



North West Leicestershire
District Council

**Sustainability Appraisal of the
North West Leicestershire Core
Strategy**

Submission Version

Final Report

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Peter Brett Associates LLP

10 Queen Square

Bristol

BS1 4NT

T: 0117 9281560

F: 0117 9281570



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1 Introduction

The sustainability appraisal

- 1.1 This is the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report of the Core Strategy (DPD) for North West Leicestershire District Council. The Core Strategy is also being produced by North West Leicestershire as part of the Local Plan. The Core Strategy is the principal part of the Local Plan and sets the objectives and strategic policy for the district.
- 1.2 The Core Strategy sets the overall framework for delivering new development in the district. Through policies and strategic allocations of land the strategy sets the overall quantity and location of development in the district, including total expected housing yield and the quantity of employment land.
- 1.3 The purpose of this SA is to assess how effective the Core Strategy will be in delivering development that contributes to greater sustainability locally and globally. SA is a process that takes place during the preparation of the Core Strategy and this SA report is intended to document this process and set the overall implications of the plan on sustainable development.
- 1.4 This stage of the SA follows on from earlier SA reports. Initially a scoping report was prepared in 2005 by the Council to provide background to the SA process. This document remains an important component of the appraisal and can be found on the LDF website. Following this stage the Core Strategy had several stages of consultation on issues and options. An SA was prepared in May 2009 of the 'Further Consultation November 2008' version of the DPD.
- 1.5 The plan-making team from the Council have also been carrying out sustainability appraisal in-house of some strategic spatial options. This has included the assessment of options for the strategic distribution of housing growth as well as the possible locations for growth around the main towns and villages.
- 1.6 The SA of the LDF is being prepared in order to fulfil the statutory requirement from the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, including the requirements set out for sustainability appraisal in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). However, regardless of statutory requirements the main purpose of the SA is to help create a better plan and one that takes full account of the potential for impacts on sustainable development. This aims to avoid and mitigate the potential for adverse impacts and maximise the benefits for greater sustainability.

2 The approach to sustainability appraisal of the Core Strategy

- 2.1 The SA is required of the emerging North West Leicestershire Local Development Framework and as part of the Core Strategy, under the regulations of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of certain plans and programmes and is also required by the European Directive EC/2001/42. The aim of this is to meet the SEA and SA requirements through a common process with common reporting – jointly known as an SA.
- 2.2 This pragmatic and combined approach does not mean that the SA and findings will be compromised. The appraisal remains thorough and robust, based on the particular needs and characteristics of the area and the Core Strategy.
- 2.3 The majority of the SA, including this report, is being undertaken independently from the Core Strategy preparation by consultants. This method provides a proper impartial test of the planning document and a critical analysis of the Core Strategy, and the identification of possible weaknesses or gaps. However, parts of the SA have been integrated into decision making and plan preparation by the plan-making team. This has included the assessment of options for the distribution of residential development and the assessment of possible urban extension locations around the main towns. There have also been discussions between those undertaking the SA and those preparing the Core Strategy to allow sustainability matters to be incorporated into the plan through more informal feedback of ideas.
- 2.4 SA is an integral part of good plan making and should not be seen as a separate activity. Its purpose is to promote sustainable development by integrating sustainability considerations into plans. By testing the emerging content of the Core Strategy it is possible to identify any likely significant effects of the plan, and give opportunities for improving the social, environmental and economic conditions by implementing the plan.
- 2.5 Sustainability Appraisal should consider several criteria:
- the long-term view of how the area covered by the plan is expected to develop
 - a mechanism for ensuring that sustainability objectives are translated into sustainable policies
 - reflect global, national, regional and local concerns
 - form an integral part of all stages of plan preparation
 - incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive.
- 2.6 The method of sustainability appraisal uses the framework of sustainability objectives (section 5) as the basis for assessment of the Core Strategy. By using these objectives as a general description of sustainability considerations, relevant to the role of a development plan, it is possible to assess whether the plan is helping to make a contribution to more sustainable development.
- 2.7 More detail on the derivation of these sustainability objectives is available in the SA scoping report and section 5 of this report.

- 2.8 The SA has an important role to play, not only in considering the approach set out through the strategy and the supporting policies of the Core Strategy, and its coverage of the sustainable development agenda. Also and perhaps more significantly in this instance, it considers the whole approach to the plan making and the spatial strategy put forward at this stage in Core Strategy preparation. The reason for this is that sustainable development cannot be secured unless the approach to plan making sets out an appropriately robust strategy. The strategy for development must be defensible, clearly demonstrating development is delivered to meet needs and to deliver development according to a sustainable spatial strategy.
- 2.9 There also has to be sufficient certainty that the approach put forward through policies and proposals can be implemented in a way that acts to improve sustainability, and to meet any relevant vision and objectives for the area. Therefore, policies need to be clearly written, avoiding ambiguity, with sufficient detail to be useful in making development management decisions and ensure developers submit higher quality planning applications.

Stages of the SA so far

- 2.10 The SA of the emerging Core Strategy is intended to be an iterative process, with feedback between successive stages of appraisal and the production of the Core Strategy. This approach is to allow the potential sustainability implications of options considered in preparing the strategy to be made explicit. Thereby, allowing these to be taken into account in the choices made by the plan-making team and to help consultees respond to the Core Strategy.
- 2.11 Scoping report: A scoping report was prepared in-house by the plan-making team for the NWL 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 have completed a district review in order to characterise the area and help in plan making.

- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 This stage of SA 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 identifying the relative sustainability impacts of these approaches is important for the SA and an SEA requirement.
- 2.14 No consultation responses were received on this version of the SA.
- 2.15 On-going SA: As part of the preparation of the submission version of the Core Strategy the plan making team has been carrying out an in-house sustainability appraisal to help choose between options. This has included an assessment of the Broad Locations for growth from the main towns and villages to find the direction most compatible with sustainable development.

- 2.16 SA of the Submission version: This is the current stage of the SA and it is a full appraisal of the objective, policies and proposals of the Core Strategy. This is the first stage there has been an opportunity for a detailed assessment of policies.
- 2.17 An initial SA of the proposed Submission version Core Strategy was completed to allow sufficient time for any matters raised to be considered by the Core Strategy preparation team/officers of the Council to allow changes to be made if necessary before the commencement of consultation.

SA methodology for policy appraisal

- 2.18 This SA report considers the impacts of the Core Strategy as a whole on achieving sustainable development, as well as the performance of individual policies. This is supplemented by the SA matrices in Appendix 2 and the appraisal of options in Appendix 3 and 4. These matrices are an essential component of the appraisal, and should be read in conjunction with the relevant text.
- 2.19 The appraisal matrices for all of the policies include a symbol summary of the likely impact of the policy on each of the sustainability objectives developed for the SA. However, due to the very strategic nature of the decisions being made and the high level of uncertainty this entails, this results in many impacts being identified as 'uncertain' and marked with a question mark. Therefore this appraisal is supplemented by text to indicate the process and thinking involved in deciding on the impact. These comments may be more useful in understanding impacts than the symbol summary alone.
- 2.20 Each matrix also contains a comment box that allows the various types of impact to be discussed. Issues that go beyond matters that can be summarised as effects against individual sustainability objectives – including unresolved issues with implications for sustainable development.
- 2.21 These appraisal matrices also include identification of possible additions, amendments or an alternative approaches. Some policies are also combined in a single matrix where it is identified that the matters covered are largely the same and sustainability impacts will be similar. Where policies are combined into one SA matrix this also indicates that they could be combined for a more succinct plan.
- 2.22 The Core Strategy makes no detailed site allocations, only Broad Locations for growth. Therefore, identifying detailed sustainability implications for any of these areas will need to be part of the SA of the Site Allocations plan. However, at this stage the area specific policies do contain some details of the chosen Broad Locations and the appraisal of these policies identifies broad sustainability implications of these. This is supplemented by an appraisal of sustainability impacts of options that was carried out in-house.
- 2.23 It is also evident for the appraisal that several sustainability objectives are closely related, so effects against one will result in effects against the other. For example objectives of accessibility, air quality and energy use are all closely related, particularly in terms of policies relating to the need to travel and therefore are often appraised similarly.

Meeting the requirements of the Strategy Environmental Assessment Regulations

2.24 In order to satisfy the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations it is necessary for the SA report to fulfil certain requirements. Table 2.1 shows how these requirements are being met through this SA report, both as part of the main text and thorough appendices. For further detail on some matters, such as the appraisal of alternatives, the SA reports of previous versions of the Core Strategy and in-house SA will also provide a useful resource.

Table 2.1: Requirements of the SEA Regulations and how they are met through the SA report

SEA Requirements	Covered in the SA report at:
a) An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationships with other relevant plans and programmes.	Section 1 and 3
b) The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme	Scoping report Section 4 Appendix 7
c) The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	Scoping report Section 4 Appendix 7
d) Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.	Scoping report Section 4 Appendix 7
e) The environmental protection objectives, established at international, community or national level which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	Section 3
f) The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as: biodiversity; population; human health; fauna; flora; soil; water; air; climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; landscape; and the interrelationship between the above factors. These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative	Section 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14. Appendix 2 Appendix 3 Appendix 4
g) The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.	Section 15 Appendix 2
h) An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken, including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	Section 7 and 8 Background papers on housing growth, housing distribution and Broad Locations for growth Previous version of the SA Report prepared at Further Consultation
i) A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10.	Section 16
j) A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.	Non-technical summary
Taking the environmental report and the results of the consultations into account in decision-making (Art. 8).	Change Log – Separate Document

3 Other plans and strategies

- 3.1 It is the nature of local planning that there exists additional and overlapping policy and legislative requirements at national and local levels that must be taken into account as part of plan making. The Local Development Framework (LDF) will aim to not just implement local policy objectives but deliver land use policy for England, as well as taking account the policies from national agencies and partner organisations.
- 3.2 Many other documents prepared by the local authority and others provide context for the local plan in the form of objectives that the local plan should help to meet, or complementary material in the form of policies and programmes.
- 3.3 In addition to local level plan and strategies will be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework, published by the national Government.
- 3.4 It is important for the local plan and the SA alike to take on board the messages from these documents in order to ensure that a unified approach is taken to the development of the plan area. For the SA, the way that these can be best taken into account in the appraisal process is by ensuring there are relevant objectives in the sustainability framework for each matter.
- 3.5 The rest of this section sets out many of the main plans and guidance that will have relevance to the preparation of the local plan to the extent of considering what sustainable development objectives have been set and how these may be met through the local plan.
- 3.6 It is important to acknowledge that many other documents and policies are for the local plan rather than the SA to take into account. The coverage of plans and strategies is kept to a reasonable level of detail make the process manageable.

International policy

- 3.7 The SA takes into account policies set at an international level, both those set by the United Nations, such as the Kyoto Protocol, 1992 on climate change and the need to limit greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the environmental legislation from the European Commission, outlined below.
- 3.8 Under the Johannesburg Declaration the UK's commitment to the principle of sustainable development was reaffirmed. This included a commitment to building an equitable and caring society; renewable energy and energy efficiency; and sustainable consumption.
- 3.9 The EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna 92/43/EEC considers the conservation and maintenance of flora and fauna and on a network of protected areas in Europe, including special protection areas.
- 3.10 The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC considers sustainable water use and water quality protection in river catchments. The Environment Agency has a duty to prepare River Basin Management Plans (in consultation and liaison with various stakeholders) to implement the Directive.
- 3.11 The Air Quality Framework Directive 92/62/EC seeks to avoid, prevent and reduce harmful effects of pollution on human health and the environment.

- 3.12 Various waste management Directives including the Landfill Directive 99/31/EC – seek the more sustainable management of waste, including setting targets for recycling rates of waste, with implications for general waste management policies.

United Kingdom Government Policies

- 3.13 The United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (1994) is the overall action plan for habitat and species protection in the UK, and this is translated into local plans. However, much biodiversity planning is now covered in Conserving Biodiversity the UK Approach (2007). A key underlying principle for the conservation of biodiversity is the Ecosystem Approach, defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity as a strategy for the integrated management of land, air, water and living resources which promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way, and which recognises that people with their cultural and varied social needs are an integral part of ecosystems. The future of planning for biodiversity agreed by the UK Biodiversity Partnership lies largely in maintaining, creating and restoring functional combinations of habitats to secure the various services they provide.
- 3.14 The Government published *Waste Strategy for England 2007* on 24 May 2007. This strategy set targets for reducing waste in England. The strategy puts emphasis on waste prevention and sets a target to reduce the amount of household waste not re-used, recycled or composted. This means reducing it from the 22.3 million tonnes in 2000 to 12.2 million tonnes in 2020 (with a target of 15.9 million tonnes by 2010). This is a reduction of 45%.
- 3.15 There are also higher targets for recycling and composting of household waste – at least 40% by 2010, 45% by 2015 and 50% by 2020. These are significantly higher than the old targets (set in Waste Strategy 2000) of 30% by 2010 and 33% by 2015. They will take England up on a par with its European neighbours. These targets have to be interpreted for the waste plan covering North West Leicestershire to ensure each area meets its own demands. This will be in the Minerals and Waste Development Framework for Leicester and Leicestershire.
- 3.16 The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (2007) sets out the sources and potential effects of the main air pollutants. The strategy sets the main policies and measures to address these impacts. In March 2010, Defra and the devolved administrations published the document *Air Pollution: Action in a Changing Climate*, which highlights the additional health benefits that can be achieved through closer integration of air quality and climate change policies in future, recognising that air pollution often originates from the same sources that contribute to climate change. These sources include transport and energy generation.
- 3.17 The national aims for sustainable development in the UK are set out in 'A Better Quality of Life; A strategy for sustainable development in the United Kingdom' (1999) and the updated strategy 'Securing the Future' (2005). The 1999 strategy set four basic tenets of sustainable development. These are:
- 3.18 The 1999 strategy identifies the four basic tenets of sustainable development as:
- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
 - effective protection of the environment
 - prudent use of natural resources
 - maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

- 3.19 The 2005 strategy expanded on these four aims to set the principals of sustainable development in the UK as:
- Living Within Environmental Limits: Respecting the limits of the planet’s environment, resources and biodiversity – to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations
 - Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society: Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all
 - Achieving a Sustainable Economy: Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (polluter pays), and efficient resource use is incentivised
 - Promoting Good Governance: Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society – engaging peoples’ creativity, energy, and diversity
 - Promoting Good Governance: Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society – engaging peoples’ creativity, energy, and diversity.
- 3.20 The Aviation White Paper ‘The Future of Air Transport’ sets out the strategic framework for the development of air capacity in the UK, recognising the economic importance of airports as well as minimising the impacts of airports.
- 3.21 The Energy White Paper (2007) sets out government policy for development of the energy industry in the UK to 2050. It sets out the strategy is to:
- save energy
 - develop cleaner energy supplies
 - secure reliable energy supplies at prices set in competitive markets.
- 3.22 The Climate Change Act (2008) also set the targets for carbon reduction. These are a net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 80% lower than the 1990 baseline. This is supported by a rolling reviewed Carbon Budget that currently also requires a reduction of at least 34 % in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. The Carbon Plan (2011) sets out how these targets will be met. It includes elements that will be implemented in part through management of development. These include: low carbon homes, energy efficiency, lower carbon heating, low carbon transport (including lower carbon travel choices) and delivery of low carbon electricity.
- 3.23 The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) is the key national planning policy for England which outlines the principles and aspirations for planning. The promotion of sustainable development is a central consideration of both documents.
- 3.24 This is supported by additional guidance to local planning authorities, which was also published in March 2012, on development in areas at risk of flooding and in relation to mineral extraction to ensure the effective implementation of the planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework replaces all of the policy that was previously in Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance. The framework contains national policy on:
- building a strong, competitive economy

- ensuring the vitality of town centres
 - supporting a prosperous rural economy
 - promoting sustainable transport
 - supporting high quality communications infrastructure
 - delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
 - requiring good design
 - promoting healthy communities
 - protecting Green Belt land
 - meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 - conserving and enhancing the natural environment
 - conserving and enhancing the historic environment
 - facilitating the sustainable use of minerals.
- 3.25 The Government has published its new planning policy for traveller sites. This policy came into effect at the same time as the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3.26 The Housing Act 2004 sets out to protect the most vulnerable in society and help create a fairer and better housing market.

Local and Regional Policy

- 3.27 There are several other Local and Regional Plans and Strategies which will influence the preparation of the local plan. Those referred to below are not intended to be a complete list of plans, or a definitive account of their contents. Rather, it is intended to indicate those areas of Plans and Strategies upon which SA of the local plan will principally focus. Other Plans and Strategies or their revisions may also arise during the preparation of the local plan.
- 3.28 Potentially relevant Core strategies from neighbouring authorities are:
- **South Derbyshire Core Strategy** – will set out the spatial strategy jointly with Derby City Council and Amber Valley District Council for the provision of new homes and jobs. Discussions have been undertaken in which there could be potential to have allocations in North West Leicestershire plan area, to meet the needs of Swadlincote in South Derbyshire, which could have an impact on the River Mease. This is yet to be confirmed by South Derbyshire District Council. The last consultation in 2011 consulted upon the housing numbers within the 3 local authority areas, looking at 4 scenarios: balanced migration, current building trends, regional plan targets and Government projections, which provides a range of between 30,000 new homes to just under 50,000 new homes
 - Charnwood is to the east of the District. The **Charnwood Core Strategy** is still being developed. The M1 separates most of the 2 Council areas, although Shepshed and Charnwood Forest are both on the North West Leicestershire side of the M1. Charnwood Forest falls within both Charnwood and North West Leicestershire plan areas, which forms the eastern part of the National Forest. The Core Strategy looks to plan for this area to protect and enhance the environment, provide improved access for

all and provide for development sensitively in this location while making the most for the rural economy

- **Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy** was adopted in September 2009. North east of the plan area is identified as part of the Charnwood Forest and National Forest. The Core Strategy identified that 9000 homes will be built up to 2026, although the majority of these will be within the urban areas which are situated to the south of the district. The Core Strategy identifies a Green Infrastructure and Tourism Zone which overlaps with North West Leicestershire. This includes biodiversity improvement areas
- **Rushcliffe, North Warwickshire, Lichfield District Council and Erewash** have smaller sections of adjoining local authority boundaries.

Waste and Minerals

- 3.29 The Leicestershire Municipal Waste Strategy provides the basis for the development of new waste management infrastructure delivered by the Waste Management Partnership.
- 3.30 The Leicestershire Waste Development Framework (Core Strategy and Development Control Policies) up to 2021, provides for the long term strategic waste management strategy and land use planning framework for waste in Leicestershire. It includes policies relating to waste developments within the National Forest, Charnwood Forest and areas identified as Green Wedges. An area covering Coalville and stretching up to, and including Loughborough is identified as a broad locations for strategic water management sites.
- 3.31 The adopted Leicestershire Minerals Development Framework (Core Strategy and Development Control Policies) up to 2021, identifies mineral resources located within the District, including within the River Mease catchment area, as areas with brick clay and sand clay resources.

Transport

- 3.32 The third Leicestershire Local Transport Plan was published in April 2011. It provides the long-term transport strategy and provides a framework for how the County will manage and develop the county's transport system in the future.
- 3.33 The Transport Plan the outlines strategic transport goals:
- a transport system that supports a prosperous economy and provides successfully for population growth
 - an efficient, resilient and sustainable transport system that is well managed and maintained
 - a transport system that helps to reduce the carbon footprint of Leicestershire.
 - an accessible and integrated transport system that helps promote equality of opportunity for all our residents
 - a transport system that improves the safety, health and security of our residents
 - a transport system that helps to improve the quality of life for our residents and makes Leicestershire a more attractive place to live, work and visit.

- 3.34 The plan seeks to increase local transport capacity, to aid economic recovery and improve social inclusion. It also recognises the need to change travel behaviour, which is essential in reducing emissions, particularly from road transport.
- 3.35 East Midlands Airport Surface Access Strategy Report sets out the aim to reduce the rate of growth in car traffic and promotes the use of alternative methods of sustainable transport modes, such as public transport, cycling and walking. There is also an East Midlands Airport Masterplan (2006) that sets out the Development Strategy and monitoring arrangements for the airport. The strategy includes:
- a commitment to make site ground operations 'carbon neutral' by 2012
 - tougher measures and penalties on night flights and the noisiest aircraft and an all weekend ban on jet training flights
 - substantial improvements to grants for those living nearest to the airport
 - investment in new technology to concentrate flight movements and alleviate noise
 - extension of surface access plans building on established links, such as the new Leicester Skylink service, completing regular links with our three main cities
 - a new Community Relations Strategy with increased investment in community projects over a wider area
 - a five year review programme.
- 3.36 The Leicestershire Walking and Cycling Strategy sets out the vision to encourage walking and cycling. There is also a National Forest Cycling Strategy which sets out a cycling strategy and an action plan for the National Forest area.

Sustainable Community strategy

- 3.37 The North West Leicestershire Community Strategy 2008-2040 (2008) has been produced through the North West Leicestershire Local Strategic Partnership and provides an overarching framework for all other strategies in the District, including the local plan.
- 3.38 The most up-to-date Community Strategy vision for North West Leicestershire is, *"North West Leicestershire will be a place where people and businesses feel they belong and are proud to call home"*.
- 3.39 The Sustainable Community Strategy has a number of priorities grouped around key themes. The Thematic Action Plans set out what work is being done in each theme area and how it contributes to local, county or national priorities. Thematic Plans are linked to a Local Area Agreement theme.
- 3.40 A key part of the Sustainable Communities Strategy is addressing key issues in key places. The Strategy focuses on local issues and makes sure that solutions match the things local people feel are important to them. It sets out that there will be three Place Plans mirroring the established Community Forums in Coalville, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and the Valley. Each Plan has three elements dealing with Town Centres, Rural Centres and Priority Neighbourhoods. The priorities for each place are reflected in the County Sustainable Community Strategy.

- 3.41 The current priorities for the Sustainable Community Strategy apply for the next five years or so, are grouped into seven themes. These are:
- Healthier Communities - This priority is about making sure people in the District can live healthy lives with good access to health care and advice
 - Children and Young People - Community views show that the District most needs to improve the provision of facilities for teenagers
 - Older People - Older people can have some of the greatest problems in accessing services and can also have the most to give through their experience and knowledge. The priorities in this area will harness this experience and help make sure that older people can get to the services they need
 - Economic Development and Enterprise - The District's business community is very varied and ranges from large multi-national groups to small independent businesses. These priorities seek to make sure the District provides an excellent environment for business whether well-established or new and start-up operations
 - Cleaner and Greener - North West Leicestershire has many unique opportunities given its place at the Heart of the National Forest. The environment is also one of the things people say they are most concerned about. In this area the Sustainable Community Strategy seeks to ensure that the District makes the most of its opportunities to be a truly sustainable place
 - Stronger Communities - A community that works together is a strong community and a strong community is essential if in the years to come North West Leicestershire is to become the successful place we all want it to be
 - Safer Communities - The Vision for the District is one in which people feel at home. Home is the place where people should feel safe and these priorities will help ensure that crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour are tackled effectively.

Other plans and strategies

- 3.42 The Regional Spatial Strategy plan making process included a lot of evidence gathering that informs the Local Plan. This includes the Regional Energy Strategy with a framework on the generation, supply and use of energy across the region. The Integrated Regional Strategy set out the strategies on housing, planning and economic development.
- 3.43 A regeneration strategy was also prepared in 2009 for the Coalville. Changing Coalville seeks to regenerate the town centre with the concept of four squares linked by vibrant streets. The strategy is based around five regeneration principles. The principles are:
- Coalville must maximise its location as a sub-regional centre for North West Leicestershire in the heart of the National Forest
 - Coalville should grow in a way that enhances existing historic centres while providing sustainable new communities
 - Coalville must repair its pedestrian and vehicle networks in the town centre to attract more customers and investment
 - The community and the Coalville Development Partnership must encourage development which supports the 4 squares and vibrant streets proposal

- New development must contribute to physical and social improvement as well as have economic benefit for the town as a whole.
- 3.44 The Local Housing Strategy has a number of key priorities which include improving the condition, making the best use of existing homes including empty homes, providing safe and well maintained homes, providing a wide range of housing options including affordable housing, and providing for vulnerable people and prevention of homelessness.
- 3.45 The National Forest Strategy (2004-2014) aims to help develop, co-ordinate and manage development in order to maximise its benefits to the local economy whilst minimising any adverse effects on local communities and the environment.
- 3.46 The National Forest Biodiversity Action Plan contains strategies and actions to protect and enhance 16 habitats and 9 species.
- 3.47 There is also a Leicestershire approved 'Local Biodiversity Action Plan' (LBAP). The plan outlines important baseline information for biodiversity in the area and how areas of high biodiversity value are to be protected and improved.
- 3.48 The LBAP for Leicestershire has a number of direct implications for the Core Strategy and is a major consideration for the SA. There are 19 Habitat Action Plans and 14 Species Action Plans to consider during development of policies and considering planning applications.
- 3.49 Leicestershire County Council has produced a Nature Conservation Strategy which provides a framework for the management and development of the Leicestershire nature conservation.
- 3.50 The Leicestershire Rural Strategy (2004-2009) provides a strategic framework for guiding the Leicestershire rural partnership.
- 3.51 Environmental Action for a Better Leicestershire is a countrywide forum for the protection and enhancement of the environment. It includes strategic policies and objectives to promote sustainable solutions relating to environmental issues.
- 3.52 The 'Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy (2002) identifies distinctive character areas across Leicestershire and Rutland and sets out objectives to enhance and conserve those areas.
- 3.53 There are a number of Air Quality Management Plans covering North West Leicestershire which set out locations and key pollutants, along with targets for these locations.
- 3.54 An Anti-Poverty Strategy has been developed to tackle social exclusion throughout the district, which includes co-ordinating the Council services and supporting disadvantaged communities.
- 3.55 The Tame, Anker and Mease Catchment Area Abstraction Management Strategy (March 2008) identifies the River Mease and the underlying Measham groundwater unit as locations to be assessed under the Habitats Regulations due to the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) status of the River Mease.

4 Baseline issues in the plan area

Introduction

- 4.1 This section of the report is a summary of the key sustainability issues in North West Leicestershire District that the Local Development Framework, including the Core Strategy would need to respond to in delivering sustainable development. The information is drawn from a review of the baseline characteristics of the plan area as part of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) as required by the SEA Directive. The information originally was part of the Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, prepared by the Council in 2005.
- 4.2 This information in this section has been updated to take into account more current data. This update has been informed the District Profile prepared as part of plan preparation as well as a wider search for additional information.
- 4.3 The complete information review is shown as Appendix 7 to this SA Report. The main findings and issues that need to be addressed in the district are shown in the remainder of this section.

An ageing population

- 4.4 There is an increasing proportion of people over 65 in the district, which expected to rise to around a quarter of the total population by 2031. This age group may have particular housing and access needs that the Local Plan will need to help to meet. For instance, more homes will need to be delivered that are adaptable to changing needs over a lifetime. In addition, new dedicated housing will need to be built that helps people to live independently for as long as possible. There will also be a need to ensure older residents do not become isolated by providing new homes in locations well served by public transport which have essential services within easy walking distance.
- 4.5 An ageing population will also put greater demand on some services, such as health services, but also reduced impact on other services such as education and childrens' facilities.
- 4.6 Also, reducing household size will require additional homes to be built in order to simply to meet the needs of existing residents, regardless of natural population growth and re-location to the area.

Housing

- 4.7 Recession and recent uncertainty on planning policy has slowed the delivery of development. The AMR 2009 indicated that housing build rate was at its lowest level for almost 20 years.
- 4.8 The LDF can ensure that the right quantity of housing is bought forward at the right time. It can also set out clear policies to help deliver affordable housing through LDF policy, guiding development management decisions.

Society

- 4.9 The district as a whole is not characterised by deprivation. However, there are pockets of deprivation throughout the district including at Greenhill, Measham and Coalville. Greenville is one of the 10% of the most deprived areas in England.

- 4.10 There are seven 'Priority Neighbourhoods' with higher levels of deprivation where new development will need to consider ways to addressing deprivation and social exclusion issues. These neighbourhoods are at:
- Ashby-de-la-Zouch
 - Castle Donington
 - Coalville, Thringstone and Whitwick
 - Greenhill
 - Ibstock
 - Measham
 - Moira and Albert Village.
- 4.11 The number of pupils achieving A* to C grades at GCSE are lower in the district than in the region or nationally. This could be as a result of secondary school access in the district.

Leisure, recreation and health

- 4.12 There are increasing demands on the health services in the district. Many of these services are already stretched. Increased demands will be from the aging population, and possibly from an anticipated rapid increase in obesity in the adult population of the district.
- 4.13 Development will have to help deliver new health services for the district. In addition, the LDF can also have a role in preventing poor health through helping provide for healthier lifestyle choices. This could include creating more opportunities for walking or cycling in peoples' day to day activities.

Accessibility and transport

- 4.14 Public transport services in the district as a whole are poor, with the exception of Coalville, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Ibstock. There are no passenger train services in the district, with the nearest station being at East Midlands Parkway, a few kilometres from Kegworth.
- 4.15 The result of limited transport choices and dispersed development causes a very high car reliance and useage in the district. Almost three quarters of commuting is made by car and distances travelled are frequently high due to ease of access onto the M1 and other major routes through the district. This leads to poor air quality, congestion impacts, contribution to climate change and inequitable access to jobs and services for some residents.
- 4.16 Car traffic levels have shown a steady increase and they peaked in 2006/7, but they fell probably due to the recession. Cycle use has risen but is still very low.
- 4.17 The LDF has a central role to play in bringing forward development in more accessible locations. For example, bringing new business development close to public transport, mixed use areas with local services, and creating greater work/live self-containment in towns. However, development management will not work in isolation, encouraging more people out of their cars will also require the implementation of other strategies, including parking management and better public transport provision.

- 4.18 Development should also support delivery of improved cycling routes and footpaths, making these modes of travel a quick and hassle free option wherever possible.
- 4.19 Surface access to the airport needs to improve with an increase in non-car travel for employees and passengers.

Landscape

- 4.20 There are no landscapes in the district that are designated as being of more than of local importance. However, development should still take account of and protect the best of the district's landscapes.

Biodiversity and nature conservation

- 4.21 The district is identified as having one of the lowest proportions of land designated as of national or international nature conservation importance. It also has a lower proportion areas designated as of national importance for nature conservation which is in a 'favourable' condition in comparison to the England or the regional average. There is a large amount of designated 'hedgerow' in the district.
- 4.22 There are areas identified for habitat enhancement as well as identified locally important nature conservation areas. Given the limited biodiversity assets, it is important that new development takes opportunities for habitat enhancement. Hedgerows and features that link habits must be protected from harm, or suitable mitigation be put in place.
- 4.23 The greatest nature conservation asset is the River Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is an internationally important nature conservation site. However, this SAC relies on good quality water and its integrity is affected by phosphorus levels from waste water treatment outfalls from plants serving Measham and particularly Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Therefore, development in these areas must be within treatment capacity limits of treatment works, to avoid significant adverse impacts on the SAC sites.

National Forest

- 4.24 A large part of the district is designated as part of the National Forest. In these areas there is a commitment to increase tree cover and to help secure tourism and leisure benefits from the Forest. New development should help to contribute to meeting the objectives for the National Forest. Existing forest, especially ancient woodland, should be protected from harm in new development.

The built environment

- 4.25 Much of the older built development of the district is associated with the industrial past. An independent review of the quality of new built development in the district revealed no schemes that were of a 'good' or 'very good' standard.
- 4.26 New development should respect the built heritage of the value and need to make a step change in quality of new buildings. There needs to be improvements in the expectations for design, both of individual buildings and the urban layout of new development area.

Waste

- 4.27 The trend to reduce waste being sent to landfill needs to continue. New development that would create waste would need to meet sustainable construction standards and support waste storage and sorting on site.

Water

- 4.28 Water quality in all the district rivers needs to meet the standards set in the Water Framework Directive. In particular phosphate levels in the River Mease have to be improved to reduce impacts on the SAC site.
- 4.29 Development will not be permitted to proceed where it shows a deterioration in water quality of the River Mease, as this would result in an unacceptable impact on the River Mease SAC.
- 4.30 Throughout the District measures need to be put in place in new development to ensure that water is used more efficiently, especially in all new homes. This will help protect the water resource and also help make additional capacity available at the sewage treatment works.

Flooding

- 4.31 There are areas at high risk of flooding (zones 2, 3a and 3b) in the district. The majority of flood risk is from fluvial flooding and therefore limited to watercourses and their channels. The greatest risk is around Castle Donington and Kegworth on the Rivers Trent and Soar.
- 4.32 All new development will have to follow tests set out in national policy to ensure new development is not put at unacceptable risk of flood. Use of sustainable drainage systems in new development will help reduce flood risk.

Employment

- 4.33 Employment levels of North West Leicestershire residents is relatively high and in 2010 wages were above the regional average, although less than the national average. However, monitoring in 2009 showed a rapid increase in unemployment as a result of the recession, reaching 3.2% in 2009.
- 4.34 Employment structure has changed in the district over of time with a decline in manufacturing. Current successful sectors are as a result of the district's position on the M1 and due to the freight role of East Midlands airport. There is also a growing tourism sector. Development in the area needs to support existing and growing employment sectors by providing appropriate sites.
- 4.35 There are proportionally fewer small companies in the district, and this causes increased risk for job stability. The LDF needs to help deliver a range of employment sites in a range of locations to help support diversification of the economy.
- 4.36 Commuting levels are also high in the district. More people travel into the area than out for work. In particular, the Castle Donington area is a focus of employment on a regional level due to the location on M1, the level of employment land availability and the East Midlands Airport. The development plan should distribute housing growth to areas of high employment to help more people live near their work, so reducing commuting.

Retail

- 4.37 Coalville, which is the main retail centre, needs special attention in regeneration of its town centre as it is currently underperforming. This would encourage take up of empty retail space, increasing and improving sustainable travel for shoppers, and improve the built environment and the experience of the town centre.
- 4.38 Ashby-de-la-Zouch town centre performs strongly for a town of its size and this vibrant centre needs to be retained.
- 4.39 Other village and town centres also need to be supported to reduce vacancy rates. The plan needs to make sure that the majority of new retail development is located in town centres, or at the edge of town centres. Out of town retailing should be avoided as it can lead to unsustainable travel patterns and further decline of town centres.
- 4.40 Wherever possible local shops and services in small villages need to be protected and changes of use restricted.

Climate change

- 4.41 Climate change prediction data shows that under scenarios that it is possible that by the 2080s climate change could be having a significant impact on the East Midlands. Some of the findings suggests that:
- winter mean temperature could be 3⁰C higher
 - summer mean temperature could be 3.5⁰C higher
 - winter mean precipitation could be 19% higher
 - summer mean precipitation could be 20% lower.
- 4.42 To help play a part in reducing contribution to climate change, development should help mitigate against future climate change. This will include increasing the energy efficiency of new buildings and securing ways of delivering lower carbon heat and power, including decentralised generation. The plan should also consider proposals for large scale renewable energy generation.
- 4.43 New development also needs to be designed so it is able to adapt to a changing climate. This could include more efficient use of water, control of flooding, design of buildings that are may be passively cooled in summer and buildings that can cope with more storms and periods of intense rainfall. Outside space needs to be designed for more extreme weather conditions, including long dry spells or times of prolonged rainfall.

Air quality and Noise

- 4.44 A major influence on air quality is the district's roads, including the M1, A42 and A511. Road traffic has increased by 22.7% in the East Midlands 1993-2002. There are five Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), all designated because of elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide, which comes predominantly from road traffic.
- 4.45 The AQMAs are at:
- Molehill Farm, Kegworth

- High Street, Kegworth
 - Broom Leys Road/Stephenson Way, Coalville
 - High Street, Castle Donington
 - Copt Oak Road, Copt Oak.
- 4.46 Many parts of the District continue to be adversely affected by noise. The areas most affected by noise are in the north of the District near by the race circuit and the airport. The M1 and other major roads through the District also have noise impacts.
- 4.47 New development must contribute to reducing car reliance in the district. This includes more self-containment of settlements, reducing commuting and support of more sustainable travel modes.
- 4.48 Similarly, the LDF should avoid locating vulnerable development in noisy locations. Attempts to limit noise should be made wherever possible, for example through controlling night flights from the airport or the number of flights or the use of the motor racing circuit.

5 The sustainability framework

Introduction

- 5.1 The sustainability framework is a set of objectives and indicators that help define what sustainable development means for the SA of the Core Strategy. The framework provides a consistent basis for the SA. This allows for the strategy, policies and possible growth locations to be assessed in a systematic way.
- 5.2 The sustainability framework as it appears now (Appendix 1) is a result of several iterations. The first framework was part of the scoping report that was prepared in-house by the Council. Since then the framework has been revised, taking into account comments made at scoping, updated background information and some changes to make it more useable by the SA consultant team. The scoping report can be found on the Council's website.
- 5.3 The current sustainability framework takes into account:
- the review of plans and programmes, including objectives for other strategies covering the area (section 3)
 - the baseline information and identification of key sustainability issues (section 4)
 - the topics that Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) must cover listed in Annex 1 (f).

Defining sustainable development

- 5.4 The sustainability objectives have their basis in a general consensus on what sustainable development means. This is based on an understanding of sustainability as:
- natural resources that should be used efficiently so that future generations can meet their needs
 - equitable access to resources, where access to resources for some should not be denied by the actions of others, now and in the future.
- 5.5 To use such ideas in examining land use or spatial plans, something more specific is needed. Therefore, a sustainability framework has been developed to establish a common and consistent definition of what it means to achieve greater sustainability in North West Leicestershire, for SA.
- 5.6 This sustainability framework uses the four objectives of sustainable development from the UK Government original sustainable development strategy, '*A Better Quality of Life*' (May 1999), despite this strategy being superseded in 2005:
- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
 - effective protection of the environment
 - prudent use of natural resources
 - maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

- 5.7 However, this strategy was updated in 2005 with the publication of *Our Future – different paths* (March, 2005). The strategy gives the purpose of sustainable development as a goal that:

'...will be pursued in an integrated way through a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment, and a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well-being. This will be done in ways that protect and enhance the physical and natural environment, and use resources and energy as efficiently as possible'.

- 5.8 The new Sustainable Development Strategy sets out five guiding principles that will replace the four aims of the older strategy that are shown. However, these five principals are less directly relevant to plan appraisal than the four for 1999, which remain the basis of the sustainability framework. The strategy defines sustainable development as:

- living within environmental limits
- ensuring a strong and healthy and just society
- achieving a sustainable economy
- promoting good governance
- using sound science responsibly.

The components of the Framework

- 5.9 The sustainability framework tries to identify those matters of environmental, economic and social capital that are basic to well-being and which we want as much of, or more of, in the future. The sustainability framework identifies these basic elements together with what constitutes a better position for each element. It tries to be comprehensive whilst keeping the different items in the framework distinctive.
- 5.10 Ideally quantified indicators and targets would be included. However, quantifying each of these objectives, and developing relevant indicators is a difficult process as the very nature of the majority of the content of a development plan, would not enable change to be directly attributed to the influence of the plan or to be measured. Therefore, the SA is principally concerned with whether the direction of change that the Plan would be likely to bring, would be positive in achieving more sustainable development, rather than with attempting to quantify changes.
- 5.11 The objectives can be further developed to include indicators for monitoring, through combination with the proposed monitoring framework for the Core Strategy or development plan as a whole. More information on monitoring is included in section 16 of this report.
- 5.12 The objectives presented in Table 5.1 take the form of a 'headline' sustainability for which an objective has been developed. This is followed by the objective itself, which sets out what the Plan should be trying to achieve in relation to sustainable development. These are each accompanied by a set of supporting objectives, these are examples of the ways the Core Strategy may directly impact on the objectives, representing a move towards greater sustainability.

- 5.13 The objectives have a purpose of providing a systematic basis for the stages of sustainability appraisal. By comparing the proposed objectives, strategy, policy and allocations against this consistent definition it is possible to determine if the plan is likely to be making a contribution to greater sustainable development.
- 5.14 The full SA framework is shown in appendix 1 of this report and principal objectives shown in table 5.1.

Table 5.1: The sustainability framework

Sustainable consumption and production		
1	Provide an adequate supply of good quality employment land needed to encourage and accommodate indigenous and inward investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a range of sites throughout the district to support the diverse needs of business Prioritise development with high job density, such as offices, in towns centres and other locations with good public transport access Protect existing employment sites from change of use, especially where they support local employment needs Support strategies to bring a greater range of employment types into the district
2	Help develop a prosperous, competitive and diverse rural economy which adds value to existing agricultural, forestry and leisure sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support new employment growth in rural locations where it will help meet a local need Support initiatives for tourism and leisure in the National Forest
3	Make the most efficient use of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage development on previously developed land Protect undeveloped land from inappropriately located development Encourage higher urban densities to make the best use of available land Encourage highest density development in locations with good access by public transport, including town centres
4	Reduce waste generation and promote re-use and recycling and support sustainable extraction and the reuse and recycling of minerals and aggregate resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure new development incorporates space for waste sorting and storage to aid recycling Encourage sustainable construction making use of recycled and recyclable building materials Ensure the re-use of demolition waste Promoted development of more sustainable waste treatment facilities, including sorting, recycling and reuse. Ensure minerals landbank is not sterilised through inappropriately located development
5	Reduce water consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure new development is designed to reduce water consumption
Sustainable communities		
6	Provide good quality homes that meet local needs and reflect local circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a sufficient number of dwellings are provided to meet the needs of existing and future residents. Increase the supply of affordable homes of the type and size to meet needs

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide homes that meet the lifetime needs of residents.
7	Improve accessibility of new development reducing need to travel and extend public transport choices for non-car modes (public transport, walking and cycling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the town centres of the district as the focus for new retail, services and office development Ensure new development has public transport access and give priority to walkers and cyclists over car users Use development to help secure better public transport for the district, in particular links to nearby rail stations Help those who live and work in the district reduce their reliance on private car travel Encourage higher density development in locations with public transport access, or in areas that have a good provision of nearby jobs, services and facilities
8	Enhance the vitality and viability of existing town centres and village centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the town centres of the district as the focus for new retail, services and office development Revitalise and renew town centre areas where necessary. Maintain the town centres as the retail focus for the district, primarily at Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch de la Zouch and at other centres suitable to their level in a retail hierarchy Apply a sequential test for new retail development
9	Improve the health and wellbeing of the district's population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all residents have equitable access to health services Use urban design and provision of open space and walking / cycling routes to support healthy choices Avoid development in areas that suffer poor residential amenity, such as those affected by noise or air pollution
10	Promote social inclusion and reduce inequalities across the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help support local services and jobs, such as protecting village shops from change of use. Improve accessibility for all, to ensure that not only those who use a car have access to good quality jobs and services
11	Reduce crime and fear of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help create safe walking and cycling routes, that not only reduce crime but also fear of crime Ensure new development is designed so as to reduce the opportunities for crime.
12	Encourage jobs that match the skills and needs of local residents and help improve access to skill training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to create new jobs in a range of sectors in the district Help support existing businesses sectors
Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement		
13	Conserve and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the District's cultural, historic and archaeological heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and conserve buildings and structures of recognised historic or architectural interest, and their settings Protect buildings and structure of local importance Ensure new development respects the character of the

		<p>historic environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respect archaeological remains and protect or record according to guidance
14	Conserve and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the District's built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help deliver built environment improvements through high quality design ▪ Ensure all new development is designed to reflect its context ▪ Built design should help in creating vibrant places, making those approaching on foot a priority
15	Conserve and enhance the quality of the District's landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance the character and distinctiveness of the district's landscape ▪ Help implement National Forest objectives ▪ Enhance the transition for urban to rural at the edge of towns and villages
16	Protect and enhance the District's biodiversity and geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that development respects biodiversity wherever it is found ▪ Ensure that the River Mease is protected from harm, and appropriate assessment of development completed wherever necessary ▪ Protect and conserve SSSIs ▪ Help all have access to the natural environment, including integrating greater biodiversity into urban areas
17	Reduce flood risk and impact from flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow PPS25 sequential approach to granting planning permission and avoid the risks of flood ▪ Ensure new development does not exacerbate the risk of flood off-site, for instance through use of sustainable drainage
18	Reduce air, light and noise pollution and manage contaminated land to avoid damage natural systems and protect human health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help reduce contribution to air pollution by reducing car use ▪ Avoid locating new development in locations of poor air quality or noise pollution. ▪ Ensure new development does not contribute to light pollution through innovative lighting design, or avoiding outdoor illumination entirely ▪ Ensure all contaminated land undergoes suitable remediation prior to development
19	Improve the water quality and avoid further pollution that could adversely impact on natural systems, wildlife and human health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure new development does not proceed unless waste water treatment works are in place to manage sewage, avoiding risks to aquatic wildlife and protected sites. ▪ Ensure water efficiency in new development to reduce improve capacity at sewage treatment works ▪ Protect ground and surface waters from the risks of contamination
20	Maintain and enhance open-space , sport and recreation provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure existing open space is protected and maintained to a suitably high quality

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide new residential development with access to open space for informal recreation. ▪ Provide new residential development with playing fields and recreation facilities for sport
Climate change and energy		
21	Reduce energy requirements across the District and increase the proportion of that requirement met from renewable or low carbon sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support proposals for decentralised and low carbon energy generation ▪ Promote small scale non-grid energy generation and large scale grid schemes where appropriately located and help reduce carbon dioxide emissions ▪ All new development should be built to high energy efficiency standards

Climate change

- 5.15 Addressing climate change through appropriate mitigation and adaptation is also an important role for the Core Strategy. No specific objective has been selected on 'climate change', as this is such a cross-cutting issue it cannot be summed up in one objective. Instead the elements of climate change mitigation and adaptation have been integrated into other objectives. In this case these are air, transport, energy, and flood, although there may also be implications for landscape, biodiversity, built heritage and water.

6 The sustainability appraisal of the strategy

Introduction

- 6.1 Sections 7, 8 and 9 report on the sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan strategy. These sections consider how the preferred growth option and the distribution of this growth will contribute to social, economic and environmental sustainability objectives and also where there is the risk of negative impacts. These sections also refer to how the preferred strategy has been selected and the relative implications for sustainable development of the rejected alternatives. Sections 10 to 14 consider the sustainability impacts of the policies that will manage the delivery of development and the objectives for the Local Plan.
- 6.2 The original appraisal of alternatives is included in the *Sustainability appraisal of the North West Leicestershire Local Development Framework – Core Strategy Further Consultation* (May 2009), which is a useful source of additional information. The Council also prepared notes on an in-house sustainability appraisal of the distribution of growth and as part of the 'Broad Locations Background Paper', all of these other parts of the SA are available on the Council's Core Strategy webpages.
- 6.3 The spatial strategy sets the basic framework for the delivery all new development in the plan period. The purpose of the strategy is to set the principles by which all applications for development will be based, making clear the locations where development will and will not be permitted.
- 6.4 This framework is the fundamental building block for delivering sustainable development in the district. It needs to be based not only on the protection of the natural environment, but also as part of a proactive approach to achieve wider sustainability benefits.
- 6.5 The spatial strategy has an essential role in distributing development and therefore shaping the future form of the urban areas. The strategy has a major role to play in reducing car use. The strategy can achieve this through policies that support public transport, walking and cycling. However, more important that this is creating a pattern of development that now and in the future reduces the overall need to travel. The strategy needs to look for ways to provide a mix of different land uses, such as homes, jobs and services, which people can access without getting in their cars. A central concern of a sustainable spatial strategy is linking the place where people live to where they work and the services they use daily. Getting more people out of their cars and improving access is a common aim in plans and strategies nationally. However, in North West Leicestershire it is of particular significance as levels of car commuting are extremely high, which currently causes a variety of adverse sustainability impacts.
- 6.6 Reducing car travel, through encouraging a more sustainable pattern of development, can help in achieving several aspects of sustainable development. These include:
- reducing emissions to air helping mitigate against climate change
 - reducing congestion is be beneficial for the economy, the built environment and residential amenity
 - health benefits from reduced air pollution and lessening the adverse impacts of busy and congested roads on communities

- making access to a range of jobs and other services more equitable
- possible individual financial benefits as a lower proportion of income would have to be spent on travel.

6.7 A more sustainable strategy should also include elements such as:

- making sure land is used efficiently to reduce greenfield land requirements and especially areas of sensitive and high quality natural environment
- identifying areas in need of renewal and regeneration where development could deliver benefits
- helping to meet the growth needs in the area, including providing enough of the right type of homes to meet needs and to provide for maintaining and growing the local economy
- supporting the continued viability of town centres by focusing new development in these areas
- allocating land for other land uses that can help deliver sustainable development, for example locations for the sustainable management of waste or renewable energy.

6.8 The appraisal of the North West Leicestershire strategy is in three parts, the SA report considers the strategy as it appears in the strategic policies. These are:

- the overall level of housing growth for the plan area
- the distribution of growth – considering the sustainability implications of the relative roles of settlements on sustainable development, as well as the overall levels of growth assigned to each town but not in reference to specific sites
- the growth locations – this section of the SA report assesses the potential impacts of growth at each town, considering the relative impacts on developing on the potential Broad Locations for growth.

6.9 The SA separately addresses issues relating to the level of growth, distribution of development, and choice of sites into different sections of this report. However, in practice they actually flow from one to another, with each decision made or option chosen, having implications for the remaining options available and narrowing the choices that still can be made.

7 Sustainability appraisal of growth levels and alternatives

7.1 When work commenced on the Core Strategy the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East Midlands was fully in place with the weight of policy behind it. The RSS set a housing requirement for North West Leicestershire to deliver 10,200 new homes in the Local Development Framework period, 2006-2026, or 12,750 over the extended plan period to 2031. Since then the new government stated they are committed to revoking the RSS and have started the process of removing this tier of the development plan planning. Therefore, for the time being local planning authorities must ensure their Local Plans are in general conformity with the RSS.

7.2 Local authorities can review parts of the RSS if there is more up-to-date evidence to support it. Therefore, North West Leicestershire has chosen to pursue a different housing

requirement for the district than set in RSS. However, there remains a ‘duty to cooperate’ with neighbouring authorities to ensure housing provision helps meet more than local requirements.

- 7.3 During plan preparation several different sets of growth figures have been discussed to find the level agreed by the Council. The housing figures must be supported by adequate evidence, as without this there is a strong possibility that figures that differ from the RSS will not be found sound at Public Examination and will have to be revised.
- 7.4 Growth options were developed based on:
- the evidence base
 - joint working of the Councils in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA)
 - discussion with the North West Leicestershire Cabinet
 - Core Strategy consultation in May 2011.
- 7.5 In May 2011 there was a consultation on the Core Strategy *Our District – Our Future* where two options were proposed for development. These were within the 2006-2026 plan period, and were either to stick with the RSS figure of 10,200 or to go with a lower figure of 8000 homes. However, at the time the lower figure was not backed up by evidence.
- 7.6 The Cabinet Report of October 2011 sets out the various growth options that could be considered. This showed that initial officer assessments of household projection suggested a need for 8,000 homes for 2006-2026 (400 dwellings per annum), giving 10,000 dwellings over an extended plan period to 2031.
- 7.7 Studies as part of the HMA area considered other growth options based on various economic or population trends.
- 7.8 The lowest scenario, based on *zero-net migration* gives a total of 3875 dwellings or 155 per annum. This is an unreasonable scenario as it is based on an unrealistic assumption that a zero-migration rate could be achieved or would be desirable given the current relatively high level of job provision in parts of the district. Also, over 3000 new homes have either been committed or completed since 2006 and the residual level (only 875 for the remaining period) is clearly unrealistic.
- 7.9 Housing needs are also considered under various employment growth scenarios in the district to 2031, these are at 0%, 5% and 10%. These scenarios give rise to dwelling requirements of 6,400, 8,050 and 9,700 respectively.
- 7.10 Rates based on past trends and housebuilding are also identified giving housing requirements of around 8850.
- 7.11 Therefore, the 10% economic growth rate give the highest requirement with the next highest based on ONS at 9,425.
- 7.12 It should be noted that all of these figures are only growth scenarios and did not take into account the distribution of development. The way that development is distributed around the District will have an influence. For instance, economic growth is likely to favour certain parts

of the district, so for sustainability to achieve the growth levels anticipated, new housing would have to be located near economic growth.

- 7.13 The relative implications of seeking higher or lower levels of growth are set out in Appendix 3, showing in a generic way what these impacts could be. However, assessment of sustainability impacts without knowing the distribution does mean that any detailed predictions of impacts are not possible. The majority of impacts are entirely dependent on the location of development. For instance, the quality of land allocated for development or the proximity to jobs and services.
- 7.14 The key differences between levels of growth are:
- providing sufficient homes to meet housing needs throughout the district
 - more homes will mean a greater use of natural resources
 - more homes will mean a greater greenfield land take
 - insufficient new homes may result in communities stagnating, large amounts of housing will have a greater impact on existing communities
 - more homes are likely to increase pressures on wildlife and habitats and landscapes
 - more homes are likely to increase levels of developer contributions and therefore the delivery of new infrastructure and services
 - more homes can help support local economic growth, although there could be competition for land
 - more homes could help drive regeneration strategies, for instance through housing stimulating town centre renewal.
- 7.15 However, as referred to in paragraph 7.13 these conclusions are quite simplistic and there are many other factors that will influence sustainability. There is also the need to consider whether providing for fewer homes will mean that they are not delivered at all, or that they have to be provided in other local authority areas.
- 7.16 Commitments and completions of housing since the plan period began show that these have reached more than 3000. If this trend continues over the remaining plan period this could give rise to the completion and commitment of around 12,500 over the plan period. This level of growth is similar to the requirement set in the RSS at 12,750. Therefore, the Core Strategy has a major role to play in reigning back development to levels more appropriate for the district based on the evidence base. Continuing the existing trend may mean development is not being delivered in sustainable locations as part of a coordinated spatial strategy. The Core Strategy also has a role to play in redistributing growth to locations where it can have the greatest benefit.
- 7.17 In order to ensure that the Core Strategy of the Local Plan is setting a spatial strategy that will help to deliver sustainable development the housing growth figures may need reviewing over the plan period. This will help make sure that if housing is coming forward quicker than expected, that the distribution of this growth, and the choices on the location of this growth, are compatible with a planned approach that supports a sustainable pattern of development. This is essential to ensure that there is plan led development in the district and this is useful in being able to refuse planning applications that are outside the planned sustainable spatial strategy.

- 7.18 The preferred option is for a requirement of 9,700 new homes to be delivered between 2006 and 2031. However, commitments and completions since 2006 are around 3000 homes (March 2012) in 6 years, leaving only 6,700 to be delivered in the remaining 18 years.

8 Sustainability appraisal of the strategic distribution of housing and alternatives

8.1 The growth level selected as the preferred option gives only part of the picture as to how development will impact on sustainability in the district. The distribution of this development around the district also has great implications, most importantly for creating the sustainable pattern of development as set out at paragraph 6.6.

8.2 Table 8.1 shows all of the options that have been considered for the distribution of development in the plan area. The sources of the options are:

- the four options of the Further Consultation version of the Core Strategy in 2008. This provides the options for distributing the Regional Spatial Strategy housing figure around the district to 2026
- various iterations of housing distribution discussed at Cabinet and reported in Cabinet Reports. These were not consulted upon publically
- the preferred distribution as reported in the Core Strategy.

Table 8.1: Options for development distribution

OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT DISTRIBUTION	Further Consultation Options 2008 – Growth to 2026				Cabinet options – Growth to 2031			Submission – to 2031
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	October 2009	March 2011*	October 2011	Preferred Option
Coalville	9800	8000	5400	7700	6500	4398	5000	4950
Ashby-de-la-Zouch	500	2400	1800	500	1000	785	1400	1400
Castle Donington	500	350	1200	1000	1000	785	1000	1300
Ibstock	100	100	1000	1000	500	393	500	550
Kegworth	50	75	800	400	300	233	450	450
Measham	50	75	800	400	400	313	450	550
Rest of district	None given	None given	None given	None given	500	393	900	500
Total	11000	11000	11000	11000	10200	7300**	9700	9700

* option March 2011 are those prepared before the May 2011 *Our District – Our Future* consultation.

** with an additional 700 to be delivered outside of Coalville – giving a total of 8000

8.3 The full assessment of the Further Consultation strategy options and the preferred option is shown in Appendix 4 of this SA report. Consideration is also given to the implications for sustainable development of pursuing the three options discussed at Cabinet and ‘business as usual’ approaches.

8.4 Some of the main findings for sustainable development from the various options, as reported in Appendix 4 are set out in this section.

- 8.5 *Efficient use of land and protecting biodiversity and landscape quality:* The options that are for higher growth levels would require the greater use of land. For all options land will be required and the majority of options would see the greatest land take at Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch. In some options, including the preferred option, Castle Donington would also be the focus for a large proportion of development. Choices on the preferred Broad Location at each of the towns or villages that would be a focus of development have implications for biodiversity and landscape impacts. However, where levels of proposed development are very high, such as for Coalville under options 1, 2 and 3, such a large amount of land may be required that avoiding negative biodiversity or landscape impacts may not be possible.
- 8.6 *Water consumption, water quality and protection of biodiversity assets:* Options 2 and 3 would see development in Ashby-de-la-Zouch above levels that could be accommodated at waste water treatment works. This would raise the potential for significant adverse impacts on the River Mease Special Area of Conservation. The preferred option is just within capacity, although the quantity of housing set in the option is almost the total remaining capacity at the treatment works. Therefore, if other types of development take place such as employment or commercial development the remaining capacity for housing is proportionally lower. Levels of development at Measham under option 3 may also risk harm. River quality and treatment capacity for Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Measham will need to be monitored and managed to avoid impacts if the desired strategy is to be implemented.
- 8.7 *Providing homes:* The strategy would see new homes distributed throughout the district. This could have benefits in helping provide additional affordable homes to meet needs. Under options that focus a significant proportion of new development in Castle Donington, including option 3 and the preferred option, there is potential to help people get better access to homes close to their employment, as the area currently has a very high level of in-commuting for work and the village is relatively small.
- 8.8 The quantity of housing proposed in any of the named settlements, should be set at a level that can at very least be high enough to cope with increased housing demand from the existing population. Reducing household size means to maintain populations, more homes are needed. Therefore, options such as 1, 2 and possibly March 2011 may not be sufficient to meet these needs. This may cause villages to stagnate and likely to cause an increase in the price of homes causing social and demographic shifts in the population, as fewer young people or families can afford to stay in the area.
- 8.9 *Accessibility to jobs and services and social inclusion:* Access by non-car travel to jobs and services is an issue that shows some of the greatest differentiation between options. Locating a greater proportion of all development in Coalville may help provide access to shops and services in the town, although this will be dependent on a matched increase in employment growth and town centre improvements. Also, as already referred to, more homes in Castle Donington could help improve access to work. At the current time most people have to commute into the area for work with a limited supply of local housing. However, there would need to be a significant increase in local services in the village, which could be accommodated in the existing village centre, with some additional services as part of an urban extension.
- 8.10 However, some options may have adverse impacts on accessibility. For instance, Kegworth has a very low level of useful village centre services as well as limited job availability. Therefore, high levels of development here, such as option 3 could be negative in terms of improving access. All of the options that would see a large amount of development in Ibstock,

- Kegworth and Measham, would have adverse impacts on accessibility, especially access to a range of employment opportunities.
- 8.11 Options that see higher levels of development in the rural area, especially the October 2011 option would have negative impacts on accessibility. In the small rural and sustainable villages there is limited access to services and jobs and the majority of trips would be by car. High levels of rural development risk creating rural isolation as the price of driving increases. More development in these locations would reinforce an unsustainable pattern of development in the district.
- 8.12 All options would require improvements to non-car access, including buses, and high quality walking routes and cycleways.
- 8.13 *Town centres:* Towns and village centres can be supported by new housing development. The options that focus a large amount of development in Coalville may therefore be particularly beneficial in the regeneration of central Coalville. Therefore, there is the risk that the preferred option may perform less well than almost all of the other options. Important in protecting town and village centres will also be the way development is delivered in urban extensions. New shops and services in these areas should be designed to complement existing centres rather than divert retail and employment opportunities to peripheral locations. This is true for all extension sites, and risks may be higher in in Castle Donington and Coalville although in Castle Donington there also needs to be a step change in service and retail provision in the village centre. Options with a particular Castle Donington focus include the preferred option and option 2.
- 8.14 *The economy:* These options are for housing development only and it is not clear in the proposed Core Strategy where new employment might be focussed. However, Coalville is likely to remain the economic focus of the district so therefore the high levels of housing directed to this settlement under all options would be positive for the economy. Furthermore, the size of potential urban extensions in Coalville means that employment could be integrated within them (the Core Strategy policies do direct 20ha of employment land to Coalville). However, the options (such as 1, 2 and 3) that would see a very large amount of development in Coalville may have negative impacts on the economy through competition for land. Housing land is more valuable, therefore delivery of employment land may not be able to compete financially for sites.
- 8.15 Significant new housing in Castle Donington, under the preferred option and option 3, would help support the economy of this area. The area is the second largest focus of employment in the district and new homes in this area could help support this, providing accessible local employment to residents.
- 8.16 In the remaining towns and villages of the district, it is difficult to draw conclusions on the economic implications due to lack of detail on expected economic growth. However, those options that would severely restrict development are unlikely to be compatible with supporting the economy of these villages, such as Options 1 and 2 and possible March 2011.
- 8.17 *Air quality:* Higher rates of growth will inevitably result in more cars on the roads. The distribution of the growth will have some influence in reducing overall car growth. For instance more mixed use development and focusing development in larger centres will reduce

the need and the distance people travel and make alternatives to car driving viable options. However, more homes and more population will inevitably lead to more cars.

- 8.18 *Rural economy:* Development in the rural areas for housing may be able to support the rural economy, but there are already more homes in rural areas than there are jobs. Therefore, very high rural growth, such as October 2011 levels, will not necessarily have any advantage for the rural economy.
- 8.19 *Built and historic heritage:* Options that see very high levels of growth in any settlement are likely to have greater impacts on built and historic heritage by changing the character of large parts of the town or village. Where the level of proposed development would result in a significant increase in the size of the settlement it would clearly have an impact on the built environment. For instance Option 3 sees a large amount of development directed to Rural Centres, as well as the preferred option that would see large growth at Castle Donington.
- 8.20 *Energy and open space:* Where growth levels in towns and villages are higher there is more likely to be a need for urban extensions rather than fitting development piecemeal within the developed area. Well planned urban extensions have the potential to deliver some sustainability benefits, through the provision of new services and infrastructure. This could include the creation of new public formal and informal accessible open space and also new opportunities for low carbon energy generation.
- 8.21 *Other impacts:* Some impacts such as use of natural resources, flooding impact, pollution impact are more likely to be influenced by choices of the exact location of growth than the overall distribution of growth. However, it is likely that were growth levels are greater adverse impact will also be more.

The preferred spatial strategy

- 8.22 The preferred strategy sees development split around the district as shown in table 8.2. The table provides a summary of how the distributed growth levels increase or decrease the size of settlements. The table is quite simplistic and is intended only to be a tool to give a broad overview of change over the plan period. The figures are based on the assumption that housing will be delivered exactly according to the strategy, up to a total of 9700 homes.
- 8.23 The table shows that the role of some settlements may change by 2031 as the proportion of the district's homes they contain grows or shrinks. Coalville, as the focus for development would see greatest growth to about 38% of all houses in the district, proportionally this is the most significant increase in the role of any settlement. However, growth at Castle Donington will be proportionally greater than all of the other Rural Centres, increasing the proportion of development in this village to levels well about the others.
- 8.24 Several of the settlements (and the rural area) would see a general reduction in the proportion of development. Ashby-de-la-Zouch's reduction by about 1.7% from current levels due to constraints required to protect the River Mease Special Area of Conservation. The rural area may be the focus of less development, at a reduction of almost 3% by 2031 from current levels, helping to reduce the less sustainable pattern of growth that has become established in the district. For the remaining settlements their proportional share of development remains more or less as it is now.

Table 8.2: Details of preferred distribution strategy and the changing proportional size of settlements

Settlement	2006 Existing homes (proportion of all homes %)	2031 Existing homes in 2006 + preferred distribution (new proportion of all homes %)	Change in proportion of homes by 2031 under preferred option (%)	Proportion of jobs at 2006 (%)
Coalville Urban Area	14603 (34.5%)	19553 (37.6%)	3.1	34.5
Ashby-de- la-Zouch	9932 (23.5 %)	11332 (21.8%)	-1.7	16.2
Castle Donington	2763 (6.5%)	4063 (7.8%)	1.3	24.2
Ibstock	2617 (6.2%)	3167 (6.1%)	-0.1	5.5
Kegworth	1555 (3.7%)	2005 (3.9%)	0.2	3.8
Measham	2062 (4.9%)	2612 (5.0%)	0.1	3.6
Other	8765 (20.7%)	9265 (17.8%)	-2.90	12.1
TOTAL	42297 (100%)	51997 (100%)	<i>0.00 (22.9% change overall)</i>	<i>100.0</i>

- 8.25 For Castle Donington and Coalville the distribution of development that would see the number of houses grow proportionally higher is likely to have some positive impacts for sustainable development. The two settlements are already the focus of employment in the district, although these are 2006 figures and some change may have occurred as a result of economic recession. Therefore, a greater proportion of the housing in these locations could help support the economy and improve accessibility to employment, reducing car commuting. However, development would need to be matched by improvements to the town and village centre to provide the services necessary to support a population of this size.
- 8.26 Development in Castle Donington, Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch would all require urban extensions. These would need to be planned to make sure that they provide the services that are necessary to support local needs as well as sustainable transport connections to the existing residential area.
- 8.27 Where towns and villages will see a reduction in their proportional share of development there may be sustainability impacts. The settlement may be less able to support economic growth, and if levels of growth are below the levels necessary to support inherent growth in households this may have adverse impacts on the affordability of homes.
- 8.28 Ibstock currently has around 5.5% of jobs in the district and a higher amount than any of the other villages where lower levels of development are directed. However, the role of Ibstock based on the proportion of overall housing development it contains may be marginally

reduced. This may have adverse impacts on the future economic role of the village and sustainable access to jobs overall.

- 8.29 Conversely, Kegworth that has quite a low job proportion and is characterised by high levels of car commuting is to proportionally grow. This growth may be incompatible to the objective that relates to supporting the economy and accessibility to work. Similarly, the village has relatively poor service provision so new services to meet local needs must be secured in the village to help sustainable access.
- 8.30 Some settlements will also grow significantly by 2031 compared to their 2006 size if all development is implemented, see table 8.3. Again this table may be simplistic and is based on the assumption that development will occur exactly to the preferred strategy. The biggest growth will be in Castle Donington, at about 50% and Coalville by about a third. As Coalville is larger there will more opportunity for the growth to be accommodated in the town and the increase in population to be assimilated with the existing character of the town.

Table 8.3: Percentage by which each settlement will grow by 2031 compared to 2006 size

Settlement	2006 Existing homes	Preferred strategy growth by 2031	Proportional increase in size of settlement by 2006 to 2031
Coalville Urban Area	14603	4950	33.9%
Ashby-de-la-Zouch	9932	1400	14.0%
Castle Donington	2763	1300	47.0%
Ibstock	2617	550	21.0%
Kegworth	1555	450	28.9%
Measham	2062	550	26.7%
Other	8765	500	5.7%
TOTAL	42297	9700	22.9%

- 8.31 In Castle Donington the amount the village is expected to grow could have an adverse impact on existing communities. Impacts could include changes to the community character of the village and extra pressure on the limited village centre services. Therefore, development in the village will have to be designed to ensure that it meets the full needs of existing and future residents.
- 8.32 In both these settlements and also in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, growth will require a significant amount of new greenfield land and therefore the built character of the town will change. New development will need to take into account the impacts on the natural and built environment in and around the settlements.
- 8.33 In Ashby de la-Zouch the constraints created from the need to protect the River Mease SAC means that town will only grow in a limited way. This is unlikely to have a significant impact on communities. However, providing a high proportion of affordable homes in the town will be important in order to support a demographically and socially mixed population. A mix is needed to provide for a vibrant place and also to provide a workforce to supply the diverse needs of local businesses.

- 8.34 Kegworth, Measham and Ibstock will see growth at about 20-30% over the plan period. These growth levels may help maintain the status quo in these Rural Centres, although concerns over the growth of Kegworth and limited growth in Ibstock are shown in paragraph 8.28 and 8.29.
- 8.35 The level of growth directed to the rural areas would see less development here than in the past. The overall proportion of housing in these locations would reduce by 3% by 2031 (table 8.2), and the rural area would grow by the least at only less than 6% more homes than there were in 2006 (table 8.3). This is despite the rural area having 20% of homes in 2006 and only having 12% of all jobs. Reducing the amount of housing in the rural area is positive for achieving more sustainable development, especially in relation to creating a sustainable pattern of development.
- 8.36 The level of services and jobs available in the more rural settlements (both Sustainable and Rural Village) are quite poor. Therefore, residents of the rural area are very reliant on their cars to get to work and to meet other day-to-day needs. This leads to high levels of car commuting. This car use has negative environmental impacts and also can create social isolation. Lowering the rate of rural growth is essential as part of an overall strategy to reduce car use.

Conclusions

- 8.37 Overall, it appears that the strategy for distributing growth as it is set out in the Core Strategy is compatible with sustainability aims of creating a pattern of development that will help deliver sustainable development by reducing the need to drive. This is achieved by focusing more development in Coalville and Castle Donington and lower growth levels in locations with fewer jobs. Also, restricting rural housing growth may be compatible with achieving a less dispersed and unsustainable pattern of development.
- 8.38 There are some caveats, including a possible need to lower the growth in Kegworth to reflect the low level of services here and the relatively cut-off nature of the village in relation to the rest of the district. Also, transport and traffic modelling at the current time does indicate an increase in car travel throughout the district, although opportunities to reduce this through improved sustainable transport has not yet been taken into account.
- 8.39 Transport modelling has also demonstrated that car use will rise overall in the district as a result of planned growth, even though the plan helps move towards self-containment. Therefore, reducing car use will be dependent on implementation of other plans, strategies and policies that provide realistic and reasonable alternatives to car travel.
- 8.40 The SA has been unable to draw any firmer conclusions as to whether the strategy will help promote more self-containment in terms of jobs and homes in towns and villages, with the possible exception of Coalville and Castle Donington. This is because the strategy and policies give little information on the distribution of employment and planned economic role of any settlements.

Achieving the growth strategy

- 8.41 The chosen housing growth figure of 9,700 to 2031 sets a reasonable target for development in the district. The figure is justifiable in terms of the amount of housing that has been calculated to meet the economic and housing needs of the district. This quantity of housing is

also one that can be accommodated on known sites within the district as required by national planning policy.

- 8.42 To achieve planned sustainable spatial distribution of development in the Core Strategy it needs to set a housing requirement at a reasonable level. The 9,700 figure does not need to be the maximum number of homes that will be permitted but to help plan for growth in a co-ordinated way, the Council needs to be confident that growth will not be significantly in excess of this figure.
- 8.43 The SA does identify that there is a need for the Core Strategy to achieve a step change in the rate of delivery of new homes in some parts of the district. For instance, there is a substantial increase in growth in Coalville and Castle Donington and reduced growth in the rural area, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Measham.
- 8.44 Therefore achieving the step change will be challenging for the local authority to achieve. For instance committed and completed development in the rural area already accounts for most of the rural housing requirement, and over half of the requirement for Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Measham. To implement the chosen sustainable strategy the Council will need to be confident that the policies it puts in place will be suitable to deliver it. Therefore, policies will need to be in place to carefully manage delivery leading to strategy review, if this is needed.
- 8.45 In particular the development strategy will need to make sure the right type of development is taking place in the right locations, especially in the rural area. The sustainability appraisal of the *Policy CS6: The Location of Development*, suggests review and monitoring of the 'Sustainable Villages' that will be the location for much rural development to ensure they are accessible by non-car transport and contain essential services and that they are currently and will remain suitable locations for growth.
- 8.46 There is a risk to creating a sustainable place if development significantly exceeds the strategy's housing requirement in any location (including the rural area) and if this comes forward in an unplanned way. The preferred growth strategies have been drawn up based on evidence and are agreed with elected representatives. They have also be subject to sustainability appraisal. So if development does come forward that is unplanned for, it could have adverse impacts on sustainable development, including:
- overstretched local services
 - development either coming forward on sites not allocated in the plan and therefore where no design brief exists
 - under provision of greenfield expansion sites leading to development in less sustainable locations or development at levels insufficient to support local employment
 - less sustainable distribution of development leading to increased car commuting
 - competition for land from employment and residential uses.

Employment

- 8.47 The strategy as it has been discussed in this section primarily relates to housing. There is little information on the planned economic growth for the district. However, the Core Strategy does set out that 20 hectares of employment land is directed to Coalville and Castle

Donington is the focus of much of the committed employment land. Therefore, in broad terms this distribution of jobs is compatible with the housing distribution and creating more self-contained settlements for jobs and homes. However, it is not clear if the economic role of any of the other main towns or villages is set to change, so drawing conclusions on the sustainability of the housing strategy for economic growth is not clear at this stage of plan making.

9 Sustainability appraisal of Broad Locations for growth and alternatives

Introduction

- 9.1 The levels of growth to be delivered around the district would require expansion of the main towns and villages. The Core Strategy has a role in setting out where these preferred Broad Locations for growth would be, but does not allocate land. These specific allocations will be part of a separate document of the Local Plan.
- 9.2 Choosing the preferred location of these Broad Locations for growth was part of the iterative plan-making process, with sustainability considerations as one of the essential elements used to select preferred locations for growth.
- 9.3 The process of appraisal of these sites has been on-going during the preparation of the plan. An appendix to the *Further Consultation Core Strategy* showed the original assessment of possible sites for growth around the main towns and villages (excluding Coalville). This can be found on the Council's Core Strategy website. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report of the Further Consultation also considered the sustainability implications of the Broad Locations for growth as they appeared in that version of the Core Strategy, which is also available on the Council's Core Strategy webpages.
- 9.4 In the submission version Core Strategy, to which this SA report relates, the preferred Broad Locations for growth are set out in settlement specific policies CS36 to CS41.

Coalville

- 9.5 There are about 4,100 additional homes where sites for development need to be found in and around Coalville Urban Area, and sites for urban extensions need to be identified. Two such sites or 'Broad Locations' are identified for the town, one to the south east and a smaller growth to the south west. In earlier stages of preparing the plan other Broad Locations for growth were considered and in this version of the Core Strategy growth to the north (in the Area of Separation) and several smaller development parcels have been ruled out.
- 9.6 **South East Direction of Growth:** Development to the south east has the potential to deliver a new community for Coalville and should be able to support a mix of uses, including employment, a new shop, schools and health facilities. To achieve sustainable access the extension will need to be served by regular direct bus services linking the site with surrounding centres as well as a high quality walking and cycling routes. Therefore, development has the potential to be more self-contained with services walkable from new houses. The likely population increase in the extension should be sufficient to support a new bus route.
- 9.7 The Council's SA identifies that there may be adverse impacts on the landscape from developing in this location, especially further south on the site away from the urban area. Ideally all new development should be located adjoining the existing development in Coalville with suitable landscape screening to avoid wider impacts.

- 9.8 Part of the site is at risk of flood, scheme layout should ensure that it does not put new residents at undue risk of flood and all development will need to be in keeping with national planning policy.
- 9.9 The scale of the site may increase the potential for renewable or low carbon generation, for instance from energy from waste or through a neighbourhood wind turbine. There is some background evidence that this could be achieved, although nothing appears as policy.
- 9.10 The 'Bardon Grange' site is in this Broad Location. This site is already progressing through the planning process as it was an allocation in the old Local Plan. However, potential yield of the site has increased substantially from that time and now represents a very significant growth to the town and alone would be a 20% growth in the number of homes in the town by the time it is complete.
- 9.11 **South West Direction of Growth:** This area is proposed as a smaller extension to the town. The site would still be of a substantial size and would therefore deliver some new community services, such as health, education and open space. However, the range of accessible local services would be limited with most people reliant on central Coalville services and other nearby towns for access to a broad range of services and employment. Northern parts of the site have adequate access to central Coalville. However, new residents are likely to be more reliant on their cars than some other possible growth locations. To help reduce car use any new development will need to be well linked to the surrounding areas through improved bus services and walking and cycling routes.
- 9.12 The site may have an adverse impact on the Local Nature Reserve which could fall within development in this broad location and the adjacent SSSI and possible impacts will need to be taken into account in the design of new development. This may need to include leaving parts of the site undeveloped to support locally or nationally important habitats as well as habitat enhancement.
- 9.13 The location of this site may have a less severe impact on air quality in Broom Leys Road / Stephenson Way Air Quality Management area than some other Broad Locations.
- 9.14 **Other Broad Locations for growth:** Sites that have been rejected for development around Coalville include to the North in the current Green Wedge. There is an existing planning application (at appeal) in this location. Development here could present a good opportunity to secure a more compact urban form and new development that has good access to Coalville town centre and employment.
- 9.15 Development in this location would result in the loss of some of the gap between the main area of Coalville and peripheral parts at Whitwick. However, parts of the Broad Location could be well screened from public areas without an adverse impact on the wider landscape. Landscape studies show this site to be over lower landscape quality than the preferred Broad Locations. Publically accessible open space, allotments and recreation space should be protected from change of use to housing, unless equally accessible and high quality provision can be provided elsewhere.
- 9.16 Development in this location may also risk increasing localised pollution in central Coalville with impacts on the Air Quality Monitoring Area. However, the site would also present opportunities for a greater number of trips to be made on foot, by bike or by public transport.

Ashby-de-la-Zouch

- 9.17 Ashby-de-la-Zouch will need to accommodate around 1400 new homes to 2031, although well under a half of these remain to be allocated on new sites, the rest are already built or committed for development. Therefore, only a relatively small extension is needed.
- 9.18 In the Further Consultation five possible locations for growth were identified, ranging in scale from a very large area to the north and to the south and several smaller ones.
- 9.19 The preferred Broad Location identified in the Submission version Core Strategy in to the **north**, this location could support a mix of new development, including housing and local shops and services. The location of the site should mean there are also existing nearby services although new links would need to be provided into neighbouring residential areas to ensure these are a walkable distance and to reduce the need to travel by car. There is no current bus service to the site although the scale of growth here may be able to support an extension of an existing route. Policy CS37 sets out a list of types of social, environmental and physical infrastructure that should be provided as part of this development.
- 9.20 **Other Broad Locations for growth:** Rejected growth Broad Locations for growth prior to submission included growth to the West and South-East. These were rejected on sustainability grounds, including poorer access to the services at central Ashby-de-la-Zouch at both these alternative sites. The site to the west is small and would not be able to accommodate any mix of uses. Landscape quality of the site is also high and may be difficult to mitigate adverse effects. The south-east direction also is in an area of higher landscape quality than the other two locations and is some distance from employment sites. The south-east direction also had the advantage of being able to accommodate some flood alleviation measures that could have reduced risks of flooding off-site.
- 9.21 One growth area considered at Further Consultation has since got planning permission and therefore is committed for development. This site is at East of Leicester Road and therefore was not appraised further for the submission version.

Castle Donington

- 9.22 Outside Coalville the largest extension site is planned for Castle Donington. The Core Strategy sets a need for new land to be found to accommodate almost 1000 new homes, out of a total of 1,300.
- 9.23 The preferred Broad Location is to the **south**. Due to its size this location could support a mix of new development, including housing and local shops and services. A masterplan needs to be drawn up for the whole site so it is delivered in a co-ordinated way, around new district/local service centres. Essential in creating a good place to live will be delivering a mix of uses to meet the needs of new residents. Uses should include services such as shops, schools (including secondary education), open space, public meeting spaces and health services. Development also needs to be designed to be permeable for walking and cycling with all new residents within walking distance of local shops and schools. There will need to be bus links to the town centre to the north and to existing and planned employment areas, including the airport. Development at this scale should be able to support new bus routes.
- 9.24 Development management policies will need to be tightly applied in this location to avoid new housing and retail development at this location being of a type that encourages car travel. For

instance, new retail should be of a type that provides to meet local needs and is easily walkable from peoples' homes. This will mean avoiding development that clearly favours access by car and where pedestrian access is a secondary consideration, such as retail parks developed around a central car park. These types of shopping areas have very little that is of benefit for sustainable development and are likely to exacerbate the current adverse impacts of congestion and high car use in the district. Similarly, residential development should be designed in keeping with layout principles that help people make sustainable travel choices and foster community interaction.

9.25 Noise impacts, associated with the airport and possibly Donington Park, on new residential development must be taken into account. This will include the need to incorporate noise mitigation and possible additional planning controls at the airport.

9.26 **Other growth options:** By the time that preparation of the Submission Stage Core Strategy was reached the preferred option was the only reasonable option considered. Earlier, at Further Consultation there were two alternative sites. One site, North Park Lane has since received planning permission and the north west site that was considered is at significant risk of flood so is not suitable.

Ibstock

9.27 Around half of the housing growth required for the village is still to be committed; but this is only about 290 homes. It is proposed that most of this new growth is directed towards the **west** of the village.

9.28 The site of the Broad Location should mean that development can be integrated into the existing built form. The site is near some existing services but at present there is no link through adjoining development to give direct access. A new link will have to be provided to support sustainable access and walkable services. There is also no current bus service to the site and new links will also need to be provided to get access to nearby bus stops. Improvements to walking and cycling routes could also be made to improve access to nearby employment allocations.

9.29 The Landscape Character Assessment states it is likely that development in this location could include mitigation and this should avoid any significant adverse impacts. Furthermore, the site is in the National Forest and development with new tree planting could help improve the appearance of the site.

9.30 **Other growth options:** Three additional Broad Locations for growth were considered prior to Submission of the Core Strategy. The rejected directions were the south west, North and North-East.

9.31 The site to the south-west has relatively good landscape quality and but there is some potential for this to be mitigated. The site is quite visible as it rises from the urban edge. The site is also too small to support new bus services so would not be accessible by public transport.

9.32 The site to the north-east contains some previously developed land so scores better than others on the efficient use of land and landscape quality is relatively low with impacts capable of mitigation. However, it has disadvantages by being next to the brickworks site as residential development in this location could restrict further operation of the brickworks due

to amenity impacts. The position of the site relative to Ibstock is also likely to mean it would be quite isolated from the main settlement.

- 9.33 The site to the north is currently has poor access to local services, it is not served by public transport and would have a very indirect route to the town centre due to the character of surrounding development. There is also a Local Wildlife Site near the development area. Development at the site would have landscape impacts that it may not be possible to mitigate, due to its location in a valley.
- 9.34 At Further Consultation stage additional areas of land were considered for development, one of which 'North of Station Road' has since got planning permission. Another site 'Land South of Pretoria Road' is not considered for submission, perhaps as it is not physically well located to the remaining urban area.

Kegworth

- 9.35 There are around 205 homes that remain to be built or committed in Kegworth. However, no Broad Locations for greenfield growth are identified. It is not clear if the housing land availability assessment has identified sufficient land to meet this housing demand within the village.
- 9.36 This is the only settlement where the location of the majority of growth is not specified in policy. The sustainability implications of growth dispersed around the built-up area includes the possibility of overdevelopment of the urban area, possible loss of undesignated open spaces (such as gardens) and possible under-provision of housing according to the strategy.
- 9.37 The piecemeal delivery of development may also adversely impact on delivery of new infrastructure (social, grey and green). This is because developer contributions are more likely to have to be pooled from multiple developments to fund schemes. Securing infrastructure in this way is at greater risk of non-delivery can also take a long time to achieve.
- 9.38 **Other growth directions:** At Further Consultation five sites were considered for potential growth locations. Of these five sites, one and part of another have received planning permission. Both the sites are to the north-west of the village, at the Computer Centre and adjoining the Cott Factory at Citrus Grove.
- 9.39 Other possible growth locations for growth were considered. Potential sites include several between the M1 and the village. However, homes in this location may suffer from adverse impacts related to air quality and noise pollution.

Measham

- 9.40 Unlike some other towns and villages most of the housing requirement in this village remains to be allocated in the Core Strategy, 440 out of 550. It is proposed that all this new growth is directed towards the **west** of the village.
- 9.41 The location of the Broad Location should be able to be integrated into the existing built form, with limited landscape impacts. It is also quite close to the existing services of the village centre. However, there are currently poor bus links to this part of the village and these will need to be improved to reach levels that are able to support better access to a wider range of

services. Improvements are needed to footpath and cycleways to provide better access to the nearby village centre.

- 9.42 The plan calls for mix of uses to be delivered as part of the development site. 440 new homes remain to be built so there is potential to deliver some mix of uses. Development in this location could support some restoration of the Ashby-de-la-Zouch Canal with benefits for tourism and the local economy, as well as to the heritage identity of the village.
- 9.43 The site is of relatively high landscape quality and mitigation would be needed, although it will only be partially possible to mitigate visual impact of development due to the topography of the site.
- 9.44 **Other growth directions:** Prior the Submission Core Strategy two other Broad Locations for growth were considered. These are to the north-east and south-east. The site to the south-east had the advantage of being partly brownfield so could use land efficiently and development would also improve the look of the site. However, development here could adversely impact on the brickworks and local mineral resources. The site is also some distance from the services of central Measham and employment areas.
- 9.45 The site to the north-east would have adverse landscape impacts as it protrudes into the countryside and impacts would be difficult to mitigate. The site is also some distance from local services in Measham and would have little benefit in terms of reducing car travel.

Sustainable urban extensions

- 9.46 For all of the larger urban extensions it is essential that they are designed and delivered in a unified and planned way. All the urban extensions have potential to have substantial sustainability impact, both positive and negative, depending on their delivery.
- 9.47 A sustainable extension can have a mix of uses with clear and direct walking routes which can help reduce car use and encourage 'neighbourliness' by having more people walking around neighbourhoods, and it can also contribute to healthy lifestyles. The design of buildings and their surroundings can also play a role in mitigating and adapting to climate change, for instance from reducing car use, urban greening and ensuring sustainable drainage. Well integrated housing types and tenures can also help create more vibrant areas. A mix of land uses can also improve access to jobs and services enabling the creation of community meeting places and centres.
- 9.48 When sites are allocated policy criteria based on a masterplan and delivery plan for the area should set out what would be expected from development. This should be backed up by development briefs and delivery plans that show what development should achieve and what contributions would be expected.
- 9.49 Growth on this scale also presents opportunities for innovative solutions for decentralised low carbon energy. It is vital not to miss opportunities for delivering low carbon energy, as once development is in place, retrofitting supply networks can be less financially viable. Future communities in this area could be part of a local energy supply company giving people greater energy security into the future, where more people will suffer from rising fuel price.
- 9.50 The same principles should apply to smaller extensions, although due to their scale the potential for innovate solutions for sustainable place-making may be more limited.

Growth in the existing built-up area

- 9.51 For all of the main settlements, with the exception of Kegworth, a significant proportion for all residual housing requirements appears to be directed to greenfield extension sites. It is important that the Core Strategy can demonstrate that it can deliver the quantity of development that it is required to, but this should include consideration of capacity within settlements.
- 9.52 Sites within urban areas have some of the greatest potential to be compatible with sustainable development. For instance these sites may already have good access to shops and services, they are more likely to be on previously developed land and have less landscape or biodiversity impacts. Urban sites can also deliver other benefits, such as stimulating renewal and regeneration, including in town centres. Therefore, this source of housing should not be discounted. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment reveals good capacity, especially in the larger settlements such as Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

10 Sustainability appraisal of the Core Strategy Vision and Objectives

SA of the spatial objectives of the Further Consultation Core Strategy (2009)

- 10.1 An appraisal of the strategic objectives for the Core Strategy was completed as part of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Further Consultation (November 2008) Core Strategy. The SA at that time concluded the strategic objectives for the 2008 draft of the Core Strategy were compatible with objectives for sustainable development, for the most part.
- 10.2 It is evident and unavoidable that some objectives, such as those seeking economic and housing growth, will have adverse impacts on achieving others, such as natural environment protection and efficient resource use. However, this conflict is expected and demonstrates the complexities involved in seeking a sustainable strategy that tries to achieve benefits for social, economic and environmental issues.
- 10.3 There were some sustainability matters that are not very comprehensively covered by strategic objectives. Examples include those relating to reducing natural resources use, such as energy, water and avoiding pollution. The SA concluded that additional strategic objectives could be included such as in relation to sustainable construction.

SA of the spatial objectives of the Submission Core Strategy (2012)

- 10.4 Between the Further Consultation (November 2008) Core Strategy and the Submission 2012 Core Strategy there have been a number of changes to the strategic objectives, as set out in Appendix 5.
- 10.5 A full sustainability assessment of the 2012 spatial objectives, using the revised sustainability objectives as set out in Section 10, is provided in Appendix 6.
- 10.6 The section below provides a summary of the changes made to the strategic objectives, between the Further Consultation (November 2008) Core Strategy and the Submission 2012 Core Strategy. It also provides a sustainability appraisal of these changes and subsequent revised spatial objectives, as set out in Appendix 6.
- 10.7 Each objective identifies sub headings which relate to local issues, providing a context for each spatial objective. These are outlined in Appendix 5.
- 10.8 There were two objectives deleted from the Further Consultation (November 2008) Core Strategy, 2008 numbers for SO1 and SO13. SO1 was deleted as it was well covered by other objectives and also referred to the now indefinitely deferred reopening of the passenger rail line. Similarly, SO13 is now addressed in other objectives, namely a revised SO5 'improving access to services and facilities' and SO9 'promoting healthier communities, and SO15 'protect and enhance...the natural environment'.
- 10.9 There are five new spatial objectives in the 2012 Core Strategy, including:
- SO6: 'Reduce congestion; reduce the need to travel by private car whilst increasing the use of sustainable transport modes'. This objective could help change a modal shift

from the use of the private car to public transport, which would reduce the use of natural resources and impact on climate change

- SO9: 'Promote healthier communities'. This objective promotes healthier communities, which can be achieved through planning by providing health, sport and recreation facilities, as well as improving air quality
- SO10: 'Improve community safety and reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour'. Improving community safety and reducing the fear of crime could improve social inclusion and the health of communities
- SO12: 'Reduce the risk of flooding and avoid development in areas subject to flooding'. This objective reduces the risk of flooding and directs development away from flood risk areas. However, meeting this objective could impact on the locations elsewhere in the district
- SO17: 'Reduce the amount of waste produced and protect and manage the use of natural resources'. This objective is to reduce waste and manage use of natural resources which could have a positive impact on the environment and mitigating climate change. This will be particularly important in the development of the number of homes and jobs proposed
- There have been minor amendments to spatial objectives SO1, SO2, SO4, So5, SO14, SO15 and SO16, as shown in Appendix 5.

11 Sustainability appraisal of housing issues

- 11.1 This section of the SA considers the issues put forward for housing, these cover affordable housing policy and gypsy and traveller policy. It also sets the overall housing strategy for the district.

Affordable housing

- 11.2 Provision of affordable housing can have a variety of positive impacts on sustainable development, including supporting a socially and demographically mixed community, providing for young people and families so they can remain in the district and helping people to live near where they work and close to their families.
- 11.3 The chosen approach to delivering affordable housing is to set a target for 20% to Coalville and Ibstock and 30% to all other settlements and rural areas (Policy CS18). In Coalville, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Castle Donington, this will only apply to sites of 15 or more units, whereas in other locations this will apply to sites of 5 or more units. This could help deliver more affordable homes in the smaller settlements. However, reducing the threshold for all settlements could help to secure more affordable homes, if it is financially viable.
- 11.4 Meeting affordable housing needs is an essential part of delivering sustainable housing. There is an aim to deliver 2360 new homes of this type. These percentages appear to reflect the difference in house prices and affordability, and the size thresholds reflect the size of sites in different locations, therefore delivering affordable housing in more rural locations, as well as the main urban centres.
- 11.5 However, essential in setting this policy is evidence that the target set is financially viable and this is part of a separate financial viability study undertaken as evidence. The Council should help developers shape proposals to select the mix of affordable housing, requiring evidence to be provided on the financial viability of developments and by showing how commuted contributions will be handled.
- 11.6 Affordable housing policy should also establish the proportion of housing that will need to be delivered as socially rented homes, and intermediate housing. From a sustainability point of view developing as many homes as possible that are affordable in perpetuity may be preferable to intermediate housing. The policy could be supported by a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 11.7 In rural areas a greater proportion of affordable homes should be secured. For instance, in Sustainable Village a threshold of fewer than 5 homes may be suitable as most development will come forward on very small sites. Issues relating to affordable housing in rural locations are addressed in the paragraphs 8.11 and 8.36

Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 11.8 The needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are addressed as part of the Core Strategy in the District. It identifies the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople up to 2016 and provides criteria against which sites will be assessed. These criteria help to provide good quality sites and protect from impacts from development.

- 11.9 The policy does not provide for the need for the full plan period or provide any indication that this will be updated within the plan period either. In order to deliver on the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople within the plan period, it is necessary for the Council to identify the need up to 2031.
- 11.10 The preferred option in the last iteration of the Core Strategy was to include Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sites as part of the strategic housing sites. This option was a positive step to help secure the delivery of these sites to allow needs of these groups to be met. Site allocations are not included within the March 2012 Core Strategy. The principle of including Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople within strategic sites is also not included within the proposed submission Core Strategy.
- 11.11 Allocating sites for these groups is essential in making sure the housing needs of these communities are met in an equitable way through the strategy. In allocating sites it will be suitable to take into account the needs of different Gypsy and Travelling groups. Provision of one site to fill the total identified need may not meet the potentially diverse requirements of the different groups; this will need to be a consideration of allocation. Any sites allocated should have good access to jobs, services, public transport and schools, and minimise impacts on the environment and amenity.

Other issues

- 11.12 **Density:** Minimum density standard supports sustainability objectives relating to the good use of land. However, in some locations such as town centres and near transport interchanges it will be more compatible with sustainable development to achieve higher densities, with the purpose of encouraging more sustainable travel and reduce trip length. Appropriate density decisions should be made based on good quality design.
- 11.13 **Housing mix:** This policy meets the needs of existing and future residents by providing the right type and size of dwellings. Implementation of the policy should provide careful consideration to proposals on a site by site basis, particularly when considering affordable housing, where the need could be different. Monitoring the need for different types of housing over the plan period is essential to ensure developers are not over favouring certain types of development that may be the most cost profitable.

12 Sustainability appraisal of economic issues

- 12.1 Securing economic development and new jobs in the right locations is essential in creating a more sustainable pattern of development in the district. Existing information shows there is a large amount of commuting in and out of the district for work, and changing patterns of growth may increase this. In particular, in the north of the district there are several large employment sites, including the airport and the East Midlands Distribution Centre, but a low local resident workforce increases the need to commute from the wider sub-region. Commuting levels and distances and car focus are increased by access to the M1.
- 12.2 The SA cannot say much on the sustainability implications of the proposed strategy for economic growth. This is because no stage of Core Strategy preparation has yet contained details on the locations of existing and planned future employment growth, with the exception of 20ha at Coalville. There is also little information on the planned future role for each town. This means it cannot be said with any certainty how an economic strategy could help promote greater self-containment in each of the towns and how this relates to housing provision. Travel assessments on future travel patterns do identify that the current preferred strategy may lead to reduced self-containment under the preferred option, with Coalville's workforce likely to grow faster than the economy of the town, encouraging out-commuting and less sustainable travel patterns. However, in Castle Donington self-containment may improve with new housing in the area, although this may depend on economic growth.
- 12.3 Therefore, for the Core Strategy to demonstrate how it is contributing to more sustainable development patterns, through a strategy for housing and employment growth, some additional information, evidence and justification may be needed.

The need for and allocation of a strategic distribution site

- 12.4 The Further Consultation (November 2008) document identified the possible need for the North West Leicestershire LDF to identify land to accommodate a regionally significant distribution centre, to serve a regional need. However, following the May 2011 consultation the need for this allocation was dropped.
- 12.5 This means that if such a site is delivered over the plan period it will come forward through planning applications. The pro-active approach had greater potential to deliver a more sustainable site than may be the case if it was left up to the development control process. Allocating land allows the shortcomings and benefits of all sites to be assessed and planned for as part of a strategy and for the District to secure the economic benefit from such development. Pro-actively planning for the site could allow for transport connections to the site to be planned in advance, bringing benefits to the site and possibly linking with other nearby development opportunities.
- 12.6 However, it may be preferable for the site not to come forward in the district given the already poor air quality in parts, the lack of public transport access for future employees and congested roads.
- 12.7 Policy CS6 sets out the criteria that will help determine if a site in the district is suitable for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange. The location of such a site will be determined nationally. However, due to the characteristics of the district North West Leicestershire is well placed to

accommodate such a facility. There could be benefits in terms of access to work as well as the wider national and global sustainability benefits of increasing the proportion of freight that is moved by rail rather than more polluting forms of transport.

The local economy

- 12.8 The Core Strategy approach for pursuing local economic growth contains much that is compatible with sustainable development. This includes using the National Forest designation to encourage related businesses and linking planned growth to improved training opportunities.
- 12.9 However, much of the employment focus is on the northern part of the district. This includes the airport and Donington Park Racing Circuit and the former power station site. The implications for sustainable development have already been discussed, with the potential mismatch in where new jobs are to be provided, and where new homes are to be provided creating unsustainable travel patterns. Increased car commuting can have a range of negative sustainability impacts, including on the environment, climate change, health and supporting vibrant communities. The sustainability appraisal recognises the limits the Core Strategy has in the location of new employment growth, as this is largely led by market needs and some thorough national decision making. However, the SA suggests more employment focus should be in new and existing employment parks in the Coalville area, as well as more housing provision in the north of the district. The purpose of this will be to encourage more sustainable patterns of growth.

Airport

- 12.10 The East Midlands Airport is within the district, adjacent to Castle Donington, and therefore the Core Strategy needs to plan for its continued operation.
- 12.11 The policy plans to:
- restrict development to airport related uses
 - resist noise sensitive development where there may be detrimental impacts
 - improve public transport access
 - minimise environmental impacts
 - reduce night-time noise impacts.
- 12.12 These principles are compatible with achieving sustainable development to some extent. Public transport access improvement is an important component of reducing sustainability impacts of airport operation on the ground-side. These links need to be for air travellers, but also for the workforce, who travel from throughout the district and elsewhere to work at the airport and associated business parks.
- 12.13 Passenger and freight air transport are not compatible with the long-term goals of sustainable development. Emissions from aeroplanes can have quite significant impacts related to climate change through emissions of greenhouse gases, as well as other emission of other air pollutants. There is an impact on residential amenity which will increase if flights are increased for air passengers and freight, particularly during the night as there are currently no restrictions during the night.

- 12.14 There is also the risk that basing a large amount of the economy of the area on airport related jobs will not be sustainable in the longer term, as costs increase for travelling and moving freight by air, this economic sector may suffer.

Rural employment

- 12.15 The Core Strategy approach for pursuing local rural employment contains much that is compatible with sustainable development, within two policies CS8 'Countryside' and CS13 'Rural Economy'. This includes supporting small scale employment uses that require a rural location. It is important to support rural communities to grow particularly within agriculture, forestry, extensions to existing businesses, equestrian proposals and tourism.
- 12.16 All rural development will need to be compatible with its location and serve a local need only. This requirement is essential in ensuring that new employment does not lead to unsustainable travel patterns with a large quantity of people leaving the urban areas to travel to jobs in the countryside.
- 12.17 The Core Strategy positively plans for the National Forest which is welcomed by the sustainability appraisal. Woodlands can have a variety of sustainability benefits including protection of the natural environment, biodiversity and reducing the district's impact on climate change, as well as creating an attractive place to live and providing local jobs. Increasing the area of woodland and promoting the National Forest for tourism and recreation could potentially increase jobs supporting the woodland and through tourism, such as for overnight accommodation.

13 Sustainability appraisal of other issues

Town and local centre issues

- 13.1 Maintaining and enhancing town centres and local retail is part of creating and supporting more sustainable communities. The policy provides a clear hierarchy which reflects the existing role of each centre. Coalville functions as a town centre and should take on a role of district centre, with other smaller settlements supporting a range of local shops and services. All these centres are relatively accessible by sustainable transport modes for a large number of people within the towns and for Coalville also a rural hinterland. Therefore, maintaining the retail focus of these areas is essential as part of delivering sustainable access through the spatial strategy.
- 13.2 Defining the areas on the map in later stages of the Local Plan that should be protected for town centres uses should help in preventing unsustainable change of use.
- 13.3 The Core Strategy does lack some of the detail necessary to understand how development in the district will help deliver regeneration and renewal of town centres. It is evident that other parts of the Local Plan will include the necessary detail to help deliver the strategy, yet there remains scope for more area specific information in the Core Strategy. For instance, the plan does not make clear what proportion of new housing will be focused in Coalville's town centre to support regeneration.
- 13.4 Part of creating sustainable town and local centre uses are the policies the plan has in place to refuse permission for applications for out-of-centre shopping centres where there is no evidence that they are required. These could directly compete with town and village centre uses harming the character and viability of town centres. In particular, to protect the long-term sustainability of town centres, out of centre retail developments with a large amount of free car parking should be avoided.

Transport

- 13.5 Car use in the district is very high. Reducing people's reliance on their cars is an essential way the Local Plan can assist in delivering more sustainable development. Levels of self-containment in the district for living and working are also low, with only 54% of the workplace population living in the area.
- 13.6 One of the ways to reduce reliance on cars is by creating a pattern of development in the district that reduces the need and the distance people travel. For example travel to and from work is one of the greatest trip generators. So this means creating more self-containment in each town that will help people make choices on living nearer where they work. Travel assessments indicate that there is a risk the current preferred strategy could result in a significant increase in car movements in the district. Therefore, if this strategy is pursued, there will be the need to for the Core Strategy, in combination with other plans and strategies, to put in place proactive measures to achieve a modal shift away from car use. Currently 71% of commuting trips to jobs in the district are by car and this needs to be significantly reduced to avoid continuing and worsening adverse social, environmental and economic sustainability impacts. For the town wards this ranges from 79% of residents getting to work by car in Ashby-de-la-Zouch to only 64% in Coalville.

- 13.7 The sustainability appraisal welcomes policies which encourage a modal shift to include improved public transport routes and networks, as well as encouraging walking and cycling on safe routes. The Core Strategy can help in delivering these through safeguarding routes and seeking developer contributions. Of particular importance in creating more sustainable travel in the district will be to provide good quality public transport links between Coalville and northern parts of the District, where much economic growth is focused. Such schemes could be in combination with public transport access improvements to the airport.
- 13.8 Policy CS23 could be more explicit about developments supporting public transport and designing proposals to support safe and convenient pedestrian, cycling and road traffic movements, as well as requiring green travel plans. Supplementary Planning Documents will provide much of the additional material required to manage car parking and will need to address ways that parking is managed in new employment development to reduce car commuting. A requirement for travel plans for all new development over a certain size is essential to ensure every opportunity is taken for reducing cars on the road.
- 13.9 If the National Forest line is re-opened for passenger rail travel this could have substantial benefits on reducing the environmental impacts of travel, despite not be viable for the time being. Therefore, the safeguarding of lines and existing stations as set out in policy CS5 meets sustainability objectives.

Sustainable developments and new development

- 13.10 The design of the urban area and individual buildings can have substantial benefits for delivering more sustainable development. This can include:
- developing to a high design standard to protect and enhance the built environment
 - making sure the urban layout promotes walking and cycling, prioritising pedestrians
 - using sustainable construction techniques and technologies to make the best use of natural resources, including energy and water
 - protect existing and future residents from adverse impacts on amenity, including avoiding all types of pollution impact, such as air, noise, odour, overlooking
 - creating development that feels safe and deters crime
 - providing, enhancing and managing natural environment features in development, including natural landscaping, and protection of trees and hedgerows.
- 13.11 The Core Strategy proposes that new development should be built to a high level of either Code of Sustainable Homes or BREEAM, if financially viable. This is compatible with objectives for sustainable development and welcomed by the SA. This is set for developments of an undisclosed threshold. However, policies setting requirements will need be worded to ensure that these standards are met by all new developments, show how developers will need to demonstrate compliance.

Climate change and new development

- 13.12 Climate change is an essential issue for the Core Strategy to address. The design, distribution and location of development all have the potential to help in mitigate climate change, and new development needs to be able to adapt to a changing climate.

- 13.13 However, climate change is a cross-cutting issue, with relevance to a range of policies, including:
- spatial distribution and reducing the need to travel
 - biodiversity
 - flooding
 - renewable energy and sustainable construction
 - waste
 - public transport
 - design.
- 13.14 Requiring new development on larger sites to reach zero carbon standards is supported by the sustainability appraisal. Larger sites present invaluable opportunities to integrate how carbon heat and power solutions into development. This will help mitigate against climate change impacts and plan for long-term affordable energy as fuel prices increase.
- 13.15 The Core Strategy proposes that new developments should be built as low or zero carbon. This fits with the change in Building Legislation Part L, which will mean that all new buildings will be zero carbon by 2016. To achieve zero carbon developments it will be necessary to include both energy efficiency measures and renewable energy technology. The types of Allowable Solutions are a recent proposal and the sustainability appraisal welcome further guidance from central Government to provide certainty for both local authorities and developers.
- 13.16 Preferred locations for large scale renewable energy schemes should be identified in the Core Strategy, particularly where they can be part of larger strategic housing or employment sites, which have already been identified as broad locations. There is evidence to suggest that there is wind power potential and the Local Plan should proactively encourage this type of development in the district, looking favourably on proposals.

Green infrastructure

- 13.17 Planning strategically for green infrastructure can help deliver a range of sustainability benefits. These multi-functional spaces can help deliver open space, biodiversity, and green route enhancement. Having a clear strategy in place can help demonstrate to developers what will be expected from new development in different locations. For example, where the green infrastructure strategy proposes a new cycle route all proposed development near this could contribute towards its implementation.
- 13.18 Green infrastructure plans should consider the multi-functional role of greenspace. This includes its use as an asset for biodiversity, providing links between habitats and built-up area, the use of green networks for safe walking and cycling, playing fields, parks and playspace, and can have a positive role in improving wellbeing, health and avoiding urban heat island impacts.
- 13.19 The policy could include more details about how the green routes and networks will be delivered and enhanced through development. Supplementary Planning Guidance on

implementing, enhancing, protecting and the long term management of a multi-functional Green Infrastructure is essential for the successful implementation of policy.

- 13.20 With the revocation of Planning Policy Statements and replacement with the National Planning Policy Framework there is less detail in national planning policy. Therefore, there may be gaps in policy coverage within the Core Strategy that were previously filled by national policy. Policy CS32 goes some way to filling this gap but does not necessarily embrace the wider landscape issues related to biodiversity protection and features and local interest. These locally important assets are particularly significant in the area given that the district contains few assets of national or international significance.

The built environment

- 13.21 The Core Strategy contains policy on the built environment and improving design. However, this policy is very broadly written leaving much up to interpretation by development control officers and developers. Some tightening of wording or additional explanation in the plan itself may be useful to ensure that there is a marked improvement in the quality of new buildings, many of which over the last 30 years have been of little architectural or design interest. Similarly, the Core Strategy and supporting documents need to ensure the urban design of new development areas take a good practice approach to design and securing sustainability benefits from development. This includes places that:
- feel safer and are safer
 - encourage walking
 - support healthy lifestyle choices
 - enable community interaction
 - help make efficient use of energy
 - incorporate green infrastructure.
- 13.22 The Core Strategy policy CS34 puts in place the protection of heritage assets in the district. This is a positive policy that recognises potentially important local heritage assets and does not rely on national designations. This can have benefits for retaining community identity in North West Leicestershire through links to its economic history. The Core Strategy must be satisfied that it puts in place the policies to support a better quality built design, protects features of built heritage importance and protects areas of archaeology.

Development adjacent to Swadlincote

- 13.23 Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy allows for the expansion of the South Derbyshire town of Swadlincote into the district if necessary. The policy is positive as it allows for the sustainable expansion of this town to help meet its housing or employment needs. Achieving sustainable growth of towns that promotes self-containment and helps reduce the need and distance people travel does not relate to district boundaries. Therefore, this approach to work with South Derbyshire in helping deliver development of their town can have advantages for sustainable development. The expansion of Swadlincote into North West Leicestershire may have advantages for villages in the area, with possible improved access to central Swadlincote and the services available there.

- 13.24 However, development will need to ensure that it does not cause deterioration in the water quality or availability in the River Mease. Development should not be in the Packington Waste Water Treatment works catchment.

National Forest

- 13.25 As described above, the Core Strategy positively plans for the National Forest supporting work to increase woodland by 33%. The provision of new woodland provides great opportunities for biodiversity. It can help improve green infrastructure links which connect and link features of importance to biodiversity. It can also help protect and enhance the landscape and reduce the impact on climate change.

Areas of Separation

- 13.26 The Core Strategy proposes Areas of Separation to protect defined settlements from coalescence. Some areas are awaiting review in later stages of the Local Plan and a new site is designated at Coalville.
- 13.27 In terms of seeking more sustainable development these open spaces could often perform well as locations for growth. For example, they often have good access to shops and services and development and could be well integrated into the built environment. Therefore, any review of sites should ensure that their continued protection is not leading to development being offset into locations that offer less benefits for sustainable development, for social or environmental reasons.

River Mease SAC

- 13.28 The Council are currently working with Natural England, the Environment Agency, the water utility company and development industry to improve water quality of the River Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC). There are also plans to improve the sewerage treatment works, to enable the increased amount of development planned for the District up to 2031.
- 13.29 Making sure that there is sufficient capacity in the waste water infrastructure will be essential in maintaining or improving water quality. Without increasing the headroom capacity, it may not be possible to deliver the residential and non-residential development that meets the needs of affected settlements. This limits the overall development in the River Mease catchment and primarily in Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Measham.
- 13.30 The policy in place to protect the River Mease from harm will need to be fully implemented to avoid harm, and this may include preventing further development in Ashby-de-la-Zouch when it is shown waste water treatment capacity has been used up. This will include a moratorium on further development if adverse impacts are shown to be taking place the River Mease SAC or the treatment works are at capacity. In the longer term the policy may help deliver new treatment infrastructure to increase capacity from developer funding.

Infrastructure delivery

- 13.31 Provision of infrastructure to meet the needs of new residents and to avoid overstretching existing facilities and services is essential. Financial and other contributions will need to be secured in a consistent and just way in all relevant new development.

- 13.32 All types of infrastructure will need to be fully phased into development. This includes new social infrastructure such as schools, health centres, community centres, and also public transport improvements. Delivery of many of these types of facilities needs to be integrated into the earliest stages of large urban extensions to be in place prior to occupation. This may help build new communities, with new residents of large urban extensions identifying and using facilities in their local neighbourhood from the outset.
- 13.33 More detail on the need for specific infrastructure and deliver plans is included in section 14.

14 Sustainability appraisal – general issues

- 14.1 For sustainable development to be achieved in the manner desired by the Core Strategy policy must be clear and easy to implement. This is an essential part of creating a plan that is usable by development control officers and helps applicants submit a better quality planning application first time. Therefore, this section of the SA relates to issues of plan usability and implementation.

Coverage

- 14.2 In March 2012, well into the preparation period of the Core Strategy, national planning policy contained in multiple Planning Policy Statements and Guidance was replaced the single document National Planning Policy Framework. Also, the regional policy has less weight than when it was adopted due to the commitment of the current government to revoke this tier of the development plan. This means that local development plans, including the Core Strategy, need to be confident that there is the necessary policy coverage.
- 14.3 The SA of the North West Leicestershire Core Strategy identifies that there could be further coverage of some issues such as protection of the nature conservation value of the wider landscape. Features of a national or international importance will be protected by legislation. However, given that the district is characterised more by features of local significance, such as priority spites and habitats, it will be important the policies are in place to respect and protect these areas, as well as create new ones.

Clarity and certainty

- 14.4 For some policies there may be scope for wording changes or more detail in the supporting text to aid their implementation including ensuring policy is written clearly enough to ensure it can be refused if is not meeting desired design standards. An example is policy CS21: Well-designed buildings and places, which contains limited detail necessary to ensure that it is implemented successfully. It is essential that the Supplementary Planning Document that enables its implementation and the successful delivery of well-designed places. The place making principles are compatible with making better places. However, as it is so open to interpretation it is not clear how this policy would actively lead to better planning applications.
- 14.5 Similarly, policy CS28 is not clear on how it will be implemented and more detail on nature conservation protection should be included in the plan to ensure no significant adverse impacts.
- 14.6 An issue where there is very little detail relates to the role of Areas of Separation. These areas are re-designated 'Green Wedges', but the Core Strategy is not consistent on how development proposals in these areas will be controlled. For instance for Coalville and Ibstock areas the policy states that 'development would not be permitted which would result in physical separation' but this is not repeated for the Area of Separation at Castle Donington.

Undefined detail and evidence

- 14.7 Several of the policies refer to work that still needs to be completed or will be shown elsewhere in the development plan. This includes the review of Areas of Separation,

identification of settlement, retail and town centre boundaries. This can make it difficult for the SA to draw conclusions on the impacts of policies.

Fewer policies

- 14.8 The Core Strategy should be as succinct as possible covering issues in a concise way to ensure all users of the plan can find relevant policies and avoid potentially conflicting advice. Therefore, some policies of the plan could be combined and others removed.
- 14.9 Examples of where policies could be combined include in the spatial strategy, such as policies on rural development and controls on development in the countryside. Elements of policies CS7: Location of Development, CS19: Rural 'exception' sites for affordable housing and CS42: are very repetitive. To some extent elements of these policies are also repeated in CS8: Countryside and CS13: Rural economy.
- 14.10 Policy CS7 could be incorporated into other policies that cover largely the same issues, such as policies CS35 to CS42 relating to specific areas for development as well as the other 'rural' policies referred to above.
- 14.11 Other more straightforward combinations of policies may also shorten the plan, including CS2: District Employment Provision and CS10: Meeting the development needs of business. As well as Policy CS30: The National Forest and Policy CS31: Charnwood Forest Regional Park.

Implementation and delivery

- 14.12 In order to successfully deliver development in the urban extensions Delivery and Implementation plans will need to be followed. In the Core Strategy the policies that cover urban extension sites in Coalville, Castle Donington, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Measham and Ibstock all include a list of infrastructure that the plan states will need to be provided as part of development. For some of the larger sites, such as in Coalville and Castle Donington delivery of this entire infrastructure may be possible based on financial viability. However, for other development areas very little development is left to be delivered, meaning delivery of all infrastructure requirements may not be possible.
- 14.13 Therefore, included in the Allocations part of the North West Leicestershire Plan will need to be an Implementation and Delivery plan for each site. This will need to set out:
- the priorities for delivering new infrastructure, for instance new schools, roads, or canal restoration
 - funding sources, including developer contributions
 - delivery partners, including developers and the Council.
- 14.14 Such a delivery plan will be essential in securing the maximum benefit to the district of delivering this quantity of new housing and achieving benefits for sustainable development. If these requirements are not clearly set out for developers at early stages that chances of their delivery are lessened as they will have not been factored in to development costs and land price. For this reason, the Core Strategy could make sure the list of infrastructure requirements set in policy is realistic and clearly indicates the priorities for delivery. An implementation and delivery plan does form one of the appendices to the Core Strategy.

However, at the time of the SA it was not available therefore the detail and value to sustainable development of this plan is not reported here.

15 Mitigation

- 15.1 The SEA Directive requires that consideration be given to how any significant impacts identified during the SA process could be mitigated.
- 15.2 Mitigation of the potential adverse impacts of the strategy can be achieved in a number of ways. Each policy in the policy appraisal matrices in Appendix 2 gives examples of how the potential adverse impacts of the policy could be mitigated against.
- 15.3 There are several ways mitigation of possible impacts can take place. These are shown in paragraphs 15.4 to 15.12.
- 15.4 **Implementing other planning policies** many potential impacts will be mitigated through the use of other policies including those of the Core Strategy and national policy. Parts of the North West Leicestershire Plan still under preparation will also have key role, including policies relating to allocations and the identification of other 'lines on maps'. This has a particular role to play in avoiding the adverse impacts from the quantity of development to be delivered through the strategy. Policies that will help mitigate impacts include those on natural environment protection, community infrastructure provision, design and flood control.
- 15.5 **Adjusting wording** to fine tune policy can help to implement successfully more sustainable development. This could include, clarifying or making wording less ambiguous or more positive for some policies to help deliver the desired policy output.
- 15.6 **Additional policies** could be included in the Core Strategy to mitigate impacts. With the changing in national policy guidance there may now be gaps in policy coverage for the district, especially relating to protection and enhancement on the natural and built environment.
- 15.7 Setting **requirements for developers** to show how they have addressed environmental and sustainability concerns through their development. This could include green travel plans, meeting sustainable construction criteria, infrastructure delivery and biodiversity enhancement and design and access statements. There may also be site-by-site planning application requirements including further ecological assessment, flood risk assessment and travel planning.
- 15.8 The Core Strategy refers to many **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)** that will be or have been prepared to support is to be written in to help implement many of the policies of the Core Strategy. These documents will provide the detail necessary to deliver development in a more sustainable way. These include SPD on:
- a Local Housing Needs
 - Education and Training
 - Urban Design
 - Climate Change and New Development
 - Open space, sports and recreation.

- 15.9 The **phased release** of housing and employment sites could help delivery of allocations to help secure sustainable development. There is also the need to ensure that social and physical infrastructure is phased into development, to make sure it is in place wherever possible. Delivering social infrastructure and setting in place sustainable travel choices from the outset are an important part of embedding community identity and sustainable lifestyles into development. This will help ensure that delivery of different land-uses are matched and facilities are in place as part of helping to make more sustainable communities and to help reduce reliance on car travel.
- 15.10 Up-to-date **Development Briefs** or **Masterplans** should be prepared for all of the larger development sites, or groups of small sites in the same area. These will help implement a cohesive development strategy for whole areas. This has greater potential to deliver high quality and sustainable development than a piecemeal approach. It should cover issues such as:
- design protocols and the layout of development
 - biodiversity protection or enhancement measures
 - the sustainable construction standards that should be met
 - the proportion of energy used on site that should be generated by on or near site renewables and low carbon targets
 - public transport, walking or cycling links between individual site elements.
- 15.11 The delivery of infrastructure improvements to mitigate some impacts, such as loss of public open space and public transport enhancement, will also be dependent on developer **contributions or obligations**. These will be used to deliver sustainability benefits associated with new development.
- 15.12 Implementation of **other strategies and plans** in the plan area, with will include measures such as the transport plan, tourism plans and the Plans of neighbouring local authorities. Other sections of the North West Leicestershire development plan will also have an essential role to play including site allocations and town centres plans.

16 Monitoring

- 16.1 There is a requirement for monitoring of the sustainability appraisal. This provides a check of the Core Strategy implementation on sustainable development. This will need to consider positive and negative impacts, triggering a review if necessary.
- 16.2 The specific requirements of the SEA Regulations on monitoring are to:
- 16.3 *“Monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation...with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage”.* (Regulation 17(1))
- 16.4 The sustainability framework is a good starting point for developing targets and indicators for monitoring. However, monitoring for the SA can be part of the wider monitoring process for the Core Strategy or North West Leicestershire Plan, using a subset of the overall monitoring objectives. The SEA Regulations specifically state that monitoring for SEA can be incorporated into other monitoring arrangements (Regulation 17(2)), and therefore it may be possible to combine with the annual monitoring proposals for the Core Strategy or whole development plan.
- 16.5 Monitoring need only begin once the plan has been adopted and implementation begun. Therefore, a monitoring framework for the SA need not be agreed until the final monitoring framework for the Core Strategy is in place.
- 16.6 For a successful Core Strategy monitoring framework the Council must ensure that the indicators they choose for monitoring are manageable, really measure the effects of the Local Plan implementation, and are matters over which the plan can have a direct influence. The indicators should also only address matters that are required through policy and not set indicators that exceed policy expectations.
- 16.7 In setting a monitoring framework for the Core Strategy or whole development plan the chosen indicators and targets need to be:
- **specific** – in that it relates to policy objectives, indicators used for the Core Strategy reflect what is set out in policy and strategy, and do not appear to be defining requirements that go beyond, or differ from, policy
 - **attributable** – monitoring the indicator must give results that can be directly related to the planning policies, and should not be issues that are influenced or more likely to be influenced by matters outside the control of the development plan as a whole
 - **measurable** – it must be the case that data or information can realistically be gathered on the indicators, including whether this is possible given time and resources. Indicators could be linked to data already been gathered by other bodies, besides the planning authority
 - **timescale** – the indicator must be capable of being monitored on a regular basis, usually annually, to be an effective part of a monitoring programme.

17 Summary and conclusions

- 17.1 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 includes:
- 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 many new housing developments are 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.
- 17.2 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.
- 17.3 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 17.14 to 17.29.

Spatial distribution of growth

- 17.4 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 plans.
- 17.5 The housing figure is not intended to be a maximum allowance. However, in order to deliver the strategy in a sustainable way there needs to be reasonable certainty that the preferred distribution of this growth will not be significantly exceeded or under-delivered in any one area. The reason for this is that the Core Strategy and the provisions it makes for infrastructure and the allocation of sites are based around these figures. So if development

happens in a way that is out of keeping with the strategy it could lead to unforeseen adverse impacts for sustainable development.

- 17.6 To achieve this in North West Leicestershire, there needs to be a step change in the locations where housing is being delivered. For instance, the rural housing requirement is largely taken up by existing commitments and completions. Therefore, tighter controls need to be put on development in these areas to help delivery objectives related to reduce car dependence.
- 17.7 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 that comes forward outside 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 delivery of the rural growth strategy, see paragraph 7.8 to 7.30.

Urban capacity

- 17.8 The Core Strategy allocates all of the residual 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 role of the existing urban area in delivery of development and also the role that urban development can have in regeneration and renewal. The exception is Kegworth where all remaining development is directed within the urban area although, as with the policies for the other settlements, there is no detail on how or where urban development will be delivered.
- 17.9 The Core Strategy needs to recognise the contribution for development within settlements. This is essential to ensure:
- the efficient use of land and ensure only 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

- 17.10 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 as most residents rely on their cars to get to work and meet most day-to-day needs. Many new homes are occupied by people who travel outside the villages for work and also may meet many of their other needs outside these areas, not necessarily supporting rural services.
- 17.11 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, plus exception sites on village boundaries.

Therefore, there remains a risk that the Core Strategy may not be able to substantially reduce village housing growth.

- 17.12 Keeping these policies under review should allow for changes to be made to the Local Plan to reduce rural development if it is found to be necessary. This could include reducing the number of villages where development is permitted.
- 17.13 Development in rural locations that does take place should primarily be to meet local needs only and include some affordable homes. However, the price of driving is only likely to increase, making it less affordable for everyone but 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

- 17.14 The Core Strategy helps in setting a pattern of development that helps economic growth and could improve future residents' access to jobs. The aim is to help people live nearer to the place 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.
- 17.15 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

- 17.16 The Council officers have 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 that would help to deliver sustainable development.
- 17.17 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 against.
- 17.18 The SA of site has also shown that some alternative sites may have benefits for 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.
- 17.19 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

- 17.20 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.
- 17.21 To avoid adverse impacts on the nature conservation site, 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.
- 17.22 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

- 17.23 The sustainability appraisal identifies that airport expansion and increased number of flights would have adverse environmental sustainability 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 noise pollution.
- 17.24 The Core Strategy also contains several proposals for road and junction improvements, including some national proposals that are beyond the scope of the Local 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 speed up travel times. However, over time the number of cars will increase to fill 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

- 17.25 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 take 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 be 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 area in place prior to occupation.

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

Infrastructure

17.27 To help deliver the infrastructure that will contribute to sustainable development an 'Implementation and Delivery' plans will be prepared. These plans could be part of the Core Strategy or allocations document. The purpose would provide certainty to developers on what will be expected from development so that it can be used in financial viability calculations and therefore help to deliver the infrastructure necessary to achieve more sustainable development. The delivery plan would need to show infrastructure delivery priorities for each site and the source of funding.

Implementation of policy

17.28 For sustainable development to be achieved policies need to be clearly written, so all those who will 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 the rural area and 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 make them a better basis for negotiation.

Policy wording

17.29 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.