

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

**STATEMENT  
OF  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Adopted October 2006

EXISTING SCI

This and other Local Development Framework documents are or will be made available in large copy print, audio cassette, Braille or languages other than English. If you require the document in one of these formats please contact the Planning Policy and Regeneration Section on 01530 454771 or e-mail: [planning.policy@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@nwleicestershire.gov.uk)

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 As part of the new plan-making system brought in under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the District Council must produce a Statement of Community Involvement.
- 1.2 This should set out how the Council intends to engage with and involve the community in producing its new Local Development Framework for North West Leicestershire and in deciding planning applications.
- 1.3 The new system requires:
  - a strong evidence base which is accessible and transparent;
  - the promotion of community engagement and involvement in the planning process – to all sections of the community.
- 1.4 The Government has identified the main benefits of community involvement as:
  - strengthening the evidence base for plans, strategies and planning decisions;
  - community commitment to the future development of an area;
  - promoting regeneration and investment; and
  - fostering ownership and strengthening delivery.
- 1.5 Many elements of the Local Development Framework will require joint working between local planning authorities, local communities and stakeholders. It is hoped that involving communities at an early stage in plan-making will help to resolve otherwise contentious issues, thereby avoiding the need for the independent Examinations to be lengthy and costly.
- 1.6 For community involvement to be successful it must involve an inclusive approach based on the differing needs of the various parts of the community. The Council therefore wishes to use the most effective means to enable people to be informed and to contribute throughout the plan-making process.
- 1.7 A glossary of the various terms used in the new plan-making system is appended to this Statement.

## **THE COUNCIL'S PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING**

The key principles which will guide the Council's commitment to community involvement in Planning are for a process which:

- is recognised as legitimate and timely leading to outcomes that are in the public interest;
- engages all sections of the community;
- is open, fair, transparent and effective;
- gives ready access to information for all persons and groups at all stages;
- provides real opportunities to:
  - ◇ contribute to identifying issues and objectives;
  - ◇ take an active part in developing the vision, options and proposals;
  - ◇ be consulted and make representations on formal proposals; and
  - ◇ get feedback and be informed about progress and outcomes.

## **2. THE NEW DEVELOPMENT PLAN SYSTEM**

- 2.1 The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has brought in a radical change to the plan-making system in England. The new system came into operation on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2004 (the “Commencement Date”) and changes the form and scope of the Development Plan for North West Leicestershire.
- 2.2 The Planning Act requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless there are good planning reasons for doing otherwise. The Development Plan remains the cornerstone of the planning system in the United Kingdom.
- 2.3 However, the old system of County Structure Plans and Local Plans, which together made up the Development Plan, has now been abolished.
- 2.4 In their place the future Development Plan for North West Leicestershire will consist of the following documents:
  - The Regional Spatial Strategy – produced by the Regional Assembly but issued by the Secretary of State;
  - Development Plan Documents – produced by the District Council (which will be brought together in the District Council’s Local Development Framework (LDF)); and
  - Minerals and Waste Development Plan Documents – produced by Leicestershire County Council (to replace the existing Minerals and Waste Local Plans).
- 2.5 As part of the transitional arrangements for the new system existing County Structure Plan and Local Plan policies will be ‘saved’ (ie remain in force) for various periods from Commencement Date.
- 2.6 In the case of the County Structure Plan this ‘saved’ period will be for 3 years from the date of its adoption.
- 2.7 Existing policies contained in the adopted North West Leicestershire Local Plan will be saved for 3 years from Commencement Date. However, it may be appropriate, depending on circumstances, to save certain Local Plan policies for longer periods. The District Council must seek the Secretary of State’s approval in such cases.
- 2.8 Existing Structure Plan and Local Plan policies will continue to form part of the Development Plan for North West Leicestershire for the periods over which they are saved.

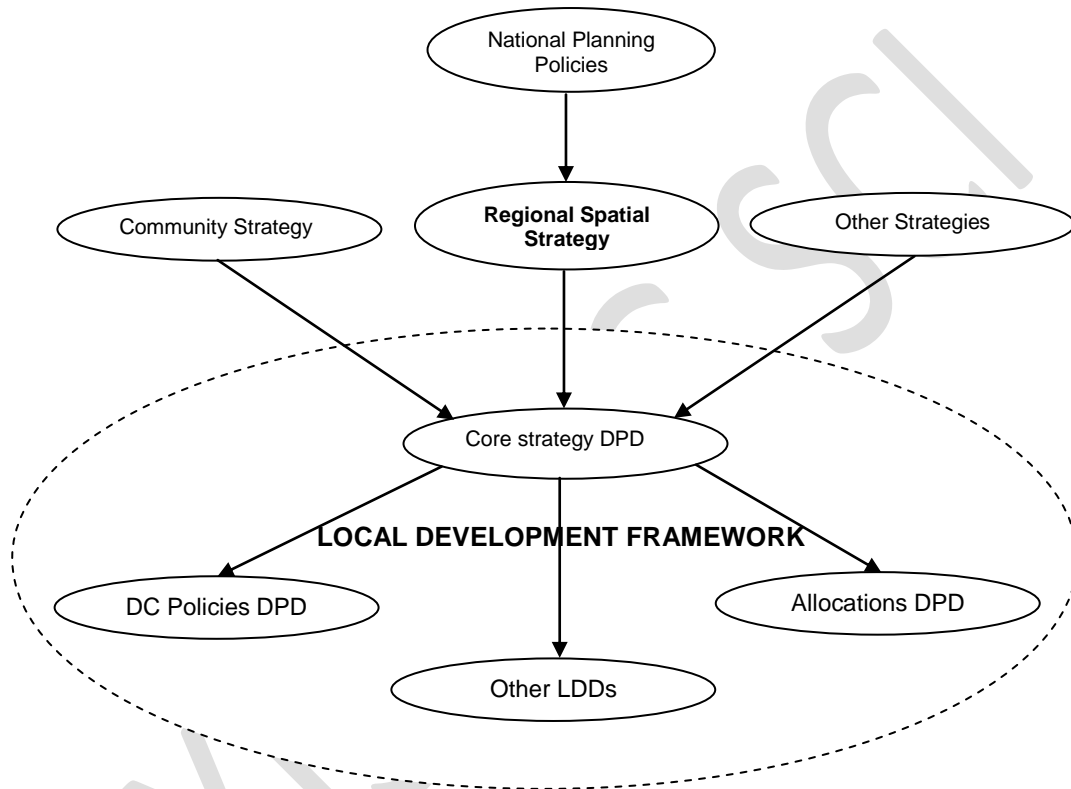
### **The Local Development Framework**

- 2.9 The District Council will be responsible for the preparation of the Local Development Framework for North West Leicestershire.
- 2.10 The Local Development Framework will consist of the following Local Development Documents:
  - Development Plan Documents;

- Supplementary Planning Documents; and
- Statement of Community Involvement.

2.11 In addition, existing Local Plan policies will continue to form part of the Local Development Framework for North West Leicestershire for as long as they are saved.

2.12 The following diagram outlines the main components of the Local Development Framework for North West Leicestershire:



### **3. THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- 3.1 The Statement of Community Involvement must set out the standards to be achieved by the Council in involving the community in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all Local Development Documents and planning applications.
- 3.2 It should be a clear public statement enabling the community to know how and when they will be involved in the preparation of Local Development Documents and how they will be consulted on planning applications.
- 3.3 Local planning authorities are required to set out in the Statement of Community Involvement how they will meet, or exceed, the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations in the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework and in the consideration of planning applications.
- 3.4 The Statement of Community Involvement is a Local Development Document in its own right and as such is subject to statutory requirements.

#### **4. THE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC AIMS AND PRIORITIES**

4.1 The District Council's key strategic aims are to:

- Provide for all of our community, reliable, well performing and value for money services (Quality, Good Value, Accessible Services);
- Work in partnership in making well paid and quality jobs available; building a matching employment base (Local Prosperity and Employment);
- Ensure everyone has equal opportunity to access our services; be socially included through strong communities (Strong, Inclusive Communities);
- Ensure that everyone has access to accommodation they can afford (Enough Decent and Affordable Homes);
- Increase opportunities and participation in healthy activities, working in partnership with others and to address public health issues (Sport and Leisure [Partners in Health]);
- Develop with partners strong and safer communities which will have a reduced level of crime and disorder (Safer Communities); and
- Provide for the community clean and tidy public areas which are enhanced by attractive parks and open spaces (Attractive, Sustainable Environment).

4.2 The following priorities will bring about significant improvements and will be the Council's focus with appropriately aligned resources, ie to:

- Revitalise Coalville and Ashby Town Centres;
- Develop strong, inclusive communities;
- Deliver the outcome of Housing Options Appraisal to meet tenants' expectations;
- Increase the number of people and specific target groups' participation in healthy activities;
- Improve the safety of the community;
- Reduce, recycle and re-use waste; and
- Improve the streetscene.

4.3 The Local Development Framework will provide an opportunity for addressing the spatial aspects of relevant aims and priorities in a cross-cutting manner.



## **5. THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The key part of the new plan-making system for the District Council is the Local Development Framework. This will replace the Council's adopted Local Plan.
- 5.3 The Council's programme for the preparation of its Local Development Framework is set out in its Local Development Scheme. This has now been 'signed off' by the Government Office and can be inspected at the Council Offices or on the District Council's website.
- 5.4 The District Council's plan-making programme, as set out in the Local Development Scheme, involves the preparation of the following Development Plan Documents during the next 3 years:
- Core Strategy;
  - Development Control Policies;
  - Housing Land Allocations;
  - Employment Land Allocations; and
  - Green Wedge, Areas of Separation and Limits to Development.
- 5.5 In addition, the following Supplementary Planning Documents will be prepared:
- Affordable housing – a review of existing supplementary planning guidance on affordable housing; and
  - Housing land release – taking forward the provisions of the housing land release policy contained in Alteration No.3 to the adopted Local Plan.
- 5.6 Over the longer term the District Council will consider the need to prepare the following planning documents:
- Airport Action Area Plan – to follow on from the Airport Company's Master Plan review (as required by Secretary of State for Transport);
  - Town Centres Action Area Plans – to follow on from current master-planning exercises and town centre partnership working;
  - Charnwood Forest Area Plan – depending on the outcome of the County Council's application for Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty status;
  - Recreation and open space provision – to follow on from an audit of current provision and needs; and
  - Gypsy sites provision – depending on the review of need now being undertaken.

### **Links with other Plans and Strategies**

- 5.7 The Local Development Framework must conform with the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands Region produced by the East Midlands Regional Assembly and issued by the Secretary of State.
- 5.8 It must also have regard to national planning policy statements (PPSs), the provisions the adopted Leicestershire Structure Plan (adopted March 2005) and the North West Leicestershire Community Strategy (adopted March 2002).

5.9 Other relevant strategies include:

- North West Leicestershire Cultural Strategy (Draft) 2002;
- North West Leicestershire Housing Strategy (Draft) 2004-2007;
- Destination 2010 – The Regional Economic Strategy for the East Midlands;
- National Forest Strategy 2004-2014;
- Leicestershire Local Transport Plan 2001-2006;
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy 2001;
- National Forest Biodiversity Action Plan 2004; and
- Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan 1998.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal**

5.10 Strategic Environmental Assessment is a process intended to ensure that significant environmental effects arising from Local Development Framework proposals are identified, assessed, mitigated, communicated to decision-makers and monitored. The role of Strategic Environmental Assessment is to:

- Support sustainable development;
- Improve the evidence base for decision-making; and
- Facilitate and respond to consultation with stakeholders.

5.11 The new Planning Act requires local planning authorities to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) to ensure that, in addition to considering the environmental impacts of policies and proposals, an assessment is also made of their economic and social impacts.

5.12 The Sustainability Appraisal is an integral part of Local Development Framework preparation and its outputs will be consulted upon during the various consultation periods.

### **Evidence Base**

5.13 The District Council has put together a comprehensive evidence base, including:

- Urban capacity study;
- Retail needs and capacity assessment and town centres health check;
- Affordable housing survey;
- Quality of employment; and
- Open space audit.

5.14 These documents are available at the Council Offices and on the Council website. Widespread consultation has featured in the development of the evidence base to date and will also apply to its enlargement in future.

## 6. STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### Minimum Standards

- 6.1 Minimum standards for community involvement in the preparation of the Local Development Framework are set out in the Regulations, but the District Council wants to do more.
- 6.2 The Regulations require the Council to:
- Place all documentation on its website ([www.nwleics.gov.uk](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk)) together with any supporting information needed to enable people to understand what they are being asked to comment upon and where and when this documentation can be inspected;
  - Make all relevant material available for inspection at the Council Offices and other suitable places for the period for which it is open for comment;
  - Send copies to the Government Office and to each statutory consultee (having regard to the guidance set out in the Government's Planning Policy Statement 12; and
  - Advertise in local newspapers circulating in the area stating where the relevant material can be inspected, how copies of it can be obtained, the closing date for representations and where to send such representations.
- 6.3 The Council will comply with the general duty in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.
- 6.4 The Council will comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 by not discriminating against disabled people and providing an equal quality of service.

### Council Standards

- 6.5 In addition to these basic requirements the District Council will:
- Maintain a Local Development Framework database of consultees which will be available for inspection;
  - Contact people and bodies registered on the Local Development Framework database at each key stage;
  - Make use of the Council's newspaper *Vision* to update residents of the progress of the Local Development Framework;
  - Provide copies of all documents in alternative formats (eg other languages, Braille etc);
  - Place copies of the relevant documents at local libraries and with parish councils;
  - Provide feedback wherever possible; and
  - Provide press releases for the local media.
- 6.6 The Council will follow these standards when producing any planning document which forms part of the Local Development Framework. When each document is published for consultation it must be supported by a statement setting out the form of community involvement undertaken in that

particular case. If an Inspector finds that the Council has not followed the standards set out in its Statement of Community Involvement then the planning document could be withdrawn.

6.7 The Council will also make available relevant background information, including (when available):

- Urban capacity study;
- Employment needs and quality of employment land;
- Retail needs assessment and shopping centres health checks;
- Open space audit; and
- Ashby-de-la-Zouch car parking study.

6.8 Community involvement is seen as a continuous process enabling everyone taking part to see how policies and proposals develop at the various stages. This will require a commitment to effective feedback from the Council.

### **Key Stages in the Preparation of the Local Development Framework**

6.9 The nature of community involvement will vary depending on the type of planning document being produced:

- Development Plan Documents – these must go through specified stages of community involvement before being submitted to a Government Inspector for examination and decision;
- Supplementary Planning Documents – these will also be subject to public scrutiny (but not independent examination) but will be adopted by the Council itself.

6.10 The scale and extent of community involvement will also vary depending on the subject of the planning document. For example, the Core Strategy will require widespread consultation across the District and with national and regional bodies, while an action plan for a particular area will be much more specific.

- The Core Strategy will set out the District Council's spatial vision and establish the overall strategy for the development of North West Leicestershire to 2016. It will enable key choices to be made (such as the broad distribution of new housing across the District) which will then provide the context for more detailed work.
- The Development Control Policies Development Plan Document will be prepared in parallel with the Core Strategy and will update, where necessary, the existing set of control policies which apply across the District.
- The Housing Land, Employment Land and Green Wedge, Areas of Separation and Limits to Development Development Plan Documents will apply the general strategy developed in the Core Strategy to specific areas across the District.
- The Proposals Map will be updated as each Development Plan Document is adopted.

### **Key stages for Development Plan Documents**

6.11 The key stages for community involvement in Development Plan Documents

are as follows:

<p>Evidence gathering and issues identification</p>	<p>Evidence will be gathered with a view to identifying issues, and options for the future. This will involve consulting various bodies on technical and other matters.</p> <p>Consideration will also be given to national, regional and other relevant policies. Evidence will be made available for public scrutiny where possible.</p> <p>Informal consultations will be undertaken with interested parties in order to establish the key issues and options for change.</p> <p>Consultations will be held on issues and options for each Development Plan Document. This will involve all identified stakeholders and a full range of events.</p> <p>These consultations will involve direct contact with stakeholders, media releases, exhibitions and workshops.</p> <p>Continuous community engagement will be sought throughout the preparation stage.</p>
<p>Preferred options (Regulations 25 and 26)</p>	<p>This is a statutory 6 weeks period during which anyone may make representations on the Council's preferred options.</p> <p>Preferred options will be published at an early stage as the basis for public engagement.</p> <p>This stage will may also require wider participation through public exhibitions and other events, 'planning for real' exercises, group meetings etc.</p> <p>The resulting feedback will enable the Development Plan Document to be completed.</p>
<p>Submission (Regulations 27 and 28)</p>	<p>This stage involves the final document that is to be submitted to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>Each Development Plan Document will be published for a statutory 6 weeks period, during which written representations may be submitted to the Council.</p> <p>Submission will be widely advertised, with documents being circulated to statutory consultees. Persons and bodies registered on the Local Development Framework database will also be informed.</p> <p>In the case of the Allocations Development Plan Document there will be a further 6-weeks consultation period if new development proposals are put forward by developers and others during the submission consultation period.</p> <p>The Council will advertise these alternative proposals and make the details available for inspection at the Council Offices and on the Council website.</p> <p>The Council will also encourage those putting forward alternative proposals to present them for public discussion in the areas affected.</p> <p>At the same time the document will be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination, together with all background material and the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment.</p> <p>All representations will be summarised and submitted to the independent Examination.</p>
<p>Examination</p>	<p>This will be conducted by a Planning Inspector.</p> <p>Six weeks notice of the Examination will be given.</p> <p>The Inspector's recommendations will be binding on the Council.</p> <p>The Council will no longer have the discretion to reject any of the Inspector's recommendations.</p>
<p>Adoption</p>	<p>The Council will be responsible for the adoption of a Development Plan Document as soon as practicable after receiving the Inspector's binding recommendations.</p>

### Key stages for Supplementary Planning Documents

6.12 The key stages for community involvement in the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents are as follows:

Evidence gathering and issues identification	<p>Evidence will be gathered with a view to identifying issues and options for the future. Consideration will also be given to national, regional and other relevant policies.</p> <p>This will involve consulting various bodies on technical and other matters.</p> <p>Evidence will be made available for public scrutiny where possible.</p>
Consultation	<p>The draft proposals will be the subject of community involvement in a similar way to that of Development Plan Documents.</p> <p>Topic-based documents will be the subject of wider consultation, whilst site-specific documents will be more local in scope.</p> <p>Documents will be subject to <b>4-6-weeks</b> consultation after which responses will be considered.</p>
Adoption	<p>Supplementary Planning Documents will be adopted by the District Council.</p> <p>A statement of the representations received and the responses to those representations will be published.</p>

## **7. COMMUNITIES AND STAKEHOLDER GROUPS**

- 7.1 The Council will maintain a comprehensive database of community and stakeholder groups, which will be kept up to date throughout the Local Development Framework process. The Council will keep this database under review, but stakeholders are asked to provide details of any changes of address etc to enable the database to be kept up to date.
- 7.2 The database of stakeholder groups may be inspected at the Council Offices and viewed at [www.nwleics.gov.uk](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk).
- 7.3 The types of groups which will be involved include:
- Those representing the wider community, including the local strategic partnership, parish councils, area forums, and other community groups;
  - Those representing the business community, including chambers of trade and Network Gold;
  - Special interest groups, such as conservation societies and nature conservation bodies;
  - Hard to reach groups (see Appendix 2);
  - Developers and those with property and/or development interests; and
  - Statutory bodies, including adjoining authorities, and regional and national agencies (set out in Appendix 3).
- 7.4 The above list is not exhaustive and also relates to successor bodies where re-organisations occur.
- 7.5 The Council will also endeavour to make individuals aware of its proposals, through events, media releases and its Vision newspaper.
- 7.6 In the case of “hard to reach” groups the Council approach to consultation is set out in Appendix 2.
- 7.7 This and other Local Development Framework documents are or will be made available in large copy print, audio cassette, Braille or languages other than English. If you require the document in one of these formats please contact the Planning Policy and Regeneration Section on 01530 454771 or e-mail: [planning.policy@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@nwleicestershire.gov.uk)
- 7.8 The Council is particularly keen to encourage the parish councils of the District to play their full part in the new plan-making system. To this end it will endeavour to make officers available to explain proposals and to help facilitate a well-informed debate on the issues under consideration.
- 7.9 Parish Plan Groups will also have an important part to play in the process. Parish Plan documents will be used as a resource to gather more information on community needs. Parish Plan and Village Design Statement groups will be consulted and advised of their role in relation to the LDF process and other planning matters.
- 7.10 The Partnership for Improving North West Leicestershire is the local strategic partnership for the District. The Partnership has representatives from across the District including:

- Charnwood & North West Leicestershire Primary Care Trust;
- Faith Communities;
- Job Centre Plus;
- King Edward VII College;
- Leicestershire Chamber of Trade & Industry;
- Leicestershire Constabulary;
- Leicestershire County Council;
- North West Leicestershire Association of Parish Councils;
- North West Leicestershire Council for Voluntary Services;
- North West Leicestershire Health Forum;
- North West Leicestershire Partnership in Safer Communities;
- Stephenson College.

**7.11** The Council is currently reviewing its approach to area working across the District.

**7.12** The District Council has signed a Compact with the voluntary and community sector within North West Leicestershire.



## **8. METHODS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

8.1 A variety of methods of community involvement will be employed in relation to the following stages of such involvement:

- Information;
- Consultation;
- Participation; and
- Feedback.

8.2 The District Council currently uses a number of methods to encourage and facilitate community engagement. Documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices and other appropriate places in accordance with Regulation 26 and Regulation 28. Wherever possible community involvement on the Local Development Framework will be dovetailed with other consultation activities. The main vehicles for involvement are:

### **Local Strategic Partnership**

8.3 The Partnership for Improving North West Leicestershire represents a wide range of interests across the District. It provides a means for conveying information and views on various issues to the District Council. It can also play an important role in passing on information on the progress of the Local Development Framework and the issues that are being raised and considered.

8.4 It is anticipated that the Local Strategic Partnership will have a significant part to play in relation to the Core Strategy and also with the strategic aspects of other Development Plan Documents.

### **Leicestershire Countywide Forum for Liaison with Builders and Developers**

8.5 The District Council is represented on this Forum which brings together planning officers and representatives of the house-builders across Leicestershire. The Council will make use of this Forum to report progress on the Local Development Framework and to encourage involvement in the process and in community engagement by developers.

8.6 It is anticipated that the Forum will be involved with the Core Strategy and the strategic aspects of other Development Plan Documents.

### **North West Leicestershire Agents Forum**

8.7 This Forum was established in order to improve liaison with those responsible for submitting planning applications and providing development advice. The Council will make use of this Forum to report progress and to encourage involvement at a more local level.

8.8

It is anticipated that the Forum will be involved particularly in the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

### **Internet**

8.9 The Council will make extensive use of the internet ([www.nwleics.gov.uk](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk)) to

make information available on the progress of its Local Development Framework.

- 8.10 The Local Development Framework web pages will be kept up to date and will be interactive, allowing representations to be submitted electronically where appropriate.
- 8.11 It is, however, recognised that not all stakeholders will have ready access to the internet so that paper copies will continue to be made available.
- 8.12 The Council will also establish an e-mail alert system whereby stakeholders identified on the Council's database can be provided with the latest information. In order to make this system effective stakeholders should provide the Council with appropriate e-mail addresses and ensure that any changes are notified.

### **Vision Magazine**

- 8.13 The Council's magazine *Vision* is to be produced and distributed across the District ten times a year and is intended to:
- Give residents better and more frequent information about Council and partner services and activities;
  - Contribute to the Council's Comprehensive Improvement Assessment Improvement Plan; and
  - Offer opportunities for additional partnership working.
- 8.14 *Vision* will be used as a means of conveying information on the progress of the Local Development Framework and also for particular consultation exercises.

### **Local Media**

- 8.15 Notices will be published in local newspapers circulating in the area and press releases will be made available to the local media at all key stages in the preparation of the Local Development Framework.

### **Exhibitions and Workshops**

- 8.16 Exhibitions and workshops will be employed throughout the process, although the format may vary depending on the issues to be discussed. They will be of particular importance in relation to the issues and options and preferred options stages of the process. The objectives and expected outcomes of each workshop will be clearly set out beforehand. Careful consideration will be given to venues, timing and participants to ensure that events are as effective as possible.
- 8.17 Workshops will be facilitated using a variety of techniques aimed at promoting discussion and leading to positive outcomes.
- 8.18 A report of proceedings at each event will be produced and made available at the Council offices and on the Council web site.

### **Reporting back**

- 8.19 The Council will acknowledge all representations received and will prepare summaries of such representations. Persons and bodies registered on the Local Development Framework database will be informed of the availability of these summaries, which will also be posted on the Council's web site.
- 8.20 Registered persons and bodies will also be informed of Council decisions and will be notified of key dates in the timetable.
- 8.21 Press releases will be prepared at key stages.
- 8.22 Reports will be prepared summarising and assessing all representations received during the various consultation activities. These will be taken via the LDF Working Party to the Council's Executive Board, as necessary. The results of each consultation exercise will then provide an input into the next stage of the process, and will be weighed against the requirement to conform with the Regional Spatial Strategy and to have regard to PPGs/PPSs and the Community Strategy in that process.

### **Examination**

- 8.23 At the Examination a Planning Inspector will consider whether the Development Plan Document before him is 'sound'.
- 8.24 The presumption will be that the Development Plan Document is sound unless it is shown to be otherwise as a result of evidence considered at the Examination. The tests of soundness are:
- it has been prepared in accordance with the Local Development Scheme;
  - it has been prepared in compliance with the Council's Statement of Community involvement (or with the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations where there is no Statement of Community Involvement );
  - the plan and its policies have been subjected to Sustainability Appraisal;
  - it is a spatial plan which is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy for the region and it has properly had regard to any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area or to adjoining areas;
  - it has had regard to the authority's community strategy;
  - the strategies/policies/allocations in the plan are coherent and consistent within and between development plan documents prepared by the authority and by neighbouring authorities, where cross boundary issues are relevant;
  - the strategies/policies/allocations represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and they are founded on a robust and credible evidence base;
  - there are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring; and
  - the plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.
- 8.25 The Inspector's report will be binding on the District Council.

### **Resources**

- 8.26 Community involvement will be led by the Council's Planning Policy and

Regeneration Section but will require a corporate effort across the Council, involving the Communications Unit and other areas of expertise.

- 8.27 The resources to be devoted to the preparation of the Local Development Framework are set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme. This scheme has been agreed with the Government Office and the Planning Inspectorate.
- 8.28 An external facilitator has been engaged to take the debate on issues and options of the Core Strategy through to Preferred Options Stage. A consultant is also to be engaged to take forward the Development Control Policies DPD, also to Preferred Options stage. The Council will keep the need for such inputs under review throughout its future LDF work.

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## **9. PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Council receives in the region of 1,300 planning applications a year, the majority of which are determined under delegated powers. Major and/or contentious planning applications are normally considered by the Planning and Environment Group which meets every 4 weeks.
- 9.2 The Council encourages applicants and developers to seek pre-application advice prior to the submission of a formal planning application. Normally this would involve the submission of sketch drawings and other relevant details. An informal written response from a planning officer will normally be sent within 3-4 weeks. In some circumstances it may be necessary to hold a meeting between Council officers, statutory consultees and developers and their agents. In these circumstances the Council would normally expect the submission of plans and drawings prior to the date of the meeting. The Council also operates a duty officer system to deal with simple inquiries at its reception.
- 9.3 The Council will also encourage applicants to undertake pre-submission consultations where appropriate. Where appropriate applicants are advised to make early contact with such bodies as the Environment Agency. The District Council is currently working towards the implementation of a 'development team' approach.

### **Consultation Procedures**

- 9.4 The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, requires that for all major applications the application must be publicised either by:
- A site notice displayed in at least one place on or near the development site for at least 21 days, or,
  - Serving notice on adjoining owners or occupiers, and,
  - Advertisement in a local newspaper.
- 9.5 For all planning applications letters are sent to all owners/occupiers of properties that immediately adjoin the boundary of the application site. In addition the Council will notify more widely where an application is likely to have a wider impact than upon immediate neighbours, especially in conservation areas. The Council also posts site notices where an application is likely to have a wider impact or is in an area (eg in the countryside) where there are no immediate neighbours, but there may be public interest in the proposal.
- 9.6 More complex and contentious applications may require additional consultation arrangements depending on the nature of the particular proposal.
- 9.7 The Council's public access system for planning applications is available on the Council's web site and can be interrogated to obtain details of current planning applications. This is available by individual property or by weekly list.
- 9.8 Plans are available to view at the Council offices in Coalville, between the hours of 8.45am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday. Plans are sent to Parish Councils as part of the consultation exercise and those neighbours notified of

applications are advised that they can, by prior arrangement with the Parish Clerk, view the plans at the Parish Council offices. Consideration is being given to arrangements for application plans to be viewed on-line.

### **Amended Plans**

- 9.9 Following submission of a planning application, negotiations often take place between planning officers and developers and their agents to seek amendments to a submitted scheme. In most cases, upon receipt of amended plans, the Council will re-notify neighbours, Parish Councils and statutory consultees to seek their views on the amendments. In view of the tight time scales to determine planning applications the re-notification time is set at 14 days. Very minor alterations to plans will not normally be the subject of re-notification.

### **Applications to be Considered by the Planning and Environment Group**

- 9.10 Some 90% of planning applications are determined under delegated powers by authorised officers of the Council. Most major and/or controversial applications are reported to the Planning and Environment Group for decision by Members of the Council. If an application is to be determined in this way the Council will inform the applicant/agent and anyone who has submitted comments on a particular application (including the Parish Council) of the date of the meeting and their right to speak at the meeting. There is a right for one objector or supporter, the applicant or agent and a Parish Council representative to speak at the Planning and Environment Group. Each speaker has no more than three minutes. A guidance note is sent to all interested parties advising of the procedure and issues which are planning related and those which are not. The guidance notes are available from the Planning reception or can be downloaded from the Council's web site.
- 9.11 Planning and Environment Group reports are available in hard copy and on the Council's web site on the Wednesday preceding the meeting of the Planning and Environment Group, ie seven days prior to the meeting.

### **Notification of Decisions**

- 9.12 Anyone who submitted comments in respect of a particular planning application is notified of the decision. Parish Councils are sent a copy of the decision notice. When the Council's web site is fully developed, decision notices will be available there. At present whilst decision notices cannot be viewed, the decision is available on the Council's web site.
- 9.13 In addition to the statutory site notices and press notices, details of major applications will be published on the Council's website following the introduction of a document management system which will allow plans to be viewed on-line. In addition the Council will strongly encourage applicants to arrange a public meeting or exhibition before an application is submitted to allow the local community to be more fully informed prior to submission. Applicants will also be encouraged to submit a brief statement outlining how the results of the pre-application consultation have been taken into account in the final application. The results of any such consultation will be reported and taken into account in decisions made by, or on behalf of, the Council.
- 9.14 Bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a longer period of time to

comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.

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## **10. MONITORING**

- 10.1 The Statement of Community Involvement will be kept under review and its effectiveness and relevance will be monitored as part of the Council's Annual Monitoring Review.
- 10.2 Any revision of the Statement of Community Involvement will follow the same procedures as are laid down for this first document.
- 10.3 Regard will also be had to changes in circumstances (eg population), legislation, and policy (in particular national planning policy) and to emerging best practice in relation to nature and scope of consultation arrangements with a view to the need to review the SCI.

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## APPENDIX 1

### GLOSSARY

<b>Annual Monitoring Report (AMR):</b>	Part of the <i>Local Development Framework</i> , the Annual Monitoring Report will assess the implementation of the <i>Local Development Scheme</i> and the extent to which policies in <i>Local Development Documents</i> are being successfully implemented.
<b>Community Strategy:</b>	Local authorities are required under the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare these, with aim of improving the social, environmental and economic well being of their areas. Through the Community Strategy, authorities are expected to co-ordinate the actions of local public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Responsibility for producing Community Strategies may be passed to Local Strategic Partnerships, which include local authority representatives.
<b>Core Strategy:</b>	Sets out the long-term spatial vision for the local planning authority's area, the spatial objectives and strategic policies to deliver that vision. The Core Strategy will have the status of a <i>Development Plan Document</i> .
<b>Development control policies:</b>	These will be a suite of criteria-based policies which are required to ensure that all development within the areas meets the spatial vision and spatial objectives set out in the <i>Core Strategy</i> . They may be included in any <i>Development Plan Document</i> or may form a standalone document.
<b>Development Plan:</b>	As set out in Section 38(6) of the Act, an authority's Development Plan consists of the relevant <i>Regional Spatial Strategy</i> and the <i>Development Plan Documents</i> contained within its <i>Local Development Framework</i> .
<b>Development Plan Document (DPD):</b>	Spatial planning documents that are subject to independent examination, and together with the relevant <i>Regional Spatial Strategy</i> , will form the <i>Development Plan</i> for a local authority area. They can include a <i>Core Strategy</i> , <i>Site Specific Allocations</i> of land, and other Development Plan Documents, such as generic <i>development control policies</i> . They will all be shown geographically on an adopted <i>Proposals Map</i> . Individual Development Plan Documents or parts of a document can be reviewed independently from other Development Plan Documents. Each authority must set out the programme for preparing its <i>Development Plan Documents</i> in the <i>Local Development Scheme</i> .
<b>Examination</b>	The purpose of the Examination is to consider if the development plan is sound. The majority of representations made at Examination will usually be 'written representations'. However, in some instances a <i>Planning Inspector</i> may allow representations to be examined by way of oral hearings, for example round table discussions, informal hearing sessions and formal hearing sessions.
<b>Local Development Document (LDD):</b>	The collective term covering <i>Development Plan Documents</i> , <i>Supplementary Planning Documents</i> and the <i>Statement of Community Involvement</i> .
<b>Local Development Framework (LDF):</b>	The name for the portfolio of <i>Local Development Documents</i> . It consists of <i>Development Plan Documents</i> , <i>Supplementary Planning Documents</i> , a <i>Statement of Community Involvement</i> , the <i>Local</i>

*Development Scheme and Annual Monitoring Reports*. Together these documents will provide the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for a local authority area and may also include Local Development Orders and Simplified Planning Zones.

<b>Local Development Scheme (LDS):</b>	Sets out the Council's programme for preparing <i>Local Development Documents</i> . All authorities must submit a Scheme to the Secretary of State for approval within six months of commencement of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
<b>Planning Inspector</b>	A Planning Inspector is a person appointed on behalf the Planning Inspectorate (itself an executive agency of Government) to conduct the <i>Examination</i> , oversee and to carry out site visits, and consider both written and oral evidence in order to reach a reasoned decision on the soundness of proposed <i>Development Plan Documents</i> .
<b>Proposals Map:</b>	The adopted Proposals Map illustrates on a base map (reproduced from, or based upon a map base to a registered scale) all the policies contained in <i>Development Plan Documents</i> , together with any saved policies. It must be revised as each new <i>Development Plan Document</i> is adopted, and it should always reflect the up-to-date planning strategy for the area. Proposals for changes to the adopted Proposals Map accompany submitted <i>Development Plan Documents</i> in the form of a submission Proposals Map.
<b>Regional Planning Guidance (RPG):</b>	Existing regional guidance that sets out regional planning policies that may be used as a material consideration in the preparation of <i>Development Plan Documents</i> .
<b>Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS):</b>	Sets out the region's policies in relation to the development and use of land and forms part of the <i>Development Plan</i> for local planning authorities. The <i>Core Strategy Development Plan Document</i> must conform with the Regional Spatial Strategy.
<b>Site specific allocations:</b>	Allocations of areas of land for specific purposes (eg housing or employment land) or for mixed uses or development to be contained in <i>Development Plan Documents</i> . Policies will identify any specific requirements for individual proposals.
<b>Statement of Community Involvement (SCI):</b>	Sets out the standards which authorities will achieve with regard to involving local communities in the preparation of <i>Local Development Documents</i> and development control decisions. The Statement of Community Involvement is not a <i>Development Plan Document</i> but is subject to independent examination.
<b>Supplementary Planning Document (SPD):</b>	Provides supplementary information in respect of the policies in <i>Development Plan Documents</i> . They do not form part of the <i>Development Plan</i> and are not subject to an independent examination.
<b>Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):</b>	Supplementary Planning Guidance did not form part of the Development plan, but could be a material consideration in deciding planning applications. To carry weight it had to be the subject of proper consultation and a Council resolution. It will be superseded by <i>Supplementary Planning Documents</i> under the new system.
<b>Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):</b>	A generic term used to describe environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes. The European 'SEA Directive' (2001/42/EC) requires a formal 'environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes, including those in the field of planning and land use'.

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA):**

A tool for appraising policies to ensure they reflect sustainable development objectives (i.e. social, environmental and economic factors) and required in the Act to be undertaken for all local development documents. Sustainability Appraisal will be undertaken alongside *Strategic Environmental Assessment*.

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## APPENDIX 2

### HARD TO REACH GROUPS

North West Leicestershire District Council has identified a number of Hard To Reach groups. These are set out below:

Hard to Reach Groups	Approach for Proactive Engagement
Ethnic Minority Groups	BME Groups are often under represented in the planning process. It is important that the SCI meets the requirements of these groups by being in accordance with the Race Relations (amendments) Act 2000. All documents produced from the Council will be made available in alternative languages where these are requested. Information on the availability of alternative formats can be obtained from the District Council.
Faith Groups	Faith groups are also underrepresented in the planning process. In particular groups that are unable to use electronic media may be particularly hard to reach. The Council will make all consultation documents available in 'hard copy' in order to ensure that such groups are not excluded from the consultation process.
Young People	The District Council will seek to engage young people through local schools and the Youth Council. Existing Youth Groups such as the Scouts Council and Guide Association will also be contacted.
Elderly People	Elderly people are often perceived as hard to reach because of difficulties in gaining access to information. Elderly individuals can feel isolated and excluded from the community around them. Organisations which represent older people such as Help the Aged and Age Concern will be informed by direct mail at all stages of consultation of the LDF.
Transient Populations eg new residents, students, commuters, Gypsies/travellers.	There are several Gypsy and Traveller sites within the District and it is important that those resident on the sites and those who seek to transit accommodation in the District are involved both in the LDF process and production of the SCI Gypsies and Travellers can be a very difficult to reach group. In order to involve this group as much as possible existing contacts (including Leicestershire County Council's Gypsy Liaison officer) and representative organisation (Such as the Gypsy Council) will be contacted, as well as direct contact where this is possible.
People with Disabilities	Again it is recognised that people with disabilities are underrepresented in the planning process. It is important that this SCI meets the requirements of these groups and is in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, as amended. All LDF consultation documents will be made available in Braille. In addition consultation documents will be made available in electronic formats that can be read aloud by most home computers. Representatives from the North West Leicestershire Panel of Opportunities for people with disabilities Group have been added to the Council's Consultee Database. There is a learning disability locality planning group with a housing sub-group with representation from NWLDC housing service. The locality planning group may need to be consulted in the case of people with learning disabilities.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **STATUTORY CONSULTEES**

The following bodies are specific consultation bodies and must be consulted in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations, 2004:

- (a) The Regional Assembly for the East Midlands Region;
- (b) Adjoining local or other relevant authorities and Leicestershire County Council;
- (c) The Countryside Agency;
- (d) The Environment Agency;
- (e) Highways Agency;
- (f) The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage);
- (g) English Nature;
- (h) East Midlands Regional Development Agency (EMDA);
- (i) Advantage West Midlands;
- (j) Any person to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under Section 106 (3)(a) of the Communications Act 2003;
- (k) Any person who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the area of the local planning authority; and
- (l) Any of the bodies from the following list who are exercising functions in any part of the area of the local planning authority:
  - i. Strategic Health Authority;
  - ii. Person to whom a licence has been granted under Section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986;
  - iii. Sewage undertaker; and
  - iv. Water undertaker.

This list relates to successor bodies where re-organisations occur.

## NON STATUTORY CONSULTTEES

- Age Concern
- Ancient Monuments Society
- Ashby Chamber of Trade
- Ashby Woulds Forum
- British Waterways
- Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and other environmental groups
- Church Commissioners for England
- Civic societies and local residents associations
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Coal Authority
- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
- Commission for Racial Equality
- Community Appraisal Groups
- Confederation of British Industry
- Council for British Archaeology
- Country Land and Business Association
- Crown Estate
- Disability Rights Commission
- East Midlands Airport
- East Midlands Tourist Board
- Equal Opportunities Commission
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Freight Transport Association
- Garden History Society
- Gypsy Council
- Health and Safety Executive
- Housing Corporation
- Historic period societies (eg Georgian Society)
- Home Builders Federation
- Learning and Skills Council
- Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce
- Leicestershire Constabulary
- Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Services
- Leicestershire Wildlife Trust
- National Farmers Union
- National Forest Company
- National Playing Fields Association
- National Trust
- Network Gold
- Network Rail
- North West Leicestershire Partnership for Safer Communities
- Parish Councils and Meetings in North West Leicestershire
- Parish Plan groups
- Primary Care Trusts
- Relevant bus companies
- Relevant train operating companies
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Rural Community Council
- Sport England (East Midlands Region)
- SUSTRANS

- Volunteer bureaux
- Woodland Trust

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