

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

- 1.1. This report constitutes an ‘initial’ Sustainability Appraisal for South Cambridgeshire’s Local Plan Issues and Options Report.
- 1.2. Sustainability Appraisal is an integral part of the plan making process. This Initial Sustainability Report compliments the Issues and Options document, providing information and analysis of issues, details of how alternative approaches were identified (and why alternatives were not considered reasonable), and a comparison of the potential impacts of those alternative approaches.
- 1.3. The Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report should be read alongside, and considered to include, the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. This provides the context for the appraisal, and identifies issues of particular importance to the District that should be considered. In order to avoid repetition, where further information can be found in the Scoping Report it has been signposted in the Initial Sustainability Report.

The Purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.4. Section 39 (2) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that development plan documents are subject to Sustainability Appraisal. Sustainability Appraisal is a systematic process undertaken during the preparation of a plan or strategy. Its role is to assess the extent to which the emerging policies and proposals will help to achieve relevant environmental, social and economic objectives. In doing so, it provides an opportunity to consider ways in which the plan or strategy can contribute to improvements in environmental, social and economic conditions, as well as a means of identifying and addressing any adverse effects that draft policies and proposals might have.
- 1.5. The overall aim of the appraisal process is to help ensure that the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan makes an effective contribution to the pursuit of ‘sustainable development’. The most widely-used definition of this concept is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”¹. In the National Planning Policy Framework sustainable development is defined by the five principles as set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy: living within the planet’s environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsible.
- 1.6. Key features of the Sustainability Appraisal process are:
 - Collecting baseline information, including identifying issues of significance to an area
 - Identifying Sustainability Appraisal objectives
 - Identifying various policy options
 - Predicting the effects of the plan

¹ World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987.

- Consulting others on the plan policies
 - Monitoring the effects of implementing the plan or policies.
- 1.7. Further details on the process can be found in Chapter 2 of the sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

Links to Other Types of Assessment

- 1.8. There are a number of other assessments the Council is required to carry out of its plans, and others that are carried out as good practice. They include Strategic Environmental Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment, and Rural Proofing. The issues raised by these requirements have been identified through the Sustainability Scoping process, and integrated into the sustainability objectives that will be used to test the plan.
- 1.9. European Directive 2001/42/EC requires an 'Environmental Assessment' of plans and programmes prepared by public authorities that are likely to have a significant effect upon the environment. This process is referred to commonly as 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' (SEA). The Directive sets out a specific process that must be followed for the assessment of plans, but these requirements are fully incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal process, and the Government advises that they can be addressed simultaneously. An assessment of the requirements of the SEA regulations, and where they have been met up to this point in the Sustainability Appraisal is included in appendix 6 of this report.
- 1.10. Equalities issues have been addressed in the Sustainability Objectives, and are therefore considered in individual assessments. However, for completeness a summary assessment has been included in appendix 7.
- 1.11. The Habitats Directive Assessment examines whether plans would have any significant effects on European designated habitats. The Scoping report includes a section dedicated specifically to Habitats Regulations Assessment, which further explains the process, and provides information on the Natura 2000 sites in the District and surrounding area, their characteristics and current condition. The Initial Sustainability Appraisal includes a screening exercise, to identify any potential significant effects of options. This is included in appendix 8 of this report.
- 1.12. Further information on these other assessments is included in Section 3 of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

The Role and Purpose of the Local Plan

- 1.13. The Local plan will form part of the statutory development plan for South Cambridgeshire, and will replace a number of its existing plans.
- 1.14. The Local Plan will set the levels of employment and housing development that should be provided up to 2031 to best meet the needs of the area and a clear strategy for meeting development needs in the best way possible that protects the quality of life and existing and future residents. It will set policies to ensure that development is of high quality and will meet the challenges we

face with a changing climate. It will ensure that new development comes with the necessary schools, health facilities, shops, leisure facilities and open spaces that residents will need to provide them with a good quality of life.

- 1.15. The Plan aims to set a strong framework for new development to meet the needs of the area to 2031, and provide a clear statement for local residents, businesses, service providers and the development industry of what they can expect to happen in terms of change in the built and natural environment over the next couple of decades.
- 1.16. The proposed vision for the Local Plan is that, 'South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live and work in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment.'
- 1.17. The preparation of the Local Plan is influenced by other plans and programmes. Particularly significant is the National Planning Policy Framework, published in March 2012. This includes a 'presumption in favour or sustainable development', and it will be for the Local Plan to guide what is considered sustainable in the context of South Cambridgeshire.

Local Plan 'Issues and Options' Consultation

- 1.18. The first stage of producing a Local Plan is to consider the 'Issues and Options'. This document is not designed to put forward any firm proposals for development but instead sets out what the main issues are that face South Cambridgeshire and what options might exist to tackle those issues. The Issues and Options document sets out options for the level and location of growth, and options that could govern the form of development. It also identifies a range of potential site options for development.
- 1.19. It represents the first stage of public consultation, undertaken before a draft plan is prepared. Consultation is taking place from Thursday 12 July to Friday 28 September, with events for the public taking place across the district.
- 1.20. Further information can be found in the Local Plan Issues and Options Report itself.

Aim of the Initial Sustainability Report

- 1.21. The initial Sustainability Appraisal is published to support the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation. Its purpose has been to help identify reasonable alternative options that the plan could implement, and test them to identify the potential impacts and their relative sustainability.
- 1.22. The Initial Sustainability Report is being published for consultation alongside the issues and options report to provide the public and statutory bodies with an opportunity to express their opinions on it, and so that views can be considered before the Local Plan is drafted.

Who has carried out the assessment?

- 1.23. The assessment has been completed by officers of the Council, drawing in specialists to guide consideration of specific topics or issues. In particular in reviewing site options external views were sought from specialist stakeholders, such as County Council Highways and the Environment Agency, and from infrastructure providers such as Cambridge Water and Anglian Water.

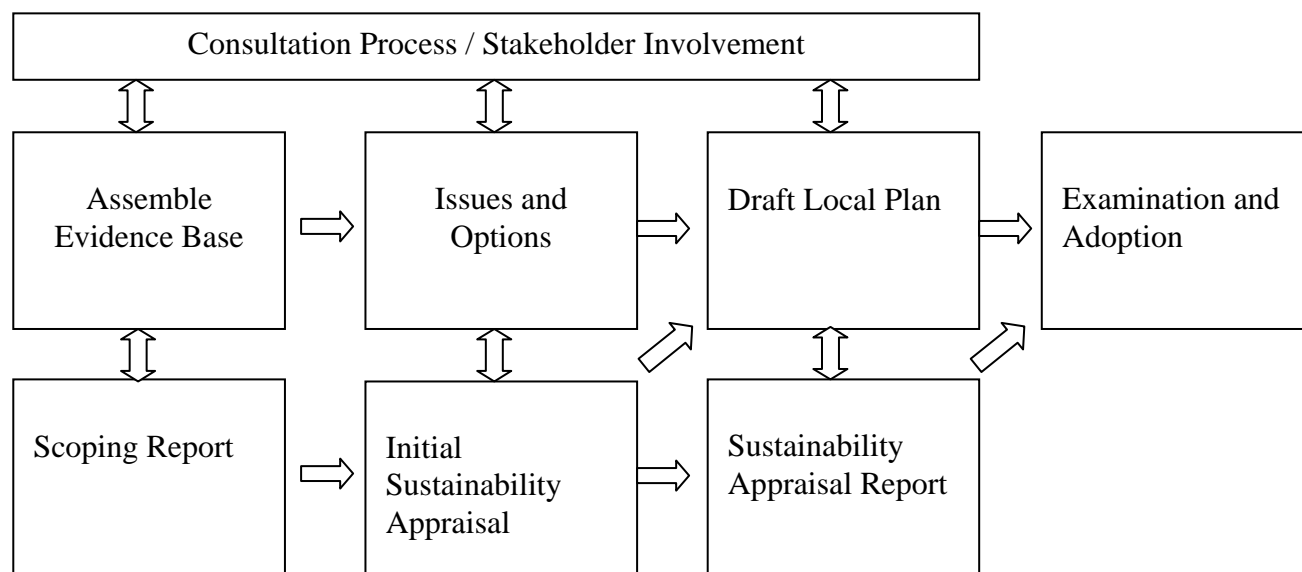
The Difference the process has made

- 1.24. South Cambridgeshire has tried to make the Sustainability Appraisal process as integral to the plan making process as possible. The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping process has been used to help identify issues and summarise the issues arising from the evidence base to support the plan making process.
- 1.25. The analysis and identification of alternatives process in this report has been used to provide the analysis and reasoned justification for options, and to develop the alternatives to be tested through the plan making process. The sustainability appraisal of the options has helped to identify any potential other alternatives, and whether options could be revised to be more sustainable. The appraisal has also been used as the key mechanism for testing sites identified as being potentially deliverable by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Chapter 2 – Scoping the Sustainability Appraisal

- 2.1. The Sustainability Appraisal process typically begins with a ‘Scoping’ stage, before an initial sustainability appraisal is completed to support consultation on issues and options. The actual Sustainability Report is completed to accompany the draft plan.

The Sustainability Appraisal Process and Plan Making



- 2.2. In order to fulfil the scoping stage the Council has produced a Scoping Report. It provides the context for the appraisal, and identifies issues of particular importance to the District that should be considered. South Cambridgeshire has tried to make the Sustainability Appraisal process as integral to the plan making process as possible. The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping process has been used to help identify issues and summarise the issues arising from the evidence base to support the plan making process.
- 2.3. Evidence in the Scoping Report has been framed around ten themes, which taken together address the full range of sustainability issues.

Sustainability Themes

Environmental	Social	Economic
Land	Health	Economic Activity
Pollution	Housing	Transport
Biodiversity	Inclusive Communities	
Landscape And Townscape		
Climate Change		

- 2.4. For each theme, issues are explored through the Scoping process outlined below:

The Scoping Process

What is the policy context?

Identifies the objectives and requirements of other plans policies and strategies ranging from national to local level that will influence development of the plan.

What is the situation now?

Existing characteristics of the district.

What will the situation be without the plan?

Considers what the district would be like if the Local Plan wasn't prepared.

What are the Key Sustainability Issues and Problems?

Identifies key sustainability issues for the district to be considered through plan making and the sustainability appraisal.

What are the Sustainability Objectives?

Using the sustainability issues identified above, establishes a framework for testing policies and proposals against.

What indicators will be used to monitor significant effects?

Considers what issues should be monitored in future to establish the actual impacts of the new plan.

Situation without the Plan

- 2.5. The sustainability Appraisal process requires consideration of the 'business-as-usual' scenario, what the situation would be like if the Local Plan was not prepared. This is not as straight forward as considering a 'no development' situation. Without the Local Plan development proposals would still be considered through planning applications, guided by National planning policy (the National Planning Policy Framework), and other legislation. Proposals would be considered on an adhoc basis, without the development plan to take a strategic overview of development needs, and opportunities for enhancement. The topic theme chapters in the Scoping Report explore the business as usual scenario in relation to the individual issues identified.
- 2.6. Summary of Situation without the Local Plan (for full information see Scoping Report Themes):
- Land - Opportunities may be lost to make best use of previously developed land, and support recycling.
 - Air Quality and pollution - would be addressed by national requirements and other regulations, but opportunities to address issues, strategically steer development, or seek higher levels of improvement may be lost.
 - Biodiversity - Designated sites will still be subject to protection and national planning policies will apply, but opportunities to promote improvement or guide development to the best areas at a strategic level would be lost.

- Landscape, Townscape and Heritage – National policy would still apply, opportunities to establish local guidance would be lost.
- Climate Change mitigation and adaptation - national planning policies and national building regulations standards would apply. Opportunities would be missed to consider mitigation and adaptation opportunities through local policies and development planning.
- Healthy Communities - Exact impacts are difficult to quantify, but without locally developed policies the opportunity to ensure health issues are properly addressed in planned growth and through redevelopment in existing areas may be missed. Response to aging population profile could be less comprehensive.
- Housing - Planning for the future provision of an appropriate level of housing is essential to support the local economy and without a plan it could be that housing is not delivered to meet the local housing needs and this could impact on the local economy. A high level of affordable housing need exists in the district, and without a plan lower levels of affordable housing may be achieved.
- Inclusive Communities - Without the Local Plan national planning policy, and the Council would still be bound by its duties under the Equality Act. However, without locally developed plans the Council would not be able to take into account the varied needs of the community as effectively. It would be able to provide less protection to village services, which could impact on rurality inequalities.
- Economic Activity – The Council would be less able to respond to needs generated by the economy. There would be less opportunities to respond to issues identified in the Cambridge Cluster at 50 study, regarding evolution of the high technology clusters. This could impact on achievement of economic growth.
- Transport – There are high volumes of traffic on some major routes in the district. Whilst development would increase the local population, delivery of homes near to jobs and infrastructure could reduce the need to travel and support sustainable modes. Opportunities could be lost without a strategic approach to development.

Sustainability Issues and Problems

- 2.7. The Scoping Report has identified a wide range of issues. For each the report summaries the key sustainability issues and problems.
- 2.8. A summary of the issues identified under each theme is set out below:

Summary of the Sustainability Issues and Problems Identified

Land & Soil

- Limited supply of available Previously Developed Land
- Significant areas of high-grade agricultural land.
- High recycling rates, but targets seek greater improvements.
- A variety of important minerals, including Sand and Gravel, worked extensively in the north of the district, and Chalk and Lower Greensand areas in the south.

Air Quality and Pollution

- Areas around A14 north of Cambridge, and the centre of Cambridge, are designated as Air Quality Management Areas.
- EU Water Framework Directive requires all inland and coastal waters to achieve 'good ecological status' by 2015 or, where this is not possible, by 2021 or 2027. 25 out of 30 river water bodies in the district are currently below this standard.
- Large area in the south of District designated as groundwater Source Protection Zone.
- Limited existing capacity at Sewage Treatment Works in some areas.
- Some parcels of land in the district are subject to land contamination, from varying sources.
- Existing noise sources in the district, including major roads network.
- Existing sources of light and odour pollution, including Sewage Treatment Works, roads etc.

Biodiversity

- Range of important biodiversity habitats and species, but high level of fragmentation.
- European Protected sites with the district (Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation) and nearby (including Ouse Washes to the north).
- SSSI, County Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland, and wildlife corridors all present in the district.
- Large parts of the district are deficient in accessible natural green space (according to Natural England's ANGSt analysis).

Landscape and Townscape

- Varied landscape comprising five distinct National Character Areas, erosion of landscape character has occurred in some areas.
- Around 25% of the district is designated as Green Belt.
- Settlements of varied and distinct local character, ranging from compact hamlets to larger villages with linear street patterns.
- Varied historic environment, including historic landscapes with archaeological features such as Fleam Dyke, Schedules Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas, and Listed Buildings.
- Need for good design to reflect local character.

Climate Change

- Need to consider climate change mitigation and adaption.
- Carbon emissions per capita higher than UK average, primarily as a result of road transport.

- Lower levels of renewable energy capacity than other districts in Cambridgeshire (excluding Cambridge)
- The District is in an area of Serious Water Stress as designated by the Environment Agency.
- Areas of the district are subject to flood risk from rivers and watercourses, or other sources such as surface water or groundwater.

Health Communities

- The “health” of people living in the district is generally significantly better than the average for England.
- Nationally, the District is one of the least deprived areas in the country.
- Gypsy and Traveller community, the District’s largest ethnic group, identified as having relatively poor health.
- South Cambridgeshire has an ageing population. The highest growth is expected to occur in the 65+ age group.
- Health services concentrated in larger settlements Only 21 settlements within the district have a doctor’s surgery or health centre within their boundaries.
- Many villages do not meet the Council’s existing sports and play space standards.
- Levels of crime are lower than the county average, but the fear of crime is disproportionately high when compared to the actual rate of crime, particularly in the younger and older populations.

Inclusive Communities - Housing

- High level of housing need in the district, some to support natural growth but mainly to support the successful economy.
- Need to plan housing in sustainable locations. Adopted plans shifted development patterns towards edge of Cambridge, the new town of Northstowe and larger villages.
- High house prices, and high house price for earnings ratio (7.4).
- High level of need for affordable housing (total net annual need for 1,372 affordable homes over the next 5 years).
- Prior to recent policies, delivery was primarily of larger homes, not reflecting needs analysis.
- Around 1% of housing stock in the Cambridge Sub-Region is vacant.
- Need for housing to meet specialist needs of elderly and disabled people, and for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

Inclusive Communities – Redressing Inequalities and Involving the Community

- The Council’s Single Equality Scheme 2011 provides useful information about different groups for which the Council has a duty to protect from discrimination, promote equality of opportunities and encourage good community relations.
- Rurality identified as particular issue, due to difficulties in accessing local services and facilities experienced by some rural communities. 56% of population live in villages without a Doctors surgery, primary school and food store.
- The percentage of people that feel they can influence local decisions is higher in South Cambs than the national average.

Economic Activity

- A diverse high value economy, with national strengths in Research and Development, high value manufacturing, and software consultancy.
- Unemployment Rate lower than national average, and median pay levels higher.
- The Cambridge area has proved relatively resilient of the impacts of the downturn.
- High tech clusters are evolving, and the area may not be getting the most out of the sector.
- Shortage of skilled workers in some sectors.
- Primary retail centres that serve the area are outside the district (Cambridge and Market towns).
- The district's (and sub-region's) growing economy and population will make substantial demands on infrastructure requiring investment.
- Despite policies protecting employment land in villages, evidence suggests that there continues to be a gradual loss of employment land in villages.

Transport

- High levels of congestion on radial routes into Cambridge at peak times.
- Increasing average commuting distances (10.2 miles in 2010 compared to 8.1 miles in 2009), 62% of journeys by car or van.
- Traffic density on Cambridgeshire's rural trunk 'A' roads (A14, A428, A11) is twice the national average, and is 40% above average on other rural 'A' roads. Traffic flow is 94% above the national average on rural trunk 'A' roads in Cambridgeshire and 40% on other rural main roads in the county.
- Good public transport services in larger villages, but limited services in many smaller villages away from transport corridors.
- Rate of death and serious injury per head of population in Cambridgeshire is 29% above the national average, although this primarily a result of volume of traffic travelling though on the major road network (casualties per km travelled is less than the national average) (Road Safety Monitoring Report 2010).
- Cycling levels higher than the national average.

Sustainability Objectives

- 2.9. In order to provide a framework for testing policies and proposals in a consistent and comparable manner, a set of sustainability objectives have been created, drawing on the key sustainability factors for South Cambridgeshire identified through the Scoping process. The objectives reflect desired environmental, social or economic outcomes, rather than measures that would assist in achieving those outcomes (they focus on the ends rather than the means). The sustainability objectives provide a series of prompts for drawing out the impacts of the different options. The assessment highlights differences in performance of the options against these objectives.

Sustainability Objectives

THEME	SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVE
LAND	Minimise the irreversible loss of undeveloped land, economic mineral reserves, and productive agricultural holdings, and the degradation / loss of soils

	Minimise waste production and support the reuse and recycling of waste products
POLLUTION	Improve air quality and minimise or mitigate against sources of environmental pollution
BIODIVERSITY	Avoid damage to designated sites and protected species
	Maintain and enhance the range and viability of characteristic habitats and species
	Improve opportunities for people to access and appreciate wildlife and green spaces
LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE	Maintain and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of landscape and townscape character
	Avoid damage to areas and sites designated for their historic interest, and protect their settings.
	Create places, spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look good
CLIMATE CHANGE	Minimise impacts on climate change (including greenhouse gas emissions)
	Reduce vulnerability to future climate change effects
HEALTH	Maintain and enhance human health
	Reduce and prevent crime and reduce fear of crime
	Improve the quantity and quality of publically accessible open space.
HOUSING	Ensure everyone has access to decent, appropriate and affordable housing
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES	Redress inequalities related to age, disability, gender, race, faith, location and income
	Improve the quality, range and accessibility of services and facilities (e.g. health, transport, education, training, leisure opportunities)
	Encourage and enable the active involvement of local people in community activities
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	Improve the efficiency, competitiveness, vitality and adaptability of the local economy.
	Help people gain access to satisfying work appropriate to their skills, potential and place of residence
	Support appropriate investment in people, places, communications and other infrastructure
TRANSPORT	Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable transport choices.
	Secure appropriate investment and development in transport infrastructure, and ensure the safety of the transport network.

- 2.10. In addition, a set of ‘appraisal questions’ have been formulated to highlight specific issues for consideration when assessing draft policies/proposals against the objectives. Together these provide a Sustainability Appraisal Framework, for considering, appraising and documenting the effects of plan policies and options. The full sustainability framework is included in appendix 1.

Chapter 3 - Testing the Objectives of the Local Plan

- 3.1. The objectives of the Local Plan set out what it is aiming to achieve in spatial planning terms and set the context for development of policies. They form the link between the high level vision and the more detailed strategy and policies. Objectives are related to addressing the issues facing the districts, and the needs that have been identified. The following objectives have been proposed in the Issues and Options Report:
- A. To support economic growth by supporting our position as a world leader in research and technology based industries, research, and education; and supporting the rural economy.*
 - B. To protect the character of South Cambridgeshire, including its built and natural heritage. New development should enhance the area, and protect and enhance biodiversity.*
 - C. To provide land for housing that meets local needs and aspirations, and gives choice about type, size, tenure and cost.*
 - D. To deliver new developments that are high quality and well-designed with distinctive character that reflects their location, and which responds robustly to the challenges of climate change.*
 - E. To link development with local facilities and services, and sustainable transport including buses, walking and cycling.*
 - F. To ensure that all new development provides or has access to a range of services and facilities that support healthy lifestyles and wellbeing for everyone, including shops, schools, doctors, community buildings, cultural facilities, local open space, and green infrastructure.*
- 3.2. The objectives have been reviewed to see whether they will support achievement of the sustainability objectives. This comparison is included in appendix 3.
- 3.3. In summary at least one Local Plan objective directly corresponds to each of the Sustainability Objectives.
- 3.4. A number of Local Plan objectives relate to enabling new development. This has clear positive implications for a number of sustainability objectives, but will have an absolute impact on resource use, such as land, and generate additional waste and greenhouse gases. Impact will depend on scale, location of development and how it is designed.
- 3.5. The development of policies provides an opportunity to mitigate many conflicts, by steering the location and form of development, and ensuring any negative impacts are minimised. The suitability of individual developments would be also assessed through normal planning application processes.
- 3.6. Through the Issues and Options consultation the objectives may be adapted/changed, in which case they will be re-appraised in the next stage.

Chapter 4 - Identifying Options

- 4.1. The consideration of reasonable alternatives is a central part of the sustainability appraisal and the plan making process. This Initial Sustainability Report includes the analysis used to identify the options available for the plan for addressing the range of issues identified for consultation through the Issues and Options process. This provides the story of the plan, the issues identified, analysis of the issues and the evidence, and the options available.
- 4.2. At the strategic level, the options consider the growth needs of the district to 2031, reflecting requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework to objectively assess the need and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area. Options have been identified for the level of housing and jobs growth, guided by objectively produced forecasting. Scenario based alternatives have been identified regarding the direction of growth, identifying alternative strategy scenarios.
- 4.3. Strategy options include the development of land on the edge of Cambridge, through a review of the Green Belt. As a result ten broad locations have been identified for consultation. One of these falls entirely within Cambridge City, three fall purely within South Cambridgeshire, and the others straddle the boundary. These have been subject to sustainability appraisal (excluding those purely within Cambridge City, which have been appraised in Cambridge City's Local Plan Initial Sustainability Report). Following consultation on the Issues and Options Report, if any of these broad locations was considered to be suitable for development, further consultation would be carried out on the potential site boundaries later in 2012.
- 4.4. Specific site development options away from the edge of Cambridge have been subject to sustainability appraisal. These reflect site options identified and tested through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The 'call for sites' process (June – July 2011) enabled landowners, stakeholder and others to suggest sites that could be allocated in the local plan. Through the SHLAA they were then tested to identify whether they were 'available, suitable and deliverable'. Sites which failed this process are not considered reasonable alternatives for testing.
- 4.5. A range of policies are to be included in the Local Plan to guide the form of development, and the consideration of windfall proposals (development not allocated in the plan) through the planning application process. They include policies which determine where types or development that are suitable or unsuitable in different locations, the quality that must be achieved, and mitigation measures that must be undertaken. They include scale thresholds where certain requirements apply. Alternatives can be limited by national planning guidance or other policy documents, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework, or where evidence has justified a single approach. Where only one option has been identified it is explained why it is considered to be the only reasonable option.
- 4.6. The range of alternatives considered reflects the range of issues to be covered in the Local Plan. Options have been identified to address the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and other legislation, through the evidence base and issues identified through the Scoping Report,

and as a result of early consultation with stakeholders both in writing and a series of workshops.

4.7. The issues are arranged around 12 themed chapters in the Issues and Options Report, which are:

- Vision
- Development Needs
- Spatial Strategy
- Development Options
- Climate Change
- Delivering High Quality Places
- Conserving and Enhancing the Historic and Natural Environment
- Delivering High Quality Homes
- Building a Strong and Competitive Economy
- Promoting Successful Communities
- Promoting and Delivering Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure
- Site Specific Issues

4.8. The Issues and options consultation is an opportunity to suggest any other alternative that should have been considered, although council only required to consider reasonable alternatives.

4.9. In order to document the development of issues and options, the following table has been completed for each issue:

Issue	<i>Identifies the issue e.g. Protection of Existing Openspace</i>
Key evidence	<i>Identifies specific documents, studies or evidence relevant to the issue</i> <i>e.g. Needs Assessment for Openspace</i>
Existing policies	<i>Identifies if there is a policy in the existing Core Strategy, Development Control Policies or Site Specific Policies DPDs.</i>
Analysis	<i>Provides an analysis of the issue, including why it should be addressed in the Local Plan, a summary of relevant guidance (e.g. National Planning Policy Framework), and key facts from the evidence base and Scoping Report.</i> <i>Concludes by identifying what the reasonable options are for addressing the issue in the Local Plan.</i>
Final Issues and Options Approaches	<i>Identifies the options that will be included for consultation in the Local Plan Issues and Options Report.</i>

4.10. As described in the table above, the iterative process means that the sustainability appraisal has influenced the development of options.

4.11. The analysis of issues and options is included in appendix 4.

Chapter 5 – Sustainability Appraisal of Site and Policy Options

Approach to Assessing Site and Policy Options

- 5.1. The Sustainability Appraisal process utilises the Sustainability Objectives to guide an assessment of the environmental, social and economic impacts of a policy option or site option, in order to identify and respond to significant effects. Significance can vary depending on the context, but judgements have been made in light of the baseline information, and the extent and duration of the effect.
- 5.2. Effects will be quantified where possible. In many cases, particularly regarding policy options, this is not possible, the appraisal documents the reasons for judgements of the impact, in order that the appraisal is transparent.
- 5.3. In many cases the assessment is neutral – that is, the option has no clear relevance to or impact on an objective. In others a positive or negative assessment cannot be made based on the evidence available at present.
- 5.4. Within individual options, there are some conflicts (i.e. positive and negative impacts) such as those between options facilitating development and objectives that prioritise conservation. These do not rule out options, but may highlight areas that need to be mitigated, either by other options, or with in a policy when it is drafted.
- 5.5. At the Issues and Options stage of plan making the appraisal will focus on policy or site options. The sustainability appraisal will enable a comparison of the reasonable alternative options available, as well as their impact. The current policy options are at an early stage of development. The exact policy wording will be made more specific once the Council determines which will be taken forward into the proposed Local Plan.
- 5.6. At the draft plan stage it will assess the draft policies and allocations selected for the final plan, considering the likely significant effects of the plan as a whole, how they can be mitigated or enhanced, and how impacts can be monitored. At this point the appraisal will identify reasons why an option was eliminated.
- 5.7. Detailed assessment of policy options is included in appendix 5 of this report.

Appraisal of Site Options

- 5.8. As detailed earlier, the sustainability objectives have also been used to guide the identification of potential site options. To assist in making this assessment quantifiable, measurable and transparent, and for direct comparison between sites to be made, the Site Assessment Matrix in appendix 2 indicates how the impact of individual sites against each objective has been determined.
- 5.9. For a number of objectives, quantifiable grading have been identified to provide a means by which the relative sustainability of each site can be established in comparison with other sites.

- 5.10. Almost 300 sites have been subject to sustainability appraisal, every site which was registered following the 'call for sites' process. Due to the volume, these have been bound as a separate annex to this report (see annex 1).
- 5.11. Sites at 'Group Villages' have not been taken forward as reasonable options for the Issues and Options Report. These are not amongst the more sustainable villages in the district. It was considered that additional housing in Group villages would lead to dispersed rural development which had previously been found to be unsustainable and sites were available at higher order more sustainable settlements that would provide sufficient flexibility in housing numbers to enable a choice to be taken following consultation to meet any of the housing target options. This is addressed in Issue 9 'Development Strategy'.
- 5.12. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal Assessments of potential sites identify key constraints and considerations relating to potential development sites including suitability, availability and achievability. In order to draw information together in an accessible form, and reach an overall conclusion on the merits of the sites assessed, key elements from both assessments have been combined in a series of settlement summaries which enable the most and least sustainable sites in each settlement to be identified. This has been collated in Annex 2 to this report.
- 5.13. The least sustainable sites, identified as having no significant development potential due to constraints or adverse impacts, have been rejected at this stage, as they are not considered reasonable options.

Limitations and Problems

- 5.14. A requirement of the sustainability appraisal process is to identify any issues and problems which affected the assessment.
- 5.15. Reflecting the guidance and SEA requirements, the focus has to be on significant effects, as identifying every potential minor impact could be endless.
- 5.16. Identifying impacts of specific sites can be carried out with specific information, such as information gathered through the SHLAA. It has used information available at the time of appraisal.
- 5.17. Assessing impacts of development control type policies setting thresholds or policy guidance can be more difficult, as it depends on applications that follow, there may therefore be uncertainty in the actual quantitative impact. A judgement has to be made on anticipated impacts, and whether it will contribute or hinder the achievement of a sustainability objective. The at the CLG Plan Making Manual states, 'Ultimately, the significance of an effect is a matter of judgment and should require no more than a clear and reasonable justification.
- 5.18. At the issues and options stage the full policy wording has not been developed. The plan will be drafted after the views of the public and stakeholders have been obtained through the consultation process.

- 5.19. In many cases, mitigation will be achieved through the application of other policies, or at this stage addressed by other options. When reading the Local Plan, the assumption should be that all policies apply, and a specific cross reference in a policy to any other policy is not generally necessary.
- 5.20. It is more possible to identify the specific cumulative and synergistic impacts of a specific package of options, rather than the many combinations available at the options stage.

Chapter 6 - Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1. The initial sustainability appraisal provides a review of each individual site and policy approach against the set of sustainability objectives. The following section summaries the most significant impacts identified from site and policy options on each of the sustainability objectives, and the cumulative impacts of options on the objectives.

Summary of Appraisal on Individual Objectives

Minimise the irreversible loss of undeveloped land, economic mineral reserves, productive agricultural holdings, and the degradation / loss of soils

<p>Reflecting the nature of the district a large number of site options would involve development of greenfield land. Much of this is agricultural land, although a portion of sites are actually disused agricultural land. Until the package of sites is finalised it is difficult to determine the cumulative impact, but due to the scale of growth it is likely to be significant.</p>

<p>Options to deliver housing and employment growth (issue 3 and 4) have the potential to require significant use of previously undeveloped land. Approach to village frameworks (issue 15) proposes a number of options regarding village frameworks. Frameworks restrict growth on the outer edges of settlements, they therefore perform a role in minimising loss of agricultural land. More flexible approaches could have a negative impact on achievement of the objective, but the scale of the impact would depend on the implementation.</p>
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<p>The construction methods policy option (issue 23) proposes to seek careful management of soils.</p>
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Minimise waste production and support the reuse and recycling of waste products
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<p>The objective is considered to be primarily related to design rather than the location of an individual site.</p>
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<p>The scale of development proposed (issue 3 and 4) will have implications overall for waste generation. The construction methods policy option (issue 23) also seeks to encourage recycling of waste products.</p>
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Improve air quality and minimise or mitigate against sources of environmental pollution
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<p>Impact on air quality, and whether a site can provide an appropriate residential environment is addressed in the assessment of individual site options. Cumulative impact would depend on the eventual package of sites, and for example any resulting traffic.</p>
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<p>A number of policy options are proposed to directly address environmental pollution of different kinds, in particular light noise and odour issues (issue 93), contaminated land (issue 94) air quality (issue 95), low emissions strategy (issue 96) and planning for sustainable travel (issue 97). The implementation of these would clearly have significant positive impacts on achievement of the objective.</p>

Avoid damage to designated sites and protected species

<p>Impact on designated sites and species is addressed in the assessment of individual</p>
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options. Sites where potential significant negative effects that could not be mitigated have not been identified as reasonable options.

Biodiversity (issue 32) directly proposes to protect designated sites from unacceptable adverse impacts. A number of other options have the potential for positive impacts.

Maintain and enhance the range and viability of characteristic habitats and species

Impact on biodiversity is addressed in the assessment of individual options. Sites where potential significant negative effects that could not be mitigated have not been identified as reasonable options. Many individual site options would actually provide opportunities to provide biodiversity enhancement, as many sites actually have a limited range of existing habitats and species. Cumulative impact would depend on the package of sites identified.

A number of policy options directly address habitats and species. Biodiversity (issue 32) also aims for development proposals to achieve a net gain in biodiversity where possible. Other options also propose to address biodiversity gain, including Green Infrastructure provision (issue 33), and securing high quality design (issue 28).

Improve opportunities for people to access and appreciate wildlife and green spaces

Larger development options, and in the general locations on the edge of Cambridge, have the potential to deliver additional green infrastructure, although the scale of impact is uncertain at this stage.

Green Infrastructure (issue 33) has the most potential for significant positive impact on this objective.

Maintain and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of landscape and townscape character

The impact on landscape and townscape has been examined in relation to individual site options. Where options would have a significant negative impact, they have been rejected, as they are not considered reasonable options for development. A number of options provide opportunities for landscape or townscape improvement. The cumulative impact on any package of site selected for the draft plan will be considered in the final Sustainability Appraisal.

Potentially significant negative impacts on landscape or townscape have been identified for the general locations around Cambridge, although it would depend on the scale and location of any specific site option.

A number of issues make direct reference to protecting landscape and townscape, either directly or indirectly, for example referring to development which is in scale with its location.

A number of options propose greater flexibility on the edges of settlements, including the approach to Village Frameworks (issue 15), which creates greater uncertainty whether the objective will be achieved. A number of policies have potential for significant positive impacts, in particular landscape character (issue 30), Protected Village Amenity Areas (issue 37), Important Countryside Frontage (issue 39), impact of development on the Green Belt (issue 34), and securing high quality design (issue 28).

<p>Avoid damage to areas and sites designated for their historic interest, and protect their settings</p>
<p>The impact on heritage assets has been examined in relation to individual site options. Where options would have a significant negative impact, they have been rejected, as they are not considered reasonable options for development. A small number of options offer opportunities to improve setting of heritage assets, including Papworth Hospital.</p> <p>The assessment of locations on the edge of Cambridge identified a number of heritage assets that could be affected by development, but impacts would depend on the scale and location of site development.</p> <p>A number of economic policies would enable the reuse of rural buildings (issue 70 and issue 71), which could support the preservation of historic buildings. Options with potential for significant positive impact are heritage assets (issue 42), assets of local importance (issue 43), which directly addresses the issue for planning purposes. Options with potential for negative impact include those that provide greater flexibility for development on the edges of villages (Approach to village frameworks issue 15), as this could impact on the historic setting of villages, but the scale and nature of impact would depend on other policies, which could be applied to address the issue.</p>
<p>Create places, spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look good</p>
<p>This objective has not been directly assessed in relation to site options, as it depends significantly on how a site is actually developed.</p> <p>Securing high quality design (issue 28) has potential for significant positive impact on achievement of this objective, as it proposes a range of issues that contribute to development quality. A range of other options which seek services and facilities, and to help the mix of uses would have a positive impact. Some options propose a design led approach, such as parking standards (issue 98). This has potential for a significant positive impact as it could adapt individual development to their circumstances, although it would create greater uncertainty.</p>
<p>Minimise impacts on climate change (including greenhouse gas emissions)</p>
<p>As sustainable transport is addressed elsewhere, the appraisal of the objective particularly focuses on impacts of development on energy use. No specific opportunities for renewable energy were identified by the site appraisals, although this does not mean opportunities will not be present.</p> <p>Overall energy use will increase as a result of the scale of development (issues 3 and 4). Other options have the potential to contribute to achievement of this objective – Mitigation and adaptation to climate change (issue 17), Renewable energy and low carbon developments (issue 18), renewables in new developments (issue 19), community energy fund (issue 20), and sustainable design and construction (issue 21). The scale of positive impact would depend on the approach selected, with options such as requiring higher level of the code for sustainable homes having the most significant impact, compared with approaches that would reflect building regulations standards.</p>
<p>Reduce vulnerability to future climate change effects</p>
<p>Flood risk has been a key element in determining whether site options were reasonable, utilising the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to filter out any sites that were at significant flood risk and should be rejected. The review of Green Belt</p>

locations on the edge of Cambridge identified some areas at significant flood risk, but in all cases it would be possible to develop whilst avoiding these areas.

A number of options would have direct positive impacts of adapting to climate change. The absolute impact of the scale of development will be to increase demand for water, in what is classified as an area of serious water stress by the Environment Agency, and has potential to negatively impact on achievement of the objective (issues 3 and 4). Options related to water efficiency could reduce overall water use (issue 21 and 24) generated by development compared to normal building regulations standards, depending on the level selected the impact could be significant.

Options on managing flood risk (issue 27), and utilising Sustainable Drainage Systems (issue 26) also have potential for significant positive impact. Mitigation and adaptation to climate change (issue 17) proposes to address wider adaptation issues, including the orientation of buildings to address cooling, and landscaping to provide shade. Green Infrastructure (issue 33) would also have a role in climate change adaption, supporting urban cooling and water management.

Maintain and enhance human health

The health impact objective was considered to be primarily addressed by site specific design rather than site location, although there are a range of other objectives which impact on health, such as air quality, sustainable transport and access to services addressed by other objectives.

A range of options have potential for significant positive impacts on achievement of the health objectives, in particular securing high quality design (issue 28). Health Impact Assessments (issue 80), developing new communities (issue 82), open space standards (issue 87), planning for sustainable travel (issue 97), and options which address air quality and pollution (issues 93, 94, 95 and 96). Addressing targets for Gypsy and Traveller pitches (issue 57) has particular benefits due to the healthy inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers. A range of other policies have potential for minor or indirect benefits.

Reduce and prevent crime and reduce fear of crime

Another objective where it is considered to be primarily related to design rather than the location of an individual site.

The objective is primarily addressed by the Securing high quality design (issue 28), which has potential for significant positive impact.

Improve the quantity and quality of publically accessible open space

Most sites have been identified as neutral impact on achieving the objective, as they would be required to deliver open space to meet the needs generated by development, reflecting open space standards. Some sites, particularly major developments would provide potential for significant additional provision, and could therefore have a significant positive impact on the achievement of the objective. No sites would result in the loss of existing public open space. The assessment of locations on the edge of Cambridge identified one option which could result in the loss of existing public open space in Cambridge.

Policy options proposing open space standards (issue 87), on-site open space (issue 89) requiring for development to address open space needs generated, and protection of existing playing fields and recreation facilities (issue 91), and provision

of infrastructure and services (issue 107) will have significant positive impact on securing the objective.

Ensure everyone has access to decent, appropriate and affordable housing

Site options for housing development all have the potential to support achievement of this objective, proportionate to the scale of housing they would deliver.

Strategic options related to the scale of development (issue 4) that should be planned in the district have a key link to achievement of this objective. The targets reflect the anticipated level of need depending on economic circumstances. As such they all have potential to significantly contribute to the achievement of the objective. If a lower target is selected, but the economy grows at a faster rate, this could have a negative impact on achievement of the objective. The highest option has the greatest potential impact on meeting affordable housing needs.

Policy options that could significantly assist achievement of the objective include housing mix (issue 46), flexible housing to support reduced mobility (issue 47), affordable housing (issue 48), exception sites (issue 49). A range of options are proposed in relation to each of these issues. Where options propose flexibility or to not provide guidance these give the greatest uncertainty whether the objective will be achieved.

Options regarding Gypsy and Traveller sites (issue 57) propose targets to meet identified need, which would clearly have significant positive impact on achieving the objective.

Redress inequalities related to age, disability, gender, race, faith, location and income

Another objective where it is considered to be primarily related to design rather than the location of an individual site.

A wide range of options have potential to contribute to achievement of this objective. In particular those which would improve or protect access to services and facilities, and deliver housing and employment to rural areas, to address issues of rurality. Securing high quality design (issue 26) also proposes to ensure areas are accessible for all, and meet the needs of the community. No options were identified that would have a negative impact on achievement of the objective.

Improve the quality, range and accessibility of services and facilities

The assessment of site options considered the accessibility of individual sites to service centres, utilising the settlement classification of centres as a proxy for the level of services available, and considered the distance to the centre. Accessibility has been a key issue when determining reasonable site options for development, with sites with poor access being rejected. Some sites offer particular opportunities for improvements in the range of services and facilities available.

Development Strategy options (issue 9) which propose development close to Cambridge, or in new settlement have the greatest potential to deliver access to the widest range of services and facilities. This is linked to the Green Belt review (issue 11). Scale of Housing Development at Villages (Issue 14) will determine the approach to development in the different scale of villages. Focusing development on better served locations could have the greatest positive impact on achievement of this objective. Options proving the greatest flexibility for growth in small villages could potentially have a significant negative impact on achievement of the objective.

Providing greater flexibility for development beyond village frameworks, or removing frameworks (issue 15), could create potential for more development in smaller villages, delivering more development in areas with less access to services.

Planning for sustainable travel (issue 97), provision of infrastructure and services (Issue 107), protection of village services and facilities (issue 81), developing new communities (issue 82), securing high quality design (issue 28), retail hierarchy (issue 75) all have the potential for significant positive impacts. Assessing the Impact of Retail Development Proposals (issue 76) identifies a potentially negative impact if the default threshold for requiring retail impact assessment was applied, as only the impact of larger stores would be considered.

Encourage and enable the active involvement of local people in community activities

Assessments of site options identify where new community facilities or village halls are referred to in development proposals.

Developing new communities (issue 82) and provision of infrastructure (issue 107), and securing high quality design (issue 28) provide significant positive impact on achievement of the objective due to their links with provision of community facilities.

Localism and the relationship with neighbourhood plans (issue 7) identified the positive role the local plan could have in meeting local aspirations, and therefore encouraging community involvement.

Improve the efficiency, competitiveness, vitality and adaptability of the local economy

Site appraisals identify options which propose additional employment provision, and others which would result in the loss of employment land.

A key issue for the plan is the projected jobs growth (issue 3), issues are linked with housing provision (issue 4). Impacts could be significant, but depend to a significant extent on the wider economy, therefore there is some uncertainty. Planning for a low forecast could hold back growth if the economy performs better, planning for a high forecast could overprovide if the economy does not perform.

Options identified that could deliver significant positive impacts include new employment provision near Cambridge (issue 59) and the related issue of the Cambridge Northern Fringe East (issue 110), promotion of clusters (issue 63), established employment areas in the countryside (issue 66), new employment development in villages (issue 67), retention of employment sites (issue 72), and provision of infrastructure (issue 107). Part of the objective is to support the shopping hierarchy and the vitality and viability of centres, which is directly addressed by the retail hierarchy (issue 75). There are a number of other options with positive impacts.

A number of options are proposed in relation to limitations on the occupancy of new premises (Issue 61), but the scale of impacts are unclear. Overall, a policy which reserves employment land to uses that need to be in the area would minimise use of land and resources. There is some evidence that the current policy may hold back development of the high tech economy, and therefore permitting greater flexibility could have a more positive economic impact.

Help people gain access to satisfying work appropriate to their skills, potential and place of residence

Site appraisals considered access to work, measuring the time taken to access the

nearest major employment area to enable a site comparison.

Access to work could be affected by strategic growth issues identified in the previous objective (issue 3 and 4). Achievement of the objective will be influenced by delivery of jobs, but also the relationship of jobs with the number and location of homes.

Options identified that could deliver significant positive impacts include new employment provision near Cambridge (issue 59) and the related Cambridge Northern Fringe East (issue 110), promotion of clusters (issue 63), established employment areas in the countryside (issue 66), new employment development in villages (issue 67), retention of employment sites (issue 72), and provision of infrastructure (issue 107). There are a number of other options with positive impacts.

Scale of housing development at Villages (Issue 14) will determine the approach to development in different scale of villages. Options proving the greatest flexibility for growth in small villages could potentially have a significant negative impact on achievement of the objective as it could result in growth in less accessible to workplaces. Addressing Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation needs could also support access to work (issue 57).

Support appropriate investment in people, places, communications and other infrastructure

Site assessments identified capacity in existing infrastructure, including foul drainage and schools, to accommodate development, and where additional investment would be required.

Options to deliver housing and employment growth (issue 3 and 4) could bring with them investment in places. Options identified that could deliver significant positive impacts include developing new communities (issue 82) and provision of infrastructure (issue 107).

Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable transport choices

Site options were subject to detailed assessment to explore their accessibility by means other than the car, including distance to public transport, frequency and journey length of the service, and cycling distance to a major centre. These were combined to give a score for each site.

Housing provision (issue 4) identifies options for scales of growth. In terms of transport infrastructure, and achieving sustainable transport, more homes could simply be more people on the networks and using cars. However, the relationship is not that straight forward, as delivery of homes in the right places, enabling more people to live close to jobs and services, could actually reduce the need to travel, and support use of sustainable modes. This would clearly depend on how growth is implemented, determined by other options.

Delivery of housing could support putting homes near to jobs, and have positive impacts on commuting patterns. Development Strategy options (issue 9) which propose development close to Cambridge, or in new settlements have the greatest potential to deliver access to the widest range of services and facilities. This is linked to the Green Belt review (issue 11). Scale of Housing Development at Villages (Issue 14) will determine approach to development in different scales of villages. Options provide the greatest flexibility for growth in small villages could potentially have a significant negative impact on achievement of the overall objective, by increasing the need to travel, and reducing opportunities to use sustainable modes of travel.

Options identified that could deliver significant positive impacts include securing high quality design (issue 28), new employment provision near Cambridge (issue 59), Cambridge Northern Fringe East (issue 110), retail hierarchy (issue 75), planning for sustainable travel (issue 97), Transport Assessments and Travel Plans (issue 98), cycle parking standards (issue 103), provision of infrastructure and services (issue 107). Impacts of options for car parking standards are uncertain, due to the potentially indirect relationship between car ownership and frequency of car use.
Secure appropriate investment and development in transport infrastructure, and ensure the safety of the transport network
Highways capacity issues have been explored in relation to individual site options. Where sites were incapable of being appropriately served, and issues weren't capable of mitigation, sites were rejected.
Options to deliver housing and employment growth (issue 3 and 4) will result in increased pressure on transport networks, but will also support investment in new infrastructure. Cumulative impacts for transport in the Cambridge sub region will be explored through Cambridgeshire County Council's new transport strategy.
Options identified that could deliver significant positive impacts include planning for sustainable travel (issue 97), developing new communities (issue 82), provision of infrastructure (issue 107) and Cambridge Northern Fringe East (issue 110).

Conclusions

- 6.2. A wide range of options have been explored through the issues and options and sustainability appraisal process.
- 6.3. Sustainable development has three key elements: environmental, social and economic. The local plan needs to explore the balance, and how all three can be achieved. The economic success of the area means that there is pressure for growth, both to supply employment, meet housing needs, and infrastructure requirements. At the same time the district has a rich environment that needs to be protected and enhanced. The Issues and Options Report has explored a range of alternative options, which propose a range of different ways to manage these impacts. Public consultation will enable people to express their views, before decisions are made.

The Next stages of the Plan Making and Sustainability Appraisal Process

- 6.4. Once the issues and options stage of plan making is completed, a draft plan will be prepared. This will be subject to sustainability appraisal, in the form of a Draft Final Sustainability Report. Both will be subject to consultation before the plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination and adoption. Should any significant changes be made to the plan as a result of public consultation, additional appraisal work will need to be carried out and the final Sustainability Report amended to reflect the results.
- 6.5. At the draft plan stage the appraisal will assess the draft policies and allocations selected for the final plan, considering the likely significant effects of the plan as a whole, how they can be mitigated or enhanced, and how

impacts can be monitored. At this point the appraisal will identify reasons why an option was eliminated.

How to comment on this report

If you would like to comment on any aspect of the report, you can make your comments in the following ways:

Online at www.scambs.gov.uk

By emailing your comments to LDF@scambs.gov.uk

By posting your comments to:

Director for Planning and New Communities
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

Please ensure that we receive your comments by Friday 28th September

If you have any questions on this Initial SA Report, or the SA process in general, please telephone the Planning Policy team on 03450 450 500, or email LDF@scambs.gov.uk