CHAPTER 2 – SPATIAL PORTRAIT

CHARACTERISTICS OF BOLSOVER DISTRICT

2.1   Character is a way of describing an area in terms of what makes it distinctive 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) 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 north-east area of Derbyshire. The District adjoins North East Derbyshire District and Chesterfield Borough to the west, and the north east section of Amber Valley Borough to the south. The District shares a long eastern boundary with Nottinghamshire County Council and the districts of Bassetlaw, Mansfield and Ashfield to the south. The District is also situated at the northern edge of the East Midlands adjoining the southern edge of South Yorkshire.

2.4   The geology of the District has influenced settlement patterns. The Landscape Character of Derbyshire (2003) identifies that 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.

2.5   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. 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.

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 comprises of two small towns (Bolsover and Shirebrook); two emerging towns (South Normanton and Clowne) and villages of a wide range of sizes. The rest of the District is predominantly rural with smaller settlements in the countryside. Within the past 5 years the District has increased the number of dwellings built per year; which has increased the size of the larger settlements and in turn increased the need for services and facilities in Bolsover, Shirebrook, South Normanton and Clowne.

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. Since 2005 the District has maintained fairly high levels of development on previously developed land, until 2016/17 when the level dropped. It is important for the future of the District to maintain the level of development on previously developed land to retain the character of the area.

2.9   In view of the shape and nature of the district, the Policies Map is divided into three sections, Northern, Central and Southern.

PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS

2.10   Bolsover District benefits from excellent north-south road links and is strategically located adjacent to the M1 'growth corridor'. Being so close to the motorway means that the local communities and businesses benefit from high quality road transport links. However, proximity to a motorway can be also lead to concerns over congestion, noise, and air quality issues that can act as a constraint or deterrent to development.

2.11   The busiest roads in Bolsover District are those that form part of the strategic highway network, i.e. the M1 and A38. The Council's transport evidence base, as summarised in the Interim Transport Evidence Information Note (April 2015), identifies that the key congestion issues are in the south of the district and in particular where the A38 meets the M1 at J28. Junction 30 also lies within the District and Junctions 29 and 29a are located just outside in North East Derbyshire District.

2.12   A network of 'A' roads run 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.

Figure 2A: The District
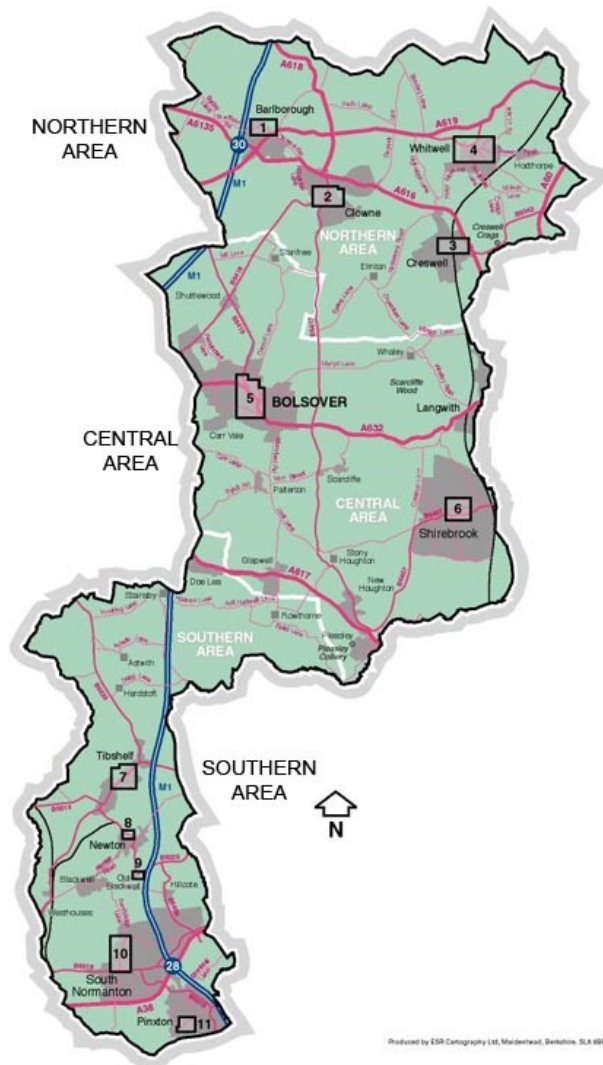
2.13   The nearest main line stations on the rail network are located in Chesterfield and Alfreton. To the east of the District the Robin Hood railway line runs roughly north / south linking Nottingham and Mansfield with Worksop, with stations in the District at Shirebrook, Whaley Thorns / Langwith, Creswell and Whitwell.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

2.14   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 District has done especially well in retaining the local Sites of Special Scientific Interest. 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.

2.15　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, the most recent of which is Bolsover Model Village; a £10million project to breathe new life into the area, carrying out essential repairs and restoring original architectural features. 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. In addition, the District contains numerous archaeological assets, such as Creswell Crags, an important archaeological site which is open to visitors and is on the UK tentative List for World Heritage Sites Status.

2.16　Consultation responses have indicated that many people in the district value the District's natural and built heritage and the character of the district.

Image of Bolsover Model Village link to paragraphs on Environmental and Cultural Heritage

Image of Creswell Crags link to paragraphs on Environmental and Cultural Heritage

WHERE PEOPLE LIVE AND SERVICES

2.17　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, and two 'emerging towns': Clowne and South Normanton. Just over half of the population of the District (around 53%) live in these four main settlements. There are a number of large towns and sub-regional centres just outside the District which offer a wide range of goods and services. For a wider range of services and facilities the north of the District is most likely to be attracted to Chesterfield Town and Sheffield City, whereas the south will be mostly be attracted to Mansfield Town and the cities of Derby and Nottingham.

2.18　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. In general terms, recent analysis indicated that settlements with the higher populations also had the higher levels of services and facilities. The Citizen's Panel survey, 'About the services you receive from us' (November 2014), 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. Overall, the survey 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.

2.19　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 (March 2018) provides detailed information on the services available in each settlement.

PEOPLE

2.20   At the time of the 2011 Census, the population of Bolsover District was 75,866. The percentage of people living in Bolsover who were born in the UK is higher than the regional and English average and not particularly ethnically diverse, with 96.3% of people describing themselves as 'white British'. In 2015 Bolsover District ranked 87th in the most deprived Local Authority Districts in England. This was an improvement on the 2010 figures and reflects the wider improvements within the district.

2.21   The District has a generally older population with an 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. In 2016 the percentage of people aged 65 or over in the District was 20% of the population.

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 has a whole.

2.23   The 2011 Census also identified that although there has been real progress in increasing the number of people in the District with an educational qualification, the District still lags behind the regional and national averages. Similarly, the number of people with a degree or diploma in the District is below the regional and national averages.

2.24   In the ONS 2014 Sub-National Population Estimates (August 2016), the population for the District is predicted to rise by around 10.2% to 83,626 by 2033. The number of households is expected to grow by 12.7% to 37,712 over the same period.

ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

2.25   The Oxford Economics Forecast (August 2013) identifies that the Gross Value Added (GVA) for Bolsover District is forecast to rise by an average of 2.9% pa to 2030 and that the District is forecast to enjoy the fastest rate of employment growth within Derbyshire. This is significantly above the projected rates of growth for Derbyshire, East Midlands and UK, 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.

2.26   The Forecast also identifies that 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. 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. The level of unemployment within the District fell between 2016 and 2017 from 1.5% to 1.0%.

2.27   In terms of the type of jobs in the District, the three main industries are; Manufacturing; Wholesale and Retail Trade; and Administrative and Support Services. 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 Human Health and Social Work and Financial and Insurance sectors (compared to UK as a whole).[1]

2.28   The Council's Growth Strategy (March 2015) 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 skilled and higher paid jobs.

Image of Barlborough Links link to paragraphs on Economy and Employment

TRAVEL PATTERNS

2.29   Based on the 2011 Census, 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 relatively low. It is therefore unsurprising that more people than average travel to work by car. The average distance people travel to work is 16.5km (10.3 miles).

2.31   There is a substantial level of out-commuting to work by residents in the District and this increased between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses. Alongside this there is substantial in-commuting of people from neighbouring areas to work in the District. This 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 2011 Census shows that the District's commuting patterns are strongest with the neighbouring Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire authorities rather than the city

[1] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157134/report.aspx?town=Bolsover#tabempunemp

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. These trails and greenways have consistently been increased and added to every year since the last Local Plan was adopted.

HOUSING

2.34   The Settlement Hierarchy Study (April 2018) estimated that there were 36,063 dwellings in the District. Within the past 5 years the District has slowly started to increase the number of dwellings built per year, increasing the size of the larger settlements. Between 2014/15, and 2016/17, the number of completions exceeded the annual requirement. This helps the District to accommodate the growth in population which was expected in the last Census. 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 the national average.

2.35   In terms of the type of accommodation, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA - November 2013) used the 2011 Census to identify that 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 lower levels of flats / apartments (5.9% compared to 11.7% for the East Midlands and 22.1% for England). In March 2018, 76.4% of the District's housing stock was in the lowest bands A and B, and only 3.04% in band E.

2.36   The 2011 census indicated that the private rented sector stands at around 13%. Whilst there appears to be a significant theoretical need for affordable housing in the district, the SHMA notes that in reality the private rented sector plays a significant role in meeting housing need.

2.37   The Council's Economic Development and Housing Strategy (March 2015) identifies that 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. This raises an important point in that whilst the private rented sector plays a significant role in meeting housing need, it is often at the cost of poor quality housing

2.38   The District has seen an increase in housing completions in recent years, generally indicating improving viability. The evidence underpinning the Whole Plan Viability Assessment (March 2018) identifies an improving situation regarding house prices, particularly in settlements on the western side of the District. Despite this, Bolsover District still has lower house prices than the region and national averages and as a result housing development viability remains challenging across the District, which can make delivery of affordable housing difficult.

2.39   In terms of affordability, the district enjoys some of the cheapest housing in the East Midlands. The Governments UK House Price Index of December 2017, indicated that whilst the average price across the UK was £226,756, the East Midlands average was only £185,694, and for Bolsover District it was only £121,417.

Image of The Edge housing development, Clowne link to paragraphs on Housing

KEY ISSUES FOR BOLSOVER DISTRICT

2.40   In considering the above and related information, a picture of the area 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.

2.41   In this regard we have identified that we need a Local Plan which will:

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.