

Charnwood Regeneration Strategy

September 2012

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Loughborough's Industrial Heritage Quarter
Astra Zeneca Site & Dishley Grange
The Watermead Corridor
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A REGENERATION STRATEGY FOR CHARNWOOD

INTRODUCTION

This strategy identifies priorities for physical regeneration within Charnwood. It is part of the delivery mechanism for the Council's long term Vision for the Borough. It takes into account the Council's established planning policy framework, its overall corporate strategy and sub regional priorities.

Through this strategy the Council will promote economic growth that meets the needs of our communities and maximise opportunities to attract external funding. It will be a proactive community leader in supporting local businesses and improving employment prospects for residents.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

The previous Corporate Plan set the framework over the past three years for the delivery of major regeneration initiatives. Under its direction the Council has:

- Been a key partner and funder in The Eastern Gateway project with the delivery of 122 new homes, a new link road and related improvements to the transport interchange at Loughborough's Midland railway station.
- Supported the development of the Loughborough town centre Business Improvement District (BID), with the establishment of the BID Board and collection of the first levy from April 2012.
- Made a commitment to promoting Loughborough as being "Central to Excellence."
- Revised the programme for the submission of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy which will be the primary vehicle for the direction of growth and the delivery of infrastructure within Charnwood over the period up to 2028.
- Developed a new Vision for the Borough setting out its aspirations and priorities for the longer term.

THE VISION FOR CHARNWOOD

"In 2033 Charnwood as a Place will bea vision of green, with countryside in the heart of our towns and vibrant villages nestled in the heart of the forest, each with its own distinct character."

This vision captures the essence of what Charnwood will be like into the future. Making sure there is a vibrant and strong local economy to support the environment, lifestyles and development of our places is a key objective of the Council. The emphasis will be on supporting a prosperous and thriving business community, embracing innovation and enterprise, and providing a wide range of employment opportunities across the Borough. Diversity within those opportunities will be integral to this strategy.

The strategic objectives are to:

- Attract highly specialised high-tech industry with an international reputation
- Support specialist and traditional agricultural skills, and sustain rural businesses
- Encourage tourism that will retain the character and heritage of rural communities.
- Value young people and provide them with opportunities to learn through our internationally acclaimed university and colleges, and through a range of apprenticeships in emerging technologies.
- Ensure there is a supply of designated employment land to encourage a wide range of businesses to take advantage of our central location supported by fast and efficient transport links.
- Aspire to develop a global reputation in commercial niches, especially in science and technology, and in particular with partners in the newly leading world economies.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The new Corporate Plan for the period 2012 – 2016 maintains previous commitments to work collaboratively with key partners across the Borough and County to take full advantage of expertise, maximise access to resources, and deliver a cohesive strategy in support of economic development and regeneration.

Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP)

The LLEP is a public/private sector partnership which provides strategic leadership across Leicestershire and Leicester to:

- Accelerate existing job growth
- Improve business survival and productivity, and
- Facilitate sector development.

The key functions of the LLEP Board are to:

- Continuously review the local economic challenges and opportunities in the form of its strategic priorities.
- Engage with local sector/stakeholder groups to form Task and Finish project teams to deliver against agreed target outcomes.
- Engage with Central Government and agencies to secure national and European Union funding,
- Engage with local authorities to align resources and funding,
- Influence local and national employment and spending in the area, and,
- Plug Leicester and Leicestershire into national programmes and economic activity.

Strategic priorities for the LLEP have been agreed and are attached at Appendix 1. Clearly not all of the objectives are the direct responsibility of the Council, but the objectives and activities following in this strategy will complement and support the LLEP's strategic objectives. The LLEP will provide a business led vehicle for the co-ordination and delivery of economic development initiatives, including access to major funding streams across the sub region. Charnwood's vision and strategy can be an essential part of making sure that the LLEP will be a success.

Leicestershire County Council

A major boost to the Council's ambitions for growth was delivered with the government's announcement in December 2011 that £14.8 million had been approved for the implementation of the Loughborough Town Centre Transport scheme, incorporating the construction of an Inner Relief Road, junction improvements along Epinal Way and public transport enhancements, opening up significant redevelopment and regeneration opportunities. The County Council anticipate a scheme completion date in the Spring of 2015.

The Council will work closely with the County Council in developing and delivering the transport infrastructure necessary to support the additional homes and jobs proposed through the Local Development Framework.

Loughborough Business Improvement District (Bid)

The BID will raise through the local levy some £1.15 million over the five year period to 2017. That investment will be directed by the private sector BID board towards adding value to the town centre, improving access and safety, celebrating events and marketing. The Council has agreed a base line to sustain existing levels of service provision and will look to dovetail investment to complement and enhance the work of the BID.

Loughborough University & Colleges

Loughborough University enjoys an international reputation and has an established close working relationship with the Council. Its success in the training and development of young people is supported by the local colleges and business apprenticeships. The Council will continue to work closely with all training and development partners to harness the potential of graduates and to encourage the skills sets required to support the priorities for the local economy. It is vital to harness the talent that will enable high technology and innovative sectors to grow bringing prosperity to the local economy and build links with leading world economies.

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

Close examination of the local economy and dialogue with local businesses established in Charnwood have indicated that the priority sectors for the area should be:

- Knowledge based industries (including high tech engineering)
- Environmental technologies (including construction), and
- Business services

The LLEP has already played a major role in determining the sub regional priorities. An Enterprise Zone has been established at the Motor Industries Research Association (MIRA) facility at Hinckley attracting £19.4 million financial support through the first round of allocations from the Regional Growth Fund. Loughborough will also benefit from that fund with £4.5 million allocated to GE Druck Ltd to establish a research and development facility at Loughborough University.

The LLEP will also to take a lead in the distribution of the £8.9 million Growing Places Fund, allocation to Leicester and Leicestershire. Bids for the first tranche of allocations have already been approved. Three bids were submitted for locations in the Borough; the lessons gathered in the preparation of those bids will be used to strengthen future bids as the fund is recycled through subsequent bidding rounds.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR REGENERATION

The Council has identified seven key locations for regeneration activity. These are seen as pivotal in boosting the local economy and have been identified due to their prominence in relation to the following criteria:

Strategic Location: The site should be located within an area where growth is to be channelled in accordance with the overall strategy directed towards urban concentration of development and renewal, and where it can best serve the priority outcomes identified in the Local Economic Assessment.

Size: The site, individually or in combination with adjacent regeneration opportunities, should be of sufficient size and scale to attract and secure best value for money through the concentration of limited resources.

Impact on the Local Community: The site should aim to deliver a significant number of new homes, employment opportunities and/or restoration of the urban fabric, with particular emphasis given to projects closely aligned to the regeneration of designated Neighbourhood Priority Areas.

Opportunity: The site should offer a realistic prospect of delivery through the involvement of private sector partners and potential access to essential funding streams.

In light of these considerations the priority areas are defined as:

Loughborough Town Centre: Baxter Gate & the Inner Relief Road Corridor

A high profile area served by the main routes through the town. The main site comprises opportunities for regeneration served by the proposed Inner Relief Road including up to 2.8 hectares at the former Baxter Gate Hospital along with adjacent land in the ownership of the Health Authority and privately owned property fronting Leicester Road and Aumberry Gap.

A further opportunity on a 0.75 ha site adjacent to Limehurst Avenue, with the capability to deliver substantial mixed use development incorporating housing, retail, business, parking and commercial uses is also included.

Loughborough Town Centre: Devonshire Square

An exceptional opportunity to redevelop up to 1.35 ha incorporating the Granby Street surface car park, retail property fronting Devonshire Square, community uses and vacant land and buildings off Bleach Yard. The site has the capacity to deliver improved retail floor space, housing, offices, commercial uses and replacement community uses. Adjacent to Queens Park, a quality development that provides an enhanced townscape and public realm, that reflects the desire for world class design and innovation, will be encouraged.

Astra Zeneca & Dishley Grange

A key priority following the withdrawal of the town's major employer a co-ordinated approach will be encouraged although the emphasis will be on the early occupation or redevelopment, as necessary. The 28 hectare former research and development facility is fully serviced. The development of 9.5 ha of adjacent general industrial land to deliver in the region of 2,000 jobs may provide additional opportunities for a wide range of specialist light industrial/commercial/technology based businesses.

Loughborough's Industrial Heritage Quarter

Reinvigorating neighbourhoods where the previous industrial heritage has declined will be a real opportunity to provide a long lasting legacy through the regeneration of pockets of vacant and derelict land within the East Loughborough Neighbourhood Priority Area. There is potential to deliver in the region of 400 homes (at least 30% affordable), local employment opportunities, workspace, community facilities, heritage assets, canal corridor enhancements and public realm improvements. In addition there is the opportunity to deliver 18 ha of landscaped parkland. The Great Central Railway already represents a major tourism asset and local regeneration opportunities may contribute to its heritage value and wider commercial potential.

Science & Enterprise Park

A commitment to the diversification and strengthening of the local economy by promoting, initially, a 10.7 hectare extension to the Loughborough Science Park. The development will support 2,000 jobs in the priority knowledge based, high technology sector sustained by spin out enterprises from Loughborough University and inward investment from the research and development sector. There is a further commitment to provide for the subsequent expansion of the Science Park in the longer term to affirm and build upon Loughborough's reputation for innovation and creativity in new technology. The Council will work alongside the University and enabling partners to deliver an overall strategy for the development of the site.

Watermead Corridor (Thurmaston/Syston)

A co-ordinated approach to the restoration of over 16 ha of derelict land, a legacy of sand and gravel extraction along the Soar Valley, to support new businesses. The site is conveniently and accessibly located in close proximity to the South Charnwood Neighbourhood Priority Areas. It is also intended to enable investment in Thurmaston village centre utilising adjacent industrial buildings of limited design life to deliver a revitalised river/canal frontage with commercial, environmental and social benefits extending into the adjacent Watermead Country Park.

Shepshed Town Centre

A commitment to the regeneration of Shepshed Town Centre to restore a range of shops, services and businesses supported by an enhanced public realm designed with pedestrian comfort and safety as a priority to enhance its vitality and viability at the heart of the community.

PROGRESSING DEVELOPMENT

A detailed assessment of the potential of each package including deliverables, relevant planning history and the interventions necessary to progress them is presented at Appendix 2. The compatibility matrix at Appendix 3 assesses the performance of each regeneration package against the Local Economic Assessment priorities to demonstrate the degree of synergy.

To ensure a compatible and supportive planning context each regeneration package will be the subject of a specific policy reference within the emerging Local Plan Core Strategy.

The strategy will provide the basis for a regeneration plan by which projects and their constituent elements will be programmed having regard to their prospects for securing financial support and overall deliverability.