



Borough of Charnwood

# Local Plan 1991-2006

Written Statement

Adopted January 2004

- vi) to encourage respect for the countryside in all development proposals;
- vii) to support and encourage the creation of the National Forest;
- viii) to encourage the planting of native trees and woodlands.

## General Principles for Areas of Countryside, Green Wedge and Local Separation

### 6.12 POLICY CT/1

Land lying outside the defined Limits to Development is variously identified on the Proposals Map as Countryside, Green Wedge and Areas of Local Separation. Development within these areas of generally open land will be strictly controlled. Planning permission will be granted for the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings for uses suitable in scale and nature, and small-scale new built development, where there would not be a significant adverse environmental impact and the proposal would:

- i) be essential for the efficient long-term operation of agriculture, horticulture or forestry; or
- ii) facilitate the diversification of the rural economy; or
- iii) improve facilities for recreation, or leisure uses; or
- iv) implement strategically important schemes for mineral related uses, transport infrastructure, and for public services or utilities.

In all cases it should be demonstrated that the proposed development could not reasonably be located within or adjacent to an existing settlement.

*(See also in particular Policies CT/2, CT/3, CT/4, CT/6, CT/15)*

- 6.13 National planning policy guidance emphasises the need to protect the countryside for its own sake. With the reduced dependency upon agriculture the imperative now is to enable new forms of rural enterprise to sustain the rural economy while protecting the countryside for the sake of its natural beauty, the diversity of its landscape and its ecological, agricultural and recreational value. Policy CT/1 sets out those uses that will be acceptable in principle in the countryside and will apply with other countryside policies in the plan.
- 6.14 The Structure Plan also requires the definition of Green Wedges and allows for the identification of areas of local separation as discrete policy areas quite distinct from the countryside.
- 6.15 The guiding principles within these areas of essentially open land will be to ensure that new development is small scale and does not adversely affect the appearance and character of the landscape. Wherever possible new development should be focused on towns and villages in locations which reduce travel needs and extend transport choice accessibility. Particular care must be exercised in allowing development even for so called "soft uses" such as recreation. The quality of agricultural land and the landscape character will be important considerations.

## Development in the Countryside

### 6.16 POLICY CT/2

In areas defined as Countryside, development(s) acceptable in principle will be permitted where it would not harm the character and appearance of the countryside and provided it could safeguard its historic, nature conservation, amenity, and other local interest.

*(See also in particular Policies CT/1, CT/6)*

- 6.17 Whilst it is recognised some new development will be necessary outside settlements, the countryside within the plan area will be protected from inappropriate or harmful developments. The range of developments acceptable in principle is defined in Policy CT/1.

## Development in Green Wedges

### 6.18 POLICY CT/3

In the Green Wedge areas development acceptable in principle will be permitted where it would:

- i) protect the predominately open and undeveloped character of the area; and
- ii) be consistent with safeguarding the area's function to provide, strategically important separation between settlements; and
- iii) maintain or enhance public access for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders compatible with land use activities; and
- iv) secure landscape improvements usually in the form of tree groups and woodland.

The green wedges are defined on the Proposals Map. They include land between:

- i) Leicester (Beaumont Leys)/Birstall/Thurcaston/Anstey/Cropston;
- ii) Birstall/Leicester/Thurmaston (Soar Valley North);
- iii) Beaumont Leys/Glenfrith/Anstey/Groby;
- iv) Syston/Thurmaston (east of Melton Road);
- v) Loughborough/Shepshed;
- vi) Loughborough/Quorn;
- vii) Loughborough/Hathern.

*(See also in particular Policies ST/1(v), CT/1, CT/6)*

- 6.19 The guiding principle of Green Wedge policy is to safeguard those areas of structurally important open land around Leicester and Loughborough which provide important separation between communities, and so help protect the individual identities of those communities. Apart from protecting and enhancing these predominantly open areas it will also be important to improve access to them given their proximity to the main areas of population, and to secure landscape improvements. Further guidance on green wedge policy is included at Policy ST/1(v) and paragraph 2.31.
- 6.20 Green Wedge areas face continuing pressure to accommodate new development. The consideration of individual proposals will have regard to the cumulative impact of change in these areas and how it is affecting their overall character, appearance, and function.
- 6.21 Development in Green Wedges will only be acceptable for certain uses provided they do not damage the open and undeveloped character of the Wedge. The range of appropriate development is defined in Policy CT/1. Further background information is set out in Technical Report No.3. Proposals for transport routes or infrastructure located in green wedges will be allowed only in exceptional circumstances. The environmental impact of such schemes will need to be controlled to safeguard the open and undeveloped character of the locality.
- 6.22 The Borough Council will also use all available powers to maintain and improve the overall environment of the Green Wedges and encourage their positive management.