Minutes of a meeting of the South Charnwood (Syston, Thurmaston, and Wreake Villages) Area Forum held at the Syston Catholic Church Hall, The Presbytery, 63 Broad Street, Syston on Thursday 13th November 2008

Present

Members of the Forum

County and District Councillors

Mr P Harley (Chair) Leicestershire County Council, Charnwood Borough Council and Thurmaston Parish Council.
Mr D Houseman Leicestershire County Council
Prof M E Preston Leicestershire County Council, Charnwood Borough Council and Rearsby Parish Council
Cllr C Duffy Charnwood Borough Council
Cllr T Noon Charnwood Borough Council
Cllr T Barkley Charnwood Borough Council

Parish Representatives

Ms P Weston-Webb Cossington Parish Council
Mr A Smith Thurmaston Parish Council
Mr Philip E. Bates Thrussington Parish Council
Mr D Cannon East Goscote Parish Council
Mr T Griffiths Syston Town Council
Mr B. Frodsham Rearsby Parish Council
Mr N King Barkby and Barkby Thorpe Parish Council

Residents present at the meeting

Neville Beaver; Helena Biddles; Steve Brown; George Braybrook; Kevin Craddock; Roger Cross; C Davies; Joan Draycott; Neil Draycott; Neil Draper; Bob Fitch; Alan Harris; Sue Lewis; Maureen Loseby; Maggi Litchfield; Mike McLoughlin; Jim Smith; Doreen Shuttlewood; Ellie Thornton Mick Westwood and Lyn Westwood.

Officers

PC Freeman Leicestershire Constabulary
PC Porter Leicestershire Constabulary
PC Stephenson Leicestershire Constabulary
PC Oliver Leicestershire Constabulary
PCSO Curtis Leicestershire Constabulary
PCSO Ogden Leicestershire Constabulary
28. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th March were agreed as a correct record subject to the following corrections being made to the attendance and apologies list.

Mrs A. Smith represented Thurmaston Parish Council
Mr M. Lowe (not Mr M. Love) of Thurmaston Parish Council tendered apologies

29. Disclosure of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

30. Update from Leicestershire Constabulary

PC Andy Oliver (Syston), PC Ed Stephenson (East Goscote and Queniborough) and PC Phil Porter (Thurmaston) updated the Forum on progress made against the priorities previously identified and the focus over the next six months.

Copies of the Neighbourhood Newsletters for Autumn/Winter 2008 covering activities in all three police beats were circulated and copies filed with these minutes.

The Chairman and members of the Forum thanked the PCs and PCSOs for their attendance and for the updates now provided.
Local Development Framework – Core Strategy

Clare Clarke, Planning Officer from Charnwood Borough Council gave a powerpoint presentation setting out the latest proposals in the Core Strategy, a key planning documents that will form part of the Local Development Framework. Copies of the slides used in the presentation are filed with these minutes.

The Forum was advised that the challenge facing this Council along with all other Councils was to provide additional housing to meet the expected demand as well as provide the necessary infrastructure and jobs whilst at the same time protecting and enhancing the environment.

The Charnwood Core Strategy has been in preparation for some time. Briefly this involved looking at the potential of sites around Loughborough, Shepshed and the north of Leicester and assessing these against certain defined social, economic and environmental objectives. It also had to develop proposals against a ‘Settlement Hierarchy’ set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy. Arising from this initial appraisal the following two areas have been identified for further study:-

- An area to the west of Loughborough towards Shepshed
- An area to the East of Thurmaston and north of Hamilton

The proposals which affect the area covered by this Forum relate to the Thurmaston area. It is proposed to provide 5000 new homes and 50 hectares of employment land plus new shops, schools and community facilities. This area has been identified on the basis that it:-

- offers the opportunity to link the new development with the existing community;
- allows greater possibility of linking in and improve the existing road network;
- offers greater opportunities for employment as it will be more attractive to potential investors due to its close proximity to the City;
- reduces the take of good quality agricultural land
- would help address issues of deprivation and provision of social housing.

The proposals now being put forward were at an early stage of development and as such no detailed plans were available. If the two areas identified were to be agreed by the Cabinet at Charnwood as meritng further investigation detailed plans would then be drawn up These detailed plans would then be the subject of a further round of consultation.
The Chairman advised the Forum that it was important for members of the forum as well as residents to consider the proposals now put forward and to make their views known both at this meeting but also to officers at Charnwood Borough Council. In making comments consideration should be given not only at the impact of the proposals on the area but also whether there would be merit in the Council exploring further, other areas in the borough, that would be better suited for such developments.

The following points/concerns were put forward by residents in the course of the discussion:

Consultation

a) All residents expressed concern that the consultation document was inadequate in that it failed to set out what was envisaged for the area e.g. it was still unclear where the greenspace and new roads were to be. As such it was difficult to make any informed comment on the proposals. Given that the Borough Council had been working on this proposal for at least two years this lack of information was extremely disappointing;

b) A number of residents particularly those in Colby Drive indicated that they were not made aware of the proposals.

c) The full consultation document was not readily available. A copy was available for reference purposes in the local library and residents were required to purchase a copy if required. The summary consultation document was wholly inadequate. This hindered the ability of residents to analyse the proposals and limited their ability to comment. The timescale for consultation was also very tight.

Officer Response

The proposals at this stage were aimed at identifying those areas of the Borough which would meet the Regional Spatial Strategy requirements and provide the most sustainable approach to development and therefore merit further investigation. As such detailed proposals were not drawn up. These would be drawn up when a decision has been taken by the Cabinet following this consultation.

The Borough Council had used the Council Tax database to send flyers so that all residents in the area should have been aware of the proposals and consultation arrangements.
The concerns about the availability of the full consultation document were noted. Copies were available to view on the website. The timescale for consultation is in line with national guidance of six weeks.

Identification of Area

d) The Core Strategy sets out the pros and cons of a number of sites but there is no clear explanation as to why the two sites were chosen ahead of others considered. In this regard the view was expressed that the Birstall site, given its proximately to the A46, lack of issues about flooding perhaps offered a better alternative;

e) Greater emphasis should be placed on brownfield sites;

f) Whilst the assurances about no decision having been made were noted, in identifying these two sites for further investigation and excluding the others there is a serious danger of a momentum being built up for developing these two sites.

Officer Response

The views now expressed regarding other sites would be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet

The Core Strategy does envisage greater use of brownfield sites. The number of homes that could be accommodated on brownfield sites was 1500 on the basis of current evidence. Therefore, if the Borough is to deliver the additional 10000 houses required of it, greenfield sites would need to be identified.

The proposals put forward are those of officers. It would be open to the Cabinet to ask officers to explore other options.

Impact on the area

g) The proposed development would alter the character of the area from a village setting to a suburb of the city;

h) The scale of development proposed (5000 homes) would exacerbate the already serious problem of congested roads in particular Melton Road and Humberstone Lane;

i) There remains serious concern about the ability to regenerate the area and create the necessary jobs locally to cater for the new population growth. If this proves to be the case there would be
increased travel to work which would add to road traffic even after mitigation;

j) There was little clear evidence of how the proposals would address issues of deprivation in the area;

k) Flooding has been an ongoing issue in the area and the building of additional homes on essential green field area would greatly increase the risk of flooding to surrounding areas;

l) The loss of the greenfield between Thurmaston and the City would adversely affect the whole character of the area and would reduce the property values of those homes which were currently overlooking open countryside who were now to have large scale development;

m) Whilst recognising the need to find transit sites for gypsies and travellers there remained concern as to whether the location was appropriate. There was also a lack of information of how such a facility would be managed so the impact on residents in the area was minimised.

n) Given the 'credit crunch' the need for housing should be revisited. By way of example the developments at Birstall have stalled and the developer contributions due from the site have not been forthcoming. There is a risk that a similar situation may arise with this proposed development.

**Officer Response**

The views now expressed would be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet. With regard to the specific points raised the Forum was advised as follows:-

*It was recognised that the proposed development would create difficulties with increased traffic and pressure on infrastructure. The proposal therefore, is for about 5000 homes to provide a scale of development that would help obtain the necessary developer contributions to pay for the improved infrastructure.*

*The Regional Spatial Strategy requires the Borough to identify sites deemed as ‘Sustainable Urban Extensions’ to the Principal Urban Areas of Leicester and Sub-Regional Centre of Loughborough.*

*Detailed plans have yet to be drawn up but if the view of the Cabinet were to require further investigation of this site the concerns about the*
maintaining some green wedge between Thurmaston and the City would be considered as would the need for green areas within the proposed development.

The risk assessment on this site demonstrated that with sustainable urban drainage systems the impact of flooding would be mitigated and there is a possibility of providing attenuation to reduce overall flooding issues in the area;

The concerns expressed regarding transit sites for travellers were noted. The Borough Council needed to provide such sites as failure to do so would seriously curtail its ability to move travellers on quickly from unauthorised encampments which was seen by many as a major problem;

The concerns about detailed plans was noted. If this site was to be further investigated then detailed plans would be drawn up and a further round of consultation would be undertaken.

The comments about the ‘credit crunch’ are noted. However the issue is to provide for the housing needs for 20 years hence.

At this point the Chairman invited County and Borough Councillors to comment on the proposals. The following comments were made:-

- Those members who were on the Cabinet at Charnwood confirmed that they had not discussed the issue of where the new housing should be sited and would look at all the concerns raised.

- Some members expressed the view that the location of new houses in the Thurmaston area was inappropriate and that consideration should be given to developments in the Birstall area which they considered would be less damaging;

- The concerns raised by residents were echoed and in particular the concerns about the adequacy of the information on which to form a view should be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet.

The Chairman thanked all those present for their contribution to the debate and assured them that the comments made would be drawn to the attention of members of Cabinet. He reminded the Forum that the consultation period closes on 5th December and that there was an opportunity for people to submit any further comments either via the website or the response sheets which were with copies of the summary proposals which were circulated to all at the meeting.
32. **Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA – Influencing the Budget**

At the request of the Chairman this item was deferred to the next meeting.

33. **Capital Grants Applications**

   a)  **Drainage works at plats Lane Recreation Ground, Cossington**

   The Forum considered a summary of a bid that had been submitted to Charnwood Borough Council requesting a £20,000 contribution for new drainage works at the Platts Lane Recreation Ground.

   RESOLVED that Charnwood Borough Council be advised that this Forum unanimously supports the grant application.

   b)  **Redevelopment of Rearsby Village Hall**

   The Forum considered a summary of a bid that had been submitted to Charnwood Borough Council requesting a £20,000 contribution for the redevelopment of the Village Hall.

   RESOLVED that Charnwood Borough Council be advised that this Forum unanimously supports the grant application.

34. **Question Time**

Questions submitted included several of direct relevance to the LDF Consultation (minute 31 above), the lack of street cleaners in Barkby Thorpe and the need for a hydrotherapy pool locally. These will be itemised separately and responses thereto will be posted on the website.

35. **Reports and Feedback**

   a)  **Name of the Forum**

   The Forum noted the views of the Charnwood Area Forum Coordination Group and which was supported by Charnwood Together.

   It was moved by Mr Houseman and seconded by Mr Noon and carried that the Forum should be called ‘South Charnwood (Syston, Thurmaston, and Wreake Villages) Area Forum’.
b) **Petition – East Goscote Parish Council (Minute 16 (a) refers**

The Forum was advised that the additional lighting requested by the petitioners had now been provided.

c) **Petition – Cossington Parish Council (Minute 16 (b) refers**

The Forum was advised that the outcome of the investigations by the Highways Authority would be reported to the next Highways Forum meeting in January.

d) **Grant Application – Ratcliffe on the Wreake Village Hall (Minute 21 (a) refers**

The request for grant aid was approved by Charnwood Borough Council.

e) **Grant Application – Syston Twon Cricket Club (Minute 21 (b) refers**

The request for grant aid was approved by Charnwood Borough Council following the submission of a revised application.

36. **Election of Chairman**

It was moved by Mr Harley, seconded and carried that Mr D. Houseman be elected Chairman of the Forum for the next twelve months.

    *At this point Mr Houseman took the Chair*

Mr Houseman thanked Mr Harley for the considerable effort he had put in to the work of the Forum during the period of his Chairmanship. Members of the Forum echoed the Chairman’s sentiments.

37. **Election of Chairman**

It was moved by Mr Houseman and seconded and carried that Mr Harley be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Forum for the next twelve months.

38. **Issues for future meetings**

The following issues were identified:

a) New Funding arrangements for the voluntary sector and the implications thereof on Volunteer bureaux
b) Crime and Anti Social Behaviour – Update from Leicestershire Constabulary

c) Further Update on the Local Development Framework

d) Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA – Influencing the Budget

The Chairman urged members of the Forum to identify issues of concern which could be addressed by the Forum and to feed those into Richard Downing.

39. Date of next meeting and Frequency of meetings

It was AGREED that the Forum should meet twice a year with the option of a third meeting if required.

Officers in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman to agree the date of the next meeting to be held one of the following venues (subject to availability):

East Goscote Village Hall
Thurmaston Community Centre, Silverdale Drive

13th November 2008
6.30pm – 9.40pm

CHAIRMAN