

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The aim of this Consultation Draft Structure Plan for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland is to secure the most appropriate development in the most appropriate locations, while taking into account environmental, social and economic well-being. In other words, a strategy which successfully addresses sustainable development issues, including the integration of land use and transport. Sustainable development is addressed in more detail in paragraphs 1.33 to 1.43 below.
- 1.2 This Consultation Draft Structure Plan has been prepared jointly by Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council District Council (referred to in this document as the 'Three Councils') within the context of international, national and regional policy. It is a statutory document that sets out the proposed strategic framework for the use and development of land in the Plan Area and looks forward to 2011. The Plan Area covers Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland.
- 1.3 The existing Leicestershire Structure Plan 1991-2006 was prepared by the former Leicestershire County Council which ceased to be on 1st April 1997 when Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council District Council were formed as Unitary Authorities, as a result of the reorganisation of local government.
- 1.4 The Structure Plan forms part of the Development Plan for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. The Development Plan for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland consists of:
- a) a joint Structure Plan (prepared jointly by Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council District Council);
  - b) Local Plans (prepared by the shire District Councils, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council District Council); and
  - c) a joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan (prepared jointly by Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council District Council).
- 1.5 The current Structure Plan was adopted by the County Council in January 1994. It is a legal requirement that the Development Plan is regularly reviewed to keep it up to date. Factors influencing the need for a replacement Plan include the emphasis being placed, both nationally and internationally, on the principles of sustainable development, new national forecasts of population and household growth, and the need to maintain a long term outlook in order to give certainty, for example to developers.
- 1.6 The Structure Plan needs to be read as a whole. The policies in the Strategy Chapter relate to all development while the other chapters contain policies which relate to specific types of development. All proposals will therefore need to be considered within the context of all the policies.

## ISSUES CONSULTATION STAGE

- 1.7 The Three Councils have recognised the need to respond to changing community values and expectations which have been emerging during the 1990s. To ensure the most up to date information Leicestershire County Council undertook a public consultation exercise in 1996. The findings of this consultation exercise have been taken into account in the preparation of this Consultation Draft Structure Plan.

- 1.8 The main findings from this public consultation exercise included:
- a) strong support for continued concentration of development in and around the urban areas and maximising the re-use of previously used land in urban areas for new development;
  - b) support for retaining shopping and other services in town centres;
  - c) support for more controls on traffic and improvements in facilities for public transport, cycling and walking; and
  - d) divided views on whether more in-migration and more warehouse development should be encouraged.
- 1.9 Work undertaken by the Forum for a Better Leicestershire (FABLE) has also been taken into account. Fable has been working in close co-operation with the District Authorities and Leicester City Council to involve people in the Local Agenda 21 process. "Ways Forward for a Better Leicestershire: Our Actions, Our Future" was published in May 1998. This document highlights the need for organisation at the local community level with health services, leisure facilities and workplaces provided near to where people live, and day-to-day activities and decision-making strengthened within local communities. This theme is closely linked with that of cutting the impact of traffic, which is stressed as one of the most important overall goals.

### **NEXT STAGES IN THE PLAN PREPARATION**

- 1.10 The results from consulting on this Consultation Draft Structure Plan will feed into the preparation of a Deposit Draft Structure Plan, which will also be published for public consultation. An analysis of the responses will then be undertaken followed by an Examination In Public. The Examination In Public will be held by an independent panel appointed by the Department of Environment Transport and the Regions (DETR) and will address those aspects of the Plan requiring further consideration and debate. The Panel will report to the Three Councils, who will then consider whether any Modifications should be made to the Plan before it is formally adopted. Any Modifications proposed will also be subject to public consultation before the Plan can be finally adopted.

### **INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

- 1.11 The concept of sustainable development achieved international prominence through the work of the World Commission on Environmental Development in 1987 (the Brundtland Commission). It has since become a central tenet of land use planning in many countries, including the UK (see also paragraph 1.36).
- 1.12 At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (known as the Rio Earth Summit) held in June 1992, world leaders including representatives of the UK Government agreed to pursue practical measures, both at the international and local level, for achieving sustainable development in the 21st Century. This agreement is known as Agenda 21. As a result of this agreement, both national and local government are expected to pursue measures to achieve sustainable development within their areas. The Structure Plan is prepared within the context of this framework.

- 1.13 The influence of the European Union on planning policy in the UK and hence on this Consultation Draft Structure Plan is of increasing importance. Several discussion papers have been produced that are relevant to strategic planning in the UK and the Union has also issued Directives with which member states must comply.
- 1.14 Two particularly important documents are the Maastricht Treaty (1992) which commits member states to work towards sustainable development and the Europe 2000+ paper, published in 1995, which recognises there should be a common approach between member states on planning policy.
- 1.15 In addition, two important Green Papers issued recently by the European Commission are “Towards Fair & Efficient Pricing in Transport” (1995) and “The Citizens Network” (1995).
- 1.16 “Towards Fair & Efficient Pricing in Transport” suggests that the only equitable and sustainable way to deal with the problems caused by motor vehicles in the long term is to gradually make transport users aware of the total cost of their travel mode choices, including the indirect costs borne by others, and to charge users on that basis.
- 1.17 “The Citizens Network” addresses increased public transport patronage and accessibility in order to counter the negative environmental effects of over reliance on private transport resulting in pollution, congestion and accidents. The Green Paper’s vision is of an integrated and accessible public transport system that is responsive to changing needs and offers realistic transport choice.
- 1.18 In December 1996, the Commission issued a Directive requiring member states to adopt the principle of Strategic Environmental Assessment. This requires that an environmental assessment of land use plans is carried out before the adoption. In April 1998 the European parliament discussed a draft report, “Towards An Urban Agenda For The European Union”. This signals an increasing focus on urban areas within European Strategies. A strategy document is to be produced in July 1998.

## **NATIONAL CONTEXT**

- 1.19 The statutory framework for land use planning in England and Wales is set down by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as modified by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. The form and content of structure and local plans is governed by the Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) Regulations 1991.
- 1.20 The Government sets down national planning policy in Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), Minerals Planning Guidance notes (MPGs), Circulars and Ministerial Statements. These set the broad framework for planning at the county and district level. Planning authorities are expected to take these into account when preparing their plans. Several new and revised PPGs have been issued since the adopted Structure Plan was drawn up. Government policy affecting land use planning is also developed through Green and White Papers.
- 1.21 In September 1990, the Government published its White Paper, “This Common Inheritance”, which outlined the Government’s environmental strategy. It emphasises the role of land use planning both in improving the local environment and in helping to avoid global environmental problems.

- 1.22 In May 1996, the Government published the Green Paper “Transport: The Way Forward”. This recognises the key role played by local authorities in addressing local transport demand. The Government identified key themes, including the better planning of transport infrastructure, making more efficient use of transport infrastructure, reducing reliance on the car, diverting expenditure from roads to public transport, and reducing the impact of road freight.
- 1.23 In July 1996 the National Cycling Strategy was launched with a view to quadrupling cycling by 2012. The Leicestershire County Council has affirmed its support for the Strategy and is preparing a County Cycle Plan in liaison with Leicester City and Rutland County Councils.
- 1.24 In November 1996, the Government published a Green Paper, “Household Growth: Where Shall We Live?”. This aimed to stimulate a wide ranging public debate about the alternative options for accommodating the new homes needed. The Secretary of State for the Environment indicated that his first priority was to use the growth in households to help regenerate existing towns and cities. One of the points put forward for discussion by the Paper is a proposal that the national target for building houses on brownfield land should be increased from 50% to 60%.
- 1.25 Since April, 1997, each local authority has been required to produce an Air Quality Strategy, involving measuring pollution levels and developing schemes to bring them below the set targets. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the impact land use planning can have on travel behaviour. The adopted Structure Plan’s Transport Choice Strategy took steps towards developing land use patterns that will eventually reduce reliance on the car and this Consultation Draft Structure Plan seeks to take that further.
- 1.26 The Government’s White Paper, “A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone” was published in July 1998. It states that the effect of noise and pollution from over reliance on the car is damaging people’s health and the quality of life in towns and cities, and that simply building more and more roads is not the answer to traffic growth. It states that the way forward is through an integrated transport policy, integrating within and between different types of transport and with land use planning to support more sustainable travel choices. Local transport plans are introduced, which will have new tools, including road user charging and levies on workplace parking. In addition, the Government will create a new Strategic Rail Authority to provide a unified vision and promote the interests of passengers and freight customers.
- 1.27 “Planning for Communities of the Future” was published by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in February 1998. The document represents the first major step in the Government’s drive to make towns and cities more attractive and sustainable and reduce the need for development to spread into the countryside. It sets out the framework for how the Government intends to break from the “predict and provide” approach to meeting the demands for new housing. It also sets out how the Government wishes to give more responsibility to Regional Planning Forums to decide how best to meet housing needs, including the development of regional targets for the building of new homes on previously developed sites. Nationally, the target is raised from 50 to 60% to be achieved over the next ten years.
- 1.28 In February 1998, the Government published a consultation paper, “Opportunities for Change”, setting out its vision of sustainable development based on four broad

objectives. These are social progress which recognises everyone's needs, effective protection of the environment, the prudent use of natural resources, and the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

- 1.29 The Government also provides advice and information based on their estimates of expected population and household numbers. The development plan system is expected to take these into account when deciding upon the number of new dwellings which will need to be provided for in the Plan period.

## **REGIONAL CONTEXT**

- 1.30 Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands Region (RPG8) was published in March 1994. This is intended to add a regional dimension to national planning policy statements. It is the primary aim of the Guidance to guide the pattern of development and provide a framework for the updating of structure plans within the Region. The Guidance covers the period up to 2011. It is a requirement that structure planning authorities have regard to this guidance when formulating strategic policies and proposals for their areas. The Guidance post-dates the adoption of the current Structure Plan, but supports much of the strategic approach of the Plan.
- 1.31 The Guidance sets down four broad objectives for land use policies in the Region within the overall national aim of achieving sustainable development. These are:
- a) to meet the basic needs of all the Region's inhabitants,
  - b) to secure and stimulate prosperity in all parts of the Region,
  - c) to conserve and, where possible, enhance the Region's environment,
  - d) to maintain a high quality of life throughout the whole Region.
- 1.32 The East Midlands Regional Planning Forum is presently reviewing its Regional Strategy, which will eventually become the new Regional Planning Guidance for the Region.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

- 1.33 Since the 1960s it has become increasingly clear that there can often be an uneasy relationship between particular human activities and the protection of the environment.
- 1.34 It became obvious that issues of pollution, such as ozone layer depletion, required action at a global level. These pollution issues meshed with other global concerns, such as increasing population, inequalities in social and economic development and widespread deforestation through logging. This generated a widespread view that many human activities were unsustainable and that a new model of development was needed.
- 1.35 During the 1980s there was growing concern about how the economic and social aspirations of the world's growing population could be accommodated without a wholesale loss of ecosystems, global plant and animal life, and of the resources available to successive generations.
- 1.36 A more holistic view was developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development in the report 'Our Common Future' (1987). This provided the most commonly used working definition of sustainable development, describing it as

‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

- 1.37 This general principle received substantial backing internationally, and led to the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 (commonly known as the Rio Earth Summit), attended by Heads of State and Government.
- 1.38 One of the four major agreements signed at the Rio Earth Summit was Agenda 21. It was the only agreement that was signed by all the nations that attended. Agenda 21 sets out why the world has to move towards sustainable development in the 21st century, and what needs to be done to achieve this, recognising in particular that many issues are best dealt with at the local level. All the nations which signed up to Agenda 21 were required to produce national strategies by 1994. The UK Government published, “Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy” in 1994 to meet this obligation. In addition, local authorities are expected to produce their own strategies addressing ‘Local Agenda 21’.
- 1.39 As a response to this commitment, Leicestershire County Council initiated a county-wide environmental forum in 1992, bringing together representatives of business, environment, academic organisations, public bodies and local groups. The overall aim of the forum, now called the Forum For A Better Leicestershire, is to prepare and implement a Local Agenda 21 Strategy for the County. The forum established action groups which have the role of considering the main concerns facing Leicestershire, identified by extensive public consultation, and then suggesting possible solutions and targets for change. The Forum published “Ways Forward for a Better Leicestershire. Our Actions, Our Future” in May 1998. Leicester City Council was awarded the European Sustainable Cities Award in October 1996. In May 1998 Leicester City published its Local Agenda 21 Action Plan and Shared Vision for the City. The document covers 15 action plan areas, including land use and buildings (see paragraph 1.9 above).
- 1.40 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) from the former Department of Environment evolved to incorporate aspects of the sustainability agenda, for example in PPG1 ‘General Policy and Principles’ (1997), PPG12 ‘Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance’ (1992) and PPG13 ‘Transport’ (1994).
- 1.41 PPG1 states that a key role of the planning system is to enable the provision of homes and buildings, investment and jobs in a way which is consistent with the principles of sustainable development. It also states that the Government is committed to the principles of sustainable development set out in its document, ‘Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy’ (1994). This includes, for example, using already developed areas in the most efficient way, while making them more attractive places in which to live and work and shaping new development patterns in a way which minimises the need to travel.
- 1.42 PPG12 requires plans (in a plan-led development process) to take account of the environment ‘in all its aspects’, global and local. It states that “the sum total of decisions in the planning field, as elsewhere, should not deny future generations the best of today’s environment”.
- 1.43 PPG13 translates a concern for global climatic stability into advice on land use/transport planning with central themes being to reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys; encourage alternative means of travel which have less environmental impact; and reduce reliance on the private car.

---

## **SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL RESULTS**

- 1.44 The current Structure Plan Review is being developed within the context and framework of Agenda 21 and Planning Policy Guidance. The Structure Plan will help to ensure that the most appropriate development takes place in the most appropriate locations while taking into account, environmental, social and economic issues. Incorporating the objectives of sustainable development requires a new way of thinking that will help to ensure the overall quality of life for people will be improved.
- 1.45 The appraisal of Structure Plan policies is an important mechanism which ensures the objectives of sustainable development are incorporated. PPG12 recommends, and the DETR has made it clear that it expects, local authorities to undertake an environmental appraisal during the preparation of development plans. The Department of the Environment published 'Environmental Appraisal of Development Plans - A Good Practice Guide' in 1993. Since then many local authorities have been developing appraisal processes which incorporate the principles of sustainable development, which includes environmental issues. This enables the appraisal process to keep in line with Government thinking.
- 1.46 The Three Councils has developed an appraisal methodology which addresses the issue of sustainable development. This appraisal process ensures that the potential impact of policies on people's environmental, social and cultural, and economic well-being are systematically assessed while the policies are being developed. This provides the opportunity to revise policies in order to mitigate any identified potential negative impacts and enhance identified beneficial impacts. In other words, undertaking an appraisal ensures that the objectives of sustainable development have been integrated into the policy formulation process and dealt with in a comprehensive manner.
- 1.47 The policies of this Consultation Draft Structure Plan have been appraised and the main findings are summarised in Appendix II. The findings show that, on balance, the draft policies are facilitating a strong move towards sustainable development. They have a particularly positive impact in terms of accessibility, the local economy, equity and transport mode. The results also show that there will be some negative impacts, most notably on movement, landscape, health and air quality. This reflects the fact that by accepting a certain level of development needs to occur, for economic and social reasons, some 'trade-off' with environmental factors must take place. Other policies within the plan will help to mitigate the impact on the environment and ensure that the most important environmental assets are given full protection.
- 1.48 The Appraisal has been very useful in highlighting the incidental impacts of policies on various factors that contribute towards sustainability. This has led to the mitigation or avoidance of potentially negative impacts and the enhancement of positive impacts through often minor changes to the text of policies or the Explanatory Memorandum.
- 1.49 Technical Paper 2: Sustainability Appraisal, which has been published to accompany this Consultation Draft Plan, gives additional background information on the process and results of the appraisal.

## **THE VISION FOR THIS CONSULTATION DRAFT STRUCTURE PLAN**

- 1.50 The Three Councils consider it is essential that the vision and principles of the Plan fully reflect the objectives of sustainable development which look beyond the year 2011. Even though the Plan period is only to the year 2011, the vision and aims upon which the Plan is based are longer term.
- 1.51 The vision for Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland is to create an attractive area with a rich historic, cultural and physical environment, enabling residents to enjoy environmental, social and economic well-being.
- 1.52 To help achieve the vision, the main principles for this Consultation Draft Structure Plan are:
- a) **Accessibility** - maximising people's ability to use facilities and services and to participate in the local economy, in particular by reducing the need to travel.
  - b) **Social Equity** - maximising equity in access to and use of facilities, services, opportunities and resources, including housing, transport, employment, recreation, education and health facilities.
  - c) **Economic Opportunity and Activity** - maximising the contribution that the commercial/business sector can make towards sustainable development, including people's economic well being.
  - d) **Air and Water Quality** - protecting and improving the quality of Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland's air and water environment, including river corridors. In addition, minimising the threat to the earth's climate from increasing emissions such as carbon dioxide and methane.
  - e) **Valuable Features and Assets** - ensuring that the features or assets of the natural and built environment, which form the overall character and quality of urban and rural areas in Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland are addressed within the following framework:
    - i) critical capital - features or assets which are irreplaceable, too difficult or expensive to replace in human timetables, highly valued and/or essential to human health are identified, protected, promoted and increased;
    - ii) constant and tradable capital - replaceable features or assets are identified. Constant features or assets lost through development will be replaced like with like, and where possible enhanced. Tradable features or assets lost, however, will be traded for enhanced living standards.
  - f) **Quality of Housing** - ensuring high quality housing which meets the requirements of Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland's households, including the needs for affordable housing.
  - g) **A Sense of Belonging and Responsibility** - encouraging community feeling by fostering high quality urban environments, and promoting a sense of individual responsibility for the built and natural environment.