

CHAPTER 2 SPATIAL PORTRAIT

Characteristics of Bolsover District

- 2.1 Character is a way of describing an area in terms of what makes it different or special. There are a number of different ways of describing an area. It can be defined by:
- a) Physical characteristics, such as landscape or landmarks
 - b) Physical connections; the roads and other infrastructure that link places together
 - c) Local features such as the level and types of wildlife spaces and important buildings that make up the district's environmental and cultural heritage
 - d) Where people live, and the available facilities
 - e) The characteristics of the people who live in Bolsover district; their age, health, and whether they are employed
 - f) The economy and job opportunities; what employment opportunities are available for people
 - g) By the patterns of where people work; whether they work in the area where they live or whether they travel to work
 - h) The type of housing available in an area.
- 2.2 The key factors that give Bolsover district its character and that have implications for its future development are set out in the description below.

Physical Setting

- 2.3 Bolsover District covers an area of 160.3 square kilometres and sits in the northeast area of Derbyshire. It shares a long eastern boundary with Nottinghamshire. It is situated at the northern edge of the East Midlands adjoining the southern edge of Yorkshire.
- 2.4 The geology of the district has underpinned settlement patterns. Parts of the district were inhabited during the last ice age, and the limestone gorge at Creswell Crags contains examples of the northernmost cave art in Europe. Creswell Crags is an important archaeological site which is open to visitors and is on the UK tentative List for World Heritage Sites Status.
- 2.5 Most of the district falls within two landscape types: the Derbyshire Coalfield in the west and south of the district, and the Magnesian plateau in the north and east. The Magnesian plateau is a dominant physical feature within the district and the escarpment and ridge provides the setting to two of the district's most impressive buildings: Bolsover Castle, and Hardwick Hall.
- 2.6 Whilst many settlements in the district date from early times, it was during the 19th century that population grew and settlements in the district expanded based on the needs of agriculture and coal mining.

- 2.7 Today the district contains two small towns (Bolsover and Shirebrook) and villages of a wide range of sizes. The rest of the district is predominantly rural with smaller settlements in the countryside.
- 2.8 Following the closure of collieries many former sites have been reclaimed and put to beneficial use as country parks or industrial estates. The district still has a number of brownfield sites remaining, although not all of these are close to services and facilities.

Physical Connections

- 2.9 Bolsover benefits from excellent north-south road links, and is strategically located adjacent to the M1 'growth corridor'. However, proximity to a motorway can be a mixed blessing, due to the associated congestion, noise, and air quality issues that can act as a constraint or deterrent to development.
- 2.10 The busiest roads in Bolsover District are those that form part of the strategic highway network, i.e. the M1 and A38. The key congestion issues are in the south of the district and in particular where the A38 meets the M1 at J28.
- 2.11 A network of 'A' roads runs across the district from east to west, linking the district with nearby sub-regional centres. Elsewhere the local transport networks reflect the semi rural dispersed nature of the district.
- 2.12 The nearest main line stations on the rail network are located in Chesterfield, Mansfield, Worksop, and Alfreton. To the east of the district the Robin Hood railway line runs roughly north/south linking Nottingham and Mansfield with Worksop, with stations in the district at Shirebrook, Whaley Thorns / Langwith, Creswell and Whitwell.

Environmental and Cultural Heritage

- 2.13 Bolsover District contains 7 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, together with 3 local nature reserves, 119 local wildlife sites, and 15 Regionally Important Geological Sites. The range of wildlife sites is diverse and includes ancient woodland, ponds, and water meadows. These sites are home to a range of plant and animal species, some of which are rare. The district also contains country trails, and a network of greenspaces linked by footpaths (green infrastructure). Part of the Sheffield / North East Derbyshire Green Belt extends into the district around Barlborough / Clowne.
- 2.14 In terms of the built environment, the district contains 395 listed buildings and 27 conservation areas. The district is home to a number of 'model village' developments, which have been renovated and improved. Some of the most important buildings in the district are also tourist attractions and include Bolsover Castle (one of English Heritage's top ten sites in the country); and Hardwick Hall, the district's most popular visitor destination.

Where people live and services

- 2.15 Bolsover district is unusual in that it does not contain a single large or dominant town. Instead there are two small towns, Bolsover and Shirebrook. Just over half of the population of the district (around 53%) live in the main settlements of: Bolsover, Clowne, Shirebrook and South Normanton. There are a number of large towns and sub-regional centres just outside the district which offer a wide range of goods and services.
- 2.16 There is no general hospital in the district. Services such as secondary schools and health facilities tend to be concentrated in the towns and larger villages. A recent analysis showed that the settlements with the highest population also had the highest number of services and facilities. A recent survey suggested that a high percentage of residents in the two towns visited their town centres at least once a week. Almost half of the respondents thought their town could have a more distinctive character. The change most people wanted was a wider variety of shops and more independent shops.
- 2.17 Whilst some of the larger villages provide for local needs, some of the district's smaller settlements are without basic facilities such as a shop, school or post office. Residents in many settlements who do not have access to a car can find their choices on employment, shopping or other activities to be very limited. The Settlement Hierarchy Study 2015 provides detailed information on the services available in each settlement.
- 2.18 The Council undertakes regular surveys through its Citizens Panel. The November 2014 survey, 'About the services you receive from us', suggests that on the whole people in the District are satisfied with their area as a place to live with an overall 69% satisfaction recorded.

People

- 2.19 The population of Bolsover district in 2011 was 75,866. This is predicted to rise by around 7.8% to 81,906 by 2033.
- 2.20 The percentage of people living in Bolsover who were born in the UK is higher than the regional and English average. The district is not particularly ethnically diverse, with 96.3% of people describing themselves as 'white British'.
- 2.21 The district has above average population in all age groups over 40 compared to the East Midlands and England averages. The percentage of retired households is also higher than the Region and England as a whole.
- 2.22 Health is a significant issue for people in the district with 24.7% of people saying that their day to day activities are limited by their health, and 8.6% saying they have 'bad' health. Residents of Bolsover district have the highest obesity rates and lowest healthy eating rates in the county. It has high levels of smoking, and high levels of early deaths from cancer and circulatory conditions compared to the rest of the county and England as a whole.

2.23 Although there has been real progress in reducing the number of people in the district without any educational qualifications, this still lags behind the regional and national averages. Similarly, the number of people with a degree or diploma in the district is also below the regional and national averages.

Economy and Employment

2.24 Gross Value Added (GVA) for Bolsover is forecast to rise by an average of 2.9% pa to 2030. This is significantly above the projected Derbyshire, East Midlands and UK rates of growth, and reflects recent high growth rates in the district. Most of the jobs in the district are in 'micro-enterprises' – businesses employing less than 9 employees. This is in line with the regional average. In contrast the district has few 'large' enterprises i.e. those employing 250 people or more.

2.25 At 2013 there were 30,100 employee jobs in the district. Of these 78.1% were full time jobs and 21.9% part time jobs. In terms of the breakdown between full and part time jobs, the percentage of full time jobs is higher than that in the rest of the East Midlands Region and Great Britain. Conversely there are fewer part time jobs in the district compared to the Region and nationally.

2.26 The jobs density within the district (i.e. level of jobs per resident aged 16 – 64) is lower than that in the region or country as a whole.

2.27 In terms of the type of jobs in the district, the percentage of jobs in manufacturing is considerably higher in Bolsover than the rest of the country. A lower percentage of people are employed in the district in the service sector and in public administration, education and health (Compared to other local authorities in Great Britain). The Council's Economic Development Strategy aims to both increase the overall number of jobs in the district and re-balance the type of jobs by aiming to increase the number of higher paid jobs.

2.28 Bolsover is currently forecast to enjoy the fastest rate of employment growth within Derbyshire¹.

Travel Patterns

2.29 The district has fewer than average people working from home than the regional or national levels.

2.30 Bolsover District does not have high frequency or extensive public transport services, and use of public transport is low. It is therefore unsurprising that more people than average travel to work in a car. The average distance people travel to work is 16.7km (6.7 miles).

2.31 There is a substantial level of out commuting by residents in the district to work and this increased between 2001 and 2011. Alongside this there is substantial in-commuting of people from neighbouring areas to work in the district. This

¹ Oxford Economics Forecast August 2013

also increased between 2001 and 2011. Combining these two pictures shows that Bolsover District has more people leaving the district to travel for work to surrounding local authority areas than people travelling to the District for work from surrounding areas.

2.32 In relation to the destinations for both in and out-commuting the District's commuting patterns are strongest with the neighbouring Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire authorities rather than the city and larger authorities of Sheffield, Nottingham, Rotherham, or Derby. In terms of journeys, this picture suggests a greater number of out-commuting journeys along the A632, A38, A617, and A619 corridors rather than the M1.

2.33 In terms of leisure travel, the district has an extensive network of trails that provide good access to the countryside, and there is potential to further enhance this network.

Housing

2.34 At April 2015 there were 35,040 dwellings in the district. In terms of tenure the 2011 Census shows that the majority of homes in the district (67.2%) were owner occupied. This is in line with regional figures, and is more than national figures.

2.35 In terms of the type of accommodation, the percentage of detached and terraced dwellings is roughly in line with the regional/national proportions. However, the district has a slightly higher percentage of semi-detached houses, and low levels of flats / apartments (5.9% compared to 11.7% East Midlands, and 22.1% England). 78% of the District's stock falls within the lower council tax bands A and B, with just 4% of the District's properties being in the higher bands of E and above.

2.36 Whilst there is a significant theoretical need for affordable housing in the district, in reality the private rented sector plays an important role in meeting housing need.

2.37 The condition of the District's housing stock varies between tenures, but generally the highest levels of hazards, disrepair and poor energy efficiency are in private rented stock and pre-1919 stock.

2.38 Viability is a key issue for the district with housing viability being generally marginal. This means that there are likely to be issues around the delivery of affordable housing in the district.

2.39 The average age of first time buyers in the district is a relatively young 28. In terms of affordability, the district enjoys some of the cheapest housing in the East Midlands

Key issues for Bolsover District

2.40 In considering the above and related information a picture of the district can be built up which enables us to define the key challenges facing the district as a whole. This enables us to develop a Local Plan which will ensure that communities are better as a result of implementing the plan. We have recognised that we need to:

- a) **accommodate new growth**, whilst ensuring the character of the district is retained and that major new development is supported by appropriate infrastructure
- b) **protect and enhance** identified heritage, and natural assets
- c) **support regeneration** of the towns and main villages, to enable them to fulfil their role as service centres, coupled with the need to address the regeneration needs of rural settlements and the few remaining large areas of previously developed land in need of restoration or re-use
- d) **improve health outcomes** in a district with an above average percentage of retired people, and people suffering poor health
- e) **improve employment opportunities** in the district by increasing the number and range of jobs in the district
- f) **provide significantly greater local job opportunities** to reduce out-commuting, improve sustainability and also to avoid the danger of turning some towns and main villages into 'dormitories' rather than settlements where people can live and work
- g) **ensure the delivery of new housing** in an area of marginal viability where deliverability has been challenging
- h) **put place making and development quality** at the heart of new development
- i) **provide improved accessibility to better areas of green space**