

Charnwood Local Plan

Sustainability Appraisal: SA Report

Non-technical summary

May, 2021

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Introduction

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

AECOM has been commissioned by Charnwood Borough Council to undertake a sustainability appraisal (SA) in support of the new Local Plan (the 'Plan').



1.1 What is SA?

SA is a tool for assessing the likely effects of a Plan.

The aim of an SA is to identify positive and negative effects, and to suggest ways that a Plan can be improved by reducing the negatives and enhancing the positives.

SA also plays an important role in terms of comparing alternative approaches to achieving plan objectives.

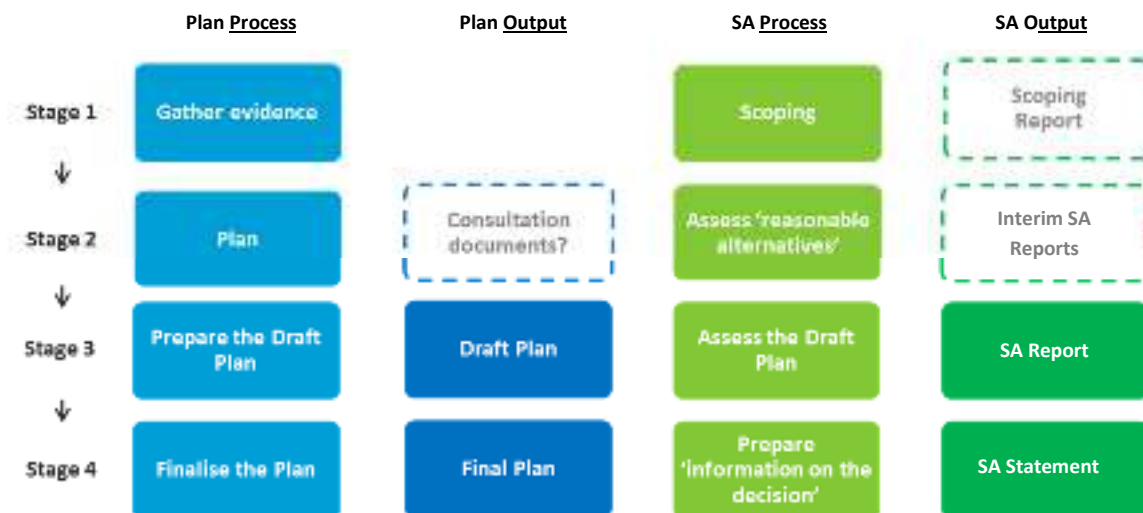
This means looking at different strategies for housing and employment. Specifically, this includes consideration of how much and where new employment and housing land could be located.

1.2 Why is an SA needed?

SA of the Charnwood Local Plan is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

It is also a process to ensure the Local Plans achieve an appropriate balance between environmental, economic and social objectives. It is a helpful way of communicating and raising debate about the effects of a Plan and any alternatives.

The diagram below shows SA as a four step stage process.



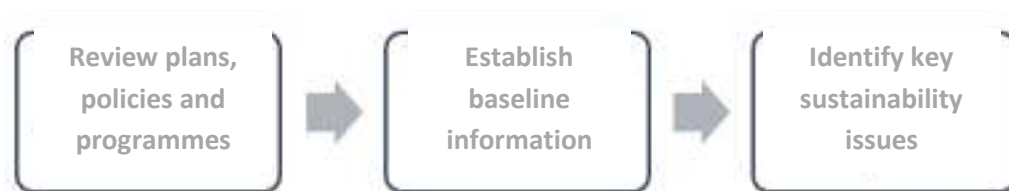
2.0 SCOPING

2.1 Background

The Scoping stage of the SA process is used to establish the key issues that should be the focus of the appraisal, as well as the assessment methodologies.

This process identifies **key sustainability issues**, which form the basis for focusing the SA on the most important factors. It also informs a series of sustainability objectives, which are used as a framework for appraising the effects of the Plan.

Figure 2.1 Scoping Stages of the SA



2.2 Key sustainability issues

Analysis of the baseline information and contextual review has allowed for a range of key sustainability issues to be identified. These issues provide an indication of the key areas that the SA should be focused upon.



Figure 2.2 Identified key sustainability issues in Charnwood

2.3 Sustainability Objectives

Once the key issues were identified, several sustainability objectives were created to form the basis for the appraisal framework.

Table 2.1 *Sustainability Objectives*

| <i>Issue</i> | <i>Objective</i> |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Landscape | <i>Protect and enhance the integrity and the quality of the Borough's urban and rural landscapes, maintaining local distinctiveness and sense of place.</i> |
| Biodiversity and Nature Conservation | <i>Protect and enhance biodiversity, habitats and species.</i> |
| Water Quality | <i>Protect and improve the quality and quantity of the water in the Borough's surface and groundwaters.</i> |
| Flood Risk | <i>Reduce the risk of flooding to existing communities and ensure no new developments are at risk.</i> |
| Land | <i>Protect the Borough's soil resources.</i> |
| Air Quality | <i>Improve local air quality.</i> |
| Climate Change | <i>Reduce the impacts of climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</i> |
| Historic Environment | <i>Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings.</i> |
| Population | <i>Reduce poverty and deprivation.</i> |
| Population | <i>Promote healthy and active lifestyles in the Borough.</i> |
| Population | <i>Improve access to affordable housing and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures within local communities.</i> |
| Local Economy | <i>Promote a sustainable and diversified economy and improve skills and employability.</i> |
| Material Assets | <i>Increase access to a wide range of services and facilities.</i> |
| Mineral Resources | <i>Ensure sustainable management of the Borough's mineral resources.</i> |

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Consideration of alternatives

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3.0 INTRODUCTION OF ALTERNATIVES

3.1 Identifying and appraising alternatives

A critical stage of the SA process is the consideration of alternative approaches and options for delivering the objectives of the Plan.

The key issues identified by the Council at this stage of Plan making relate to the following plan elements:

1. Housing growth and distribution
2. Broad approaches to employment land delivery
3. Site specific options

The following chapters deal with the alternative approaches that have been identified and assessed for each of the Plan elements listed above.



Alternatives appraisal:
Spatial strategy

04

4.0 ALTERNATIVES APPRASIAL: HOUSING STRATEGY

4.1 Introduction

Meeting housing needs is a crucial part of the plan-making process. Therefore, there is a need to examine robust evidence behind housing and employment needs and understanding the effects of all reasonable alternatives (options for growth) on social, economic and environmental factors.

A set of housing strategy options were established which set out the amount of growth that would be distributed to different parts of Charnwood. These options were appraised, and the findings were consulted upon from April to June 2018 within the first interim sustainability appraisal report. This consultation was called *“Towards a Local Plan for Charnwood”*.

Following on from this consultation, a refined list of housing options were identified in September 2018 for the purposes of testing through evidence and through sustainability appraisal. Further SA work was also undertaken to shape the strategy and explore reasonable alternatives as the Plan was prepared.

4.2 What are the reasonable alternatives?

Housing growth and distribution

The underlying principles of the current Local Plan were used as a starting point for the development of housing options. The options were also shaped by considering a range of factors as follows:

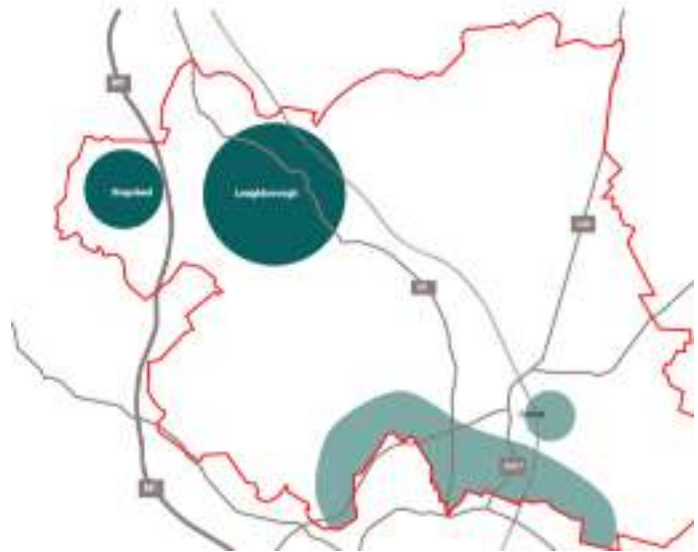
- Government Policy
- Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire
- Charnwood Borough Council Cabinet vision for Charnwood
- Charnwood Employment Land Review
- Housing needs (supported by evidence)
- Economic needs (supported by evidence)

Initial housing options

With regards to housing growth, two different levels were explored as reasonable alternatives. The first was the Objectively Assessed Housing Need, and the second was a higher figure that would allow for increased flexibility and choice in the market. These were called Scenario A (Objectively Assessed Needs) and Scenario B (Higher Growth). To better understand the impacts that these growth scenarios could have, several different distribution options were developed. This led to **ten options** being tested in the SA. A summary of the key effects associated with each option is provided below.

Option A1: Focus on Leicester Urban Area and Loughborough

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Landscape | x |
| Biodiversity | x |
| Water quality | x |
| Flood Risk | x |
| Soil | xx |
| Air quality | x |
| Climate change | ✓✓ |
| Historic environment | x |
| Deprivation | ✓✓ |
| Healthy lifestyles | ✓ |
| Housing | ✓? |
| Economy | ✓✓ |
| Accessibility | ✓ |
| Minerals | x |

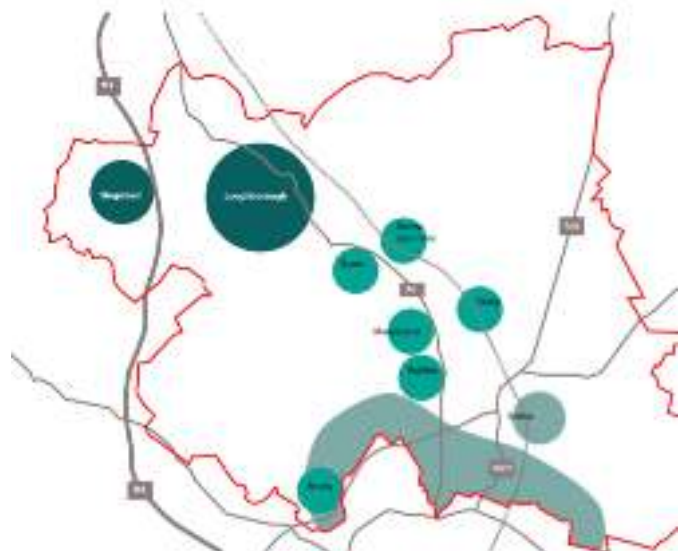


- Like all options, significant negative effects on soil resources
- Minor negative effects on remaining environmental objectives
- Significant positive effects for climate change, deprivation and local economy
- Minor positive effects for healthy lifestyles, housing accessibility and health
- Uncertain positive effects for housing as housing needs might not be met in service centres and other settlements.

Option A1 was **NOT TAKEN FORWARD** for further development and consideration

Option A2: Leicester, Loughborough and Service Centres

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Landscape | x |
| Biodiversity | x |
| Water quality | x |
| Flood Risk | / |
| Soil | xx |
| Air quality | x |
| Climate change | ✓ |
| Historic environment | x |
| Deprivation | ✓ |
| Healthy lifestyles | ✓ |
| Housing | ✓ |
| Economy | ✓✓ |
| Accessibility | ✓ |
| Minerals | x |



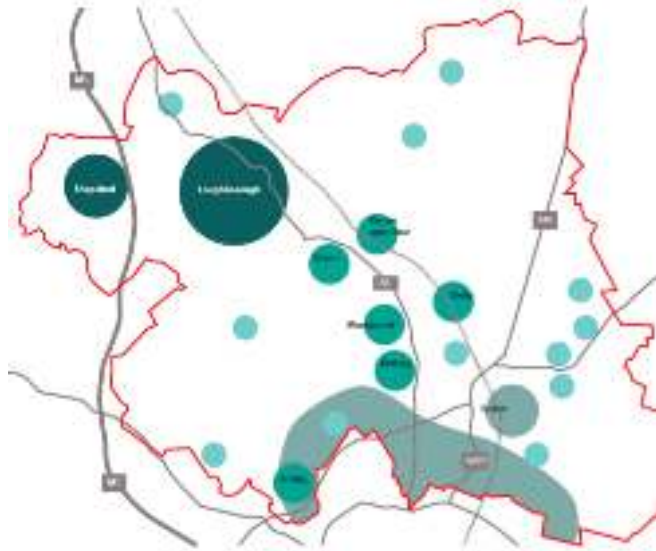
- Like all options, significant negative effects on soil resources
- Minor negative effects on other environmental objectives
- Significant positive effects for local economy

- Minor positive effects for climate change, deprivation, healthy lifestyles, housing and accessibility.
- Neutral effects for flood risk

Option A2 was **TAKEN FORWARD** for further development and consideration

Option A3: *Dispersed distribution*

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Landscape | XX ² |
| Biodiversity | X |
| Water quality | X |
| Flood Risk | / |
| Soil | XX |
| Air quality | X ² |
| Climate change | / |
| Historic environment | X ² |
| Deprivation | ✓ |
| Healthy lifestyles | / |
| Housing | ✓ |
| Economy | ✓✓ |
| Accessibility | ✓ |
| Minerals | X |



- Significant negative effects on soil resources
- Uncertain significant negative effects on landscape as it is dependent upon the sites that are developed. Uncertain negative effects on air quality and the historic environment as dependent upon the site that are developed within option.
- Minor negative effects on other environmental objectives
- Significant positive effects for the local economy
- Minor positive effects for deprivation, housing, and accessibility
- Neutral effects for flood risk, climate change and healthy lifestyles

This option was **TAKEN FORWARD** for further development and consideration

Option A4: Proportionate distribution

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Landscape | XX |
| Biodiversity | X ² |
| Water quality | X |
| Flood Risk | / |
| Soil | XX |
| Air quality | X ² |
| Climate change | X |
| Historic environment | X |
| Deprivation | ✓? |
| Healthy lifestyles | / |
| Housing | ✓ |
| Economy | ✓ |
| Accessibility | ✓ |
| Minerals | X |

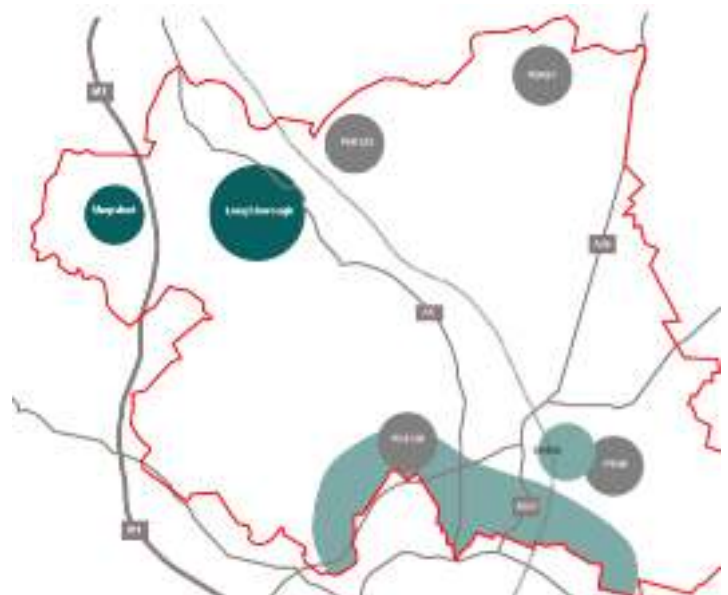


- Significant negative effects for landscape character, and soil resources.
- Minor negative effects for other environmental objectives
- Uncertain negative effects on biodiversity and air quality as is dependent upon sites identified within option
- No significant positive effects
- Minor positive effects for housing, local economy and accessibility
- Uncertain positive for deprivation
- Neutral effects for flood risk, and healthy lifestyles

This option was **NOT TAKEN FORWARD** for further consideration.

Option A5: Leicester, Loughborough and New Settlements

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Landscape | X |
| Biodiversity | X ² |
| Water quality | / |
| Flood Risk | / |
| Soil | XX |
| Air quality | X |
| Climate change | X ² |
| Historic environment | X ² |
| Deprivation | ✓ |
| Healthy lifestyles | ✓ |
| Housing | ✓? |
| Economy | ✓ |
| Accessibility | ✓? |
| Minerals | X |

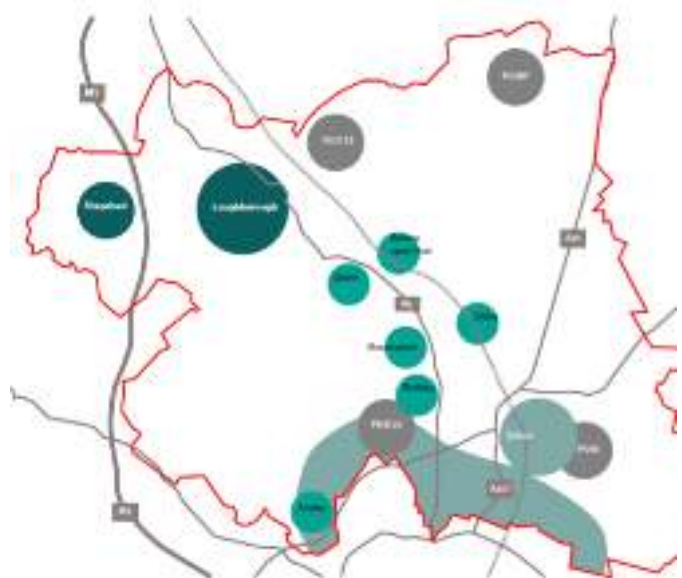


- Significant negative effects for soil resources
- Minor negative effects for other environmental objectives
- Uncertain negative effects on climate change because of potentially increased travel by car and the historic environment and biodiversity because of potential to avoid damage to these assets
- No significant positive effects
- Positive effects upon deprivation, healthy lifestyles and local economy
Uncertain positive effects upon housing because effects would be less prominent than for other options and uncertain positive effects on accessibility as potential negative effects of new settlements could offset the benefits of developing in urban areas

This option was **NOT TAKEN FORWARD** for further consideration

Option A6: *Leicester, Loughborough, New Settlement and service centres*

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Landscape | x |
| Biodiversity | x ² |
| Water quality | / |
| Flood Risk | / |
| Soil | xx |
| Air quality | x |
| Climate change | x ² |
| Historic environment | x ² |
| Deprivation | ✓ |
| Healthy lifestyles | ✓ |
| Housing | ✓ |
| Economy | ✓ |
| Accessibility | / |
| Minerals | x |

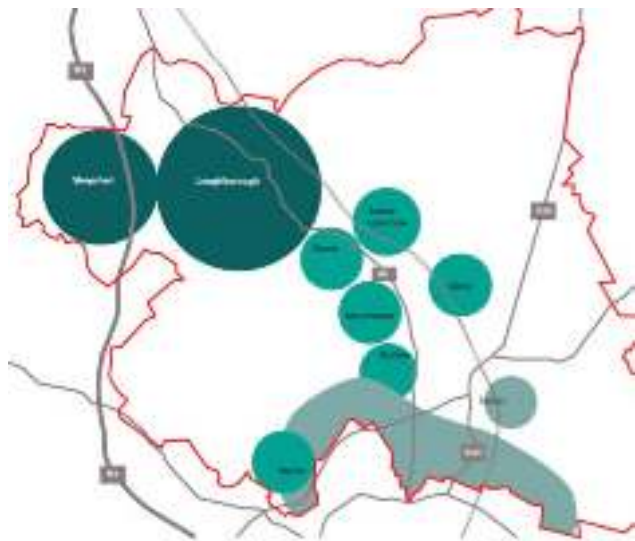


- Significant negative effects for soil resources
- Minor negative effects for other environmental objectives
- Uncertain minor negative effects on climate change because of potentially increased travel by car and the historic environment and biodiversity because of potential to avoid damage to these assets
- No significant positive effects
- Positive effects upon deprivation, healthy lifestyles and local economy
- Neutral effects on accessibility

This option was **TAKEN FORWARD** for further development and consideration

Option B2: Leicester, Loughborough and Service Centres (HIGHER GROWTH)

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Landscape | XX |
| Biodiversity | XX |
| Water quality | X |
| Flood Risk | XX |
| Soil | XX |
| Air quality | XX |
| Climate change | ✓ |
| Historic environment | XX |
| Deprivation | ✓✓ |
| Healthy lifestyles | ✓ |
| Housing | ✓✓ |
| Economy | ✓✓ |
| Accessibility | ✓✓ |
| Minerals | X |

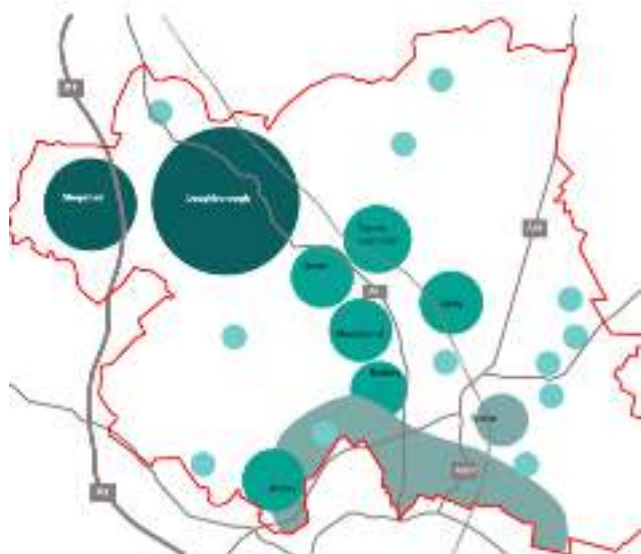


- Significant negative effects for most environmental objectives.
- Minor negative effects for water quality and minerals.
- Significant positive effects for deprivation, housing, economy and accessibility.
- Minor positive effects for climate change and healthy lifestyles.

This option was **TAKEN FORWARD** for further development and consideration

Option B3: Dispersed (HIGHER GROWTH)

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Landscape | XX |
| Biodiversity | XX |
| Water quality | X |
| Flood Risk | X |
| Soil | XX |
| Air quality | XX |
| Climate change | ✓ |
| Historic environment | XX |
| Deprivation | ✓✓ |
| Healthy lifestyles | ✓ |
| Housing | ✓✓ |
| Economy | ✓✓ |
| Accessibility | ✓✓ |
| Minerals | X |

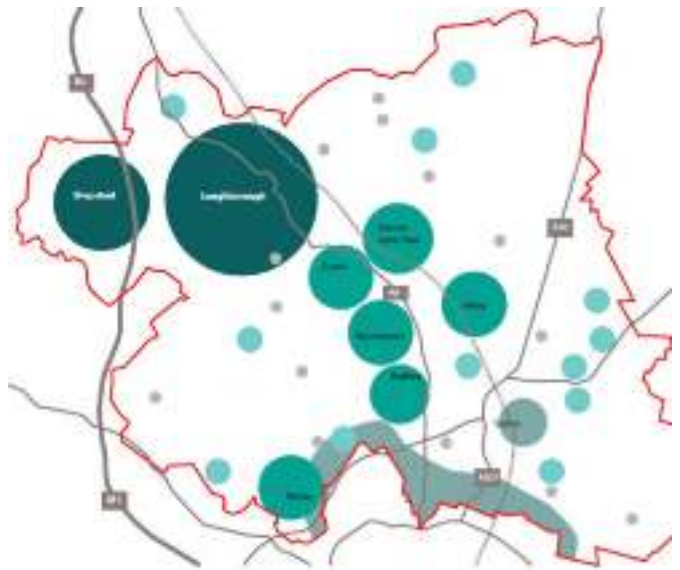


- Significant negative effects on landscape, historic environment, soil, air quality and biodiversity.
- Minor negative effects for water quality, flood risk and minerals.
- Minor positive effect on climate change and healthy lifestyles as it places growth in existing service centres and other accessible locations.
- Significant positive effects for deprivation, housing, economy and accessibility.
- Minor positive effects for climate change and healthy lifestyles.

This option was **TAKEN FORWARD** for further development and consideration

Option B4: Proportionate growth (HIGHER) GROWTH)

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Landscape | XX |
| Biodiversity | XX |
| Water quality | X |
| Flood Risk | X |
| Soil | XX |
| Air quality | XX |
| Climate change | X |
| Historic environment | XX |
| Deprivation | ✓ |
| Healthy lifestyles | ✓? |
| Housing | ✓✓ |
| Economy | ✓✓ X |
| Accessibility | ✓ |
| Minerals | X |

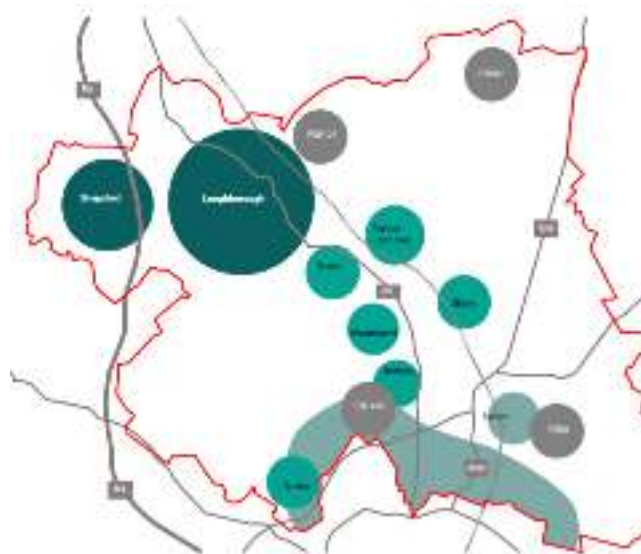


- Predicted to have significant positive effects on the local economy, but minor negatives arise too.
- Significant negative effects on environmental factors but relatively few significantly positive effects on socio economic factors.
- Significant negative effects for landscape, biodiversity, soil, air quality and historic environment.
- Minor negative effects for other environmental objectives.
- Significant positive effects housing.
- For local economy, a mix of significant positive effects (at Loughborough/ Shepshed) and minor negative effects (at Other Settlements) are predicted.
- Minor positive effects for deprivation and accessibility, and uncertain positive effects for healthy lifestyles

This option was **NOT TAKEN FORWARD** for further consideration.

**Option B6: Leicester, Loughborough, New Settlement and service centres
(HIGHER GROWTH)**

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Landscape | XX |
| Biodiversity | XX |
| Water quality | X |
| Flood Risk | X |
| Soil | XX |
| Air quality | XX |
| Climate change | X ² |
| Historic environment | XX |
| Deprivation | ✓✓ |
| Healthy lifestyles | ✓✓ |
| Housing | ✓✓ |
| Economy | ✓✓ |
| Accessibility | ✓✓ |
| Minerals | X |

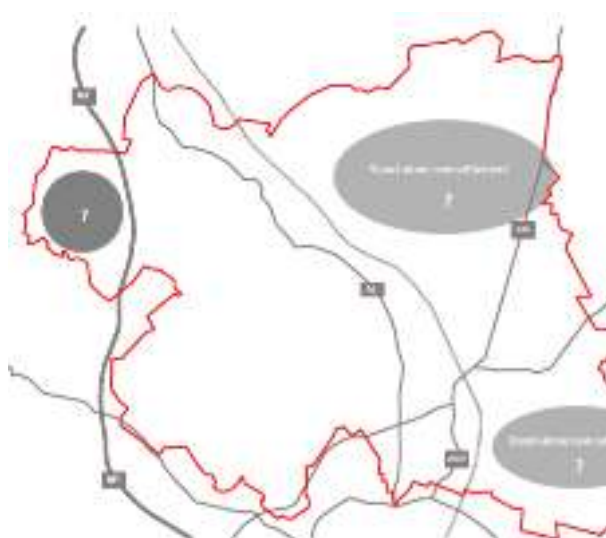


- Significant negative effects on landscape, soil, historic environment, air quality and biodiversity.
- Minor negative effects for other environmental objectives
- Uncertain minor negative effects for climate change.
- Significant positive effects for deprivation, healthy lifestyles, housing, economy and accessibility.

This option was **TAKEN FORWARD** for further development and consideration

Option C1: Standalone settlement

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Landscape | X |
| Biodiversity | / [?] |
| Water quality | ? |
| Flood Risk | / |
| Soil | XX |
| Air quality | XX ² |
| Climate change | X ² |
| Historic environment | X ² |
| Deprivation | / |
| Healthy lifestyles | ✓ |
| Housing | ✓ X |
| Economy | ✓ |
| Accessibility | / |
| Minerals | X ² |



- Significant negative effects for soil and air quality.
- Minor negative effects for landscape. Uncertain minor negative effects for climate change reflecting that whilst services may be co-located with development, people may need to travel to work. Uncertain minor negative effects for historic environment reflecting the potential that such a large site would impact upon a heritage asset.
- Minor positive effects for healthy lifestyles and local economy.
- For housing, a mix of minor positive effects (reflecting the level of housing growth) and minor negative effects (reflecting deliverability issues) are predicted.
- A neutral effect is predicted for biodiversity, deprivation, flood risk and accessibility, with an uncertain effect for water quality.

This option was **NOT TAKEN FORWARD** for further consideration

Refining the spatial strategy

Further sustainability appraisal work was undertaken as the spatial strategy for housing was finalised. This involved appraising refined housing options, building on the work undertaken at issues and options stage. A hybrid approach was developed and this too was appraised through the SA.

The range of growth tested in the SA included:

- Four distribution options involving 8100 homes
- Three distribution options involving 15,700 homes
- The hybrid option – 7800 homes
- A higher hybrid option involving 11,700 homes.

The performance of each option is summarised below in a matrix (figure 4.1). It can be seen that regardless of distribution, growth involving 15,700 new homes brings about a greater number of significant negative effects, particularly in relation to landscape character, biodiversity, air quality and the historic environment.

At the lower scale of growth, there are differences in the significance of effects depending upon distribution. The hybrid approach performs favourably in this respect as it avoids significant negative effects on landscape, air quality and the historic environment.

Whilst the significant positive effects are not as widespread compared to high growth, there are still a range of benefits recorded for the lower growth options and the hybrid approach.

Whilst an increase in growth for the hybrid approach to 11,700 homes brings a wider range of positive effects on socio-economic factors, it tips some environmental factors into significant negative effects.

Further sustainability appraisal work was carried to assess different levels of growth within different tiers in the settlement hierarchy, and this was used to refine the hybrid approach. This work was done to enable the development strategy to include more flexibility in terms of the scale of

development, and was done in response to the representations on the Draft Local Plan. This work is presented in appendix G in the Sustainability Appraisal report.

The parameter for each settlement tier in terms of their growth, combined with an understanding of other constraints notably primary education capacity provided the framework in which the more detailed site selection process took place. This is covered in more detail in Section 5.

Figure 4.1 Appraisal summary of the refined housing options

| | 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 1 | -- | - | + ² | - ² | - ² | - | - ³ | + | - | ++ | + | + | ++ | ++ ² |
| Option 2 | -- ² | - | + ² | - ² | 0 ² | - | - | + | - ² | ++ | + | ++ ² | + | ++ |
| Option 3 | - ² | - ² | + ² | - ² | 0 ² | - | - | 0 | - | + | 0 | ++ | + | + |
| Option 4 | -- ² | - ³ | + ² | - ² | 0 ² | - | - | + | - | + | + ² | + | ++ ² | - ² |
| Hybrid Option | - | - ² | + ² | - ² | 0 ² | - | - | + | - ² | + | ++ ² | ++ | + | - |
| Scenario B – 15,700 homes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Option 5 | -- | - | + ² | - | - | - | - ³ | - | - | ++ | - | ++ | - | ++ |
| Option 6 | -- | - | + ² | - | - | - | - ³ | - | - | ++ | - | ++ | - | ++ |
| Option 7 | -- | - ² | + ² | - | - | - | - ³ | - | - | ++ | - | ++ | - | ++ |
| Scenario C – 11,700 homes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hybrid Option High | -- | - ² | + ² | - | - | - | - | 0 | - ² | ++ | - ² | ++ | - | ++ |

Deciding on a preferred approach

The Council developed a hybrid approach as its preferred strategy.

With regards to housing growth, the Council concluded (on the basis of the evidence) that the **lower growth scenario is preferable**, but that a margin of flexibility should be built in to the supply. Several factors support this approach (in favour of a lower growth scenario).

The SA and supporting evidence base identifies that:

- a low growth scenario would cause less environmental harm, whilst being able to deliver required housing and economic growth in a strong market.
- a higher growth scenario could cause significant environmental effects and transport impacts will require significant mitigation, may not be mitigated to a reasonable level and could prove difficult to deliver in the plan period.
- infrastructure requirements to support a high growth scenario may delay the delivery of the homes.
- whilst the higher growth level provides greater flexibility in housing supply, the Council considers that flexibility can be provided at a lower scale of growth.

Taken together the hybrid approach locates growth in locations which fit well with the Strategic Growth Plan, reflect the vision and take account of the positive and negative impacts of growth.

Employment options

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.

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.

This section discusses how the Council has considered the evidence, and explored potential alternatives relating to developing Charnwood's strategy for employment.

Four options were identified for employment land distribution in Charnwood:

- **Option 1:** presents a ‘business as usual strategy’.
- **Option 2:** would identify 10ha of new employment land in order to release poorer quality employment sites for alternative uses.
- **Option 3:** would involve identifying 10ha of new employment land to respond to demand for large warehousing.
- **Option 4 (The preferred approach):** Is a mix of options 2 and 3 and involves 5ha of employment land in Shepshed to support the wider growth strategy.

These options were appraised against the SA Objectives. The findings are illustrated in figure 4.2 below, followed by a brief summary of the effects for each option.

Figure 4.2 *Employment options: Summary of appraisal findings*

| | Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 | Option 4 |
|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Landscape Character | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Biodiversity | 0 | - [?] + [?] | - + [?] | - [?] + [?] |
| Water quality | 0 | ? | ? | ? |
| Flood Risk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Soil Resources | 0 | 0 [?] | - | - |
| Air Quality | 0 | 0 [?] | - | - |
| Climate Change | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Historic Environment | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Deprivation | 0 | + [?] | + | + |
| Healthy Lifestyles | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Housing | 0 | + [?] | 0 | 0 |
| Local Economy | + | + | ++ | ++ [?] |
| Accessibility | 0 | + [?] | + | + |
| Minerals | 0 | 0 [?] | 0 | 0 |

- Option 1 would not generate any negative effects, but has only minor benefits for the economy.
- Option 2 is predicted to have minor negative effects in regard to biodiversity. However it would still generate minor positives in relation to local economy. Unlike option 1 it could also potentially generate some positive effects on accessibility, housing, and deprivation.
- Option 3 and option 4 generate the most effects, with additional negatives in relation to air quality and soil resources. However, these effects are only minor. Options 3 and 4 would also be more beneficial with regards to tackling deprivation and are the

only options to have significant positive effects on the economy (there is a degree of uncertainty related to option 4 though).

Deciding on a preferred approach

- Option 1** to rely upon existing employment allocations that have been identified in the Core Strategy and 2004 Borough of Charnwood Local Plan has not been selected.
- Option 2** would involve some uncertainty in ensuring adequate supply of employment land in the borough, and would also give rise to uncertainty for the occupiers of the industrial estates identified for release to alternative uses. The Council's Employment Land Review 2018 indicates that one of the key potential sites at Earl's Way in Thurmaston "is occupied at the moment and before releasing the site the Council would need to ensure that there is new (or alternative) property for tenants to move into". The sustainability benefits of redeveloping the Earl's Way employment site are minor and uncertain and would not outweigh the lack of certainty for employment land provision and for the uncertainty for occupiers of existing employment units.
- Option 3** to develop 10ha of additional land for strategic warehousing has not been pursued. There has been no approach from the market regarding the site and no specific need in this location is evident. Discussions with partners under the Duty to Cooperate has not highlighted that there is a particular need to develop land in Charnwood for this purpose. The site adjacent to the M1 motorway in Shepshed has been identified for a mixture of employment land and housing development.
- Option 4** will meet an identified shortage of employment land in Shepshed and provide employment opportunities for the housing allocated to Shepshed, and that planned for by the previous plan.



Appraisal findings: Site Options

05

5.0 APPRAISAL FINDINGS: SITE OPTIONS

5.1 Introduction

The Council considered it necessary to allocate housing and employment sites to demonstrate how housing and employment land needs will be met in the plan period. A key element of the spatial strategy was to prioritise development on brownfield land,. However, the overall demand for land resulted in a need to consider the release of greenfield sites for allocation.

Site allocations were established and selected through a site assessment process:

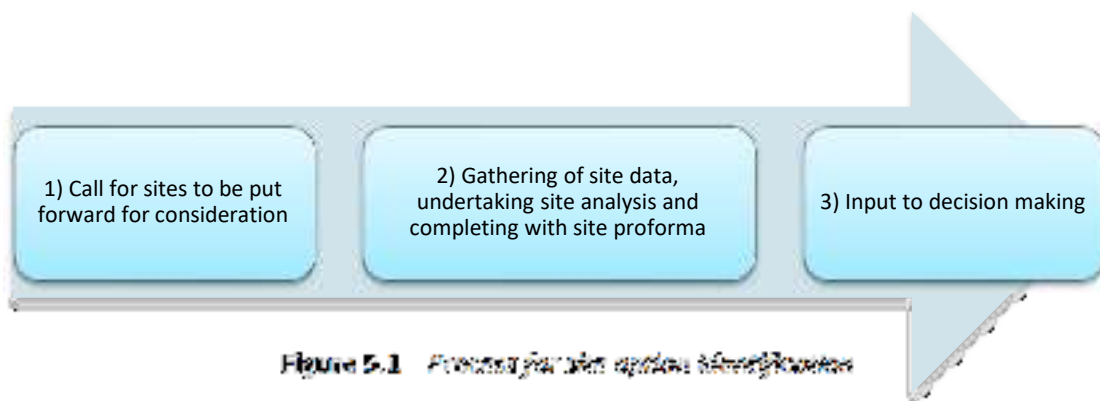


Figure 5.1 Process for site options identification

5.2 The site options

Nearly 250 housing sites were assessed against a range of social, environmental and economic criteria to identify sites without any significant adverse impacts (Scenario A), those where significant adverse impacts had the potential to be mitigated (Scenarios B and C), or those sites where significant adverse impacts would arise as a result of developing the site. The initial site options assessments informed further work to understand how potential significant adverse impacts of development could be mitigated.

This process resulted in the selection of 69 sites to be allocated. Site specific policies have been used to ensure that, where there is potential for adverse impacts, those impacts that were identified will be mitigated.

The selected sites are distributed in a range of settlements in accordance with the hybrid development strategy option.



Appraisal of the Plan

06

6.0 APPRAISAL OF THE PLAN

6.1 Introduction

This section presents an appraisal of the draft Plan against the SA Framework. Effects have been identified considering a range of characteristics including: magnitude, duration, frequency, and likelihood.

Combined, these factors have helped to identify the significance of effects, and whether these are positive or negative. To give the appraisal a clear structure but to avoid repetition and duplication, the findings are presented under one of ten SA Topics.

The effects are written in the text as part of the overall discussion. Bold and coloured text is used to highlight the different effects.






- **Minor positive effects**
- **Significant positive effects**
- **Neutral effects**
- **Minor negative effects**
- **Significant negative effects**

6.2 Appraisal of the Plan ‘as a whole’

As part of a SA (incorporating SEA) there is a requirement to appraise the effects of the draft Plan. Whilst it can be useful to assess individual components of the Plan (i.e. plan policies) it is most useful to consider the Plan in its entirety to understand how the policies interact with one another.

This enables an understanding of cumulative and synergistic effects, and how certain plan policies help to mitigate or enhance the effects of others. The appraisal was divided into each SA Topic then sites were analysed based on location. Table 6.1 summarises the analysis for each SA Topic based on the Draft Plan.

Table 6.1 Summary of the appraisal of the plan

| SA Topic | Summary of the Plan appraisal |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Landscape</p>  | <p>The strategy directs growth from the most sensitive locations.</p> <p>Development / site allocations will lead to loss of greenspace and green fields. However, the Plan avoids significant negative effects through management of developable areas and densities on sites. Therefore, minor negative effects are predicted overall.</p> <p>Minor positive effects could arise due to the combination of other policies in the Plan, which support rural protection.</p> |
| <p>Biodiversity and nature conservation</p>  | <p>Minor negative effects are expected with short term disruptions from construction and loss of habitat.</p> <p>Longer term effects are expected to be significantly positive as a result of net gains in biodiversity being secured. A range of other supporting policies will also have benefits such as improvements in the Charnwood Forest.</p> |
| <p>Water quality</p>  | <p>Minor negative effects could potentially arise in the short term as a result of development / construction. However, plan policies that seek to reduce pollution ought to ensure that effects are manageable.</p> <p>In the longer term, a change in land use from agriculture could reduce diffuse pollution. The implementation of SUDs should also help to minimise pollution from future development. These are minor positive effects.</p> |
| <p>Flood Risk</p>  | <p>Generally, sites are not within flood risk zones/ or adjoining areas of risk. Though there are sites that are intersected by flood zone 2/3 (such as in the urban area of Loughborough), Plan policies will minimise the potential for residual negative effects. As such, neutral effects are likely.</p> <p>A range of Plan policies should help to achieve minor positive effects in terms of managing run off and encouraging tree planting.</p> |
| <p>Land</p>  | <p>There will be an unavoidable and permanent loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. Though there will remain substantial soil resources, this is still considered to be a significant negative effect.</p> |

Air Quality



Concentrated development could lead to increased car trips through AQMAs in Loughborough, Shepshed and Syston. However, policies relating to low emission vehicles and alternative modes of travel should ensure only **minor negative effects** in the short term.

Policies around sustainable construction, sustainable development and electronic vehicles could have **positive effects** in the long term.

Climate Change



Employment and housing growth could lead to an increase in carbon emissions. However, carbon emissions savings are likely to be achieved overall due to a focus on sustainable transport, identifying locations suitable for wind energy schemes, increasing tree coverage and improving the efficiency of development. On balance, **minor positive effects** are predicted.

Historic Environment



The strategy broadly directs growth away from sensitive locations with regard to the historic environment. Some site allocations are in places that will be unlikely to affect heritage or could positively affect existing poorer quality sites. However, a handful of sites are adjacent to heritage assets and present the possibility of **minor negative effects**. Supporting plan policies minimise the negative effects of site allocations. The Plan could have **minor positive effects** in other respects through policies that seek to achieve regeneration and improve the public realm.

Population – Deprivation



It is uncertain whether areas of need will benefit from development. However, A focus on regeneration in Loughborough and Shepshed could have benefits in terms of addressing inequalities in these locations. For this reason, only **minor positive effects** are predicted (mostly related to affordable housing provision and new social infrastructure). On the other hand, the increased growth in Loughborough and the Leicester Urban Area could potentially create increased congestion that may affect deprived areas disproportionately, which is an uncertain **minor negative effect**.

Health and wellbeing



The strategy directs growth towards areas with reasonable access to healthcare facilities. The majority of sites proposed for allocation are also well located to open space and recreation. This helps to provide the conditions for healthy living, which are **minor positive effects**.

Other Plan policies complement these effects as they seek to deliver environmental improvements, improve accessibility, promote active travel and protect and enhance community facilities.

Housing



A **significant positive effect** is predicted as housing needs are likely to be met and a range of locations and types of sites (large, small, brownfield, greenfield) are included as proposed allocations. The supply of land identified in the Plan provides flexibility and choice.

Furthermore, the Plan will seek delivery of affordable housing and the types of homes for those with specific needs.

Economy



The strategy will meet identified needs for employment at locations that are attractive to market and broadly accessible to job seekers. Housing allocations align relatively well with existing and proposed employment opportunities.

The Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park is likely to have a positive effect in terms of attracting investment, promoting innovation and improving qualifications.

Overall, **significant positive effects** are predicted.

Material assets: Accessibility



The strategy results in **minor positive effects** as it direct growth away from smaller villages and remote locations, and places most growth in areas where there are good transport links and employment opportunities. There is also a general focus on shifting towards sustainable modes of transport.

On the other hand, some allocations will require car trips along busy / congested routes into Leicester City, which are potential **minor negative effects**.

Minerals



The overall effect of the Plan with regards to mineral resources is **minor negative**. It is likely that some mineral resources would be sterilised, but it is unclear whether these would be viable. Furthermore, it is unlikely that this would affect the required supply.



Mitigation and enhancement

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7.0 MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

7.1 Introduction

The sustainability appraisal (SA) of the emerging Charnwood Local Plan has been an iterative process, in which proposals for mitigation and enhancement have been considered at different stages.

Draft versions of each plan policy have appraised through the SA process, and recommendations were made for improvements before the policies were finalised in the Plan.

7.2 Mitigation and enhancement measures

Recommendations made have been made and considered throughout the process. The Council's response to the recommendations of the SA and the implications of the response for the findings of the SA are set out in the main Report.

The Plan has been positively prepared, applying the SA process iteratively as the draft Plan strategy and policies have developed. This has involved a range of recommended mitigation and enhancement measures.

The Council have responded as they deem appropriate. Where changes have been made, this has broadly improved the overall performance of the Plan in sustainability terms. In particular, the changes made should lead to:

- A **more positive** outcome with regards to green infrastructure and biodiversity through, for example, including specific policies to address impacts on the Black Brook in Shedshed, various site specific policies that protect and enhance habitats, and strengthening of the policy on biodiversity net gain.
- A **more positive** outcome in relation to tackling deprivation through, for example, including policy wording in relation to the Council's Priority Neighbourhoods and improving training prospects.
- A **less negative** effect on landscape and heritage at a strategic scale, through, for example, responding to the SA evidence and directing development away from the most sensitive areas.
- A **more positive** outcome in terms of water quality and resource use, through, for example, including a specific policy to reduce surface water run-off from brownfield sites.



Monitoring and next steps

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8.0 MONITORING AND NEXT STEPS

8.1 Monitoring

Table 8.1 below summaries the effects of the draft Plan for each of the SA objectives.

There is a requirement to outline the measures envisaged to monitor the predicted effects of the Plan. In particular, there is a need to focus on the **significant effects** that are identified. It is important to track predicted effects to ensure that positive effects are actually realised and to identify any unforeseen negative effects that may occur.

At this stage the monitoring measures have not been finalised, as there is a need to confirm the feasibility of collecting information for the proposed measures. Wherever possible, measures have been drawn from the Local Plan monitoring framework to reduce duplication.

The monitoring measures will be finalised once the Plan is adopted, and will be set out in an SA Statement in accordance with the SEA Regulations. The measures are listed below in Table 8.1

Table 8.1 *Monitoring the SA objectives where significant effects have been predicted*

8.1 Next Steps

The Council has prepared a draft Plan. This includes a preferred approach for the scale and distribution of development to meet identified needs. A range of supporting policies has also been developed. The SA Report has been prepared to document the SA process that has been undertaken to inform the draft Plan, including an assessment of reasonable alternatives (where appropriate).

Following the consultation period on the draft Plan, the Council will work towards the submission of the Local Plan for examination. This will take account of consultation feedback and any new evidence.

The SA Report may need to be updated to support the submission version of the Local Plan. This will involve updating the SA Report as necessary (or preparing an addendum) to account for any changes.

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