



**North West Leicestershire  
District Council**

**Sustainability Appraisal of  
the North West  
Leicestershire Core  
Strategy - Submission  
Version**

**Non-Technical Summary**

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report is the non-technical summary of the combined sustainability appraisal (SA) and strategic environmental assessment, of the revised following consultation submission version of the North West Leicestershire Core Strategy (the Core Strategy).
- 1.2 This non-technical summary intended to provide an overview of the findings of the appraisal, with more detail of the process and outputs included in the main report.
- 1.3 The main purpose of carrying out an SA is to assess what the impacts of development proposed in the Core Strategy might be on the economy, the environment and society. Where potential negative effects are identified the SA then makes recommendations for how the Core Strategy can be modified, or controls put on development, to avoid or mitigate these effects. Mitigation may be through means other than the Core Strategy including other parts of the development plan for the District, or implementing other plans and strategies. This submission version SA report is part of a process where successive stages of the emerging Core Strategy have been appraised to inform the plan preparation process.
- 1.4 The full SA report is a public document and its purpose is to show the relationship between sustainable development and the content of the Core Strategy. The SA report allows readers of the plan to:
  - get an idea of how effective the Core Strategy might be in delivering more sustainable development
  - understand where there might be adverse impacts, and
  - see where there is potential for the Core Strategy to go further in seeking sustainable development.

## 2 Sustainability appraisal stages

- 2.1 The SA is a process that continues throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy. So far, the appraisal has included several stages and reports. These demonstrate the feedback process between plan making and sustainability appraisal, allowing sustainability considerations to be integrated into the Core Strategy during preparation.
- 2.2 The SA reports from earlier stages of appraisal are available on the North West Leicestershire Council Local Development Framework (LDF) website.
- 2.3 **Scoping report:** A scoping report was prepared in-house by the plan-making team for the North West Leicestershire Core Strategy to provide a picture of the background sustainability issues in the District. This is available on the Council's website. For this submission version of the SA of the Core Strategy, some additional up-to-date background material was collected. In addition, the Council has completed a District review to characterise the area and help in plan making.
- 2.4 **SA of the Further Consultation November 2008:** In 2009 consultants, Baker Associates (now Peter Brett Associates) prepared an SA report of the Further Consultation version of the Core Strategy. The findings of this appraisal were fed into preparing the submission

draft, despite the report being prepared at the consultation stage. This considered the options put forward for distributing growth around the District. The appraisal looked at how the options would perform in delivering sustainable development. The SA also included an assessment of policy issues and how the plan could help deliver sustainable development. The consideration of alternatives and the identification of the relative sustainability impacts of these approaches is important for the SA and an SEA requirement.

2.5 **On-going SA:** As part of the preparation of the submission version of the Core Strategy the plan making team has been carrying out sustainability appraisal to help choose between options. This has included an assessment of the directions of growth for the main towns and villages to find the direction most compatible with sustainable development.

2.6 **SA of the consultation version of the proposed Submission version:** ~~This~~ This was the previous version of the SA and on which this report is based. However, track changes show how this version of the SA has been updated to take into account changes made to the Core Strategy following public consultation in the summer of 2012. The SA report contains is the current stage of the SA and it is a full appraisal of the objective, policies and proposals of the Core Strategy.

### 3 The sustainability objectives

3.1 A set of sustainability objectives has been developed to use in the SA. These objectives are based on agreed national definitions of sustainable development, but adapted using the information gathered at the scoping stage to tailor them to the needs of this SA. They cover a range of sustainability issues related to the protection of the environment and natural resource, the economy and society.

3.2 The initial set of objectives of sustainability objectives was developed at the scoping stage. However, following input from consultees and the need for some clarification, the sustainability objectives were updated for the submission version.

3.3 The purpose of the objectives is to provide a consistent definition of sustainable development for the SA process. The emerging objectives, policies and proposals of the Core Strategy are then tested against the sustainability objectives as part of a process of systematic appraisal. Table 1 shows the sustainability objectives.

#### Sustainability objectives for the SA of the North West Leicestershire Core Strategy

Provide an adequate supply of good quality <b>employment land</b> needed to encourage and accommodate indigenous and inward investment
Help develop a prosperous, competitive and diverse <b>rural economy</b> which adds value to existing agricultural, forestry and leisure sectors.
Make the most <b>efficient use of land</b>
<b>Reduce waste</b> generation and promote re-use and recycling, and support the sustainable extraction and the reuse and recycling of <b>minerals</b> and aggregate resources
Reduce <b>water consumption</b>
Provide good <b>quality homes</b> that meet local needs and reflect local circumstances
Improve <b>accessibility</b> of new development reducing need to travel and extend public

transport choices for non-car modes (public transport, walking and cycling)
Enhance the vitality and viability of existing <b>town centres</b> and village centres
Improve the <b>health and wellbeing</b> of the District's population
Promote <b>social inclusion</b> and reduce inequalities across the District
Reduce <b>crime</b> and fear of crime
Encourage <b>jobs that match the skills</b> and needs of local residents and help improve access to skill training.
Conserve and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the District's <b>cultural, historic and archaeological heritage</b>
Conserve and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the District's <b>built environment</b>
Conserve and enhance the quality of the District's <b>landscape character</b>
Protect and enhance the District's <b>biodiversity</b> and <b>geodiversity</b>
Reduce flood risk and impacts from <b>flooding</b>
Reduce air, light and noise <b>pollution</b> and manage <b>contaminated land</b> to avoid damage natural systems and protect human health
Improve <b>water quality</b> and avoid further pollution that could adversely impact on natural systems, wildlife and human health
Maintain and enhance <b>open-space</b> , sport and recreation provision
Reduce <b>energy</b> requirements across the District and increase the proportion of the requirement met from renewable or low carbon sources

## 4 Creating a Core Strategy that delivers sustainable development

4.1 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has recognised that the North West Leicestershire Core Strategy has an important role to play in the sustainable development in the District and over a wider area. The Core Strategy sets out the overall strategy for delivering development in the District including:

- The amount of development that needs to be planned for, especially housing growth
- The distribution of this development around the towns and villages of the District
- The location of the development within or adjacent to the Coalville, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Measham, Castle Donington and Ibstock.

4.2 The choices that are made here will have a fundamental impact on long-term sustainability. For instance the strategy could help to:

- Deliver development in locations that help reduce the need to drive, reducing environmental impacts and making sure everyone has equal access to jobs, shops and services
- Identifying the growth needs of the towns and villages of the area to make decisions on the land that needs to be made available

- Putting policies in place to manage the delivery of large new development sites to make sure they do all they can to encourage healthy lifestyle choices and reduce the impacts from new development
- Regenerating the town and local centres in the main urban area by concentrating more development in these settlements
- Avoiding putting new development such as shops and offices in locations that favour drivers, as with increasing costs of driving these may not be sustainable in the long term.
- Delivering housing to meet everyone's needs, including affordable homes and a mix of housing types
- Protect what is best about the District's built and natural environment.

## 5 The findings of the sustainability appraisal

5.1 This section looks at the main findings from the sustainability appraisal and if the Core Strategy for North West Leicestershire will help deliver sustainability development.

5.2 The SA has identified that the objectives and policies in the Core Strategy have the potential to deliver sustainability development in North West Leicestershire. There are many positive aspects of the plan in relation to delivering sustainable development that include:

- allocating the majority of development in Coalville, where there is the greatest access to a range of services and potential for more self-containment reducing car travel
- putting more housing in Castle Donington to help balance homes with jobs in this area, also helping to deliver more self-containment and therefore help reducing long distance commuting by car
- supporting economic growth that can have benefits for the District and the wider region
- supporting new mixed use urban extensions through the provision of new homes with community services, including schools, health centres and open space
- policies on ensuring a proportion of new housing developments is delivered to be affordable to those on lower incomes
- putting in place policies on sustainable construction and climate change mitigation to help reduce the overall demand on natural resources from new development and reduce impacts on the natural environment
- setting policy and a distribution of development to make sure development does not harm the River Mease Special Area of Conservation
- protecting the countryside from development and helping promote and support the National Forest and provide and protect other open spaces
- highlighting through policy the need to make sure new development has good access to public transport and better walking and cycling routes, with the result of fewer car trips and more equitable access for all.

- 5.3 The SA also identifies some parts of the Core Strategy where the benefits for sustainable development are less clear. It may be possible to address some of these issues simply by adjusting policy wording, reviewing the evidence base or providing supporting material.
- 5.4 Some issues have been identified where the plan may risk having adverse or uncertain impacts on delivering development in a more sustainable way. These issues are set out in paragraphs 5.5 to 5.30.

### **Spatial distribution of growth**

- 5.5 The Core Strategy sets growth targets for the plan area of 9,700 new homes to be delivered between 2006 and 2031. It is important that the Council decide on the **right level and distribution of growth** to make sure it can be planned in a co-ordinated way in the Core Strategy and associated documents.
- 5.6 The housing figure is not intended to be a maximum allowance. However, to deliver the strategy in a sustainable way there needs to be reasonable certainty that there will not be a significant departure from the preferred distribution of this growth. If development happens in a way that departs from the strategy it could lead to unforeseen adverse impacts for sustainable development.
- 5.7 To achieve the intended distribution of residential development in North West Leicestershire there needs to be a marked change in the locations where housing is being delivered. For instance, the rural housing requirement is already largely taken up by existing commitments and completions. Therefore, tighter controls needs to be put on development in these areas in the future to help deliver objectives related to reduce car dependence.
- 5.8 Having a Core Strategy in place will be an effective tool in better managing the delivery of new housing sites. Policies of the Local Plan will be able to help ensure development proposals that come forward that are inconsistent with the strategy can be refused, slowing growth in some location. The allocation of sites will help stimulate growth in other areas in need of development. However, the SA has identified potential risks relating to the delivery of the rural growth strategy, (see paragraphs [7.88.11](#) to [7.308.36](#)).

### **Urban capacity**

- 5.9 The Core Strategy allocates all of the development that has yet to be committed or completed in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Castle Donington and Measham to the urban extension sites. In Coalville and Ibstock the majority is directed to these locations. The policies contain little detail on the role of the existing urban area in delivery development and also the role urban development can have in regeneration and renewal. The exception is Kegworth where all the remaining development is intended to be delivered within the urban area, although as with the policies for the other settlements, there is little detail on how or where urban development will be delivered.
- 5.10 The Core Strategy needs to recognise the contribution for development within settlements. This is essential to ensure:
- The efficient use of land and to ensure that only the necessary quantity of greenfield land is allocated

- Areas can be identified where new housing growth will be part of regeneration strategies for the settlement, for instance as part of town centre renewal
- To plan for new infrastructure and services in the town centre
- To help make sure that the overall growth levels are accurate.

### **Rural development**

- 5.11 The Core Strategy allows some growth in the rural areas. Past completion rates for housing show that the rural area has always played an important role in housing growth in the District. However, development in villages has led to a pattern of development that is unsustainable. Many new homes are occupied by people who travel outside of the villages for work and also may meet many of their other needs outside these areas, not necessarily supporting rural services.
- 5.12 The Core Strategic policies aim to limit the quantity of development taking place in village locations. However, 17 villages are identified as ‘Sustainable Villages’ where development will be permitted in the existing built-up area. A further 15 ‘Rural Villages’ are identified where development for a local need can take place, together with exception sites outside village boundaries. Therefore, there remains a risk that the Core Strategy may not be able to substantially reduce village housing growth.
- 5.13 Keeping these policies under review should allow for changes to be made to the Local Plan to reduce rural development if this is found to be necessary. This could include reducing the number of villages where development is permitted.
- 5.14 Development in rural locations that does take place should primarily be to meet local needs only and includes some affordable homes. However, the price of driving is only likely to increase, making it less affordable for everyone though the impacts may be felt more by those on lower incomes. Care will need to be taken that these policies help avoid rural isolation.

### **The economy**

- 5.15 The Core Strategy helps in setting a pattern of development that promotes economic growth and could improve future residents’ access to jobs. The aim is to help people live nearer where they work by making sure there is a supply of new homes in the area. Although it is simplistic to say housing growth matched to location of employment will create more self-contained settlement, it is true to say that where there are insufficient jobs or homes then longer distance commuting is more likely. This is an issue of particular importance in North West Leicestershire where levels of car commuting are high. Reliance on car use in much of the District and people commuting in and out of the District for work has led to adverse impacts on the local environment through high levels of congestion in some locations.
- 5.16 However, the Core Strategy goes into little detail (with the exception of Coalville and Castle Donington) on how the housing distribution in the District will be matched by employment land allocation. Therefore, it is difficult to identify if the amount of housing directed to Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Measham, Kegworth and Ibstock will be matched by employment land allocations and job creation.



### **Site selection and options appraisal**

- 5.17 The Council has undertaken a review of Broad Locations for growth around each of the main towns and villages. This has helped identify sites that are available and would help to deliver sustainable development.
- 5.18 This has revealed that there is the potential for some adverse impacts of developing in the Broad Location selected and impacts will need to be mitigated.
- 5.19 The SA of sites has also shown that some alternative sites may have benefits for some aspects of sustainable development, especially related to accessibility of services. However, due to overriding sustainability constraints (such as flooding) and planning issues (such as policy constraints and land availability) other Broad Locations for growth have been rejected.
- 5.20 All of the development areas will need to be delivered through a masterplan or development brief indicating how adverse sustainability impacts will be mitigated for and how sustainability benefits will be achieved. Each site area will also require thorough site investigation as part of a planning application, including ecological survey, landscape assessment and appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations if necessary.

### **Ashby-de-la-Zouch**

- 5.21 Future development in Ashby-de-la-Zouch is limited by the capacity at the local Waste Water Treatment works in Packington. The Packington works releases water into the River Mease and as the river is designated as an area of international importance for nature conservation it needs to be protected from significant harm. However, the effluent from Ashby-de-la-Zouch is reducing water quality in the Mease and this cannot continue.
- 5.22 To avoid adverse impacts on the nature conservation site, the Core Strategy policy limits housing growth to 1,400 in Ashby-de-la-Zouch. However, what is less clear from the plan is the quantity of non-residential development that is expected in the town and how this needs to be managed to protect water quality. The Core Strategy needs to make clear to all developers the significance of this issue and that if no solution is found, economic and residential growth in the town may be limited.
- 5.23 If it is found that Ashby-de-la-Zouch cannot deliver the full 1,400 new homes a strategy may need to be in place to re-allocate this development elsewhere in the District.

### **Transport**

- 5.24 The sustainability appraisal notes that airport expansion and an increased number of flights would have adverse environmental impacts. These impacts would be experienced globally with negative impacts related to air quality and climate change. There will also be local adverse impacts on air quality and through noise pollution.
- 5.25 The Core Strategy contains several proposals for road and junction improvements, including some national proposals that are beyond the scope of the plan, but also some local proposals such as link roads at Castle Donington and Coalville. New road building is

not compatible with long-term sustainability, although in the short term they can help reduce congestion and reduce travel times. However, over time the number of cars will increase to fill the capacity negating positive impacts and leaving a legacy of adverse sustainability impacts. Due to decreased travel times increased capacity may also encourage car commuting, which the plan aims to reduce.

### **Sustainable urban extensions**

5.26 The Core Strategy proposes a number of large scale urban extensions to the main villages and towns. These will require a large amount of greenfield land with possible adverse impacts on landscape quality, nature conservation and flooding. However, these extensions also present an opportunity to deliver development that meets needs and is substantially better at securing sustainable development than existing residential neighbourhoods. To help deliver this a development brief or masterplan needs to be developed setting the expectations for development. This needs to be incorporated into site specific policy. It should cover issues such as:

- design protocols and the layout of development
- biodiversity protection or enhancement measures
- site-specific sustainable construction standards
- targets for energy efficiency or on-site energy provision
- mix of uses
- public transport, walking or cycling links between individual site elements
- a delivery and implementation plan
- phasing to development parcels to ensure infrastructure and services are in place prior to occupation.

5.27 The area specific policies state that each urban extension will need to provide a range of infrastructure, from schools to roads. This should be helpful in achieving social and environmental sustainability benefits from the development. Implementation and Delivery plans for each site will help identify priorities for delivery, particularly on smaller sites where developer funds may be more limited.

### **Infrastructure**

5.28 To help deliver the infrastructure that will contribute to sustainable development, 'Implementation and Delivery' plans will be required to be prepared. These plans could be part of the Core Strategy or allocations documents. Their purpose would be to provide certainty to developers on what will be expected from development so that this knowledge can be reflected in financial viability calculations. The Implementation and Delivery plans would need to show infrastructure delivery priorities for each site and the source of funding.

### **Implementation of policy**

5.29 For sustainable development to be achieved, policies need to be clearly written, so all those who use the plan understand what is expected from development. Therefore, the SA suggests combining some policies to avoid duplication that may lead to confusion. For

instance, policies on development that will be allowed in rural areas and the countryside could be combined. Similarly, policies that repeat the National Planning Policy Framework may not be necessary. There are also policies where additional detail may help establish a better basis for negotiation.

**Policy wording**

- 5.30 In addition to the strategic and overarching issues, the main SA report also queries some criteria of specific policies where changes could be made to secure more sustainable development.