

# Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14: Appendices

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August 2011

v0.7 App

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# Appendix 1: Strategic Policy Context

## 1.1. National

Reflecting the Government's localism agenda no single strategic document outlines the rural vision of the Coalition Government to replace Defra's Rural Strategy 2004. Current Government strategy has been outlined within departmental **Business Plans** which will be refreshed annually. Much of the Defra family, established to deliver the Rural Strategy 2004, remains in place. This includes Natural England, the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency and the National Forest Company. Alongside the role of the Rural Advocate, the Commission for Rural Communities has been abolished, and replaced by an enlarged Defra Rural Policy Unit.

Defra centrally manages delivery of socio-economic elements contained within the Rural Development Programme for England, 2007-13. This is supported by a co-ordination team based in the East Midlands. Natural England and the Forestry Commission deliver their respective elements of the programme regionally.

## 1.2 Regional

Under the current Government there is a reduced emphasis on the regional tier. The Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM) was abolished in March 2011 and the East Midlands Development Agency will follow in 2012. There remains some activity at a regional level.

The **East Midlands Rural Framework 2010-13**, published by the East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum (EMRAF), identifies the priorities for the region's rural areas against 4 key policy themes including, sustainable and inclusive communities (including housing), a thriving rural economy, quality services accessible to all, and a high quality rural environment. Following significant changes at the regional level EMRAF has been replaced by the smaller Food, Farming and Rural Network.

## 1.3 Local

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

- improve life chances for vulnerable people and places (click on the title for the text below to come up)
- build stronger, more cohesive communities
- make the county a safer and more attractive place in which to live and work
- deliver a more effective response to climate change
- ensure the county has a prosperous, innovative and dynamic economy
- make the people of Leicestershire healthier
- deliver more effective and efficient service delivery

These are delivered through the partnership's **Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)**, which was revised in 2011 to reflect new priorities and develop strategic commissioning as an approach to allocate pooled funding. Leicestershire Together is structured around six themed commissioning Hubs:

- Supporting individuals and families

- Enhancing children's lives
- Improving our communities
- Protecting our Environment
- Developing our Economy
- Delivering effective services

The LRP is one of six theme groups within the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP). Although it has no project budget the LLEP will allocate local authority funding for economic development and seek external funding (e.g. ERDF, RGF) to deliver a range of economic regeneration, transport, and housing priorities. The Board includes a champion of rural issues. The LLEP is supported by a range of strategic documents including the sub-regional **Tourism Strategy** and **Food and Drink Strategy**. These have been developed to drive forward priority growth sectors. The **Local Investment Plan** identifies the capital investment required to deliver our economic priorities initially over the next 3 years. This includes c£16.5m required to deliver current planned affordable rural housing schemes which total 350 homes.

The third **Local Transport Plan** (LTP3), adopted in March 2011, identifies how transport provision in Leicestershire will be managed and improved to 2026. In the short-term, to 2014, the LTP3's priorities are to optimise the existing network and services, to ensure value for money, and to minimize the impacts of population growth.

There have been significant changes to the planning system to devolve decision making to the local level. Although temporarily reinstated, the East Midlands Regional Plan (RSS8) will be abolished and all strategic planning decisions will be devolved to local planning authorities (Districts and Borough Councils) through their **Local Development Framework** (LDF) documents. These have a critical role allocating local housing and outlining policies which will support rural communities and economic development. LDFs could potentially be supported by Neighbourhood Plans where local communities identify their own planning priorities.

There are a number of sub-regional strategies which aligns to the current Framework. The National Forest Delivery Plan 2009-2014, for example, sets out how the National Forest will continue to grow to 2014 and beyond, implementing the National Forest Strategy .

The Big Society and the localism agenda is a cross-cutting priority across Government. Leicestershire County Council has championed the principles of the Big Society and developed its own aspirations. The LRP will continue to work to help deliver localism in rural areas.

Finally, many local authorities, including all those in Leicestershire, have signed the **Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change**. By signing, they pledged to actively tackle climate change and work with others to reduce emissions country-wide. Within Leicestershire, the Environment Hub's **Climate Change Action Plan** has been developed to encourage individuals and organisations to pick and adopt specific actions relevant to their own situation

# Appendix 2: Rural Leicestershire – a changing place

## 2.1 Demographic change

Population change between 2001 and 2008 reveals that across all age groups the population of rural Leicestershire has grown at a slightly faster rate than urban areas. There is a continuing pattern of domestic migration with younger people moving out of rural areas and older people moving in. This is shown in Table 1. Recent data has identified that the difference between inflow and outflow has slowed significantly in rural areas.

	All ages	0-15	16-29	30-44	45-64M /59F	65+M/ 60+F
Urban > 10k	5.7%	-3.3%	18.2%	-5.3%	8.2%	13.8%
Town and Fringe	5.9%	-1.3%	10.0%	-4.0%	5.7%	23.6%
Village, Hamlet and Isolated Dwellings	6.4%	-0.3%	13.1%	-7.3%	8.7%	21.5%

Table 1: The change in population by age and urban/rural areas between 2001 and 2008.

## 2.2 Transport and access to services

Rural communities are reliant on either services being made available locally or a range of travel options to reach services delivered elsewhere. The higher cost of delivering services in and to rural communities means that they are potentially threatened when public funding is reduced. The LRP has undertaken significant steps to ensure key services, such as village shops and post offices, remain in villages. A tool to explore access to services has been developed as part of LSR Online.<sup>1</sup> With Leicestershire's Accessibility Partnership the LRP has worked to provide a mixture of conventional bus services and bespoke taxi buses. In addition, a Wheels to Work project, aimed specifically at providing access to work for young people in rural areas has been extended due to high demand.

## 2.3 Rural economy

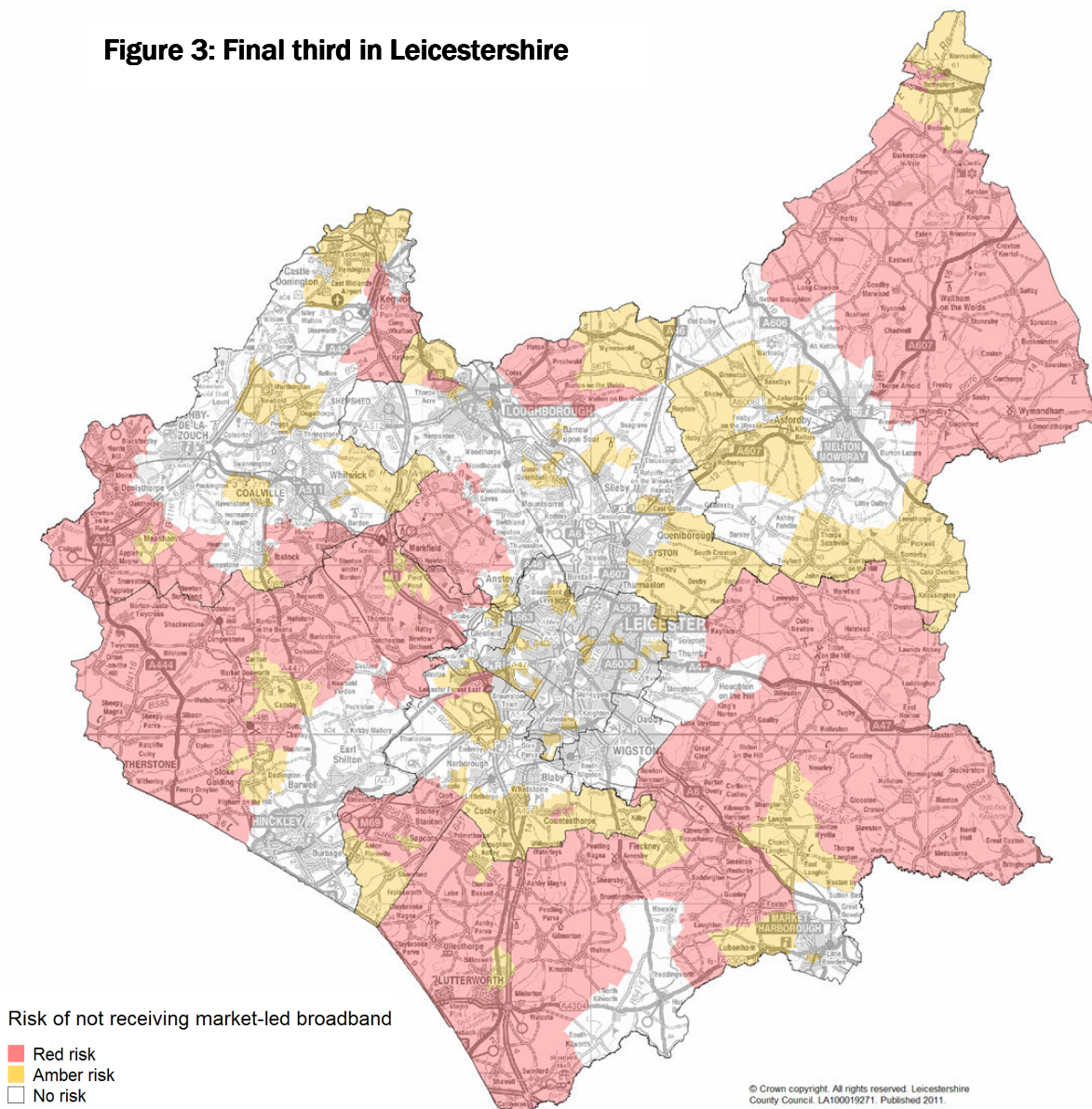
In structural terms Leicestershire's rural economy aligns significantly to urban areas. A diverse range of business interests are represented within rural areas, including creative, knowledge-based and financial services. There are a higher proportion of SMEs and home-based businesses within rural areas.<sup>2</sup> Despite the range of business types there are priority rural sectors, including equestrian and outdoor recreation, food and drink, visitor economy and land-based.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is available at [www.lsr-online.org/access-to-services](http://www.lsr-online.org/access-to-services)

<sup>2</sup> Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Assessment (2010)

<sup>3</sup> Supporting Leicestershire's Rural Economy: A Sector Scoping Study (2009)

**Figure 3: Final third in Leicestershire**



Although employment within the land-based sector is low, employing only 0.5%, it remains a significant sector – especially agriculture, equestrian and the woodland economy. Collectively land-based businesses manage about 79% of Leicestershire's land area and have a critical role in ensuring landscape distinctiveness, enabling public access for recreation, and encouraging species biodiversity.

Extensive planting to increase woodland cover in the Leicestershire parts of the National Forest has helped to provide a platform for the development of a new visitor economy. As the Forest develops there is opportunity to grow the tourism market and develop woodland management, timber processing and renewable energy opportunities.

Leicestershire's rural economy, therefore, has significant economic growth potential but there are key barriers which need to be tackled in order to release this – including broadband and planning regulations.

Improvements to broadband connectivity are critical for a range of community, education and businesses needs. There is a growing Digital Divide between urban and rural areas. In total 190,000 residents live within the Final Third. This is the percentage of the population which, it is calculated, will not receive market-led connectivity improvements delivered by BT or Virgin Media. This is illustrated in Figure 3.<sup>4</sup>

Planning restrictions have often been cited as preventing growth opportunities. The application of planning guidance and concern over the potential increase in traffic congestion has often resulted in missed opportunities to ensure the creation of local jobs and the growth of local economies.

<sup>4</sup> A more detailed version of the map is available at [www.oakleaves.org.uk/framework](http://www.oakleaves.org.uk/framework)

## **2.4 Rural housing**

To ensure their future sustainability, rural communities require a range of housing options. This includes affordable housing and housing for an increasing older population. It is estimated that in total 250 affordable rural homes per annum are required in Leicestershire to meet local needs.<sup>5</sup> Despite current low delivery rates there are a significant number of pipeline projects. The Leicester and Leicestershire Local Investment Plan has identified that there are at least 350 homes within settlements of less than 10,000 population to 2014 in the pipeline. Under current public funding models this would require £16.5m.

Affordable rural housing is currently delivered through the Exception Site policy and Section 106 agreements, with the former focused on villages of less than 3000 population. Increasingly there is a need to explore a range of solutions, including Local Housing Trusts, as part of the localism agenda, and cross-subsidy which will bring forward private sector investment.

## **2.5 Community capital and volunteering**

Research in Leicestershire has identified that the “ultimate” volunteer has been characterised as being more likely to be female and living in a rural area.

A number of organisations have helped support volunteering in rural areas. The RCC, funded by Leicestershire County Council, has been highly successful in raising the capacity of rural communities. To date c.50% of Leicestershire’s rural communities have undertaken community-led consultation to identify their local priorities. The RCC and service providers work with the communities to help deliver a range of priority actions. This activity has been further strengthened by aligning it to the network of 27 Community Forums. Other organisations, including the National Forest Company and Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) have successfully encouraged high levels of volunteering within rural areas. In the National Forest, for example, high levels of volunteering, linked to woodland management, health walking and environmental education, have been encouraged.

With the introduction of the Localism Bill and Big Society principles there will be an increasing reliance on volunteers to deliver services and support the needs of local communities and the provision of continued support and capacity building will be essential.

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<sup>5</sup> Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008)

# Appendix 3: Priority Theme Commentary

Within an earlier draft of the Leicestershire Rural Framework, 2011-14 we included a commentary for individual theme chapters. These summarised evidence for the inclusion of specific priority outcomes. Although we have further reduced the number of priority outcomes from 16 to 7 it is considered that these summaries provide a useful context.

## **3.1 Strong, safe and inclusive communities**

There are popularly perceived advantages of living within a rural area. This includes, for example, a greater sense of community and proximity to the countryside. This idyllic vision of rurality, however, masks pockets of disadvantage and isolation which can be exacerbated by reduced access to services. Whilst generally rural communities in Leicestershire are active, inclusive and empowered, as demonstrated through community-led planning and high levels of volunteering, there is a need to ensure all residents have the opportunity to influence the delivery of the services that they rely on. It is likely that those who most rely on support services are less empowered to influence their delivery.

Across rural Leicestershire there is need to work with all agencies to ensure that those who most rely on services, including young people, older, disabled people, are not disadvantaged.

Generally rural Leicestershire is a safe place to live. Theft from properties and fear of crime within rural Leicestershire is, however, of particular concern. Land-based businesses and companies based in converted redundant buildings within remote areas, for example, are particular targets due to the high value of machinery or computer equipment. Targeted campaigns, led by Leicestershire Constabulary, the visible presence of police offices in rural areas, and the on-going vigilance of residents, through Farm and Neighbourhood Watch schemes, are critical to ensure the successful reduction of crime levels.

It is generally accepted that there is a need to increase the supply of affordable rural housing to meet local need. Young families and those who provide local services are often forced to move to urban areas where housing is more affordable. It is essential that suitable housing is made available in perpetuity. Increasing supply relies on strong partnership working across a range of different organisations together with political and community commitment.

The County's network of Community Forums provides an excellent opportunity to engage with rural communities, to ensure greater inclusiveness and help ensure the delivery of local priorities. Participatory budgeting where communities have their own fund for example, provides an excellent catalyst to help develop greater community capital.

## **3.2 Thriving economy**

The need for increased sustainable economic development in rural areas has been strongly advocated from many sources; the Rural Coalition in their Rural Challenge Report 2010 affirmed the importance of rural economies estimating that rural businesses are worth nearly £145bn to the national economy every year.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Rural Challenge: Achieving sustainable rural communities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. August 2010



Recognising that the rural economy is, on the whole, a reflection of its urban counterpart, the LRP aims to focus its work towards issues or opportunities that are explicitly or largely due to a rural location. With this in mind, sector development support has been prioritised for the land-based, food and drink, equestrian and visitor economy. Continued development for the woodland economy will also be encouraged through close working with the National Forest Company and elsewhere within Leicestershire, including the Charnwood Forest.

Town and rural centres are vital places for people to live, work, and visit. The quality and range of services they provide (including retail), as well as their physical environment and recreational offer have a marked affect on the counties economy.

In general, larger proportions of the working age population in Leicestershire have higher level qualifications and smaller proportions have no qualifications, than in urban areas.<sup>7</sup> There is also significant out-commuting from rural areas to higher paid employment within urban areas; meaning those who work in rural areas are on average paid less than those that live there. To help address this imbalance the LRP will work with planners and the private sector to ensure that there is adequate workspace provision and associated high quality jobs within the county.

The LRP sees the promotion, accessibility and development of career paths within rural sectors as a priority to secure high quality services, facilities and products for the future.

It is increasingly important that there needs to be a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Opportunities within the 'green economy' could provide significant employment growth. This could include start-up businesses being encouraged to use local renewable material or the establishment of environmental social enterprises.

### **3.3 High quality and accessible services**

Access to services is one of the most important issues affecting the sustainability of rural communities. Residents' ability to access services varies significantly depending on how and where they are delivered. This priority theme chapter aims to ensure that services are delivered in a way that is most suitable to individual needs. This includes fixed services delivered locally (e.g. childcare, convenience retail etc.), transport services to enable access to other, sometimes larger, settlements for other services, or remote services taking advantage of technological improvements,

Increased commuting patterns and the opportunity to access services through a range of methods, has resulted in greater pressure on the viability of some services delivered within rural areas. This can, therefore, have a disproportionate impact on those without access to private transport, including young, older and disabled people.

The Commission for Rural Communities has argued that services delivered within rural areas are not inherently unsustainable. Instead they identified that innovative solutions, including delivery of a range of services through one-stop-shops, can ensure all have access to the services they need. There is a danger that as a result of reduced public funding, rural areas could be severely disadvantaged as services are concentrated within town centres. A critical role for the LRP will be to help bring forward innovative solutions.

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<sup>7</sup> The Rural East Midlands 2008 (emda)



Increasingly the provision of super-fast broadband is now recognised as essential to ensure both access to services and the future competitiveness of rural businesses. Sparsely populated rural areas are not commercially viable for BT to invest. Public and private sector investment and alternative delivery methods will help bring forward super-fast broadband into rural areas. Alongside ensuring the availability of super-fast broadband there is a need to encourage residents to take advantage of digital services. Nationally, ensuring greater uptake is the principal aim of Race Online 2012.<sup>8</sup>

### **3.4 Countryside and the environment**

In recent years there has been significant importance placed on Green Infrastructure. This is the planned and realised network of high quality green spaces and other environmental features which are managed as a multi-functional resource capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green Infrastructure could include parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens.

A well managed and healthy natural environment, therefore, is fundamental to many areas of our lives including leisure, personal health and well-being, the economy, landscape character, flood management, biodiversity and the provision of essentials such as food, water and fuels. The LRP can play a key role in connecting partners who work within sectors that impact on the environment, including land owners, businesses, environment agencies and planning authorities. Domestic food production, for example, is increasingly important in light of growing food security concerns.

In contrast how we design and maintain our built up areas impacts on the sense of place and general well being of our communities, the enjoyment of visitors and the attractiveness as a place for businesses to invest.

In Leicestershire 36% of carbon emissions come from industry and commerce, 28% come from domestic sources, 33% from road transport and 3% from land use change. The LRP can have a key role in raising awareness and supporting rural communities to become greener whilst ensuring that local businesses take responsibility for reducing their carbon emissions through efficient energy use and good waste management.

The National Forest, covering 200 square miles across three counties, is an excellent example of how good woodland management can support the local economy and provide a renewable energy source, as part of a wide range of benefits Green Infrastructure can bring.

Communities are at the heart of finding sustainable local solutions. This could range from working to keep villages tidy to micro-generation of electricity from renewable sources.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://raceonline2012.org/>