AECOM

Sefton Council ⛫

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the
Sefton Local Plan

Non-Technical Summary
August 2015

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This document is the non-technical summary of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Sefton Local Plan. It summarises how the sustainability appraisal has been carried out, the main findings and the next steps.

Sefton Council has been preparing a Local Plan document which, when adopted, will set the framework for future development across Sefton and will replace the current policies of the Unitary Development Plan.

The Local Plan document includes:

- an overall vision which sets out how Sefton will develop
- strategic objectives for the area focussing on key issues
- a delivery strategy for achieving these objectives, setting out how much development is intended to happen, where and when
- locations for strategic development
- evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed
- arrangements for managing and monitoring the delivery of the strategy.

Sustainability appraisal is a process that has been carried out as an integral part of developing the Local Plan with the aim of promoting sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations. It is required by government through legislation and is subject to the same level of public consultation and scrutiny as the Local Plan.

AECOM is commissioned to undertake Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the Sefton Local Plan.

2. THE STAGES OF SA

SA can be viewed as a four stage process, as illustrated in the figure below. This non-technical document summarises the key tasks undertaken at each stage and the outcomes of the appraisal process. Detailed technical findings and methodologies are presented in the full SA Report.
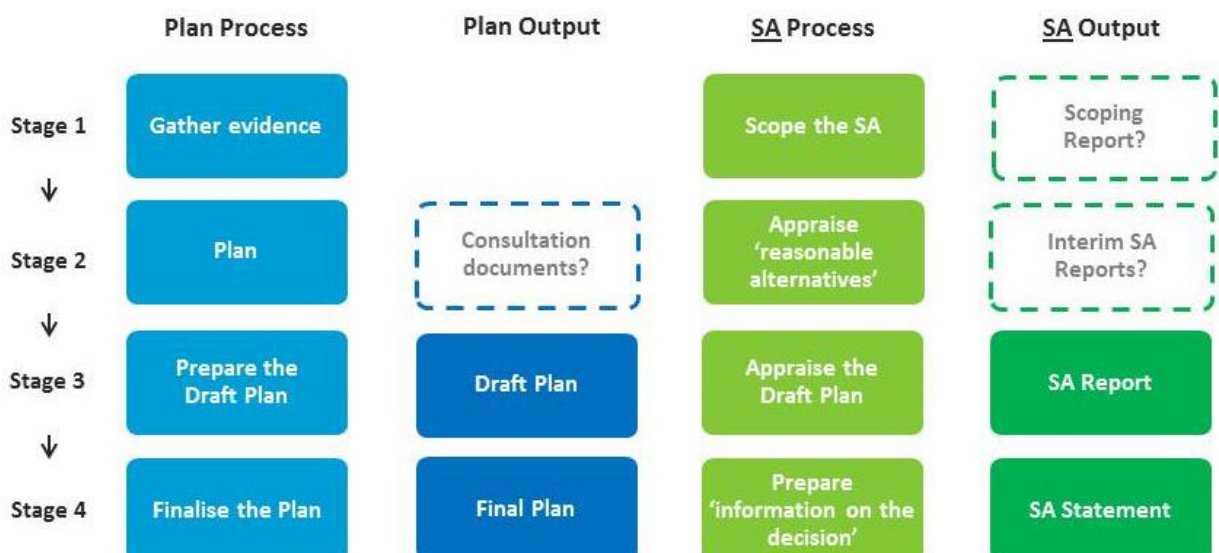
3. STAGE 1 - WHAT'S THE SCOPE OF THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL?

In essence, scoping is the process of gathering information about the area and the factors likely to be affected by the Local Plan. This information helps to identify what the key issues are and which of these should be the focus of the SA process. This stage involves several tasks as outlined below.

Presenting information about the Plan area

It is important to provide a general overview of the extent and characteristics of the area that is likely to be affected by the Plan.

Contextual review / policy framework

It is necessary to undertake a review of international, national, regional and local policies, plans and programmes to set the context for the Sustainability Appraisal. This task helps to identify any environmental protection / sustainability objectives that the SA should seek to support. Of particular importance is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which provides high level support for sustainable development.

The current and projected baseline

Another important step when seeking to establish the 'scope' of an SA involves reviewing the current state of the environment for a range of sustainability topics. Doing so helps to enable identification of those key sustainability topics that should be a particular focus of the appraisal, and also helps to provide 'benchmarks' for the appraisal of significant effects. The key issues for Sefton are described below.

Identification of key issues

Drawing on the contextual review and baseline information, a range of sustainability issues were identified that should be a focus of SA. These sustainability issues are listed below, presented under a series of broad 'sustainability themes'.

Economy
High levels of unemployment in Sefton, particularly in wards in South Sefton and amongst younger people. Lack of suitable skills and a need to match skills to jobs.
Over reliance on the public sector for jobs making Sefton susceptible to cuts in public sector spending. Fewer jobs per population than many other areas. Lack of land for employment development.
Local Centres
Many of Sefton's local and district centres are currently struggling with high vacancy rates and a poor range of services and shops.

Communities

There are inequalities between many parts of Sefton, with many areas, particularly in south Sefton, identified as areas of deprivation. Many areas are in need of regeneration, in terms of the physical environment but also social and economical too.

Crime and the fear of crime are major obstacles in the regeneration of local neighbourhoods. Crime in some wards is much higher than in others.

There is a lot of scope to improve the way people engage with the plan making process and become more involved with the decision making process overall.

Housing

There is a high affordable housing need in many parts of the borough. Many areas of Sefton have a lack of choice in the variety of homes, in terms of size, tenure and quality.

Accessibility

There are some areas, communities and groups of people that have restricted access to services and facilities. Sefton's population has decreased over the past 30 to 40 years, resulting in many services being closed or put under pressure. Sefton has an older population than many other parts of the region putting pressure on services. Despite good public transport links, many people still choose to travel by car for commuting. This adds to congestion on many of Sefton's roads.

Health and wellbeing

There are inequalities in health [including mental health] between different parts of the borough. Sefton has high levels of obesity and many people lead inactive lifestyles.

Climate change and resource use

Climate change action should be taken at the local level. Although carbon dioxide emissions have been decreasing in recent years, more work is needed to meet the government's commitments.

The perception with many residents is that infrastructure provision has not kept up with past development and that this has caused problems with drains, roads, power supply etc. Many types of existing infrastructure are at capacity, need upgrading and would struggle with additional development.

The amount of waste recycled in Sefton has increased significantly in recent years. However, Councils must continue to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. Energy use has decreased in recent times and should continue to do so in the future.

Flooding

Large areas of Sefton are at risk from flooding. Surface water flooding is also an issue in many parts of Sefton.

Environmental quality
Many parts of Sefton's countryside is considered grade best and most versatile agricultural land.

There is legacy of heavy industry in Sefton with many areas having suspected high levels of contamination. There are a number of Air Quality Management Areas in Sefton. The water quality of Sefton's rivers needs improving.

Planning should encourage effective use of land by using land that has been previously developed. There are high levels of vacant homes in some areas. |
| **Landscape** |
| Sefton has large areas of coast and countryside that provide many benefits. Many of these sites are under pressure from development and increased visitor numbers. |
| **Biodiversity** |
| Sefton has many areas with biodiversity and habitat value. |
| **Culture and Heritage** |
| Sefton has many heritage assets. Local heritage and culture help give people a sense of pride in their neighbourhood, helps to define the unique character of distinctive places and can play a big role in regenerating an area. In some instances there is a lack of information on the location and importance of our heritage assets.

Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. |

The SA Framework

The SA framework is used to predict and evaluate the social, economic and environmental effects of proposed options and policies being considered. It is important that the assessment process is practical and manageable.

The issues identified at the previous stages were used as a basis for establishing a series of sustainability objectives and supporting questions (*to aid the assessment process*) that together make up the Sustainability Appraisal Framework. This is essentially the tool that has been used to test the emerging Local Plan. This is set out on the tables below.

Sustainability Themes	SA Objectives	Supporting questions
Economy	1.Encourage economic growth and investment 2.Reduce unemployment and skills 5. Provide the required infrastructure to support growth.	Will the plan provide sufficient land for business development? Will the plan Support Seftons key employment sector (ports and tourism)? Will the plan help to diversify the local economy? Will the plan help to encourage investment within Sefton? Will the plan help to reduce the number of people out of work? Will the plan improve access to education and training? Will the plan help to retail and improve employment opportunities? Will the plan help match skills to Employment opportunities?
Local centres	3. Support the Rural Economy 4. Maintain vibrant town, local and village centres.	Will the plan protect farming and other established rural businesses? Will the plan help to diversify the rural economy Will the plan help rural residents to access employment? Will the plan prioritise retail, leisure or office development in and around existing town and local centres? Will the plan result in a significant loss of best and most versatile agricultural land? Will the plan encourage more people to use existing centres? Will the plan make centres more attractive to businesses, including shops, leisure and offices?
Communities	6. Reduce inequalities and social deprivation 7. Reduce crime and improve safety 11. Strengthen communities and help people to be involved in decision making.	Will the plan help to improve the conditions and prospects of people living in the most deprived areas? Will the plan help to support the regeneration priorities of the Council and its' partners? Will the plan help to reduce inequalities according to ethnicity, gender, age and other groups? Will the plan help to reduce crime and the fear of crime? Will the plan help to protect personal safety and reduce accidents? Will the plan help create and strengthen local communities that are diverse and stable? Will the plan encourage people to get involved in local decisions and become more active in their communities?
Housing	8. Meet Sefton's diverse housing needs	Will the plan help to meet Sefton's housing needs? Will the plan help to meet Sefton's affordable and specialist housing need? Will the plan provide a diverse choice of housing?
Accessibility	9. Provide better access to services and facilities, particularly by walking, cycling and public transport.	Will the plan promote a wider range of local services and facilities? Will the plan increase accessibility to existing services and facilities? Will the plan encourage use of sustainable travel? Will the plan improve links between areas?
Health and wellbeing	10. Provide environments that improve health and social care. 20. Provide a quality living environment.	Will the plan provide and protect areas than can be used for formal and informal recreation? Will the plan provide for environments that would help the mental health and wellbeing of residents? Will the plan ensure high levels of design? Will the plan help to create places where people choose to work and do business? Will the plan help to create attractive local neighbourhoods Will the plan help to foster a sense of civic pride and identity?

Sustainability Themes	SA Objectives	Supporting questions
Climate Change and resource use	12. Mitigate and adapt to climate change. 15. Reduce waste and the use of natural resources	Will the plan help to reduce carbon emissions? Will the plan reduce car use? Will the plan promote energy efficiency? Will the plan promote renewable energy production? Will the plan promote an increase in trees, open space and other green infrastructure? Will the plan reduce the amount of natural resources used (energy, water, minerals)? Will the plan help reduce waste and promote recycling?
Flooding	13. Reduce the risk from flooding	Will the plan reduce the risk from flooding to existing homes and businesses? Will the plan ensure new development is built in areas with low flood risk? Will the plan help reduce surface water flooding?
Environmental quality	14. Reduce pollution 17. Bring back into use derelict and underused land and buildings.	Will the plan help reduce air pollution? Will the plan help reduce water pollution? Will the plan help reduce soil pollution? Will the plan help reduce noise pollution? Will the plan help reduce light pollution? Will the plan help bring back into use previously developed land? Will the plan help bring back into use vacant buildings? Will the plan encourage the remediation of contaminated land?
Landscape	16. Protect Sefton's valued landscape, coast and countryside	Will the plan help to protect and enhance areas valued for its landscape, including Sefton's coast and countryside? Will the plan restrict inappropriate development in areas valued for its landscape (including areas of coastal change)?
Biodiversity	18. Protect and enhance biodiversity	Will the plan help protect and enhance existing areas of biodiversity value? Will the plan create new areas of biodiversity value?
Culture and Heritage	19. Protect and enhance Sefton's culture and heritage	Will the plan preserve or enhance Sefton's cultural and heritage assets? Does the plan provide sufficient opportunity and encouragement for regeneration activity and improvements to cultural heritage?

At an early stage in the plan making process we compared the draft vision and objectives for the Local Plan against the sustainability appraisal objectives to ensure that they were broadly compatible.

As the vision is by definition, an aspirational statement, it is unsurprising that it generally scores well in sustainability terms. However it was concluded that the part of the Vision that may potentially cause conflict in sustainability terms are the sections that address growth. These potentially could be in conflict with a number of environmental focused SA Objectives.   However, the vision does try to balance the need for growth with that of protecting the best elements of Sefton's environment.

14 draft Strategic Objectives where proposed setting out how the Council intended to achieve the vision. These cover a range of issues and provide the framework for preparing the Local Plan policies.

As with the Vision there are a number of Local Plan objectives that may be considered in potential conflict with the Sustainability Objectives. This is inevitable for a plan that has such a wide remit. The areas that could be considered conflicting are generally those objectives that promote development and growth (both in terms of jobs and homes) with those that seek to protect the environment and reduce climate change.

Economic growth and an increase in population will use more energy, generate more car journeys, require resources for new buildings and infrastructure and emit more carbon. The land required for this growth could also put pressure on land that has current value for recreation, flood alleviation, nature and agriculture.

The Local Plan objective that seeks to maximise the value of the Port has a number of potential areas of conflict, primarily due to the expected increase in traffic and industrial processes that currently occur at the port. This has had a negative impact in recent years on the local population (i.e. the Bootle and Seaforth areas) and the viewpoint will be that these problems could be exacerbated.

4. STAGE 2 - IDENTIFYING REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES

A key requirement of the Sustainability Appraisal process is test reasonable alternatives, taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan. It is also a requirement to subject each of the reasonable alternatives to the same level of scrutiny as each other. For the Local Plan it has been determined that the key alternatives that could be considered were in terms of the level of housing and employment land. There was also some scope, within the level of housing and employment growth, on the distribution of new homes and employment land.

Alternatives to the spatial strategy

The choice of a broad approach to housing and employment growth and distribution is one of the most important decisions made through the Local Plan. Hence, it is important that the Council's preferred approach is justified by a robust evidence-base. In light of this, it was considered important to subject alternative approaches of delivery to Sustainability Appraisal.

In 2011 three options were considered and consulted on for the Sefton Local Plan [then known as the Core Strategy], based upon the level of development [housing and employment] proposed. As the Local Plan progressed, more studies were carried out in a range of areas, including a review of the housing requirement, and an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Independent consultants, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners [NLP], carried out an updated assessment of the housing requirement for Sefton in 2014 and this updated work now underpins the Publication Draft Plan. A range of scenarios were tested by NLP as part of the housing requirement modelling. At the higher end of this range, the scenarios were employment led, assuming a high level of net in- migration and therefore Sefton would also be meeting housing needs from outside the Housing Market Area.

Whilst it is possible to appraise a large amount of options it is difficult to differentiate between them at a strategic level. Therefore, a list of five distinct alternatives [with a number of sub-alternatives] have been appraised. These are based on housing scenarios from the NLP study and have a suitable employment requirement based on the most recent Employment Land and Premises Study.

The table below describes 8 distinct approaches that have been identified, as 'reasonable alternatives' for the purposes of the SA. The assumptions and rationale behind each of these alternatives is provided.

The distribution of homes and employment land is influenced and constrained by the amount of available land. Therefore, whilst it may have been possible to focus development in one area but not others at lower levels of growth; at higher levels of growth the choice of where to focus development becomes more limited.

Alternative		Why was this alternative considered?
1	**Urban Containment** • 6,309 dwellings • 58.4 hectares of employment land • Development would be refined to the existing settlement boundaries.	This alternative illustrates the effects of an approach that seeks to protect Green Belt land from development. Despite the fact that this would not meet objectively assessed housing needs (*and could therefore be considered unreasonable*), consultation responses highlight that there would be strong community support for this approach.
2a	**Household projections dispersed across Sefton** • 9,171 dwellings – 420dpa • 76 hectares of employment land	These options use the CLG household projections as the basis for objectively assessed needs. Whilst these options do not strictly meet the full objectively assessed needs they do provide a good comparator for appraisal purposes. These options are also likely to have an amount of support with residents who can clearly see a link with official data and what Sefton should plan for. The options for dispersal are considered the options for meeting needs in different locations based on knowledge of available land, constraints and developer intentions. These options use the employment land requirement as advocated by the Employment Land and Premises Study.
2b	**Household projections with a South Sefton focus** • 9,171 dwellings – 420dpa • 76 hectares of employment land	
2c	**Household projections with a North Sefton focus** • 9,171 dwellings – 420dpa • 76 hectares of employment land	
3a	**Objectively Assessed Need dispersed across Sefton** • 11,624 dwellings – 615dpa • 76 hectares of employment land	These options use the housing figure recommended by consultants NLP in their assessment of housing need. Their assessments takes account of the latest published demographic data, including the 2011 Census and the 2012 based population projections, and has sought to anticipate some key aspects of the anticipated household projections. The options for dispersal are considered the options for meeting needs in different locations based on knowledge of available land, constraints and developer intentions. These options use the employment land requirement as advocated by the Employment Land and Premises Study.
3b	**Objectively Assessed Need focus in South Sefton** • 11,624 dwellings – 615dpa • 76 hectares of employment land	
4	**Objectively Assessed Needs higher forecast** • 15,120 dwellings – 800dpa • 76 hectares of employment land • Not possible to focus growth in any one area as a higher number sites would be required. (i.e. would require comprehensive development throughout Sefton).	This option is based on the higher level of household growth from a range suggested by consultants NLP in their assessment of housing requirement for Sefton. This higher level is linked to an economic growth scenario. The level of homes required would restrict the options for geographic dispersal to across Sefton only. Based on knowledge of available land, constraints and developer intentions it is not possible to meet a majority of the need in one settlement/broad location. This option uses the employment land requirement as advocated by the Employment Land and Premises Study.
5	**Growth based upon Experian job forecast** • Higher end of the OAHN. • 21,206 dwellings – 1,122dpa • 6086 dwellings would need to be met outside of Sefton. • 76 hectares of employment land + 25hectares outside of Sefton. • Not possible to focus growth in any one area as a higher number sites would be required.	This housing option is predicated on matching homes to Experian Job Growth forecasts. This results in much higher housing requirement than other options. As with the previous option it would not be possible to meet this need in one settlement/broad location. This option uses the employment land requirement as advocated by the Employment Land and Premises Study with an additional 25 hectares to support the additional job growth.

Additional Site for Port Logistics

Peel Holdings have proposed a large site [48ha, for approx 1 million sq ft net floor space] between Maghull and Aintree/Melling for logistics operations to support growth arising from investment in the port of Liverpool and wider super port initiative. This land is not proposed for employment uses as considered in the Employment Land and Premises and as such the site is not proposed to meet any of this need.

It is possible to include the proposal for a Port Logistics site as a separate element of each the options above [except for option one which seeks urban containment, i.e. no Green Belt loss]. Therefore, this has been tested as a 'policy off' and 'policy on' for options 2 to 5 above.

Have any alternatives been considered that were deemed 'unreasonable'?

The Council considers that the geography of Sefton, including the number of environmental constraints and designations, make it unreasonable for the consideration of a new stand-alone settlement in Sefton [i.e. in the Green Belt].

Appraising the reasonable alternatives

For each of the alternatives, the appraisal identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' when appraised against the sustainability objectives or issues. Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high level nature of the alternatives under consideration.

Significant Positive effects are illustrated in the tables with green shading next to the relative alternatives. Significant negative effects are illustrated with red shading.

In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on the merits of alternatives in more general terms. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'.

The following symbols have been used to identify the broad implications of the alternatives against the SA objectives. In some instances there could be both a positive and negative effect recorded, which reflects the fact that the alternatives could have positive effects in some areas, but negative effects elsewhere.

⇧   Broadly positive effects   ⇩   Broadly negative effects

?   Uncertain effect   -   Negligible effects

The overall results of the appraisal of the alternatives is set out in the table below, with commentary following in the subsequent section.

Summary of appraisal findings	Economy	Local Centres	Communities	Housing	Accessibility	Heath and Wellbeing	Climate Change	Flooding	Environmental Quality	Landscape	Biodiversity	Heritage
Alternative 1) Urban Containment	⬆⬇	⬆	(red) ⬆	(red)	-	⬆	-	-	-	(green)	-	-
Alternative 2a) Household projections dispersed across Sefton	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬇	-	⬇⬆	-	?	⬇⬆	-	⬇	?
Alternative 2a) with port logistics	(green)	⬇⬆	(green)	(red)	⬇	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇
Alternative 2b) Household projections with a South Sefton focus	⬆	⬇⬆	⬆	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇⬆	-	?	⬇⬆	-	⬇	?
Alternative 2b) with port logistics	(green)	⬇⬆	(green)	(red) ⬆	(red)	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇
Alternative 2c) Household projections with a North Sefton focus	⬆	⬇⬆	⬆	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇⬆	-	?	⬇⬆	-	⬇	?
Alternative 2c) with port logistics	(green)	⬇⬆	(green)	(red) ⬆	(red)	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇
Alternative 3a) Objectively Assessed Need dispersed across Sefton	?	⬇⬆	(green)	(green)	⬇	⬇⬆	-	?	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇	?
Alternative 3a) with port logistics	(green)	⬇⬆	(green)	⬆	(red)	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇
Alternative 3b) Objectively Assessed Need focus in south Sefton	?	⬇⬆	⬇	(green) ⬇	⬇	⬇⬆	-	?	⬇⬆	(red)	⬇	⬇
Alternative 3b) with port logistics	(green)	⬇⬆	⬇	⬇⬆	(red)	(red) ⬆	⬇	⬇	(green) ⬆	(red)	⬇	⬇
Alternative 4) Objectively Assessed Needs higher forecast	?	⬇⬆	(red) ⬆	(green) ⬇	(red)	(red) ⬆	⬇	⬇	(red)	(red)	(red)	⬇
Alternative 4) with port logistics	(green)	⬇⬆	(green)(red)	(red) ⬇	(red)	⬆	(red)	⬇	(red)	(red)	(red)	⬇
Alternative 5) Growth based upon Experian job forecast	?	⬇⬆	(red) ⬆	(green) ⬇	(red)	⬆	⬇	⬇	(red)	(red)	(red)	⬇
Alternative 5) with port logistics	(green)	⬇⬆	(green)	(red) ⬇	(red)	(red) ⬆	(red)	⬇	(red)	(red)	(red)	⬇

Overall, it is clear that alternatives 4 and 5 are the least 'sustainable' approaches. Whilst planning for a high level of growth would help to stabilise the economy and would deliver a significant amount of affordable housing, there would be significant effects on environmental factors such as biodiversity, landscape and agricultural land. Furthermore, this level of growth could put significant pressure on social infrastructure and road networks that might be difficult to mitigate.

Alternative 1 is positive in some respects as it represents the community wishes and would best protect environmental assets. However, this scenario would fall well short of meeting housing need, which would have significant negative effects on housing, regeneration and the recovery of the economy.

Alternatives 2a, 2b and 2c, would have mixed effects. There would only be partial release of Green Belt at the least sensitive sites, which would help to protect the environment. Planning to meet a higher level of growth (than alternative 1) would have some positive effects in terms of housing, regeneration and economy, but the effects would not be significant, as housing needs would not be fully met. Although these options could help to support infrastructure improvements, it is unclear whether the level of development would be adequate to support the upgrades required (for example to the road networks).

Alternatives 3a and 3b are considered to be the most 'sustainable' approaches overall. Aside from the potential for adverse effects on landscape and accessibility (through increased traffic), the effects of these alternatives upon the environment are not considered to be much different compared to the level of growth proposed under alternatives 2a, 2b and 2c. However, alternatives 3a and 3b would meet objectively assessed housing needs, which would have a significant positive effect on the local economy, community development and regeneration.

It is considered that 3a performs slightly more favourably compared to 3b. Whilst the effects would be very similar across the majority of SA objectives, it is considered that 3b has the potential for greater adverse effects on landscape due to cumulative effects of development around Maghull. Focusing development in the south of the borough may also be less suitable to help tackle affordable housing issues where they are more acute and would put pressure on transport networks in a particularly constrained area (although contributions to infrastructure upgrades could help to mitigate this).

Summary / Comparison (With port logistics)

The inclusion of the proposed site for port logistics would generally (i.e. for each scenario) have a more negative effect on the baseline position in terms of environmental factors such as landscape, biodiversity, heritage and environmental quality. This is mainly due to the loss of sensitive Green Belt land, loss of best and most versatile agricultural land and risk of flooding.

The inclusion of this site would also have a significant negative effect in terms of increased traffic and congestion in the South of the borough, which would be particularly problematic

when combined with alternatives 3b, 4 and 5. These effects would compound those that would already be anticipated as a result of increased housing and further employment growth.

Despite these effects, the inclusion of the site would have clear economic benefits, and would help to meet strategic employment needs. This level of development would bring significant investment into the Borough, which would have a significant positive effect on the Council's regeneration objectives. Notably, the site would be easily accessed by local communities, many of which fall within the 20% and 10% most deprived in the Country. It is also important to note though that the site would be likely to attract a significant amount of commuters from the wider area.

A significant increase in job growth would also mean that the higher end of the objectively assessed housing need was a more appropriate target for the Borough.   There would likely be an increased demand for housing locally, but it would be difficult to meet this need at lower levels of house building.   Under this scenario, alternatives 2a, 2b and 2c would therefore be likely to fall well short of the required housing need to match employment growth. Alternative 3a and 3b would also fall short of the required need (presuming that the Borough wanted to support local access to jobs rather than promoting significant increases in in-commuting), but to a lesser extent. With the inclusion of the port logistics site, alternatives 4 and 5 would be better placed to meet the likely increase in population growth/housing need. However, as discussed above, the environmental implications would be significant.

On balance, it is considered that the inclusion of the port logistics site (in addition to) the proposed level of employment growth under each alternative would be a less sustainable approach.

Why has the preferred approach been selected?

The Council's preferred approach to housing growth and distribution is presented within policies MN1 – MN7 in the Local Plan, and is broadly reflective of alternative 3a.

Policy MN1 sets out the housing target for the period 2012 – 2030 of the development of a minimum of 11,070 new homes in Sefton. These are broadly distributed across the Council. Policy MN1 also established the provision of a total of 84.5 ha of employment land within the plan period.

The Preferred Option was supported for a number of key reasons:

- it meets the Government's requirement to meeting needs, providing choice of homes and other economic development
- it will provide more opportunities for families and young people to meet their housing needs and access jobs
- it will enable significantly more affordable homes to be provided than at present
- at a time of severe cutbacks in public sector funding, the allocation of land for new homes may help to keep some existing local services viable because more people will live in a particular area

- it will also bring significant investment in new infrastructure which will be paid for through the development process
- this Option has the unanimous support of our adjoining local authorities. We have a legal 'duty to co-operate' on strategic planning matters so it is important that we work closely with and take note of the views of our neighbouring authorities
- this Option best matches past rates of development in the Borough - we have built an average of 470 dwellings in Sefton for the past 30 years
- It will identify the most sustainable green belt sites for development with fewest constraints – having regard to local constraints such as flood risk and ecological designations [see next section].
- It will ensure that best use is made of Sefton's assets – including for land in the urban area and the Green Belt
- It will enable, as far as possible, a spread of development across the Borough – meeting needs, in the main, where they arise
- It will deliver a new urban extension [at the east of Maghull], providing significant investment in local infrastructure, meeting needs in a sustainable mixed use development
- It will provide significant new local employment opportunities to help support the economy
- It will protect the heritage and environments of Sefton with detailed polices requiring high design standards in new development
- It is considered to be a deliverable option.

5. APPRAISAL OF STRATEGIC SITE OPTIONS

Why have alternatives been considered for this issue?

The preferred spatial strategy requires the development of (Green Belt) land / sites outside the urban areas for housing and employment. However, there are a number of strategic sites that could be identified in the Local Plan to support the spatial strategy. It is therefore important to ensure that the selection of sites / locations for development is informed by the consideration of sustainability factors.

Given the need to release Green Belt land for development (in addition to sites within the urban area), one of the starting points for identifying reasonable site options was to undertake a Green Belt Study.

A study was published in May 2011 which considered the whole of the Green Belt area as potentially being available for future development. However, the study concluded that significant areas should remain within the Green Belt for a number of critical reasons, namely that:

- The importance of the site in meeting the five purposes of the Green Belt.

- Whether the site contained critical constraints such as land with a high risk of flooding (flood zone 3) or designated nature conservation areas.

Following this initial sieving of unsuitable sites, the Green Belt study identified 46 Green Belt sites considered to have some potential for development. These sites were consulted on during May to August 2011.

These sites were first appraised through the SA process in 2013, and the findings of the site assessments at that time were presented in an Interim SA Report (July 2013).

Following consultation on the Preferred Options, the Council decided to reassess site options for housing and/or employment (some of which were not within the Green Belt) for a number of reasons; namely.
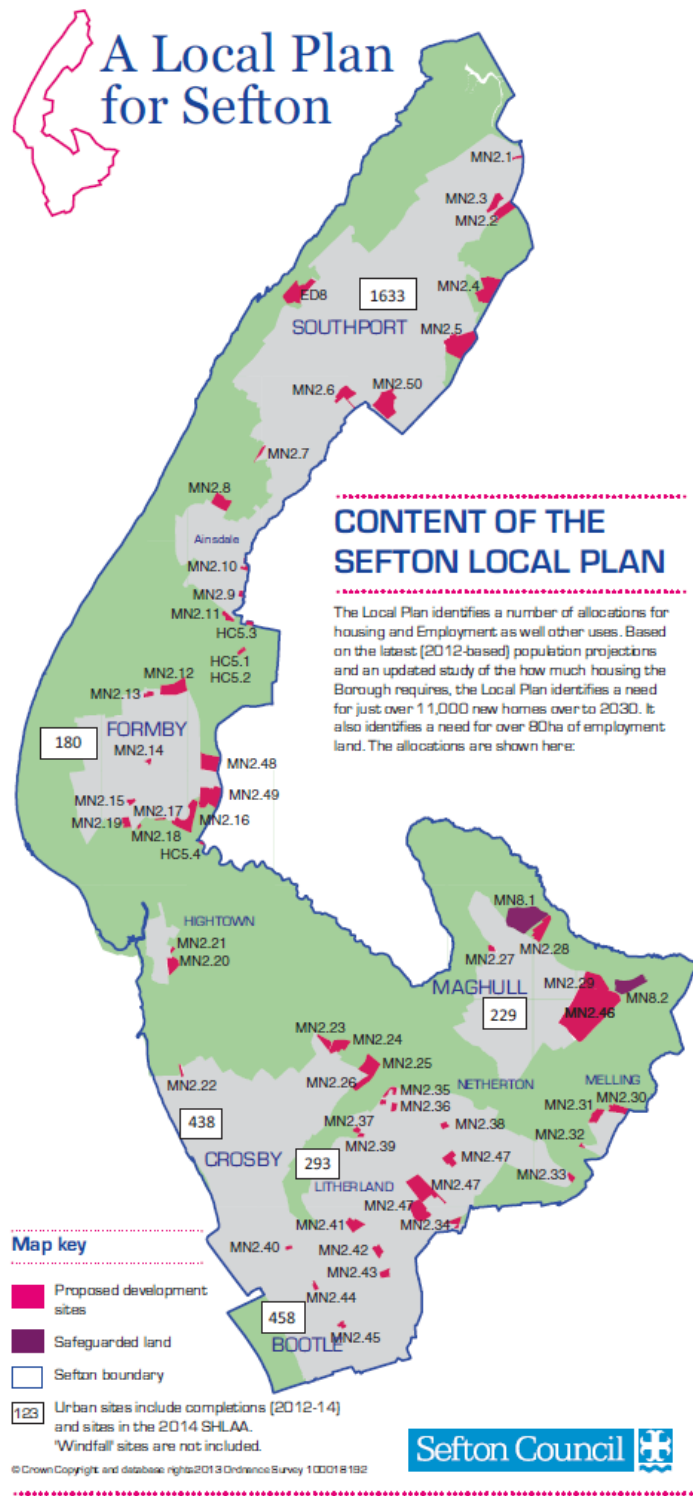
- To include additional sites thatwere put forward during consultation by landowners/developers/agents.

- To undertake a more robust, objective appraisal of the sites using an updated SA site appraisal framework.

- To account for updated information (e.g. relating to Environment Agency flood zones and other evidence commissioned by the Council on behalf of site promoters) and additional information received at 'Preferred Option' stage of Local Plan preparation and subsequently, and best practice from elsewhere.

The Council subsequently developed a detailed Site Selection Methodology that incorporated the requirements of sustainability appraisal. This methodology built upon the approach taken at preferred options stage. The detailed methodology can be found in the Local Plan Site Selection Methodology Report (see www.sefton.gov.uk/siteselection)

For the purposes of transparency the site assessment includes all the sites that were proposed at the options stage, preferred options stage and 'additional sites' proposed by developers. This assessment considers sites for housing, traveller pitches and employment

land.   This approach has identified a long list of 102 reasonable alternatives / site options for SA purposes. A proforma has been produced for every one of these site options considered through the SA process. Detailed reasons have been provided for each proforma as to why the site has been recommended for allocation or not. The detailed site appraisal findings can be found in the Local Plan Site Selection Methodology Report (see www.sefton.gov.uk/siteselection).

The map below identifies the sites that have been recommended for allocation in the Sefton Local Plan.

A Local Plan for Sefton

CONTENT OF THE SEFTON LOCAL PLAN

The Local Plan identifies a number of allocations for housing and Employment as well other uses. Based on the latest (2012-based) population projections and an updated study of the how much housing the Borough requires, the Local Plan identifies a need for just over 11,000 new homes over to 2030. It also identifies a need for over 80ha of employment land. The allocations are shown here:

Map key

- ■ Proposed development sites
- ■ Safeguarded land
- □ Sefton boundary
- 123 Urban sites include completions (2012-14) and sites in the 2014 SHLAA. 'Windfall' sites are not included.

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Sefton Council

6. STAGE 3 - APPRAISAL OF THE EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

A set of draft policies was presented in the Local Plan Preferred Options document; which were subject to sustainability appraisal. The findings of the SA were presented in an interim SA Report which was published for consultation alongside the Preferred Options Document in July 2013.

Recommendations presented within this interim SA Report were taken into consideration when policies were being finalised for the Pre- Submission version of the Local Plan. The key issues listed below were presented in the interim SA Report, stating that the Local Plan should:

- try to secure businesses that require large number of employees. Seek ways to improve access to new employment areas, particularly from deprived areas;

- seek to maximise the number of affordable homes that are provided;

- allocate land for new homes in areas that are most accessible, or are capable of being made accessible, by public transport, walking and cycling;

- set out the infrastructure improvements that are required and be clear how these will be provided and when;

- seek to encourage greater use of public transport to reduce the reliance on the car to offset any congestion, pollution etc;

- provide clear and strong design policies for all developments, with particular care to respect the character of existing local neighbourhoods, both in terms of the buildings and landscape;

- avoid areas with the greatest risk from flooding. Areas that have severe problems with surface water flooding should be avoided and uses as areas of open spaces as part of larger developers if suitable. Sustainable drainage systems should be used on site and any development should not increase the surface water run-off; *and*

- maximise sites in the urban areas so as to reduce the need to release land in the Green Belt'.

Following the Preferred Option stage the Council reviewed its emerging Local Plan policies to take account of comments made, the SA recommendations listed above and emerging planning guidance.   The final Local Plan policies, including both the strategic policies and detailed development management policies, were then appraised against the sustainability framework again.

The effects of the plan policies were considered both individually and taken as a whole, to identify the overall effects of the Local Plan on different aspects of sustainability. These appraisal findings are summarised in the tables that follow. A series of suggested monitoring indicators have also been included to show how the predicted significant effects of the Local Plan could be monitored.

Summary of impacts	Monitoring measures
Economy	
The Local Plan supports the growth of the local economy by providing attractive land for employment development. New jobs generated at these strategic locations are likely to be accessible to local communities, as well as those jobs created in the construction industry to deliver the required housing need. The development management policies are also likely to have a positive effect on the baseline by supporting the expansion of the Port of Liverpool, strengthening the role of town, district and local centres and facilitating regeneration activities in deprived areas. The plan also recognises the importance of the natural environment to the visitor economy and for the health and wellbeing of local residents. By helping to deliver a mix of housing appropriate to the needs of different areas, the plan will also help to ensure that residents can continue to live and work in Sefton; which is something that communities have expressed a desire for. Taking all these factors into account, the Local Plan is likely to have a **significant positive effect** on the economy.	− Land available for employment [ha] (type/location). − Floorspace developed by employment type/location. − Approvals in Port and Maritime zone. − Approvals in PIA by type. − Approvals in 'Tourism' areas listed, locations and type. − Approvals in Southport Seafront Area by type. − Unemployment rates.
Local Centres	
Through the spatial strategy and development management policies, the Local Plan will help to support the function and viability of town, district and village centres throughout Sefton. The majority of housing sites are well located in terms of access to services and facilities, which in part reflects the contained nature of the Borough. The Plan also seeks to improve linkages between areas, and provide new services and facilities where there is a need; such as at the urban extension at 'Land East of Maghull'. A small amount of housing development will be located in areas that are not ideally located in terms of access to a local centre on foot (*for example allocations MN2.20 and MN2.21 in Hightown have poor access to a primary school, GP and district centre*). On balance it is considered that there will be **neutral effect** on the baseline position.	− Amount of approved retail/office/leisure development in Sefton/designated centres − Approvals in Southport Central Area by type − Approvals in Crosby Centre by type − Vacancy rates in designated centres

Summary of impacts	Monitoring measures
Communities	
Sefton is a relatively affluent Borough, but there pockets of deprivation in areas such as Bootle and parts of Southport. The Local Plan strategy and supporting policies should help to tackle these issues by: • promoting regeneration and mixed-used development in or close to deprived communities; • allocating new land for high quality employment in accessible locations; *and* • meeting housing needs in settlements across the borough. The plan also seeks to promote town, district and local centres as focal points for community development, with a number of policies likely to contribute to the creation of safer environments with a strong identity. Although there is some community objection to meeting housing needs on Green Belt land, it is considered that (overall) the Local Plan would have a **significant positive effect** on Sefton's communities.	− No. of applications that affect an Asset of Community Value and the proportions refused/approved. − Approvals in Regeneration areas, by location and type.
Housing	
The Local Plan is likely to have a **significant positive effect** on housing by planning to meet Sefton's objectively assessed housing needs in appropriate locations. The Plan policies will also help to improve access to affordable and specialist needs housing, but allows a more relaxed approach in areas that are in need of regeneration. Along with a number of policies that allow flexibility in the delivery of housing (*provided that this leads to the creation of suitable residential environments)* on other land uses, this should ensure that the diverse housing needs of the Borough are delivered. As a large number of the allocated sites consist of greenfield land (*which have been modelled mainly as being viable including affordable housing requirements*[1]), the likelihood of the housing targets being met is considered to be fairly high.	− Net additional homes (total/on allocated sites). − Approvals in PRA that are not residential − Applications for conversions to HMOs and the proportions refused/approved. − Five year traveller pitch supply − Approvals for traveller pitches (permanent/transit) − Completions and Approvals for Affordable and Special Needs Housing by Type and Location − Number of homes by no. of bedrooms for market and affordable homes. − No. of older person homes

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[1] Sefton Council (December, 2014) Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy Economic Viability Study. www.sefton.gov.uk/media/461804/FINAL-SEFTON-REPORT-51214.pdf

Summary of impacts	Monitoring measures
Accessibility	
The Local Plan directs housing and employment development to areas that are mainly well served by facilities and transport links. However, it is likely that some development locations (*for example at the edge of settlements*) may promote a continuation of car use as the dominant mode of travel. For some groups, this may be exclusive. However, to minimise additional pressure on constrained road networks the spatial strategy spreads development somewhat across the key settlements in the borough. The Local Plan also outlines a series of transport schemes (Policy IN2) that will be prioritised as infrastructure improvements to help ensure that effective transport links can be maintained and secured over the plan period. A number of policies also seek to achieve a shift to more sustainable modes of travel, which appears to be a key feature of the Local Plan. This should help to promote social inclusion and tackle potential issues of congestion; particularly to the south of the Borough where the Port expansion could exacerbate existing problems. The plan also seeks to maintain key services and facilities and direct new development to key town, district and local centres. This should help to reduce the need to travel, and ensure that services are located in accessible locations. As discussed above, the Local Plan is likely to have mixed effects on accessibility. Although a growth in car travel is anticipated, this would be likely in the absence of the Local Plan. The Plan also seeks to support sustainable modes of transport, deliver infrastructure upgrades and provide new services and facilities for communities as part of new development and regeneration. Therefore, on balance, the effects are considered to be **neutral**.	− No. of transport assessments submitted. − % of development within appropriate (SPD) distance to bus stop; rail station; gp; primary school. − Levels of peak congestion. − Development contributions to infrastructure improvement schemes. − Travel to work by transport mode.
Health and wellbeing	
The Local Plan will help to create attractive places to live, work and visit; which will contribute to **significant positive effects** on health and wellbeing. It will achieve this by: • Protecting and enhancing the role of local centres. • Delivering regeneration and public realm improvements. • Delivering green infrastructure enhancements. • Securing upgrades to social and economy infrastructure such as roads and community facilities. • Protecting and enhancing built and natural assets.	− Area of new public open space /green infrastructure approved. − Approvals in Public Open Space and % inappropriate − Approvals of A3, A4 and A5 in designated centres; PRAs; within 400m of education establishment.

Summary of impacts	Monitoring measures
Climate Change and Resource Use	
The proposed level and distribution of housing and employment growth is likely to lead to a continued reliance upon car travel (and associate carbon emissions). However, the Local Plan should help to mitigate/offset this effect by supporting a modal shift to sustainable travel, maintaining the role of local centres and enhancing local access to jobs, services and facilities. The local plan also supports expansion of the Port, which will lead to an overall increase in carbon emissions in terms of increased HGV and car trips. However, a number of plan policies seek to mitigate these effects by achieving a shift to more sustainable modes of travel for residents, visitors and for freight movement. The Local Plan is likely to help reduce carbon emissions from new development by enabling future development on sites that remain viable when higher levels of energy efficiency and sustainable design are incorporated. Whilst the Plan does not identify specific opportunities for the development of low carbon energy schemes, it does require development to help facilitate the expansion or development of existing and committed schemes; which is likely to have a **significant positive effect** on the baseline. In terms of adaptation to climate change, the Local Plan is likely to have a positive effect by; seeking to locate development in areas at lower risk of flooding, increasing and enhancing the provision of green infrastructure, and protecting the natural environment.	− Carbon emissions by source. − Installed capacity of renewable and low carbon energy schemes (MW). − % of approved housing developments exceeding national standards for energy efficiency.
Flooding	
The majority of new development sites are at a low-risk of flooding. Some moderately constrained sites have been allocated, but mitigation measures ought to minimise flood risk and control potential increases in surface water run-off in these areas. This would be facilitated by site specific policies for strategic sites such as MN3, MN4, MN5 and MN6, and also through general plan policies (such as EQ8) that seek to: • manage and reduce flooding through the incorporation of SUDs into new developments; • protect and enhance open space and green infrastructure; *and* • Secure upgrades to flood management and drainage infrastructure. • Achieve a reduction in run-off rates and volumes by 20% on brownfield developments. On balance, it is considered that the Local Plan would have a **neutral effect** in terms of flooding.	− Approvals in Flood Zones 2 and 3 % inappropriate. − Number of approvals on larger development sites with details of SuDs proposed and type. − % of brownfield development (by area) achieving a 20% reduction in run-off rates. − Total of homes and businesses classed at risk from flooding.

Summary of impacts	Monitoring measures
Environmental Quality	
The distribution of housing and employment development proposed in the Local Plan could have mixed effects in terms of environmental quality. On one hand, housing would largely be developed in accessible areas; which could help to minimise emissions off NOx from car travel. Conversely, increased development in some area could exacerbate air quality issues by increasing traffic, particularly along routes into the City / the Ports. There would also be a notable loss of agricultural land, although this is not considered in the context of the rural economy. However, The Local Plan also has policy measures in place that seek to ensure that human health and environmental assets are not affected by pollution and the quality of the environment is improved; for example: - the Plan should help to bring vacant land and buildings back to use and remediate areas of contaminated land; - the use of SUDs should help to minimise negative effects and enhance positive effects on water quality; - the Plan should contribute towards enhanced walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure; *and* - policy EQ5 requires development to ensure that there will be no worsening of air pollution. On balance, it is considered that the Local Plan would have a largely neutral effect on environmental quality provided that suitable mitigation (as presented in the Local Plan) is secured. However some minor negative effects would be inevitable due to the irreversible loss of agricultural land.	- Area of new public open space approved. - Approvals in Public Open Space and % inappropriate. - Number of approvals on larger development sites with details of SuDs proposed and type. - Air quality at monitoring stations. - Water Framework Directive River Status. - Vacant home rate.

Summary of impacts	Monitoring measures
Landscape	
The Local Plan largely directs development away from the most sensitive areas of landscape along the coast and in the open countryside. Although there is the potential for some negative effects on landscape character on development sites (at the edge of settlements and around the Port of Liverpool in particular), the plan policies should ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are in place to minimise impacts. Therefore, the effects are not considered to be significant. In combination, the development management policies are likely to have a positive effect on wider areas of landscape and countryside by seeking to enhance the connectivity of green infrastructure in urban areas and to protect coastal and countryside areas from inappropriate development. • the Plan should help to bring vacant land and buildings back to use and remediate areas of contaminated land; • the use of SUDs should help to minimise negative effects and enhance positive effects on water quality; • the Plan should contribute towards enhanced walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure; *and* • policy EQ5 requires development to ensure that there will be no worsening of air pollution. On balance, it is considered that the Local Plan would have a largely neutral effect on environmental quality provided that suitable mitigation (as presented in the Local Plan) is secured. However some minor negative effects would be inevitable due to the irreversible loss of agricultural land.	− Approvals in the GB/safeguarded land and % inappropriate. − Area of new public open space /green infrastructure approved.
Biodiversity	
The Local Plan proposes to locate development land away from the coastal areas, as these are the most sensitive areas in terms of habitats and species conservation. However, development away from the coast still has the potential to affect wildlife due to the importance of non-designated habitats that support the designated sites and also offer alternative locations for recreation for local residents. There is also potential for increased disturbance to wildlife as a result of increased traffic, and visitor pressure due to a growing population and the growth of Port related activities. Although some allocated sites for housing and employment are within close proximity to designated wildlife sites, and / or thought to contain important (or protected) species, the Local Plan should help to ensure that these effects are mitigated. This would be achieved through site specific policies for some strategic sites, and through more general policies that seek to protect and enhance environmental quality (including biodiversity).	− Approvals in or adjacent to International, National and Local nature sites and % inappropriate. − Approvals in Nature Improvements Areas and % inappropriate. − Development requiring compensation and % with appropriate schemes secured.

Summary of impacts	Monitoring measures

Biodiversity *(Continued)*

The development management policies should also contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity by focusing on town, district and local centres for retail, jobs and recreation; thereby taking pressure away from the countryside and coastal areas.

The Plan also recognises the importance of biodiversity assets to the local visitor economy, which will help to ensure that development is not detrimental to the natural environment upon which many local economic activities are reliant upon.

On balance, it is considered that the effects on wildlife would be minor provided that suitable mitigation, enhancement and compensation are secured (*which the Plan seeks to achieve*). At this stage however, an **uncertain (negative) effect** has been recorded, as there is potential for cumulative adverse effects on wildlife, which cannot be ruled out.

Culture and Heritage

New development that is delivered within Sefton over the plan period could place additional pressure on existing areas historic value and open space by changing the setting within which heritage assets are located. However, the impacts on the historic environment would need to be established when determining planning applications for new development on the allocated sites.

Most of the sites allocated for development do not contain designated heritage features within the main body of the site, but some features are located adjacent to or on the boundary of the site. It is anticipated that mitigation measures would be capable of rectifying these potential issues though.   The cumulative effect of development is not thought to be significant, as development is spread somewhat across the Borough. Furthermore, the Local Plan policy measures also provide a strong approach to the protection and enhancement of natural and heritage assets, with a number of policies making it clear that development will not be acceptable unless it contributes positively to local character.

The plan policies are also likely to support viable town, district and local centres, which should offer opportunities to protect and enhance the built environment, and secure improvements to the public realm.

On balance, a neutral effect is anticipated, but further detailed assessment will be required for individual projects as they come forward.

Monitoring measures (Culture and Heritage):
- Densities in approvals for residential development (and % appropriate).
- Heritage indicators tbc

7. NEXT STAGES

The Local Plan was 'published' for consultation between 30th January and 27th March 2015 so that final representations could be made. The draft Sustainability Appraisal Report was also made available as part of this consultation.

Two comments were received about the SA Report, one from Historic England (formerly English Heritage) and one from a member of the community. In response to these comments, the SA Report was amended so that a significant positive effect on SA objective 14 (historic environment) was amended to be a <u>not significant</u> positive effect.

No changes were made to the Local Plan, and thus all other findings within the SA remained relevant and unchanged.

The Local Plan will now be 'Submitted' for consideration by an Independent Planning Inspector at Examination. The Inspector will then judge whether or not the Plan is 'sound'.

Assuming that the Inspector does not request that further work be undertaken in order to achieve soundness, it is expected that the Plan will be formally adopted by the end of 2015. At the time of adoption an SA 'Statement' must be published that sets out (amongst other things):

- How this SA findings and the views of consultees are reflected in the adopted Plan, *i.e. bringing the story of 'plan-making / SA up to this point' up to date; and*

- Measures <u>decided</u> concerning **monitoring**.

These documents will be made available at the relevant time.