



Charnwood Local Plan 2011 to 2028

Core Strategy

Adopted 9th November 2015



Chapter 7: Our Environment

- 7.1 Our built and natural environment makes a strong contribution to our quality of life. Our community and the buildings we use are nestled in a rich setting formed by our landscape and the wildlife it contains. This, and the relationship between each of these, gives us our sense of place. Our natural environment also provides us with a good opportunity to minimise the impacts we have on climate change and adapt to it.
- 7.2 Different types of green spaces and the connections between them, are known as 'Green Infrastructure'. Green Infrastructure is used for recreation and leisure, provides routes for walking and cycling, supports wildlife and helps us to manage flooding. They also counter the 'heat island' effect in urban areas by cooling the heat retained in buildings and streets. Green spaces also contribute to a more attractive environment which helps us to attract economic investment.
- 7.3 This chapter considers all types of Green Infrastructure, from the landscape, countryside and strategically important natural areas, through to specific policies for protecting and enhancing our heritage and our network of green spaces for people and for wildlife.
- 7.4 Our green open spaces are used for a number of purposes and benefit our environment and our community. Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation contribute to the health and well-being, and to the cohesion of our communities.
- 7.5 We want our existing and new communities to live and work in a high quality environment. If we are to achieve our Vision we must protect and improve our network of 'Green Infrastructure'.
- 7.6 Some of the policies in this chapter relate strongly to the countryside. However, wildlife and ecology are also present in our towns and villages. Similarly, green infrastructure often penetrates our towns and villages. As such, much of this chapter is relevant to all development, regardless of where it is proposed.

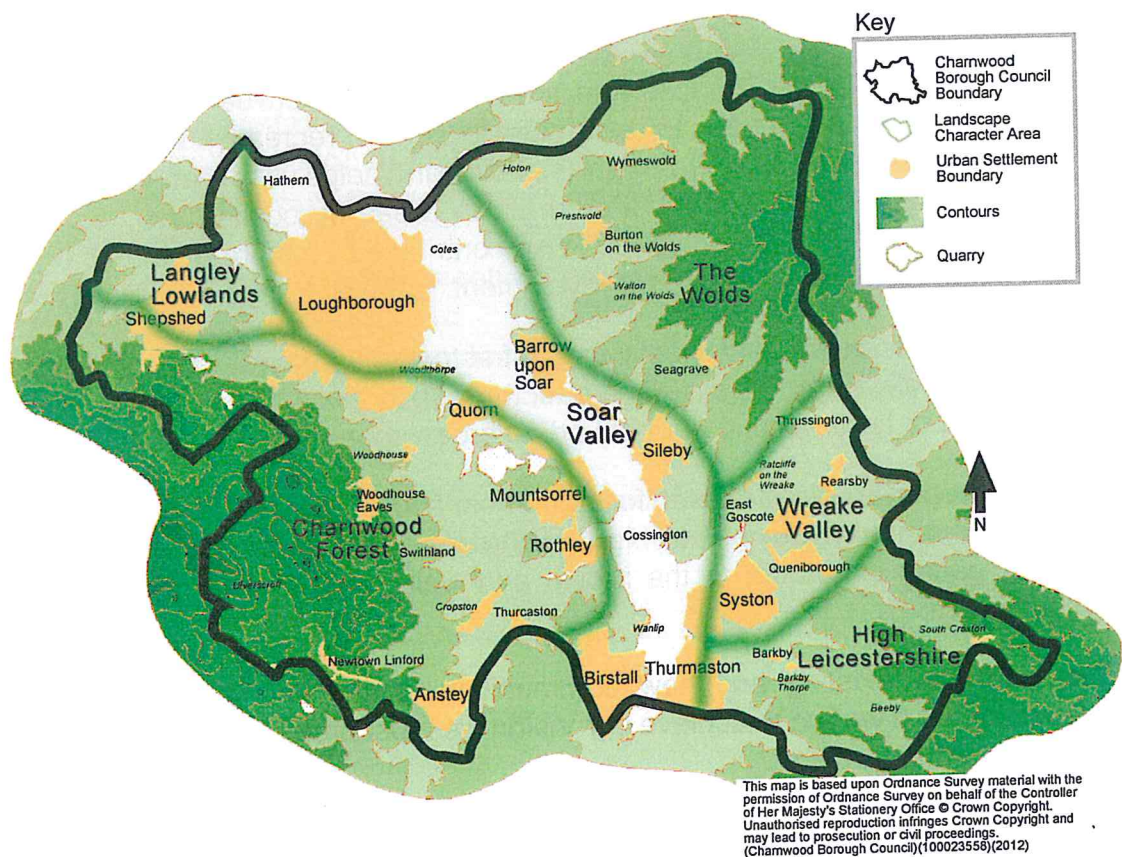
Countryside and Landscape Character

- 7.7 Countryside is the largely undeveloped area beyond the defined limits of our villages and towns. It is home to farms, isolated and small groups of homes, including our smallest villages, and other rural enterprises. It is also a tranquil and ecologically rich area which contributes to food production and tourism.
- 7.8 Understanding our landscape helps us to understand and maintain settlement identity. Our Landscape Character Assessment identifies 6 character areas within Charnwood:
- Langley Lowlands;
 - The Soar Valley;

Chapter 7: Our Environment

- The Wolds;
- Wreake Valley;
- High Leicestershire; and
- Charnwood Forest.

7.9 These character areas can be seen in the diagram below.



7.10 Our landscapes have their own distinctive character and are valued highly by our community. We want to make sure they continue to be recognised for their distinct quality. Protecting our landscape character and allowing acceptable sustainable development that supports our rural areas is a delicate balance. There is a close relationship between protecting our landscape and our support for the rural economy (set out in chapter 6). Our strategy also supports our rural communities need for affordable housing, facilities and services.

7.11 We are also mindful that our countryside is an area of tranquillity where people are generally free from noise and feel closer to nature. The Council for the Protection of Rural England has mapped areas of tranquillity and found that Leicestershire is thirty-third out of eighty-eight English County and Unitary local authority areas (Rank 1 being the best). We want to ensure our communities continue to enjoy our tranquil areas.

7.12 New development in the countryside should be appropriate in terms of its scale, siting and design. Negative impacts on sensitive and historic landscapes, including buildings

and settlements, will not generally be acceptable. We want to see development which makes a significant contribution to meeting our community or economic needs.

- 7.13** Our towns and villages are concentrated along the river valleys of the Soar and the Wreake and around the edge of Leicester City. As these towns and villages have grown the space between them has got smaller because of this landscape. Our communities have increasingly become concerned about their identities as separate places. 'Areas of Local Separation' have been used successfully to guide development in areas between our towns and villages. The policy has maintained the character and identity of individual settlements and prevented their coalescence.
- 7.14** We will continue to use Areas of Local Separation.⁽ⁱ⁾ We will retain the following Areas of Separation, the boundaries of which will be reviewed through the Site Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Document:
- a. Loughborough/Woodthorpe
 - b. Quorn/Mountsorrel
 - c. Mountsorrel/Rothley
 - d. Sileby/Cossington
 - e. Sileby/Barrow upon Soar
 - f. Thurstaston/ Cropston/The Ridgeway Area of Rothley
 - g. Wanlip/Birstall
 - h. Rearsby/East Goscote
 - i. East Goscote/Queniborough
 - j. Queniborough/Syston
 - k. Syston/Thurmaston (west of Melton Road)
 - l. Syston/Barkby
 - m. Anstey/Newtown Linford
- 7.15** The retention of Areas of Local Separation will be balanced against the need to provide new development, including new homes, in the most sustainable locations.
- 7.16** We will also explore opportunities for new Areas of Separation in those areas previously designated as Green Wedge in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004) and in association with strategic developments for homes and jobs.

ⁱ As defined in the glossary

Policy CS 11

Landscape and Countryside

We will support and protect the character of our landscape and countryside by:

- requiring new developments to protect landscape character and to reinforce sense of place and local distinctiveness by taking account of relevant local Landscape Character Assessments;
- requiring new development to take into account and mitigate its impact on tranquillity;
- requiring new development to maintain the separate identities of our towns and villages;
- supporting rural economic development, or residential development which has a strong relationship with the operational requirements of agriculture, horticulture, forestry and other land based industries and contributes to a low carbon economy, in accordance with Policy CS10;
- supporting the provision of community services and facilities that meet proven local needs as identified by a Neighbourhood Plan or other community-led plan; and
- supporting rural communities by allowing housing development for local needs in accordance with Policy CS3.

We will protect the predominantly open and undeveloped character of Areas of Local Separation unless new development clearly maintains the separation between the built-up areas of these settlements.