



# Action for a Better Charnwood

Our meetings are generally held on the first Tuesday of each month, not as stated in previous newsletter, at JSH, Loughborough at 7pm. Details of meetings can be found at <http://www.bettercharnwood.org.uk/>

**Charnwood's Local Development Framework and the Core Strategy** was the topic of our June meeting. An overview was presented by Richard Brown of Charnwood Borough Council (CBC).

We were told that the Local Development Framework (LDF) represented the plan for Charnwood's future development in relation to homes, leisure, recreation and jobs. It represented a way of preserving the countryside, conserving energy and of preventing flooding. It has to conform with national guidance and the Regional Plan. The LDF consists of many documents including the Core Strategy; The Core Strategy being policy direction which sets the tone and direction. The Preferred Options '06, which are due to be repeated in '08 addresses discrepancies so that it is sound.

**The Nottingham Sustainable Developer Guide** was referred to as being the first time information was put into one document but that it was only guidance and information ([www.sdg-nottinghamshire.org.uk](http://www.sdg-nottinghamshire.org.uk)). This may be so but the fact that it is so accessible and easy to understand gives it a lot of value and credibility.

Leicestershire County Council requires 10% of energy to come from renewable sources for new build, increasing by 1% each year. We were told that the London Borough of Merton were successful in getting a change in national guidance. A contrasting

approach is that of West Berkshire which has a Code for Sustainable Homes as opposed to renewable energy. CBC's strategy should be in the Core Strategy and shouldn't duplicate national policy.

A question was asked that surely efficiently designed houses are more important than ones producing renewable energy? Charnwood's approach is that a certain percentage of energy is to be derived from renewable sources and that will be varied according to building type and location, urban as opposed to rural or schools as opposed to very low density housing; The detail will be in the Supplementary Planning Documents. This depends on the draft Regional Plan where the majority of urban extensions should be carbon neutral (ie. buy in) to work with the increasing requirements of building controls with regard to housing requirements. With regard to water usage, this was not very clearly explained. We were also told that whilst climate change was of relevance to this group, it wasn't to the wider public. Shouldn't it be, after all it's going to affect everyone and so it should be taken into account by both local and national governments whilst there's still time to act. The issue of transportation was raised and we were told that the council could only provide the conditions for more sustainable travel, it couldn't force people to use them. True, but if those facilities were provided in the best locations then people would be more likely to use them, especially if they saw others using them. As concerns Grange

Park we were told that it wasn't known if there would be a bus service to this estate. Surely this is counter sustainable as people will only move there if they have a car. Richard agreed as a planner that the facilities should be in place to begin with.

We were told that the Core Strategy allows the big strategic sites to be identified and were told that we should be referred to Dave Hankins for the publication date of the Core Options.

As we were unable to go ahead with the planned meeting in July we discussed various things including the following:

### **The Sustainable Communities Act**

will start in October and is about building local communities. Councils will be invited to opt in to the Act. ABC intends to write to the Council urging them to opt in when invited to do so by the Government in October. We will also get involved in local panels which the council will set up when it does opt in. We are hoping that Local Works who promoted the Act will speak at our meeting on 4 November. We hope that you are able to join us.

For the first time we have an Act of Parliament that discards the usual top-down decision making and also the nonsense that 'consultation' by the government is somehow empowering (when the opposite is the case as most people know). This Act is special because it establishes for the first time a co-operative method of decision making, so that all the decisions are no longer made at the centre. It is an Act that can empower citizens and will give effect to the fact that **'citizens and councils are the experts on their own problems and the solutions to them'**

### **But why should Charnwood 'opt in'?**

Community decline is happening everywhere. So by 'opting in' councils are signing up to receive 'assistance'. Local authorities are given the power to

determine the nature of the assistance that they receive. The assistance could involve new powers being given to local authorities. By opting in, local authorities can act together to put in proposals to government supported by their colleagues elsewhere, so making it harder for the government to refuse to act on them. The Act also enables councils to request the transfer of functions from government or government agencies to themselves. As decisions on these requests must be made by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the SoS trying to reach agreement, this can be used to regain from government control, powers and spending that affect local areas.

We discussed the powers that Charnwood has as regards **climate change** with reference to what is written on the Local Government Association web site.

<http://climatechange.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/18093>

'A new statutory framework, including new powers on planning, could help councils rise to this challenge. The next two years must see a significant improvement in councils' response to climate change and a strong commitment within the new local area agreements (LAAs).

### **Future Meetings:**

All of our meetings start at 7pm  
Thursday Sept 4 Charnwood Transition Towns

Oct 7 AGM Cllr David Snartt To talk about his role on the Borough as Climate Change Champion and the measures that the Council is taking on Climate Change.

Nov 4 The Sustainable Communities Act a presentation from Steve Shaw of Local Works. tbc

The last newsletter (June 2008) is now on the website front page, in two lengths, as a PDF