

Report of the Chief Executive

STRATEGIC SITE ALLOCATIONS REQUIRED IN THE CORE STRATEGY1. Purpose of Report

To consider the background to emerging government policy, the significance of recent Court of Appeal Decisions regarding Local Development Framework plan preparation and to seek cabinet approval to identify as the preferred strategic sites for further consultation land west of Toton Lane and north of Stapleford in order to progress the Broxtowe Core Strategy as part of the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies. This is in accordance with the Council's place shaping and housing priorities.

2. Background

Emerging government policy is very firmly focussed on the importance of housing delivery which is explained in more detail in appendix 1. Councils that do not allocate sufficient sites in their Local Development Plans to accommodate the level of housing need in their areas run the very significant risk of losing control over the sites to be developed for new housing in a planning by appeal approach.

As part of the Core Strategy preparation, Broxtowe has twice consulted on a range of potential strategic sites in addition to a possible site at the Boots campus. The extent to which existing housing needs can be accommodated within existing built up areas in the borough and in locations adjoining sustainable settlements is shown in appendix 2. The results of this most recent consultation on potential strategic sites are given in appendix 3. A summary of the main strands of evidence and officer opinion on potential sites is given in appendix 4. A summary of the emerging Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy is in appendix 5 and a conclusion based on all of this is in appendix 6.

3. Conclusion

This extensive background information has informed the recommendation below. In addition Planning Policy Working Group (PPWG) has been kept regularly updated of work to progress the Core Strategy at their meetings in November 2010, March 2011 and June 2011. The recommendation below has been endorsed by the PPWG.

Recommendation:

The cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:

- 1. The strategic site west of Toton Lane be identified and published as one of the preferred Broxtowe sites for allocation in the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies.**
- 2. The strategic site at Field Farm, north of Ilkeston Road, Stapleford be identified and published as one of the preferred Broxtowe sites for allocation in the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies.**
- 3. In parallel an 8 week consultation be undertaken on broad locations identified around Awsworth, Brinsley, Eastwood and Kimberley/Watnall to accommodate additional future housing in the 'Allocations' Development Plan Document.**

Background papers

Tribal report on potential sustainable urban extensions
Tribal study sustainable locations for growth

APPENDIX 1

Housing Delivery

In January 2010 a report was prepared for cabinet seeking approval to consult on the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies (ACS) Option for Consultation. This stage followed the June 2009 Issues and Options consultation, in which views were sought as to potential locations for Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) in order to meet the housing numbers required in the East Midlands Regional Plan.

In the January 2010 report members were advised that as at April 2009, of the 6,800 dwellings required in the Regional Plan to be built in Broxtowe over the period 2006 to 2026, 1,035 had already been built, leaving 5,765 of which 2,796 were to be in the principal urban area of Greater Nottingham and 2,969 in the non principle urban area. When taking into account available sites within existing built up areas, this left 1,480 new dwellings still to find. The recommendation to members, based on relevant evidence available at the time, including earlier consultation responses and the Tribal report into sustainable urban extensions, was that two sites were required to meet the borough's housing needs, one between Toton and Stapleford for 1000 dwellings and one north of Stapleford for 480. It is important to record that, at the time this report was prepared, there was an expectation that any decisions as to greenfield sites was bound by the PUA/ non PUA split in the Regional Plan.

In approving the ACS Options for Consultation document, members did not consider that specific sites should be included as the preferred ones and instead the following text was included:

'In Broxtowe Borough, the Council has established general principles to apply to the choice of housing sites:

- Any development should avoid causing coalescence of built up areas
- Sites should be distributed across the borough, to reduce the degree of localised impact, in proportion to the size of the settlements served
- Sites must be well related to existing settlements

As a consequence the Borough Council has accepted that there is a wider choice of potential sustainable urban extension sites and these will include land between Toton and Stapleford, to include Toton Sidings, land north of Stapleford, west of Coventry Lane, west of Bilborough Road, west of Woodhouse Way together with other sites in the Urban Area. These site options will be the subject of a Development Planning Document identifying:

- The number of homes possible on each site
- The pros and cons of development
- Whether the Council considers the site as suitable for development in the achievement of it's obligations under the Regional Plan.'

Detail on the response to this consultation is given in appendix 3.

Regional Plan Revocation

The coalition government has been very clear on its intention to revoke Regional Plans, which will only be legally possible when the 'Localism Bill' becomes law, expected to be in November this year. However, previous decisions of the High Court and Court of Appeal in response to proceedings from Cala Homes regarding the government's original 'revocation', and subsequent government advice that its reinstatement changed very little, have established that the revocation will only be possible once legislation is introduced to allow it (in the Localism Bill) and that the decision to revoke has been subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This may happen by November, but it may be longer, and the significant implication for LDF plan preparation is that, until such a time as it is revoked, any Local Development Plan Documents (including the Core Strategy) still have to be in general conformity with the Regional Plan. The Court of Appeals judgment is that to do otherwise would be unlawful.

Coalition Government Policy

Although there is uncertainty as to when the Regional Plan will be revoked, there is no uncertainty as to the priorities of the government for the planning system and the delivery of development including new housing.

The following are policy initiatives intended to speed up the delivery of housing and other development:

- The New Homes Bonus, including legislation in the Localism Bill to allow this and other local financial considerations to be taken into account in making decisions on planning applications
- The 2011 budget, in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer published his 'plan for growth' and stated he wanted the UK to be the best place in the world to "start, grow and finance a business". Plans to set up Enterprise Zones were announced in the budget (which include the Boots campus) to encourage businesses to invest, including in deprived areas, by relaxing planning laws and discounting business rates.
- The Local Growth Agenda, intending to streamline and simplify procedures and timetables for plan preparation and invite the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), which will have a vital role in working with neighbourhoods and councils to foster economic growth. On 23rd March 2011 the Minister of State for Decentralisation made a written ministerial statement 'Planning for Growth' which sets out the government's commitment to reforming the planning system so that it promotes sustainable growth and jobs.
- The introduction of a statutory duty for local authorities to cooperate in their plan making functions.
- A general presumption in favour of 'sustainable development', which would apply where no up to date 'local plan' is in place. In a recent announcement the government defined sustainable development as "making the necessary decisions now to realise our vision of stimulating economic growth and tackling the deficit, maximising wellbeing and protecting our environment, without negatively impacting on the ability of future generations to do the same".

- The proposed removal of 'prematurity' as a reason to refuse planning permission where a plan is being prepared.
- Several policies to free up neighbourhoods and businesses to carry out new development without the requirement for planning permission. These include consulting on changes that would allow business uses to be changed to housing without planning permission, the increased use of Local Development Orders to allow certain proposals to proceed without planning permission and incentives to encourage development as part of the government's new Enterprise Zones, one of which is the Boots campus.
- Commissioning an advisory group to draw up recommendations for a draft 'National Planning Policy Framework' which would replace all existing government advice in PPGs and PPSs. The draft says that a presumption in favour of sustainable development should be a "golden thread" running through planned decision-making. It says the idea that economic growth leads to environmental degradation should be "laid to rest".

In terms of the green belt, the draft National Planning Policy Framework includes reference to the potential to 'review' green belt boundaries and, when reviews are undertaken, they should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. In addition the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP, has both allowed and dismissed a number of appeals in green belt areas. In June 2011 the government published additional details of their proposed 'presumption in favour of sustainable development as follows:

'There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the planning system, which should be central to the approach taken to both plan-making and decision-taking. Local planning authorities should plan positively for new development, and approve all individual proposals wherever possible. Local planning authorities should:

Prepare local plans on the basis that objectively assessed development needs should be met, and with sufficient flexibility to respond to rapid shifts in demand or other economic changes.

Approve development proposals that accord with statutory plans without delay and

Grant permission where the plan is absent, silent, indeterminate or where relevant policies are out of date.

All of these policies should apply unless the adverse impacts of allowing development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policy objectives in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole.'

Government advice in PPS3 is still very clear that any decisions on local housing need will have to be based on robust evidence and the basis of such evidence is still to be the government's latest published household projections. The necessity of providing sufficient sites for new housing as part of an agenda of sustainable development is reinforced in the draft National Planning Policy Framework with a recommendation that the requirement for a five year supply of housing land is extended to include a 20% 'uplift' for 'flexibility.'

'Local' Housing Need

In order to address this need for 'robust evidence of local housing need' the Housing Provision Position Statement, reported in the previous item on this agenda, summarises the work commissioned by the Joint Planning Advisory Board at its meeting of 2nd September 2010 to review the housing provision figures in the draft ACS, and in particular to examine the most recent evidence in the form of the government's 2008-based household projections, to determine whether the ACS figure remains an appropriate basis for planning for the housing requirements of Greater Nottingham.

The findings of the review of the government's household projections were presented and discussed at a councillor/stakeholder seminar in February 2011 and are also presented in the Housing Provision Position Statement referred to above. The conclusion is that the Regional Plan housing provision figure, which informed the preparation of the ACS, remains the appropriate figure to plan for. This is considered to be a figure which will allow the Greater Nottingham economy to grow, which as a driver of the regional economy it is essential that it does, and also strikes an appropriate balance between being ambitious in terms of its delivery but also achievable with an early return to economic growth.

Choice of Sites

Given this background, both nationally and locally, it is necessary to take decisions to allow the ACS to be progressed to adoption. The following appendices present the further information to provide members with the required background information to do this.

APPENDIX 2

Core Strategy Site Information

It is recommended that the Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies are prepared using housing provision figures in the East Midlands Regional Plan. Taking account of dwellings already built in Broxtowe, this requires that, between the years of 2011 and 2026, a minimum of 5472 dwellings will be provided in Broxtowe. Of the original Regional Plan requirement for 6800 dwellings to be built over the whole plan period (starting in 2006 this equates to 340 per year for each of the 20 plan years of which a minimum of 3600 (180 per year) are to be provided in or adjacent to the Nottingham Principal Urban Area (PUA). This is shown in columns A and B in table 1 below, albeit that when the Regional Plan is abolished more flexibility will be allowed in terms of distribution within local authority areas (see section 7 of the Housing Provision Position Paper in the previous item on this agenda).

In terms of timescales, government guidance in PPS12 (Local Spatial Planning) is that Core Strategies should plan for a period of at least 15 years from adoption. With adoption expected in very late 2012 it is necessary to extend the plan period to 2028 to allow for minor slippage in the timetable and to ensure a 15 year plan will be in place. The implications of this in 'rolling forward' the housing requirement for an additional two years is that in Broxtowe an extra 361 dwellings will be needed as shown in column E below.

Table 1 – Dwelling Requirement

	A	B	C	D	E
	PUA	NPUA	Total (A+B)	Remaining dwellings to build 2011-2026 (5472)	2026-2028 (+361)
Dwellings with planning permission	237	297	534	4938	5299
Lapsed permissions	64	11	75	4863	5224
Existing Local Plan Allocations for Housing	108	561	669	4194	4555
Existing Local Plan Allocations for Employment suitable for housing	320	164	484	3710	4071
Other large urban sites suitable for housing	833	194	1027	2683	2999
Other small urban sites suitable for housing	62	44	106	2577	2938
TOTAL	1624	1271	2895	2577	2938

All figures quoted in columns A and B relate to dwellings that either have been built or are expected to be built over the plan period. This gives a minimum total of 2938 dwellings still to find in the years 2011 to 2028. Importantly this table includes a thorough assessment of all known existing urban sites including Boots/Severn Trent that are expected to deliver housing over these years, albeit that Boots is not expected to deliver housing until the latter years of the plan period given the constraints identified in the summary in appendix 4 to this item.

Having thoroughly reviewed existing evidence in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) of the availability of sites adjacent to settlements identified in the Tribal Greater Nottingham Sustainable Locations for Growth report (2010), it is considered that there are available sites in sustainable locations adjoining the settlements of Eastwood, Kimberley/ Watnall, Brinsley and Awsworth on which a total of approximately 1775 dwellings could be accommodated. This includes an assumption that no more than 30 dwellings to the hectare would be built on any of these sites and, as explained in the footnote below, on some sites the density assumptions are significantly lower. It is, however, important to note that the specifics of the sites to be included would be, subject to detailed consultation and sustainability appraisal through the site allocations process. Nevertheless it is a robust and defensible assumption that, given the details of specific developable sites that could be available for housing following a review of green belt boundaries, this number represents a reasonable minimum figure that can be built, particularly as this only includes sites located in areas considered in the Sustainable Locations for Growth report as potentially acceptable without leading to coalescence of settlements. This leaves a further 1163 dwellings to be found on strategic sites in the Core Strategy process.

*The current permissions assumed to be built have been subject to analysis in terms of delivery, and in terms of density a figure of 20 dwellings to the hectare is assumed in the absence of more detailed site specific information.

Table 2 - Summary: table of strategic sites

Boots/Severn Trent land (urban)	550
Land between Toton and Stapleford	800
Land at Field Farm, north of Stapleford	450
Sites at Awsworth, Brinsley, Eastwood & Kimberley/Watnall	1775

APPENDIX 3

2010 Core Strategy Options for Consultation – Broxtowe sites summary.

There have been two previous formal rounds of Core Strategy consultation in 2009 (Issues and Options) and 2010 (Options for Consultation). Both sought views on potential strategic sites in Broxtowe with no preferences for the sites listed in either.

There was opposition to all options for growth outside of existing built up areas, as shown in table 3 below-

Table 3 – 2010 Options for Consultation Responses

Site	Object	Support
Land between Toton and Stapleford	176	127
Land north of Stapleford	61	7
Land west of Coventry Lane	53	3
Land west of Bilborough Road	62	18
Land west of Woodhouse Way	15	9

Although all potential sites received substantial opposition from local communities, most were opposed to land between Toton and Stapleford and least opposed to the land west of Woodhouse Way. However the land between Toton and Stapleford also had overwhelmingly the most support to be developed for housing, largely on the basis of the potential to support sustainable transport in terms of the tram.

It is also relevant that several respondents were of the view that, without the identification of specific strategic sites in the Core Strategy, the document would be found 'unsound' at Examination.

Potential Strategic Site Appraisals

Land between Toton and Stapleford (Capacity up to 800 dwellings)

The site is a 100% greenfield site within the green belt adjacent to the PUA. This site was considered in the Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions report which concluded that the opportunity for sustainable transport here, as well as coalescence concerns being less clear cut than elsewhere, tips the balance narrowly towards development.

The site was also previously identified in a 1998 Potential Sites document to inform decisions taken in the 2004 Broxtowe Local Plan and was subsequently considered by the Inspector as part of the 2004 Local Plan. The Inspector concluded development would reduce this narrow gap and the benefits would not outweigh this. He was of the view that it was therefore important to retain in the green belt.

The site currently consists of agricultural land (grade 2) with trees screening the road and south boundary. The site is relatively flat near Toton Lane but has a moderate slope down towards Toton sidings. There is a public right of way (Beestonfp17) through the site. There is also existing open space (George Spencer Comprehensive School) running through the site.

The main constraints are the overhead power lines across the site on both sides of Toton Lane. It is adjacent to a very busy road (Toton Lane) and Bardills roundabout. Access would be available from Toton Lane and possibly from the adjacent housing estate. The Inspector was satisfied that access to this site can be attained. These are Toton Sidings the sewage farm and the busy A52, all of which could have some effect on the site west of Toton Lane. There is also a commercial use at the Garden Centre to north of the site east of Toton Lane and the tram terminus and Park and Ride are also proposed to be constructed adjacent to the site east of Toton Lane. The land adjacent to the sewage works and electricity substation may require some contaminated land investigation.

The site has no ownership problems, with all owners supporting development, and the site would be adjacent to a strong housing market in Toton and also close to areas of highest housing need as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

As the site is immediately adjacent to the proposed tram terminus including Park and Ride, public transport accessibility will considerably improve with the NET development which is expected to open in 2014. There is a small shopping parade within 10-15 minute walk but no pedestrian / cycle routes nearby.

Land west of Woodhouse Way (Capacity up to 300 dwellings)

The site is 100% greenfield site within the green belt and is adjacent to the PUA. The site was considered unsuitable in the Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions report

which concluded that there are issues of coalescence of Nuthall/Kimberley and Nottingham.

The site was previously identified in the 1998 Potential Sites document and considered as part of the 2004 Local Plan. When considering development in the vicinity of the site, the Inspector concluded that the area comprises a very sensitive green belt area within Broxtowe and development would constitute countryside encroachment with further concerns of coalescence.

The site currently consists of grade 2 agricultural land and is located within a coalfield area.

The main additional constraints of the site are noise from the motorway, which abuts the western edge of the site, and a woodland Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in a small part of the south west of the site.

The site would be adjacent to a moderate housing market. However, as with other SUE's, development of this scale would be likely to create its own housing market.

The site has several private owners but the issues are considered to be solvable.

The site is within a 15 minute walk of a bus stop, a 10-15 minute walk of a small shopping parade and within a 20 minute walk of a tram stop. There are no pedestrian/cycle routes nearby.

Land west of Bilborough Road (Capacity over 1000 dwellings)

The site is within the green belt and is adjacent to the PUA. It is considered suitable in the Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions report which concluded that there are no issues of coalescence and development would avoid unrestricted sprawl. The appraisal considers that the landscape setting appears favourable to development that would relate clearly to the existing urban area as the site features a slope down to the east and a defensible boundary to the west. A site visit concluded that a very small part of the far western extent of the site may be exposed to noise from the motorway.

The site was also looked at as potential development site in the Local Plan Supplementary Sites document 1998. The site was considered to provide additional opportunities for regeneration through economic development.

The site currently consists of agricultural land (a small part grade 2) and is located within a coalfield area. The site has numerous public right of way (Trowellfp16, Strelleybw4, Trowellbw13, Trowellbw14) and has a group TPO located within it.

The main constraints of the site are a mature landscape area (Strelley Hall), prominent area for special protection (Catstone Hill Ridge) and ancient monuments (Broad Oak Farm). In addition there are listed buildings and a conservation area close to the site in Strelley Village.

The site is adjacent to the weak housing market areas of Broxtowe and Bilborough in the City of Nottingham. However, as with other SUE's, development of this scale would be likely to create its own housing market.

The site has several private owners but the issues are considered to be solvable.

The site is within 5 minute walk of a bus stop and 10-15 minute walk of a small shopping parade. However there are no tram stops within 20 minute walk and no pedestrian/cycle routes nearby.

Land west of Coventry Lane (Capacity over 1000 dwellings)

The site is predominantly greenfield (more than 70%) within the green belt and is adjacent to the PUA. It is considered suitable for housing development in the Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions report, which concluded there are no issues of coalescence and development would avoid unrestricted sprawl. This Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions report considers that landscape appears favourable to development related clearly to the existing urban area as the site features a slope down to the east and defensible boundary to the west in terms of topography. The ridgeline to the west of the site assists in preventing any visual coalescence between Greater Nottingham and settlements to the west.

The site was looked at as a potential development site in Local Plan Supplementary Sites document 1998 and was considered by the Inspector in the Inquiry into the 2004 adopted Local Plan. The Inspector, when considering this site, found encroachment into the green belt, breach of the A6002, lack of a defensible western boundary, loss of grade 2 agricultural Land and the impact on the Nottingham Canal to be significant issues informing his conclusion that the site should not be developed.

The site currently consists of agricultural land and lies within a coalfield area. The site is also located within a historic landfill site (Birchwood Nursery).

The main additional constraints of the site are that part of the site south of the disused canal does not have an available access onto Coventry Lane and is part of a long distance trail. There are also numerous public rights of way (Trowellfp18, Trowellfp22 , Beestonfp79) through the site and a group TPO. A bio-SINC comprises of Nottingham Canal (Trowell to Balloon Wood) which is a small area of the site as a whole. There is a listed building (Swancar Bridge) on the site and a railway line running through the South which is likely to cause some adverse noise impacts.

The site is within 5 minute walk of a bus stop and 10-15 minute walk of a district/town centre.

Land at Field Farm, north of Stapleford (Capacity up to 450 dwellings)

The site is a 100% greenfield site within the green belt adjacent to the PUA. The site was considered in the Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions report which concluded that the site sits within a bowl, with the land rising gradually to the north-east (Stapleford Hill), and is mainly surrounded by higher land. The landscape in the vicinity

is described as high quality in the Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions report, which identifies no issues of coalescence and development would avoid unrestricted sprawl. The site was previously identified in the 1998 Potential Sites document and was considered as part of the 2004 Local Plan. The Inspector thought development provides no danger of settlements merging and he recommended that the site be removed from the green belt and safeguarded. The Borough Council did not follow this recommendation as at the time Inspector's reports were not binding.

The site is currently vacant, consisting of agricultural land (grade 4) with vacant agricultural buildings. There are numerous public right of way (Trowellfp18, Staplefordfp5, Trowellfp19) through the site. The site includes existing open space (Pit Lane Recreation Ground) and may affect a trunk water main.

The main additional constraints of the site are a railway line to the north that is likely to cause some adverse noise impacts. A SINC adjacent to the Eastern boundary of the site, and a brook that runs through the site which would need to be investigated as part of a flood risk assessment.

The site has no ownership problems and is in the control of a single house builder with a willingness to build.

The site is located within 5 minute walk of a bus stop and 10-15 minute walk of a small shopping parade. There are no pedestrian/cycle routes nearby.

Boots/Severn Trent (capacity 550 dwellings)

The site is 100% previously developed land within the PUA. This is a specific site identified in the Core Strategy Option for Consultation February 2010. The site straddles the boundary with Nottingham City and a total number of 1150 dwellings are expected. This is broadly consistent with the Statement of Development Principles document.

The main constraints of the site are the loss of employment land and the high risk flood area (Flood zone 3), although the flood risk is to be significantly reduced with the left bank flood alleviation works. There are grade I listed buildings on the Boots main campus. The impact on the settings of these will be a significant issue. There is a biological SINC at Beeston Canal.

There are three potential access points and potential capacity issues although it is expected that these could be resolved. The site is adjacent to the sewage works (historic landfill site) and this is proposed separately for residential re-development. There is a railway near by and the site is in a coalfield area. There's a public right of way – Beestonfp63.

The site has good accessibility with a proposed green infrastructure facility within 10-15 minute walk or the site would deliver green infrastructure with a public benefit. When the NET phase 2 is complete there will be a tram stop within 20 minute walk. The site is within 10 minutes walk of a bus stop and within 10-15 minute walk of a small shopping parade. Beeston town centre, whilst being marginally over 10-15 minute comfortable walking distance, will still be accessible from the site. There are a good number of co-

ordinated routes that link to most of the residential areas nearby which are well designed and safe to use. There is excellent access to Nottingham City centre via high quality cycle and pedestrian route along the canal and river.

Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy

The purpose of the sustainability appraisal process is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of a plan from the outset. In doing so it will help ensure that decisions are made that contribute to achieving sustainable development.

The sustainability appraisal is integral to the plan making process and informs the decision making process to facilitate the evaluation of alternatives. It should also help demonstrate that the plan is the most appropriate given the reasonable alternatives.

The scope of the sustainability appraisal has been agreed between the environmental agencies. This included consultation on the Partner Councils' Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Reports and consulting with the Strategic Environmental Assessment consultation bodies and other stakeholders on the information and level of detail to include in the sustainability appraisal report.

Key Findings of the Emerging aligned Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal

The key issues raised from the sustainability appraisal process are as follows:-

- Points towards urban concentration as being a more sustainable model for growth but not discounting large opportunity sites on the periphery of the Nottingham Principal Urban Area.
- The integration of jobs and services with housing, through mixed use development, gives a positive outcome.
- Adopting an approach to housing mix based on housing sub-markets in the area would make the greatest positive contribution to sustainability.
- Encouraging the joint use of community facilities and for them to be located close together has the most positive impacts.
- A considered approach to protect important open space in urban areas is the most sustainable option because open space in urban areas benefits from air quality more than an equivalent space in rural areas.
- Development in villages has significant positives for housing, health, heritage and social objectives.
- A flexible approach to employment land is more sustainable than protectionism in that it allows alternative land use options which may meet more objectives.
- Specifying employment sites, based on evidence, is seen to be more sustainable than not specifying sites.
- Maximising opportunities for training initiatives to re-skill the Greater Nottingham workforce has major economic sustainability benefits and no significant dis-benefits.

- Enhancing retail in Nottingham as a core city would maximise the transport objective gain but, although it would create employment, this may not support the knowledge-based economy objective.
- The proposed climate change policy, to have higher than national standards in the short term, has major environmental objectives benefits but may impact on development viability.
- Given the housing and regeneration objectives, some development will be needed on sites requiring the Exception Test and technological and innovative mitigation will be necessary.
- Prioritising public transport investment meets most sustainability objectives without any apparent negative impacts but highways investment has major effects on the environmental objectives.
- The green infrastructure requirement has major positive effects on most sustainability objectives, especially biodiversity, environment and landscape, natural resources and flooding.
- Identifying specific sites and corridors of acknowledged biodiversity importance and ensuring that all development proposals, wherever they are, identify positive measures to protect and enhance biodiversity has major environmental objectives benefits.

Considerations

The factors to be considered when taking decisions on sites include-

- the extent of the need for the development,
- whether it would support existing or new services,
- whether there is the capacity for existing services and infrastructure including the local road network to support the development – and if not can new services and infrastructure be provided,
- whether the site is well connected/accessible by sustainable modes of transport, whether there are environmental or other constraints on the site or in the locality making development difficult to achieve, such as flood risk,
- the extent to which new development will have an impact on existing communities in terms of noise, traffic or other negative impacts,
- whether the site is available for new development,
- whether it is previously developed land, whether it is in a sustainable location within the Greater Nottingham urban area or another sustainable settlement, and, if not
- to what extent it impacts on the purposes of including land in the green belt, and
- whether it would encourage investment in deprived wards or communities.

The sources of information available to help inform these necessary decisions include the Tribal Urban Studio reports firstly on an Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions (2008) and secondly on Sustainable Locations for Growth (2010), site specific information in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), previous Inspector's reports into the then emerging Broxtowe Local Plan, previous Core Strategy rounds of consultation in 2009 on Issues and Options and 2010 on the Options for Consultation, a Strategic Housing Market Assessment, including an update in 2009 and an Affordable Housing viability report, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, a Water Cycle Study, Employment Land and Retail needs studies, a Landscape Character Assessment and Accessible Settlements study.

Of particular relevance is the general principles to apply to the choice of housing sites that Broxtowe specified in the 2010 ACS Option for Consultation document, which were that any development should avoid causing coalescence of built up areas, sites should be distributed across the borough to reduce the degree of localised impact in proportion to the size of the settlement served and sites must be well related to existing settlements.

Taking all of this into account there is considered to be compelling evidence regarding the level of housing need in the Greater Nottingham housing market area to support the level of housing provision in the Regional Plan. In the absence of sufficient sites within the built up areas of Broxtowe, this is considered to be the exceptional circumstances sufficient to amend green belt boundaries to allow new development to meet this need in accordance with advice in paragraphs 2.6 to 2.10 of PPG2. This advice is that green belt boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances and only when the authority has considered opportunities for development within urban areas. When drawing boundaries they should be clearly defined, using readily recognisable features such as roads, streams, belts of trees or woodland edges where possible. If boundaries

are drawn excessively tightly around built up edges it may not be possible to maintain the degree of permanence that green belts should have.

On economic grounds, planning for growth is of critical importance and the evidence is that housing numbers much lower than those in the Regional Plan will put a very serious risk on the provision of housing to accommodate new workers as and when the Greater Nottingham economy grows. In addition this could increase pressures on delivery of affordable housing, create overcrowding and a rise in homelessness. Brownfield sites in suitable locations within existing urban areas are considered to be more sustainable on a number of grounds including encouraging regeneration, providing access to existing services and facilities, having good transport links already in place and providing much needed housing which otherwise would have to go in the green belt. For all of these reasons, officers remain of the view that the potential difficulties of securing development on the Boots sites including those relating to flood risk, access and the setting of the listed buildings, can be successfully addressed and the delivery of 400 houses in the Broxtowe part of Boots and 150 on the Severn Trent site remains a realistic position, albeit that the timing of this housing delivery is likely to be in the latter years of the Core Strategy timescale.

In addition to this, allowing a reasonable amount of development in and adjacent to the four larger settlements in the north of the borough will allow these settlements to expand to meet their needs at the same time as protecting the most sensitive areas of green belt from encroachment. It is not considered that this approach will be at odds with the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal or the strategy of urban concentration, with the majority of housing and other development to be directed to locations in or on the edge of the Nottingham PUA. This also has the advantage of achieving a more balanced distribution of development throughout the borough in line with the stated intention to achieve this in the 2010 ACS Option for Consultation.

This leaves one (or part of one) very big site at either the west of Bilborough Road or west of Coventry Lane, or two out of the remaining three potential strategic sites that were consulted on in 2010, to be allocated in the Core Strategy. Of the factors identified above, the one of most significance is considered to be the extent to which each of these potential sites will impact on the green belt including its openness and for the purposes of including land in the green belt. PPG2 identifies the five purposes of including land in the green belt as:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

In the context of decisions to be reached in Broxtowe, it is considered that the factors of particular importance when selecting sites will be the extent to which each of these sites will avoid neighbouring settlements merging into one another, the extent of encroachment into the countryside and the existence or otherwise of defensible boundaries that would avoid further pressure to expand the site in the future.

On these grounds the site considered to perform best is the site north of Stapleford at Field Farm. The site is well contained by topography and has highly defensible boundaries being either existing housing to the north-west, west, south and south-east and the railway line and protected open space to the north. There is also the higher land at Stapleford Hill to the east. The site could deliver 450 new homes without encroaching onto any of the protected areas of open space at the north of the site or developing the much higher land to the north east between Stapleford Hill and the railway line. It is considered that this number of dwellings could be constructed allowing for adequate separation between the housing and the railway to the north and the brook through the centre of the site. The site was considered favourably by the Inspector to be released from the green belt at the previous Local Plan Inquiry at a time of radically lower housing needs. He was also clear in his view that development here would not lead to the coalescence of Trowell village with Stapleford, being of the view that the housing north of the brook, although within Trowell Parish, was physically and visually attached to Stapleford and as such development would not lead to settlements merging into each other. This is a view shared by officers.

Specifically when considering this site for housing at the previous Local Plan Inquiry the Inspector stated in his report that-

'I can see little in land use terms to distinguish or separate between Parishes the housing developments along the west side of Stapleford Road. The narrow brook and small name-place signs hardly suffice. As STRAG conceded, it is difficult to perceive that one is not in Stapleford north of the brook. Similarly, I can see little to distinguish these housing developments from those to the south of Ilkeston Road or from the Trowell Grove and Mayfield Drive estates, apart from age and tenure which are not Green Belt factors. They all appear in land use terms to be an extension of the built up area of Stapleford.'

All of the other sites will either lead to some reduction in the gap between settlements (sites at Toton and Woodhouse Way) or will not have the same highly defensible boundaries (Coventry Lane and Bilborough Road). Of these remaining sites the one considered to perform worst on green belt grounds is that west of Woodhouse Way. Although it is acknowledged that the site is contained with roads on three sides, including the motorway to the west and Nottingham Business Park to the south, it is considered that development on the site will encroach into a narrow gap between the Nottingham urban area and Kimberley/ Nuthall. This is one of the most important strategic gaps to the highly sensitive green belt area to the west of Nottingham and, as such, it is considered that this site should not be allocated for this reason. There are also further significant problems regarding noise from the motorway. This was not considered an appropriate location for new development by the previous Local Plan Inspector or by the consultant team preparing the Tribal Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions report. Even if members were minded to support this site, the figure of 300 dwellings is considered to be an absolute maximum* and may need to be reduced further given the need to maintain a potentially wide buffer between housing on the site and busy roads, in particular the M1 motorway.

It therefore comes down to one further site being required at Toton, or part of either Coventry Lane or Bilborough Road. The latter two sites are both located immediately to the west of the City of Nottingham and each could provide significant amounts of new housing. Each of the Coventry Lane and Bilborough Road sites, if developed to the

* Cabinet were advised at their meeting that the promoters of this site have submitted evidence including a noise assessment which they consider demonstrates that the site can accommodate up to 750 dwellings. This evidence has not yet been fully tested by the Borough Council.

extent considered suitable in the Tribal Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions report, could accommodate more than the 1163 new houses required to be released from the green belt as strategic sites in the Core Strategy. There is a ridge to the west of both sites with the motorway beyond. Although the ridge will screen views of the housing from the west (including from Trowell village), this is not considered to be as defensible a boundary as a physical barrier such as the motorway, particularly if only part of either site were allocated for housing. In reaching this view it is acknowledged that the Tribal report considered that the ridge is a sufficiently defensible boundary to allow acceptable development to take place in this location. It is however officer opinion that both of these sites will encroach to a large extent into the countryside and, in addition, development in this locality was considered as part of the 2004 Local Plan with the Inspector identifying significant problems of encroachment to reject a site south of the A609. There are therefore some issues with both of these sites in expanding the urban area of Greater Nottingham to open areas to the west in the general direction of Derby (particularly Coventry Lane) in resulting in encroachment into the countryside and the lack of similar defensible boundaries when compared to the three other competing sites.

In terms of Toton, it is important to record that land west of Toton Lane was also resisted by the previous Local Plan Inspector for green belt reasons and in particular his concern regarding the perception of coalescence between settlements and his view that filling the gap between the large free standing electricity substation and the urban area of Toton can not be constituted as 'rounding off the latter'. However, it is not considered that the green belt in this area serves the same strategic purpose of preventing Nottingham merging with Derby, which is a view shared by the consultant team undertaking the Tribal report who, in the context of considering the extent of the built development around the site, commented that:

'Development here would seem not to constitute unrestricted urban sprawl into open countryside, as it is debatable whether the Green Belt gap within the PUA here could be genuinely described as 'countryside'; it is more an informal suburban amenity space.'

It is important to note that the fundamental reason Nottingham has a green belt is to prevent Nottingham and Derby from merging into one another, as similar sized cities without the risk of merging with a large neighbouring settlement don't have a green belt at all. Leicester is an obvious example in the East Midlands. Therefore any potential merging between Toton and Stapleford is considered to be less of a strategic issue than encroachment into open areas of green belt to the west of the A6002 at Coventry Lane and Bilborough Road, given that this part of the green belt north of Toton is already surrounded by settlements within the Nottingham Principal Urban Area. In addition the Toton site is considered to be visually and physically well contained with the railway sidings to the west, Toton to the south, Toton Lane to the east and George Spencer School and the sewage works to the north beyond which is the A52. It is considered that this well contained site can be developed with up to 800 houses, additional local services and planned open space in such a way as to minimise any visual intrusion from new housing particularly as this number of houses will allow a separation to be maintained between the north of the site and the A52. There will be very limited views of any new development from Stapleford given the A52, George Spencer School and the sewage works all between the site and existing housing in Stapleford. In reaching this view members are advised that the figure of 800 houses does not include

development on Toton sidings, which is now considered to be faced with very severe difficulties in ensuring any housing delivery over the Core Strategy period.

The Toton site also has the very significant advantage of sustainable transport to the links to the tram with the terminus and park and ride facility to be located a very short walk from this site on the east side of Toton Lane. The site is therefore best placed of the 5 competing ones to take the maximum benefit from the tram, which would not only support this important public transport facility but would also take more cars off the road than would be the case with a similar development less well connected to public transport. The tram is expected to be operational by 2014 and, even on the very most ambitious delivery timescales, only a very small number of dwellings could be complete and occupied by this time given that the Core Strategy is not expected to be adopted until late 2012. Both the Tribal consultants and the previous Local Plan Inspector attached weight to the sustainable transport benefits through the tram of allocating housing land in this location and since this time the delivery of the tram is more certain with funding and contracts now in place.

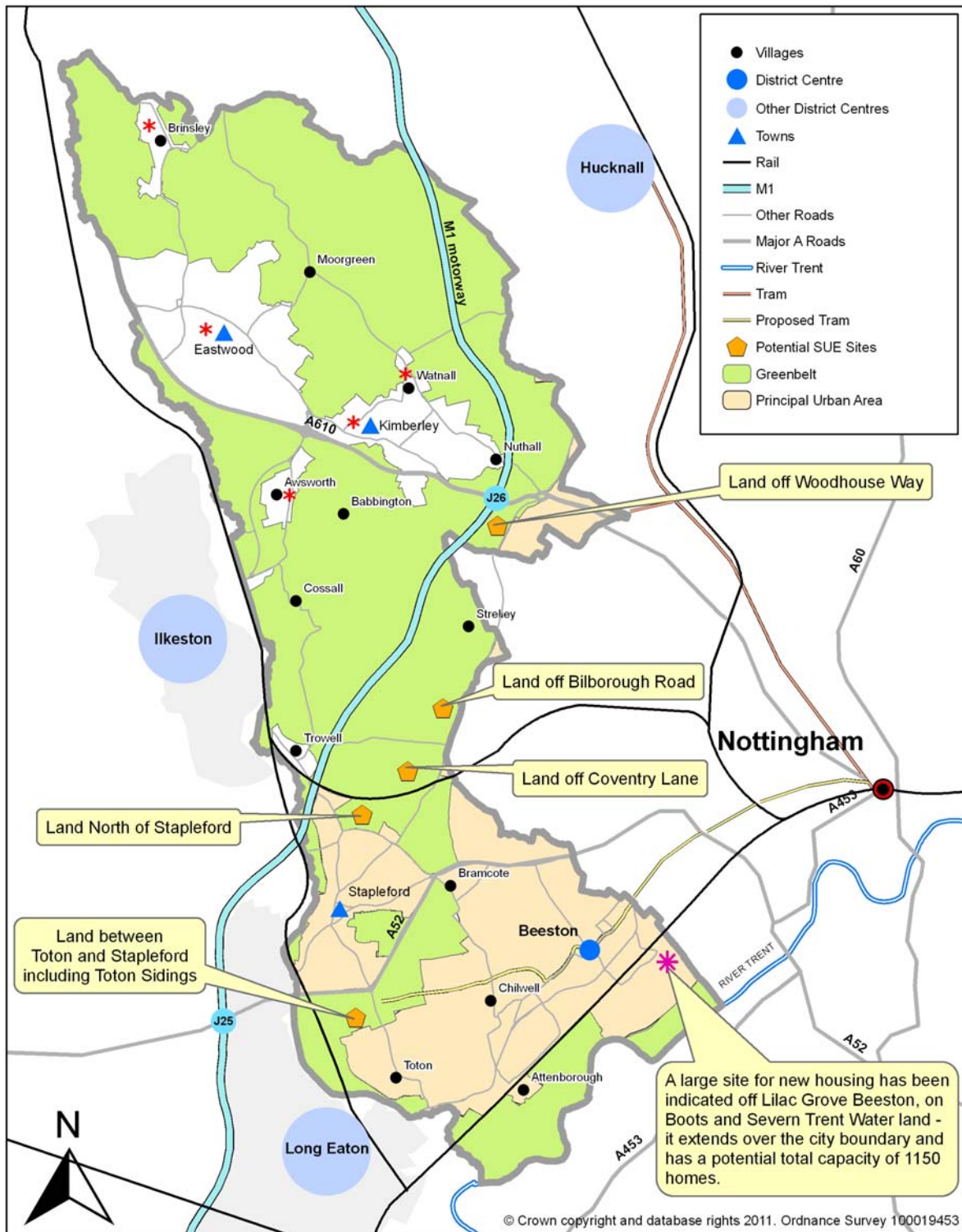
It is therefore considered that there is the strongest case to allocate Toton in addition to Field Farm due to, on balance, lesser impact on the openness and purposes of including land in the green belt than other competing sites and especially on sustainable transport grounds being in close proximity to the tram. In reaching this view officers are also mindful that the Tribal consultants considered that development west of Nottingham may support additional public transport in the form of new railway stations between Nottingham and Ilkeston. In this regard it should also be noted that it remains a major ambition of Erewash Borough Council to achieve a new railway station in Ilkeston, very close to the Broxtowe Borough boundary, with existing Broxtowe Local Plan policy support for this in safeguarding land to assist with this. Whilst the overall package to support the scheme is at present incomplete, it is hoped that the required funding will shortly be in place. However all councils recognise that, without the necessary funding, delivery of this transport initiative is uncertain.

Both Toton and Field Farm have committed developer interest and have less multiple ownership issues than the other contending sites. Both are expected to be able to deliver housing (800 at Toton and 450 at Stapleford) in the early years of the Core Strategy, which is important as the other large site to be allocated at Boots is not expected to come forward for housing for 10 years. In this regard viability and delivery issues are the subject of ongoing investigation, but there is nothing on either site that is considered to prevent the early delivery of housing. There are electricity pylons on the Toton site which will need to be relocated but this is not considered to be a real constraint.

Whilst it is the case that all sites will result in some impact on existing communities in terms of additional traffic and loss of existing open land, this is not considered of such significance as to prevent sustainable developments of a very high quality design with adequate open space and infrastructure provision on both sites at Field Farm and Toton. The sites at Coventry Lane and Bilborough Road potentially perform best in assisting with regeneration of deprived areas, given that both are large enough to provide significant employment opportunities in addition to housing and both are located close to wards in the west of the City of Nottingham at Bilborough and Broxtowe estates which suffer from high levels of deprivation. In addition, the site north of Stapleford also has some merit in this regard as, although it is a significantly smaller site than either of

these two, it is partly within the north Stapleford ward which is one of the two most deprived wards in Broxtowe, the other being Eastwood south.

It is therefore considered that the most sustainable sites to allocate in the Core Strategy are north of Stapleford and west of Toton Lane.



Reference map

Aligned Core Strategy

Cabinet 12 July 2011

Chief Executive's Department