

Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Summary Findings – Market Towns

This element of the SHMA outputs gives brief summaries and key conclusions relevant for housing and other strategy and policy for the County and Market Towns . The detailed evidence and analysis compiled for the SHMA which supports these is in the main report, appendices, and data.

There are over 80 [urban areas](#) and [settlements](#) within the Leicester(&shire) housing market area as classified by ONS based on the 2001 Census¹, ranging from the entire Leicester Urban area at over 10,000 hectares, to Burton Overy at 20 hectares.

Leicestershire settlement	hectares	Comparison - % of Leicester urban area
Leicester Urban Area	10,132	100%
Loughborough	1,373	13.6%
Hinckley	1,156	11.4%
Coalville	893	8.8%
Melton Mowbray	651	6.4%
Market Harborough	614	6.1%

Leicester Urban area is more than seven times the area of the next biggest town in the HMA, Loughborough, and has nine times the number of households.

Despite their smaller size, the county towns generally have strong, separate identities, and although there are clearly links with the core city for commuting, shopping, leisure and some migration patterns, these are variable, and weak in some cases. Some key issues emerging from the SHMA for each of the main county towns are considered in turn below.

Coalville, North West Leicestershire

Coalville is a former coal-mining town which grew up with the advent of coal mining, and quarrying, textile and engineering industries, such as railway wagon production, grew in the town in the 19th century. Rail passenger services were withdrawn from the Leicester - Burton line in 1964, but it remains open for freight traffic. There is now no railway station in Coalville, the nearest passenger railway station is Loughborough

Following the closure of the mines and the Palitoy factory in the 1980s, the town fell on harder times. Effort was put into regeneration and the Whitwick Business park now stands on top of the former Whitwick Colliery site. New business parks and industrial estates were constructed along the A511.

¹ http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/product_ua_settle_boun_cd.asp

Many housing issues in Coalville still stem partly from this history. Coalville itself has smaller and cheaper housing which provides a more affordable entry level in an urban centre, and is surrounded by higher priced smaller settlements which attract better off households from Coalville itself and larger urban settlements such as Leicester, Burton and Derby.

Regeneration of older housing stock in the private sector, and support for older, post industrial households are likely to be important policy considerations. As virtually everywhere in the UK at present, the ability of younger, emerging households to access housing affordable to them is a continuing problem, even as prices fall

Housing market

The housing mix in Coalville itself could benefit from more housing attractive to better off, economically active households, but this would need to compete effectively with the surrounding areas on quality, environment and services.

At the same time it is important to retain affordable and entry level housing as this serves the wider area, and to encourage more affordable housing in the surrounding areas to create a better overall mix in the A511 corridor.

Demand and need

While North West Leicestershire district overall has an annual shortfall of some 355 affordable lets, the need for affordable housing in Coalville and its immediately surrounding areas is more complicated, with quite high levels of supply in some parts of the urban area, such as Greenhill, which reduce the net need, but may only meet a particular segment of need over the long term, with quite high levels of internal moving or 'churning' within parts of the social rented sector.

Provision of additional affordable housing in Coalville should therefore be particularly carefully planned to complement existing provision, and to avoid exacerbating any concentrations of deprivation or rapid turnover patterns. Housing provision and general improvements could help to make Coalville more attractive to households from the rural areas of the district and so relieve pressure on other settlements such as Ashby de la Zouch.

Other policies with implications for housing

Further regeneration could be supported by growth based on the location of Coalville in the Leicester-Burton transport corridor, and between the M1 and M42 junctions, although a commuting based approach would not be seen as sustainable.

Market Harborough, Harborough District

Market Harborough is on the southern border of the housing market area, has good general transport links by rail and road, and strong links to the Milton Keynes/South Midlands renewal area. It is generally seen as an attractive market town and draws better off residents from a wide area stretching into North Northamptonshire as well as from Leicester(&shire).

Housing market

This all makes it the highest house priced settlement in the HMA, which in turn reduces affordability for less well off residents and younger, emerging households. The need for affordable housing therefore reaches higher up the income scale, which has implications for other need because all housing costs are higher and more need to rely on social renting.

It should also mean that there would be greater demand for intermediate housing products, but because the prices for these have been driven by the higher local house prices, this appears to have met with limited success in addressing need. In particular demand for shared ownership apartments and flats in a town like market Harborough may be limited because of aspirations and competition from private renting. In the current market it is likely that demand for shared ownership has fallen substantially, but intermediate renting could still have a strong role in Market Harborough.

Demand and need

Market Harborough is quite attractive to better off, older households, and has seen several developments for retired people. Specialist schemes may have a limited appeal, however, and many in the 'young old', 'empty nesters' demographic cohort still want houses, with spare rooms, gardens and parking spaces, which apartments do not often provide.

So encouragement of products and pricing that would attract this group could release larger family housing not only in the town but in other settlements and surrounding rural areas. This could include bungalows, and careful, creative design can limit the amount of land they take. Design and construction to allow for extension and adding of floors could make future use more flexible and allow for effective addition to housing supply without further land take.

At the same time demand and need from younger, emerging and less well off households is also pressing due to higher local house prices, and provision should be increased for these groups where possible to help maintain a social and age mix, or many may be forced to move to areas with cheaper housing such as Desford, Rothwell, Corby and Kettering.

Hinckley, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough

In the south west of the county, Hinckley is often considered to have strong links with Nuneaton and Coventry as much as with Leicester. Hinckley is a traditional centre of the hosiery industry, and has a history of engineering. The town's central location and good links to the UK motorway network have made it a popular location for distribution warehouses.

Housing market

The housing market in the town has a range of types and sizes including relatively reasonably priced entry level properties, which in a more stable and affordable market would provide an effective housing ladder for most lifestages and lifestyles. Hinckley is directly linked to Burbage, which has larger and more expensive housing and a village aspect, with older households more prevalent. Earl Shilton and Barwell might also be considered to form a slightly detached adjunct to Hinckley itself.

Demand and need

The main housing policy objectives should be to maintain and improve this balanced mix and promote a stable, balanced housing market, encouraging appropriate affordable housing for emerging and less well off households in most submarkets in the borough. However provision of additional social rented housing in Wykin and Earl Shilton should be carefully considered and aim to complement existing provision rather than simply add to general needs social rented housing. These areas could also benefit from tenure diversification and addition of moderately priced entry level family houses to buy.

Other policies with implications for housing

More generally policies need to encourage younger households into the town by attracting employers, improving employment opportunities and building a wider economic base.

Loughborough, Charnwood

Loughborough is the largest county town with a population of some 60,000. At this substantial size and with its central location between Leicester, Nottingham and Derby, a strong local identity including its own evening newspaper, large university and surrounding hinterland of villages and smaller settlements, in housing market terms it probably merits forming the centre of a subsidiary housing market area to properly understand its housing market and plan most effectively.

Housing market

Loughborough has the wide range of household and lifestage types, lifestyles, and housing types and costs expected of a town of this size, including quite

large estates of social housing and a sizeable ethnic minority community of Bangladeshis.

Expansion is already taking place in Woodthorpe to the south, and further Sustainable Urban Extensions to the west are planned. Current housing market turbulence notwithstanding, the market housing in these will need to compete effectively on with other nearby expansion areas including growth points in the three cities of the East Midlands and possible Ecotowns near Leicester and Rushcliffe, Nottinghamshire.

Other policies with implications for housing

Careful planning of these urban extensions could also help provide substantial amounts of the more affordable housing needed for Loughborough and surrounding areas in a variety of types, sizes and tenures, provided that links to the main urban areas are good.

Students constitute approaching a quarter of the population of Loughborough town in term time and form a particular segment of the housing market with its own dynamics, considered in Appendix 6. Extensive development of student housing schemes by the private sector over recent years, coupled with the growth of buy to let and with an increase in 'city centre' type flats has all led to an oversupply in this segment, which will need to be managed strategically to avoid problems of decline and empty properties, especially as the numbers of migrant workers falls, as they have often created a replacement demand for these properties.

However this could create opportunities for family housing to be brought back into use for families through either sale or rent, but some areas may need policy input to help them become more attractive to families again, and may need to 'cross thresholds' so they are not seen as predominantly student areas.

Bangladeshi households do not appear to be spreading and integrating as much as many migrant communities do over time, and this may become a source of concern about a pattern of ethnic separation and 'parallel lives' developing. However other evidence suggests that this is as much a result of the economic circumstances and behaviour patterns of that community as to any lack of opportunity within the housing market.

Melton Mowbray, Melton

Melton Mowbray is moderately less well connected to Leicester city by road links than other county towns, although there is a rail connection. It is in a more rural, less densely populated area, and is less linked to Leicester for travel to work patterns, and is a similar distance from Nottingham and Grantham so also has connections to these larger urban centres. It is attractive to wealthier and retired households, like Market Harborough or nearby Oakham in Rutland, with which Melton has quite strong connections

and shared a separate travel to work area prior to the 2001 Census based revisions.

Housing market

Melton Mowbray is has an overall outward appearance of affluence, but this disguises a significant number of lower income households who are likely to need assistance in the local housing market.

Policies need to be implemented to encourage affordable housing and a balanced supply of suitable family housing for middle and lower incomes, as well as housing for smaller households - both starter homes and for downsizing. Care must be taken with the design of new provision to ensure that the homes provided will be appropriate and desirable for their target markets.

Other policies with implications for housing

The town has been subject to the effects of problems facing more rural economies and has seen various measures to increase economic activity, which have had variable levels of success. These policies are set to continue with urban extensions planned, and a southern and western -pass.

This will provide the opportunity for an increase in housing including affordable provision, which will require careful planning and especially awareness of other growth points which will compete with it, and phasing so that there is not oversupply in any size, type or tenure, which is more possible in a smaller and more separated settlement.

The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment was carried out between July 2007 and September 2008, principally by B.Line Housing Information, Three Dragons and Rural Solutions.

The full report, appendices and data models are available on line at :-

http://www.blinehousing.info/LeicSHMA/Leicester_SHMA.htm or
<http://tinyurl.com/6dn14j>