



Blaby's future...



give us your views



Foreword by Councillor David Parsons



Welcome to Blaby District Council's Issues Paper relating to our first Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will eventually replace the Council's Local Plan and sets out how land use and social and environmental issues will be addressed over the next ten to twelve years.

The District of Blaby is a thriving area, it has an excellent living environment and a wide range of employment, shopping and leisure opportunities. The Council is not complacent though, and wishes to build on this to ensure that the quality of life of all residents is further improved. One of the ways we can achieve this is through an effective approach to the planning of our area.

The LDF will set out policies for how new houses, shops, employment and leisure opportunities are to be provided.

This Issues Paper is designed to allow you, as residents, businesses and people who enjoy leisure opportunities in the District, to have your say on how Blaby will develop in the future. We are very interested to know your views and wish to thank you for taking the time to comment.

Blaby District Local Development Framework (LDF)

1

What is the LDF?



Blaby District Council is starting production of its 'Local Development Framework' (LDF). The LDF sets out the spatial (land-use planning) policies and proposals that will guide how the District of Blaby will grow and change up to the

year 2016. The LDF will replace the 'Local Plan' that previously set out the planning policies for the area and which has an 'end date' of 2006 (now 'saved' under recent legislation to 2007).



2

Why is the LDF important?

The LDF is very important as it sets out where new development will occur and how it should be designed, operated and implemented and, just as important, those areas that will be protected from development. Once completed some of the LDF documents will become part of what is known as the 'statutory development

plan' which, along with the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Blaby District Community Plan will act as a blueprint for how the District will develop over the next 10 to 12 years. The LDF sets a framework for the provision and location of housing, employment, leisure, shopping and transport in your area.

What issues will the LDF deal with?

3

The LDF is the 'spatial' plan for the area. This means that it deals mainly with how land is used in the area in terms of how it is designated and policies against which planning applications are determined. The LDF is also concerned with making sure

that new developments take account of social considerations (such as the provision of education/ community facilities) and economic considerations (considering employment needs). It has strong links with the Community Plan.



What issues cannot be included in the LDF?

4

Issues relating to non-spatial matters such as other Council services (such as refuse collection) and non-Council services (such as

social services provision) cannot be considered through the planning system and may be difficult to address through the LDF.

What issues does the Council have no control over?

5

Whilst the Local Development Framework should be community led, the Council must have regard to certain key documents in its preparation. These include:

- National Planning Policy Statements and guidance (these set out the Government's views on a broad range of planning policy areas).
- The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996 – 2016 (The Structure Plan) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East Midlands that is due to replace Regional Planning Guidance Note 8. These set out strategic planning policies for the area, and also broad development requirements (i.e the amount of housing and employment land needed).
- The Community Plan / Strategy, which has been prepared by the community in conjunction with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which comprises a number of key agencies that operate in the District including the Primary Care Trust, Police Authority, Voluntary sector and County Council.
- Revised Local Transport Plans (LTP's).

This means that the Council is not starting with a blank sheet of paper in the preparation of its Framework but has a number of considerations that it must address.



Why have an issues paper?

6

The Issues Paper gives you an opportunity to let the Council know what you would like to see addressed in your spatial plan.

This Issues Paper represents a very early stage in the LDF process. It is designed to seek the views of Blaby residents and those

who work, shop or otherwise use the District.

The paper is not a formal requirement of the LDF process, but gives an opportunity to stimulate thought and encourage responses on the types of issues that you would like to see addressed as part of the LDF process.

7

What 'issues' does this paper address?



This Issues Paper asks questions on several 'spatial' planning topics. The questions are designed to stimulate debate on topics likely to be addressed in the LDF. Please do not feel constrained by the questions, your views are important to us and we would like to know what you think we should be addressing in the LDF. All questions are repeated on a tear off sheet at the back of the Issues Paper, please complete the questions along with any other relevant points and return them in the envelope provided.

The broad issues discussed are Housing, Employment, Built and Natural Environment, Shopping and Leisure and Transport. A number of questions are posed in each of the sections. However any 'spatial planning' issues that you consider appropriate can be included in your response.

The Council is aiming to ensure that the LDF will build on what people like about their area and to help address issues they dislike in the District.

Q1

What do you like about the District of Blaby?



Q2

What do you dislike about the District of Blaby?

8

The issues

A number of key issues and topic areas are set out below, followed by a series of questions.



Space for answers is provided on the rear pages of this Issues Paper.

8.1

Overall strategy

Sustainability



The key principle underpinning the spatial planning system is that of sustainability. Sustainable development is defined as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland). This not only relates to environmental matters such as

minimising energy consumption and waste production but also economic and social concerns such as equal access to decent homes, employment and leisure opportunities. Achieving these goals involves a complex relationship of a variety of public and private bodies.

Q3

Do you think that the policies & proposals of the LDF should consider not only current needs, but also needs of future generations?

Sequential development

This approach to siting and provision of new development gives greatest priority and support to sites that are closest to existing major services and infrastructure (main towns / villages and urban locations) on previously used ("brownfield") land, whilst the lowest

priority is given to sites outside of urban areas (often greenfield sites). The sequential approach has to be applied to several development types (Shopping, Housing, Employment and Leisure) and forms a key aim of Central Government guidance.

Do you think that new development in the District should take place on brownfield land before greenfield sites are developed?

Q4

Mixed-use development

Recent Government Guidance has promoted mixed-used development schemes that incorporate a variety of uses including housing, employment and restaurants for example.

Theoretically this approach enables people to achieve their lifestyles without excessive travelling and energy wastage and allows streets to be active at all times of the day.

Should the LDF encourage mixed-use development in the District of Blaby?

Q5

Design quality

New development and in particular volume house building over the last 30 years has been criticised for being uninspiring, car dominated and lacking any context or local character.

Recent initiatives such as the promotion of design excellence through CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) has attempted to reverse this design decline.

What are your views on the quality of design of new developments in the District of Blaby, and do you think that the LDF should place a strong emphasis on better design quality?

Q6

Crime & disorder

Blaby District Council is a key partner in attempting to reduce the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour. The Council has a duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act to consider the implications of its

actions on these issues. The primary influence the LDF can have is through encouraging designs that aim to reduce the potential for criminal and anti-social behaviour.

Do you think that crime & anti-social behaviour can be influenced by the design of new developments, and if so, should the LDF include policies that encourage developments that design out crime?

Q7

Housing

8.2

The requirement for housing in the District of Blaby up to 2016 is set out in the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan. The table below shows progress on meeting these requirements (all figures refer to the number of dwellings).



Requirements	Completions 1996-2004	Permissions	Allocations	Total	Balance to be found
4,650*	2,830	1,165	10	4,005	645

The number of new houses required to meet the Structure Plan target to 2016 is some 645 (as at 31st March 2004).

As part of the information gathering for the new LDF the Council will be undertaking an Urban Capacity Study that will attempt to identify the potential number of housing units that could be achieved on previously developed or underused land in the District.

Notwithstanding the findings of any Urban

Capacity Study, the Council will need to decide where best to locate new housing to meet identified needs. A key issue is whether these are on greenfield or brownfield sites (or a mixture of the two).

- 4,200 of which should be within the Central Leicestershire Policy Area (CLPA). This area covers the District of Blaby other than the Parishes of Thurlaston, Stoney Stanton, Elmesthorpe, Sharnford, Sapcote, Aston Flanville, Wigston Parva and Potters Marsden.

Q8

Do you think that new housing required to meet the District's needs should be provided on previously developed or underused land (brownfield sites) or on previously unused/agricultural land (greenfield sites)?

Q9

Where do you think are the best locations for new housing?

Whilst the Structure Plan housing targets are expressed in total numbers of units, there may be certain specific needs that require special attention through the LDF such as affordable housing (both in larger towns and villages and

more rural areas) and elderly persons accommodation. The need for such housing will be identified through a Housing Needs Survey.



Q10

Do you think there is a need to provide specific types of housing such as affordable or elderly persons housing or any other specific housing type in the District of Blaby. If so which types?

The Government is encouraging developers to achieve a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare (12 houses per acre) on all new housing developments. Local Planning Authorities are advised to resist planning

applications that do not meet this target. The purpose of this policy is, amongst other things, to prevent the need for incursions onto greenfield land and to maximise the use of available land.

Q11

Do you think that all new housing development should be built at as high a density as possible, taking into account the character of the area?

The District of Blaby, along with other Districts, is facing increasing demand for travellers' sites for both transit and permanent use. Whilst the Council currently has a criteria based policy against which planning applications are

judged, an alternative approach may be to allocate a site or sites (based on assessment of identified needs). This approach is supported by Central Government.

Q12

Do you feel that the Council should identify a specific site(s) to meet travellers' needs?

8.3 Employment

The requirement for employment land in the District of Blaby is set out in the Structure Plan 1996 to 2016. The table below shows progress

on meeting these requirements (all figures refer to hectares).

Requirements	Completions 1996-2004	With plan' permissions	Allocations	Total	Balance
146*	53.61	43.28	8.50	105.39	40.61

The need to find an additional 40 hectares of employment land in the District (which must include a large-scale strategic employment site or sites) raises key issues and questions regarding the scale and type of employment and where this should be sited.

Recent changes in the nature of employment (primarily a change from manufacturing to

distribution and office based employment) has resulted in a change in demand for the type of employment land. This, coupled with the loss of traditional small employment sites to housing, has brought about changes in how employment land is provided.

* with 144 hectares of which should be within the CLPA

Do you consider that, where possible, new employment sites should be built within existing settlements or on greenfield land?

Q13

Do you think that new employment uses should be mixed in with new & existing housing areas in the District of Blaby, or on sites specifically designed for employment (often on the edge of existing towns & villages)?

Q14

Should the Council allow existing employment sites in towns & villages to be redeveloped for housing?

Q15

What type & scale of employment land/buildings should be provided for in the District of Blaby?

Q16

Built & natural environment

8.4

The District of Blaby has a strong diversity of built and natural environment. Features of importance in the built environment that may need protection include some 200 listed buildings, 14 scheduled ancient monuments and 9 Conservation Areas (with a further 5 proposed for consideration at Glenfield, Croft, Littlethorpe, Huncote and Kilby).

The natural environment is equally diverse with 6 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, some 300 sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest and 6 Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Sites. In addition the District also contains important landscapes that add to the visual amenity of the area (such as Croft Hill).

The Council's current policies set strict limits to the extent of village settlement boundaries. Areas outside of these defined settlements are mostly protected from new housing and employment developments by planning policies, including Green Wedges (which cover

10% of the District) that maintain separation between settlements.

The Council also has a duty to ensure that the wider environment is protected as well as the local environment. Approaches to help secure environmental sustainability include encouragement for the use of renewable energy and recycling initiatives.

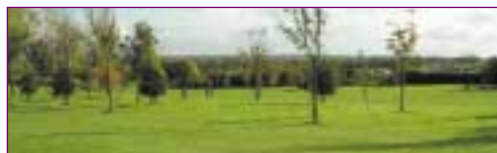


What buildings/areas do you think are in need of protection in the District of Blaby & why?

Q17

What areas and features of the Natural Environment need protection from inappropriate development in the Local Development Framework?

Q18



Do you think it is important to have policies that encourage energy conservation and recycling in the Local Development Framework?

Q19

8.5 Shopping & leisure



The District of Blaby has a mix of retail and leisure opportunities, from the independent shops, small village and town centre shops to large scale out of town developments at Fosse Park and Meridian Leisure. Whilst the latter undoubtedly increase the retail and leisure opportunities available, they have other knock on effects such as impacting on the need to travel and the resulting congestion and air pollution issues.

Blaby District Council consider it is important to keep the town and village centres of Blaby viable and well used. In order to do this it is essential that the balance and mix of shops and other uses is appropriate. Whilst the

Council cannot control what specific shops occupy premises, it can set out policies to encourage or prevent specific types of use. Often retail centres can be adversely affected by an over-supply of non-retail uses (such as pubs, estate agents, take-aways and taxi-hire offices), which individually provide a useful function, but cumulatively can be detrimental to the health of a village or town centre.

A choice of leisure opportunities can have an influence on quality of life. The District of Blaby has a choice of private and public facilities including Fosse Meadows, leisure centres and Meridian Leisure.

Q20 Are you aware of any town or village centres that are not viable or well-used because of the mix of uses (too many take-aways/non-retail uses for example)?

Q21 Are more shops required in the District? If so, where should these be located?

Q22 What additional leisure facilities would you like to see in the District & where would you like to see these?

8.6 Community facilities

Commercial leisure and retail facilities are important to enhancing the quality of life of residents. Other forms of community facilities (sports / meeting halls, leisure, play equipment

and open spaces) are equally important. The LDF and supplementary guidance can encourage developers to make contributions toward providing or improving such facilities.

Q23 Do you consider there are enough play & open spaces? If not, where do you think more open spaces should be provided?

Q24 Do you think that there are sufficient community facilities such as Leisure Centres, health centres & community halls in the District? If not, where do you think that the new facilities should be provided?

8.7 Travel, transport & communication

Providing efficient and 'sustainable' transport for all is one of the key challenges facing the planning system and other agencies with a transport role. Central Government strongly encourages the more 'sustainable' forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport over the private motor car. However this must be balanced with the current needs of the motorist until suitable alternatives are available.

The issue of car parking (including the level of provision and pricing) both on private land and serving retail, leisure, employment and other

uses is a complex and contentious issue. Central Government guidance strongly discourages over-provision of car parking spaces in an attempt to discourage car use.

The Local Development Framework should be consistent with the Local Transport Plans (LTP) produced by Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council. These set out the 5 year transport strategy for both Central Leicestershire and the remaining County. The District of Blaby is affected by both LTP's.

Do you think that less emphasis should be given to the car in transport policy & in the design of streets?

Q25

Are public car parks in the District of Blaby of the right size & in the right place? If not what actions need to be taken?

Q26

Should the potential for additional Park & Ride facilities be explored?

Q27

Is there a need for additional cycling facilities within the District, & if so, where?

Q28

Is there a need for new passenger railway stations in the District & if so, where?

Q29

Do you think that the amount of car parking spaces in new developments should be limited, or would this result in greater levels of on-street parking?

Q30



What will the local development framework look like?

9

The Local Development Framework will comprise a number of separate documents including 'a core strategy', land use allocations, a proposals map and development control

policies. The LDF may also contain Supplementary Planning Documents which add detail to these policies.

What is the local development framework process?

10

The Local Development Framework approach is a new way of setting a planning 'blueprint' for the area introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The process of producing Local Development Documents as part of an LDF involves several stages. These are set out below.

Pre-production stage

Information gathering on 'spatial issues' to inform the LDF production process. The Council prepares a scheme of what 'documents' it intends to prepare and a draft timetable called a 'Local Development Scheme'.

Production stage

Preparation of Issues and Options

Information gathered at this stage will help to inform future stages of the process by incorporating the views of the community in the plan making process. The Council must also consider the key documents referred to earlier in section 5 and carry out an appraisal to see how 'sustainable' the LDF is.

Preferred options

After taking into account key documents, the views of the community and interested parties the Council will prepare a statement of its preferred options for the spatial planning of the area. This will comprise preferred options including:

- A core strategy for the development of the area setting out the broad principles underpinning the plan;
- Specific policies and a Proposals Map that will be used to guide decisions on planning applications;
- Allocations of land for specific uses (such as housing and employment), and;
- Area Action Plans that consider the development of specific geographical areas (where appropriate).

You will be given an opportunity to comment on the preferred 'spatial plan' for the area, which (at this stage) will suggest specific policies and proposals. Following this the Council will prepare its 'development plan document' (DPD) in light of comments received and this will be sent to the Secretary of State.

Examination

An independent examination by a panel or an inspector considers whether the policies and proposals contained in the DPD are sound. The examination gives you an opportunity to make representations on these proposals and an opportunity to appear to present your case.

Adoption

A report is submitted by the Panel/Inspector that sets out what policies and proposals are considered appropriate in light of the examination. This report is binding on the Council.

The above process must be accompanied by an Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal that aim to ensure that the policies and proposals of the plan address sustainability issues. The Council must also prepare a Statement of Community Involvement that

addresses how the community and other interested groups will be involved in the process.

The Council is hoping to adopt its Local Development Framework in 2007.



11 Community involvement

The Council is committed to involving the community and interested groups in its planning process in order to gain wider

ownership. You will have other opportunities to get involved in the LDF process at various stages of preparation (set out in section 10).

Q31 Are there any other issues, not covered in this paper, which you think should be considered in the LDF?

It is unlikely that the Council will have the resources to include all the issues in this

Issues Paper in its first LDF. Its work will have to be prioritised.

Q32 Which one issue, from questions 1-31 above, do you think should be top priority for the LDF?

Q33 Do you have suggestions as to the best way of consulting people on the LDF in the future, & who do you think should be consulted?

Questionnaire

- Please complete the questions along with any other relevant points and return them in the envelope provided.
- Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

Q1

What do you like about the District of Blaby?

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Questionnaire (continued)

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Questionnaire (continued)

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Questionnaire (continued)

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Q33

Do you have suggestions as to the best way of consulting people on the LDF in the future, & who do you think should be consulted?

About you/your organisation

You do not have to answer the following questions, but if you do, the information will help the District Council to keep you informed of later stages in LDF preparation. Your personal information will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and not used for any other purpose unless allowed by law.

Name _____ Address. _____

Postcode. _____

(If you do not wish to include your name and address please would you provide your postcode to allow research showing the geographical split of responses).

Relationship with the district:

Are you:

- A resident of the District? Employed within the District? A visitor to the District?
 A company based in the District? An organisation with interests in the District?

Sex: M F

Age: (years)

- Under 16 16 -24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+



This information can be made available on request, in other languages & formats (large print, Braille or on audio tape) by contacting:

The Planning Policy Team, Blaby District Council, Council Offices,
Desford Road, Narborough LE19 2EP

Telephone: 0116 272 7765 / 272 7693 / 272 7520

e-mail planning@blaby.gov.uk

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