

Section II : South Derbyshire : An Overview

Profile of the District

- 2.1 Over the past decade, South Derbyshire has been the fastest growing district in Derbyshire. At mid 1995 about 76,000 people lived in the district, a figure that is expected to rise to over 80,000 by 2001.
- 2.2 Swadlincote is the principal administrative and commercial centre, with a population of over 30,000. Over the past decade, the town has experienced a large amount of new development, prompted by improvements in the quality of the local environment, competitive development costs and constraints on land in neighbouring areas. In the town centre, the main shopping streets have been pedestrianised and new shops and extra car parking provided.
- 2.3 The rest of the population is dispersed throughout the rural area, although some 3,740 people now live at Stenson Fields on the edge of Derby. Melbourne is the largest village with a population of 4,730. Locally, it is important for shopping, recreation and employment purposes. Other larger villages, such as Etwall (2,660 population), Linton (2,460), Hatton (2,490) and Willington (2,530) perform a similar role, albeit on a smaller scale. Despite some new development, particularly in the 1960's/early 1970's, many villages and settlements have retained their original character and appearance. A number, such as Melbourne and Repton, are also of historic value.
- 2.4 A large part of South Derbyshire is given over to farming. Much of the best and most versatile agricultural land is located in the Trent Valley, where Drakelow and Willington Power Stations dominate the landscape. This area is also becoming increasingly popular for various types of leisure and recreation activities, which in the long term could assist in securing a healthy rural economy.
- 2.5 Traditionally, the district's main employment centre has been Swadlincote. For many years, the town was important for mining and pottery manufacture due to its location on the South Derbyshire Coalfield. These activities have now been superseded by engineering and manufacturing industries, often located on new industrial estates, and by public services. Hatton, Melbourne, Shardlow and Willington are smaller employment centres.
- 2.6 Despite this industrial legacy, the local employment base is small, with about 19,900 Employees in Employment (1991 Census of Employment). The service sector provides the main source of employment with about 63% of local jobs. Manufacturing is poorly represented with only 21% of the total. Many manufacturing businesses depend heavily on the brewing and engineering industries of Burton upon Trent and Derby. Energy and Water accounts for a further 7% of jobs due to the presence of the power stations. This structure is potentially a source of weakness due to its dependence upon industries which are not expected to grow or which are sensitive to changes in service delivery at the national level. In contrast, the local labour force is expected to continue to grow. Many residents work in Burton upon Trent and Derby, a pattern that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.
- 2.7 The development of land which has become surplus to the requirements of its original use can reduce the need for land on "greenfield sites". The closure of Cadley Hill Colliery (Swadlincote) and the Ministry of Defence Vehicle Depot at Hilton have provided significant development opportunities. More land has also become available as a result of the closure of hospitals at Bretby, Aston and Mickleover (Pastures) and with the rationalisation of other employment uses throughout the district.

- 2.8 The adequacy of the local highway network has been a long standing cause for concern, although recent road improvements in Swadlincote including the development of the A444 Castle Gresley Bypass and the opening of William Nadin Way linking the town centre with the A444 have helped to improve accessibility. Likewise the opening in 1997 of the A50 Derby Southern Bypass has provided some relief to the villages of the Northern parishes whilst improving links to the national motorway network thus enhancing the district's status as a location for new industrial and business development.
- 2.9 Throughout South Derbyshire, the environment is extremely varied. Areas of high environmental quality are complemented by significant tracts of open countryside between Swadlincote and Burton upon Trent and on the southern fringes of Derby. Some 22 conservation areas have been designated and there are nearly 700 listed buildings, along with a wide range of heritage features and wildlife habitats. The maintenance of a rich and diverse community of wild plants, animals, and water habitats is important, not only in view of their scientific and ecological value, but also because they constitute a fundamental component of the rural environment and the countryside scene.
- 2.10 The district also has approximately 36 hectares of derelict land, a large amount of which is associated with the South Derbyshire Coalfield. Reclamation would not only improve the quality of life locally, but would help to attract investment and bring new opportunities for recreation, tourism and wildlife conservation. The District Council has welcomed the establishment of the National Forest on the ancient Needwood and Charnwood Forests. The defined area covers a total of 194 square miles and about a quarter lies within South Derbyshire including the Southern Parishes, Swadlincote and the area south of the line from Bretby Lane to Melbourne. It will create a new landscape for work, leisure and wildlife.
- 2.11 The Forest seeks to achieve:
- environmental improvement through enhancing and creating a diverse landscape and wildlife habitat;
 - a major new recreation and tourism resource;
 - stimulation of economic enterprise and creating jobs through new forest-related industries, farm diversification initiatives and an attractive environment to new inward investment;
 - an alternative productive use for agricultural land in ways which meet environmental objectives;
 - a major stimulus to restoring derelict land and former mineral workings.
- 2.12 Mineral extraction will continue to be an important local issue on account of the extensive reserves of sand and gravel in the Trent and Dove Valleys and the coal and clay deposits of the South Derbyshire Coalfield. Around Swadlincote, coal is found in shallow deposits that are capable of being worked by opencast methods. Several sites have already been investigated by the British Coal Opencast Executive.
- 2.13 In the short term, mineral working can cause disruption to local communities, lead to the loss of valuable heritage features and deter investment. However, where it is possible to secure a package of community and environmental benefits, there can be long term advantages. The approved scheme for the Cadley Hill Colliery/Nadins/High Cross Area, for example, involves not only the removal of coal but also the provision of improved access to the town centre via the recently opened William Nadin Way, construction of the now complete A444 Castle Gresley By-Pass, reclamation of land for industrial development and the provision of recreational facilities.

2.14 The issue of mineral extraction is not dealt with in this Local Plan. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning & Compensation Act 1991, the Mineral Planning Authority (Derbyshire County Council) is now required to draw up a Minerals Local Plan covering the whole of its area. The Plan should carry forward policies which provide for the supply of minerals and for ensuring the required degree of environmental protection associated with the development. The Plan can also set out development control criteria that will be applied in considering applications for mineral working and requirements for the restoration and after care of sites.

2.15 The County Council must also prepare a Local Plan for Waste Disposal.

Toyota

2.16 In April 1989, the Toyota Motor Corporation announced its intention to construct a new European car manufacturing plant in the north of the District at Burnaston. Production commenced in 1992 and in 1996 was running at a rate of 110,000 vehicles per annum. In March 1995 the company announced plans to move to its second phase of development bringing production up to 200,000 units per annum and employment to some 3,000 people, giving a major boost to the local economy.

2.17 This increase in economic activity has led to requirements for new housing, land for industrial and business development and recreational and community facilities. These requirements will need to be addressed in the Local Plan in a positive and comprehensive manner.

Pressures for Development

2.18 Toyota will not be the only catalyst for development and change in South Derbyshire over the next decade. Other important factors include:-

- (i) The A50 Stoke-Derby Link Road;
- (ii) The establishment of the National Forest which will bring opportunities for leisure and recreation and the reclamation of derelict land;
- (iii) The restructuring of the local economy and in neighbouring Burton upon Trent and Derby;
- (iv) The changing nature of agriculture and the need to maintain a healthy rural economy;
- (v) The growth of the East Midlands Airport and the implications for the district in terms of housing, employment, environment and transport;
- (vi) Development proposals in Burton upon Trent, Derby and North West Leicestershire (e.g. City Challenge in Derby, the Ashby Wolds Regeneration Strategy etc.);
- (vii) Demographic change, increased leisure time and the demand for an improved range of leisure and tourist facilities.

2.19 Development pressures are likely to be focused upon particular locations - the urban fringes of Derby, along the corridors of the A50 and the A38 and in the attractive villages and settlements of the district. Clearly, unrestrained development will damage the character and appearance of the countryside (which it is important to protect for its own sake) and lead to the coalescence of settlements. It will also deflect investment from

Derby and Swadlincote where new development will assist the regeneration process. For many people, development in sensitive rural locations and the loss of heritage features (whether man-made or natural) are no longer acceptable.

- 2.20 The underlying aim of the Local Plan is to secure a proper balance between the interests of development and the interests of conservation. The Local Plan must make adequate provision for new homes and workplaces to meet the needs of the community and at the same time, take account of the need to protect the natural and built environment. Development and growth must be sustainable - meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and minimising the irreversible loss of natural resources.

National and Regional Planning Guidance

- 2.21 Advice from Central Government on the formulation of planning policies is contained in Circulars and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's). Some of the advice is of a general nature relating, for example, to the form and content of Local Plans. In other instances, it concerns specific topics such as housing, sport and recreation, the countryside and the rural economy.
- 2.22 Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands was published in 1994 by the Secretary of State for the Environment to ensure that matters of regional significance are dealt with in Structure Plans. The Guidance indicates that development plans should aim to achieve the following objectives:
- (i) to meet the basic needs of all the Region's inhabitants,
 - (ii) to secure and stimulate economic prosperity in all parts of the Region,
 - (iii) to conserve and where possible to enhance the Region's environment,
 - (iv) to maintain a high quality of life throughout the whole Region.

Derbyshire Structure Plan

- 2.23 The Derbyshire Structure Plan adopts a broadly remedial/conservation type approach to development, whilst at the same time recognising the need to make the most of the economic potential of each part of the County. The Plan adopts a more promotional attitude to economic development than was adopted in the past. However, for other uses such as housing and retailing, development is sometimes restrained in the interests of strategic policies such as Green Belt or the policies of neighbouring authorities. Throughout the Plan, there is an underlying intention to direct new development to existing towns and settlements, to make full and effective use of vacant, underused and derelict land, and to protect the open countryside.
- 2.24 In the light of Toyota, provision is made for 7,000 houses in South Derbyshire during the period 1987-2001, together with 380 hectares of land for industrial and business use. The latter includes a specific allocation of 255 hectares in the vicinity of the junction of the A38 and A50, along with 75 hectares at Swadlincote. These levels of provision represent a rate of development in excess of that recently experienced in the district.
- 2.25 In approving the first Derbyshire Structure Plan (1980), the Secretary of State for the Environment designated Green Belts to the South East of Derby and between Burton upon Trent and Swadlincote. The purpose of these Green Belts was to limit urban expansion (especially in the corridor between Derby and Nottingham), to maintain the

separate identity of towns and smaller settlements, and to maintain the open character of the countryside between the settlements. Policies for the continuation of both Green Belts are included in the current Structure Plan.

Aims and Objectives of the Local Plan

- 2.26 The underlying aim of the Local Plan is to deal with the economic and population changes in South Derbyshire during the plan period whilst providing for the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment and the conservation of scarce resources. New development will be located in such a way as to:
- (i) Meet the needs identified in the Derbyshire Structure Plan for sites for housing and employment uses in the district, principally through the development of strategic sites at Swadlincote, Hilton and Church Broughton;
 - (ii) Minimise the effect of development upon the countryside (especially along the A38 corridor and on the southern fringes of Derby), the best and most versatile agricultural land, areas of local landscape value and sites and features of natural history interest;
 - (iii) Protect the identity, character and environmental quality of the many small villages and settlements dispersed throughout the district as well as features of architectural or historic interest;
 - (iv) Make full and effective use of vacant, underused and derelict land and existing or committed infrastructure;
 - (v) Continue the expansion of Swadlincote in order to promote further regeneration of the town and reinforce its role as the administrative, employment and commercial focus of the district;
 - (vi) Provide for the housing, employment, transport, shopping, recreational and community needs and aspirations of all sections of the community including those who are disadvantaged and disabled.

Local Plan Strategy

2.27 The Local Plan Strategy closely reflects that of the Derbyshire Structure Plan in adopting a broadly remedial/conservation type approach to development, whilst recognising the need to make the most of the economic potential of particular parts of South Derbyshire.

2.28 The main elements of the Local Plan Strategy comprise:

- * The allocation of major new housing development at Hilton (on the site of the former Ministry of Defence Vehicle Depot), Church Gresley and Stenson Fields with constraints generally on housing development in villages and in the countryside.
- * The allocation of land for industrial and business development at Swadlincote, Church Broughton (on the site of the former airfield), Hilton and Melbourne along with measures to promote the rural economy.
- * The maintenance of the South and South East Derbyshire Green Belts.

- * The designation of five Areas of Local Landscape Value.
- * The protection of the countryside and the conservation and enhancement of features of heritage and ecological interest.
- * The promotion of the National Forest.
- * Improvements to the highway network, especially to enable land to be released for development.
- * The protection of land for new passenger railway stations at Castle Gresley and Willington.
- * The direction of new shopping development to Swadlincote and Melbourne in order to enhance their role as district centres.
- * The promotion of tourism and recreation in South Derbyshire.
- * Provision for education and community developments.

2.29 In the following section, detailed proposals are set out to implement this Strategy.