

Charnwood Local Plan

Sustainability Appraisal:

**Housing and employment
strategy**

Interim SA Report

Non-technical summary

April 2018

<i>Project Role</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Actions Summary</i>	<i>Date</i>
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Introduction

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 AECOM is a professional consultancy that has been commissioned by Charnwood Borough Council to undertake a sustainability appraisal (SA) in support of the new Local Plan (the 'Plan').
- 1.1.2 A sustainability appraisal is a process used to predict what effects a plan could have on the environment, the economy and on communities. The important stages are:
- *Scoping* – Which involves gathering information to identify what the key issues are
 - *Testing alternatives* – This involves looking at different ways that the plan can manage development in Charnwood such as housing and employment growth.
 - *Appraising the Plan* – *Once a plan has been prepared, it is appraised 'as a whole' to understand the benefits and issues that the plan could have. The SA is also a place where recommendations are made for improving the plan.*
- 1.1.3 The new Local Plan will be a single plan (rather than multiple documents) that covers a longer time period. The main purpose of the plan will be to set out how much and where new homes and employment land should be located.
- 1.1.4 As an early stage of plan-making, the Council has been looking at different options for meeting its development needs up to 2036. The SA involves looking at the pros and cons of each approach and will help to inform the preferred approach to the Plan.
- 1.1.5 The Interim SA Report presents the findings of the SA work undertaken at this stage.

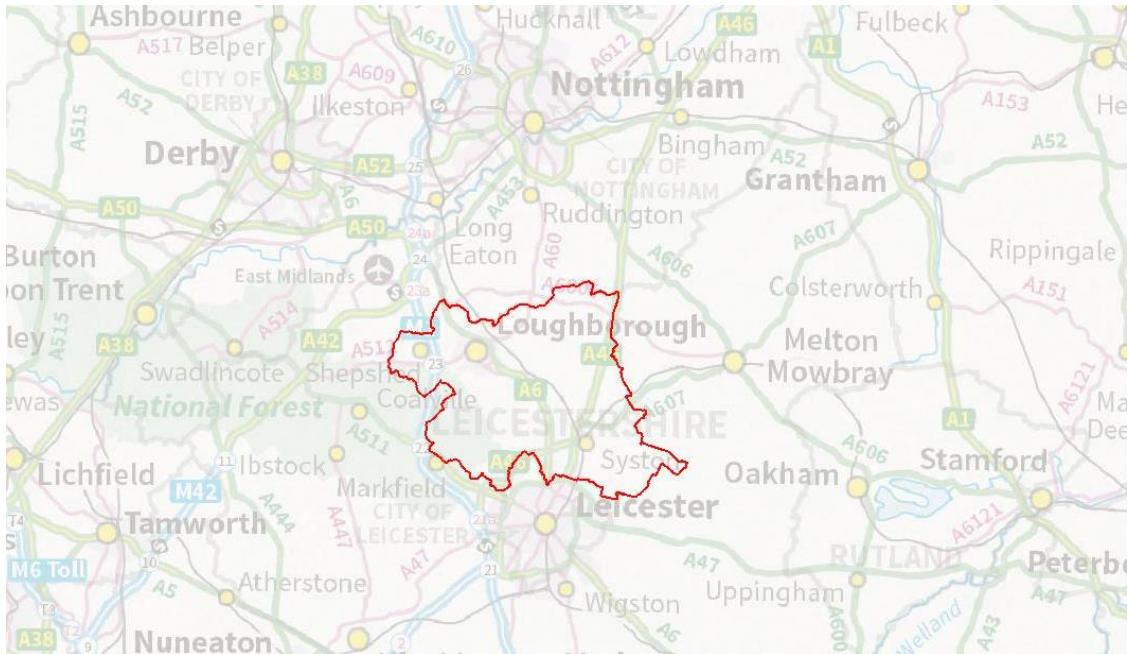
1.2 Overview of the plan area

- 1.2.1 Charnwood is one of seven Leicestershire districts located around the city of Leicester (which form the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area).
- 1.2.2 As illustrated on figure 1.1 below, Charnwood (demarked by a red boundary) directly borders Leicester to the south, whilst Nottingham and Derby are within relatively close proximity to the north and provide sources of employment.
- 1.2.3 The borough is well connected with access to both the M1 motorway to the west and East Midlands Railway Line to the east. Given its strong links with key centres of population, and cross border features such as the Charnwood Forest, there is a need to consider the Plan in its wider context.
- 1.2.4 Like many parts of the UK, there is pressure for housing development to support a growing, aging and changing demographic.
- 1.2.5 Charnwood's main centre is Loughborough, which is home to a renowned university and is a key location for economic growth. A range of smaller settlements are dotted across the Borough, with several service centres dotted along the Soar Valley along

the A6. A larger number of smaller settlements are located within the plan area, with relatively large areas of countryside.

- 1.2.6 The Charnwood Forest is a key natural feature within the Borough which forms part of the larger National Forest that runs across North West Leicestershire.

Figure 1.1 - The Local Plan area



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Scoping

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2 SCOPING

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 The Scoping stage of the SA process is used to identify the key issues that should be the focus of the appraisal, as well as the assessment methodologies.
- 2.1.2 A Scoping Report was prepared and published for consultation in January 2017. Following consideration of the comments received, the scope of the SA has been determined and has provided the baseline position against which appraisals have been undertaken.
- 2.1.3 It should be noted that the scope of the SA changes over time and will be updated throughout the plan making process to reflect new evidence and trends.

2.2 Key issues

- 2.2.1 The key issues identified through the scoping process so far are summarised in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Key sustainability issues identified through scoping

Landscape Character

- Pressure on landscape character and condition from habitat fragmentation, urban intrusion and commercial agriculture intensification in several LCAs.
- Maintaining settlement and landscape identity caused by pressure on open land between settlements particularly within the Soar and Wreake valleys.
- The amount of area of relative tranquillity within Charnwood is declining. There is a lack of tranquillity surrounding Loughborough, Shepshed, Leicester, the Soar Valley and the M1 corridor.
- Infrastructure and development are creating barriers within the Borough, particularly restricting movement between east to west.
- There is a large-scale programme of afforestation in the National Forest area of the Borough, which contributes to LCA objectives for Charnwood Forest.

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

- Loss and fragmentation of habitats, leading to potential harm to species due to development pressure.
- Condition of many designated sites (SSSIs) is unfavourable.
- Important habitats and species in the Borough are vulnerable to the effects of climate change.
- The Soar Valley and Charnwood Forest are important areas for nature conservation.

Table 2.1: Key sustainability issues identified through scoping

Water Environment

- The ecological quality of the Borough's watercourses is generally low, with several watercourses failing to meet WFD objectives.
- Water resources in the Borough experience a moderate level of stress. The regional water resources strategy aims to reduce water demand and improve water usage, reducing the impact of water abstraction on the water environment.
- The Borough provides public water supply storage for other areas in the region.
- There is some pressure on water resources from the quarrying and aggregate industries and agriculture.
- Future development may place pressure on existing water treatment facilities requiring upgrade or expansion of treatment systems to ensure no detriment to the quality of receiving watercourses.
- The rivers Soar and Wreake are the principal sources of flooding in the Borough.
- Climate change is likely to cause a significant increase in flood risk.
- Flooding has the potential to mobilise contaminants in the Borough.
- There are a relatively limited number of sustainable drainage (SuDS) schemes in the Borough.

Land

- The Borough has a variety of important geological sites.
- Good quality agricultural land is at risk from development.
- Modern agricultural practices are leading to increased soil erosion.
- There are a number of contaminated sites within the Borough, with a cluster of historic landfills in the Soar Valley.

Historic Environment

- There are a significant number of heritage assets in the Borough that need to be preserved.
- There are a number of heritage assets at risk, several of which do not have a plan in place to provide protection and restoration.
- Heritage assets not legally protected are at risk from development.
- Development may adversely affect the setting of heritage assets.

Table 2.1: Key sustainability issues identified through scoping

<p>Air Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loughborough, Syston and Mountsorrel suffer from poor air quality.• Increased congestion could lead to degradation in air quality of the Borough.
<p>Climate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Borough is predicted to have increased summer temperatures, decreased summer rainfall, increased winter rainfall and increased frequency of severe weather events.• Increased rainfall and severe weather events increase the flood risk.• Biodiversity may be negatively impacted by climate change, particularly along the Borough's watercourses.• There is significant potential for renewable energy generation in the Borough.• There is increased risk to public health due to increased summer temperatures and increased flood risk.• Increased population and increased development may increase the Borough's greenhouse gas emissions.
<p>Population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The population of the Borough is increasing and Charnwood has a very high population density. This is increasing pressure on community services and facilities, and housing provision in the Borough.• High student population in Loughborough places pressure on the town and its permanent residents.• Educational attainment levels in the Borough are slightly lower than the national average.• There are pockets of deprivation, with five of Leicestershire's 10 most deprived areas within the Borough.• Crime and community safety is a cause of concern for the local population.• Domestic abuse incidents have increased in the Borough.• The Borough has the highest NEET rate in Leicestershire.
<p>Human Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is considerable variation in life expectancy between people living in the least deprived and most deprived areas of the Borough.• The Borough has higher than the national average levels of adult and child obesity.

Table 2.1: Key sustainability issues identified through scoping

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are a falling number of smokers and smoking-related deaths in the Borough.
<p>Local Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The local economy is relatively strong, with a lower than average unemployment rate.• Scientific and high-technology industries are growing in the Borough, providing economic diversification.• Average salary rates are less than the national average.• There is a significant difference between male and female average salaries.
<p>Material Assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a lack of accessibility and public transport infrastructure in rural areas such as The Wolds.• Car use is increasing and the number of cars is predicted to grow significantly in the future, which will place additional pressure on the road transport network serving the Borough.• There is a relative lack of footpaths in the east of the Borough.• The cycle network is improving, particularly in Loughborough and the Soar Valley.• Some rural areas suffer from limited accessibility to services.• There is a deficiency of parks and open spaces in Loughborough.• There is a lack of accessibility to open space, particularly in Shepshed and some rural service centres.• Green infrastructure, including green wedges, are under pressure from development.
<p>Waste and Minerals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whilst Charnwood has a relatively high rate of recycling and composting, more than 50% of waste is not treated in these ways.• Future population growth is likely to place increased pressure on waste management systems and facilities.• There continues to be significant mineral extraction in the Borough.

2.3 SA Framework

2.3.1 Table 2.2 sets out fourteen SA objectives that have been established as a result of the scoping process (i.e. by establishing the key issues that need to be addressed through the SA process). Each SA objective is supported by a list of sub-criteria to help guide the appraisals.

2.3.2 The SA Framework forms a basis for the appraisal of all elements of the Plan, and any alternative approaches. Essentially, the SA seeks to determine how the Plan performs in relation to each of the SA Objectives and whether the proposals would lead to significant effects or not.

Table 2.2: The SA Framework (Objectives and supporting criteria)

SA objectives	Supporting criteria
<p>1. Landscape - Protect and enhance the integrity and quality of the Borough's urban and rural landscapes, maintaining local distinctiveness and sense of place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protect and enhance landscape character in accordance with management objectives. - Maintain settlement identity and prevent coalescence. - Protect and enhance areas of tranquillity. - Promote schemes designed to promote the diversity of landscape and built character into new development. - Minimise detrimental visual intrusion. - Minimise light pollution.
<p>2. Biodiversity and nature conservation - Protect and enhance biodiversity, habitats and species</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protect and enhance designated sites including SSSIs, LNRs and LWSs. - Protect and enhance priority habitats and species. - Contribute to the protection and creation of new BAP habitats. - Avoid habitat fragmentation and increase connectivity of habitats. - Enhance community engagement with biodiversity. - Encourage the protection and provision of green and open spaces.
<p>3. Water Quality - Protect and improve the quality and quantity of the water in the Borough's surface and groundwaters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to the achievement of WFD objectives. - Encourage sustainable and efficient management of water resources. - Protect and where possible improve drinking water quality. - Improve water quality in the Borough's watercourses. - Enhancement and recreation of natural watercourses. - Increase the use of SuDS.

SA objectives	Supporting criteria
<p>4. Flood Risk – Reduce the risk of flooding to existing communities and ensure no new developments are at risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimise the risk of flooding to people and properties. - Promote and increase the use of SuDS that result in Greenfield or better run-off rates. - Only development appropriate to the Flood Zone shall take place. - All new development takes account of the 2016 Climate Change allowances.
<p>5. Land - Protect the Borough's soil resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce soil erosion and protect and enhance soil quality and quantity. - Minimise the loss of Grade 2 and Grade 3a ALC land. - Reduce contamination of soils from development, industry or agriculture. - Promote the use of brownfield land for development where possible. - Increase the remediation and regeneration of contaminated land.
<p>6. Air quality - Improve local air quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and improve local air quality. - Promote measures that will remove the occurrence of AQMAs. - Reduce the impacts on air quality from transport. - Mitigate against the uses that generate NO2 or other particulates.
<p>7. Climate change - Reduce the impacts of climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliver schemes that promote habitat and species resilience and adaptability to the effects of climate change. - Promote measures that minimise greenhouse gas emissions. - Minimise the likely impacts of climate change through promotion of appropriate adaptation measures in new development. - Promote the development of renewable energy generation. - Promote water efficiency measures in new development. - Reduce waste and increase reuse, recycling and energy produced of waste. - Promote measures that reduce the need to travel and travel distances. - Promote measures to reduce the need to travel by car. - Promote use of public transport.

SA objectives	Supporting criteria
<p>8. Historic environment - Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conserve and enhance designated heritage features. - Maintain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of Conservation Areas and settlements. - Promote high-quality design. - Promote heritage based sustainable tourism. - Provide for increased access to and enjoyment of the historic environment. - Provide for increased access and enjoyment of the historic environment. - Promote heritage-led regeneration. - Increase the social benefit derived from the historic environment.
<p>9. Population – Reduce poverty and deprivation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase community engagement and decision-making. - Increase racial and gender equality and community cohesion. - Reduce poverty and social exclusion. - Reduce crime and the fear of crime.
<p>10. Population - Promote healthy and active lifestyles in the Borough</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase access to high quality healthcare facilities. - Promote active and healthy lifestyles. - Promote recreational and leisure opportunities and access to open space. - Increase regular participation in physical activities and sport.
<p>11. Population - Improve access to affordable housing and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures within local communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide an adequate supply of housing. - Reduce homelessness. - Make best use of existing housing stock. - Provide quality and flexible homes that meet the needs of the community

SA objectives	Supporting criteria
<p>12. Local economy - Promote a sustainable and diversified economy, and improve skills and employability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote retention of existing jobs and create new employment opportunities. - Increase diversity in the range of job opportunities. - Ensure an adequate supply of a range of sites in terms of types and quality for employment uses. - Improve access to opportunities for education, learning and skills training for all sectors of the community. - Support the creation of flexible jobs to meet the changing needs of the population.
<p>13. Material assets - Increase access to a wide range of services and facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including healthcare, education, retail and leisure. - Promote the development of a range of high quality, accessible community, cultural and leisure facilities. - Maintain and enhance rural facilities. - Increase voluntary and community infrastructure.
<p>14. Mineral resources - Ensure sustainable management of the Borough's mineral resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the retention of mineral workings for biodiversity, landscape and the general public. - Reduce the use of minerals and increase the reuse of material on and off site. - Safeguard the existing development from the environmental effects of mineral workings.

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Appraising alternatives

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3 APPRAISING ALTERNATIVES

3.1 Identifying and appraising alternatives

- 3.1.1 An important stage of the SA process is the consideration of alternative approaches and options for delivering the objectives of the Plan.
- 3.1.2 Appraisal of reasonable alternatives allows for a fair comparison of different strategies, policy approaches and site options to be undertaken. The findings of appraisal can then help to inform decisions about the Plan approach.
- 3.1.3 An important aspect of an effective SA is to help stakeholders (i.e. businesses, communities, developers, statutory bodies) understand the benefits, constraints and opportunities associated with different strategies, policy approaches and site options.
- 3.1.4 The key issues identified by the Council at this stage of Plan making relate to the following plan elements.
- Housing growth and distribution
 - Broad approaches to employment land delivery
- 3.1.5 For each of these issues, a range of alternatives have been considered and those that have been found to be reasonable have been appraised through the SA Framework.

3.2 Alternatives for housing

When looking at options for housing growth and distribution, it is considered less meaningful to test growth scenarios without an understanding of where this growth would be located. Therefore, the options have been identified by looking at both growth and distribution approaches at the same time.

Housing Need

- 3.2.1 The evidence relating to housing needs suggests that there is a need for 24,850 dwellings for Charnwood Borough over the Plan period.
- 3.2.2 Taking away developments that are already expected to be built because they have planning permission or are allocated in the current Plan, leaves a 'to be found' figure of 8,100 new homes over the plan period.
- 3.2.3 The first growth option is therefore to plan to meet this level of need through the allocation of land to deliver 8,100 homes.
- 3.2.4 It is considered unreasonable to provide for housing land below this level as there is no evidence to suggest that there are substantial constraints to the delivery of the housing needs
- 3.2.5 A second growth option has been identified that would provide land for the delivery of 15,700 homes. This higher provision scenario reflects the need for flexibility in the instance that allocated or committed sites do not come forward as anticipated, as well

as accounting for lead-in times and build-out rates. This is a reasonable alternative as it helps to understand the effects of allocating substantially more land to meet housing needs within the plan period.

- 3.2.6 It would be possible to test a very large number of additional growth options lying between these two housing allocation options (8,100 / 15,700). However, at this stage it is considered proportionate and appropriate to compare just these two distinct levels of housing delivery. This will allow for a good understanding of the implications of land release. The growth options are sufficiently distinct to allow meaningful conclusions to be reached and to inform debate about the relative merits of such approaches.

Housing distribution

- 3.2.7 Strategic options for the distribution of new housing development have been identified taking account of the land known to be available as indicated by landowners.
- 3.2.8 A large number of options could be explored, but there is a need to ensure that options are meaningful, discrete and deliverable. It is also necessary to limit the number of alternatives that are tested and presented for consultation to aid in the decision-making process. Too many options can make it difficult for stakeholders to engage.
- 3.2.9 With these factors in mind, the following approaches to distribution have been identified as reasonable. These differ according to how much focus is placed on the larger settlements (Leicester urban area and Loughborough), the medium sized settlements (Service Centres), and the smaller settlements (villages). The potential for entirely new settlements has also been explored for some options.

Table 3.1: Approaches to the distribution of housing

Distribution Strategy	Description / Assumptions
Leicester & Loughborough focus	Development focussed on key urban areas firstly at the edge of Leicester Urban Area (edge of Leicester, Birstall, Thurmaston and Syston) and then the Loughborough Urban Area (Loughborough and Shepshed). Development capacity maximised at higher level in settlement hierarchy before capacity taken at next settlement tier.
Leicester & Loughborough + Service Centres	Development focused on Leicester, then Loughborough, with remainder of development focussed on Service Centres. Development capacity maximised at Leicester in settlement hierarchy before capacity taken at next settlement tier. Remainder of housing distributed between Loughborough/ Shepshed and Service Centres to reflect hierarchy.
Settlement Hierarchy distribution	Development focused on Leicester, then Loughborough, with remainder of development focussed on Service Centres. Development capacity maximised at Leicester in settlement hierarchy before capacity taken at next settlement tier. Remainder of housing distributed between Loughborough/ Shepshed, Service Centres and Other Settlements to reflect hierarchy.

Distribution Strategy	Description / Assumptions
Proportionate Distribution	Housing distributed across settlement hierarchy in proportion to the population of each settlement hierarchy tier.
Leicester & Loughborough + New Settlements	Development at Leicester and New Settlements maximised, remainder focussed at Loughborough.
Leicester & Loughborough + Service Centres + New Settlements	Development at Leicester and new settlements maximised, with remainder of development distributed between Loughborough and Service Centres to reflect hierarchy.
Large Standalone new settlement	A development strategy based around new settlements is brought out as an alternative to be considered, as this strategy has been favoured by some respondents to consultations on the Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy. However, a reliance on this approach alone is considered to be an unreasonable approach to the delivery of housing within the plan period (see below).

3.2.10 Other broad approaches to distribution were identified but dismissed as unreasonable. The outline reasons for this are presented below:

Focus on growth at smaller settlements: This approach was dismissed as unreasonable as it would not reflect the settlement hierarchy and would not meet the Plan Objectives that seek to achieve growth in key locations.

Focus on a large standalone settlement: Responses to consultations on the Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy suggested a new standalone settlement as a means of meeting the borough's housing need. Evidence suggests however that a new settlement option is unlikely to deliver housing before 2030 and therefore unlikely to meet housing need in the period covered by the new local plan; the option therefore may not be considered to be a reasonable alternative.

Given the long lead in times for a standalone new settlement the option may only represent a longer term strategy for Charnwood's development needs beyond the 2036. If a new settlement is considered to be an appropriate strategy for meeting the borough's development needs in the longer term it might be sensible to identify and plan for it now rather than leave it to the next plan.

Despite being considered unreasonable, the option is included within the sustainability appraisal to recognise previous consultation responses to the Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy, and is intended to inform public debate on how Charnwood meets its development needs both up to 2036 and beyond.

Combining growth and distribution alternatives

3.2.11 In order to give the appraisal context and meaning, the two growth scenarios were combined with each of the six high-level spatial options. This is to allow for a broad understanding of effects to be identified for each of the spatial options, and how these effects would differ should the level of growth be higher or lower.

3.2.12 This combination resulted in ten discrete options that have been tested in the SA (see table 3.2 below). Two of the distribution alternatives (B1 and B5) were not reasonable at the higher level of growth, as there is insufficient land capacity identified for these to be delivered.

3.2.13 A further scenario (Scenario C) was identified to explore the potential for a large standalone settlement. This is not related to either Scenario A or B with regards to growth or distribution, and therefore, is considered as a distinct scenario.

Table 3.2: High level reasonable alternatives for housing strategy

Distribution Strategy	Housing land delivery		
	Scenario A (8100)	Scenario B (15,700)	Scenario C (8,810-10,810)
Leicester & Loughborough focus	Option A1	/	/
Leicester & Loughborough + Service Centres	Option A2	Option B2	/
Settlement Hierarchy distribution	Option A3	Option B4	/
Proportionate distribution by settlement size	Option A4	Option B4	/
Leicester & Loughborough + New Settlements	Option A5	/	/
Leicester & Loughborough + Service Centres + New Settlements	Option A6	Option B6	/
Standalone new settlement	/	/	Option C1

Appraisal of the reasonable alternatives

3.2.14 The findings of the detailed appraisals are summarised in this section below, preceded by a short discussion of the methods used to determine significance.

Visual representation of the effects

3.2.15 **Table 3.3** (page 27) sets out a visual summary of the effects associated with each of the housing options.

3.2.16 The table has been compiled from the detailed assessments within Appendix B of the interim SA Report.

3.2.17 The significance tables below explain what each score in table 3.3 actually means; and are used to identify whether effects are positive, negative or neutral and most importantly whether these effects could be significant.

3.2.18 For each housing option illustrated in table 3.3, one of the following symbols has been allocated for each SA objective to determine the significance of the effects on a borough-wide basis.

Effects Significance	Effects symbol
<i>Significant positive effects</i>	++
<i>Minor positive effects</i>	+
<i>Neutral effects</i>	0
<i>Minor negative effect</i>	-
<i>Significant negative effect</i>	--

Uncertain effects	Effects symbol
<i>Uncertain significant positive effect</i>	++?
<i>Uncertain minor positive effect</i>	+?
<i>Uncertain effects</i>	?
<i>Uncertain minor negative effect</i>	-?
<i>Uncertain significant positive effect</i>	++?

3.2.19 Where there is uncertainty, the nature of such effects has been identified. For example, an uncertain negative effect would be recorded if there is a chance that negative effects could occur but this is dependent upon the precise location of development.

3.2.20 It may still be possible to rule out significant effects though, and so the unknown effect may be recorded as minor or potentially significant.

Table 3.3 Housing options: Summary of appraisal findings

	Landscape character	Biodiversity	Water quality	Flood Risk	Soil resources	Air quality	Climate change	Historic Environment	Deprivation	Healthy lifestyles	Housing	Local Economy	Accessibility	Minerals
Scenario A – 8,100 homes														
Option A1	-	-	-	-	--	-	++	-	++	+	+ [?]	++	+	-
Option A2	-	-	-	0	--	-	+	-	+	+	+	++	+	-
Option A3	-- [?]	-	-	0	--	- [?]	0	- [?]	+	0	+	++	+	-
Option A4	--	- [?]	-	0	--	- [?]	-	-	+ [?]	0	+	+	+	-
Option A5	-	- [?]	0	0	--	-	- [?]	- [?]	+	+	+ [?]	+	+ [?]	-
Option A6	-	- [?]	0	0	--	-	- [?]	- [?]	+	+	+	+	0	-
Scenario B – 15,700 homes														
Option B2	--	--	-	--	--	--	+	--	++	+	++	++	++	-
Option B3	--	--	-	-	--	--	+	--	++	+	++	++	++	-
Option B4	--	--	-	-	--	--	-	--	+	+ [?]	++	++	-	-
Option B6	--	--	-	-	--	--	- [?]	--	++	++	++	++	++	-
Scenario C – Standalone settlement														
Option C1	-	0 [?]	?	0	--	-- [?]	- [?]	- [?]	0	+	+	-	+	- [?]

Summary of effects for Scenario A (8,100 homes)

- 3.2.21 There are similarities between how each option has performed, which is to be expected given that there are common elements and the level of growth is the same. For example, each of the options is predicted to have a significant negative effect with regards to the loss of soil, as regardless of distribution it is likely that large amounts of Grade 2 or 3 agricultural land would be lost. Each option is also predicted to have minor negative effects with regards to minerals as there would be potential overlap with Minerals Safeguarded Areas regardless of distribution.
- 3.2.22 Option A1 is not predicted to have any further significant negative effects, though minor negative effects are predicted against all of the environmental factors. However, this option performs most favourably with regards to Climate Change and Deprivation, being the only option at this level of growth to generate significant positive effects for these factors. There would also be significant positive effects on the economy and minor positives for accessibility and health. The positive effects associated with housing are uncertain though.
- 3.2.23 Option A2 performs similarly to option 1 with regards to effects upon the environment, though flood risk is neutral rather than negative. However, whilst positive effects are predicted for social factors such as health, deprivation, housing, economy and accessibility, these are less significant for deprivation compared to Option A1. The option also performs less well compared to option 1 with regards to climate change, but the positive effects associated with housing ought to be more certain.
- 3.2.24 Option A3 performs more differently compared to options A1 and A2. This option could generate significant negative effects on landscape, but the negative effects upon air quality and the historic environment ought to be lower. Similar to options A1 and A2, this approach would also generate significant positive effects for the economy, and minor positives for housing, accessibility and deprivation. However, the effects for health and wellbeing would only be neutral, and no positive effects would be generated with regards to climate change.
- 3.2.25 Unlike options A1-A3, Option A4 does not generate any significant positive effects and performs the worst of any option in terms of tackling deprivation. It also performs the poorest with regards to climate change as it could generate minor negative effects due to the increased likelihood of car travel. With regards to environmental factors, this option performs better in some respects compared to options A1-A3, as a dispersed approach ought to better avoid potential effects on biodiversity and air quality. However, this option would generate a significant negative effect for landscape.
- 3.2.26 Options A5 and A6 perform similarly, and somewhat different to the other four options. These two options perform slightly better with regards to environmental factors, with both being the only options to have neutral effects on water quality, and flood risk. These two options would also only have uncertain negative effects for biodiversity, climate change and the historic environment. Whilst these two options would have broadly positive effects upon socio-economic factors, these would only be minor in nature.

Summary of effects for Scenario B (15,700 homes)

- 3.2.27 As a general point, each of the options at the higher level of housing provision are predicted to perform more positively with regards to socio-economic factors, and more negatively with regards to environmental factors. In particular, each option would generate significant positive effects in terms of housing provision and economic growth. This is due to increased flexibility in housing provision, and the corresponding increase in homes likely to be available to support economic growth and to provide investment in infrastructure improvements. Conversely, all four of these options are likely to perform worse than the six options under scenario 1 with regards to environmental protection. In particular, the effects upon air quality, the historic environment and biodiversity are predicted to be significantly negative for options B2, B3, B4 and B6. At the lower scale of growth, the effects upon these factors would only be minor for all of the options.
- 3.2.28 In terms of comparison between these options, there are many similarities given that the scale of growth necessitates the release of a greater amount of land in Loughborough and the Service Centres in particular.
- 3.2.29 Options B2 and B3 perform the same with the exception that Option B2 could have significant negative effects upon flood risk compared to a minor effect for Option B3.
- 3.2.30 Option B4 performs similarly to Options B2 and B3 with regards to environmental factors, but due to the dispersed nature of some of the growth, a negative effect is predicted for Climate Change rather than positives (as per options B2 and B3).
- 3.2.31 The magnitude of the positive effects would also be lower compared to options B2 and B3, with only minor positive effects predicted in terms of deprivation, and greater uncertainty about positive effects on health and wellbeing occurring overall. Despite significant positive effects upon the economy, this approach is also the only option under scenario 2 which is predicted to generate minor negative effects due to an increased amount of growth being located in smaller settlements.
- 3.2.32 At this scale of growth, Option B6 performs most positively with regards to socio-economic factors, with significant positive effects identified for deprivation, housing, economy, accessibility and health and wellbeing (the only option to generate significant effects on this factor). This option also performs similarly to options B2 and B3 with regards to negative effects upon the environment. However, the effects in terms of climate change are potentially negative rather than positive (as per options B2 and B3).

Summary of effects for Scenario C (Standalone new settlement)

- 3.2.33 The effects associated with option C1 are difficult to determine accurately as the location of a new settlement has not been identified. However, a broad assessment of potential opportunity areas has been undertaken to understand what the effects might be. Given that the scale of growth is closer to Scenario A than to Scenario B, the effects are more comparable to the options in this scenario. However, there are differences across the range of sustainability objectives discussed below.
- 3.2.34 The primary difference between C1 and all of the other options is the potential for negative effects with regards to housing. This relates to an overreliance on a new settlement, which could mean under delivery in housing needs in the short term and would also provide less choice and flexibility across the borough. Option C1 is also the least likely to help address deprivation as a new settlement would be totally removed from existing communities. Similarly, the effects in terms of transport would

be less positive compared to the options that involve development at existing settlements that have established services and transport links. It is unclear the extent to which transport improvements would be secured through a large new settlement, but it is anticipated that car use would be necessary.

- 3.2.35 With regards to environmental factors, a new settlement is likely to perform relatively well, with the broad opportunity areas not being particularly sensitive for biodiversity, water quality, flood risk and the historic environment. However, landscape effects would be anticipated to be significant in that particular location. A concentration of growth could also affect air quality depending upon where the settlement was located and the transport measures secured.
- 3.2.36 With regards to land usage, this option would result in a significant loss of agricultural land (similar to all other options) but would be less likely to have negative effects with regards to minerals safeguarding.

Comparison of growth scenarios and options

- 3.2.37 There are clear differences between scenarios A and B with regards to the generation of significant positive and negative effects. Whilst scenario A options are predicted to have fewer significant positive effects, the growth would be accommodated without generating significant negative effects. Conversely, scenario B options would generate more significant positive effects, but at the expense of several environmental factors. The difference in the amount of housing between the two options is fairly large, and therefore, a level of growth in between the two options could possibly provide a better balance between positive social-economic effects and negative environmental effects.
- 3.2.38 The effects related to option C1 are more in-line with those for the options under scenario A, which is to be expected given that the scale of growth is similar. However, the spatial approach results in some notable differences.
- 3.2.39 With regards to distribution, the effects at a higher scale of growth are more similar for each of the options. This is due to the necessity to release similarly large amounts of land at Loughborough/Shepshed and the Service Centres, whilst delivering the same amount of growth at the PUA.
- 3.2.40 At the lower scale of growth, the differences between the options are greater.
- 3.2.41 Option A4 is predicted to have the most negative effects on balance, and is also unlikely to generate significant positive effects. Consequently, this option is considered to perform the poorest under scenario A.
- 3.2.42 Options A1 and A2 perform the best with regards to social-economic factors as they generate mostly positive (and some significant) effects. However, these two options are predicted to have slightly greater negative effects on environmental factors overall when compared to Options A5 and A6.
- 3.2.43 Options A5 and A6 have the fewest negative effects overall across the range of environmental factors, but would only generate minor positive effects on socio-economic factors and perform poorer with regards to climate change.
- 3.2.44 Option C1 performs relatively well with regards to environmental factors compared to the options under Scenario A. However, the positive effects of housing, economy, accessibility and deprivation would be of a lesser magnitude.

3.2.45 This is due to the spread of benefits across the borough being limited and the likelihood that housing delivery and economic activity in the short to medium term would likely be lower. The assessment of option C1 does demonstrate that a new settlement could be a positive longer term strategy, but evidence suggests that a new settlement is very unlikely to meet housing need in the plan period and other spatial strategies would be more appropriate up to 2036.

Next steps

3.2.46 At this stage, the Council has not identified a preferred approach to housing growth or distribution. The spatial strategy will be informed by a focused consultation on development strategy and key policy choices in April - June 2018.

3.2.47 The interim SA Report is available as part of the focused consultation process; helping to inform stakeholders of the sustainability implications of different approaches to the spatial strategy.

3.2.48 The findings in the SA will also be taken into account in the Council's decision-making process along with consultation responses and other key pieces of evidence.

3.2.49 As the plan-making process progresses, there will be a need to build upon the appraisal of alternatives at this stage.

3.3 Alternatives for employment land

3.3.1 In order to contribute to the achievement of economic growth aspirations, it is important that the Local Plan identifies the need for employment land and an appropriate distribution strategy for meeting such needs.

3.3.2 It is crucial that housing and employment needs are well balanced, and for the plan to promote a strategy that supports good accessibility to job opportunities for communities.

The reasons for selecting the alternatives

3.3.3 The options for employment land provision have been informed primarily by the conclusions of the Charnwood Employment Land Review March 2018 and by the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2017.

3.3.4 The Employment Land Review shows that there is sufficient land with planning permission or committed through the Core Strategy to meet the overall quantitative need for employment land. This evidence does however suggest that there are qualitative issues to consider such as the location and type of employment land.

3.3.5 Options for employment were considered reasonable if:

- they were consistent with the quantity of employment land recommended through Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2017 and / or
- a qualitative demand was identified through the Charnwood Employment Land Review 2018

3.3.6 In considering these factors, only three options were identified as reasonable.

- 1 Rely on existing employment allocations identified in the Core Strategy and 2004 Borough of Charnwood Local Plan.
- 2 Identify new employment land to facilitate regeneration and release poorer quality employment sites for alternative uses.
- 3 Identify new employment land to respond to demand for large warehousing.

3.3.7 Given the evidence about Charnwood's need and supply for new employment land, options 1 and 2 do not propose any net additional employment land.

3.3.8 Option 1 represents a 'business as usual' strategy relying on existing Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy and the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan allocations (in addition to committed development).

3.3.9 Option 2 would identify 10ha of new employment land in order to release poorer quality employment sites for alternative uses.

3.3.10 Employment evidence indicates that there are a number of sites which are in employment use in Thurmaston which are well occupied and functional but have a poor relationship with surrounding uses and in some cases are constrained by poor access. The Employment Land Review does not identify a specific site or sites for this replacement employment land.

- 3.3.11 However, evidence suggests identifying around 10ha of new employment land north of the Leicester in the new local plan to enable the release of these existing alternative uses such as housing. This option would not involve any net additional land being identified though.
- 3.3.12 Option 3 would involve identifying 10ha of new employment land to respond to demand for large warehousing. The Employment Land Review indicates that the Council should consider whether it is appropriate to identify 10ha of land for large warehousing. The distribution of large housing was not provided through the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Needs Assessment. The distribution of warehousing will require further discussions with partners under the duty to cooperate. The Employment Land Review indicates that this land would need to be delivered in a single location with excellent access to the strategic road network and is therefore likely to be located to the northeast of M1 Junction 23, near to Shepshed.
- 3.3.13 To avoid confusion the appraisal of options focuses on the difference between the options, in particular Options 2 and 3, rather than considering the likely significant effects of all the committed and allocated development proposed under Option 1 and common to Options 2 and 3.

Appraisal of the reasonable alternatives

- 3.3.14 The interim SA Report sets out a detailed appraisal of each of the three employment options (i.e. the reasonable alternatives) against each of the SA Objectives.
- 3.3.15 The findings of the detailed appraisals are summarised in this section below, preceded by a short discussion of the methods used to determine significance.

Visual representation of the effects

- 3.3.16 **Table 3.4** sets out a visual summary of the effects associated with each of the employment options.
- 3.3.17 The table has been compiled from the detailed assessments within the Interim SA Report.
- 3.3.18 The significance tables below explain what each score in table 4.4 actually means; and are primarily used to identify whether effects are positive, negative or neutral and most importantly whether these effects could be significant.
- 3.3.19 For each employment option illustrated in table 3.4, one of the following symbols has been allocated for each SA objective to determine the significance of the effects on a borough-wide basis.

Effects Significance	Effects symbol
<i>Significant positive effects</i>	++
<i>Minor positive effects</i>	+
<i>Neutral effects</i>	0
<i>Minor negative effect</i>	-
<i>Significant negative effect</i>	--

Uncertain effects	Effects symbol
Uncertain significant positive effect	++ [?]
Uncertain minor positive effect	+ [?]
Uncertain effects	?
Uncertain minor negative effect	- [?]
Uncertain significant positive effect	++ [?]

3.3.20 Where there is uncertainty, the nature of such effects has been identified. For example, an uncertain negative effect would be recorded if there is a chance that negative effects could occur but this is dependent upon the precise location of development.

3.3.21 It may still be possible to rule out significant effects though, and so the unknown effect may be recorded as minor or potentially significant.

Table 3.4 Employment options: Summary of appraisal findings

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Landscape Character	0	0	0
Biodiversity	0	- [?]	-
Water quality	0	?	?
Flood Risk	0	0	0
Soil Resources	0	-	-
Air Quality	0	0 [?]	-
Climate Change	0	0	0
Historic Environment	0	0	0
Deprivation	0	?	+
Healthy Lifestyles	0	0	0
Housing	0	0	0
Local Economy	+	+	++
Accessibility	0	+ [?]	+
Minerals	0	-	0

3.3.22 Option 1 is predicted to have mostly neutral effects as it essentially represents a 'business as usual' scenario. However, a minor positive effect is predicted for the economy given that the approach maintains a positive strategy for economic growth for the borough.

3.3.23 Given that options 2 and 3 both involve 10ha of higher quality employment land, they are predicted to have a greater range of effects compared to option 1. For option 3, the overall level of provision is also 10ha higher, but the differences between these two options are still minimal.

- 3.3.24 With regards to landscape and heritage both options 2 and 3 are predicted to have neutral effects, as the sensitivity of the land likely to be involved is relatively low. Similarly, the effects in terms of flood risk and climate change would be limited from a borough-wide perspective.
- 3.3.25 Whilst there could be localised effects on biodiversity and air quality, these are not anticipated to be significant given the magnitude of growth involved and the prevailing baseline position.
- 3.3.26 Each option would lead to a further loss of soil resources, which is also a minor negative effect, though the potential for a loss of Grade 2 land exists for Option 2. The potential sterilisation of minerals is also greater for Option 2 (though effects would not be significant).
- 3.3.27 The effects on water quality are also likely to be minor and localised, but could present more of an issue for Option 2, where some potential sites are within close proximity to waterbodies.
- 3.3.28 With regards to positive social-economic effects, each option is likely to contribute positively to tackling deprivation through the provision of jobs in accessible locations. However, only option 3 is predicted to have significant positive effects with regards to the local economy on the basis that the type of employment that would be delivered would meet a specific business demand. The growth is also more likely to be strategic and support a wider population across the district.
- 3.3.29 Option 2 could potentially have benefits for housing as the release of lower quality sites from employment use could possibly mean that housing uses become suitable.
- 3.3.30 Overall, options 2 and 3 perform very similarly across the range of sustainability factors and it is likely that minor negative effects could be mitigated. The key differences between the Options are as follows. There is greater uncertainty related to effects for Option 2, given that specific sites have not yet been identified.
- 3.3.31 Only Option 3 generates significant positive effects (in relation to local economy).
- 3.3.32 Option 2 generates minor negative effects in terms of minerals, whereas option 3 does not.
- 3.3.33 Whilst Option 1 would not generate any negative effects, the potential for additional positive effects is limited too.

Next steps

- 3.3.34 At this stage, the Council has not identified a preferred approach. The spatial strategy will be informed by a focused consultation on development strategy and key policy choices in April - June 2018.
- 3.3.35 This interim SA Report is available as part of the focused consultation process; helping to inform stakeholders of the sustainability implications of different approaches to employment provision.
- 3.3.36 The findings in the SA will be taken into account in the Council's decision-making process along with consultation responses and other key pieces of evidence.
- 3.3.37 As the plan-making process progresses, there may be a need to build upon the appraisal of alternatives undertaken at this stage.



Mitigation, enhancement and monitoring

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4 MITIGATION, ENHANCEMENT AND MONITORING

4.1 Mitigation and enhancement

- 4.1.1 An important aspect of the appraisal process is to identify how the Plan could be improved by introducing mitigation measures or enhancements. At this stage, the Plan approach has not been finalised, and so detailed measures for mitigation or enhancement have not been identified. However, the options appraisals in the interim SA Report do consider how likely it might be that certain effects could be mitigated (and how) and also what enhancements could be implemented to improve a particular option. These issues are brought out in the conclusions about the options as well, and this should help to shape a more sustainable strategy as the plan progresses.
- 4.1.2 Further mitigation and enhancement measures will be considered at the next stages of the SA process. Where changes are made in response to SA recommendations, these will be recorded in the reports to show what influence the SA has had.

4.2 Monitoring

- 4.2.1 It is necessary to set out how the significant effects of the Plan will be monitored. At this stage, the preferred approach has not been determined, and the effects of the Plan cannot be determined accurately. Therefore, it is not possible to set out a proposed monitoring framework. However, some general monitoring indicators are set out in the SA Framework that suggest how progress against each element of sustainability could be tracked.



Next Steps

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5 NEXT STEPS

5.1 Next steps

- 5.1.1 The Council has identified a timetable for the development of the new Local Plan.
- 5.1.2 Following the focused consultation between April-June 2018, a preferred strategy will be established for the scale and distribution of development.
- 5.1.3 A range of draft policies will also be prepared in support of the strategy, which will culminate in the consultation upon a draft Local Plan in August 2018.
- 5.1.4 Further SA work will be necessary to identify the effects of the draft Plan. There may also be a need to reconsider alternatives in light of new evidence and consultation feedback.
- 5.1.5 A second interim SA Report will be prepared to document the SA findings at this next Plan milestone. The report will include the findings presented within this first interim SA Report, but will be updated and expanded upon to cover new elements of the Plan (for example policies, site options / allocations).
- 5.1.6 Feedback on the findings of this first interim SA Report will be taken into consideration in the preparation of subsequent SA Reports.

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