November 2014. Over the last twelve months, a significant amount of work has been carried out between the partners on the legal agreements to secure the roads, schools and community facilities and also on the plans for a phased approach to building. The legal agreement is expected to be signed in the near future and applications for detailed phases of the site are expected to be ready in the New Year.

West of Loughborough Sustainable Urban Extension

The Plans Committee resolved to grant planning permission for the SUE in September. The partners are currently working on the legal agreements to secure the roads, schools and community facilities and expect to start work on detailed phases in the New Year.

North of Birstall - Broadnook Garden Suburb

The Planning and Regeneration Service has been working with the promoter of the Garden Suburb and expects a planning application to be submitted in the New Year. Work has focused on the arrangements for the Garden Suburb including the design, layout and open space management that a Garden Suburb will benefit from. It is expected that the promoter will hold a community consultation exercise before making a planning application.

More funding for shopfront scheme

Charnwood Borough Council has contributed a further £50,000 to encourage landlords and business owners to improve their shopfronts in Shepshed. Leicestershire County Council has also committed £10,000 to the scheme. To date 15 businesses have taken advantage of the scheme sharing almost £16,000 in grant allocations.

The borough council's scheme will fund 50 per cent of eligible works to shopfronts, ranging from painting and decorating through to the installation of new windows and signage, up to a maximum of £3,000.

Key success stories to date include The Gasworks Hair and Beauty Salon in Britannia Street and Bride Diva in Charnwood Road.

Two more businesses have been offered funding pending the approval of planning permission and a further six other businesses are discussing their requirement with us. If you run a business in Shepshed and are thinking about improving your shopfront please get in touch with us to see how we could help. Contact David Hankin on 01509 634727 or email:

Growth.support@charnwood.gov.uk



Development Management Service improvements

This year has been particularly challenging for everybody involved in the planning process given frequent changes to the planning rules and the emergence of the Council's Core Strategy.

In recent months there have also been a number of initiatives seeking to improve the process of dealing with planning applications. The improvements mainly revolve around the reporting of applications through to Plans Committee, which is generally a four-weekly cycle. A snapshot of these improvements is:

- Tweeting from Plans Committee – did you know that you can now follow the outcome of Plans Committee on the evening of the meeting? You can do this by following @charnwoodbc and looking out for hashtag #planning
- Review of the planning application process to include the earlier engagement of ward members – we are seeking to introduce an alternative to the current ward referral process in the New Year to provide a better balance between meeting performance targets and providing customer service.
- Greater promotion of our pre-application advice service - while there is a charge for certain types of development, this is a free service for householders and helps to minimise planning applications being submitted that do not meet the required standards.
- New standards to confirm that information, submitted after a Plans Committee agenda has been published, will be summarised and included in an additional report to the Plans Committee. From January the cut off point for late information will be midday on the day before the committee meeting so the additional report can be prepared and circulated before the meeting.

We are always looking at ways to improve and have more changes in the pipeline for the New Year. These include earlier engagement of parish councils and councillors in the planning application process and improvements to the online Planning Explorer portal, where current and historic planning application documents can be accessed.

Teamwork crucial for customer service

Our Customer Support, Validation and Registration teams are an integral part of the Planning and Regeneration Service.

In recent months the teams have regularly been completing the validation and registration of applications, issuing decisions and dealing with a wide range of other work within recognised service standards.

They have achieved this at a time of continuing high levels of application workload and changing work practices.

The teams are now supported by colleagues in the contact centre who can help customers with initial planning information requests and technical queries. The teams can then handle detailed technical queries with support from professional planning officers as necessary.

While these wider improvements are being implemented it would be helpful for any feedback on any recent experiences of making contact with the service using general telephone numbers. If you have any comments then please email them to development.control@charnwood.gov.uk



Enforcing the rules for everyone's benefit

The Enforcement Team is made up of four officers and their main role is to secure compliance with planning legislation.

It could be argued that without enforcement there is no point in having regulations. Imagine having laws without police officers to investigate and resolve crimes?

The planning system is wide ranging and when unauthorised development occurs it can have a serious negative impact on a person's day to day life. We deal with all types of unauthorised development:

- domestic extensions not in accordance with the approved plans or built without planning permission
- unauthorised works to protected trees
- unauthorised works to listed buildings
- untidy land
- changes of uses of land and buildings

The team also cover legislation for hedges that are deemed to be too high under the High Hedges Act. Formal action can result in the service of an enforcement notice or in some circumstances a prosecution depending on the breach.

The team try to secure compliance without using formal action although sometimes a formal approach is the only way to prevent harm from being caused by unauthorised development.

Communities at the heart of infrastructure planning

The Borough Council is changing the way it plans for community infrastructure such as village halls, green spaces, play spaces, recreational facilities and sports pitches. The Council will continue to actively engage with local communities and their representatives to understand their needs and priorities.

Community infrastructure can be secured and funded in a number of ways but in recent years Section 106 agreements have played a key role. These are legal agreements accompanying planning permissions which require developers to manage the impacts of new development either through the provision of new infrastructure and community facilities, or to pay for necessary facilities to be provided.

The Council also expects promoters of major developments to work with elected ward members, parish and town councils and appropriate community groups at an early stage before a planning application is formally submitted. This helps promoters understand the type of community provision that may be necessary to mitigate the potential impacts of their proposal.

There will always be a further opportunity for the community to express views during a formal consultation stage on submitted planning applications when all comments will be taken into account in the report to Plans Committee. However, involving the community more closely in the process will help identify issues early on; help community representatives to lead on community issues; and increase the possibility of securing agreement on the package of community infrastructure required to support new development.



Making the most of Neighbourhood Plans

There are now four designated Neighbourhood Plan Areas within Charnwood. These are Barrow upon Soar, The Wolds, Thurcaston and Cropston and Rearsby.

Each of these areas has a Neighbourhood Group working towards creating a Neighbourhood Plan for their community. The plan will allow them to guide the future development and growth of their area. They are each at various stages in the process with some areas likely to have their plans finalised during 2016.

A Neighbourhood Plan should contain a vision, aims as well as planning policies. It could include proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, and can even allocate key sites for specific kinds of development. Neighbourhood Plans relate to the use and development of land and associated social, economic and environmental issues. They may deal with a wide range of issues (like housing, employment, heritage and transport) or may simply focus on one or two issues that are of particular importance to the local area. They have to follow the Council's adopted Core Strategy.

A fifth Neighbourhood Plan Area, which covers the parish of Rothley has been consulted upon and is likely to be designated soon. A number of other parishes in the borough are also showing an interest in producing a Neighbourhood Plan which will enable them to have a say in the development taking place in their communities.

For further details please visit the neighbourhood planning page at www.localplan.charnwood.gov.uk or email localplans@charnwood.gov.uk; or telephone Paul Gilding, Senior Planning Officer on 01509 634765.

Council's pledge to cut carbon by 15%

2015 was on average the hottest year on record over the last 150 years. We are already more than 50 per cent towards the agreed global threshold of a two degree average temperature rise at which point we can expect more severe weather events, food stress, flooding, rising sea level and damage to the global ecosystem.

The 2015 Paris Climate Conference has just been held. Known as COP21, it is the first time in over 20 years of UN negotiations that a legally binding and universal agreement on climate change has been reached. The aim is to keep global warming below 2°C.

Closer to home, we want to play our part. The Council's activities currently produce over 2,100 tonnes of CO₂ a year, mostly from the heating and lighting of the main Southfields office, communal areas of sheltered housing complexes and other buildings.

We are showing our green credentials by making a pledge to cut our own carbon footprint by 15 per cent in the next five years. By 2020, we aim to have reduced our carbon footprint by 320 tonnes of CO₂ to around 1,800 tonnes a year.

To meet our 2020 Carbon Pledge, we plan to:

- invest in more energy efficient LED lighting and heating systems across our property portfolio and encourage a more energy conscious workforce
- invest in more energy efficient heating systems at Woodgate Chambers in Loughborough
- encourage Council staff to take part in internal energy reduction and carbon cutting campaigns
- become a leader in carbon management in Leicestershire

If all schemes are implemented, the Council could save £85,000 a year and so the investment will pay for itself in three and a half years.



Councillor Eric Vardy with an electric car used by various services.