

REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION: CHARNWOOD LOCAL PLAN

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Charnwood Core Strategy was adopted in November 2015. It sets out a strategy for delivering homes, jobs and infrastructure between 2011 and 2028. The Council and its partners are currently working together to implement the strategy set out in the plan.

1.2 Government guidance suggests that plans need to be reviewed every three to five years to ensure they are up to date and reflect evidence and current policy. The government also wants to see a single plan rather than multiple documents. It is sensible to start to prepare for the next plan; a single local plan that will provide for a longer period.

1.3 The first task when preparing a plan is to identify what the plan will deal with. This document provides an opportunity to understand and engage with interested parties on the future for Charnwood, the scope of the plan and what it should contain.

Chapter 2: Context

2.1 The Charnwood Core Strategy provides the vision, objectives and strategic policies for delivering growth in Charnwood to 2028.

2.2 The **vision** for Charnwood in 2028 is of one of the most desirable places to live, work and visit in the East Midlands, where development has been managed to improve the economy, quality of life and the environment. The vision sees Loughborough being recognised for the role it plays in the region's knowledge based economy and the main economic, social and cultural heart of the Borough. Business and technological links with the City of Leicester will have been strengthened and our community will have access to the jobs and homes to suit their needs. Charnwood will be recognised for high quality design, our landscape and the features it contains will have been protected and our community will see individual settlement identity retained and a cleaner and greener environment.

2.3 The **strategy** for Charnwood provides 13,940 new homes and 12,000 jobs between 2011 and 2028 as well as around 40-50,000 sqm of new shops, improvements to our transport system and the delivery of schools, parks and open spaces, and utilities like gas, water and electricity.

2.4 The Strategy locates new development where it helps provide people with good access to jobs, services and facilities; where new homes and jobs benefit from the existing infrastructure in our urban areas whilst new infrastructure that accompanies our strategic developments benefits as many people as possible. This includes public transport, roads, schools and leisure facilities. Our strategy supports regeneration, reduces the need for people to travel and provides a genuine choice to walk, cycle or use public transport.

2.5 The Strategy focuses the majority of new development on the edge of Leicester City and Loughborough in sustainable urban extensions to the North East of Leicester and West of Loughborough, a Garden Suburb to the North of Birstall, a Science and Enterprise Park adjacent to Loughborough University and a Regeneration Corridor at Watermead. Outside of the main

urban areas, there are also seven larger settlements which function as Service Centres to the more rural parts of our Borough. These settlements are Anstey, Barrow upon Soar, Mountsorrel, Quorn, Rothley, Sileby and Syston. They have a good range of services and community facilities including shops, schools and health centres and provide a sustainable location for a smaller scale of development, appropriate in size to their character and the services and facilities they contain. The remainder of the villages either have sufficient services and facilities to allow some small scale infill development or are not suitable locations for development.

2.6 The strategy also encourages economic development and regeneration, with new employment focussed in main centres, a town centre first approach to offices and shops, support for the rural economy and delivery of the Council's Regeneration Strategy, including:

- Loughborough Town Centre – Baxter Gate and the Inner Relief Road Corridor
- Loughborough Town Centre – Devonshire Square
- Bishop Meadow and Dishley Grange
- Loughborough's Industrial Heritage Quarter
- Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park
- Watermead Regeneration Corridor

2.7 The strategy also recognises the contribution our built and natural environment makes to our quality of life and sense of place. It promotes a mix of new homes to meet our needs, protects landscape character, ecology and historic assets and promotes green open spaces for sport and recreation, health and well-being and for community cohesion. The strategy identifies green wedges and areas of separation that should be protected because of the relationship between the countryside and urban areas and to protect settlement identify and also promotes the Charnwood Forest Regional Park, the River Soar and Grand Union Canal and a restored Garendon Park and Garden.

2.8 This strategy responded to the **issues** faced by our community including:

- A growing population – a need for 13,940 homes by 2028
- Deprived communities – pockets of deprivation at Loughborough, Thurmaston, Syston and Mountsorrel
- Housing market pressure – a lack of smaller, affordable housing and a need for specialist homes for the elderly and students
- A constrained economy – a lack of land for new and expanding businesses
- Increasing volumes of traffic – significant congestion at peak times with limited opportunities for alternatives to the private car outside of the main urban areas
- Shopping and leisure improvements – improvements needed in Loughborough, Shepshed and our other centres to secure their long term vitality and viability
- A lack of green space and leisure facilities – a need for a variety of green spaces and leisure facilities across the Borough
- The fear of crime – areas where crime levels are significantly higher than the Leicestershire average

- Heritage pressures – historic structures and buildings at risk from development pressures and neglect
- Maintaining settlement and landscape identity – pressure on open land between settlements, need to manage important landscapes like the Charnwood Forest and a need for a higher standard of design
- A pressured environment – a risk of fragmented ecological resources and an increased risk and severity of flooding along the River Soar and Wreake
- Climate change – a local role in the global issue of climate change

2.9 We need to see whether these issues are likely to remain over the longer period to 2036 and explore any new issues that the plan should tackle. Government policy is also changing, with the Housing and Planning Act introducing a new approach to Affordable Housing, higher density development at transport hubs and opportunities for Permission in Principle on brownfield land. There is also a Strategic Growth Plan being prepared for Leicester and Leicestershire which the new plan will take its lead from. The Strategic Growth Plan will be informed by a Housing and Economic Needs Assessment which will provide evidence for the number of homes and jobs needed across Leicester and Leicestershire to 2036. We are working with our partners to understand these issues and help shape the strategic direction for Leicester and Leicestershire.

Question 1

Do we still face the same issues in Charnwood?

Question 2

Are there any other changing circumstances that need to be understood?

Question 3

Should the strategy be continued to 2036?

Chapter 3: Preparing the New Plan

3.1 All local plans must be developed in accordance with legislation. In broad terms the steps we need to undertake are:

- set the scope of the plan;
- collect evidence;

- consult on the options available and select a preference;
- publish a plan for consultation;
- submit it to the Secretary of State for an examination in public; and
- adopt it if it passes that examination.

3.2 The programme for preparing the Charnwood Local Plan was published in the Local Development Scheme 2016. The key milestones we are working towards are:

- Regulation 18 Consultation on the scope of plan – July/August 2016
- Issues and Options Consultation – May/June 2017
- Preferred Option Consultation – November/December 2017
- Pre-submission Consultation – September/October 2018
- Submission – January 2019
- Inspector’s report published – April 2019
- Adoption of Local Plan – August 2019

How Long Should We Plan For?

3.3 The Core Strategy plans for the period to 2028, with many of the strategic developments continuing beyond 2028. One option is for the new plan to cover the period to 2031. However, given the level of engagement and resources required by all the stakeholders involved, a plan to 2031 does not appear to be a sensible option.

3.4 The evidence for new homes and jobs being prepared with our Leicester and Leicestershire partners will provide the evidence to plan for the period to 2036. The majority of our partner authorities are using this evidence to plan for the period to 2036. This is the second option for the plan.

3.5 The Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire will also set a high level framework for growth for the period to 2050. Whilst this timescale is also an option it is more difficult to plan at a local level for longer periods given the potential for circumstances to change.

3.6 Taking into account the type of evidence we need to provide a robust plan and the resources and timescales for preparing the new plan we believe it should provide for the period to 2036.

Question 4

Do you agree that the new plan cover the period to 2036?

What Issues Do We Need To Plan For?

3.7 The issues we needed to plan for in the Core Strategy are set out in section 2. We need to know whether these issues have changed, prepare evidence to understand that and the options available to deal with them. This section presents a series of topic areas and we would welcome comments on it, together with the core evidence needed and options available to us.

Amount of Development

3.8 A significant amount of development is already planned in Charnwood. However, there is likely to be a need for more homes and jobs for the period beyond 2028. Some of the strategic developments provided by the Core Strategy will continue to be developed beyond 2028. Understanding the amount of development needed is crucial, especially in the context of what is already planned.

3.9 We will prepare the following core evidence to help us understand the amount of development needed:

Evidence Name	Provides...
Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment	The objective assessment of need for homes and jobs in Charnwood and understanding Charnwood's role in Leicester and Leicestershire
Charnwood Annual Monitoring Report	Data on the amounts of development built and with permission that can contribute to supply
Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment	Information about housing and employment sites which are available and might contribute towards the supply in the future
Town Centre Study	Information about the amount of shops, offices and leisure development needed in town centres
Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study	An assessment of the open space, sport and recreation land that is available and what new spaces or improvements are needed

Question 5

Do we need any other evidence to understand the amount of development needed?

Spatial Strategy

3.10 We want new homes and jobs to be in the right places in Charnwood and where they are needed. The Core Strategy already confirms the agreed approach to 2028 but we want to know whether this should continue for a longer period or whether a different approach is needed beyond 2028.

3.11 We will prepare the following core evidence to help us understand and plan for the spatial strategy:

Evidence Name	Provides...
Charnwood Settlement Hierarchy Assessment	Information about the facilities and services available in settlements and their relative sustainability
Charnwood Annual Monitoring Report	Data on the homes and jobs being delivered by the Core Strategy and their contribution to supply
Charnwood Strategic Options Assessment	An assessment of strategic distribution and location options available to meet the need for new development
Environmental Capacity Audit	An assessment of the environmental capacity for Charnwood to accommodate development
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	An assessment of flood risk to inform growth options
Landscape Character Assessment	An assessment of landscape character to inform growth options
Transport Modelling	Evidence of transport capacity constraints and opportunities for mitigation to inform growth options
Infrastructure Assessment	An assessment of the infrastructure required to deliver growth options

Question 6

Do we need any other evidence to understand and plan for the spatial strategy?

Transport Strategy

3.12 The Core Strategy proposes significant investment in transport improvements to support and mitigate the growth being delivered to 2028. We need to understand how travel patterns will grow and change over the longer period beyond 2028 and the opportunities available to encourage a greater proportion of trips by sustainable means like walking, cycling and public transport.

3.13 We will prepare the following core evidence to help us understand and plan for the transport strategy:

Evidence Name	Provides...
Transport Modelling	Evidence and testing for transport solutions to mitigate growth options
Infrastructure Assessment	Assessment of planned and potential road and public transport improvements

Question 7

Do we need any other evidence to understand and plan for the transport strategy?

Managing the Environment

3.14 Pressure on the environment is likely to continue from climate change, industry and agriculture, leisure and the need for development. We need to understand strategic and local landscape issues and wildlife, open space, heritage and design matters and how they can be balanced with the need for development. Understanding this is essential if the new plan is to include detailed policies to manage the impacts of development on the environment and protect and enhance it for the value it contributes to Charnwood.

3.15 We will prepare the following core evidence to help us understand and plan for the environment:

Evidence Name	Provides...
Charnwood Annual Monitoring Report	Data on the Core Strategy environment policies
Environmental Capacity Audit	An assessment of the environmental capacity for Charnwood to accommodate development

Evidence Name	Provides...
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	An assessment of flood risk to inform environmental strategy
Landscape Character Assessment	An assessment of landscape character to inform environmental strategy
Green Wedge and Area of Separation Study	A review of open land designations at the edges settlements
Phase 1 Habitat Survey	A borough wide assessment of ecological habitats
Habitat Regulations Assessment	An assessment of the potential for significant effects upon European sites of natural conservation
Heritage Assessment	An assessment of heritage assets to inform environmental strategy
Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment	An assessment of the potential for renewable and low carbon energy
Open Space Sport and Recreation Study	An assessment of the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces to inform recommended standards for new development
Charnwood Regional Forest Strategy	A strategy for the long term activities to achieve the Park

Question 8

Do we need any other evidence to understand and plan for the environment?

Homes

3.16 The Core Strategy includes a set of policies that seek to balance the housing stock with our community's need for homes. Over the longer period the community will continue to grow and the Government's desire for increased home ownership will change the way in which affordable homes are provided.

3.17 The need for different types, mix and tenures of homes and affordable homes, including starter homes, all need to be understood. We also need to understand the needs of different groups in the community, how the housing market is working and the programmes and funding arrangements for delivering new affordable homes if the plan is to best meet the needs of our growing community.

3.18 We will prepare the following core evidence to help us understand and plan for the type, mix and tenure of homes needed:

Evidence Name	Provides...
Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment	The objective assessment of need for homes in Charnwood, including type, mix and tenure of homes needed
Charnwood Annual Monitoring Report	Data on the type, mix and tenure of homes built and with permission
Affordable Housing Viability Assessment	An assessment of economic viability of affordable housing to inform housing policies
Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment	An assessment of the need for Gypsy and Traveller site provision

Question 9

Do we need any other evidence to understand and plan for the type, mix and tenure of homes needed?

Jobs and the Economy

3.19 The Core Strategy promotes economic, regeneration and tourism priorities for Charnwood to 2028 which will still be important for Charnwood. Over the longer period we need to understand whether this strategy for the economy should continue or whether new priorities will emerge. This might include industries and sectors that we need to protect, or provide for and encourage. Town and District centres will continue to be at the heart of our communities for people and businesses but forecasts suggest markets and the way business and visitors use existing centres will continue to change so this needs to be understood and planned for.

3.20 We will prepare the following core evidence to help us understand and plan for the economy:

Evidence Name	Provides...
Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment	the objective assessment of need for jobs in Charnwood
Employment Land Study	An understanding of business land and requirements in Charnwood
Town Centre and Retail Study	An understanding of the role of different centres and the requirement for town centre uses like shops
Loughborough Town Centre Masterplan	An economic strategy for the town centre to inform the policies required to manage and deliver change
Watermead Regeneration Corridor Masterplan	A strategy and action plan for the Watermead corridor to inform the policies required to manage and deliver change
Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park Masterplan	A concept masterplan for the delivery of knowledge based business sectors and associated infrastructure to inform the policies required to manage and deliver change
Loughborough Heritage Quarter Study	An assessment of the cultural and historic opportunities to benefit the area
Grand Union Canal and River Soar Strategy	An strategy and action plan for the canal and river corridor and signal for the policies required to manage and deliver change
Charnwood Annual Monitoring Report	Data on the amounts of development built and with permission that can contribute to supply

Question 10

Do we need any other evidence to understand and plan for the economy?

Community Facilities and Services

3.21 The Core Strategy recognised that our communities were going to grow and located growth where it could benefit from and support existing services and facilities. Over the longer period we might expect to see changes in the services and facilities communities use or need and some communities are likely to see their services and facilities come under pressure. For

many communities these issues might be important for neighbourhood plans and we want to understand what framework is needed to help plan for this in both the local plan and any neighbourhood plans.

3.22 We will prepare the following core evidence to help us understand and plan for the community and the facilities and services needed:

Evidence Name	Provides...
Charnwood Settlement Hierarchy Assessment	Information about the facilities and services available in settlements
Charnwood Annual Monitoring Report	Data on the amounts of development built and with permission that can contribute to supply

Question 11

Do we need any other evidence to understand and plan for the community facilities and services needed?

Delivery and Infrastructure

3.23 There will be a close relationship between the Charnwood Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the local plan. We need to understand how we make sure development happens at the right time and in the right place and how we deliver much needed infrastructure. The Core Strategy included strategic infrastructure to 2028 and its delivery and the relationship it will have with new growth and any new infrastructure requirements needs to be considered if the plan is to have the best chance to happen and Charnwood is not to be left with insufficient infrastructure or exposed to a lack of housing and employment supply.

3.24 We will prepare the following core evidence to help us understand and plan for the delivery of homes, jobs and infrastructure:

Evidence Name	Provides...
Charnwood Infrastructure Study	An assessment of the infrastructure required to deliver growth options
Transport Modelling	Evidence and testing for transport solutions to mitigate growth options

Question 12

Do we need any other evidence to understand and plan for infrastructure delivery?

Monitoring the Plan

3.25 We will prepare a local plan that is capable of delivering our vision and objectives for Charnwood. However, the only way we can be certain that the plan is delivering is to undertake robust and effective monitoring and be prepared to take action if the plan is failing to deliver. Taking decisions to intervene or change direction will need to be carefully considered so that the timescales and circumstances are clear to the public, developers and the business community as well as what we might expect to see in those circumstances.

3.26 National guidance requires local planning authorities to maintain a supply of sites sufficient to meet the need for homes for a five year period. Local plans also look further ahead, usually for a fifteen year period. When there are insufficient sites for the homes needed or sites simply aren't coming forward it can lead to a loss of control for local planning authorities. We will need to consider the possibility and implications of this happening and identify a robust response that can be taken in a timely manner.

Evidence Name	Provides...
Soft Market Testing	An understanding of the housing market, its dynamic relationship to the strategy and options for mitigating against market failure
Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment	An assessment of the deliverability of sites across Charnwood and dialogue with the industry on delivery and the consequences for a lack of supply
Charnwood Annual Monitoring Report	Data on the delivery of development and the implementation of policies in the plan

Question 13

Do we need any other evidence to monitor and respond to a lack of delivery?

What Should The Plan Aim To Do Overall When All These Things Are Considered?

3.27 The Core Strategy included a vision for Charnwood to 2028 (see Section 2) and the Council and its partners are now working to deliver that vision. Over the longer period, we need to consider whether that vision should continue or whether there is anything missing from it or if a change in direction is needed. Key investment decisions have been taken to implement the strategy to achieve the vision to 2028 and it is unlikely that the circumstances in Charnwood will shift significantly to the extent that a fundamental change in direction is needed. However, our evidence, set out against the issues we face, in this document will help us understand any changing context. We need to understand whether there is anything we have not taken into account.

Question 14

Should the Core Strategy Vision to 2028 continue for the period to 2036?

Chapter 4: Commenting on the scope of the Charnwood Local Plan

What we are asking

4.1 We want to know if the set of issues identified in this document are right or whether there are other things we aren't aware of or have missed. The document poses a series of questions which are helpful to frame comments against but interested parties need not be limited or constrained by these in helping us to identify the scope of the plan.

How to become involved in this discussion

4.2 The Council is committed to putting the customer at the heart of everything we do. Local plans are not prepared in isolation and in order to develop effective plans and make the best possible decisions the Council needs a positive input from key partners in the community and other interested organisations.

4.3 This document is the first formal step in preparing a new local plan for Charnwood and satisfies Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. In accordance with the Charnwood Statement of Community Involvement (January 2014) we are inviting specific consultation bodies and to make representations to us.

4.4 Please visit our portal at <http://consult.charnwood.gov.uk/portal/planning/newlocalplan/reg18consult>

4.5 We also understand that some people prefer to submit comments by email or by letter. If you are unable to make your comments online please send your comments to localplans@charnwood.gov.uk or by letter to:

Plans, Policies and Place-Making Team
Charnwood Borough Council
Southfields Road
Loughborough
LE11 2TN

4.6 If you wish to discuss the document and the issues it considers please contact us by the email address above or by telephone at 01509 634929. Representations on the scope of the plan are invited up to the 23rd August 2016.

What happens next

4.7 We will use responses to prepare a report setting out what we have learned and to identify the scope of the plan. This report will be published on our website and will be used as the trigger for evidence collection and will inform the next stage of the plan, an issues and options exercise that is programmed for May to June 2017.