

**Draft Leicestershire Rural
Strategy 2007 – 2014**

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Chairman's Foreword

I am delighted to be able to present to you the third Leicestershire Rural Strategy, which will provide a strategic framework for the work of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) for the next seven years.

The policy context within which we operate has changed considerably since the first Rural Strategy was produced in 1994 and this change has accelerated over the last couple of years with the advent of Local Area Agreements, the creation of the Commission for Rural Communities and Natural England and the development of the Regional Rural Action Plan. We decided, as a partnership, that we needed to review our Strategy to reflect these changes and to ensure that the LRP remains a focal point for activity in the rural areas of the County.

The strength of the LRP has always been our focus on delivery, our ability to turn small amounts of funding into benefits on the ground, whether this is supporting villages shops, pubs and posts offices, providing grants to small businesses, helping communities to help themselves through community participation projects or community transport schemes or developing affordable housing schemes to enable local people to continue to live within and contribute to their local community. To deliver effectively, however, we need a robust strategy - based on facts and figures, as well as local intelligence.

This strategy positions the LRP to influence the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, whilst also reflecting rural priorities at a local, regional and national level. The Strategy will be accompanied by a more detailed annual Rural Action Plan - the delivery plan for the partnership. This will include specific targets against each of our priorities and will enable us to more effectively monitor delivery against the strategy

I hope you find the strategy, which is a stepping stone towards the delivery of our vision for 2026, a useful overview of the position in rural Leicestershire in 2007 and outline of our priorities for the next 7 years.

Introduction

What is the Leicestershire Rural Partnership?

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) was established in 1993 by the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland), the then Rural Development Commission, and the County Council. The 'Rural Partnership' was created in order that partners could work better together, benefiting from shared knowledge and resources, and jointly addressing issues of mutual concern. This would result in residents, voluntary organisations and businesses in rural Leicestershire, benefiting from increased co-ordination, efficiency and improved service delivery.

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership has a formal membership of 19 organisations working across rural Leicestershire, with working links to more than 40 other organisations. A list of formal members is provided on the inside cover.

Principles of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership

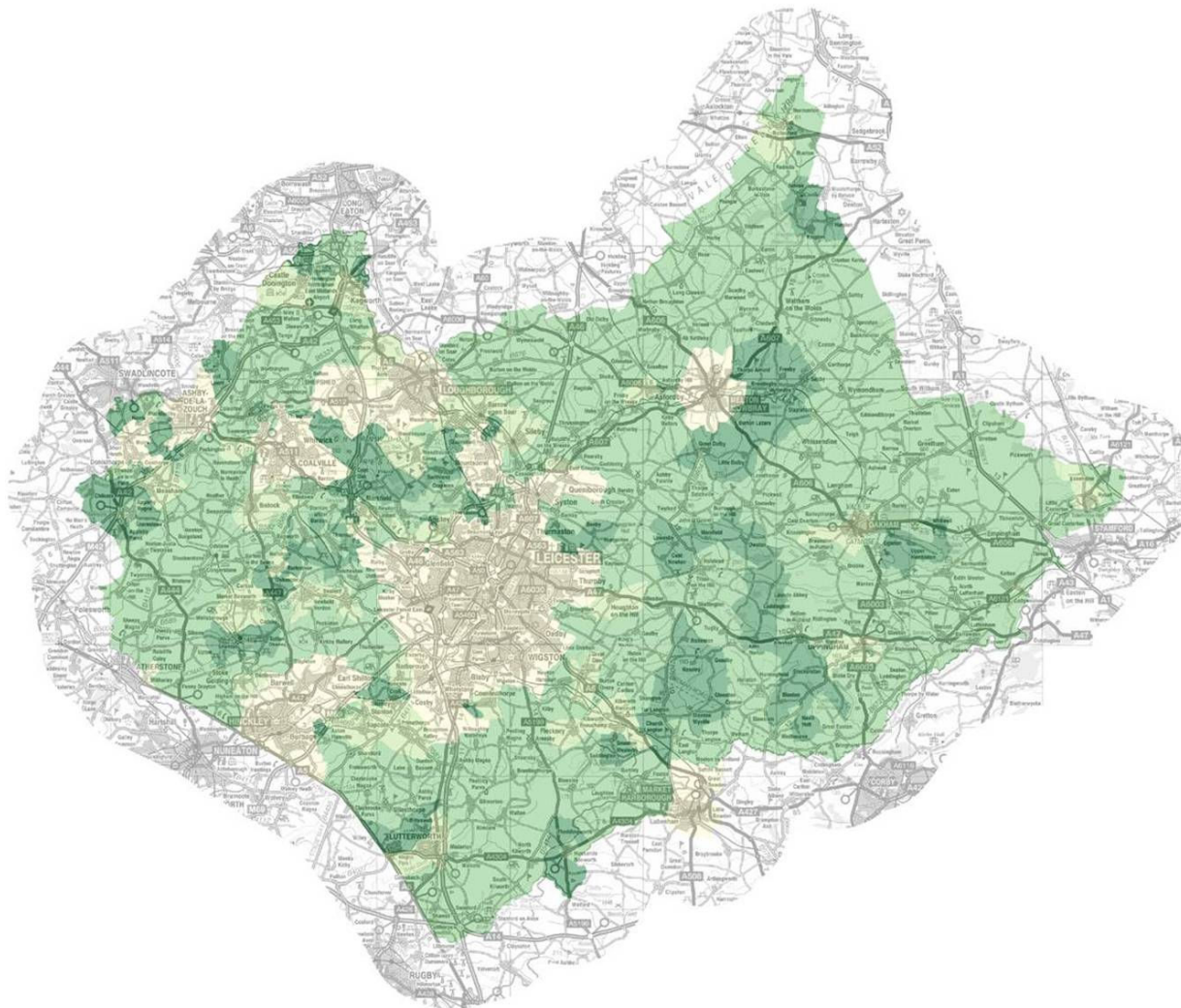
The focus of the LRP is set out in the 20 year vision for rural Leicestershire (see page 6). To achieve this, the LRP has a critical role in "Delivering, Co-ordinating, Influencing, and Advising" on behalf of rural Leicestershire, to deliver better services and quality of life. To enable the Partnership to effectively carry out these roles, a Rural Strategy is developed, implemented and regularly reviewed.

About Rural Leicestershire

Leicestershire is a predominately rural county, with 55% of the population living in 210 rural parishes. The County has over 300 settlements, each with a population of fewer than 10,000. The majority of these settlements are very small, nearly half having a population of under 250. There is a clear pattern to the distribution of rural settlements, with Harborough and Melton districts containing a total of 70% of settlements under 10,000.

Leicestershire benefits from excellent national road and rail links. The south of the County is just over 1 hour from London by train, well within commuting distance. Many principal roads pass through the County, including the M1, M69, M42 and A14. Public transport in the County is based on a network of bus routes, of at least hourly frequency, linking to major settlements.

Leicestershire can be broadly divided into several landscape character areas, the main ones being the Wolds, Charnwood Forest and the former Coalfields across the north, High Leicestershire to the east, and the Leicestershire Vales to the south.



- Urban > 10k
- Town & Fringe
- Village
- Hamlet & Isolated Dwelling

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Map 1: Map of Leicestershire (including Leicester City and Rutland) split via the 2004 Rural/Urban Definition

Vision for Rural Leicestershire

In 2026 Rural Leicestershire will be made up of thriving and sustainable, safe and secure, communities, towns and villages, each of which will have at least one key community resource (e.g. school, church, pub, shop, post office, village hall). It will be recognised, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, for its;

1. Thriving **communities** that enjoy a high quality of life, have a broad social balance, and are empowered to influence and manage their own future, supported by an active voluntary and community sector.
2. **Economic activity** that plays to the County's strengths, including its location, heritage, culture, specialist products and services, leisure, tourism, and environment.
3. Profitable and entrepreneurial **businesses** trading in strong local supply chains and networks, maximising the value of their products and services.
4. **Access to services and facilities** (quality housing, health services, education, and employment opportunities), supported by high quality transport and information services.
5. Diverse and well-managed **countryside** that is valued and accessed by all. Towns and villages that provide a high quality sense of place for residents, which play to their cultural, heritage and environment strengths.
6. Ability to develop **skills** (through Universities, colleges, schools, employers and the voluntary sector) that meet the needs of local people, communities and businesses.

Defining Rural Leicestershire

There have been a variety of rural/urban definitions produced and utilised over the last 10 years. In 2004, 'the Rural and Urban Area Classification' was jointly produced between the Countryside Agency, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Welsh Assembly Government. Despite varying opinions, it does provide the clearest classification for identifying urban and rural areas across the country.

The classification is based on population density and clustering rather than the socio-economic characteristics of an area. The definition contains eight distinct categories, ranging from the most densely populated urban areas to areas with a sparse and dispersed population. It can be applied to different levels of geography, including electoral ward and census output area.

The rural/urban classification has been applied at individual census output area level, across Leicester, and Leicestershire. This resulted in output areas being classed into one of four classifications:

- Urban > 10k (e.g. refers to settlements such as Loughborough, Ashby, and Blaby)
- Town and Fringe (e.g. refers to settlements such as Lutterworth, Castle Donnington, and Bottersford)
- Village (e.g. refers to settlements such as Twycross, Wymondham, and Diseworth)
- Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling (e.g. refers to settlements such as Appleby Parva, Launde, and Swithland)

Map 1 (page 5) shows the classification applied to Leicester, and Leicestershire.

Table one (below) shows the population¹ and the area in hectares². The table indicates that a large proportion (75%) of the population live in a relatively small proportion of the geographical area of Leicester, and Leicestershire (16%). This equates to a quarter of the population (233,268 people) living in non-urban areas.

The rural/urban definition has been utilised throughout the draft Rural Strategy. It has been applied to all evaluation and evidence-based reports undertaken through the LRP recently. However, it is accepted that the definition needs to be carefully applied when informing rural delivery programmes across Leicestershire. It is essential that the partnership is working to integrate and utilise the role that key service centres (such as Melton Mowbray, Ashby, and Loughborough) play in supporting their rural hinterland. Also, how the rural hinterland can provide significant strength and opportunities to their main 'urban' centre.

Rural Leicestershire – a changing place

In order to identify and set out the overarching rural priorities for the Leicestershire Rural Strategy 2007-2014, it is important to have an understanding of the key issues facing rural communities from a statistical perspective. This section of the strategy provides a broad commentary and indicates how the outcomes of these events shape the different parts of the County. This has been undertaken utilising the 2004 ward Rural and Urban Definition in England, this classification divides Leicestershire into three areas: Leicestershire's main urban areas, Town and Fringe, and Village, hamlet and isolated dwellings

For areas that are defined as rural, including both the town and fringe and village and hamlet areas, there is a perception that they offer an 'oasis of stability' in a rapidly changing world. Indeed some of the popular assumptions about rural areas are indeed correct. For example, as shown in table two, compared to the urban areas, with an average median age of 38, the town and villages of rural Leicestershire do indeed have an older population structure.

However, the 2001 Census results showed rapid change for all areas with distinct differences between urban, town and rural communities. The local geography is more structured now by age, migration and work, than at any point in history. Graph 1, highlights the key geographical distinctions in the age structures. The proportion of 18 to mid-thirties, living in rural areas is below that of the main urban areas across Leicestershire. This situation is reversed from 35 years' old until people are in their late sixties; with more proportions of this group in rural settlements. The picture is similar between all three areas for the proportion of over 75's. These distinct age profiles will have significant implications for the provision of services in all these areas.

A comparison between the 2001 and 1991 censuses provides evidence of general changes occurring within Leicestershire's towns. It is clear that growing social mobility, and the continuing structural change in the Leicestershire economy, has been common between all the main market towns and service centres. There have been significant reductions in households without a car and people employed in manufacturing throughout the nineties. There were small decreases, in unemployment and the proportion of people from a white ethnic group. In contrast, Leicestershire town's recorded big increases in economic activity, reflecting the more favourable economic conditions in 2001 compared to 1991, and this was also coupled with an increase in the proportion of working in professional occupations. Whilst the LRP hasn't explicitly worked in the main towns across Leicestershire, their role within the

wider rural hinterland is critical to local people. To access key services, employment, education and training, and recreation and leisure it is essential rural and urban aren't seen in separate silos.

Since 2001, (see table 3) there has been population growth in most areas of Leicestershire, with increases being slightly higher in rural than urban Leicestershire. Although the majority of this growth is in the older age groups, and unlike urban areas, the rural areas of Leicestershire have witnessed a small increase in the numbers of young people between 0 to 15 years old. In fact the increase in the rural population is set to continue with current projections predicting that England's rural population will rise by nearly 20% by 2027. The driver for this rural population change in Leicestershire is mainly through domestic migratory growth that is both age and class selective from urban areas.

From 2002-2004, (see table 4) the in-migration by area, from anywhere in England, was highest in the towns and villages of Leicestershire. This migration changes with age, between 0 - 14 years rural Leicestershire has a greater rate of children moving in than urban areas. However this trend is reversed for ages 15 to 24, where young people are moving away from rural areas at greater rates than urban areas. This drive could be implicated through a number of factors including to start further education, join the labour market, limited affordable housing provision and restricted access to services within rural Leicestershire. The trend then reverses again for all the older age groups but with the in-migration rates highest in the rural areas at the 25-44 year age group.

From an economic perspective it is important that rural areas provide a diverse range of employment and training options. It is clear that almost 40% of Leicestershire's population are migrating from an urban location into Leicestershire's rural areas. With regards to the sparsest rural locations in Leicestershire, urban in-migration is actually higher than those who reside in a rural settlement. However this is not a simple one way process, but a complex pattern of movement linking urban and rural areas together. For example around 20% of people moving into Leicestershire urban areas originate from a rural area. It is essential that rural and urban areas are jointly supporting their local communities from a social and economic perspective, particularly for accessing services, employment, training and leisure opportunities.

Leicestershire, in general, has extremely good accessibility via a number of modes of transport, particularly the car. This migration is being driven through increased personal mobility and people associating living in a rural area with a better quality of life. Generally, these people tend to be within the more affluent older population with young children working in professional

occupations. This is more commonly found in the more accessible urban areas in Leicestershire which dominant employment opportunities in the county. Table 5 indicates that over 50% of work journeys from Leicestershire towns and villages are ending in an urban area. This is resulting in rural areas suffering from small day time populations. The circle map to the right shows: the smaller the circle, the smaller the daytime population. Leicestershire's rural areas are highlighted in black, and are the smallest circles. Rural areas are losing population to commuting during the day (except near Lutterworth because of Magna Park) but the greatest reduction in daytime population is within the town and fringe areas.

Nonetheless, nearly half the population of Leicestershire are provided with employment and housing in rural areas. The Leicestershire Rural Economy Study indicates that "Town and village areas" provide 40 per cent of jobs in Leicestershire's knowledge economy, which provide improved wages and have a higher value added impact. It is a significant strength of Leicestershire's rural areas that they provide and stimulate opportunities for emerging high growth sectors compared to urban areas. In general, the social and economic picture is reflected in median average household incomes being higher in the rural Leicestershire than urban areas of the County, as shown in table 6. Conversely, those households in poverty, those with 60% of the English average, are concentrated in all but one urban area.

Although the economic picture of rural areas appears positive, there are many issues which affect this situation. Rural areas are continuing to be less affordable places to live, as table 7 highlights the challenge for those trying to enter the labour market. This shows affordability is worse the smaller the settlement: reaching a peak of six and half times lower average income in hamlets and isolated dwellings. Young people are particularly affected and this may be contributing to out-migration from rural areas. For those wishing to live in these areas but unable to buy, the lack of social housing, XXX% compared to XXX% in urban areas, forces more people to privately rent.

The retention of key local services within rural areas is an ever increasing challenge given the changes in commuting, demography, lifestyle patterns for the way people want to access them. For example, there is evidence commuters are shopping close to work and so diverting business from rural shops, also the growth in use of ICT/broadband technology. Defining access to services is complex, but a simple way is to measure the physical distance as this provides a simple measure of disadvantage. Table 8, identifies that residents of rural areas travel further for the key services measured here. Whilst this may not cause a problem for the majority of people in rural areas, but for those without a car, XXX%, low income or have a disability, XXX%, it might be. Town and

fringe, and urban areas have similar distances to services, emphasising the importance of market towns for shoppers and the services that they provide for the rural hinterland. However with eight out of 10 rural post offices losing money, their long term viability places considerable risks to the local rural economy. A recent survey showed some 82 per cent of local business think a local post office closure would have a significant impact on the local economy.

The levels of crime are an important factor in determining an area's perceived quality of life. Recorded crime has generally fallen in recent years and the biggest decreases are in the most sparse rural areas where crime is down by almost a quarter, compared to a slight increase in the urban areas of the County (see table 9). This is largely the result of reductions in domestic burglary and vehicle crime and in spite of an increase in violent crime. Fewer incidents of domestic violence (per head of population) are reported to the police in rural areas than in urban areas. However, it is argued that there is a greater level of anonymity in more populous areas and reporting rates are lower in rural communities.

There is a common perception that crime and anti-social behaviour is a greater problem in urban/town and fringe areas in the County compared to rural areas. This is particularly apparent for vandalism, rowdiness and disorderly behaviour. However, for the majority of people in both urban and rural parts of the County the levels of crime and disorder are perceived to have stayed around the same over recent years. The perceived risk of being a victim of crime is much higher than the actual risk.

Living in a Leicestershire rural area is generally a qualitatively different experience. A recent local survey showed that rural communities in Leicestershire are strong in many types of social capital. Social capital is the glue and resources that help a community stay together and move on. People in rural areas have a strong sense of neighbourliness and good networks outside the household. They feel that generally people can be trusted and that if you put something in to your local community, you get something back. Levels of getting involved (in local activities, campaigns and groups) are good but levels of voting in all elections are not so positive. The diversity of networks – different cultures, faiths and ages – is also not as strong in rural areas as it is elsewhere in the County.

Strategic Rural Policy Context

Agriculture and Rural Development

Europe

In December 2005 Defra and the Treasury jointly published their *Vision for the Common Agricultural Policy*. This set out proposals for the future administration of the European Union's **Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP). Measures within the CAP reform package included the creation of a Single Payment Scheme, administered by Defra's Rural Payments Agency. Central to the implementation of the CAP reform is England's *Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food*.

The Government launched its ***Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food: Facing the Future in England*** in December 2002. It set out how industry, Government and consumers can work together to secure a sustainable future for our farming and food industries, as a viable sector contributing to a better environment and healthy and prosperous communities. The strategy's three main objectives were to;

- Produce safe, healthy products in response to market demands, and ensure that all consumers have access to nutritious food, and to accurate information about food products;
- Support the viability and diversity of rural and urban economies and communities;
- Enable viable livelihoods to be made from sustainable land management, both through the market and through payments for public benefits;

National

Since 2000 there has been an on-going and sustained evaluation of Government policy affecting rural areas, with significant emphasis on improving the delivery of services for all residents. The Government's commitment to change was initiated through the **Rural White Paper**, *Our Countryside: the Future - a Fair Deal for Rural England*, published in November 2000.

In November 2002, running parallel to a review of the Rural White Paper, Defra invited Lord Haskins to re-evaluate service delivery within rural areas. His final report, ***Rural Delivery Review***, published in October 2003, included 33 separate recommendations for improving delivery of rural policies. These principally focused on a greater need to encourage local partnerships take a lead on the delivery of services.

In response, Defra produced their **Rural Strategy 2004**. This identified three priorities for rural policy, focusing on:

- Economic and social regeneration – supporting enterprises across rural England, but targeting greater resources at areas of greatest need;
- Social justice for all – tackling rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and providing fair access to services and opportunities for all rural people; and
- Enhancing the value of the countryside – protecting the natural environment for this and future generations.

To deliver the *Rural Strategy 2004*, Defra established the **Modernising Rural Delivery (MRD) Programme**. This was a change programme aimed at delivering rural services more efficiently in a more streamlined way through a smaller number of organisations with clearer and more accountable roles, working in partnership within an overarching sustainable development agenda.

Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities were established as independent bodies. **Natural England** brings together English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service. Its role is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

The **Commission for Rural Communities** has a particular focus on disadvantage. The Commission provides advice to Government, ensuring that policies reflect the real needs of all people living and working in rural England. Together with topic-based reports considering various forms of rural disadvantage, the Commission publish their annual *State of the Countryside* report, which reviews current issues affecting rural England.

The Regional Development Agencies (RDA), such as the East Midlands Development Agency (emda), have taken on decision making and funding responsibilities for the delivery of rural economic and social regeneration, working in close partnership with local authorities and others. A principal function of the RDAs is to administer the socio-economic elements of the new Rural Development Programme for England, 2007-2013, in support of the objectives detailed within the Regional Economic Strategy.

The **Rural Development Programme for England, 2007-2013** (RDPE), which will commence in autumn 2007, is the successor to the England Rural Development Programme, 2000-2006. The priority themes of this programme are to enhance the environment and countryside, make agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable and enhance opportunity in rural areas. Unlike the former Programme, Leader is now a fully integrated element. The package of measures is funded through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and Government. Within the East Midlands, partners (Natural England, the Forestry Commission and emda) will manage delivery through the Regional Implementation Plan.

The **Rural Social and Communities Programme** (RSCP), established by Defra in August 2005 as a two-year programme, provides funding to develop the capacity of the rural voluntary and community and parish council sectors to address locally defined issues of disadvantage and help shape the communities in which they serve. In Leicestershire, through the Leicestershire Rural Partnership, RSCP funding has been secured to support a number of programmes including those targeted at building capacity, developing social enterprises, delivering affordable rural housing and tackling social exclusion.

Regional and local

The East Midlands Regional Assembly's (EMRA) **Integrated Regional Strategy** (IRS), published in January 2005, provides the overarching framework for sustainable development within the region. The Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Plan are essential mechanisms which support this.

As part of the *Rural Strategy 2004*, each regional government office was asked to take the lead to develop the arrangements to prioritise and co-ordinate activity, funding and delivery within their area, within one framework document. In January 2006, the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM) released the draft **East Midlands Rural Delivery Framework** (EMRDF). The principal focus of this 'linking' document is to tailor the East Midlands share of Defra resources within the region.

Incorporating the EMRDF, the East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum (EMRAF) published (in January 2007) the revised **East Midlands Rural Action Plan** (EMRAP). The rural priorities set out within this include:

- Improving access to affordable rural housing;
- Increasing the quality of the Region's green areas (green infrastructure);
- Improving enterprise, innovation and employment opportunities;
- Improving accessibility to jobs and services;
- Developing active communities;
- Supporting existing land-based and other rural business, and adapting to economic change; and
- Addressing climate change.

The EMRAP sets out an overarching vision for rural areas of the East Midlands to 2013; enabling the region's rural areas to be vibrant places for people to live, work and visit, with:

- A thriving rural economy
- Quality services, accessible to all
- A high quality environment
- Sustainable and inclusive communities

Delivery arrangements for the Rural Development Programme for England within the East Midlands will be managed through the **Regional Implementation Plan** (RIP), a draft of which was published in September 2006, which has been developed in partnership between emda, Natural England and the Forestry Commission. The three core delivery partners have proposed to deliver the RDPE through four inter-related strands of activity. These cover:

- Conserving and enhancing the environment and countryside;
- Competitiveness, collaboration and diversification;
- Enhancing opportunity and quality of life in rural areas; and
- Skills development (underpinning/cross-cutting delivery strand).

Both the East Midlands Rural Action Plan and Regional Implementation Plan will remain current until 2013, the end date of the present European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

In 2006, following extensive consultation, emda published the region's third **Regional Economic Strategy** (RES) – *A flourishing region*. The vision for the RES is that, by 2020 the East Midlands will be increasingly prosperous and productive, enjoying levels of sustainable economic well-being with a quality of life higher than the European average. This is supported by the structural themes to raise productivity, ensure sustainability and achieve equality. These objectives will be realised through ten strategic priorities

Emda's approach to delivering the RES in rural areas is to tailor existing programmes. Although there are some specific issues in rural areas which require dedicated solutions, a more efficient 'mainstreaming' approach ensures that programmes address need, thereby avoiding misleading confusions about the rural-urban divide.

The Leicester Shire Economic Partnership (LSEP) supports emda's economic development objectives. Delivery arrangements are detailed within their rolling three-year **Investment Plan, 2007-2010** and longer term business plan.

Sustainable Development and Planning

Regional and local

There have been significant changes to the planning system within England. Development planning is now far broader and considers social, environmental and economic objectives. The principal new spatial planning documents are the East Midlands Regional Plan and district Local Development Frameworks.

The **East Midlands Regional Plan** (RSS8), prepared by the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) as part of its regional planning responsibility, provides a broad development strategy for the region up to 2026. The Regional Plan includes policies which address rural development and environmental issues.

In order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, the Regional Plan facilitates the implementation of strategies to meet local housing needs (including affordable rural housing), diversify incomes, add value to rural produce, improve skills and broaden the economy. Furthermore, it promotes adequate employment opportunities in rural areas in order to reduce the need for long distance commuting to jobs in urban areas. It also recognises that the vitality of many rural areas depend on the ability of market town regeneration initiatives to deliver sustainable development and to make links between urban and rural communities.

The Regional Plan is supported by four sub-regional strategies – including the **Three Cities Sub-Regional Strategy** which covers Leicestershire. Together these replace the existing Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996-2016. The Secretary of State will publish the final Regional Plan, incorporating the sub-regional strategies, when it is adopted in 2008.

Replacing the old-style local plans developed by district authorities, a **Local Development Framework** (LDF) is a ‘folder’ of local development documents that together outlines the spatial planning strategy for local district authority areas.

Within this the core strategy plays a key part in the delivery of the district’s community strategy by setting out its spatial aspects and providing a long-term spatial vision. The core strategy expresses those parts of the district’s community strategy that relate to the development and use of land and outline the council’s strategy for delivering strategic development needs, including housing, leisure and retail.

Community Development

National

The Government’s **Local Government White Paper** – *Strong and prosperous communities*, published in October 2006, sets out a radical vision of revitalised local authorities, working with their partners, to reshape public services around the citizens and communities that use them. Specific proposals are grouped around the themes of:

- Responsive services and empowered communities
- Effective, accountable and responsive local government

- Strong cities; strategic regions
- Local government as a strategic leader and place shaper

The White Paper will become a key document helping local authorities improve the delivery of services for the benefit of all residents. This includes emphasis on the important role of Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements.

Regional and Local

Leicestershire Together, established in 2002, is the County Council's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Bringing together 28 different organisations the Partnership's vision is to develop:

- A vibrant and thriving County in which to live, work and play;
- A County where all have access to quality services; and
- A County which looks to the future by maximising opportunities for its young people.

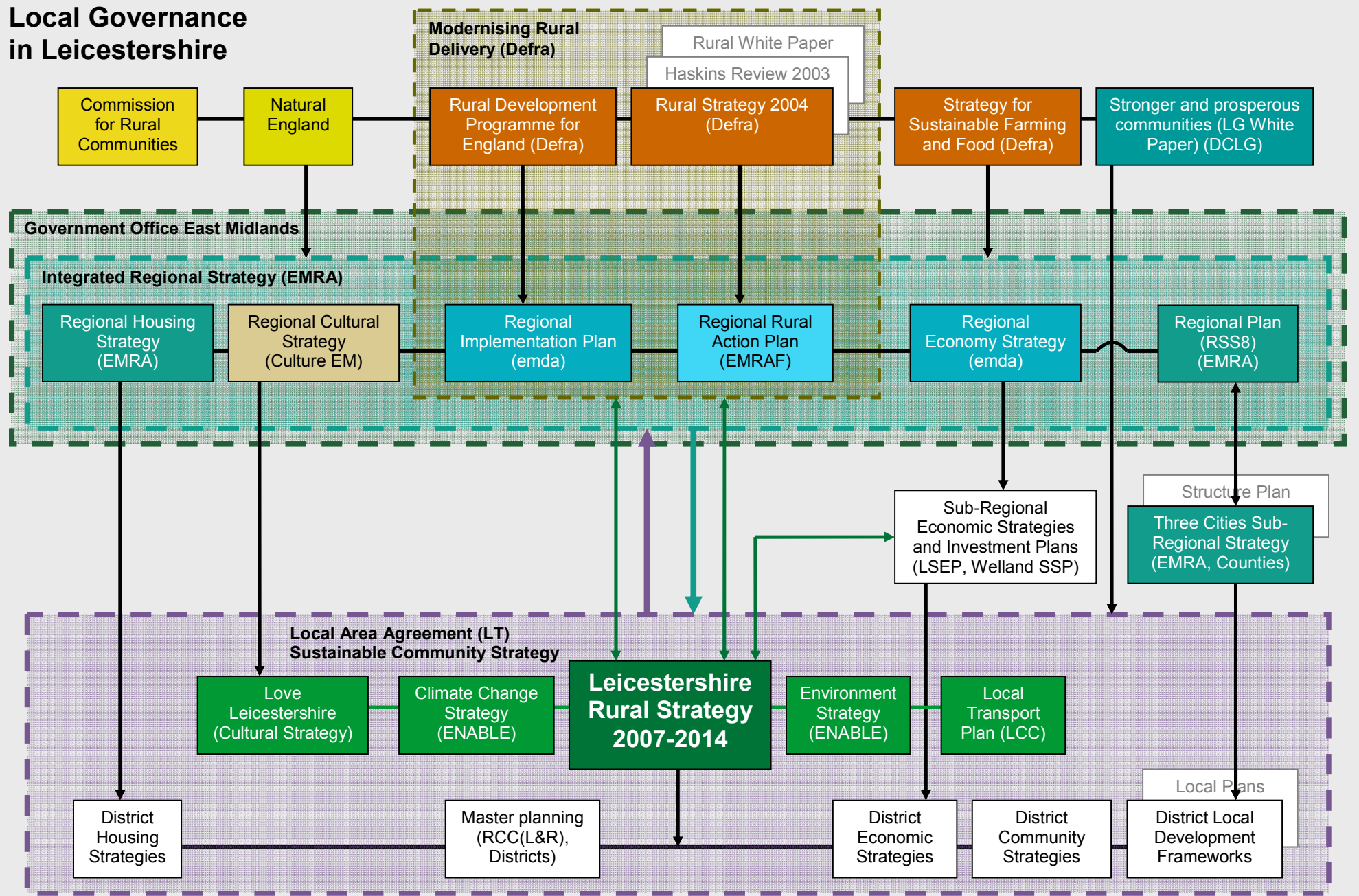
This is delivered through the partnership's **Community Strategy** (originally produced in 2003 and reviewed in summer 2005). Leicestershire Together is currently developing a new **Sustainable Community Strategy for Leicestershire**, which will be in place in 2008. This will reflect local priorities, robust evidence of need, the emerging place shaping agenda and the shared strategic priorities for the county.

A wide range of local partners came together to develop the first Leicestershire **Local Area Agreement** which was signed in March 2006. This is a contract between local government (and partners) and Central Government which reflects both local and national priorities

The second Local Area Agreement (likely to be in place summer 2008) will form a key delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Each of the seven districts within Leicestershire has a separate LSP and has produced, individually, their own community strategy. The District LSPs are also responsible for driving forward neighbourhood management in the 19 priority neighbourhoods identified through the Local Area Agreement.

Local Governance in Leicestershire



Please consult the glossary for acronym details

Principles of the Rural Strategy

Changing context of Rural Delivery

The Rural Strategy has clear links to a number of other key strategies at all levels of the European, national, regional and local level. Diagram xx included on page fourteen outlines where the Rural Strategy sits and feeds into other documents. Since the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001 there has been a substantial review of rural policy and delivery mechanisms. Since 2004, when the Government launched its Rural Strategy, significant organisational and funding changes for rural policy delivery have taken place.

The Leicestershire Rural Strategy provides a strategic framework for the work of the LRP. It highlights the main issues currently facing rural Leicestershire and outlines the strategic priorities of the partnership in addressing these issues. These priorities have been informed by a series of European, national, regional and local policies. An overview of these policies is included on page eight, which provides the rural policy context.

Delivering the Strategy

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to undertaking the implementation of the priorities outlined within this strategy. The Rural Strategy focuses upon issues that can be best addressed through partnership working; it does not seek to identify every issues of concern to rural Leicestershire. In addition, the LRP has utilised research and evidence to inform the priorities included within the strategy (see glossary for more details).

In order to take forward the ambition outlined within the 'Vision for Rural Leicestershire', it will require a tailored approach which takes into account different parts of Leicestershire and its settlements. The LRP will impose arrangements on partners, communities or businesses but seek to work in tandem through consultation and community engagement.

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership has also sought to engage and align its approach with the Leicestershire Local Area Agreement. The development of a Sustainable Community Strategy and the moves to create Neighbourhood Engagement and Community Forums across Leicestershire will ensure that all residents are involved in developing their communities in their own way.

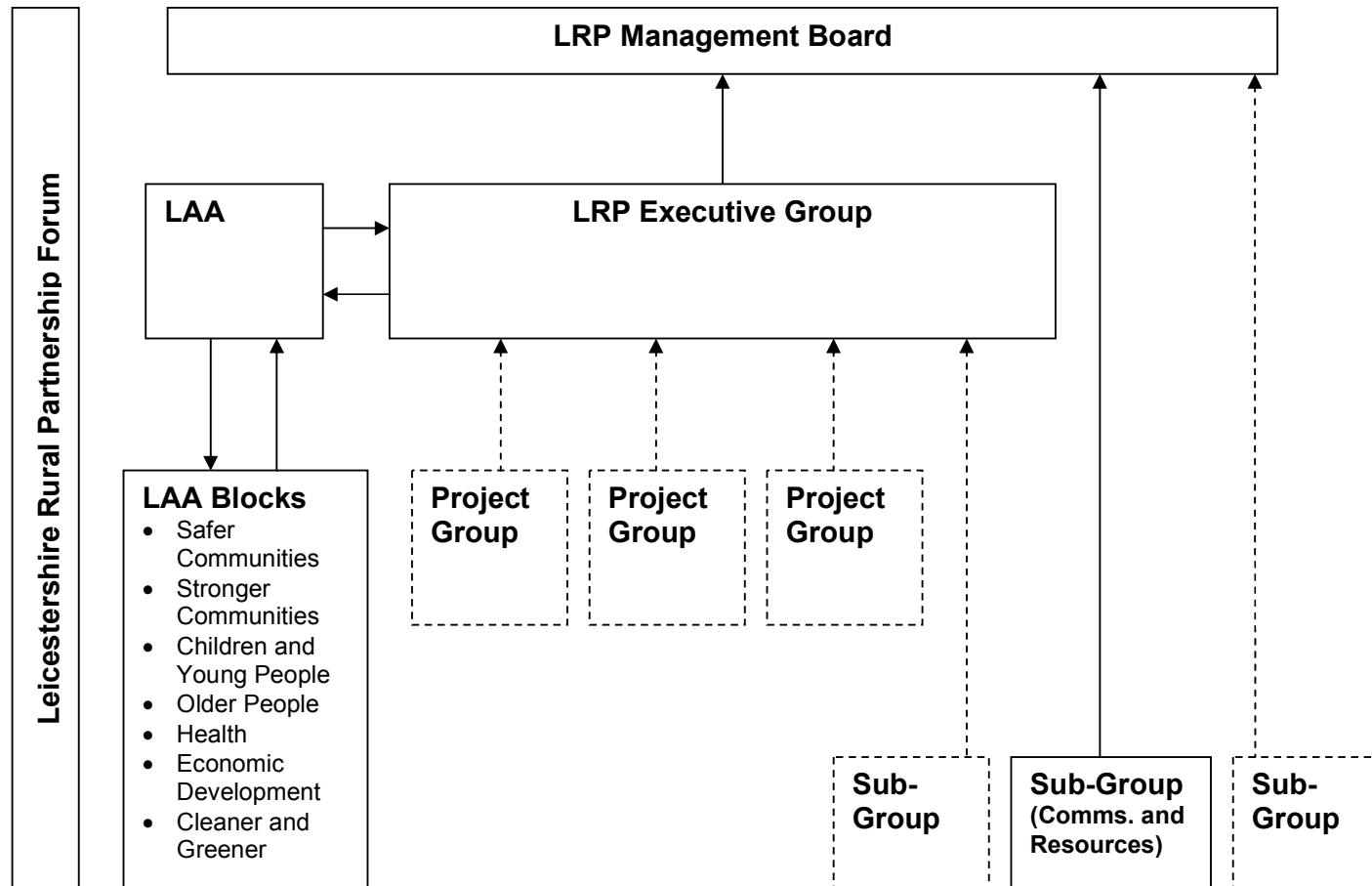
Working Alongside the Leicestershire Local Area Agreement

The LAA is a contract between local and central government which aims to improve local performance by allowing a more flexible use of resources and devolving responsibility, enhance efficiency by simplifying the funding streams and help local partners to join up service delivery. Although initially there is no new funding available through the LAA, reward targets have been agreed with Government which will be challenging to achieve but, if we do so, will bring in up to £12 million in reward grant.

Within Leicestershire, LAA outcomes have been developed against seven themed 'blocks', for each of which specific delivery plans have been prepared. These cover:

- Healthier Communities
- Older People
- Children and Young People
- Safer Communities
- Stronger Communities
- Cleaner and Greener Communities
- Economic Development and Enterprise

Structure of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership



Chapter 1: Stronger Rural Communities

Vision

*Thriving **communities** that enjoy a high quality of life, have a broad social balance, and are empowered to influence and manage their own future, supported by an active voluntary and community sector.*

What is being achieved by the LRP

- We have developed a Community Capacity Building project over a number of years - support is provided through the Rural Community Council for the development of Parish Plans and other consultation activity across the county
- We support two posts based at Midlands Rural Housing, a Rural Housing Enabler who works with Parish Councils to identify housing needs and potential sites and applies for funding through the Housing Corporation for affordable housing schemes and a Strategic Housing Post, established with funding through the Rural Social and Community Programme (RSCP), to enable a greater strategic housing input into key policy-making and delivery processes, such as the LAA
- The County Council organises a programme of Service Co-ordination events, based in individual settlements, and with the aim of identifying service delivery issues, problems and solutions. Service Co-ordination events are increasingly being linked into the different stages of the Parish Plan process and other consultation activity
- The LRP supports work around Social Inclusion through the RCC, this is focussed upon those suffering from stress and distress in rural areas and supporting the rurally isolated and deprived
- Linked to the Capacity Building Project, the RCC administers the Community Roots small grants scheme, aimed at supporting the delivery of projects to meet identified community needs

Strategic Objectives

Rural Priorities for Leicestershire	What the LRP will do
<p>1.1 To develop social capital within rural communities by empowering local people to have a greater voice and influence over decision making, and a role in planning the future of their communities, including through effective and inclusive community participation processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a community participation programme which includes a “menu” of participation techniques • Develop specific approaches to engage the “harder to hear” in developing and shaping services • Support and work with the Stronger Communities Board in the development of Social Capital and community cohesion in the rural neighbourhoods targeted through the LAA
<p>1.2 To maximise the number of local people who feel able to influence the delivery of services and the activities of service providers, and ensure equality of services for everyone, including disabled people, BME groups, people who are vulnerable and who live in deprived areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement and specific approaches of young people • Support and enable the creation of Youth Councils as part of Parish and Town Councils achieving Quality Status
<p>1.3 To facilitate volunteering in rural areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an effective interface between volunteers who wish to help and those who need the help • Encourage businesses across Leicestershire to allow their staff to volunteer, offer training to those who wish to help by giving others the skills required
<p>1.4 To support Parish/Town councils and the Voluntary and Community Sector to ensure that they are in a position to facilitate and support the development of rural communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop better partnership working between the “third sector”/VCS, local authorities and other partners to provide more structured approach to supporting rural communities • Support the development of Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings across Leicestershire
<p>1.5 To reduce vulnerability and reassure the public, reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, particularly in rural priority neighbourhoods, and improve the confidence in the criminal justice system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with the Police, Safer Communities Themed Partnership of the LAA, and others to address anti-social behaviour and reduce the fear of crime for rural communities across Leicestershire

Strategic Context

	Strategy	Actions
National	Rural Strategy 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair access to public services and affordable housing • Tackle social exclusion wherever it occurs
	Rural Social and Community Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The RSCP focuses upon four areas of activity – Capacity Building, Rural Housing, Social Exclusion and Social Enterprise. Within the programme, just over £220,000 has been made available over 2 years (2006 – 2008) to support the delivery of projects in these areas</i>
	Stronger and prosperous communities (Local Government White Paper)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Our aim is to create strong and cohesive communities – thriving places in which a fear of difference is replaced by a shared set of values and a shared sense of purpose and belonging...Our challenge however, is to build these stronger communities in times of rapid change (p155).</i> • <i>Improving the quality and responsiveness of services to communities, increasing resident participation in decision making, enhancing the role for community groups, strengthening local leadership ...place-shaping role to help to build cohesive and self-confident communities (p154).</i>
Regional	East Midlands Rural Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improve the quality of community leadership in rural communities, increased levels of community activity and reduced level of social exclusion</i> • <i>Better managed and maintained community facilities</i> • <i>Improve, develop and embed in each county a partnership approach</i> • <i>Improve access to seed corn grants to support community activity</i>
	Regional Economic Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To increase life chances for all leading to stronger and more cohesive communities, a dynamic society and a stronger economy (p123):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Promoting social capital</i> ○ <i>Collaboration to encourage participation</i> ○ <i>Develop cohesive communities</i>
	Integrated Regional Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Create sustainable and health communities by:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Empowering and engaging communities</i> ○ <i>Reducing fear of crime and anti-social behaviour</i> ○ <i>Developing social capital (p5)</i>
Local	Leicestershire Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Local people to have a sense of “community spirit” and be supported in community activities to bring people together (p28)</i> • <i>Local people to feel part of the decision making process and to have a role in planning the future of their own community</i> • <i>Improved support for the victims of crime, particularly racially motivated crime and domestic violence (p52)</i> • <i>Healthy communities where people look after themselves and each other</i> • <i>Increased involvement of young people and those working with them in decision about their future and community activities (p62)</i> • <i>All young people to be protected from being involved in or affected by crime and bullying, either as victims or perpetrators (p66)</i>
	7 district Community Strategies	
	7 district Local Development Frameworks	

Related priorities, including cross-cutting priorities

This section highlights where this chapter of the Rural Strategy links across to outcomes/priorities identified in the four other themes of the Local Area Agreement – Children and Young People, Healthier Communities, Older People and Cleaner and Greener – that are not included as separate chapters of the Rural Strategy. It also flags up any related cross-cutting priorities.

Young People

- To gather and share information on the needs of rural young people
- To ensure that young people have the facilities and information to enable them to influence how their needs are met by service providers

Older People

- Improved well-being of older people
- Increase the number of older people who are productively engaged (including those who are hard to reach) in the process of development and design of services that meet their needs and aspirations

Cleaner & Greener

- Improve the quality of town and village centres - improved cleanliness and attractiveness of villages and town centres

Research

- To improve understanding of the economy, environment and social conditions in rural Leicestershire and their interrelationships.

Chapter 2: Rural Economic Development

Vision

Economic activity that plays to the County's strengths, including its location, heritage, culture, specialist products and services, leisure, tourism, and environment

Profitable and entrepreneurial **businesses** trading in strong local supply chains and networks, maximising the value of their products and services

Ability to develop **skills** (through Universities, colleges, schools, employers and the voluntary sector) that meet the needs of local people, communities and businesses.

What is being achieved by the LRP

- Through the Rural Business Advice Mobile Trailer, funding information and advice is provided to farmers and businesses in rural locations, including at farmers markets and agricultural shows.
- In delivering the emda-funded National Forest Business Development Programme, the LRP is developing the infrastructure for continued growth and sustainability of the National Forest economy, including by providing business advice and supporting creation of new businesses and jobs
- Through the Rural Business Support Programme, the LRP provides grant support to help rural micro businesses, farmers, equestrian businesses, the provision of rural visitor accommodation and the bringing back into use of redundant buildings.
- Provision of training, through LANTRA, to land based sector businesses.
- With LRP support Leicestershire Food Links employs a farmer's market organiser who supports the development of farmers markets, helping develop a system of farmers' market certification brand, and looking to extend the range of this brand.
- A Social Enterprise Project, which seeks to ensure social enterprise support agencies work together in a co-ordinated way for the promotion and growth of social enterprise, is supported by the LRP.

Strategic Objectives

Rural Priorities for Leicestershire	What the LRP will do
<p>2.1 To increase the number of businesses starting up, expanding and locating within the County, including through co-ordinated business support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and support through the LRP rural business advice trailer • Liaise with East Midlands Business to ensure that there is appropriate support available to rural businesses, including business advice fairs • Work with Invest Leicester Shire to promote the location of appropriate businesses within rural Leicestershire
<p>2.2 To encourage entrepreneurial activity and development of emerging sectors of the rural economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and support through the LRP rural business advice trailer • Liaise with EMB to ensure that there is appropriate support available to rural businesses, including business advice fairs
<p>2.3 To support the development and creation of social enterprise in rural Leicestershire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide grant funding to support the establishment of new social enterprises
<p>2.4 To remove the barriers to economic participation, including through the provision of training and advice to develop skills and increase employment in rural Leicestershire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the delivery of vocational training opportunities, especially ICT, in rural communities,
<p>2.5 To support local producers and businesses to access markets for their products/activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and support the Leicestershire Food Group and Leicestershire Food Links to ensure that local producers and businesses can access markets
<p>2.6 To Increase the vitality and viability of town and rural centres, including by improving the quality of the public realm, by providing a supportive business environment for enterprises, and by raising their profile amongst residents and visitor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the visual appearance of market towns • Establish Town Centre Managers for each Market Town and for clusters of rural centres • Make small grants available to support and develop services in market towns and rural centres • Support the establishment of local business forums
<p>2.7 Work towards improving the provision of quality employment land and premises across the County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the LSEP, Invest Leicester Shire and local authorities through the planning process to improve the provision of suitable employment land
<p>2.8 Increase the contribution of tourism to the local economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a tourism profile for each key market town and rural centre • Provide grant funding to improve the tourist offer within rural Leicestershire • Support Leicester Shire Promotions to develop the tourist offer, including the number of overnight stays • Work with Leicester Shire Promotions to ensure that tourism opportunities through the London 2012 Olympics are captured
<p>2.9 To support the role of market towns and rural centres to act as service delivery “hubs”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an audit of services available in market towns and rural centres • Ensure through the Access to Services programme that all rural communities are able to access services through delivery “hubs”. • Support provision of mobile and remote services where access through delivery “hubs” is not suitable

Strategic Context

	Strategy	Action
National	Rural Strategy 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on the economic success of the majority of rural areas • Tackling the structural economic weaknesses and accompanying poor social conditions that exist in a minority of rural areas
	Sustainable Farming and Foods Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the viability and diversity of rural and urban economies and communities • Enable viable livelihoods to be made from sustainable land management, both through the market and through payments for public benefits
	Rural Development Programme for England	
	Stronger and prosperous communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive services and empowered communities • Effective, accountable and responsive local government
Regional	Regional Economic Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment, learning and skills • Enterprise and business support • Innovation • Land and development • Economic renewal • Economic inclusion
	East Midlands Rural Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving enterprise, innovation and employment opportunities • Supporting existing land-based and other rural businesses, and adapting to economic change
	Integrated Regional Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve economic performance and competitiveness by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encouraging enterprise and innovation ○ Improving the performance of existing businesses ○ Ensuring on-going development of learning and skills ○ Ensuring efficient use of the regions infrastructure, including ICT ○ Creating high quality employment opportunities
	Draft Regional Spatial Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Priority Policy 5: Development in rural areas should maintain the distinctive character and vitality of rural communities, strengthen rural enterprise and linkages between settlements and their hinterlands, help shorten journeys and facilitate access to jobs and services by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encouraging development opportunities related to the rural economy, including farm-based enterprises and the appropriately scaled growth of new and existing rural businesses. ○ Strengthening the viability and vitality of rural towns by providing for housing, employment and a range of services to serve a wider hinterland
Local	Leicester & Leicestershire Economic Regeneration Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprise and Innovation • Land and Buildings • Sustainable Communities • People and Skills
	Leicestershire Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong diverse economy where a wide variety of thriving small, medium and large businesses can flourish in both urban and rural areas
	7 district Economic Development Strategies	
	7 district Local Development Frameworks	
Leicestershire Rural Economy Study		

Related priorities, including cross-cutting priorities

This section highlights where this chapter of the Rural Strategy links across to outcomes/priorities identified in the four other themes of the Local Area Agreement – Children and Young People, Healthier Communities, Older People and Cleaner and Greener – that are not included as separate chapters of the Rural Strategy. It also flags up any related cross-cutting priorities.

Young People

- Improved engagement of 14-19 year olds in education/training.
- Sufficient quality childcare places provided across the County, accessible to all groups

Older People

- Maximising income and improving use of income for Older People

Cleaner & Greener

- Improve the quality of town and village centre environments

Healthier Communities

- Promote ,mental health and well being iwithin workplaces within Leicestershire

Research

- I mprove understanding of the economy, environment and social conditions in rural Leicestershire and their interrelationships.

Chapter 3: Improving Accessibility and Information

Vision

Access to services and facilities (good quality: housing, health services, education, and employment opportunities), supported by high quality transport and information services.

What is being achieved by the LRP

- The LRP has supported and developed a substantial Community Information and Electronic Services programme. The project has enabled the flow of information and services for communities and businesses to be made available via village websites. These sites, along with Parish Council websites have empowered individuals, communities, parishes, and voluntary organisations providing them with: a sense of purpose, interactive tools to enable effective two-way communication and easy access to electronic information and services.
- The County Council has supported the implementation of Mobile ICT Training in Rural Areas. This project has helped many people take their first steps into computing, and is delivered through the Leicestershire Adult Learning Service team.
- The LRP has worked through the County Council 'Rural Transport team' to identify and deliver a range of measures to address rural transport needs across Leicestershire.

Strategic Objectives

Rural Priorities for Leicestershire	What the LRP will do
<p>3.1 To develop an effective, integrated and economic transport network, in support of the Leicestershire Accessibility Strategy, that provides access to education, training, employment, health and food shopping locations along with leisure and social opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • XX percentage of new, targeted transport routes, within rural communities without access to an hourly bus service, that connect with key employment and training centres across Leicestershire • To work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to enable the creation of innovative and sustainable, demand responsive services linking rural areas with key service centres
<p>3.2 To ensure that everyone who lives in a rural community is able to access key services, facilities, and information through ICT development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and build the ICT infrastructure across Leicestershire to support and empower communities and businesses, and improve access to services in rural areas
<p>3.3 To develop and improve the role that market towns and rural centres play, in serving and supporting their surrounding rural hinterland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop and improve the ICT infrastructure and rural transport options into and between rural areas and key service centres, ensuring rural areas are a viable place to live and work
<p>3.4 To develop a single 'gateway' so that everyone, including older and younger people, can contact key agencies for the first time or for assistance to wider issues that might impact on person's wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with the Children and Young People's and Older Persons theme partnerships to support the communities in rural Leicestershire to address key issues which impact on their well-being

Strategic Context

	Strategy	Actions
National	Rural Strategy 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair access to public services and affordable housing • Tackle social exclusion wherever it occurs
	Rural Social and Community Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the community capacity building and entrepreneurial capability of rural communities so that those communities can work together to shape their own future
	Stronger Prosperous Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive services and empowered communities
Regional	East Midlands Rural Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to affordable rural housing • Improving accessibility to jobs and services • Developing active communities
	Regional Economic Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport and Logistics • Employment, learning and skills • Cohesive communities • Economic Inclusion
	Draft East Midlands Regional Plan (and Three Cities SRS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Priority Policy 5: Development in rural areas should maintain the distinctive character and vitality of rural communities, strengthen rural enterprise and linkages between settlements and their hinterlands, help shorten journeys and facilitate access to jobs and services by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Give priority to the provision of public transport and opportunities for the use of other non-car modes of travel ○ Securing improvements in transport and communications infrastructure where it can be demonstrated that poor linkages have led to disadvantaged compared to the rest of the Region
	Integrated Regional Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create sustainable and healthy communities throughout the region by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improving access to services and opportunities, including affordable housing and cultural activities ○ Improve economic performance and competitiveness by: • Ensuring efficient use of the regions infrastructure including ICT
Local	Leicestershire Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to good quality affordable and energy efficient homes (40) • Reliable, safe, and comfortable public transport (buses, trains, and community transport) and integration with walking and cycling facilities, so that people can more easily access essential service such as education, shopping, employment, health and leisure (46) • Equality of access to services and facilities for everyone, including disabled people, older people, BME groups, teenage parents, people who are vulnerable and people who live in deprived areas (42) • Vital and thriving market towns and rural centres which act as 'hubs' for surrounding communities (26)
	Leicestershire Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Access to Facilities • Leicestershire Accessibility Strategy
	7 district Community Strategies	
	7 district Local Development Frameworks	

Related priorities, including cross-cutting priorities

This section highlights where this chapter of the Rural Strategy links across to outcomes/priorities identified in the four other themes of the Local Area Agreement – Children and Young People, Healthier Communities, Older People and Cleaner and Greener – that are not included as separate chapters of the Rural Strategy. It also flags up any related cross-cutting priorities.

Rural Services

- To deliver services that effectively meet the needs of rural communities, by retaining and enhancing existing facilities and identifying new sustainable delivery mechanisms

Young People

- To gather and share information on the needs of rural young people
- To ensure that young people have the facilities and information to enable them to influence how their needs are met by service providers

Research

- To improve understanding of the economy, environment and social conditions in rural Leicestershire and their interrelationships.

Chapter 4: Enabling Rural Services and Facilities

Vision

Access to services and facilities (good quality: housing, health services, education, training, and employment opportunities), supported by high quality transport and information services.

What is being achieved by the LRP

- The LRP is working with Midlands Rural Housing Association to identify and address Rural Housing needs across Leicestershire and Rutland
- The County Council organises a programme of Service Co-ordination events, based in individual settlements, and with the aim of identifying service delivery issues, problems and solutions. Service Co-ordination events are increasingly being linked into the different stages of the Parish Plan process
- The LRP has delivered an Access to Services programme that has supported the retention and creation of key services within small rural villages and key rural service centres across Leicestershire. The programme has retained post offices, created new rural retail outlets, and worked to develop the role of pubs as a broader community facility.
- The LRP has been co-ordinating a rural centres programme with the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland). The project has worked in four key rural centres across Leicestershire, to undertake a Healthcheck and enable the delivery of key outcomes.
- The County Council has overseen the implementation of a Market Towns programme across Leicestershire. The programme supports Living and Working over the Shop (LOTS and WOTS) grants and Shop Front Improvement schemes. It has also created key shopping guides for a number of the towns and rural centres such as Shepshed, Asby and Earl Shilton.

Strategic Objectives

Rural Priorities for Leicestershire	What the LRP will do
<p>4.1 To deliver services that effectively meet the needs of rural communities, by retaining and enhancing existing facilities and identifying new sustainable delivery mechanisms</p> <p>4.1.1 <i>To deliver a minimum level of accessible, well-used and customer focussed services, based on geography and population for all rural communities in Leicestershire</i></p> <p>4.1.2 <i>To support the development of appropriate new community facilities that address gaps in provision and contribute towards consistent access to services for rural communities</i></p> <p>4.1.3 <i>To retain and enhance existing key services - schools, shops, pubs, churches, post offices etc - in rural communities by maximising useage and encouraging more effective joined up service delivery</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify gaps in service provision via a county-wide audit/study • Establish a baseline of service provision levels, identify an acceptable minimum, and target communities to bring up to the minimum • Establish and maintain a “Leicestershire services database” • Explore the co-location of services and multi-agency use of key facilities/buildings in rural Leicestershire • Develop combined mobile services • Deliver the Access to Services programme • Develop a strategy to protect existing key facilities and an early warning system that facilities are in danger of closing • Facilitate new uses for existing buildings e.g. church as village hall • Provide support for existing businesses and business advice to groups who run community facilities • Develop guidelines on what Section 106 money could be spent on in rural Leicestershire
<p>4.2 To ensure market towns and rural centres offer a range of facilities to visitors and the local population</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a tourism profile for each key market town and rural centre • Improve the visual appearance of market towns • Town Centre Managers for each Market Town and for clusters of rural centres • Make small grants available to support services in market towns and rural centres
<p>4.3 To help create inclusive communities which provide a wide range of housing options and choice, and enhanced safety at home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of housing stock in rural areas • Lobby for a greater proportion of affordable housing in rural developments • Look at the needs of those who want to down-size

Strategic Context

	Strategy	Action
National	Rural Strategy 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fair access to public services and affordable housing Tackle social exclusion wherever it occurs
	Rural Social and Community Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In Leicestershire, through the Leicestershire Rural Partnership, RCSP funding has been secured to support a number of programmes including those targeted at building capacity, developing social enterprises, delivering affordable rural housing and tackling social exclusion.</i>
	Stronger Prosperous Communities & LG White Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Strong and prosperous communities</i> <i>Responsive services and empowered communities</i>
Regional	East Midlands Rural Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Improving accessibility to jobs and services</i> <i>Developing active communities</i>
	Regional Economic Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Employment, learning and skills</i> <i>Cohesive communities</i>
	Integrated Regional Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Create sustainable and healthy communities throughout the region by:</i> Improving access to services and opportunities, including affordable housing and cultural activities
Local	Leicestershire Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Leicestershire – a county to be proud of</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provision of lifelong learning opportunities Opportunities for all <i>Leicestershire – where there are Quality Services for all</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality of access to services Healthy communities <i>Young People – Leicestershire’s future</i> Access to leisure activities
	7 district Community Strategies	
	7 district Local Development Frameworks	

Related priorities, including cross-cutting priorities

This section highlights where this chapter of the Rural Strategy links across to outcomes/priorities identified in the four other themes of the Local Area Agreement – Children and Young People, Healthier Communities, Older People and Cleaner and Greener – that are not included as separate chapters of the Rural Strategy. It also flags up any related cross-cutting priorities.

Older People

- To increase the range and volume of cultural, leisure and recreational activities that older people participate in.
- Increase the number of older people who are productively engaged (including those who are hard to reach) in the process of development and design of services that meet their needs and aspirations.

Healthier Communities

- Improve access to sexual health services.

Children and Young People

- Improved personal and social development and enjoyment of culture and recreation
- Sufficient quality childcare places provided across the County, accessible to all groups.
- Extended services developed in primary schools & in Children Centres.

Stronger Communities

- Equality of access to services for everyone, including BME groups, people who are vulnerable and people who live in deprived areas, so that everyone can have a voice and secure independent living.

Research

- To improve understanding of the economy, environment and social conditions in rural Leicestershire and their interrelationships.

Chapter 5: Countryside and the Environment

Vision

*Diverse and well-managed **countryside** that is valued and accessed by all. Towns and villages that provide a high quality sense of place for residents, and which play to their cultural, heritage and environment strengths*

What is being achieved by the LRP

- The County Council has overseen the implementation of a Market Towns programme across Leicestershire. The programme supports Living and Working over the Shop grants and Shop Front Improvement schemes. It has also created key shopping guides for a number of the towns and rural centres such as Shepshed, Ashby and Earl Shilton.
- In delivering the emda-funded National Forest Business Development Programme, the LRP is developing the infrastructure for continued growth and sustainability of the National Forest economy, including by providing business advice and supporting creation of new businesses and jobs
- The LRP has supported the County Council to implement the Rural Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme and small-scale Environmental Improvements across Leicestershire. Both programmes have undertaken significant works in a number of towns and rural centres that have improved the public realm and visual attractiveness, encouraging business growth and tourism.
- The LRP supported a project assessing the feasibility of producing energy from farm waste within Leicestershire. The further development of this project has the potential of producing a non-fossil fuel, reducing farm waste management problems and encouraging farm diversification
- The Community Heritage Initiative within the County Council is working with local communities to encourage people to record and celebrate the biodiversity and natural heritage of Leicestershire. This project is also supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- The County Council, with support of English Heritage, is undertaking a Historic Landscape Characterisation study of Leicestershire. This is a powerful tool that provides a framework for broadening our understanding of the whole landscape and contributes to decisions affecting tomorrow's landscape.
- The Stepping Stones Community Forest Feasibility Study provides guidance helping to ensure that central Leicestershire will be, "a mosaic of woodlands, farmland, open spaces and settlements that contribute to a dynamic and energetic multifunctional landscape for people and wildlife". The first stage of this has been to undertake digital mapping of all green infrastructure within the County around the Leicester City boundary.

Strategic Objectives

Rural Priorities for Leicestershire	What the LRP will do
<p>5.1 Improve the quality of town and village centre environments, support improvements to Leicestershire's historic environment and diverse landscape settings, increase the quality and use of Green Infrastructure, and support the management of Leicestershire's valued historic environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide grant funding to support the repair and use of valued historic buildings. • Support the management of the National Forest and Charnwood Forest as key green spaces within Leicestershire
<p>5.2 Work with ENABLE to increase awareness of and response to the problems of climate change and encourage the delivery of climate change benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness and encourage action at a local level through the community consultation project • Embed advice on climate change mitigation and adaptation within all business advice and support
<p>5.3 Work with ENABLE to improve bio-diversity and nature habitats by supporting the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the work of the Community Heritage Initiative through the community consultation project
<p>5.4 Encourage the economic opportunities for diversification and provide the land-based sector with the potential to develop their knowledge and skills base.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the land-based sector in developing opportunities to bid for financial support through the Rural Development Programme for England • Encourage and support opportunities for rural diversification within the planning system
<p>5.5 Support resource efficiency programmes, emphasising the economic benefits to rural businesses, and improve waste management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed resource efficiency advice within the development of all programmes and allocation of grants • Further develop the energy from slurry project and support development of other resource efficiency projects
<p>5.6 Develop the under-valued economic potential of the countryside and environment by promoting the tourism and leisure offer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of the National Forest and Charnwood Forest as key tourist destinations. • Improve the tourist offer within rural Leicestershire, including encouraging the number of overnight stays • Provide support to develop the equestrian sector as a tourism opportunity
<p>5.7 Encourage volunteering in support of environmental improvement schemes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop better partnership working between the "third sector"/VCS, local authorities and other partners to provide more structured approach to supporting rural communities • Encourage greater levels of volunteering through the community consultation project
<p>5.8 Encourage land management and agri-environmental schemes and ensure that the land-based sector captures the maximum support available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the NFU and CLA to ensure that maximum support is secured by the land-based sector • Provide information and support through the LRP rural business advice trailer
<p>5.9 Support the continued development of forestry related businesses, including those relating to tourism and wood-fuel industries within the National Forest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support the Woodland Economy Business Support programme • Provide information and support through the LRP rural business advice trailer

Strategic Context

	Strategy	Actions
In	Kyoto Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to reduce CO2 emissions and other greenhouse gases
	EU Energy Directives and Regulations	
National	Draft Climate Change Bill 2007	
	UK Climate Change Programme 2006	
	Rural Strategy 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance the rural and urban environments Enhance the value and natural beauty of the countryside for rural communities and for the benefit of society in general
	Rural Development Programme for England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing the Environment and Countryside
	Local Government White Paper	Climate change mitigation and adaptation through 1) strong and visible leadership, 2) leading by example through its own practices and the services it delivers, 3) responding to calls for action and the priority local people place on tackling these issues, and 4) coordinating innovative partnerships which can deliver real changes.
Regional	East Midlands Rural Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the quality of the region's green areas (green infrastructure) Addressing climate change
	Regional Implementation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserving and enhancing the environment and countryside
	East Midlands Regional Environment Strategy	
	East Midlands Regional Biodiversity Strategy	
	Regional Cultural Strategy – <i>The Place of Choice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving cultural provision in rural areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to culture for people in rural areas Integrate plans for culture in rural economic and community development, and in rural planning
	East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (Regional Plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce the impact of climate change and ensure a high quality environment where people want to live and work, we must transform the way we use resources and generate energy To ensure our economic growth is sustainable we need to protect and enhance our environment
	Regional Economic Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To transform the way we use resources and use and generate energy to ensure a sustainable economy, a high quality environment and lessen the impact on climate change To protect and enhance the region's environment through sustainable economic growth
Local	Landscape and Woodland Strategy (LCC)	
	Environment Strategy 2004 (and Environment Action Plan 2004-2010)	
	Climate Change Strategy for Leicestershire	
	Biodiversity Action Plan	
	Cultural Strategy (Leicestershire) 2003-2008	
	Historic Landscape Characterisation (LCC)	
	Leicestershire Community Strategy	
	7 district Local Development Frameworks	
	7 district Community Strategies	

Related priorities, including cross-cutting priorities

This section highlights where this chapter of the Rural Strategy links across to outcomes/priorities identified in the four other themes of the Local Area Agreement – Children and Young People, Healthier Communities, Older People and Cleaner and Greener – that are not included as separate chapters of the Rural Strategy. It also flags up any related cross-cutting priorities.

Healthier communities

- Increase participation in physical activity
- Increase walking, cycling and the level of outdoor physical activity
[the two above overlap – need consistency]

Children and young people

- Improved physical health of children and young people
- Improved personal and social development and enjoyment of culture and recreation
- Greater encouragement of young people to access and respect the countryside

Economic development

- Increase the vitality and viability of town and rural centres
- Increase the contribution of good tourism to the local economy

Research

- To improve understanding of the economy, environment and social conditions in rural Leicestershire and their interrelationships.

Glossary

Definition of terms

Green Infrastructure	Comprises the networks of multi-functional greenspace which sit within, and contribute to, the type of high quality natural and built environment required to deliver sustainable communities. [Examples include the County Council's Stepping Stones Countryside Management Project]
Local Area Agreement	
Local Development Framework	
Regional Economic Strategy	
Regional Spatial Strategy (Regional Plan)	
Social capital	
Sustainable Community Strategy	
Public Realm	

Abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy	LRP	Leicestershire Rural Partnership
CRC	Commission for Rural Communities	LSC	Learning Skills Council
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government	LSEP	Leicester Shire Economic Partnership
Defra	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
Emda	East Midlands Development Agency	LTP2	Local Transport Plan 2006-2011
EMRA	East Midlands Regional Assembly	R3N	Regional Third Sector Network
EMRAF	East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum	RCC (L&R)	Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland)
ENABLE	Environmental Action for a Better Leicestershire	RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
GOEM	Government Office for the East Midlands	RES	Regional Economic Strategy
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	RSCP	Rural Social and Community Programme
LAA	Local Area Agreement	RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy (Regional Plan)
LCC	Leicestershire County Council	SSP	Sub-Regional Strategic Partnership
LDF	Local Development Framework	VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
LOTS	Living over the shop	WOTS	Working over the shop
LRAPLC	Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Parish and Local Councils		