

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – 20 OCTOBER 2009

Title of report	CORE STRATEGY - UPDATE
Key Decision	a) Financial No b) Community No
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Purpose of report	To outline emerging views in respect of a number of the key issues from the Core Strategy
Reason for Decision	To provide a direction of travel for further work and discussions
Strategic aims	Sustainable Communities
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	Allowed for within existing budgets
Link to relevant CAT	Place Shaping Local Prosperity Cleaner Greener
Risk Management	A risk assessment of the project has been undertaken. As far as possible control measures have been put in place to minimise these risks, including monthly updates to the Corporate Leadership Team.
Equalities Impact Assessment	The Core Strategy will have to ensure that any policies have taken account of any diversity and equality issues. Therefore all new policies will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment as part of their preparation.
Human Rights	None discernible

Transformational Government	Not applicable
Comments of Head of Paid Service	Unable to comment
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory
Consultees	None
Background papers	<p>'A Strategy For Growth and Change' – North West Leicestershire Local Development framework – Core Strategy Further Consultation. Copies can be viewed at Local Development Framework - North West Leicestershire District Council. Copies also held in the Planning Policy Team in Room 100.</p> <p>Representations received to the Further Consultation</p> <p>Sustainability Appraisal</p> <p>Habitats Regulations Assessment</p> <p>Report of Transport assessment using Ptolemy model</p> <p>Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment</p> <p>Core Strategy Background Paper - Green Wedge Study</p> <p>Copies of all representations received and all background papers are held by the Planning Policy Team in Room 100. Copies of the background papers have also been placed in the members room and can be viewed at Development Planning - North West Leicestershire District Council</p>
Recommendations	<p>(I) THAT CABINET NOTE THE PROGRESS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORE STRATEGY;</p> <p>(II) THAT CABINET NOTE EMERGING VIEWS ON THE ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED IN THE REPORT AND;</p> <p>(III) THAT THE EMERGING VIEWS FORM THE BASIS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS AS PART OF THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORE STRATEGY</p>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will recall that the 14 July meeting of Cabinet considered a report which provided an update on the Core Strategy and identified a number of key issues and challenges. The key issues considered related to:
- Green Wedge;
 - Strategic Sites;
 - Development Strategy;
 - Strategic Distribution, and
 - Provision for gypsies and travellers
- 1.2 It was agreed at the meeting to seek the views of other members on these issues.
- 1.3 The July report set out in general terms the nature of the responses received to these key issues. For members' information, these responses together with an outline of what the consultation put forward are summarised at Appendix A of this report.
- 1.4 This current report provides a further update on these issues, including the views of other members, and sets out the emerging views on these issues on the basis of current evidence. Cabinet are asked to agree to these conclusions forming the basis of further discussions with key stakeholders as part of the development of the Core Strategy.
- 1.5 It should be stressed that Cabinet are not being asked to make any decisions on these issues. Instead, Cabinet are asked to consider these issues in the light of the report and to provide an indication as to the direction of travel. The decision as to what goes in the final plan will be determined by Full Council in 2010 in accordance with the Regulations.
- 1.6 Members should note that a summary of all of the representations is nearly completed and it is hoped to get these on to the Council's website by the end of October. Due to issues associated with Data Protection it will be necessary to exclude the names of any individuals who made a representation. Copies of individual representations will only be made available upon request and will also need to accord with the various requirements associated with Data Protection requirements.

2.0 HOW ARE THE ISSUES CONSIDERED?

- 2.1 There are a number of factors which will need to be considered in determining the appropriate approach to take in the Core Strategy. These include:
- the provisions of the approved Regional Plan;
 - the various responses to the consultation, and
 - the findings of the various pieces of work which make up the evidence base;
- 2.2 The evidence base is constantly being added to or updated as the need for additional information is identified. For example, an Affordable Housing Viability Study is nearing completion whilst a Water Cycle Study to identify the potential implications for water infrastructure is also underway. In addition, officers are meeting with the promoters of the major sites in Coalville, together with the respective highway authorities and other infrastructure providers, to understand fully the potential implications of these proposals.

- 2.3 Specific reference is made in this report to the Sustainability Appraisal, the Appropriate Assessment in respect of the River Mease Special Area of Conservation and highway evidence (Ptolemy model). More details on these can be found at Appendix B.
- 2.4 Reference is also made to the views of other members where such views have been expressed.
- 2.5 This report however focuses on the 'key issues' that have arisen as part of the previous consultation exercises, the resolution of which will be fundamental to the eventual contents of the Core Strategy

3.0 GREEN WEDGE

- 3.1 The potential deletion of the Green Wedge has, understandably, raised concerns amongst the local community. As previously noted over 500 individual responses have been received expressing concern about the possibility of development in the Green Wedge. The concerns raised include:
- Loss of physical separation and village identities, communities and qualities (Whitwick, Swannington & Thringstone)
 - Green lung for community - loss of open green space and recreational resource for current and future generations
 - Green Wedge prevents urban sprawl
 - Loss of health benefits
 - Impact on wildlife and flora and fauna including meadow, woodland and heath
 - Loss of farmland
 - Concerns regarding subsidence from mining works and increased risk of flooding
 - Loss of Green Wedge will affect the functionality of the wider eco-system
 - Loss of residential amenity and devaluation of property prices
- 3.2 The deletion of the Green Wedge designation does not automatically mean that some or all of the area will be developed. The [background paper](#) published with the consultation document set out a range of possible options, including a policy which aims to maintain the separation between Coalville and Whitwick in its current form or only allowing development on parts of the area.
- 3.3 The Environment Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11th August 2009 recommended that "Cabinet note the concerns raised in respect of the Green Wedge and request that officers protect the village boundaries".
- 3.4 The Sustainability Appraisal commented that Green Wedge policies can play an important role in retaining the unique identity of different settlements. However, the wider sustainability benefits of Green Wedges and other 'openness' designations can be limited. It also noted that the existing Green Wedge has the potential to provide good access to the town centre and employment sites. Therefore re-allocation for housing (at least in part) may have benefits for sustainability and a more compact urban form.
- 3.5 Whether the Green Wedge should be identified for development will depend to a large extent upon what the Development Strategy is to be and how the issue of Strategic Sites should be addressed.

Emerging view

- 3.5 Whether the Green Wedge designation is deleted and whether development on the Green Wedge is considered appropriate are two distinctly separate matters. It would appear that it is this potential for development and the potential threat to community identity that has generated most responses, rather than the deletion of the Green Wedge per se.
- 3.6 There are very genuine concerns about the future role of the Green Wedge and the significance of these issues is understood. However, given the requirement in the Regional Plan to review and consider the appropriateness of Green Wedges it is not felt at this stage that there is a clear justification for retaining these areas as Green Wedges. That is not to say that they should automatically be developed but the future role of the Green Wedge area needs to be considered in the light of discussions on the Development Strategy later in this report.
- 3.7 In the event that some development on the Green Wedge is considered to be appropriate, then it will clearly be necessary to ensure that any future development addresses those concerns expressed by the local community, particularly in respect of the perceived threat to the identity of Whitwick and Thringstone and the need to improve public accessibility within the area currently designated as Green Wedge.

4.0 STRATEGIC SITES

- 4.1 Members will recall that the GOEM has suggested that the suggested threshold for a Strategic Site of 100 dwellings or 1 ha or more for employment purposes was too low. The GOEM had suggested that a more appropriate threshold would be 2,000 dwellings.
- 4.2 If GOEM's threshold was applied to the potential sites outlined in the consultation, only two sites would satisfy this criterion (South-east of Coalville and north of Stephenson Way (i.e. the Green Wedge area)).
- 4.3 There is no definitive advice as to what in size terms constitutes a Strategic Site. However, PPS12 specifically advises that *"Progress on the core strategy should not be held up by inclusion of non strategic sites"*.
- 4.4 As noted in the July Cabinet report another option would be for the Core Strategy to include both Strategic Sites and 'broad locations' (i.e. directions for growth). A 'broad location' would differ from a Strategic Site as no specific site boundary would be identified but it would show the scale and direction of growth proposed. Whilst it would be necessary to show such a site could be delivered, the amount of information required to do this would be less. For example, a Strategic Site would need to be clear about exactly how much development would take place, the mix of different uses and what infrastructure is required and when, at what cost and who was to provide the associated infrastructure.
- 4.5 At its meeting on 1 September Planning Committee commented that the threshold for Strategic Sites should be 500 or more dwellings.

Emerging view

- 4.6 Having had due regard to the consultation responses, it is considered that the threshold suggested in the consultation is too low. In the absence of any more specific guidance, it is

suggested that GOEM's definition of a Strategic Site be used. However, in order to address the concerns raised through the consultation, particularly those raised by the Planning Committee, it is also considered appropriate that 'broad locations' should also be identified outside of the Coalville Urban Area therefore allowing the Council to plan with more certainty over which areas of the district are likely to be supported for development.

5.0 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

5.1 There are a number of components to the development strategy which need to be considered. These are:

- The overall scale of development
- Settlement hierarchy (i.e. the role of settlements), and
- The growth Option to be pursued.

5.2 The overall scale of development

5.2.1 As was noted in the July Cabinet report, the Regional Plan identifies a requirement in North West Leicestershire of 10,200 dwellings for the period 2006-2026. Whilst this is the actual level of provision required, members will appreciate that there have been a significant number of completions since 2006. Up to 31 March 2009 some 925 dwellings had been built, leaving a residual requirement of 9,275 dwellings.

5.2.2 A number of consultation responses have expressed serious concerns about the overall amount of housing development required. Whilst these concerns are understandable, a key test of soundness of the Core Strategy will be conformity with the Regional Plan and therefore not providing enough homes to meet the Regional Plan requirement would carry a very significant risk of the Core Strategy being found to be unsound.

5.2.3 As members are aware, the Regional Plan housing provision requirements are currently being reviewed and the period extended to 2031, with an emphasis on revised housing numbers for 2021-2031. Notwithstanding the Council's concerns about the Regional Plan review process; this could increase the housing requirement for the period 2021-2026, although by how much is not clear.

5.2.4 There would be some merit in seeking to build a degree of flexibility into the Core Strategy in respect of housing provision by going above the requirement in the approved Regional Plan. However, in the absence of any firm guidance in the review of the Regional Plan any such flexibility would be, at this time, purely arbitrary.

Emerging view

5.2.5 It is considered that in view of the fact that any built-in flexibility would be arbitrary, and taking into account the Council's reservations about the Regional Plan review process, it is recommended that no specific flexibility be built in to the Core Strategy. Instead, the Core Strategy should only seek to ensure that the requirement of the approved Regional Plan is accommodated during the remainder of the plan period to 2026.

5.3 Settlement Hierarchy

5.3.1 Members will recall that the Development Strategy suggested in the consultation was to identify the Coalville Urban Area as the focus for growth with Ashby de la Zouch, Castle

Donington, Ibstock, Kegworth and Measham being identified as Rural Towns. Outside of these settlements development would be restricted to infill development in Sustainable Villages and local needs only development in Local Needs Settlements.

- 5.3.2 Generally speaking there was support for the overall thrust of the strategy, although a large number of residents in the Whitwick and Thringstone area expressed concerns that there was too much focus upon Coalville. In addition, a number of respondents suggested that there would be merit in identifying Ashby De la Zouch and Castle Donington as higher order settlements than the other Rural Towns in recognition of their size, function and the level of services provided. Finally, a number of respondents raised concerns about the approach in the rural areas, and in particular the potential for the suggested strategy to stifle opportunities for new development and therefore affect the social sustainability of these settlements. Others responded that some of the suggested criteria are too restrictive.
- 5.3.3 The Sustainability Appraisal concluded that the suggested Development Strategy should help to move towards more sustainable patterns of development by concentrating development in the most sustainable locations. It raised concerns that allowing new affordable housing in settlements with poor access and facilities could result in pockets of rural isolation and, therefore, it may be better to prevent new development outside of Sustainable settlements.

Emerging view

- 5.3.4 At this stage, officers are of the view that having regard to the consultation responses and the conclusions of the Sustainability Appraisal, that the overall approach suggested in the consultation is appropriate.

5.4 The Growth Option to be pursued

- 5.4.1 Members will recall that at the July meeting it was noted that the amount of development in Coalville in both Options 1 and 2 (9,800 and 8,000 respectively) were considered to not be deliverable. Both Options 3 and 4 (at least in respect of Coalville) were considered to be deliverable. There were also suggestions that Ashby de la Zouch and Castle Donington be identified as 'Principal Rural Towns'. However, it was also noted that there were issues about how much development might be appropriate in Ashby because of the possible impact on the River Mease Special Area of Conservation.
- 5.4.2 Since the July meeting further discussions have taken place with both the Environment Agency and Natural England to explore this issue. It is apparent from these discussions that the potential impact of this issue upon the Core Strategy is more serious than was initially envisaged. At the present time the Environment Agency are objecting to even minor applications in the River Mease catchment area. Essentially the concern of the Environment Agency (and Natural England) is that the water quality in the River Mease is lower than the target sought as part of the Special Area of Conservation designation. This is primarily as a result of a combination of discharges from the Packington sewage works and run off from land which adjoins the River Mease resulting in higher concentrations of phosphates than the target. Under these circumstances both the Environment Agency and Natural England are required to take steps to ensure the water quality entering the River Mease is within acceptable levels

- 5.4.3 In addition to these ongoing discussions, as noted earlier a Water Cycle Study has been commissioned which will help to address this issue.
- 5.4.4 As members will appreciate this is a technical issue and it may be the case that a technical solution can be found which makes the issue resolvable, subject to the cost. If this were to be the case in this instance, then some development should be possible in Ashby and Measham.
- 5.4.5 In addition to the question of deliverability, all 4 options have been assessed as part of the initial Sustainability Appraisal work and in terms of their potential impact upon the River Mease, whilst option 1, 2 and 3 have also been assessed against the Highways Agency's Ptolemy model to test their likely impact upon transport infrastructure. A summary of these is set out at Appendix C of this report (this also summarises the 4 options put forward and the results of the SHLAA which have informed the issue of deliverability).
- 5.4.6 In summary:
- Option 1 performs very poorly in respect of the Sustainability Appraisal but performs best in respect of the Appropriate Assessment although it is not considered that this is sufficient, at this time, to outweigh the other considerations.
 - Option 2, this Option performs better than Option 1 in terms of Sustainability Appraisal, but it is the worst performing Option in respect of the Appropriate Assessment.
 - Option 3 performs better than Option 2 in terms of Appropriate Assessment, but not as well as Option 1 and 4, but performs best in terms of the Sustainability Appraisal.
 - Option 4 performs better than Options 2 and 3 in terms of Appropriate Assessment, but not quite so well as Option 3 in respect of the Sustainability Assessment.
- 5.4.7 These findings reinforce the conclusions reached in respect of deliverability, and support either Option 3 or 4 of the consultation, although as was stated in the consultation document the final approach might not match up exactly with any of the options. .
- 5.4.8 In respect of the results from Ptolemy, all of the options assessed (i.e. Options 1, 2 and 3) perform quite poorly given the amount of development proposed and the lack of a genuine alternative to the car in most parts of the district, which results in unsustainable car based trips. It would not be appropriate to conclude that there is any Option that can clearly be regarded as the best with regard to outcomes from Ptolemy so far. However, further work is now taking place to examine in much greater detail the types of interventions that a 'Coalville focus' would be able to deliver, which could include significant investment in public transport to partly address the issue of unsustainable trips.
- 5.4.9 At the meeting of Planning Committee on 1 September it was stated that the public felt that an urban sprawl would be created by the large number of houses proposed in the Coalville area. In addition, it was stated that the public should have been informed of the wider aspects including employment, recreation facilities and parkland, and request that Cabinet consider including this in their proposals.

Emerging view

- 5.4.10 On the basis of the current evidence it is considered that the initial conclusions reported in the July report in respect of which option to pursue remain valid, subject to the resolution of issues associated with the River Mease.
- 5.4.11 Option 3 in effect represents a 'business as usual' case in respect of the amount of development in each of the main settlements, But it is very debatable whether this would be fully in accordance with the Regional Plan with its requirement that new development should be focussed 'mainly at Coalville'. Option 4, however, would represent a changed approach which would more accurately reflect the changed strategic status conferred on Coalville by the Regional Plan.
- 5.4.12 Options 3 and 4 identify two Rural Towns to take more development than the other Rural Towns. Option 3 suggested Ashby and Castle Donington whilst Option 4 suggested Castle Donington and Ibstock.
- 5.4.13 In respect of the amount of development in each settlement, it is not possible to provide a definitive distribution until such time as the issue of the River Mease is satisfactorily resolved and members should be aware that there is no evidence currently available which demonstrates that this issue will be resolved.. However, in order to enable further meaningful discussions to take place with a range of stakeholders in advance of the River Mease issue being resolved, it is considered that it would be appropriate to provide an indication as to the likely scale of growth that may be considered appropriate.
- 5.4.14 Any distribution will need to reflect the requirements of the Regional Plan, particularly Policy Three Cities SRS 3 (i.e. that development is to be located mainly at Coalville) and Policy 12 which requires that development should be "located within and adjoining settlements. Such development should be in scale with the size of those settlements", as well as paying regard to the issue of deliverability.
- 5.4.15 On this basis the following is suggested as an appropriate split to meet the requirements of the Regional Plan.

Table 1

Settlement	Dwellings
Coalville	6500
Ashby	1000
Castle Donington	1000
Ibstock	500
Kegworth	300
Measham	400
Rest of district	500
Total Dwellings	10200

- 5.4.16 A figure for the rest of the district has been included to reflect the fact that the suggested policy envisaged a limited amount of development outside of Coalville and the Rural Towns. The suggested figure of 500 dwellings represents about 5% of the total number of

new dwellings compared to about 22% of all current dwellings. Such a shift of development towards more sustainable locations will help to achieve a more sustainable pattern of development.

- 5.4.17 As noted at paragraph 5.2.1 some development has already taken place, whilst there are also a number of commitments (i.e. planning permissions) which are likely to contribute towards meeting the housing requirements in the next couple of years. When these are taken into account the effect is to reduce the amount of minimum new development for which provision will have to be made, as set out in Table 2.

Table 2

	Total no of dwellings required (a)	Built 2006-09 (b)	Planning permission at April 2009 (c)	Remaining (a-b-c) (i.e. dwellings still to find)
Ashby	1000	283	245	472
Coalville	6500	412	234	5854
Ibstock	500	14	17	469
Kegworth	300	27	20	253
Castle Donington	1000	45	12	943
Measham	400	37	51	312
Rest of district	500	107	80	313
Total	10200	925	659	8616

- 5.4.18 For the reasons already set out these figures must be treated with a degree of caution at this time. However, they can be used in discussions with key stakeholders, particularly infrastructure providers, in order that the implications of new development upon infrastructure can be explored and understood.
- 5.4.19 If the issues associated with the River Mease cannot be resolved, or if lower figures are required (either as a result of the River Mease issue or infrastructure restrictions) then this will necessitate revision to these figures. This could be particularly significant in the rest of the district where it may be necessary to consider a higher figure than currently envisaged in order to meet the Regional Plan requirement for a minimum of 10,200 dwellings up to 2026.
- 5.4.20 In respect of the issue of Strategic Sites, if the figures above are accepted by Council, it is likely there would be a need to include both South-East Coalville and north of Stephenson Way (i.e. the Green Wedge area)) to ensure that the Regional Plan requirement could be met.
- 5.4.21 It is clear however from the consultation responses that many respondents would not support any development on the Green Wedge area. As already highlighted earlier in this report, if development of this area is to be included in the Core Strategy, such development must address the concerns that have been raised in the consultation.
- 5.4.22 Development which simply results in 'wall to wall' development across any entire part of the Green Wedge would be completely unacceptable. Instead, any development would need to accord with the Council's commitment to achieving high quality design as reflected

in the 'Your Place' Design Initiative which the Council is launching. To this end development would need to reflect the principles arising from the work of the Prince's Foundation in the Coalville Town Centre Regeneration Strategy. This recognises that accommodating growth in greater Coalville, can still be achieved whilst also preserving the physical identity and character of the separate villages which make up greater Coalville and identifies the potential for introducing new significant areas of open space which can act as a 'green lung'.

- 5.4.23 To achieve this a policy for any development in that part of the Green Wedge between Stephenson Way and Hall Lane Whitwick (in effect the eastern part of the Green Wedge) would need to require the provision of an open, undeveloped area to the east of Hermitage Road and south of Hall Lane to preserve the physical separation of Whitwick from Coalville. Based on the Prince's Foundation report this would need to be of about 150 – 300 metres depth. To secure maximum public benefit this area would need to be publically accessible and include the provision of a combination of forest planting, cycleway, footpaths, playing fields and play areas. In effect it would be the creation of a new 'park' which would serve the needs of both existing and future residents whilst also providing a 'green buffer'. The area would need to be secured in perpetuity via a legal agreement.
- 5.4.24 In respect of land east of Thornborough Road/south of Church Lane Whitwick (Central Green Wedge), development would best reflect the Prince's Foundation report by restricting development to that area immediately adjoining Thornborough Road and Church Lane and retaining a buffer along that part adjoining Stephenson Way (i.e. the area of the Hermitage Recreation Ground and golf course), in effect representing an extension of the buffer from the Eastern Green Wedge.
- 5.4.25 However, until there is greater certainty about the distribution of new development that will follow resolution of the River Mease issue, the sites to be included in the Core Strategy cannot be finally confirmed.

6.0 STRATEGIC DISTRIBUTION

- 6.1 Members will recall that the Regional Plan does not include any specific requirement for a site (or sites) for Strategic Distribution purposes. Despite this a preferred site was included in the previous consultation, at Junction 24 of the M1. However, since the previous consultation, the Regional Plan policy on this (Policy 21) has been changed such that the reference to a minimum size of site is no longer included within the policy. This is of potential significance in respect of the potential site identified in the consultation at Lounge, Ashby de la Zouch, as this site was smaller than the then specified threshold (50ha).
- 6.2 The consultation generated a significant number of responses (400+) opposed to the potential site north of East Midlands Airport, primarily due to the scale of development and its potential impact upon nearby settlements in respect of traffic, noise and visual intrusion.
- 6.3 In general terms, the Sustainability Appraisal noted that a pro-active approach has greater potential to deliver a more sustainable site than may be the case if it was left up to the development control process. It would however be necessary to demonstrate that the potential sites have been rigorously tested, and no alternatives would be more suitable. In respect of the sites included in the consultation the Sustainability Appraisal conclusions are included at Appendix C.

- 6.4 It is acknowledged that the geographical advantages offered by the district in terms of this type of use are such that it is likely that there will continue to be interest in developing distribution facilities in the area.
- 6.5 However, if the Core Strategy were to allocate a site, then the Council would need to be sure that any site put forward was the most appropriate site within the Housing Market Area (HMA). However, the Core Strategy is only concerned with North West Leicestershire and it cannot consider the suitability of sites elsewhere.
- 6.6 The Council has been pressing East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) and East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) for more advice on this issue and only recently EMDA agreed to commission a sub regional study into appropriate distribution sites. However it is unlikely that any new evidence will be available on until 2010. .
- 6.7 The July report noted that there were three possible options for dealing with this matter
- Identify a specific site as part of the Core Strategy or;
 - Include a criteria-based policy to provide guidance for the possible allocation of sites through the subsequent allocations Development Plan Document or to assist the planning application process or;
 - Have no policy whatsoever on this issue
- 6.8 At its meeting on 11th August 2009 the Environment Scrutiny Committee recommended that “Cabinet consider the necessity for the strategic distribution centre proposal in light of public concern”.

Emerging view

- 6.9 Of the three Options highlighted in paragraph 6.6 above, the last one is not considered to be reasonable given the weight of evidence now available and there is a significant risk that such an approach would result in the Core Strategy being found ‘unsound’. The other two Options are very finely balanced with the first Option potentially providing a degree of certainty. However, as outlined above there are a number of doubts about the suitability of all three potential sites in the district. The criteria-based policy would allow the Council to be able to address this issue at some future date, including potentially considering other sites which have yet to be identified.
- 6.10 On balance, therefore, it is considered that in the absence of more detailed guidance from the regional bodies which addresses the concerns outlined above in paragraph 6.4, the Core Strategy should include a criteria-based policy on this issue and not allocate a specific site in the district.

7.0 PROVISION FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

- 7.1 As noted in the July Cabinet report the Regional Plan requirement for provision of pitches in the district has now been set at 32 permanent, 10 transit and 8 for showpeople (compared to 43 permanent, 20 transit and 10 for showpeople in the earlier version and referred to in the consultation document) but it is now over the period 2007-12 rather than up to 2016.

- 7.2 The Sustainability Appraisal noted that the favoured approach (i.e. provision to be made as part of one or more Strategic Sites) would help to secure the delivery of these sites to allow needs of these groups to be met. However, it also noted that in allocating sites it may be necessary to take into account the needs of different gypsy and travelling groups. Provision of one site to fill the total identified need may not meet the potentially diverse requirements of the different groups.
- 7.3 At its meeting on 1 September 2009 Planning Committee commented that it considers this should be considered at a later date as a separate issue to the Core Strategy.

Emerging view

- 7.4 It is considered that the most appropriate way forward would be for the Core Strategy to include a criteria-based policy to guide the future identification of appropriate sites but not to identify any specific sites at this stage. In addition however, further work will be undertaken to assess the feasibility of bringing forward a site as part of any Strategic Sites that may be included in the Core Strategy.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 There are clearly a number of issues which need to be resolved before the Council can determine its preferred approach for the Core Strategy. Key amongst these is the River Mease issue. Discussions with the Environment Agency and Natural England will need to continue with a view to resolving this matter.
- 8.2 Work will also continue to develop the evidence base. This will include targeted engagement with key stakeholders over the period ahead of a decision of Full Council on the emerging views set out in this report, subject to the agreement of Cabinet. Any such engagement will make it clear that nothing is determined at this stage and may be subject to change where evidence, which includes consultation responses, suggests such change is required.

A GREEN WEDGE

A1 What did the consultation put forward?

The consultation suggested that the Green Wedge should be deleted. A background paper set out a range of Options (7 in total) for the future of the area covered by the Green Wedge. These included possible development on parts of the Green Wedge or alternative policies to keep the area undeveloped.

A2 What was the response to the consultation?

A significant number of respondents have objected to the possibility of development on the Green Wedge, primarily on the grounds of the loss of separation between Coalville and Whitwick.

B STRATEGIC SITES

B1 What did the consultation put forward?

It was suggested that the Core Strategy identify Strategic Sites and that these be defined as 100 or more dwellings for housing developments and over 1 hectare for employment sites.

B2 What was the response to the consultation?

There was general support for the definition suggested from the development industry, but the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM) has advised that whilst Strategic Sites can be identified in a Core Strategy, it should only be those sites which are central to the achievement of the strategy. It has suggested that an alternative threshold would be 2,000 dwellings.

C DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The growth Option to be pursued

C1 What did the consultation put forward?

Four Options were put forward with varying amounts of development in Coalville and the Rural Towns.

C2 What was the response to the consultation?

A number of respondents on behalf of the development industry were of the view that the amount of development in Coalville (9800 dwellings) in Option 1 would not be capable of being delivered within the timescale. Other respondents, especially local communities,

also expressed concerns about the scale of development for Coalville in Option 1, in terms of its impact upon existing services and facilities.

In addition, about 200 respondents plus a petition signed by 307 people suggested that the Council should consider a fifth Option with a 'fairer distribution' of development which preserves the Green Wedge between Coalville and Whitwick.

D STRATEGIC DISTRIBUTION

D1 What did the consultation put forward?

The consultation noted that the then emerging Regional Plan had identified a need for the provision of a number of sites across the region for Strategic Distribution with the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA being one possible area for such a use. Three potential sites had been suggested to the Council which could be suitable for such a use. It was concluded that land west of Junction 24 of the M1 best met the criteria in the emerging Regional Plan.

D2 What was the response to the consultation?

There was some support for dealing with this issue as part of the Core Strategy. However, a significant number of representations were received objecting to the potential sites, particularly that west of Junction 24 where over 450 objections were received.

A number of nearby local planning authorities commented that it is not a requirement for each of the potential areas referred to in the Regional Plan to make provision.

E PROVISION FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

E1 What did the consultation put forward?

Two Options were put forward to meet the identified need for gypsies and travellers – either as part of the strategic sites (the favoured approach) or as stand alone specific sites.

E2 What was the response to the consultation?

A significant number of people objected to the proposal to make provision for gypsies and travellers. There was some support for the favoured approach but most respondents did not support the favoured approach. A number of responses from the development industry raised concerns about the impact upon viability and deliverability of strategic sites. Representatives of the gypsy and traveller community who responded tended to favour the alternative Option of making provision via series of stand-alone sites.

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

Sustainability Appraisal is required as part of the process of preparing the Core Strategy. This assesses the likely environmental, social and economic sustainability of the Core Strategy. A report has been prepared by independent consultants which examines the main sustainability implications of the strategic Options for housing and employment growth, as set out in the consultation document. A copy of the Sustainability Appraisal has been placed in the member's room.

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

The River Mease is designated as a Special of Conservation (SAC) under the European Union's Natura 2000 programme. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (often referred to as an Appropriate Assessment) is required under the European Directive (92/43/EEC) on the 'conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora', including SACs such as the River Mease. An Appropriate Assessment has been prepared which assesses the possible implications for the River Mease arising from the four growth Options included in the consultation. A copy has been placed in the member's room.

HIGHWAYS EVIDENCE

Any development strategy will have an impact upon the highway network and also services such as public transport. The Highways Agency has developed a model (known as Ptolemy) which can assess and identify the likely implications arising from new development. In this instance the Ptolemy model has been used to assess growth Options 1, 2 and 3. Each run has to be paid for separately and in view of the fact that in Option 4 the figures for each settlement are no more than those in the other Options, this Option has not been assessed. Discussions with the Highways Agency have confirmed that they consider this to be appropriate. The results from Ptolemy were also fed in to the Sustainability Appraisal.

APPENDIX C

Settlement	Option 1 – The Coalville Focus Option	Option 2 - Coalville focus with significant amount in a Rural Town	Option 3 - Coalville focus with a significant amount in two of the Rural Towns	Option 4 – Coalville focus with significant amount in two of the Rural Towns	Dwellings in SHLAA
Coalville	9800 dwellings	8000 dwellings	5400 dwellings	7700 dwellings	7912
Ashby de la Zouch	500 dwellings	2400 dwellings	1800 dwellings	500 dwellings	3879
Castle Donington	500 dwellings	350 dwellings	1200 dwellings	1000 dwellings	1504
Ibstock	100 dwellings	100 dwellings	1000 dwellings	1000 dwellings	1018
Kegworth	50 dwellings	75 dwellings	800 dwellings	400 dwellings	851
Measham	50 dwellings	75 dwellings	800 dwellings	400 dwellings	10140

	Option1 The Coalville Focus Option	Option 2 Coalville focus with significant amount in a Rural Town	Option 3 Coalville focus with a significant amount in two of the Rural Towns	Option 4 Coalville focus with a significant amount in two of the Rural Towns
Sustainability Appraisal	This Option could provide for the creation of 'sustainable communities' in Coalville. However, the scale of growth is likely to result in an imbalance with employment thus creating more journeys by car. This in turn will impact upon air pollution and will not be	This Option could provide for the creation of 'sustainable communities' in Coalville. Whilst the impact in respect of journeys would be slightly less than under Option 1, it would still be significant, although it is acknowledged that there	This Option could support the continued viability of all six towns and would also provide greater self containment in the north of the district although it notes that as with all Options out commuting will remain an issue. This greater self containment is also likely to be more positive in respect of air	The scale of development suggested in Coalville, Castle Donington and Ibstock could support the continued viability of these settlements and may also provide an opportunity for the creation of new sustainable extensions. The scale of development

	<p>positive in terms of mitigation against climate change. Limited development in other towns could make existing services and facilities vulnerable. Furthermore, limited housing development in other towns is likely to increase issues of affordability across the district and also misses out opportunities for new development to support physical regeneration in those areas with a poor quality urban environment. The impact on local communities is also likely to be significant under this Option, with the rural towns suffering a decrease in population. This Option is likely to be the most favourable in terms of impact upon the River Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC).</p>	<p>would be the potential for improved self containment for Ashby de la Zouch. However, the other towns would still be effected by either a drop in population numbers or at best stagnation. This in turn would impact upon existing businesses and services. Affordability would be likely to be an issue outside of Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch as housing numbers are restricted. The amount of development at Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch could still impact upon community character, whilst elsewhere there is likely to be shrinkage in population numbers resulting in changes to the local communities. Increased development in Ashby de la Zouch could potentially affect the River Mease SAC. The increased development in Measham under this Option is minimal and hence less likely to raise issues. The scale of development in Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch will change the physical shape of the towns thus potentially affecting the built character. This Option</p>	<p>quality. This Option is likely to meet more of the housing needs of the district and to have less of an impact upon existing communities, but at the possible expense of creating new sustainable neighbourhoods. The scale of development in Ashby de la Zouch and Measham is likely to have direct impact upon the River Mease SAC, although this scale may help support the provision of new or improved waste treatment. Water supply in Ashby de la Zouch and Measham is also likely to be an issue. This Option would allow new development to contribute towards regeneration but with some impact upon the character of towns.</p>	<p>in Coalville is such that there would be out commuting on a significant scale which would have implications in respect of air quality. However, there would be more self containment in the Castle Donington area. This Option would help meet housing needs in Coalville, Castle Donington and Ibstock but could result in affordability issues elsewhere. The amount of development at Coalville, Castle Donington and Ibstock could impact upon community character, whilst elsewhere there is likely to be shrinkage in population numbers resulting in changes to the local communities. This Option limits development in Measham and in Ashby de la Zouch and therefore may be preferable Options for protecting the River Mease Special Area of Conservation from harm related to development. Under this Option new development could assist with the regeneration of town centres but could bring major changes to the built character of towns, such as in Coalville and</p>
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		also misses out opportunities for new development to support physical regeneration in those areas with a poor quality urban environment. As this Option is likely to result in greater self containment in Ashby de la Zouch it is likely to be more positive in respect of air pollution than Option 1 but the scale of development in Coalville is still likely to produce negative results in this respect.		possibly in Ibstock and Castle Donington, and therefore needs to be sensitively planned. There may be some impacts in respect of the River Mease SAC in view of the scale of development in Ashby de la Zouch and Measham.
Appropriate Assessment	This Option would have the least impact upon the River Mease SAC, although even this Option proposes development in settlements (Ashby de la Zouch and Measham) which potentially could have a significant impact on the River Mease SAC.	This Option would have a major impact upon the River Mease SAC.	This Option would have a major impact upon the River Mease SAC.	This Option would have less impact than Option 2 and 3 but more than Option 1.
Ptolemy	The significant growth in dwellings and employed residents in Coalville would . generate significant levels of traffic focussed towards the rest of Leicestershire and Leicester. This is largely attributable to the fact that under this Option there would be significant imbalance between the	The impacts of the different distribution of housing growth is relatively localised with the main impacts seen as slightly reduced congestion in Coalville compared to Option 1, and increased congestion in Ashby. However, the reduction in growth in Coalville is not	The more uniform distribution of dwellings would have little impact on the overall level of traffic and delay within the District. The impacts, where they occur, would be more local with the reduced dwelling growth in Coalville resulting in less congestion than in Option 1, whilst there would be more	Not tested

	<p>number of jobs available in Coalville and the number of workers, leading to workers having to look elsewhere for work. Ashby would become more isolated from the rest of the District with congestion on the A42 and A511 restricting opportunities to travel to or from the town from the other urban centres within the District. As a consequence the town sees an increase in interaction with the West Midlands via the A42. Kegworth would see an increase in traffic flows through the town, even with the inclusion of the new bypass to the south. Castle Donington would also see increased congestion through the town associated with the economic activity at the airport. The airport and Strategic Distribution would draw a significant proportion of their workforce from outside the district. Around 15% of the workforce is likely to come from within the District.</p>	<p>sufficient to have a significant impact on the congestion within the town. Ashby would continue to be isolated from the rest of the District, and have a significant interaction with the West Midlands via the A42. Congestion on the roads surrounding Ashby would increase the likelihood that residents of the town will take up jobs and make use of services within the town. Travellers (and potential employees) from outside the area are being deterred by the levels of congestion which reduces the attractiveness of the town as a destination. The result is an increase in the proportion of trips to Ashby that start and finish within the town, rising from 38% in Option 1 to 46% in Option 2. In terms of trips from Ashby the percentage of overall trips also from Ashby rises from 40% under Option 1 to 41% under Option 3.</p>	<p>congestion in Ashby. However as with Option 2 there is an increase in the proportion of trips that start and finish in the town, rising from 38% in Option 1 to 43% in Option 3. The bypass at Castle Donington [associated with development off Park Lane] would reduce congestion within the village. However, congestion on roads leading to it from the North and South would see an increase. In terms of overall trips to Castle Donington there would be an increase in the proportion of trips that start and finish in the village, rising from 37% in Option 1 to 43% in Option 3. However as with Ashby under Option 2 the total trips in percentage terms from Castle Donington to Castle Donington only rises from 40% under Option 1 to 41% under Option 3. In Kegworth there would be an increase in the number of trips that start and finish in Kegworth, from 31% under Option 1 to 35% under Option 3. For trips from Kegworth the percentages stay at 25% for both Options 1 and 3.</p>	
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