

# **Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan**

## **Sustainability Appraisal**

**SA Report**

**Non-Technical Summary**

**September 2018**



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# **Introduction**

**01**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 AECOM is commissioned by the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Planning Group to undertake Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan. SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of a draft plan, and alternatives, in terms of sustainability issues, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse effects and maximising the positives.
- 1.1.2 SA is not a legal requirement for a non-statutory document such as the Strategic Growth Plan. However, a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required given the scope of the Plan. The Strategic Planning Group consider that it is beneficial to widen the scope of the SEA to include social and economic factors. Therefore, a full SA is being prepared which incorporates the requirements of an SEA.
- 1.1.3 This document is a Non-Technical Summary of the main SA Report which appraises the implications of the Strategic Growth Plan, as well as documenting the SA process and outputs from previous stages of the plan-making process.
- 1.1.4 SA is a process for helping to ensure that Plans achieve an appropriate balance between environmental, economic and social objectives. SA should help to identify the sustainability implications of different plan approaches and recommend ways to reduce any negative effects and to increase the positive outcomes.
- 1.1.5 The Plan, once adopted, will provide a spatial strategy to help the Local Authorities within the Leicester and Leicestershire area to plan for new housing and employment needs across the housing market area.

## 1.2 Outline of the Plan

- 1.2.1 A Strategic Growth Plan has been established which sets out a spatial approach to the delivery of development in the long term (2031-2050). The key elements of the Plan are described below, with the strategic locations for growth illustrated on figure 1, which is reproduced from the final Plan document.
- 1.2.2 Before the plan was finalised, a draft version was prepared and consulted upon to seek feedback from stakeholders. An appraisal of the draft Plan was undertaken as required by the SEA Regulations. The comments made about the draft Strategic Growth Plan were taken into account and then the plan was revised.
- 1.2.3 The Plan is focused on making the most out of future infrastructure improvements and key centres of economic growth opportunities. New housing (approximately 90,500 dwellings) is to be focused to the following locations, supported by the notion of large scale development with Garden Village principles.

### *Primary Growth Areas*

- The A46 Corridor and Leicester City are critical areas for growth (highlighted orange on Figure 1).

### Secondary growth areas

- The Leicestershire International Gateway (highlighted purple on figure 1) is a key growth area that will support approximately 11,000 dwellings close to significant employment opportunities.
- The A5 improvement corridor is an opportunity to support existing growth from the west at Tamworth through south west alongside Hinckley and Lutterworth. It will help to unlock further growth opportunities as well in these locations.

### Key Centre for regeneration

- Growth will be supported at Melton Mowbray to help support new infrastructure, services and economic growth and regeneration.

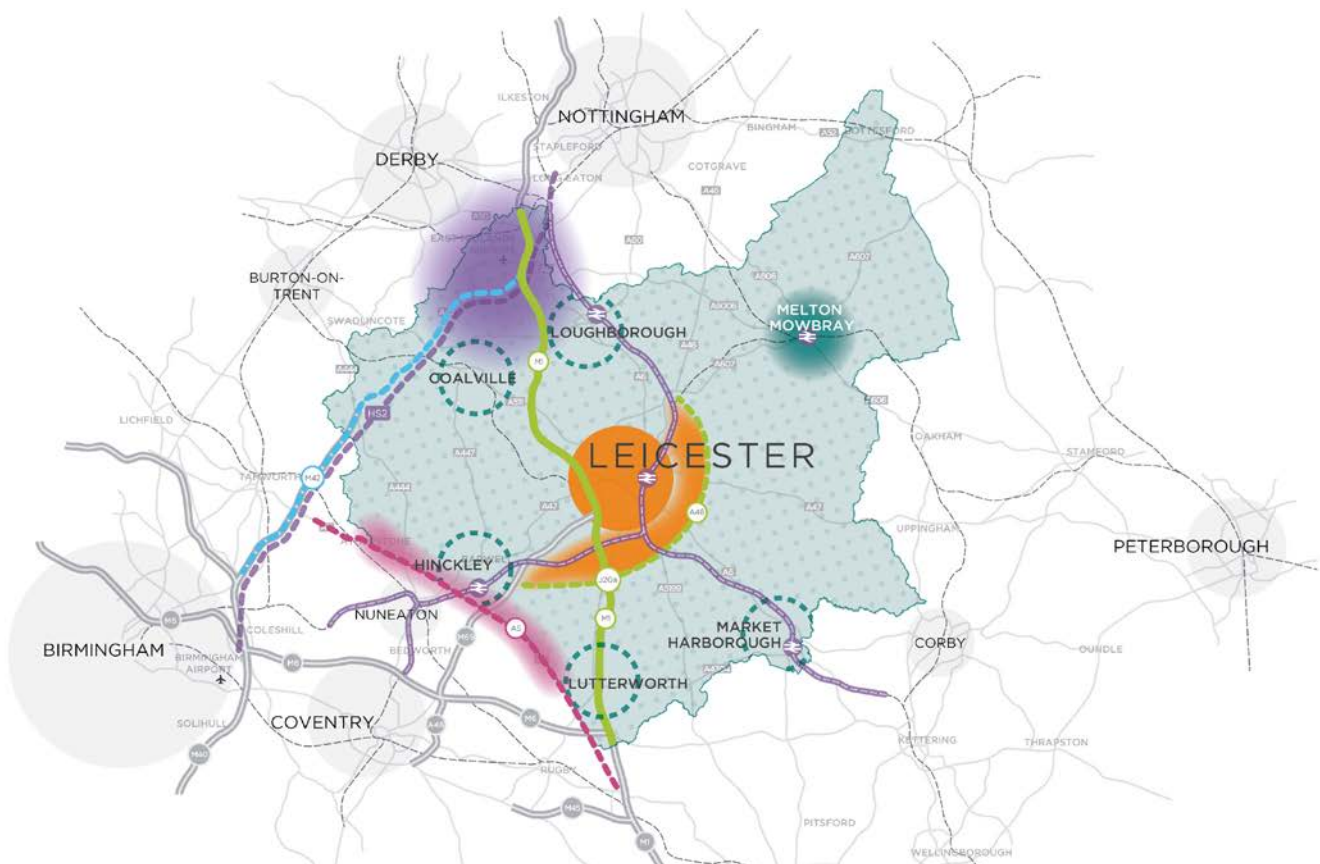
### Areas of managed growth

- Development at Coalville, Loughborough, Hinckley and Market Harborough will be consistent with the need to support local growth.

### Villages and rural areas

- There will be limited growth in these areas, consistent with providing for local needs.

Figure 1: The draft Spatial Strategy



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**Scoping**

**02**

## 2 SCOPING

### 2.1 Background

2.1.1 The scoping stage of sustainability appraisal involves the collation of evidence relating to the baseline position and policy context - culminating in a series of key issues that should be a focus for the SA and which helped to establish a sustainability framework. These key issues are summarised below; with the corresponding sustainability objectives identified (which form part of the SA framework).

### 2.2 Key issues

2.2.1 **Table 1** below sets out the Sustainability topics that were identified within the scoping report, the associated key issues, and the corresponding sustainability objectives. Where a decision was made that topics could be 'scoped out' of the SA, no SA objectives were developed.

**Table 1:** Key issues and the SA Objectives

Key issues	SA Objective
<p><b>Biodiversity and geodiversity</b></p> <p>The County has a relatively low level of designated biodiversity sites. However, these are in a mostly favourable or recovering position. Opportunities to strengthen ecological networks should therefore be taken advantage of.</p> <p>The quality of water could affect a range of biodiversity habitats and species across the County, making strategic river networks an important feature to protect, maintain and enhance.</p>	<p>1. Create new, protect, maintain and enhance habitats, species and ecological networks.</p>
<p><b>Health and wellbeing</b></p> <p>The population is ageing, with impacts for the delivery of health services.</p> <p>Also key issue due to rising ageing population is provision of sufficient and appropriate housing within the HMA / districts.</p>	<p>2. Maintain and improve levels of health, whilst reducing health inequalities</p>
<p><b>Housing</b></p> <p>There is a need to meet needs for housing as identified in the HEDNA (2017). In some districts it may be difficult to meet full needs 'locally' (i.e. within the district it arises). This could necessitate housing needs for some districts being met in other parts of the HMA.</p> <p>Housing affordability is an issues across the HMA. There is an increasing need to provide housing suitable for an ageing population.</p>	<p>3. Secure the delivery of high quality, market and affordable homes, to meet projected housing requirements.</p>

Key issues	SA Objective
<p><b>Employment and economy</b></p> <p>The County is well positioned for growth in the strategic distribution sector; though there is a need to identify the appropriate distribution of growth opportunities. Unemployment rates are falling across the HMA, though remain the highest within the city.</p>	<p>4. Support the continued growth and diversification of the economy.</p>
<p><b>Transport and travel</b></p> <p>Accessibility to services, facilities and jobs is poor in rural areas.</p> <p>Access to strategic employment sites by public transport is not ideal.</p> <p>There may be constraints to the amount of development that can be accommodated on the edge or near the Leicester urban area in light of congestion along parts of the orbital road network.</p>	<p>5. Improve accessibility to services, jobs and facilities by reducing the need to travel, promoting sustainable modes of transport and securing strategic infrastructure improvements.</p>
<p>Though generally good, air pollution presents an issue in some parts of the County, typically within areas that suffer from higher levels of traffic and congestion.</p>	<p>6. Minimise exposure to poor air quality, whilst managing contributing sources.</p>
<p><b>Climate change</b></p> <p>There are opportunities to increase the amount of low carbon and renewable sources of energy above the relatively low baseline position</p>	<p>7. Contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and an increase in the use of low carbon energy.</p>
<p><b>Landscape and land</b></p> <p>There are parcels of high quality agricultural land throughout the district that should be protected given the relatively low amount of Grade 1 and 2 land present.</p> <p>No nationally designated landscapes are present. But there are a variety of important landscapes which are important to the character of the countryside, preventing urban sprawl and supporting the natural environment. Whilst these are in relatively good condition, there are increasing pressures for from development that need to be managed.</p>	<p>8. Protect, maintain and enhance landscapes whilst promoting their value to sustainable growth.</p> <p>9. Protect high quality agricultural land from permanent development.</p>



Key issues	SA Objective
<p><b>Cultural heritage</b></p> <p>There is a wealth and variety of heritage features, many of which are designated for their heritage value. It will be important to protect the condition and setting of these assets. There may be cross border heritage assets.</p> <p>Though the number of 'at risk heritage assets has decreased slightly from 2015-2017, the majority of heritage assets that remain on the 'at risk' register are declining in condition.</p>	<p>10. Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings.</p>
<p><b>Water</b></p> <p>The quality of many water resources across the County is in need of improvement, yet could come under increased pressure from new development. SUDs should be encouraged to support the natural and sustainable management of water resources.</p> <p>There are areas across the County that are sensitive to and at risk of flooding (which could be exacerbated by climate change). There is a need to ensure that future development does not put more people at risk of flooding whilst ensuring that overall levels of flooding do not increase. This could/should constrain development in some areas, such as the flood plains of the River Soar and watercourses leading to and through Leicester City.</p>	<p>11. Steer development away from the areas at the greatest risk of flooding, whilst supporting schemes that reduce the risk and impacts of flooding.</p> <p>12. Protect, maintain and enhance the quality of water resources.</p>
<p><b>Waste and minerals</b></p> <p>Levels of recycling, reuse and composting are relatively high, and rates continue to improve. There has also been a general decrease in the amount of waste per capita.</p> <p>Growth in housing and employment is likely to generate more waste in terms of the overall volume. However, improved efficiency and continued drives to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill should help to reduce the amount of waste generated per capita.</p> <p>There are mineral resources across the County, some of which could be sterilised by development. It is important to protect such reserves from sterilisation.</p>	<p><b>Waste</b> – Scoped out. The trends are generally positive, and the planning for growth ought to be managed through the Leicester and Leicestershire Waste Plans.</p> <p>13. Protect mineral resources from sterilisation, and support their sustainable extraction.</p>

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# **Alternatives**

# **03**

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## 3 ALTERNATIVES

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### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Stage 2 of the SA/SEA process involves identification and assessment of 'reasonable alternatives'. This means comparing different approaches that could be taken to achieve the objectives of the Plan; which in this case relates to whether there are different options for delivering housing growth from 2031-2050.

### 3.2 Identifying alternatives

- 3.2.1 The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Planning Group explored several alternatives to the amount and distribution of growth. These are discussed below:

#### Amount of growth

- 3.2.2 Two levels of growth have been tested in the SA. The first is based on a projection of housing needs for the period 2011-2036. This would equate to an approximate notional requirement for new homes over the period 2031-2050 of 90,500 homes.
- 3.2.3 A higher target (20% more than notional projected housing requirements) has also been tested to account for greater flexibility in achieving housing delivery and to support greater economic growth aspirations.
- 3.2.4 A lower level of growth than notional projected housing requirements is considered to be an unreasonable alternative. While there are constraints within and across Leicester and Leicestershire, these are not of such scale and importance, either individually or collectively, to prevent notional housing requirements being accommodated in a sustainable way.

#### The distribution of development

- 3.2.5 The Strategic Planning Group established a range of options for the distribution of housing and employment. This work has been influenced by a range of factors including emerging evidence on growth opportunities, progress on individual authorities' Local Plans to 2031 or 2036, and options explored and tested as part of the Local Plan processes.
- 3.2.6 Six reasonable alternatives were established setting out the amount of growth that would be distributed to key locations across the HMA. Each of the reasonable alternatives involve differing levels of housing growth in each area to represent a greater or lesser focus on each of the broad strategies.

**Option 1: Focus on the Leicester Urban Area** - Emphasise development in and immediately around the built framework of Leicester, with growth elsewhere constrained.

**Option 2: A greater focus on Market Towns** - Emphasise development in and immediately around the market towns of Coalville, Hinckley, Loughborough, Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray, with growth elsewhere constrained.

**Option 3: Employment / Infrastructure led** - Emphasise development in the vicinity of known economic growth areas and associated infrastructure investment, with growth elsewhere constrained.

**Option 4:** New / Expanded settlements - Emphasise the option of growth being accommodated via new and expanded settlements, with constraints on growth in other key settlements and the urban area of Leicester.

**Option 5: Dispersed growth**

**Option 6: Continuation of established trends**

Combining growth and distribution Options

- 3.2.7 In order to give the appraisal greater context and meaning, the two housing growth scenarios were combined with each of the six spatial options. This allowed for a broad understanding of effects to be identified for each of the spatial options, and how these effects would differ should the level of growth be higher or lower.
- 3.2.8 This combination resulted in twelve discrete options that have been tested in the SA.
- 3.2.9 As outlined in tables 2 and 3, each of the options involve different amounts of growth in the City, Leicester Urban Periphery, Market Towns, 'other settlements' and at new/expanded settlements.

**Table 2:** Six reasonable alternatives at the notional projected housing requirement growth scenario (90,500 dwellings)

	1a.PUA focus	2a.Market Towns focus	3a.Employment/ infrastructure led	4a.New/expanded settlements focus	5a.Dispersal	6a.Trend
City	20% 18,100	10% 9,050	10% 9,050	10% 9,050	10% 9,050	25% 22,625
Leicester Urban periphery	40% 36,200	15% 13,575	30% 27,150	15% 13,575	20% 18,100	25% 22,625
Market towns	20% 18,100	60% 54,300	45% 40,725	15% 13,575	30% 27,150	30% 27,150
Other settlements	20% 18,100	15% 13,575	15% 13,575	10% 9,050	40% 36,200	20% 18,100
New/expanded settlements	0%	0%	0%	50% 45,250	0%	0%

**Table 3: Six reasonable alternatives at the higher growth scenario for flexibility (108,600)**

	<b>1b.PUA focus</b>	<b>2b.Market Towns focus</b>	<b>3b.Employment/ infrastructure led</b>	<b>4b.New/expanded settlements focus</b>	<b>5b.Dispersal</b>	<b>6b.Trend</b>
<i>City</i>	20% 21,720	10% 10,860	10% 10,860	10% 10,860	10% 10,860	25% 22,625
<i>Urban periphery</i>	40% 43,440	15% 16,290	30% 32,580	15% 16,290	20% 21,720	25% 27,150
<i>Market towns</i>	20% 21,720	60% 65,160	45% 48,870	15% 16,290	30% 32,580	30% 32,580
<i>Other settlements</i>	20% 21,720	15% 16,290	15% 16,290	10% 10,860	40% 43,440	20% 21,720
<i>New/expanded settlements</i>	0%	0%	0%	50% 54,300	0%	0%

### 3.3 Hybrid option

3.3.1 Following the appraisal of the twelve reasonable alternatives, the Council developed a hybrid option, which took different elements of some of the approaches tested. The hybrid option was appraised alongside the original alternatives to allow for a comparison of the preferred strategy with these options.

3.3.2 The Hybrid Option formed the basis of the draft Plan strategy and distributes housing as follows:

- Leicester City – 10, 450 dwellings
- Urban periphery – 4,500 dwellings
- Market Towns – 18,100 dwellings
- Other Settlements – 9,050 dwellings
- New/expanded settlements – 48,000 dwellings (A46 corridor, Southern / Northern Gateways)

### 3.4 Reconsidering the alternatives

3.4.1 Comments received during consultation suggested that there were options for strategic growth that should have been appraised in the SA. These are summarised below, with an explanation as to why the Strategic Planning Group do not think these options are reasonable.

3.4.2 One of the alternatives suggested was that more housing should be directed to Leicester City.

3.4.3 The SA through Option 6 has tested what it would mean in the City if there was 22,625 dwellings located here. This is much higher than the 10,500 dwellings being proposed in the Plan. Putting more housing into the City (than 22,625), would mean releasing further greenfield and open space. This could have negative effects on objectives such as biodiversity, amenity and health and wellbeing – being detrimental to some communities. Increasing densities is also viewed as unreasonable as it would change the historic nature of the City.

- 3.4.4 Another suggestion was that there should be increased growth to the East at an 'Eastern Gateway'. However, there is limited transport infrastructure and employment opportunities in these areas making it a less favourable growth area.
- 3.4.5 There may be potential for development to the east of Leicester along the A46 corridor, but this would need to be considered through Local Plans.
- 3.4.6 There was a suggestion that a strategy should be looked at which is less reliant on the A46. However options 5 and 6 take this approach by dispersing a greater amount of housing growth. Therefore this does not need to be tested further as an alternative approach.
- 3.4.7 Another suggestion was that there should be more than 38% of housing proposed on non-strategic sites. This would involve housing being distributed less strategically, and would not make the most of infrastructure. Furthermore, the Strategic Planning Group consider that the split between strategic and non-strategic sites/locations for growth is appropriate.

### 3.5 Methodology

- 3.5.1 The appraisal has been undertaken and presented against each of the ten sustainability topics established through scoping.
- 3.5.2 For each of the SA topics an appraisal table has been completed which discusses the likely effects for each option (see the SA Report). An overall score for each option is derived from an appraisal and understanding of the effects across the HMA in different spatial contexts. These 'building blocks' for each option are as follows (in-line with how the alternatives have been established):
- Effects on the City
  - Effects on the Urban Periphery (PUA)
  - Effects on Market Towns
  - Effects on 'other (rural) settlements'
  - Effects at new settlements / expanded settlements.
- 3.5.3 These individual elements are then considered together to establish an overall score for each option against the SA Objectives. A summary of the overall scores is provided in this non-technical summary.
- 3.5.4 When determining the significance of any effects, a detailed appraisal of factors has been undertaken to take account of:
- the nature and magnitude of development;
  - the sensitivity of receptors; *and*
  - the likelihood of effects occurring.
- 3.5.5 Taking these factors into account allowed 'significance scores' to be established using the system outlined below.
- |                   |     |                   |     |                              |   |
|-------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|------------------------------|---|
| Major positive    | ✓✓✓ | Minor negative    | x   | Neutral / negligible effects | - |
| Moderate positive | ✓✓  | Moderate negative | xx  | Uncertain effects            | ? |
| Minor positive    | ✓   | Major negative    | xxx |                              |   |
- 3.5.6 The assessment has been undertaken making-use of baseline information presented in the scoping report and mapping data. Whilst it has not been possible to identify exact effects due to sites not being established at this stage, we have made assumptions on the potential locations of development by referring to SHELAA sites and potential opportunity areas

identified by the Strategic Planning Group. There is a focus on strategic impacts at a settlement-level, rather than detailed local effects. Whilst every effort is made to make objective assessments, the findings are also based upon professional judgement and are therefore partly subjective.

### **3.6 Summary of appraisal findings**

- 3.6.1 Table 4 (page 18) presents the overall scores recorded for all twelve of the reasonable alternatives (i.e. the six distribution options at both scales of growth). A summary of the findings is discussed in this section.

#### Notional projected housing requirements (90,500 dwellings)

- 3.6.2 A dispersed approach is the least balanced overall; having the most negative effects for three sustainability objectives (transport and travel, landscape and land, cultural heritage). Therefore, despite having very positive effects for housing and health and wellbeing, it would be unlikely to achieve sustainable development.
- 3.6.3 From a social and economic perspective, the hybrid option appears to perform the best overall, as it is the only option that generates a major positive effect on both housing and economy without generating negative effects. The next best performing option is option 3, which also generates significant positive effects for housing and economy, but could generate some negatives. All other options would still generate positive effects on social and economic factors, but to a lesser extent.
- 3.6.4 However, despite performing well in terms of social and economic factors, option 3 would have more negative effects on land and landscape and cultural heritage compared to options 1, 2 and 4. Those options are not without their own difficulties though, with option 2 performing worst of all options in terms of biodiversity and option 4 performing worst of all options in terms of water. The hybrid option, on the other hand, is one of the better performing options with regards to environmental protection, despite potentially significant effects on landscape.
- 3.6.5 It is clear that the overall performance of options 1, 2, 3 and 4 is fairly similar in terms of sustainability 'as a whole'. However, each approach has more merits or issues for different aspects of sustainability.
- 3.6.6 What can be concluded from this appraisal is that option 5 should not form a major element of the spatial strategy. However, there is still merit to dispersing some growth as demonstrated by positive effects on health and housing associated with option 5.
- 3.6.7 It is also clear that the hybrid option best meets the economic aspirations of the growth strategy and supports housing in accessible locations whilst performing as well as any other option in terms of environmental protection objectives.

#### Higher growth options

- 3.6.8 With a 20% increase in housing to allow for 'flexibility', the broad trend for all options is for the negative effects to become more prominent across the HMA, whilst the positive effects do not increase as consistently or by the same magnitude.
- 3.6.9 For option 1, despite an improvement in the housing and economic factors, the effects on multiple environmental factors would become majorly negative and could be difficult to mitigate. There could also be major negative effects upon health and wellbeing.

- 3.6.10 The picture is similar for options 2 and 3, which would both see major negative effects for landscape and land and heritage, as well as more significant negative effects in terms of congestion, infrastructure and potential intrusion into minerals safeguarded areas.
- 3.6.11 Option 2 would have the most prominent negative effects on biodiversity at this level of growth compared to all other options (the same as for the lower growth scenario).
- 3.6.12 Option 3 would still remain the most positive with regards to the economy, even at this higher level of growth.
- 3.6.13 Option 4 would perhaps be best placed to accommodate even greater levels of growth, as the negative effects generated would be less significant compared to the other options. Nevertheless, the overall pattern is one of exacerbated negative effects on environmental factors compared to the notional projected housing requirement.
- 3.6.14 For option 5, major negative effects are also predicted for a range of environmental factors, including a rise in the significance of effects for water, biodiversity, climate change and minerals. The positive effects only rise in significance for transport and travel, as increased growth in rural areas could help to support/improve accessibility and services.
- 3.6.15 Option 6 would also see an increase in negative effects for many sustainability factors. The exception is an increase in significance of the positive effects on housing and economy.
- 3.6.16 For the higher growth scenario, option 5 does not score as badly in comparison to the other options; with it only scoring the poorest for climate change at this scale of growth. This is due to the negative effects of each other option rising at the higher level of growth.
- 3.6.17 The hybrid option was not tested at the higher level of growth as the preferred scale of growth is the housing needs figure not the higher projection.

### **3.7 Outline reasons for the selection of the spatial strategy**

- 3.7.1 The Strategic Planning Group has come to a decision on the preferred approach based upon a range of factors including; national policy, regional priorities for the economy and infrastructure investment, the need to protect local environmental and historic assets, and the findings of the SA process (presented in an interim SA Report).
- 3.7.2 Whilst none of the original reasonable alternatives have been taken forward in their entirety, the preferred approach does reflect elements of each option where they are in accordance with the preferred strategy. For example, option 5 is rejected in terms of the focus on rural settlements, but the level of growth at the City and the market towns for this option is broadly the same as the preferred approach.
- 3.7.3 As in the case of the draft Plan, the revised Plan has been developed to take advantage of significant new infrastructure capacity that is close to the anticipated key economic growth points. The A46 corridor represents an excellent opportunity to accommodate housing growth close to and with good transport links into the City, where anticipated job growth requires a workforce well in excess of that likely to be accommodated within Leicester and the urban periphery. Growth along this corridor is anticipated to help reduce the length of journeys to work, improve the prospect of non-car journeys and create additional jobs associated with the new housing areas in the corridor.



- 3.7.4 It is anticipated that a large amount of growth would be accommodated at new / expanded settlements. Consequently, the broad approach of option 4 has formed the basis for the growth strategy (but also drawing from elements of the other distribution options as appropriate).
- 3.7.5 In the southern part of the County the Southern Gateway has been deleted and the revised plan emphasises the importance of improvements to the A5 Corridor, particularly in terms of their relationship to the delivery of development that is already committed in Local Plans or with planning permission (the A5 Improvement Corridor).
- 3.7.6 Substantial numbers of new jobs are anticipated in this part of the County, in addition to the proposed road and rail infrastructure investment. The area will also be connected to the A46/M69 to the south-west and, via the new southern/eastern Leicester bypass, will be connected to the M1 via the proposed new Junction 20a. The amount of new homes in Harborough District has been reduced by 2,000 dwellings in recognition of the very high annual rate of delivery that the original figure would have required. Similarly, Lutterworth is no longer designated as a key centre for growth; instead growth in this area will be managed in Local Plans.
- 3.7.7 In the revised Plan, the Leicestershire International Gateway replaces the Northern Gateway. In this area, the homes are again likely to be in new settlements and expansions to existing urban areas such as Loughborough / Shepshed. Housing growth is justified by the economic growth anticipated in this location including at Loughborough (which is an important university town), the strategic rail freight interchange, HS2 interchange at Toton just outside the County boundary and growth of East Midlands Airport. North West Leicestershire District Council has been assigned an additional 1,200 dwellings in recognition of these growth opportunities.
- 3.7.8 The strategy sets an appropriate level of growth in Leicester City, which represents the current assessment of maximum capacity in the City from the period 2031-2050. Planning for greater levels of growth here is considered likely to stifle the capacity for employment growth (office, retail, leisure) and could also have greater potential for effects on biodiversity, health and wellbeing due to the loss of open space. Consequently, options 1 and 6 which both propose substantially higher levels of growth in the City are considered to be inappropriate in this respect. Planning for lower levels of growth in the City (rather than maximising potential) is considered to be unreasonable given the ongoing shortage of homes and the inability to meet fully objectively assessed housing needs. Furthermore, the SA does not identify any significant issues with regards to the level of growth proposed in the City.
- 3.7.9 The level of growth focused at the market towns is considered to be appropriate given that there are already significant developments in the pipeline for these areas up to 2031 and beyond. Around Loughborough / Shepshed, the Leicestershire International Gateway will increase development opportunities in this location and, in the revised Plan, Melton Mowbray has been designated as 'key centre for regeneration and growth' (emphasising the importance of regeneration to the town and its relationship with new growth).
- 3.7.10 In recognition of confirmed funding for the town centre bypass Melton Mowbray, has been assigned an additional 800 dwellings in the revised plan. Focused growth at the other market towns would not take full advantage of economic opportunities and strategic infrastructure upgrades. Consequently, options 2 and 3, which focus substantial growth to the other market towns, are considered less attractive in this respect.

- 3.7.11 The level of growth proposed at the rural settlements is limited, and reflects the strategic focus on larger-scale opportunities in more accessible locations. Consequently, options 5 and 6, which propose substantial dispersal of growth, are considered to be unattractive in this respect.
- 3.7.12 The SA findings broadly support the preferred strategy, as it would generate the most benefits in terms of employment and housing growth. The focus of growth at key areas of economic growth and infrastructure capacity is also likely to reduce the length of car trips, and encourage sustainable modes of travel (particularly where there are strong rail and bus links into the City). In terms of environmental effects, the preferred approach does not generate any major negative effects and performs better or the same as the alternatives in this respect.
- 3.7.13 The role of the Strategic Growth Plan is to establish broad preferred locations for longer term growth and thus to provide a framework for statutory local plans. The broad locations would evidently be able to accommodate a range of different growth levels, so if subsequent work based on updated evidence confirms that a higher level of growth ought to be pursued in certain locations, then this can be considered at that stage and the impacts analysed accordingly. What is clear at this stage is that a higher level of growth (than the projected OAN) will have largely negative impacts. This is supported by the SA findings which suggest that the negative effects for every option would be likely to increase, and this could lead to major negative effects on the built and natural environment, water, and transport infrastructure.

**Table 4 - Summary of appraisal scores for the twelve reasonable alternatives plus the hybrid option**

		Biodiversity	Health & wellbeing	Housing	Economy	Transport	Climate change	Landscape and land	Heritage	Water	Minerals
<b>Option 1</b> <i>PUA Focus</i>	1a	x	✓✓✓xx	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓/x	✓/?	x	xx/✓✓	x	-
	1b	xx	✓✓✓xxx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓/x	✓✓/xx	✓/x	xxx	xxx/✓✓	xxx	x
<b>Option 2</b> <i>Market town focus</i>	2a	xx	✓✓xx	✓✓	✓✓/x	✓✓/xx	✓✓	x	xx/✓	x	x
	b	xxx	✓✓xxx	✓✓	✓✓✓/xx	✓✓/xxx	✓	xxx	xxx/✓	xxx	xx
<b>Option 3</b> <i>Employment-led</i>	3a	x	✓✓✓xx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓/x	✓✓/xx	✓✓	xx	xx/✓	x	-
	b	xx	✓✓✓xxx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓/xxx	✓	xxx	xxx/✓	xx	x
<b>Option 4</b> <i>New settlements</i>	4a	x	✓✓xx	✓✓	✓✓	✓/xx	✓	x	x/✓	xx	?
	4b	xx	✓✓✓xxx	✓✓	✓✓✓/x	✓/xxx	-	xx	xx/✓	xx	x
<b>Option 5</b> <i>Dispersal</i>	5a	x <sup>?</sup>	✓✓✓x	✓✓✓	✓✓/x	✓/xxx	x	xxx	xxx/✓	x	x
	5b	xx <sup>?</sup>	✓✓✓xx	✓✓✓	✓✓/xx	✓✓/xxx	xx	xxx	xxx/✓	xxx	xx
<b>Option 6</b> <i>Trends</i>	6a	x	✓✓✓x	✓✓	✓✓	✓/x	✓/?	xx	xx/✓✓	x	?
	6b	xx	✓✓✓xx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓/x	✓/xx	-/x	xxx	xxx/✓✓	xxx	x
<b>Hybrid option</b>		x	✓✓✓/xx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓/xx	✓	xx <sup>?</sup>	x/✓	x	?



# **Appraisal of the Plan**

# **04**

## 4 APPRAISAL OF THE PLAN

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 This section presents a summary of the appraisal of the Plan considered 'as a whole'.
- 4.1.2 Whilst there are no policies as such proposed within the Plan (to support the spatial approach to development), it contains a range of broad principles that provide a framework for how growth should be delivered.
- 4.1.3 The key principles are:
- A focus on large scale sustainable developments.
  - The need to deliver the principles of the Garden City Concept.
  - The need to protect the built and natural environment.
  - Taking advantage of strategic infrastructure improvements.

### 4.2 Methodology

- 4.2.1 The appraisal was based upon the SA Framework, which consists of ten SA Topics, with supporting objectives and guiding questions.
- 4.2.2 When determining the significance of any effects, a detailed appraisal of factors has been undertaken to take account of:
- the nature and magnitude of development;
  - the sensitivity of receptors; *and*
  - the likelihood of effects occurring.
- 4.2.3 Taking these factors into account allowed 'significance scores' to be established using the system outlined below. Major and moderate effects are considered to be significant, whilst minor effects are not.

Major positive	✓✓✓	Minor negative	×	Neutral / negligible effects	-
Moderate positive	✓✓	Moderate negative	××	Uncertain effects	?
Minor positive	✓	Major negative	×××		

- 4.2.4 The assessment has been undertaken making-use of baseline information presented in the scoping report and mapping data. Whilst it has not been possible to identify exact effects due to sites not being established at this stage, we have made assumptions on the potential locations of development by referring to SHELAA sites and potential opportunity areas identified by the Strategic Planning Group. There is a focus on strategic impacts at a settlement-level, rather than detailed local effects. Whilst every effort is made to make objective assessments, the findings are also based upon professional judgement and are therefore partly subjective.

### 4.3 Summary of appraisal findings

4.3.1 **Table 5** below presents a summary of the effects associated with the final Plan. There is particular emphasis on identifying whether effects are significant or not.

4.3.2 Also presented is a range of potential monitoring measures to check whether positive effects are actually occurring or unforeseen negative effects arise.

*Table 5 - Summary of Plan effects including potential monitoring measures.*

SA Topic	Potential monitoring measures
<p><b>Biodiversity</b></p> <p><b>Uncertain negative effects</b> are predicted overall relating to the potential for localised effects on habitats and species as a result of large scale development. However, these effects are not predicted to be significant given the avoidance of the most sensitive areas and the focus on a Garden City concept.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Net loss/gain in designated habitats (ha).</li> <li>• Ecological enhancement schemes delivered at strategic sites.</li> <li>• Ecological water quality.</li> <li>• Establishment of a green infrastructure strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health and wellbeing</b></p> <p>A <b>significant positive effect</b> is predicted for health and wellbeing due to the potential to improve access to health services, community facilities and affordable housing.</p> <p><b>Minor negative effects</b> are identified with regards to a loss of open space and potential increase in air quality issues in the City.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Net change in open space provision.</li> <li>• Number of new health care facilities delivered.</li> <li>• Access to local green space.</li> <li>• Change in levels of deprivation in the top 20% areas.</li> <li>• Achievement of air quality objectives</li> </ul>
<p><b>Housing</b></p> <p>A <b>significant positive effect</b> is predicted overall for housing. This reflects the support for affordable and market housing in areas of need that are well located to employment opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rates of housing delivery.</li> <li>• Percentage of affordable housing delivered.</li> <li>• Availability of land for strategic development opportunities in the key locations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economy and employment</b></p> <p><b>Significant positive effects</b> are predicted for the economy and employment as the strategy seeks to help deliver and take advantage of infrastructure and economic growth opportunities. Housing growth is focused to areas that have good access to jobs, and ought to support increased local spending, provide jobs in construction, and provide accommodation for a growing workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gross Added Value Leicester and Leicestershire.</li> <li>• Unemployment rate.</li> <li>• Retention of working age population.</li> <li>• Changes in the levels of deprivation.</li> <li>• Change in numbers of people employed by sector</li> </ul>

SA Topic	Potential monitoring measures
<p><b>Transport and travel</b></p> <p>The Plan is predicted to have mixed effects on transport and travel.</p> <p>The close proximity of new homes to employment opportunities ought to reduce the length of travel. The focus on new settlements should also ensure that new communities have good access to local facilities and services. A <b>significant positive effect</b> is predicted in this respect.</p> <p>However, substantial growth around the City could put additional pressure on orbital routes and in and out of the Leicester. This could have <b>minor negative effects</b> in terms of congestion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and proportion of homes within walking distance of key public services, recreational opportunities and public transport services.</li> <li>• New / expanded public transport services secured through strategic development.</li> <li>• Average annual traffic flows.</li> <li>• Average trip length to access employment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Climate change</b></p> <p>The Plan is predicted to have a <b>minor positive effect</b> overall, reflecting a potential reduction in emissions from transport by directing the majority of growth to areas with good accessibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in the amount of carbon emissions generated from transport (per capita).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Landscape and land</b></p> <p>The Plan is likely to have minor negative effects with due to the likely loss of best and most versatile agricultural land.</p> <p>With regards to landscape character, an uncertain <b>moderate negative effect</b> is predicted overall, though significant effects could occur along the A46 corridor depending upon the location and layout/design of development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of best and most versatile agricultural land lost to development by grade.</li> <li>• Number of allotments established at strategic development sites.</li> <li>• Landscape character assessments to identify sensitive parcels of land at key growth areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural heritage</b></p> <p>The Plan is predicted to have both <b>minor positive effects</b> and <b>minor negative effects</b> on heritage.</p> <p>There is the potential for the character of settlements to be affected by large scale development and a loss of open space.</p> <p>Development in Leicester City in particular presents opportunities to enhance heritage assets that are currently in poor condition. The avoidance of negative effects across much of the Plan area is also a positive factor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of or change in the significance of designated heritage assets.</li> <li>• Townscape and landscape character assessments.</li> <li>• Amount of derelict land restored (ha).</li> <li>• Heritage assets removed or added from the 'at risk' register.</li> <li>• Net loss/gain of open space in Leicester City.</li> </ul>

SA Topic	Potential monitoring measures
<p><b>Water</b></p> <p>The Plan is predicted to have a <b>minor negative effect</b> overall, reflecting the potential for some development to be in areas at risk of flooding and an increase in the demands on water treatment infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of new development within flood zones 2 and 3.</li> <li>SUDs schemes incorporated into new developments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Minerals</b></p> <p>An <b>uncertain negative effect</b> is predicted as it is possible that new development in the areas identified for growth could overlap with Minerals Safeguarded Areas (particularly for sand and gravel).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amount of development within Minerals Safeguarding Areas (ha).</li> <li>Potential sterilisation of minerals at strategic development sites.</li> </ul>

#### 4.4 Mitigation and Enhancement

- 4.4.1 Where appropriate, recommendations were made as part of the appraisal of the draft Plan. These are summarised below, along with a response from the Strategic Planning Group to demonstrate how the recommendations have been taken into consideration.
- 4.4.2 A key principle is that the scope of the Strategic Growth Plan was to focus on the spatial distribution of development and infrastructure requirements, rather than the form of development. Therefore, it is expected that more detailed work would be deferred to later stages (i.e. through Local Plans and other strategic plans). There is also an assumption that measures can be addressed through the garden cities agenda, which is a key principle expected to be reflected in future detailed Plans.

*Table 7.2: Summary of recommendations*

SA Recommendations	Strategic Planning Group response
It would be beneficial for a green infrastructure strategy to be developed to identify how links between the City and the A46 corridor could be strengthened, ensuring that wildlife habitats are better connected.	A Landscape and Green Infrastructure Study informed thinking on the draft and revised versions of the Plan. This work will be taken forward in more detail as decisions are made, in Local Plans, on potential development sites.
In order to mitigate potential negative effects in terms of increased congestion and effects on air quality from vehicles, it would be beneficial to highlight a commitment to establishing the infrastructure to support electric vehicles.	The two highway authorities (Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council) are preparing a Strategic Transport Plan to provide an overall context for Local Transport Plans, statutory Local Plans and other strategies.
Additional positive effects could be generated by setting a policy framework that supports the protection, diversification and modernisation of rural businesses.	The future of rural areas will be addressed in Local Plans. There is a need to balance the need for agriculture and food production with the diversification of local economies.



<b>SA Recommendations</b>	<b>Strategic Planning Group response</b>
<p>Given the proposed concentration of growth at a series of large scale developments (which ought to be more viable for decentralised energy schemes), the Plan could set out a commitment to achieving low carbon development and explore how separate developments can be linked together to create better opportunities for sustainable developments.</p>	<p>The scope of work for the Strategic Growth Plan is to focus on housing, employment, infrastructure and environmental protection at strategic level. Climate change is a matter that is being addressed in Local Plans/Local Plan reviews and for specific development proposals.</p>



**Next Steps**

**05**

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## 5 NEXT STEPS

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- 5.1.1 The draft Plan was consulted upon during the period 11th January 2018 – 10th May 2018. Responses were submitted with regards to the Plan, and supporting evidence (including the SA Report).
- 5.1.2 Following consideration of consultation feedback, the Strategic Planning Group has now finalised the Plan. This involves a preferred approach for the scale and distribution of development in the long term and a number of key principles to guide growth.
- 5.1.3 The SA Report has been prepared to document the SA process that has been undertaken to inform the Plan; including an assessment of a draft plan and any reasonable alternatives.
- 5.1.4 This SA Report will accompany the final Plan to help to support Plan approval by each of the partner authorities.
- 5.1.5 It is anticipated that the Strategic Growth Plan will be approved in winter 2018/2019. At this time, a Sustainability Statement will be prepared, which sets out the SA process that has been followed and how this influenced the development of the Strategic Growth Plan.

