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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL PLAN: CORE STRATEGY

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY BACKGROUND PAPER



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A key issue addressed as part of the Core Strategy is that of an appropriate settlement hierarchy to guide decisions on future development patterns. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reflects the approach taken in various former Government Policy Statements (e.g. PPG13, PPS3) about the need to ensure that new development is located wherever possible where alternatives to the private car exist. In particular, paragraph 17 establishes 12 ‘Coe Planning Principles’ which includes that planning should *“actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable”*.
- 1.2 In addition, the adopted East Midlands Regional Plan (EMRP) provides some guidance as to the most appropriate locations for new development. This paper outlines the reasons behind the settlement hierarchy included in the Core Strategy, taking account of national and regional policies and also local circumstances.
- 1.3 The issue of settlement hierarchy was first considered in detail as part of the 2007 consultation. At that time the EMRP was going through the process of preparation and agreement. Some of the policies and proposals referred to at that time were subsequently amended or deleted. The text which flows represents the EMRP as adopted.

2.0 WHAT DOES THE REGIONAL PLAN SAY?

- 2.1 Policy 3 (Distribution of New Development) establishes how development and economic activity should be distributed across the region:
- Five Principal Urban Areas (PUA) (Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Northampton and Nottingham) where "development will be concentrated primarily in and adjoining";
 - Three growth towns in Northamptonshire (Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough) where "significant levels of new development" are to take place;
 - Sub Regional Centres (SRC) which are defined as where "appropriate development of a lesser scale" is anticipated. Coalville is one of the SRC's identified;
 - Ensure that the development needs of other settlements and rural areas are provided for. This includes maintaining the vitality and viability of rural communities whilst also shortening journeys and facilitating access to jobs and services and strengthening links between settlements and their hinterlands.
- 2.2 The supporting text to Policy 3 specifically notes that Sub-Regional Centres (SRC) have been selected on the basis of their size, the range of services they provide, and their potential to accommodate further growth.
- 2.3 In addition, it notes that development in SRCs should not be of a form or scale to prejudice "the urban renaissance of the PUAs" but Policy 3 does not provide any further guidance about the scale of development anticipated in SRCs. However, Policy Three Cities SRS3 notes that of the 510 dwellings per annum to be provided in North West Leicestershire, these should be "located mainly at Coalville" (the issue of how much development should be directed towards Coalville is considered in a separate Background Paper in respect of the distribution of housing).
- 2.4 Other policies in the Regional Plan deal specifically with a number of sub-areas across the region. In respect of the Three Cities Sub area (within which North West Leicestershire falls), Policy 12 suggests that outside of the PUAs development should be located within and adjoining settlements providing the scale of developments fits with the size of the settlement, respect environmental constraints "in particular the River Mease Special Area of Conservation" and "where there are good public transport linkages".
- 2.5 A number of points can be drawn from the EMRP:
- Coalville is a Sub Regional Centre (SRC) and hence to be the focus for new development in North West Leicestershire;
 - Outside of Coalville there is an expectation that the development needs of other settlements and rural areas will be met but no further

guidance is provided as to the quantity of development or where it should be located.;

- 2.6 The EMRP provides a useful starting point but it leaves a number of issues to be determined locally. These are principally:
- Scale of development in the SRC (and hence elsewhere);
 - The most appropriate location for development beyond the SRC
- 2.7 The first issue is considered in a separate paper regarding distribution of development. This current paper looks at the latter issue.
- 2.8 In order to do this it is necessary to consider:
- a) what is the next level in a settlement hierarchy?
 - b) which settlements would be most appropriate to perform this function?

3.0 WHAT IS THE NEXT LEVEL OUTSIDE OF A SUB REGIONAL CENTRE?

- 3.1 Reference is made in Policy 3 of the EMRP to linkages between settlements and their 'hinterlands'. The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan (LLRSP) (1996-2016) included a reference to Rural Centres as part of the settlement hierarchy. Strategy Policy 2c specifically noted that such settlements are to "serve a rural hinterland". This is clearly similar to the reference in the EMRP in respect of settlements where some development may be appropriate.
- 3.2 Therefore, it is considered that outside of the SRC the next level down in a settlement hierarchy could be a 'Rural Centre'.

4.0 WHICH SETTLEMENTS COULD BE RURAL CENTRES?

- 4.1 Whilst the LLRSP is no longer part of the development plan it is considered that it provides a useful starting point when considering the issue of how to define a Rural Centre. The Explanatory Memorandum to the LLRSP noted that the choice of (rural) centres “should be based on an analysis of services currently provided” and that “they should generally be the larger and better served villages which act as service centres and offer employment opportunities”.
- 4.2 Strategy Policy 2c of the LLRSP identified eight functions which a Rural Centre was expected to have most or all of, in addition to serving a rural hinterland. These were:
- (a) A primary school;
 - (b) A post office;
 - (c) A general store;
 - (d) A general medical practice;
 - (e) A pharmacy (if not within the general medical practice);
 - (f) Community and leisure facilities;
 - (g) Additional employment to that provided by (a) to (f) above;
 - (h) A regular, six day a week return bus service.
- 4.3 Most of these criteria are easy to judge. The latter two are exceptions and are considered in more detail at Appendix 1.
- 4.4 These criteria were used to identify potential Rural Centres outside of Coalville. The results are set out in Appendix 2.
- 4.5 Strategy Policy 2c noted that a rural centre should “serve a rural hinterland” and “contain most or of all “of those functions listed above. In respect of the latter “most of or all” is taken to mean that at least 5 of the services listed above should be present for a settlement to be considered as a Rural Centre..
- 4.6 From Appendix 1 it can be seen that two (Castle Donington and Ibstock) satisfy all of the requirements whilst a further three (Ashby, Kegworth and Measham) have seven of the services and facilities listed. Furthermore, a more detailed examination shows that these settlements also have a range of other services and facilities not listed including public libraries and a wide range of shops, including supermarkets, as well as secondary education facilities (in the case of Ashby, Castle Donington and Ibstock). It should be noted that in respect of accessibility Ashby de la Zouch satisfies the requirement in respect of daytime service but does not have an evening service beyond about 7.30pm. For this reason it was judged to not satisfy the bus service requirements. Both Kegworth and Measham have at least an hourly day time service and some evening service, but again do not satisfy the overall requirement.

- 4.7 Whilst two more settlements (Ellistown and Moira) have 5 of those services listed it is considered that they do fulfill the requirement of serving a 'rural hinterland'. In respect of Ellistown this is due to its proximity to both Coalville and Ibstock whilst Moira and the villages nearby (e.g. Blackfordby and Donsithorpe) are within the hinterland of Ashby and also Swadlincote, even though this is located in South Derbyshire.
- 4.8 A further issue in respect of Moira is that most of the services are largely centred around the Norris Hill part of Moira on its north-east edge. Due to the particular linear physical characteristics of Moira large parts of the settlement are somewhat distant from these facilities and the only bus service which connects the whole settlement up runs only one every 90 minutes. Therefore, the sustainability credentials of Moira are not as good as might at first glance appear to be the case. It is thus considered that Moira should not be included as a rural centre.
- 4.9 On the basis of the above it is considered that there should be five Rural Centres beneath - Ashby de la Zouch, Castle Donington, Ibstock, Kegworth and Measham.

5.0 REMAINING SETTLEMENTS

- 5.1 Beyond Coalville and the Rural Centres there are a large number of smaller villages which range in size and facilities and services available.
- 5.2 In order to create a sustainable pattern of development the amount of development in these settlements will be limited. Two further categories of settlement were identified; Sustainable Villages and Rural Villages.
- 5.3 In order to identify which villages would fall within which category regard was had to those criteria used to identify Rural Centres. However, it was considered that the use of both a general store and a post office was somewhat onerous in these smaller settlements where they are often combined as one. In addition, it was considered that splitting community and leisure facilities in to more than one category would be beneficial in terms of trying to ensure that settlements are as sustainable as possible. Therefore, community and leisure facilities were split in to:
- A Village hall or similar venue;
 - A recreation or sports ground;
 - A public house;
- 5.4 Finally, it was decided to exclude a pharmacy as such services are normally restricted to larger settlements and so to require such a service in a village would be unreasonable.
- 5.5 In terms of bus service, it would be unreasonable to expect a level of service required to be a Rural Centre. However, some form of regular, 6 day a week service would be a reasonable requirement to ensure that there is a reasonable alternative to using the car to access services in higher order settlements. It was decided that an hourly service would represent such a reasonable level of service
- 5.6 Therefore, the following list was used to assess service provision in villages:
- A General Store (with or without a post office);
 - A Primary School;
 - A GP surgery;
 - A Village hall or similar venue;
 - A recreation or sports ground;
 - A public house;
 - A daytime (i.e. 7am to 6pm) bus service, Monday-Saturday with a frequency of at least once an hour, to one or more higher order centres;
 - Local employment opportunities other than employment associated with the above services.

- 5.7 In respect of the number of services required it was decided that a village which had most (i.e. more than 50% or 5) of the services listed could be considered as sustainable. It was felt inappropriate to specify one or more services which were considered more essential than another service, particularly as it is sometimes the case that a village might not have one facility, say a shop or a school, but a village nearby which is accessible by public transport would have these services.
- 5.8 The results of the assessment are set out in Appendix 3 Using these criteria the following settlements are identified as Sustainable Villages:
- Albert Village, Appleby Magna, Belton, Blackfordby, Breedon on the Hill, Coleorton (the Lower Moor Road area only), Diseworth, Donisthorpe, Ellistown, Heather, Long Whatton, Moira (including Norris Hill), Oakthorpe, Packington, Ravenstone, Swannington, Worthington.
- 5.9 It will be noted that only part of Coleorton is identified as being a Sustainable Village. This is because Coleorton covers quite a large geographical area but is characterised by sporadic development. Therefore it was considered inappropriate to define all of Coleorton as a Sustainable Village when large parts are not well related to services and facilities.
- 5.10 The following villages are classified as Rural Villages where development will be restricted to that which is to meet a local need.
- Battram, Coleorton (the part not considered to be a Sustainable Village), Griffydam, Hemington, Lockington, Lount, Newbold, Newton Burgoland, Osgathorpe, Peggs Green, Sinope, Snarestone, Spring Cottage, Tonge, Wilson.

APPENDIX 1

A1 WHAT CONSTITUTES ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT?

- A1.1 The Examination in Public Panel report stated that *“Rural Centres should contain or provide for some employment development other than that arising from basic services and community uses provided for in the policy”*. In addition, the explanatory memorandum (paragraph 2.19) referred to Rural Centres as offering *“employment opportunities”* (i.e. more than one source of employment).
- A1.2 Having regard to these factors it is thus considered that for a settlement to satisfy this criteria there must be some uses falling with the B Use Class of the Use Classes Order and that there must be two or more such employers within the particular settlement.

A2 WHAT CONSTITUTES A REGULAR, SIX DAY A WEEK RETURN BUS SERVICE?

- A2.1 The use of the word ‘regular’ clearly implies that such a service must occur on every day for six days (It is assumed that this means Monday to Saturday). As worded it is implied that there only needs to be a single return service six days a week to satisfy this criterion. An assessment of settlements in the district suggests that virtually every settlement would satisfy such a simplistic approach.
- A2.2 It is essential that bus services are frequent in order to maximise accessibility both from and to a potential Rural Centre. A single daily service would not, therefore, be sufficient to maximise accessibility. An examination of bus services showed that most settlements in the district had at least one service every hour in accordance with the policy of Leicestershire County Council to make sure that *“95% of Leicestershire’s residents are within 800m of an hourly bus service during the daytime, Monday to Saturday”*.
- A2.3 Having regard to the above it was concluded that a frequency of bus service that was better than hourly would be required. Again quite a number of settlements have such a level of service and so it was decided to further refine the frequency to require a frequency of bus services equivalent to a frequency of at least 15 minutes. A service which went in two different directions every hour (e.g. a service from Ashby which went to Burton in one direction and Coalville in another) was defined as two services for the purposes of this assessment.
- A2.4 In addition to frequency it is also necessary to consider where the services provide connections to. Whilst Strategy Policy 2c only refers to a *“return bus service”*, the explanatory memorandum clarifies that *“buses should serve both the hinterland [of the proposed rural centre] and connect to the relevant*

main town or other major urban areas outside the plan area” (paragraph 2.19).

A2.4 In summary, to satisfy this criterion a settlement would require bus services which offer a minimum of:

- bus services between 7am and 6pm (catching both the AM and PM peaks), Monday to Saturday with a frequency of 15 minutes or better;
- an evening service Monday to Saturday; and
- provide connections to at least one other major centre (inside or outside the district) and to other lower order settlements in the hinterland/vicinity.

APPENDIX 2 – ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL RURAL CENTRES

SETTLEMENT	Primary School	Post Office	General Store	GP practice	Chemist	Leisure and Community Facilities	Employment	Bus service	Score out of 8
Acresford	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Albert Village	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes - village hall	No	No	3
Appleby Magna	Yes	Yes(with General Store)	Yes	No	No	Yes - village hall	No	No	4
Ashby	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (x2)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	7
Battram	No	No	No	No	No	Yes - village hall	No	No	1
Belton	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes - village hall	No	No	4
Blackfordby	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes - village hall	No	No	2
Breedon	Yes	Yes (with General Store)	Yes	No	No	Yes (school)	No	No	4
Castle Donington	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes(various)	Yes	8
Chilcote	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Coleorton	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes - village hall	No	No	3
Diseworth	Yes	No (limited mobile service)	No	No	No	Yes - village hall	No	No	2
Donisthorpe	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes - village	No	No	3

						hall			
Ellistown	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes (school)	Yes (South Leics colliery)	Yes	5
Griffydam	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	1
Heather	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes - village hall	Yes (Sweepstone Road)	No	4
Hemington	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	1
Ibstock	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes(various)	Yes	8
Isley Walton	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Kegworth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes(various)	No	7
Lockington	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes(Lockington Hall/Church Farm)	No	3
Long Whatton	Yes	Yes (with General Store)	Yes	No	No	Yes (school)	No	No	4
Lount	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Measham	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (Community Hall)	Yes (various)	No	7
Moira	Yes	Yes	Yes(x2)	No	No	Yes - village hall	Yes (various)	No	5
Newbold	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes (TNT)	No	2
Newton Burgoland	Yes	Yes(with General Store)	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	4
Normanton le Heath	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Oakthorpe	Yes	Yes (with General Store)	Yes	No	No	Yes (Community Hall)	No	No	4

Osgathorpe	No	No	No	No	No	Yes - village hall	No	No	1
Packington	Yes	Yes (with General Store)	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	4
Peggs Green	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Ravenstone	Yes	Yes (with General Store)	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	4
Sinope	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Snarestone	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	2
Swannington	Yes	Yes(with General Store)	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	4
Sweepstone	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Tonge	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Wilson	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Worthington	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	3

APPENDIX 3 - ASSESSMENT OF VILLAGES

Settlement	Primary School	Bus Service	General Store	GP Surgery	Public House	Village/Community Hall	Recreation or Sports Ground	Employment	Facilities Count
Acresford	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Albert Village	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	5
Appleby Magna	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6
Appleby Parva	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	1
Bardon	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	3
Battleflat	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Batram	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	2
Belton	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6
Blackfordby	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	5
Boothorpe	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Boundary	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	1
Breedon	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6
Chilcote	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Church Town	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	1
Coleorton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	7
Diseworth	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	5
Donisthorpe	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	5
Ellistown	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7
Farm Town	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Gelsmoor	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	1
Griffydam	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	2

Heather	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	5
Hemington	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	3
Lockington	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	2
Long Whatton	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6
Lount	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	1
Moir	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7
Newbold	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	4
Newton Burgoland	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	3
Normanton le Heath	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Oakthorpe	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6
Osgathorpe	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	1
Packington	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	5
Peggs Green	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	3
Ravenstone	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6
Sinope	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	1
Snarestone	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	3
Staunton Harold	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Stretton en le Field	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Swannington	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	5
Sweepstone	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	0
Tonge	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	1
Wilson	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	1
Worthington	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	6