

REVISION SCHEDULE					
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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction

Background

In October 2016 North West Leicestershire District Council submitted the North West Leicestershire Local Plan for independent examination by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. One of the associated documents submitted alongside the Plan was the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report, which was then updated in late 2016.

Examination hearings were held in January and March 2017, subsequent to which the Council prepared a list of proposed modifications to the submitted plan, and agreed these with the Planning Inspector. Proposed modifications are now published for consultation.

This SA Report Addendum

The aim of this SA Report Addendum is essentially to present an appraisal of the proposed modifications, with a view to informing the current consultation.

In addition to presenting an appraisal of the proposed modifications, this report presents an appraisal of the 'the Plan as modified', thereby updating the appraisal findings presented within the SA Report (as updated).

Screening proposed modifications

The first task is to consider proposed modifications in turn, with a view to identifying those that need to be given detailed consideration, through appraisal.

Screening conclusions are presented in the following table -

Policy	Proposed main modifications	Is there a need to examine matters through the appraisal (Chapter 3)?
S1 - Future housing and economic development needs	MM1 to MM9	Yes. Whilst a number of the proposed modifications are factual, others reflect strategic policy decisions on the Council's part, and hence should be a focus of appraisal.
S2 - Settlement hierarchy	MM10 to MM11	Yes
H1 to H3 - Housing supply	MM13 to MM29	Yes. Whilst a number of the proposed modifications are factual, others reflect strategic policy decisions on the Council's part, and hence should be a focus of appraisal.
H4 - Affordable housing	MM30 to MM31	Yes. Whilst affordable housing policy is largely a matter of responding to the technical evidence-base, it appears that there are some policy choices in this instance.
EC1 to EC2 - Employment land supply	MM32 to MM41	Yes. Whilst a number of the proposed modifications are factual, others reflect strategic policy decisions on the Council's part, and hence should be a focus of appraisal.
EC4 - East Midlands Airport	MM42	No, as a minor wording change with no clear sustainability implications.
IF4, EN2, HE2 and CC1 - thematic policies	MM43 to MM46	Yes, although the proposed changes are relatively minor, with few sustainability implications.

N.B. the focus here is proposed **‘main’ modifications only**. Proposed ‘minor’ modifications (which are being consulted upon alongside the Main Modifications) are screened out automatically.

Appraising proposed modifications

The main task is to appraise the screened-in proposed modifications against the SA framework, and also discuss the ‘submission plan plus proposed modifications’ (thereby the SA Report).

The appraisal is structured under 15 sustainability topic headings, with the following overall conclusion -

Proposed modifications perform well in terms of all sustainability objectives, other than ‘economy and employment’.

With regards to ‘submission plan plus proposed modifications’, the overall conclusions presented within the 2015 SA Report were as follows:

“Generally, the draft Local Plan has been positively prepared. There was little scope for suggesting mitigation measures, as no significant negative effects were identified. However, there was some scope for enhancement of positive effects, as well as mitigation where not significant negative effects were identified.”

Proposed modifications do not serve to change this broad conclusion; however, the Plan is now predicted to perform less well in respect of ‘economy and employment’, than was the case when the above conclusion was written. The proposal to support a higher quantum of housing growth, through a larger scheme at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch, also leads to some tensions with certain SA objectives (notably transport, biodiversity and cultural heritage) when considered in isolation, but less so once account is taken of the proposal to require preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the site.

Next steps

The next step is for the Inspector to consider the representations raised as part of the consultation, alongside this SA Report Addendum, before deciding whether he is in a position to write his report on the Plan’s soundness.

Assuming that the Inspector is able to find the Plan ‘sound’, it will then be formally adopted by the Council. At the time of adoption an ‘SA Statement’ will be published that explains the process of plan-making / SA in full and presents ‘measures decided concerning monitoring’.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In October 2016 North West Leicestershire District Council submitted the North West Leicestershire Local Plan for independent examination by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. One of the associated documents submitted alongside the Plan was the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report, which was then updated in late 2016.¹

1.1.2 Examination hearings were held in January and March 2017, subsequent to which the Council prepared a list of proposed modifications to the submitted plan, and agreed these with the Planning Inspector. Proposed modifications are now published for consultation.

1.2 This SA Report Addendum

1.2.1 The aim of this SA Report Addendum is essentially to present an appraisal of the proposed modifications, with a view to informing the current consultation.

1.2.2 In addition to presenting an appraisal of the proposed modifications, this report presents an appraisal of the 'the Plan as modified', thereby updating the appraisal findings presented within the SA Report (as updated; examination document EX/37).

1.2.3 It is important to emphasise that this is an *addendum* to the SA Report (as updated; examination document EX/37), and hence the two should be read together.

Reasonable alternatives?

1.2.4 As required by Regulations,² the SA Report presents detailed information in relation to reasonable alternatives, in that it presents an appraisal of reasonable alternatives and also 'an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with'. More specifically, the SA Report presents the following information on reasonable alternatives -

- 1) Detailed information is provided in relation to the consideration of alternatives for the two key strategic plan issues of 'housing growth quantum' and 'broad housing growth distribution' (see Chapters 6 and 7).
- 2) Detailed information is provided in relation to the consideration of site options and alternative approaches to the allocation of land for housing (i.e. alternative packages of site options) at Ashby de la Zouch and the Coalville Urban Area (see Chapters 8 and 9).
- 3) Detailed information is provided in relation to the consideration of employment site options across the district (see Chapter 10).
- 4) 'Outline reasons' were presented to explain why detailed consideration had not been given to alternative approaches to addressing thematic plan issues, including the 'stand-out' thematic issue of affordable housing (see Chapters 11 and 12).

1.2.5 When developing proposed modifications the Council (working with the Inspector) was not presented with a need to appraise alternatives, given alternatives appraisal work completed prior to submission. As such, this report does not contain information on alternatives.

N.B. At the time of Plan adoption an 'SA Statement' will be published that explains how the Plan (as modified) is justified on the basis of alternatives appraisal.

¹ Specifically, the 'site assessment' element of the SA Report was updated, drawing upon new / updated data.

² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004)

2 SCREENING PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The first task is to consider proposed modifications in turn, with a view to identifying those that need to be given detailed consideration, through appraisal (see Chapter 3).

2.1.2 This chapter gives consideration to Local Plan policies in turn.

N.B. the focus here is proposed **‘main’ modifications only**. Proposed ‘minor’ modifications (which are being consulted upon alongside the Main Modifications) are screened out automatically, as by their very nature they will not lead to significant effects / have a significant bearing on the achievement of sustainability objectives. All references in this report to proposed modifications are, therefore, to the main modifications only.

2.2 Policy S1 (MM1 to MM9)

2.2.1 This policy, and the preceding supporting text, deals with “future housing and economic development needs”.

2.2.2 The majority of proposed modifications are factual, in that they report the findings of the latest Housing and Economic Needs Development Assessment (HEDNA), in respect of objectively assessed need for housing and employment land.

2.2.3 However, the following proposed modifications go beyond factual updates, i.e. reflect a policy decision on the Council’s part -

- MM6 - proposes to provide for the objectively assessed housing need (OAHN) figure established by the HEDNA.
- MM8 - identifies that an early review of the Local Plan will be undertaken to address issues relating to the fact that the employment land provision in Local Plan does not meet the objectively assessed need for employment land established by the HEDNA.
- MM9 - relates to Policy S1 itself, setting out in policy the matters discussed in the preceding supporting text.

2.3 Policy S2 (MM10 to MM11)

2.3.1 This policy, and the associated supporting text, deals with “settlement hierarchy”.

2.3.2 The two proposed modifications, and MM11 in particular, involve giving additional policy support to the development of previously developed land ahead of greenfield development, wherever possible. Indeed, MM11 replaces policy support for ‘physical extensions’ to smaller settlements - which would have equated to broad support for both brownfield and greenfield sites - with more restricted policy support for *“previously developed land which is well related to the settlement concerned.”*

2.4 Policy S3 (MM12)

2.4.1 This policy, and the associated supporting text, deals with “countryside”, and hence will be a key policy when dealing with applications for development of land not within a settlement, as defined by the settlement hierarchy.

2.4.2 MM12 essentially does three things. Firstly, the introductory text is re-worded in order to make the policy wording more ‘positive’, as required by national policy; secondly, it adds support for the allocation of employment land (subject to criteria being met); and, thirdly, it adds the following criterion to the list of criteria that must be met in order for a development in the countryside to be suitable: *“The proposed development is accessible, or will be made accessible, by a range of sustainable transport.”* It is this latter change that is most significant, as it is likely that numerous development proposals could be ‘captured’.

2.5 Policies H1 to H3 (MM13 to MM29)

- 2.5.1 These policies, and the associated supporting text, list the sites that will contribute to the housing supply, i.e. provide for OAHN. The policies deal with three types of site in turn: 1) sites with planning permission; 2) sites with 'resolution to grant' planning permission; and 3) sites without planning permission, i.e. sites where a policy decision is being made to support the site through an allocation within the plan or assignment of 'reserve site' status.
- 2.5.2 MM13 to MM20 are mainly factual. Sites with planning permission or 'resolution to grant' are listed, and there is a discussion (MM18) of the assumed number of homes that will be delivered across these sites over the course of the plan period. Ultimately, the conclusion is reached that is fair to assume that approximately 72% (9,000 homes out of a potential yield of 12,553 homes) of the homes across these sites will be delivered within the plan period. This is an important calculation, as the implication is that the plan must allocate sites in order to achieve the OAHN figure of 9,620; however, it is a calculation nonetheless. It is not a policy choice on the Council's part, and hence does not lead to sustainability implications.
- 2.5.3 The remaining proposed modifications deal with changes to the approach to land allocation through the plan, and the allocation of 'reserve sites', and hence reflect **important policy decisions** that are of central importance to this SA.
- 2.5.4 The main point to note is the proposal to retain support for a single large allocation at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch, through Policy H3 (MM25), and indeed increase the quantum of homes supported at this site to 2,050, despite the 'need' for allocations (i.e. the difference between OAHN and housing supply through completions / commitments) having reduced.
- 2.5.5 The implication is that the plan will provide for OAHN plus a larger 'buffer' than was proposed at the time of submission. The current proposal is to provide for 10,592 homes, which equates to a c.12% buffer over-and-above OAHN. The aim of this larger buffer is to: 1) provide a further contingency against the risk of sites not delivering (in full or at all) during the plan period; 2) provide a supply of land to meet unmet housing needs likely to arise from elsewhere within the Housing Market Area (HMA); and 3) ensure that there is a good 'trajectory' of housing delivery across the plan period (and therefore always a five year supply of deliverable sites). There is support for providing for a buffer through the NPPF.³
- 2.5.6 The second point to take from the proposed modifications to Policy H3 is the proposal to add an additional reserve site, namely H3d - Land south of Ashby Road, Kegworth (MM27). This site, as per the other reserve site (Land of Ashby road/Leicester Road, Measham), will come forward only if certain other sites prove non-deliverable - or are not able to deliver in full - as a result of the HS2 route. None of the three sites that are potentially to be (indeed likely to be) affected by HS2 are counted within the Council's housing trajectory. As such, support for reserve sites - which is set to be increased by the proposed modifications - has the potential to result in the plan providing for a figure above 10,592 homes (the two reserve sites have the potential to yield a total of 530 homes).
- 2.5.7 Finally, a notable changes is made to the criteria that must be met for development to be supported at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch (about 2,050 homes). Specifically, proposed MM25 adds policy support for access to the wider countryside; modifies provisions in respect of the historic environment; and adds a requirement for a comprehensive masterplan.

³ Para 14 of the NPPF states that: "Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, **with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change.**" (emphasis added)

Para 47 of the NPPF states that: "To boost significantly the supply of housing, local planning authorities should:• use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing **in the housing market area**, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period;• **identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements** with an additional buffer of 5% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to provide a realistic prospect of **achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land;**" (emphasis added)

2.6 Policy H4 (MM30 to MM31)

- 2.6.1 This policy, and associated supporting text, deals with “affordable housing”, and specifically the requirements that are placed on housing developers in respect of delivering a proportion of affordable housing as a component of housing schemes. Schemes are classified according to type and location, and then the role of policy is to determine which schemes qualify (i.e. must provide a proportion of affordable housing), and what that proportion must be.
- 2.6.2 The proposed modifications reflect a policy departure from the submission plan, most notably through the proposal to set less onerous requirements on developers of previously developed sites. The change of tack does not reflect new viability evidence, although it is potentially in-line with latest understanding of affordable housing delivery. As explained within the supporting text, whilst understanding at the time of plan submission was that 25% of new homes delivered since the start of the plan period were ‘affordable’, latest understanding is that the figure is 18%. On balance though, it is fair to say that the proposed modification reflects a policy decision on the Council’s part to provide support for development involving the use of previously developed land by not having such onerous requirements, as opposed to simply a response to new technical evidence.

2.7 Policies EC1 to EC2 (MM32 to MM41)

- 2.7.1 These policies, and the associated supporting text, list the sites that will contribute to the employment land supply, i.e. provide (albeit not in full, as discussed above) for the objectively assessed need figure established by the HEDNA. The policies deal with two types of site in turn: 1) sites with planning permission; and 2) sites without planning permission, i.e. sites where a policy decision is being made to support the site through an allocation within the plan.
- 2.7.2 With regards to (1), two sites are removed from the list of sites with planning permission. This is because construction has now commenced, and hence the site need not be dealt with through the plan. It is not because planning permission has lapsed. With regards to (2), the proposal remains to allocate a single new employment site, at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch (up to 16 ha).
- 2.7.3 Further points to note are as follows -
- The calculation of the amount of employment land to be provided for through allocations has changed notably as a result of: A) the findings from the HEDNA; and B) a significantly different assumption regarding the quantity of employment land that may be unsuitable for employment during the plan period, and hence redeveloped for housing (or other non-employment uses) in accordance with plan policy. The assumption within the submission plan was 45 ha, but the proposed new assumption is 10 ha, based on the findings of an Assessment of Employment Sites study. It is not possible to question the findings of this study; however, it is important to note that additional conversion of employment sites to housing, over-and-above the assumed 10ha, would mean a greater shortfall in employment land supply than is already set to be the case (albeit an early plan review is proposed to address this matter).
 - There is additional support for windfall employment sites, with the proposed new policy wording: *“Where evidence indicates an immediate need or demand for additional employment land (B1, B2 and B8) in North West Leicestershire that cannot be met from land allocated in this plan, the Council will consider favourably proposals that meet the identified need in appropriate locations subject to... [certain criteria].”*
 - Policy criteria that must be met in order for development to be supported at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch have been amended; however, there is little reason to suggest that the effect will be to restrict the employment land yield of the site.

2.8 Policy EC4 (MM42)

2.8.1 A minor wording change is proposed, in relation to the growth of East Midlands Airport.

2.9 Policies IF4, EN2, HE2 and CC1 (MM43 to MM46)

2.9.1 A number of relatively minor changes are made to thematic policy.

2.10 Screening conclusions

2.10.1 Conclusions are presented in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Screening conclusions

Policy	Proposed main modifications	Is there a need to examine matters through the appraisal (Chapter 3)?
S1 - Future housing and economic development needs	MM1 to MM9	Yes. Whilst a number of the proposed modifications are factual, others reflect strategic policy decisions on the Council's part, and hence should be a focus of appraisal.
S2 - Settlement hierarchy	MM10 to MM11	Yes
H1 to H3 - Housing supply	MM13 to MM29	Yes. Whilst a number of the proposed modifications are factual, others reflect strategic policy decisions on the Council's part, and hence should be a focus of appraisal.
H4 - Affordable housing	MM30 to MM31	Yes. Whilst affordable housing policy is largely a matter of responding to the technical evidence-base, it appears that there are some policy choices in this instance.
EC1 to EC2 - Employment land supply	MM32 to MM41	Yes. Whilst a number of the proposed modifications are factual, others reflect strategic policy decisions on the Council's part, and hence should be a focus of appraisal.
EC4 - East Midlands Airport	MM42	No, as a minor wording change with no clear sustainability implications.
IF4, EN2, HE2 and CC1 - thematic policies	MM43 to MM46	Yes, although the proposed changes are relatively minor, with few sustainability implications.

3 APPRAISING PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

- 3.1.1 This chapter presents an appraisal of the screened-in proposed modifications, and also discusses the 'submission plan plus proposed modifications' (thereby updating the SA Report).
- 3.1.2 The appraisal is structured under the 15 sustainability topics identified through SA scoping (and used to structure the appraisal findings within the SA Report).⁴

3.2 Housing

Appraisal of proposed modifications

- 3.2.1 As discussed above, the proposal is to modify Policy S1 (MM9) so that the housing requirement reflects the findings of the HEDNA. The requirement is less than that previously planned for but it is not proposed to remove any sites proposed in Policy H3. The effect of this is to increase the land supply 'buffer'. The proposal is now to support land for development with a total capacity c.12% above OAHN, in order to: 1) provide a contingency against the risk of sites not delivering (in full or at all) during the plan period; 2) provide a supply of land to potentially meet unmet housing needs that may arise elsewhere within the Housing Market Area (HMA); and 3) ensure that there is a good 'trajectory' of housing delivery across the plan period (and therefore always a five year supply of deliverable sites). This is a very positive step, from a 'housing' perspective. In relation to (2), it is noted that the likelihood of unmet needs within the HMA has increased, since the time of submission, with both Leicester City and Oadby and Wigston having declared an unmet need. The exact extent of this unmet need is not known at this time and is the subject of ongoing discussions across the HMA.
- 3.2.2 Significant modifications are also proposed in respect of Policy H4 (MM30), on affordable housing. The proposal is to set less onerous requirements on developers of previously developed sites, which on the one hand should improve scheme viability and therefore increase delivery, but on the other hand will result in fewer schemes delivering affordable housing, and those that do delivering a lower proportion of affordable housing. It is difficult to comment on the merits of the Council's proposed approach, as there is a need to defer to the available technical evidence-base, namely the Council's Viability Study. The proposed approach is in accordance with the study.
- 3.2.3 Finally, there is a need to consider proposed modifications that could feasibly act to restrict housing delivery, i.e. lead to a situation whereby certain schemes are refused permission -
- The proposal to modify Policy S2 (Settlement hierarchy) through replacement of policy support for 'physical extensions' to smaller settlements - which would have equated to support for both brownfield and greenfield sites - with more restricted policy support for "*previously developed land which is well related to the settlement concerned*".
 - The proposal to modify Policy S3 (Countryside) through addition of the following requirement - "*The proposed development is accessible, or will be made accessible, by a range of sustainable transport.*" It is possible that numerous schemes could be 'captured' by this criterion.
 - Proposed modifications to thematic and site specific policies involve addition of some criteria that must be met in order for development proposals to gain planning permission; however, there is little or no reason to suggest a significant conflict with 'housing' objectives.

⁴ Scoping is the first stage in the SA process. For the NW Leicestershire Local Plan, a scoping report was consulted upon in September 2014, before then being updated in response to consultation feedback and published on the Council's website in February 2015.

- 3.2.4 In summary, the overriding consideration is the proposed increase to the planned housing supply, which will help to ensure that housing needs are met within HMA. The NPPF is clear that: *“To boost significantly the supply of housing, local planning authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area...”* As such, the proposed modifications are very positive, from a ‘housing’ perspective.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

- 3.2.5 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“The spatial strategy (with supporting housing policies) will have a significant positive effect on the baseline by seeking to meet the objectively assessed housing need for the district (which takes into account the need to support economic growth). Given that a large proportion of this housing is already committed, the likelihood of this housing being delivered is considered to be high (although market factors will clearly be important). A further strategic housing allocation in Ashby de la Zouch will also help to deliver affordable housing in an area of relatively high house prices, which is positive for local communities in this area. In general, the development management policies in the plan are supportive of housing growth, and are likely to add to the attractiveness of development, rather than act as a barrier. The plan is considered likely to have a significant positive effect on the baseline position.”

- 3.2.6 This very positive conclusion holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’.

3.3 Health and wellbeing

Appraisal of proposed modifications

- 3.3.1 None of the proposed modifications have direct implications for health and wellbeing; however, increased support for housing delivery (as discussed above), is ‘a positive’, and the proposal to strengthen policy Policy IF4 (Transport Infrastructure and new development) (MM43) is also supported. The proposed modifications involve added support for walking and cycling - i.e. modes of active travel that are supportive of good health - and also accessibility by non-car modes to essential services and facilities (which will include health facilities).

- 3.3.2 In summary, proposed modifications are positive, from a ‘health and wellbeing’ perspective.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

- 3.3.3 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“The Plan incorporates measures delivering not significant positive effects on the health and wellbeing of the District’s population. The Plan aims to provide sufficient housing (including affordable housing) and employment opportunities for the District’s population which would have a positive effect on their wellbeing. In addition, the Plan incorporates policies (including EN1-EN6, S4, and IF3), which aim to protect and enhance the natural environment, and open space throughout North West Leicestershire, which would have a positive effect in terms of promoting healthy lifestyles in the district. A requirement to deliver new community services and facilities throughout North West Leicestershire and improve existing services and facilities (IF1 and IF2) should have a not significant positive effect on the health and wellbeing of the District’s population through ensuring good access to key services and facilities. Only Policy Ec2 in the Local Plan is determined to have a significant positive effect on the baseline by providing employment opportunities in Ashby de la Zouch. In combination however, there could be synergistic effects which could lead to a further significant positive effect on health and wellbeing in the longer term. For example, residents would be more likely to be able to access a job and affordable housing, have access to good quality environments and community facilities, and have better facilities for walking and cycling. Together, these factors could make a difference to health and wellbeing, which is the product of a complex relationship between multiple factors.”

3.3.4 This positive conclusion holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’.

3.4 Communities

Appraisal of proposed modifications

3.4.1 Increased support for housing delivery (as discussed above), is ‘a positive’, when considered at the district scale, although it is recognised that support for a larger scheme at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch (MM25) will create certain localised challenges. In this respect, it is noted that the proposal is also now to require that a ‘comprehensive masterplan’ is developed prior to any planning application. Specifically -

“A comprehensive Masterplan prepared in consultation with stakeholders, including both the district and town council and agreed in writing with the local planning authority for the comprehensive development of the site which identifies a range of land uses (including residential, employment and commercial uses, green infrastructure and open spaces, pedestrian and cycle links within and beyond the site and community facilities) and their relationship to each other and existing development in the vicinity of the site and what measures will be put in place to protect amenity of existing residential areas.”

3.4.2 Finally, as per the discussion under ‘health and wellbeing, the proposal to strengthen policy Policy IF4 (Transport Infrastructure and new development) is also supported. The proposed modifications involve added support for walking and cycling, and also accessibility by non-car modes to essential services and facilities, with schools and shops referenced specifically.

3.4.3 In summary, proposed modifications are likely to be positive, from a ‘communities perspective, however, there is a need to carefully consider implications for Ashby de la Zouch. The requirement for a comprehensive masterplan should ensure that this is the case.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

3.4.4 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“There is a strong focus in the Plan to ensure vitality and viability of existing town and local centres. By directing an appropriate level of growth to settlements, this should help to support local businesses, without having an undue adverse effect on the character of settlements, which is important in terms of community identify and attracting visitors. Growth at towns and villages may offer the opportunity to enhance community infrastructure through securing developer contributions. The Plan sets out an appropriate policy framework for achieving this. Economic policies are likely to have a significant positive effect on the town and village centres baseline position. In combination with other policies in the Plan, the overall effect would still be a significant positive effect on the town and village centres”

3.4.5 This positive conclusion holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’.

3.5 Economy

Appraisal of proposed modifications

3.5.1 As discussed in Chapter 2, the overall proposal remains to allocate just one site for employment, and to address issues of under-supply against the objectively assessed requirements, as established by the HEDNA through an early review of the plan.

3.5.2 On the one hand, the decision not to propose an additional allocation at this stage does mean that there will be a shortfall in planned employment land supply, against the need established by the HEDNA. The level of need has increased since the time of submission, partly due to different assumptions in the HEDNA compared to the previous evidence. Numerically there is still a significant supply, but not necessarily for the right type of employment.

3.5.3 However, on the other hand, proposed modifications are positive, from an ‘economy’ perspective, as: 1) additional support for windfall development is added, through an additional criterion within Policy EC2 (MM40); and 2) there is now proposed to be a firmer commitment to an early (indeed immediate) plan review.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

3.5.4 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“The Plan seeks to provide sufficient land to support employment opportunities throughout the District. There is also support for economic diversification in rural areas, increased visitor attractions and protection of good quality employment land. The policies in the Plan seek to provide sufficient housing to support economic growth and to improve accessibility through infrastructure improvements. Overall, a significant positive effect is predicted.”

3.5.5 This positive conclusion no longer entirely holds true, recognising that the latest evidence shows there to be a significant gap between employment land needs and the proposed supply, particularly once account is taken of type or employment land that is needed. However, it is *not* possible to conclude that the plan will result in ‘significant negative effects’, given the proposal for an early plan review, focused on meeting the employment land supply shortfall, and also given strong support for windfall employment land development.

3.6 Transport and access

Appraisal of proposed modifications

3.6.1 Increased support for housing delivery (as discussed above) potentially leads to challenges in respect of managing traffic / avoiding traffic congestion, with the primary proposal being to increase the quantum of growth at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch creating localised challenges. However, the proposal is also to strengthen mitigatory policy, both district-wide (see discussion of Policy IF4, above, under ‘health and wellbeing’) and site specific (see discussion above, under ‘communities’, of the proposed requirement to develop a masterplan for Land north of Ashby de la Zouch).

3.6.2 Also of note is the proposal to modify Policy S3 (Countryside) through addition of the following requirement - *“The proposed development is accessible, or will be made accessible, by a range of sustainable transport.”* It is possible that numerous schemes could be ‘captured’ by this criterion, i.e. numerous schemes that perform poorly from a transport/access perspective will either need to implement mitigation measures, or be refused permission.

3.6.3 In summary, whilst there are some uncertainties - ahead of development of a masterplan for Land north of Ashby de la Zouch - the proposed modifications are on balance positive, in respect of ‘transport and access’.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

3.6.4 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“As a large proportion of development has already been committed, infrastructure will have been secured that minimise impacts on transport. For any further development, the Plan directs housing and employment towards the main settlements which will help to ensure that existing facilities and public transport links will be in close proximity. However, increased development in the main towns (as directed by the settlement hierarchy) is likely to lead to further travel by private car, which is the most prevalent form of travel in the District. In areas of greatest development such as Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch, this could lead to increased congestion at peak times. Plan policies encourage the development of sustainable modes of transport in new development, seek to ensure that infrastructure is upgraded as necessary, and also support the re-opening of the National Forest Rail Line. These measures will each help to minimise additional car traffic and promote sustainable modes of travel.

Overall a not significant positive effect is predicted. Whilst the Plan will encourage shorter trips, and more sustainable modes of travel, the influence of the policies is not considered to be high; given that the majority of development (and mitigation) has already been established, and the predominant mode of travel would remain the private car.”

3.6.5 This positive conclusion broadly holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’. The risk of ‘increased congestion at peak times’ in Ashby de la Zouch could feasibly be increased as a result of the proposed modifications, due to the proposal to increase the quantum of growth at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch; however, the proposal is also now to require preparation of a comprehensive masterplan, which should serve to mitigate effects.

3.7 Climate change mitigation

Appraisal of proposed modifications

3.7.1 The proposal to strengthen policy Policy IF4 (Transport Infrastructure and new development) is supported. The proposed modifications involve added support for walking and cycling, and also accessibility by non-car modes to essential services and facilities (which will include health facilities). As such, the proposal is to increase support for ‘modal shift’ away from reliance on the private car.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

3.7.2 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“The spatial strategy is unlikely to have a significant influence on whether development is able to achieve carbon emissions reductions. Most policies in the Plan could have positive implications for climate change mitigation and adaptation, but they are unlikely to have an effect on the baseline position as they reflect principles set-out in national policy. However, identifying potentially suitable areas for wind energy is an important step towards the development of such energy schemes. Consequently, a not significant positive effect is predicted overall.”

3.7.3 This positive conclusion holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’.

3.8 Climate change adaptation (flooding)

Appraisal of proposed modifications

- 3.8.1 The proposed modifications have limited implications for flood risk, or any other climate change issue. The proposal to increase the quantum of growth at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch does not lead to tensions with flood risk avoidance objectives, and neither of the reserve sites (one of which is newly proposed through modifications, and the other is given additional support through modifications) are subject to flood risk.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

- 3.8.2 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“The distribution of housing and employment (through committed development) could potentially lead to development in areas at risk of flooding such as Castle Donington and Kegworth. However, a large amount of development has already been examined through the planning system and flood risk assessments will have formed part of this process as necessary. Any further development (guided by the settlement hierarchy) would also need to satisfy policy requirements on flooding, which would ensure that development did not take place in areas at risk of flooding and / or would secure appropriate mitigation. A neutral effect is predicted. Policy Cc2 will help to ensure that flood risk does not increase as a result of new development, whilst Cc1 encourages the use of sustainable drainage systems and green infrastructure to manage flooding. This should lead to a not significant positive effect.”

- 3.8.3 This positive conclusion holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’.

3.9 Biodiversity and geodiversity

Appraisal of proposed modifications

- 3.9.1 Land north of Ashby de la Zouch is associated with certain biodiversity sensitivities (see discussion below), and so the proposal to increase the quantum of housing growth (MM25) could lead to challenges. However, the proposal is also to require preparation of a masterplan ahead of a planning application, which will be a means of ensuring that optimum green infrastructure is delivered as part of the scheme.
- 3.9.2 A modification is also proposed to Policy En2 (River Mease Special Area of Conservation, SAC) (MM44), which would strengthen the policy provision focused on minimising risk of capacity breaches at Waste Water Treatment Works (which in turn would lead to water pollution, and in turn impacts to the special characteristics of the SAC).

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

3.9.3 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“Given that the majority of housing development is already ‘committed’, there is limited potential for the Local Plan to influence where the bulk of housing will come forward and therefore, the effects on biodiversity are limited. Allocations for additional housing growth in Ashby de la Zouch could lead to further discharge from Packingham waste water treatment works, with the potential for negative effects on water quality (and thus biodiversity) in the River Mease Catchment. However, there is currently sufficient capacity at the works to accommodate this development, and Policy En2 would seek to manage further development that could have an adverse effect on the River Mease Catchment. The site appraisal identified that there are potential local wildlife sites that could be affected. Development would, however, be required to adhere to policies in the Local Plan seeking to avoid effects on biodiversity and enhance green infrastructure; which is potentially positive. Consequently an uncertain effect is identified with regards to effects on local wildlife. In combination, there is potential for the policies in the Plan to have a significant positive effect on biodiversity associated with new developments through policies that seek to reverse habitat fragmentation, enhance green infrastructure, protect water quality and implement natural drainage systems. Potential not significant negative effects could occur as a result of strategic and local highways improvements.”

3.9.4 This positive conclusion broadly holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’. The risk of ‘negative effects on water quality’, and effects to local wildlife sites, could feasibly increase as a result of the proposed modifications, due to the proposal to increase the quantum of growth at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch; however, robust mitigatory policy is set to be put in place, which helps to alleviate concerns. Most notably, Policy H3a specifically limits the amount of development that can take place until such time as proposals are implemented to pump waste water out of the catchment.

3.10 Landscape and land

Appraisal of proposed modifications

3.10.1 The proposal to increase the quantum of housing growth at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch inevitably leads to certain tensions with the achievement of landscape objectives; however, the proposal is also to require development of a masterplan ahead of a planning application, which helps to alleviate concerns considerably.

3.10.2 With regards to ‘land’, there is a need to consider the implications of proposed modifications in respect of support for A) development of previously developed land; and B) higher density development.

- Proposed modifications perform well in respect of (A), given the proposal to modify Policy S2 (Settlement hierarchy) through replacement of policy support for ‘physical extensions’ to smaller settlements - which would have equated to support for both brownfield and greenfield sites - with more restricted policy support for *“previously developed land which is well related to the settlement concerned”*.
- Proposed modifications perform well in respect of (B), given the proposal to deliver a higher density scheme at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch. Without this approach the outcome could be lower density greenfield development elsewhere.

3.10.3 Finally, it is noted that the proposal is to include a new ‘Part 2’ to Policy EC2 (MM40) which is supportive of windfall employment development. It is conceivable that sites could come forward in areas that are constrained from an environmental perspective - e.g. in respect of landscape - however, there is no certainty in this respect. Furthermore, the proposed policy references the need to avoid detrimental effects to ‘the wider environment’, and any proposed scheme would need to be in accordance with all other plan policies.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

- 3.10.4 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -
- “The majority of development proposed in the Plan is already committed, and it is assumed that potential impacts on landscape have been deemed to be acceptable. The Plan directs further proposed new development towards the larger settlements thereby helping to protect rural landscapes from potential adverse effects. Policy S[3] also provides stringent measures for the protection of landscape for new development in the countryside, which is a significant positive effect. New housing and employment development has the potential for negative effects, but these are not considered to be significant as there would be a need to adhere to the policies within the Local Plan that seek to protect and enhance landscapes. The Plan also emphasises the importance of protecting and enhancing landscape character; specifically within Areas of Separation, within the National Forest and Charnwood Forest Regional Park. It is probable that development contributions will be secured to contribute to enhancements in these areas, which in combination would also be considered a significant positive effect. Not significant negative effects are also predicted as there would be a loss of agricultural land classified as best and most versatile as part of the allocation of Money Hill. As further developments come forward there is also potential for further effects on agricultural land and landscape.”*

- 3.10.5 This positive conclusion holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’.

3.11 Cultural heritage

Appraisal of proposed modifications

- 3.11.1 Land north of Ashby de la Zouch is associated with certain heritage sensitivities (see discussion below), and so the proposal to increase the quantum of housing growth could lead to challenges. However, the proposal is also to require development of a masterplan ahead of a planning application, which will be a means of ensuring that layout and design respects heritage sensitivities. It is noted that the part of the site already with planning permission is that part of the site that is closest to heritage assets; however, the part of the site that is the focus of the proposed allocation is on rising land, and hence visible in the landscape.
- 3.11.2 The proposal is also to amend heritage-focused mitigatory policy, both site specific and district-wide. With regards to site specific policy to guide development at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch, the proposal (MM25) is to add a requirement for any development to have specific regard to the heritage value of the Parish Church of St Helen (in addition to Ashby castle and the wider Conservation Area).
- 3.11.3 With regards to district-wide Policy He1 (Conservation and enhancement of North West Leicestershire’s historic environment) the proposal (MM45) is to word the policy more ‘positively’; however, it is not clear that the effect will be to reduce protection for the cultural heritage.
- 3.11.4 Also, a minor change is proposed to a criterion within Cc1 (Renewable energy) (MM46), which establishes heritage assets as a constraint to renewable energy schemes; however, the degree of protection for the cultural heritage remains broadly unchanged.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

3.11.5 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“Policy H3 locates a significant development within proximity of the Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area and within the setting of Ashby Castle. The predicted effects upon the Conservation Area are not likely to be significant given that policy He1 and D1 will need to be implemented. However, the development of Money hill for housing and employment presents the potential for significant negative effects on the experience of the castle (on views from atop the castle) in the short term, and not significant effects in the longer term (once construction phases have been completed and any new trees/vegetation has matured). Though it ought to be possible to reduce the effects of this development, some change to character is inevitable and so a not significant negative effect is predicted.

The Council has amended policies H3 and Ec2 in response to these concerns, and thus the magnitude and likelihood of effects occurring ought to be reduced somewhat (potentially reducing the significance of the negative effect in the short term). This is positive, but a degree of uncertainty remains, as the success of the policy clauses will depend upon appropriate measures being agreed at design stage and these being implemented successfully. Careful monitoring is recommended.

Where new (or ‘full’) applications for development are submitted, or where existing planning permissions expire, there is potential for the policies in the Local Plan (particularly He1 and D1) to have a not significant positive effect in terms of ensuring the need to protect and enhance the District’s built and natural heritage. The in-combination effects of all the plan policies are not considered to be significant because they are largely reflective of national policy principles and legislation, which would already provide protection and enhancement for the historic environment.”

3.11.6 This positive conclusion holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’.

3.12 Natural resources

Appraisal of proposed modifications

3.12.1 Proposed modifications have limited implications for ‘natural resources’, beyond those already discussed above, notably under the ‘land’ heading. It is not possible to suggest that support for increased housing growth within the district leads to negative implications, as that housing growth will need to be delivered somewhere within the HMA under any scenario.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

3.12.2 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -

“Although it is reasonable to assume that new development will lead to increased use of natural resources and increased generation of waste, much of this development is already committed, and so these effects cannot be attributed directly to the Plan. For further development that comes forward, the Plan is likely to have a limited influence on the ability to secure developments that make the use of resource efficient materials and minimise waste. These factors are largely dealt with through National Housing Standards and Building Regulations. However, the Plan seeks to distribute development to areas that make best use of existing infrastructure, which should help to reduce the need for new construction materials. Policy Cc1 also identifies areas of potential suitability for wind energy development, which is a not significant positive effect. Overall, a not significant positive effect is predicted.”

3.12.3 This positive conclusion holds true for ‘the submission plan plus proposed modifications’.

3.13 Pollution

Appraisal of proposed modifications

- 3.13.1 Proposed modifications have limited implications for 'pollution', although it is noted that a modification is also proposed to Policy En2 (River Mease Special Area of Conservation, SAC), which would strengthen the policy provision focused on minimising risk of capacity breaches at Waste Water Treatment Works.
- 3.13.2 Also of note is the proposal to add 'Land south of Ashby Road, Kegworth' as a reserve site, through Policy H3 (MM27), with the following policy requirement proposed: *"The incorporation of appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of any noise issues associated with the M1, HS2 or East Midlands Airport."* Whilst there can be no certainty that this site will be required, there is a strong likelihood that its allocation will be 'triggered', i.e. it will transpire that the HS2 route results in either of two proposed allocations at Kegworth not being able to deliver in full.

Appraisal of the submission plan plus proposed modifications

- 3.13.3 The 2015 SA Report concluded the following -
- "The level of new development planned over the plan period will increase demand for water resources, increase emissions to the air and increase discharges to water, potentially affecting the quality of these resources. However, as the majority of new housing and economic development required already benefits from planning permission, it is assumed that the potential impact on water resources and quality, air, light and noise pollution was considered and deemed to be acceptable (taking mitigation and cumulative effects into account). Development management policies in the Plan are considered appropriate to minimise the effects of further development upon air quality, water quality and residential amenity (noise and light pollution). In particular, policies that promote the development of pedestrian and cycle links, and seek to achieve enhancement to the quality and amenity of water, should help contribute to a not significant positive effect on the baseline situation. Development of Money Hill in Ashby de la Zouch is expected to increase car travel, which would have a not significant negative effect on air quality in this area."*
- 3.13.4 This conclusion holds true for 'the submission plan plus proposed modifications'.

4 CONCLUSIONS AT THIS CURRENT STAGE

- 4.1.1 Proposed modifications perform well in terms of all sustainability objectives, other than 'economy and employment'.
- 4.1.2 With regards to 'submission plan plus proposed modifications', the overall conclusions presented within the 2015 SA Report were as follows:
- "Generally, the draft Local Plan has been positively prepared. There was little scope for suggesting mitigation measures, as no significant negative effects were identified. However, there was some scope for enhancement of positive effects, as well as mitigation where not significant negative effects were identified."*
- 4.1.3 Proposed modifications do not serve to change this broad conclusion; however, the Plan is now predicted to perform less well in respect of 'economy and employment', than was the case when the above conclusion was written. The proposal to support a higher quantum of housing growth, through a larger scheme at Land north of Ashby de la Zouch, also leads to some tensions with certain SA objectives (notably transport, biodiversity and cultural heritage) when considered in isolation, but less so once account is taken of the proposal to require preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the site.

4.2 Monitoring

- 4.2.1 The SA Report proposes monitoring indicators in-light of appraisal findings. Given the appraisal findings presented in this SA Report Addendum, it is suggested that particular emphasis be given to monitoring of impacts in the Ashby de la Zouch area. There might be a focus on developing monitoring indicators through the required masterplanning process.

5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1.1 The next step is for the Inspector to consider the representations raised as part of the consultation, alongside this SA Report Addendum, before deciding whether he is in a position to write his report on the Plan's soundness.
- 5.1.2 Assuming that the Inspector is able to find the Plan 'sound', it will then be formally adopted by the Council. At the time of adoption an 'SA Statement' will be published that explains the process of plan-making / SA in full and presents 'measures decided concerning monitoring'.