

Plan has allowed a considerable reduction in environmental impact compared with that proposed in the Main Issues report.

- 2.25 Technical Paper No. 7 'Environmental Appraisal' considers all policies and proposals put forward in this Local Plan against a comprehensive set of environmental criteria. The impact of the policies and proposals is indicated in a matrix intended to show the balance of effects on environmental assets from positive to negative. Some negative impacts are unavoidable and these are identified. Remedial or compensatory action to minimise adverse environmental effects are indicated and this is subsequently included in the policies, supporting text or site briefs in this plan.

SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

- 2.26 There is a clear settlement hierarchy in Ashfield District. The first level covers the Main Urban Areas of Hucknall, Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Sutton-in-Ashfield. The second comprises the villages of Jacksdale, Selston, Underwood and New Annesley and the Ashfield part of the larger settlements of Bestwood and Brinsley. The third consists of other smaller settlements within countryside. The current commitment to development, in terms both of recent planning permissions and policies of the adopted Ashfield Local Plan, reflects the general size and role of these settlements. The proposals for the District contained in the Structure Plan Review reaffirm this situation. The Local Plan Review closely reflects the most recent strategic over-view provided by the Structure Plan Review and hence involves no fundamental change in attitude to development in the District. It provides for new development where there is already a concentration of services and facilities and restricts development in other areas where services and facilities are less evident and would be more expensive to provide. Hence, the general size of settlements in relation to each other will be unaffected and their current roles are confirmed. Elsewhere in Ashfield, development will not normally be permitted.
- 2.27 Policies ST1 to ST4 below express in overall terms the approach of the District Council to the future physical form of the District. These, together with appropriate detailed policies in later chapters, are consistent with the aims referred to in para. 2.20 above and Structure Plan Review strategy policies 1/1 to 1/3.

DEVELOPMENT

POLICY ST1 DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE:-

- a) **IT WILL NOT CONFLICT WITH OTHER POLICIES IN THIS LOCAL PLAN,**
 - b) **IT WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE CHARACTER, QUALITY, AMENITY OR SAFETY OF THE ENVIRONMENT,**
 - c) **IT WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT HIGHWAY SAFETY, OR THE CAPACITY OF THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM,**
 - d) **IT WILL NOT PREJUDICE THE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AREA,**
 - e) *IT WILL NOT CONFLICT WITH AN ADJOINING OR NEARBY LAND USE.*
- 2.28 Government advice states that in general the planning system operates on the principle that planning permission should be granted unless the development would cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance, and those who decide planning applications and appeals must give clear and well founded reasons for refusing planning permission. Policy ST1 represents the general policy against which all development proposals will be assessed irrespective of land use. It outlines the basic criteria which all development proposals must satisfy and therefore applies to all the land use based policies in the Plan. Hence, development proposals must accord with the land use policies contained within the Local Plan Review if they are to gain the support of the Authority.
- 2.29 A development must not adversely affect the character, quality, amenity or safety of the built or natural environment, wherever it occurs. This will include the need to protect open spaces and playing fields in urban areas and elsewhere. The appearance of a proposed development and its relationship with its surroundings are material considerations in determining planning

applications and the Authority will not accept any development which adversely affects the local environment. Where possible the Council will promote good quality design solutions which respect and enhance the local character of an area. Design solutions which provide a safer and more secure environment to assist with planning out crime and which incorporate energy efficient layouts will be encouraged. This consideration will apply equally to all forms of development, involving both built development and changes of use of buildings.

- 2.30 The landscape treatment of the site should be one of the main considerations in any development proposal. Developers should take into account the landscape characteristics of the area, significant landscape features of the site and the potential of the site to contribute to the character and appearance of the area. Sympathetic and effective boundary treatment together with good quality landscaping can improve the setting and appearance of new developments and make them more acceptable. This should include the retention of valuable existing features and habitats, wherever possible, and the use of native and other complementary species.
- 2.31 All developments must have a safe means of access which is adequate to serve the proposal and does not adversely affect pedestrian or vehicular safety. The capacity of the transport system to take new development will also be considered. It is therefore likely that transport impact assessments will be required for major proposals and developers should consider undertaking such a study in advance of the submission of a planning application in order to facilitate its full and proper consideration. In a wider context the likelihood of larger developments affecting the capacity of motorway junctions will be considered by the Highways Agency. In addition, appropriate car parking facilities must be provided which are well related to the development and are laid out in a usable form. The Council's agreed car parking standards are contained in Appendix 7.
- 2.32 Some developments, due to the relationship between the site and adjacent land, may prove to be unacceptable as their implementation in isolation could adversely affect the more comprehensive development of an area of land at a later date. In such circumstances developers will be encouraged to contact adjacent land owners to seek a comprehensive solution.
- 2.33 Some developments which are acceptable in one location may be unacceptable in another due to possible conflicts with adjacent or nearby land uses. This may include such issues as diverse as a new lighting scheme which may result in glare or light spillage beyond the site, for example the floodlighting of a sports facility adjacent to residential properties. New industrial uses may also be unacceptable close to residential areas or existing uses may generate noise, smells, vibrations etc. which render nearby sites unsuitable for other uses.

GENERAL LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 2.34 The principal aims and objectives established in the adopted Local Plan still remain essential to the Local Plan Review. With increasing requirements for development land it is important that the main strategic approach of the plan is retained. It is however recognised that in some cases the release of development land in both the Green Belt and other areas of countryside will be required and it is necessary to consider a method of identifying the most appropriate way of determining the suitability of such sites.
- 2.35 In general terms therefore the review has adopted a "sequential" approach to site identification in accordance with PPG3. This is based on Structure Plan Review policy of identifying land within urban areas as a priority, followed by sites adjoining urban areas, and finally, only when the first two options have been exhausted, to consider sites elsewhere.
- 2.36 In considering the release of sites for development which are currently within the Green Belt or other countryside, the Council will wish to ensure that those sites which have the minimum impact on the general purposes of Green Belt and Countryside are the preferred sites. In this respect, each site considered has been tested against these purposes. Sites will be preferred where the loss of a Green Belt area or other countryside can be minimised or "contained" within firm and defensible boundaries and where this is unlikely to lead to further loss of land to development in the future. In the case of sites in Hucknall, the need to maintain the open break with Nottingham City is of paramount importance.

White Land

- 2.37 The Structure Plan Review places no requirement on Districts to identify land for development needs beyond 2011. The consideration of development needs to 2011 has involved a review of Green Belt to identify firm defensible boundaries once account has been taken of land requirements to 2011. The Structure Plan advises that where such defensible Green Belt boundaries exist beyond a line necessary to meet 2011 land requirements then the remaining areas should be identified as white land and safeguarded for future development needs. There is currently no Regional Planning Guidance to determine development needs beyond 2011.
- 2.38 The Council is concerned to ensure that the development needs of the South Nottinghamshire Sub-Area beyond 2011 are considered as a whole. In allocating all land beyond existing urban area boundaries which is necessary to meet Structure Plan requirements to 2011, the Council has undertaken, where appropriate, a review of Green Belt. Green Belt boundaries have been established which follow firm and defensible features and which in all cases do not identify land beyond that which would be required to meet needs to 2011. Consequently it has not been necessary to identify white land within this Local Plan Review. Land within the reviewed Green Belt should remain so until land needs beyond 2011 have been properly identified in the context of all land requirements across all relevant Structure Plan Sub Areas. The Council considers this approach, which could lead to a subsequent Green Belt Review, preferable to the premature identification of white land against uncertain future land requirements.

Public Transport Corridors

- 2.39 In the South Nottinghamshire Sub-Area the Structure Plan Review identifies a series of Public Transport Corridors along which development should be concentrated. The identification of such corridors is based on the principles of sustainable development and the objectives of PPG13 which encourages travel by public transport to reduce the use of the private car. This will in turn reduce fuel consumption and congestion on the roads by making the most efficient use of transport facilities in relation to land use.
- 2.40 In Ashfield, the Nottingham to Hucknall corridor is identified in Structure Plan Review Policy 1/2. The corridor is centred on public transport facilities currently provided by rail (The Robin Hood Line) and by line 1 of the Nottingham Express Transit System (NET). This is because rail-based facilities are more efficient than road-based facilities in terms of the numbers of people they can transport to and from the City Centre, particularly during busy periods. The NET system when operational will be a high frequency, high capacity system capable of transporting up to 1,200 people per hour from Hucknall to Nottingham at peak times.
- 2.41 In identifying development sites within the Hucknall area a significant criteria has therefore been the accessibility of land to either a Robin Hood Line Station or a proposed NET stop. Sites which are within 1km of such a facility are preferred since this reflects a reasonable maximum distance for walking to a station. Beyond this distance, sites which are well served by main bus routes, preferably linking to a railway station, will be considered. Sites which cannot meet these criteria have only been considered as a last resort where there is the potential to improve public transport facilities in the future. Such improvements are most likely to be bus based.
- 2.42 The Authority has also considered the potential of larger sites to justify new rail or NET facilities in the future. However, it is unlikely that a new Robin Hood Line station could be provided since there are capacity constraints on the line caused by a long single track section and there are already sufficient station sites at appropriate locations for a successful heavy rail operation. Proposals for new housing and employment development to the north of Hucknall are currently being considered as part of the Gedling Local Plan Review process. Whilst the outcome of this process is not currently finalised, a safeguarded route has been identified between Hucknall Station and the boundary with Gedling Borough to the north. This will allow for a potential extension of the NET system, should this be required in the future, to widen transport choices in this area.

- 2.43 The principles of accessibility to public transport facilities have also been considered in relation to sites in the West Nottinghamshire Sub-Area. While no Public Transport Corridor is identified, parts of the area are served by the Robin Hood Line, particularly in Kirkby, and therefore sites can be considered in the same way as South Nottinghamshire sites. Considerations of accessibility also include the need to identify sites within walking distance of existing bus routes and with good cycle access.

Urban Capacity

- 2.44 In meeting the aims of the plan in relation to concentration of development within urban areas, and in support of the objectives of sustainability, an exercise has therefore been undertaken within all urban areas of the District to identify potential development sites. This has involved a detailed investigation of all undeveloped sites and open areas including allotments, open space, derelict sites and vacant sites and buildings. The details of the exercise are contained in Technical Paper No.1: 'Urban Capacity'. Some of the sites identified in the Local Plan Review have arisen from this Urban Capacity exercise and others, mainly smaller sites under 0.4 hectares may come forward for development during the plan period.
- 2.45 While indicating that some development land clearly exists within the existing urban area, the study also shows that overall needs for both housing and employment land will need to encroach into open countryside, which in the southern part of the District will involve loss of Green Belt. Accordingly sites which have been identified for development adjoining the urban area have been carefully selected in accordance with the "sequential" approach referred to in paragraph 2.35 and 2.36 to ensure the minimum of impact on the open countryside and to ensure the purposes of Green Belt are not undermined.

MAIN URBAN AREAS

POLICY ST2 DEVELOPMENT WILL BE CONCENTRATED WITHIN THE MAIN URBAN AREAS OF HUCKNALL, KIRKBY-IN-ASHFIELD AND SUTTON-IN-ASHFIELD AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP.

- 2.46 Most of the specific land use allocations in subsequent chapters are concentrated in these three Main Urban Areas. In addition, it is proposed that, in general, other proposals which emerge during the Plan period and do not conflict with specific land use designations or with development control criteria will be encouraged in these areas where services are concentrated and access to facilities is best.
- 2.47 As indicated in para. 2.26, it is anticipated that the general role of Hucknall, Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Sutton-in-Ashfield as the main employment, housing and service centres in the District will remain largely unchanged in coming years, as will the positive attitude of the District Council to development in these areas. As a result, policy ST2 does not distinguish between the three towns in terms of the overall strategic attitude to development, but looks to concentrate new development in each of them during the Plan period.
- 2.48 The Structure Plan Review proposes the concentration of new development within and adjoining existing urban areas, and in the case of Hucknall along identified 'Public Transport Corridors'. The scale of additional development needs to 2011 has meant that capacity of the Main Urban Areas identified within the adopted Ashfield Local Plan is insufficient to provide for all new requirements.
- 2.49 The precise boundaries of the Main Urban Areas have therefore been redrawn to reflect both existing and proposed development, and are shown on the Proposals Map. Wherever possible, previously established boundaries have been retained. Where encroachment onto land previously identified as Green Belt or other Countryside is proposed, boundaries have been drawn to minimise further loss of countryside using identifiable strong boundaries wherever possible. Hence the policy wording makes no further provision for developments 'adjoining' these urban areas. Other developments on the edge of the identified Main Urban Areas will be unacceptable unless they conform with Green Belt or Countryside policies (EV1 and EV2).