

East Midlands Draft Regional Plan

Charnwood Borough Council Core Strategy preferred options

Response from Garendon Park Countryside Protection Group (GPCPG)

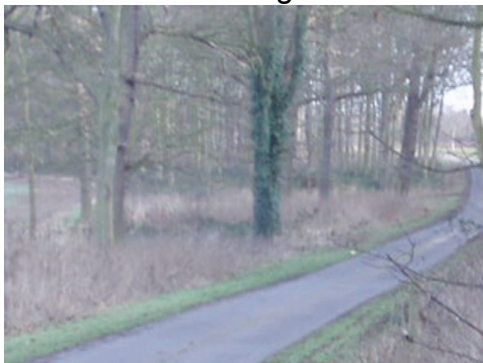
Charnwood Borough Council's paper "Core Strategy Preferred Options" (Feb 2006) suggests the designation of the Garendon Estate as a major Sustainable Urban Expansion site for the location of upwards of 1800 new houses to contribute to the target set by EMRA for future housing needs in the East Midlands.

The Garendon Park Protection Group wish to register a formal objection to this proposed designation on three grounds.

1. This is an area of great value as agricultural, amenity, recreational land and should be preserved for this and future generations. There is massive local opposition to the building of houses on Garendon.
2. If the target number of new homes is accepted this is the wrong type of development to support sustainable urban development.
3. It is clear that the proposed increase in housing demand is based on unjustified extrapolations and may lead to a loss of amenity for the region as whole.

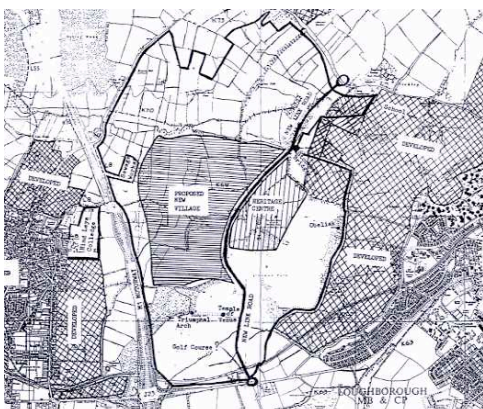
1. The Designation of the Garendon Estate

1.1. This is the last significant area of land that has not been built on between the



towns of Loughborough, Hathern and Shepshed. It provides a walking and cycling route allowing the enjoyment of open country. It contains a rich flora and fauna which would be lost if it was converted to building land. There are few other areas of open country that are so accessible to the large numbers of people living in Loughborough, Hathern and Shepshed.

1.2 The location is inappropriate for this development.



The only access for the thousands of new homes planned for this area will be through a new link road costing £8.3M which would give access to one of two very congested roads, the A6 to the north and the A512 to the south. This would make a serious traffic congestion problem intolerable. A direct route into Loughborough is not proposed as it would have to go through a densely built up suburban area and would go past a number of schools.

1.3 This is a greenfield development. The Government has recently set the target of 73% of all new development on brownfield sites. The East Midlands is one of the least successful in reaching this target with only 55% of new development reaching this target. We invite the Inspector to reject this proposal on the grounds of failure to address the greenfield site target.

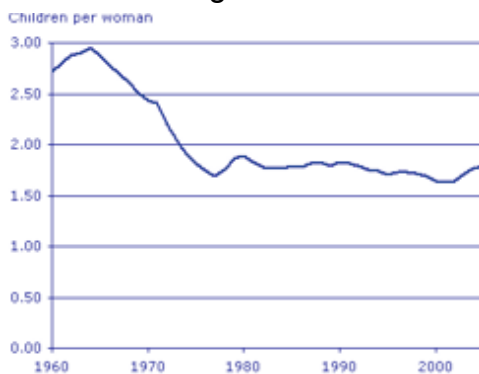
2. This proposal is the wrong type of development

2.1 The essence of the proposed development is a suburban development which will be largely composed of detached, semi detached and terraced houses. This is not in accord with the needs of the area. Charnwood's housing survey shows that it is oversupplied with suburban housing with houses and bungalows forming 75.3% of all dwellings compared to a national average of 54.1% while the supply of flats is 8.5% compared to the national average of 19.7%¹. The major need is for flatted accommodation close to existing facilities for those in housing need.

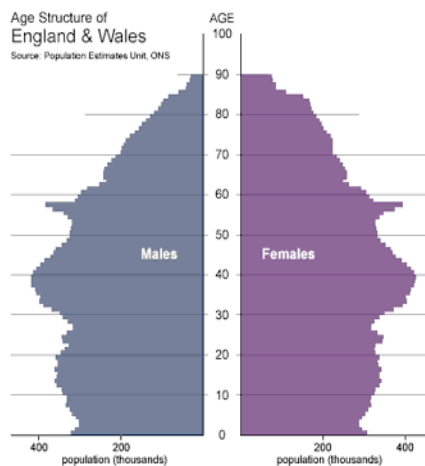
2.2 The current draft PPS3 states that the government wants planning departments to provide access for all to jobs, health facilities, open space, sport, and recreation, by ensuring that new development is located where everyone can access services or facilities on foot, bicycle or public transport rather than having to rely on access by car. The Garendon estate development cannot possibly fulfil this sustainability requirement.

3. The proposed increase in housing is unjustified.

3.1 Although not related to our objection to the designation of the Garendon



Estate for housing we must comment on the assumption that large numbers of houses must be planned for over the next 16 years. We are told that the population is going to increase substantially, yet it is clear that the existing population will decline because the Total Fertility Rate is below replacement level and has been declining since 1964.



The population structure for the UK shows a bulge of those age 40 to 50, born when the fertility was high, and that the number of children born in each generation is declining. In 20 years time the bulge will move to the ages when mortality will become significant and the population will begin to decline rapidly. It is clear that the whole of the increase in population is assumed to be due to immigration.

This can be shown by examining the Government Actuary's table for population growth in the East Midlands. Detailed government tables advise

¹ Charnwood Housing Needs Survey 2003 p.2

that projections are based on continuation of current trends, including migration.

Taking one group of men in the East Midlands (aged 25 to 29 in 2009) the tables indicate there will be:

132.8 thousand in 2009

136.4 thousand in 2014 (when they will be 30 – 34)

142.3 thousand in 2019 (when they will be 35 to 39)²

Thus the figures for increased housing need are based on the assumption that 10,000 men will have been added by immigration to just one age group over a ten-year period

This worries us, as it seems that there is no inevitability to the need for increased housing, which is based on very ambitious expectations of massive and sustained immigration. Government has stated recently that it intends to control non-EU immigration and know that there was strong immigration from Portugal after that country joined the EU, but the majority of those returned home after a few years. There is every reason to suggest that the large influx of Polish immigrants will reverse within ten years.

4. The need to follow sound planning policies

4.1 We are in accord with the Royal Town Planning Institute stating: that government plans for housing are too focussed on market demand and are based on the principal of “predict and provide” rather than being based on sound principles of inclusive planning³. We urge a review of the proposal for the Garendon Estate on the basis of a more thorough analysis of housing demand and by the application of sound planning policies.

4.2 Our analysis suggests that no more than 1500 houses are required for Charnwood and that these could be provided on brownfield sites.

4.3 Additionally we are irritated by the distortion of the housing market figures related to student housing. Part of the demand figures are based on the high number of students, and these students have displaced residents from housing in the town, yet the creation of large numbers of new housing designed for students both in the town and on campus is not allowed to count as a contribution to the target set by EMRA although it will lead to family houses coming back into the housing market. This distorts the figures in a way that is not helpful.

5 In conclusion our group wish to register strong objections to the proposal to locate housing on the Garendon Estate because it is:

1. A valuable environmental resource for present and future generations
2. It will provide the wrong sort of accommodation in the wrong place
3. It will lead to a massive increase in car-based transport and place an unsustainable pressure on the local road system.
4. It is based on population predictions dependent on assumed immigration, which may not happen.
5. Application of proper planning policies indicate a smaller number of new dwellings on brownfield sites together with proper consideration of student housing

² National Statistics Online <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?ID=951>

³ Royal Town Planning Institute Consultation Paper in Response to Draft Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3)