

West Oxfordshire District Council

October 2012

Draft Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Non-Technical Summary

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Section One: Introduction

The Draft Local Plan

- 1.1 West Oxfordshire District Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan to replace the existing plan which was adopted in 2006.
- 1.2 A draft Local Plan has been prepared and will be subject to consultation in October/November 2012. The draft plan sets out the key elements of the planning framework for West Oxfordshire, guiding public and private sector investment and development and making clear spatial choices about where development should go in broad terms. It is the key document in the Council’s Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.3 The Draft Local Plan covers the period 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2029. It seeks to address the challenges apparent in the District, now and in the future. These challenges include global issues such as climate change and fluctuations in the economy and more local issues such as affordable housing and transport.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report

- 1.4 This document is a non technical summary of the full Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report, which has been prepared to support and inform the Draft Local Plan.
- 1.5 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Draft Local Plan is required under the section 19 (5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). In accordance with best practice, the SA report incorporates the requirements of the European Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42 /EC which is intended to assess the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.
- 1.6 The purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report is to demonstrate that environmental, social and economic considerations have been properly taken into account in the preparation of the Draft Local Plan. It is important to reconcile the need for social and economic development with the protection of the environment as this is the key to the delivery of sustainable development in the District.
- 1.7 There are five key stages and a series of sub-stages involved in the SA process which are outlined in Table 1 below.

STAGE A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope	
A1	Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes and sustainability objectives
A2	Collecting baseline information
A3	Identifying sustainability issues and problems
A4	Developing the SA framework (objectives, targets and indicators)
A5	Consulting on the scope of the SA

STAGE B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects	
B1	Testing the Local Plan objectives against the SA framework
B2	Developing the Local Plan options
B3	Predicting the effects of the Local Plan options
B4	Evaluating the effects of the Local Plan options
B5	Considering ways of mitigating the effects and maximising the beneficial effects
B6	Proposing measures to monitor significant effects of implementing the Local Plan
STAGE C: Preparing the sustainability appraisal report	
C1	Preparing the SA report
STAGE D: Consulting on the preferred options of the DPD and SA report and preparing the submission document	
Preferred Options Document	
D1	Public participation on the preferred options of the Local Plan and SA report
Submission Document	
D2 (i)	Preparation of the submission document and appraising significant changes made since preferred options
Following Examination in Public	
D2 (ii)	Appraising significant changes resulting from representations made by the planning inspector
D3	Making decisions and providing information – preparing the adoption statement
STAGE E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the DPD	
E1	Finalising aims and methods for monitoring
E2	Responding to adverse effects.

Table 1: Stages involved in the SA process

- 1.8 We are effectively at Stage D1 of the process. The consultation on the draft Local Plan and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (SA) will help inform the preparation of the proposed submission Local Plan (Stage D2) in spring 2013.

Section Two: Context of the Local Plan

Stage A : Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope

- 2.1 Stage A of the SA process is about identifying and analysing relevant contextual and baseline information, in order to develop the Sustainability Appraisal framework that is used to 'test' the Draft Local Plan. This stage was undertaken in July 2007 and was subsequently updated in December 2009 with a range of new evidence, in consultation with local communities and key relevant stakeholders.
- 2.2 The full SA report also takes account of a range of new evidence collected during the preparation of the draft Local Plan, including updated census information, local demographic projections and housing market data. The recently published National Planning Policy Framework and emerging Local Plans prepared by neighbouring districts have also been a key consideration in both the formation of local policies and the ongoing sustainability appraisal, to ensure that they conform with national and local planning policies.

A1 - Setting the context

- 2.3 An important element of Stage A is to define the policy context in which the Draft Local Plan sits. This involves a review of all relevant plans and strategies that both influence and are influenced by the Draft Local Plan. A summary of the plans and strategies that have been considered is set out at Appendix I of the full SA report.

A2 - Collecting Baseline Information

- 2.4 The collection of relevant baseline information is a key component of the SA process as it helps to define the sustainability issues and problems facing the District. It also provides the basis for predicting and monitoring the effects of the plan. The findings of the baseline information analysis are presented in full in the SA scoping report and are reflected in Box 3 of the full SA report.

A3 - Identifying sustainability issues and problems

- 2.5 Task A3 involves drawing on the evidence gathered throughout stages A1 and A2 to determine the key social, environmental and economic issues facing the District. The key sustainability issues facing West Oxfordshire are summarised in Table 2 below. Further explanation is provided in the full SA report.

- S1) Like many areas the District has an ageing population. As the population ages, more people may require increased support in terms of housing, healthcare and transport. Demographic changes, including an ageing population, are also resulting in smaller households.
- S2) House prices in West Oxfordshire have increased at a faster rate than wages making it more difficult for local people to enter the housing market. This has resulted in rising levels of housing need.
- S3) General levels of health in the District are high but specific health issues such as obesity have increased in prominence nationwide and are a particular concern in children, indicating a need to change our diet but also increase physical activity. Although a rural district with large areas of attractive countryside, rural communities can find that, outside the rights of way network, access to public open space is limited.
- S4) Levels of unemployment in the District are typically low. Low skills levels are apparent in certain areas of the main towns of Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton and may have implications for future economic growth.
- S5) There is a low level of crime and fear of crime but speeding vehicles, violent crime and antisocial behaviour remain issues of concern.
- S6) Outside of the main towns of the District public transport accessibility is generally poor. Certain groups without access to a car, such as older people on lower incomes, young people, lone parents and those experiencing mental health problems may be particularly at risk of social exclusion as a result. An ageing population presents increasing challenges as the elderly are highlighted as a particular group least likely to have access to a private car.
- S7) The number of people travelling to work by car has increased and the distance people travel to work has increased. The District has several congestion problems. The A40 between Witney and Oxford is seen as one of the County's worst congestion problem.
- S8) Air quality objectives are not being met at Bridge Street, Witney and Horsefair, Chipping Norton as a result of traffic congestion in these streets.

- S9) Many of the larger previously developed sites suitable for redevelopment have now been developed and in a rural district the opportunities to use brownfield land are limited. Beyond 2011 further urban extensions on greenfield sites will need to be provided. Such urban extensions may be relatively sustainable if the infrastructure required to support them is provided and efficient use is made of the land. It should also be noted that whilst there is the presumption that previously developed land should be developed before Greenfield land, some previously developed land may not be appropriate for development due to wider sustainability considerations such as their amenity or biodiversity value.
- S10) Although the proportion of waste being recycled or composted is increasing the amount of waste being produced also appears to be increasing although this may reflect increases in collection.
- S11) Although data on carbon emissions is limited, responding to climate change and reducing carbon emissions through increased energy efficiency and increasing the supply of renewable and low-carbon decentralised energy sources is seen as a key challenge.
- S12) Significant climate change is now thought unavoidable and is expected to result in more frequent extreme weather events. As such there is a need to secure new development and infrastructure which is resilient to the effects of climate change particularly as buildings and infrastructure may have a 20-100 year life span.
- S13) There is a network of relatively isolated sites of particular importance for biodiversity in the District, which in the context of climate change would benefit from expansion and linkage to provide more sustainable biodiversity management units. The status of some priority species, notably water voles and farmland birds, has declined in recent years. Farmland birds have declined largely as a result of some agricultural practices.
- S14) The District has a rich archaeological and architectural heritage which along with the natural beauty of the District's countryside contributes to a high quality landscape recognised in national designations such as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These assets also present an irreplaceable resource for education, leisure and tourism. Meeting the development needs of the community whilst maintaining a high quality landscape, including the conservation and enhancement of areas, sites and buildings that contribute to the archaeological, architectural and natural heritage, and promoting access to historic assets and the countryside remains a continuing challenge
- S15) The economy of West Oxfordshire appears prosperous with low unemployment levels and high levels of economic activity. A key challenge is to maintain this prosperity and ensure sustainable economic growth, maintaining the Quality of Life for all residents
- S16) The District contains some considerable sand, gravel and limestone resources, the extraction of which needs to be managed to protect environmental quality, with particular regard to archaeological sites and remains, landscape impacts, after-use and traffic impacts.
- S17) There are some significant rivers flowing through the District, including the Thames along the southern boundary of the District, the generally biodiversity rich Windrush which runs through Witney and Burford and the Evenlode running through the agricultural areas of central West Oxfordshire. In the context of climate change extreme weather events may increase the risk of flooding from these rivers. The quality of the water in these water courses may affect habitats of international importance at Oxford Meadows.
- S18) There are two sites of particular importance for nature conservation in close proximity to the District: Port Meadows SAC and Cothill Fen SAC. These are at risk of harm from air quality deterioration, water availability and quality degradation and recreation pressure, all of which are affected by the Local Plan.

Table 2: Key sustainability issues in West Oxfordshire

A4 - Developing the SA Framework (objectives, targets and indicators)

- 2.6 A key outcome of the Stage A SA scoping process was to define a series of objectives against which the sustainability of the Draft Local Plan can be assessed. These objectives along with a series of sub-objectives are based on the evidence gathered through Stages A1-A3 and define the SA framework, which is used to assess the significant sustainability effects of the Draft Local Plan.
- 2.7 There are 16 headline sustainability objectives that form the West Oxfordshire SA framework and these are set out in Table 3 below;

1. Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed affordable home
2. Improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities
3. Promote thriving and inclusive communities
4. Improve education and training
5. Maintain a low level of crime and fear of crime
6. Improve accessibility to all services and facilities
7. Improve the efficiency of land use
8. Reduce waste generation and disposal
9. Reduce air pollution and improve air quality
10. Address the causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and be prepared for its impacts
11. Protect and improve soil and water resources
12. Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding
13. Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity
14. Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment
15. Maintain high and stable levels of employment
16. Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness

Table 3: West Oxfordshire sustainability objectives

A5 - Consulting on the Scope of the SA

- 2.8 The consultation period on the West Oxfordshire SA scoping report ran from the 23rd March 2007 to 27th April 2007. A summary of the comments received is included in the full SA report along with actions that were taken to address any concerns regarding the scope of the SA.

Section Three: Appraisal of the Draft Local Plan

Stage B Developing and refining options and assessing effects

- 3.1 The SA framework has been used to assess and refine various options through the 6 key tasks involved in stage B:
- B1 Testing the Local Plan objectives against the SA framework
 - B2 Developing the Local Plan options
 - B3 Predicting the effects of the Local Plan options
 - B4 Evaluating the effects of the Local Plan options
 - B5 Considering ways of mitigating the effects and maximising the beneficial effects
 - B6 Proposing measures to monitor significant effects of implementation the Local Plan

3.2 In order to summarise the detailed findings of the SA clearly and succinctly and to enable the effective testing of options, a simple scoring matrix was defined and is illustrated in Table 4 below.

++		Major positive - the option contributes significantly to the achievement of the objective
+		Positive - the option contributes to the achievement of the objective
+/-		Neutral - Some positive and some negative impacts
-		Minor negative - the option would detract from the objective
--		Major negative - the option would detract significantly from the objective
?		Uncertain - the effects of the option may depend on other factors or there is insufficient information available to make an assessment.
0		No Impact

Table 4: SA scoring matrix

BI - Testing the Local Plan objectives against the SA framework

3.3 The scoring matrix was initially used to test the sustainability of the Draft Local Plan objectives, as illustrated in table 5 below.

3.4 The matrix demonstrates that the Local Plan objectives generally score positively against the SA framework, particularly in relation to economic development objectives and the creation of healthy and inclusive communities. The objectives for the delivery of large scale development such as those to meet the housing needs of the community demonstrate a degree of potential conflict, particularly in relation to the efficient use of land and environmental protection objectives of the SA framework

		Sustainability Objectives															
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Local Plan Objectives	CO1	+	++	++	+	?	++	?	?	+	+	?	+	+/-	+/-	+	+
	CO2	++	+	++	?	+	+	-	?	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	+	+
	CO3	++	+	++	?	?	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	?	+/-	+/-	+/-	++	++
	CO4	++	++	++	?	?	?	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	?	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	+
	CO5	+	++	++	+	++	++	?	?	+	+	?	+	+	+	+	+
	CO6	+	++	++	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	?	?	+	+
	CO7	+/-	++	++	?	+	++	?	?	++	++	?	?	+	+	+/-	+/-
	CO8	+	+	++	+	?	+	?	?	+	+	?	?	+/-	+/-	++	++
	CO9	+/-	+	+	+	?	+	?	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	+/-	++	++	++	++
	CO10	+/-	+	++	?	++	++	+	?	+	+	+/-	?	+/-	+	++	+
	CO11	+/-	++	++	++	+	++	?	?	+	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	+
	CO12	+/-	++	++	?	?	++	?	?	+	+	?	?	+	++	+	+
	CO13	?	+	+	?	?	?	+	+	+	+	++	+	++	++	+	+
	CO14	+	+	?	?	?	++	+	+	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	+
	CO15	?	++	+/-	?	?	+	+	+	++	++	++	+	++	+	+/-	+/-
	CO16	++	+	+/-	?	?	+	+	+	++	++	+	+	+	-	+/-	+/-
	CO17	++	+	+/-	?	?	+/-	+/-	+	++	++	++	++	+	+/-	+/-	+/-
	CO18	+	+	++	?	?	+	+/-	?	+/-	+/-	?	+/-	+	++	+	+

Table 5: SA of Local Plan objectives

B2 - B5 Developing the Local Plan options, predicting and evaluating the effects of the options and potential mitigation and maximisation of benefits.

3.5 Ongoing consultation since 2007 has enabled the testing and refinement of various policy options to address the key issues facing the district. The full SA report documents each sub-stage in detail and demonstrates how the Local Plan options have been tested and refined through the SA process. Box 1 below provides a brief summary including a series of web links to the relevant consultation documents.

Issues and Options (March 2008)

<http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/5253-2812.pdf>

The first stage in the process was an issues and options consultation which identified the key issues facing the District and a range of broad spatial options for development as well as a number of key theme based questions designed to stimulate discussion about the future development of the area.

Interim position statement (February 2009)

<http://planningconsultation.westoxon.gov.uk/consult.ti/CSInterimFeb09/consultationHome>

The interim position statement built on the findings of the Issues and Options consultation by presenting an overview of the Council's likely approach to tackling the key issues facing West Oxfordshire particularly housing and employment strategies as well as the response to climate change.

The document presented a range of updated information, particularly in relation to housing and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment process used to identify potential housing sites in the District. On the basis of the evidence and information available at the time, a draft approach for the basis of the Local Plan was set out.

Preferred Approach (February 2010)

<http://planningconsultation.westoxon.gov.uk/inovem/consult.ti/CSPreferredApproach/consultationHome>

This document built on the earlier consultation and set out the Council's preferred approach to a number of issues. It was accompanied by a sustainability appraisal to assist in the consultation and the further development/ refinement of alternative options. The SA is available at

<http://planningconsultation.westoxon.gov.uk/gf2.ti/f/193986/3446853.1/pdf/-/Core%20Strategy%20Preferred%20Approach%20Sustainability%20Appraisal%20%20print%20version%20with%20maps.pdf> .

Each section of the SA reflected a chapter of the document to enable the systematic appraisal of options but with particular regard to;

- The settlement strategy;
- Economic strategy; and
- Strategic development areas for the main settlements.

Draft Core Strategy (January 2011)

http://planningconsultation.westoxon.gov.uk/consult.ti/Draft_Core_Strategy_January_2011/consultationHome

The Draft Core Strategy (now referred to as Local Plan) built upon the preferred approach and set out a detailed draft policy structure for the future development of the District. The draft strategy was accompanied by a sustainability appraisal which illustrated how the policies were derived from a series of options and how these options performed against the SA objectives. The SA is available at <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/8119-3892.pdf>

Opportunity for further comment (June 2011)

http://planningconsultation.westoxon.gov.uk/consult.ti/Draft_Core_Strategy_June_2011/consultationHome

Further comments were invited following the publication of updated evidence and information relating to strategic development options.

Box 1: Local Plan consultations completed to date

- 3.6 Throughout these various stages, a wide range of options have been consulted upon and tested through the Sustainability Appraisal process in order to identify the most appropriate and sustainable strategy for the District.
- 3.7 The main options that have been consulted upon and tested throughout the development of the Local Plan relate to the following issues:
1. Overall Settlement Strategy
 2. Level of Housing Growth
 3. Delivery of Affordable Housing
 4. Level of Employment Growth
 5. Directions of Growth at Witney
 6. Directions of Growth at Carterton
 7. Growth at Chipping Norton

Overall Settlement Strategy

- 3.8 Various options for the overall settlement strategy for the District have been assessed throughout the development of the Local Plan. These include:
- ‘Witney Focus’: Concentrate development at Witney
 - ‘Three Towns’: Concentrate development at Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton
 - ‘Dispersal’: More dispersed development amongst a variety of towns and villages but still including development in Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton
 - A new village
 - Concentration of development along transport corridors
- 3.9 Throughout the consultation process, most support has been expressed for the ‘three towns’ option that focuses the majority of development at the three main towns of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton with more limited development elsewhere.
- 3.10 The options relating to the creation of a new village and the concentration of development along transport corridors were scoped out early on in the consultation process as they were not considered to be realistic or achievable for a variety of reasons.
- 3.11 A sustainability appraisal of the three main options was undertaken at the ‘Preferred Approach’ stage and a summary of the appraisal is illustrated in Table 6 below.

Sustainability Objective	Witney focus	Three towns	Dispersal
Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home	+	++	+
Promote thriving and inclusive communities	+	+	+
Improve education and training	+	+	-
Improve accessibility to all services and facilities improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities	++	+	-
Reduce air pollution and improve air quality	-	+/-	-
Address the causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and be prepared for its impacts	+	+/-	-
Protect and improve soil and water resources	-	-	--
Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding.	+/-	+/-	+/-
Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment, biodiversity and geodiversity	-	-	-
Maintain high and stable levels of employment Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness	+	+	+/-

Table 6: SA summary of overall settlement strategy

3.12 As can be seen from the summary both the 'Three Towns' option and the 'Witney Focus' option perform well in sustainability terms. However, it was concluded that the Three Towns option is preferred as it would better meet affordable housing needs across the District and provides the potential for the other main towns to address infrastructure needs.

Level of Housing Growth

3.13 In terms of the level of housing growth, at the Issues and Options stage (2008), the number of new homes needed was dictated by the then emerging South East Regional Plan, which identified a total housing requirement of 7,300 dwellings in the period 2006 - 2026.

3.14 Because the South East Plan specified the level of housing to be provided within the District, no other options were put forward or tested (i.e. higher or lower) although various options were proposed as to how the number of houses identified should be accommodated within the District.

3.15 At the Interim Approach stage (2009) and Preferred Approach stage (2010) the level of housing proposed to be provided was also based on the South East Plan although the figures were updated to take account of recent commitments (i.e. planning permissions).

3.16 Notably however, in light of the potential revocation of the South East Plan, the draft Core Strategy (2011) was informed by a local demographic projections (<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/7979-4251.pdf>) independently commissioned by the Council. The projection suggested that there was a need to deliver an additional 4,300 homes in the district between 2011 and 2026. Coincidentally this was broadly in line with the South East Plan once completions in the period 2006 – 2011 had been taken into account.

- 3.17 Because the plan period has been rolled forward from 2026 to 2029 the housing target needs to be updated. The initial results of the 2011 Census have also been made available and must be factored in. For this reason, the Council has commissioned a further set of housing projections to help inform the development of a local housing target. Three different 'scenarios' have been prepared: a 'natural change' scenario (4,000 houses), an 'employment-based' scenario (6,700 houses) and a 'South East Plan' based scenario (5,500 houses).
- 3.18 These three options have been tested using the SA framework to determine their social, economic and environmental implications. A summary of the appraisal is set out in Table 7 below.

Sustainability Objective	Low Growth 4,000	Medium Growth 5,500	High Growth 6,700
1. Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed affordable home	+	++	++
2. Improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities	+	+	+
3. Promote thriving and inclusive communities	+	++	++
4. Improve education and training	+	+	+
5. Maintain a low level of crime and fear of crime	?	?	?
6. Improve accessibility to all services and facilities	+	+	+
7. Improve the efficiency of landuse	?	?	?
8. Reduce waste generation and disposal	?	?	?
9. Reduce air pollution and improve air quality	+/-	+/-	+/-
10. Address the causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and be prepared for its impacts	+/-	+/-	+/-
11. Protect and improve soil and water resources	+/-	+/-	+/-
12. Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding	+/-	+/-	+/-
13. Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	+/-	+/-	+/-
14. Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment	+/-	+/-	-
15. Maintain high and stable levels of employment	+/-	+	+
16. Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness	-	+	+

Table 7: SA summary of housing growth options

- 3.19 The summary table above illustrates that the medium growth option delivers the most positive sustainability outcomes, providing sufficient housing growth to support the necessary economic growth in the district through the duration of the plan, while limiting the impact on the historic and landscape character of the district, particularly at the rural / urban fringe. The medium and high options will deliver a significant amount of affordable housing but the low growth scenario is less effective. All options will contribute to the

provision of necessary social, physical and green infrastructure to support local communities but the low growth option limits the opportunity to provide new or enhanced infrastructure. All options will also result in a range of positive and negative outcomes in relation to air quality, climate change, natural resources, flood risk and biodiversity and will be dependant on other relevant policies in the Local Plan to mitigate impacts.

Affordable Housing

3.20 Housing affordability is a key issue for West Oxfordshire and a number of different options for increasing the supply of affordable housing in the District have been put forward to date.

3.21 Options for affordable housing provision identified at the Interim Approach stage (2009) included the following:

- Identification of further opportunities for redevelopment and intensification within existing housing estates owned by registered social landlords
- Secure additional rural exception sites in accordance with Local Plan Policy HI2
- Identify as many sites as possible through the LDF process which can provide both market and affordable housing
- Increase the proportion of affordable housing to be provided on market sites above current levels
- Widen the range of sites where affordable housing is to be provided
- Seek financial contributions towards the provision of affordable housing from other development including non-residential.

3.22 A number of different options for the delivery of affordable housing have been presented at each stage of the Local Plan consultation, although there have been mixed views on both the proportion of new affordable housing to be delivered and the use of appropriate thresholds to trigger the delivery of affordable housing in the district.

3.23 Further details on the range of affordable housing options presented for consultation can be found in the full SA report.

3.24 Taking account of the responses received and the viability work that has been undertaken, the draft Local Plan includes Core Policy 8 – Affordable Housing, which requires the provision of 35% in Carterton, 40% in Witney and 50% elsewhere in the District. The threshold for provision is a net gain of one or more dwellings.

Level of Employment Growth.

3.25 Various options have been proposed in relation to the level of employment growth to be delivered by the Local Plan.

3.26 At the Interim Approach stage, the options included:

- Indigenous Growth
 - Provision of up to an additional 10ha of new employment land (40ha in total taking into account existing commitments of 30ha)
 - Focus on indigenous growth to broadly match new labour supply
- Steady Growth
 - Provision of an additional 30ha of employment land (60ha in total)

- Focus on supporting indigenous growth and business start ups whilst catering for a modest level of inward investment

- Higher Growth

- Provision of an additional 50ha of new employment land (80ha in total)

- Support indigenous growth but more active encouragement of inward investment

- Allocate a strategic area for employment in the Core Strategy

- Continue and expand criteria based policies for new employment sites

3.27 At the Preferred Options stage, four of these options were subject to a sustainability appraisal, taking account of feedback received through previous consultation. A summary of this SA is illustrated in Table 8 below.

SA Objective	Indigenous Growth	Steady Growth	Higher Growth	Small Scale Dispersal
Promote thriving and inclusive communities	+/-	+	+	+
Improve accessibility to all services and facilities	+	+/-	--	+/-
Improve the efficiency of land use	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
Conserve and enhance biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape character and the historic environment	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
Maintain high and stable levels of employment	+/-	+	++	+
Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness	+/-	+	++	+

Table 8: SA summary of employment growth options

3.28 The sustainability appraisal demonstrated that the 'steady growth' and the 'small scale dispersal' scenarios provide the most positive impacts against the SA framework,

3.29 The steady growth option reflects the approach that had led to a reasonably successful economy to date and was broadly consistent with the regional and sub-regional planning and economic strategies. The indigenous growth option places greater emphasis on growth in small businesses, retail and tourism, reduces pressures on the labour supply and infrastructure and minimises new land requirements.

3.30 The option of providing more flexibility for small scale dispersal also scores positively if safeguards are included to limit the impact of excessive dispersal of employment development on the rural character of the area.

3.31 In light of this, the Council's 'preferred approach' was presented as being a combination of the Steady Growth and Small Scale Dispersal options.

3.32 This approach has been carried forward into the draft Local Plan (2012). A full appraisal of the draft Local Plan employment policies is included in Appendix 2 of the full SA report.

Directions for growth at Witney

3.33 Having regard to the overall settlement strategy, various options have been considered in relation to the potential direction of growth at Witney. Given that the availability of previously developed land in the town is limited, there is an acknowledged need to develop on the fringe of the town on undeveloped, greenfield land. There are effectively five main options - north, north east, east, south and west, each of which have been promoted through the consultation process for development by interested parties. These potential development areas are shown on the plan below.

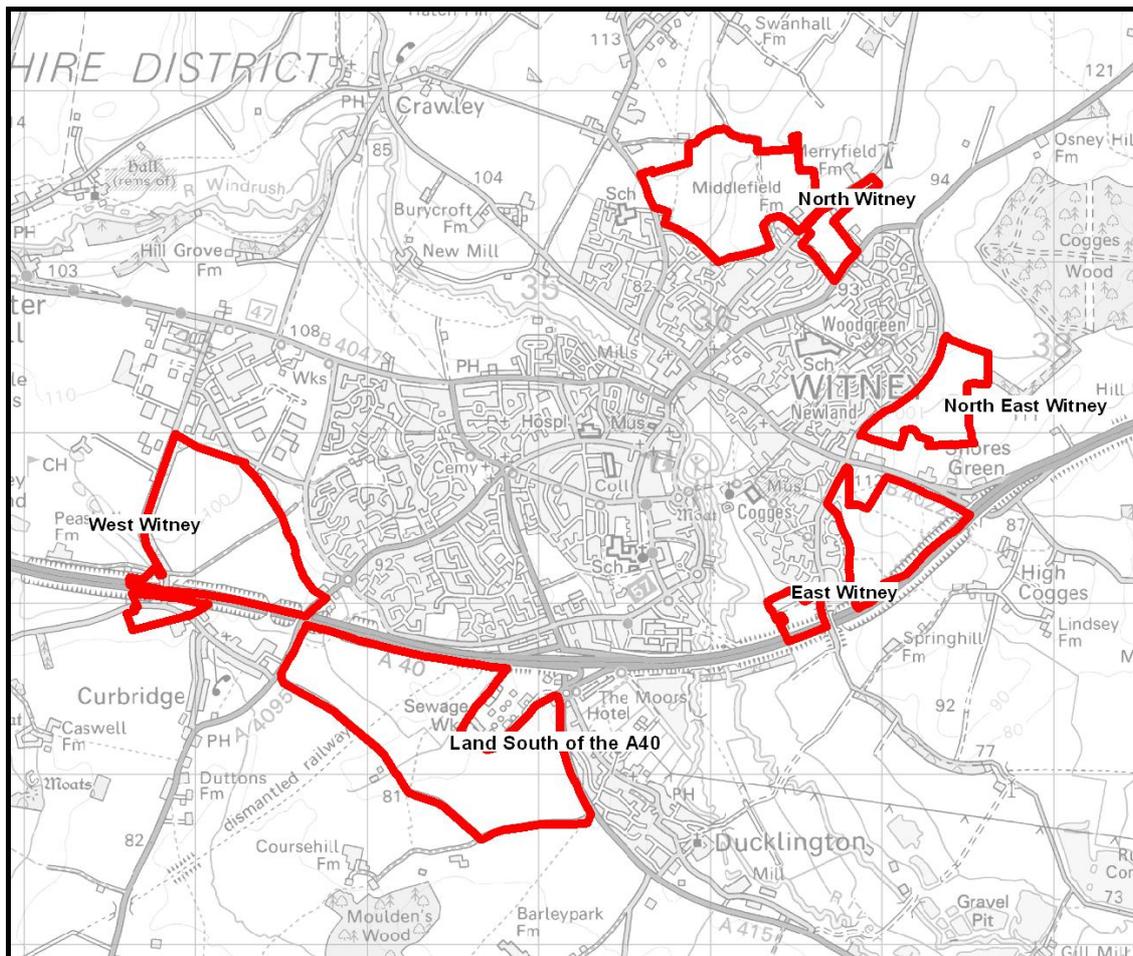


Figure 1: Witney strategic growth options

3.34 These options were all tested through a process of sustainability appraisal at the Preferred Approach stage (2010). Importantly, since then a decision has been received on the Cogges Link Road (CLR) which suggests that the scheme is unlikely to go ahead. As the construction of the CLR would have involved land at east Witney, this option has been re-appraised. Because of the wider transport implications of the decision, the north and west options have also been re-appraised. The north east and southern options have not been re-appraised as it is not considered that the CLR decision has significant bearing on the previous assessment. Development on land to the north east was considered to have significant adverse landscape impacts and development on land to the south would result in unsustainable urban sprawl, dependent on car travel and would create a poor level of residential amenity.

3.35 The results of the re-appraisal are summarised in the table below. Reflecting previous appraisals the objectives considered have been filtered, selecting those most relevant to the

comparative appraisal. The accompanying Assessment of Strategic Site Options background paper provides a detailed assessment of the sites against related criteria.

SA Objective	North 1,500 homes West End Link	East 500 homes Shores Green A40 Junction improvement	West 1,000 dwellings 10ha employment Downs Rd A40 Junction
Improve health and well being and reduce inequalities. Promote thriving and inclusive communities	+	++	+
Improve education and training	+	+	++
Improve accessibility to all services and facilities	+	++	+
Reduce air pollution and improve air quality	-	+	+/-
Protect and improve soil and water resources	+/-	+/-	+
Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding	+/-	+/-	+
Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	-	-	+/-
Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment	-	-	+/-
Maintain high and stable levels of employment Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness	+/-	+/-	++

Table 9: SA Summary of Witney strategic growth options

3.36 Table 9 illustrates that the West Witney development option remains the most sustainable option for accommodating new development in the town when compared with the re-tested North and East options. Although the West Witney site is more distant from the town centre it has good pedestrian and cycle links and access to premium bus services. It is in close proximity to existing employment provision and can provide significant increases in employment whilst delivering a new junction on the A40 to benefit existing businesses in that area. The site is of lower environmental sensitivity and has greater potential to improve educational provision by incorporating proposals for a new secondary school facility. Land to the east of Witney scores well in relation to accessibility to services and facilities, being in close proximity to the town centre. There are some concerns about potential landscape and heritage impact on more elevated parts of the site and in the Windrush Valley which could be reduced by scaling back development. The delivery of Shores Green A40 junction improvement is expected to reduce the volume of traffic through Bridge Street of benefit to air quality. Land to the north is not as accessible as east to the town centre and has a number of environmental sensitivities including biodiversity, flood risk and landscape, and impacts associated with the delivery of the proposed West End Link Road. Even with this new link road the amount of traffic predicted through Bridge Street is expected to increase.

Directions of Growth at Carterton

3.37 Having regard to the overall settlement strategy, various options have been proposed in relation to the potential direction of growth at Carterton.

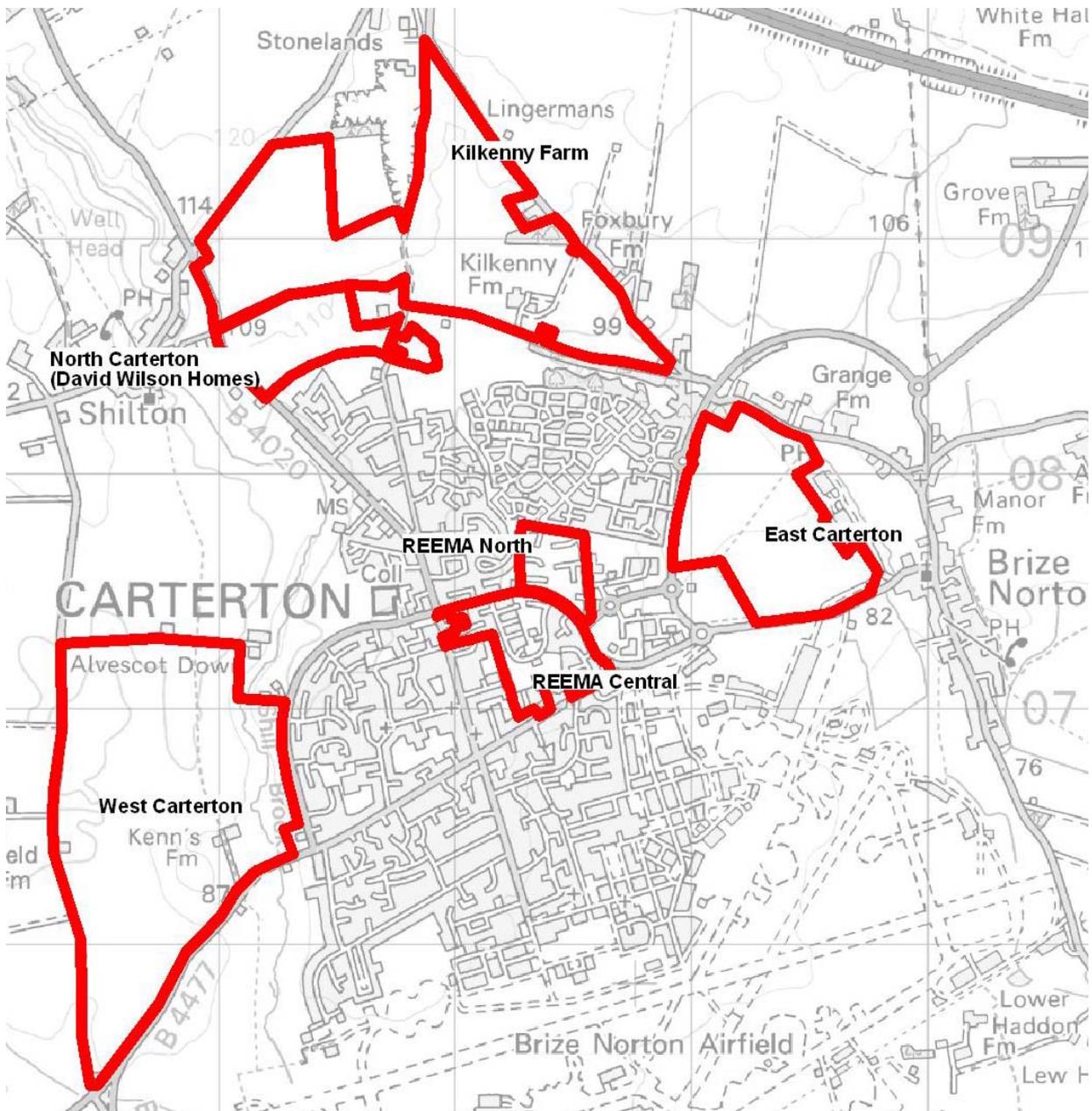


Figure 2: Carterton strategic growth options

3.38 Although the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) have stated that some land will potentially be made available for open market housing in the middle of Carterton (REEMA North and Central), it will still be necessary to develop on some greenfield land on the edge of the town in accordance with the overall strategy to focus development in the three main towns.

3.39 Options to the north, east and west were originally tested at the Preferred Approach stage (2010) together with the option of no major extension. The options for expansion have been re-assessed in light of additional information received from the site promoters. A summary of the results is set out in Table 10 below. Reflecting previous appraisals the

objectives considered have been filtered, selecting those most relevant to the comparative appraisal. The accompanying Assessment of Strategic Site Options background paper provides a detailed assessment of the sites against related criteria.

3.40 The option for no major expansion has not been re-assessed as it is considered that this was tested effectively through earlier stages of the SA process. Although of lesser environmental impact this option limits the ability to deliver new infrastructure and housing in the town, particularly affordable housing.

Sustainability Objectives	East (700)	West (1,000)	Kilkenny Farm (1,000)	North (David Wilson Homes) (300)
Decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes	++	++	++	+
Promote thriving and inclusive communities	+	+/-	-	+/-
Improve education and training	+	+	+	+/-
Improve accessibility to all services and facilities	+	+/-	-	+/-
Improve efficiency of land use Protect and improve soil and water resources	+/-	+/-	-	+/-
Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding	+	+/-	+	+
Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	+	+/-	+	-
Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment	+/-	--	-	-
Maintain high and stable levels of employment				
Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness	+	+	+/-	+/-

Table 10: SA Summary of Carterton strategic growth options

3.41 The results of the SA indicate that the eastern option of 700 dwellings is the most sustainable option. The site has excellent accessibility which will encourage walking, cycling and use of bus services and the site can integrate well into the existing settlement, Through incorporating a landscape buffer to Brize Norton village and extension to the Kilkenny Lane Country Park, landscape impact is limited. Land to the west would result in significant adverse landscape impact being a major incursion into open countryside. The accessibility of the site is reasonably good but is dependent on provisions of additional crossings of the Shillbrook. Although the development offers potential for ecological benefits, the development would require built development within an ecologically sensitive area and floodplain. The site is sequentially less preferable on flood risk grounds. Kilkenny Farm has a poor relationship to existing services and public transport and would be poorly integrated with the town. The proposed development would have adverse landscape impacts. Land to the north (David Wilson Homes) is reasonably well related to existing services but access to public transport is not as strong as other site options. Development as proposed would have an adverse landscape impact, intruding into the setting of Shilton village and there are potential adverse biodiversity impacts. The size of the site limits the ability to deliver additional affordable housing.

Growth at Chipping Norton

- 3.42 Opportunities for significant expansion in Chipping Norton are relatively limited due to the landscape constraints of the Cotswolds AONB. Development at Chipping Norton is also constrained to an extent by the allocation of an air quality management zone in the town centre. The town sits astride the A44 and the A361, a heavily used lorry route passing through the town centre.
- 3.43 At the Preferred Approach stage (2010) land on the eastern fringe of the town was subjected to sustainability appraisal. This area lies outside the Cotswolds AONB, although the capacity for new development is constrained by the landscape character of the area.
- 3.44 No further re-assessment of development options in Chipping Norton has been undertaken because a Neighbourhood Plan is currently being prepared for Chipping Norton which will in due course consider development options for the town through a separate process of Sustainability Appraisal.

Appraisal of current planning policies (B4 / B5)

- 3.45 The development strategy and policies presented in the Draft Local Plan (October 2012) have been developed and refined through previous rounds of consultation and sustainability appraisal. In order to ensure that each of these policies conform with the SA framework and that they will cumulatively deliver positive impacts throughout the district, in conformity with one another, a full sustainability appraisal of each of the policies has been undertaken. A summary is provided in Table 11 below.

Table 11: SA summary of impacts of Draft Local Plan policies

SA Objectives	Policies that combine to deliver cumulative/ synergistic/ indirect effects	Effects
1. Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home	Overall Strategy: ++ Providing New Homes: ++ Sustainable Economic Growth +/- Environmental & Heritage Assets + Strategy at the Local Level ++	The majority of the Local Plan policies will deliver significant positive outcomes in relation to this sustainability objective, particularly the overall strategy, housing policies and the strategy at the local level. All of these policies are geared towards increasing the supply of housing and directing residential development to the most sustainable locations. The economy and town centre policies will deliver a neutral impact overall.
2. Improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities	All Policy Areas ++	Policies will deliver positive impacts against SA Objective 2 and cumulatively, will have significant positive implications for improving the health and well being and reducing inequalities in the district. The delivery of good quality affordable housing, the protection and enhancement of the environment and ensuring that people have accessible jobs and services are all important elements in meeting this objective.
3. Promote thriving and inclusive communities	All Policy Areas ++	Policies in the Local Plan will have significant positive implications for promoting thriving and inclusive communities both individually and cumulatively. The sub objectives for this element of the SA relate to tackling social exclusion, increasing the vitality of communities and improving opportunities for leisure and recreational activity and each section of the overall strategy will contribute in some way to meeting at least part of the headline objective.
4. Improve education and training	Overall Strategy: ++ Providing New Homes: + Sustainable Economic Growth: ++ Environmental and Heritage Assets: + Transport & Movement: + Strategy at the Local Level: ++	A number of policies did not relate to this sustainability objective and were scoped out of the SA process. Those policies that are relevant scored positively against the objective, particularly those that focus on strategic development areas and those relating to sustainable economic growth. These policies will cumulatively deliver significant positive results for improving education and training by delivering new educational establishments alongside residential development, by ensuring that residential development is located in close proximity to existing services and by delivering new employment with potential training opportunities.

SA Objectives	Policies that combine to deliver cumulative/ synergistic/ indirect effects	Effects
5. Maintain low level of crime and fear of crime	Overall Strategy: ++ Providing New Homes: + Sustainable Economic Growth: + Strategy at the Local Level: +/-	More than half of the policies were scoped out of the appraisal against this objective as they were not relevant. Policy CP4 scored best against the objective as this spells out the requirements for reducing crime and fear of crime in the design of all development. The local level strategy scored neutrally against this objective as although no reference was made to community safety, it was assumed that the overarching design policy (CP3) would apply to all development in these areas.
6. Improve accessibility to all services and facilities	Overall Strategy: ++ Providing New Homes: + Sustainable Economic Growth: + Environmental and Heritage Assets: ++ Transport & Movement: ++ Strategy at the Local Level: ++	The environmental and heritage assets policies have little relevance to this objective and the majority of these were scoped out of the appraisal. Enhanced Green Infrastructure provision however has the potential to improve linkages with services and facilities by sustainable means. All of the relevant policies will cumulatively deliver significant positive outcomes against this objective by improving linkages with services and facilities via a range of modes of transport and in the case of the local strategies, deliver improved services and facilities to support new development. CP 15 will help to ensure the provision and protection of local services and community facilities.
7. Improve the efficiency of land use	Overall Strategy: +/- Providing New Homes: +/- Sustainable Economic Growth: ++ Environmental and Heritage Assets: + Strategy at the Local Level: +/-	Policies exhibit mixed scores against sustainability objective 7. Policies relating to sustainable economic growth scored well as they primarily focus on concentrating development within defined locations and the re-use of existing units. As there is a shortage of suitable previously developed land for new development in the district however, the cumulative impact of policies to deliver new housing will be that more and more greenfield land will be required to accommodate it. These policies will have a cumulative negative impact as a result.
8. Reduce waste generation and disposal	Overall Strategy: ++ Providing New Homes: + Sustainable Economic Growth: +/- Environmental and Heritage Assets: + Strategy at the Local Level: +/-	The cumulative impact of the Local Plan policies against this sustainability objective are likely to be neutral, with the incorporation of sustainable design and construction methods into new development (to reduce waste and encourage recycling) likely to be balanced by the overall increase in the quantum of development.

SA Objectives	Policies that combine to deliver cumulative/ synergistic/ indirect effects	Effects
9. Reduce air pollution and improve air quality	Overall Strategy: ++ Providing New Homes: +/- Sustainable Economic Growth: +/- Environmental and Heritage Assets: ++ Transport & Movement: ++ Strategy at the Local Level: +/-	<p>The environmental and heritage assets policies will deliver the most significant cumulative benefits against this sustainability objective as they ensure the protection of natural habitats and provide enhanced opportunities for walking and cycling, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving the ability of the environment to clean the air through natural processes.</p> <p>The policies that guide housing and economic development in the district, although neutral in most cases, have potential to cumulatively cause negative impacts against this objective, as they continue to focus the bulk of development in the main settlements where traffic congestion and air quality is already an issue. Sufficient mitigation measures are built in to ensure that existing problems aren't exacerbated where possible. Policies, such as CP24, encourage the use of sustainable transport and seek to deliver highway improvements to improve the flow of traffic.</p>
10. Address the causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and be prepared for its impacts	Overall Strategy: ++ Providing New Homes: +/- Sustainable Economic Growth: +/- Environmental and Heritage Assets: ++ Transport & Movement: + Strategy at the Local Level: +/-	<p>The overall strategy and policies relating to environmental and heritage assets will deliver the most significant positive benefits against SA objective 10. The overall strategy ensures that all development is designed sustainably and that it is located appropriately so as to reduce dependency on private transport. The protection of environmental assets will maintain the ability of the natural environment to absorb greenhouse gas emission with an improved green infrastructure network better enabling species to adapt to climate change. Increasing vegetation coverage will help keep the district cool with rising global temperatures and will enable the local environment to respond to increased levels of flood risk. The neutral impacts in relation to the creation of new homes, employment development and the local area strategies are a result of the overall increase in the quantum of development and associated population increase.</p>
11. Protect and improve soil and water resources	Overall Strategy: +/- Providing New Homes: - Sustainable Economic Growth: + Environmental and Heritage Assets: ++ Strategy at the Local Level: +/-	<p>The Local Plan will deliver an overall neutral impact against this sustainability objective, largely as a result of the volume of greenfield land required to accommodate new development in the district. The housing policies in particular score negatively due to the shortage of available brownfield land to accommodate such development. Such negative impacts are mitigated however by the positive scoring environmental and heritage assets policies which will ensure that development is steered away from the best and most versatile agricultural land and other natural environment assets.</p>
12. Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding	Overall Strategy: + Providing New Homes: + Sustainable Economic Growth: +/- Environmental and Heritage Assets: ++ Strategy at the Local Level: +/-	<p>There are a number of policies within the Local Plan that have potential to increase the risk of flooding, particularly those that seek to increase the overall quantum of development in areas that have experienced past flood risk. This potential risk is balanced however by the flood risk policy and overall strategy which apply to all development in the district and ensure that all new development includes flood risk mitigation measures.</p>

SA Objectives	Policies that combine to deliver cumulative/ synergistic/ indirect effects	Effects
13. Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	Overall Strategy: + Providing New Homes: +/- Sustainable Economic Growth: + Environmental and Heritage Assets: ++ Transport & Movement: + Strategy at the Local Level: +	The Local Plan policies score well in relation to protection and enhancement of biodiversity, largely due to the crossing cutting nature of this objective and ongoing references to biodiversity protection and enhancement through many of the policies. The housing policies score less well in relation to biodiversity due to the large volume of greenfield land required to accommodate residential development and the potential impact on habitats that this may result in.
14. Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment	Overall Strategy: + Providing New Homes: +/- Sustainable Economic Growth: + Environmental and Heritage Assets: ++ Transport & Movement: + Strategy at the Local Level: +	The landscape and historic character of West Oxfordshire are two of the key drivers for change in the District attracting people to live and work in the area and attracting visitors and investment to the District. As a result, the protection and enhancement of these assets is a key aim of the strategy and is addressed through all policy areas, to score positively against this objective. The provision of new homes scores neutrally as the majority of residential development will take place on the edge of settlements, affecting the character of both settlements and the countryside although any potential negative impacts will be mitigated through good quality design.
15. Maintain high and stable levels of employment	Overall Strategy: ++ Providing New Homes: + Sustainable Economic Growth: ++ Environmental and Heritage Assets: + Transport & Movement: + Strategy at the Local Level: ++	All policy areas score positively against the objective to maintain high and stable levels of employment in the district, particularly the policies on Sustainable Economic Growth which promote further development of land for employment and support for the rural economy, tourism and town centres.
16. Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness	Overall Strategy: ++ Providing New Homes: + Sustainable Economic Growth: ++ Environmental and Heritage Assets: + Transport & Movement: + Strategy at the Local Level: ++	All policy areas score well against the objective to promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness in the district. The overall level of housing, including the provision of affordable housing will enable the retention of a skilled workforce and the development of modern employment spaces in sustainable locations will enable businesses to expand and provides potential to attract new businesses to the area.

Mitigation

- 3.46 A number of potential negative impacts have been identified in relation to the Local Plan and these are as follows;
- An increase in the overall quantum of development in the district, particularly in the main service centres may lead to an increase in the level of traffic generated within town centres, causing further deterioration of air quality in air quality management areas unless appropriate mitigation is introduced such as improved transport infrastructure.
 - Population expansion and an increase in the overall level of development in the district may contribute to the causes of climate change through energy and transport use.
 - The high quality landscape character and historic environment of West Oxfordshire is potentially at risk from the impacts of modern development.
- 3.47 Where these potential negative impacts exist, they will be mitigated through implementation of relevant policies within the Local Plan, as set out under the key social, environmental and economic themes of the Strategy. Appropriate measures have been incorporated into these policies through the sustainability appraisal and consultation process to ensure that they will sufficiently mitigate the potential negative impacts that may arise from new development in the district.
- 3.48 The significant effects of these policies will be monitored and measured against the baseline position that was determined through Stage A of the SA process.

Section Four: Next steps

- 4.1 The draft Local Plan will be subject to further consultation in October/November 2012. The SA report will be published alongside to ensure that the policies and proposals contained therein are accurate, fit for purpose and that they satisfy the social, environmental and economic needs and aspirations of the District as a whole.
- 4.2 Representations on both the Local Plan and the SA report will be taken into account and the Council will look to formally publish the proposed submission draft Local Plan in spring 2013. It will then be formally submitted to the Secretary of State in early summer 2013.

Section Five: Monitoring

- 5.1 A series of monitoring indicators have been developed as part of the SA framework. Detailed information relating to each of these indicators will be collected on an annual basis and presented in the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) through which the performance of policies and the impact on social, environmental and economic conditions in the district will be assessed.
- 5.2 Appendix 3 of the draft Local Plan presents a delivery and monitoring framework linked to each of the core policies and spells out the range of delivery mechanisms, delivery partners, monitoring indicators and timescales linked to each policy.