



The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

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1 . Non Technical Summary

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

1 Non Technical Summary

1.1 This chapter forms the first non technical summary for the SEA/SA process of the Stevenage Local Plan.

Introduction

1.2 Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local authorities to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. An SA promotes sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of new planning documents.

1.3 The Non-Technical Summary is part of the Sustainability Report for the draft Local Plan. The SA report has been produced alongside the emerging draft Local Plan (prepared under Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning Local Development (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008) in order to provide guidance on its development. The SA Report is available for consultation at the same time as the draft Local Plan to provide the public and statutory bodies with an opportunity to express their opinions on the SA Report and to use it as a reference in commenting on the draft Local Plan. This report presents the key findings to date of the Sustainability Appraisal on the draft Local Plan and provides background and ancillary information as appropriate.

The Local Plan

1.4 A Local Plan for Stevenage sets out the spatial strategy, long term spatial vision, strategic objectives and policies for development, and will eventually identify sites for development within Stevenage to cover the period up to 2031. It is based on the social, economic and environmental objectives of the Stevenage Sustainable Community Strategy together with other important strategic development needs such as employment, retail, leisure, community, public services, transport as well as mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change.

The Sustainability Appraisal

1.5 The purpose of the SA is to inform the decision making process, by highlighting the potential implications of pursuing a particular strategy or policy response. Therefore, the final version of the Local Plan may be further altered, if appropriate, to maximise benefits, and minimise adverse effects.

1.6 Sustainability Appraisals must be conducted in accordance with Government guidance on Sustainability Appraisals, and must meet the requirements of the European Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. An overview of the method used to undertake the SA on the draft Local Plan is set out below in the table below.

Table 1 The SA Process so far

Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on scope
The first Scoping Report was published for consultation with statutory stakeholders in February and March 2012 and provided a summary of the current environmental, social and economic conditions in Stevenage. This baseline information of the Scoping Report assisted in the development of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework. Responses from the consultation were taken into account and indicators were updated to develop the final version Scoping Report in support of the draft Local Plan, published in June 2013.

Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing their effects; and

Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report

This SA Report predicts and evaluates the significant effects of the various options presented as part of the first draft Local Plan. It does this by assessing the options against the Sustainability Objectives. Where appropriate, recommendations have been made to mitigate adverse effects and maximise beneficial effects. The SA Report also includes measures to monitor significant and uncertain effects of implementing the draft Local Plan.

Stage D: Consulting on the draft Local Plan and SA Report

The SA Report, along with the draft Local Plan are both available for public consultation for 6 weeks from 11 June 2013. The feedback received from this consultation will be considered for the next stage of the Local Plan process.

Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan

The Sustainability Appraisal makes recommendations for how significant and uncertain effects of the draft Local Plan should be monitored.

The Baseline

1.7 Stevenage is in the county of Hertfordshire about 30 miles north of London. It is the third largest town in the county and covers an area of approximately 26km². Stevenage has a population of around 84,000 residents.

1.8 Stevenage was the UK’s first new town, designated in 1946, and continues to provide the benefits of its New Town status. It provides opportunities for housing, leisure, employment and retailing close to home to meet peoples needs. Originally, six planned neighbourhoods made up the urban area of Stevenage. The town has since expanded and the urban area now encompasses eleven neighbourhoods.

1.9 Stevenage has long been a growing district, with the pressures of urban expansion from London extending into Hertfordshire. Its location is desirable for commuters into London, with trains servicing the station providing links with London Kings Cross and London Moorgate via the East Coast Mainline and the Hertford Loop. The A1(M), via junctions 7 and 8, provides good access to the town. Links east and west from Stevenage are less developed with movement primarily focused upon the road network. A comprehensive bus service provides access within Stevenage and to the surrounding localities.

1.10 Stevenage has an established employment sector providing a variety of employment opportunities, including the presence of a number of ‘footloose’ international companies. Stevenage also has an established town centre, which is currently the subject of regeneration work. The town centre provides a wide variety of retail services, though its physical appearance is tired. The redevelopment of the town centre will aim to address this concern, along with securing appropriate anchor companies to ensure the economic future of Stevenage.

1.11 The table below identifies key statistics in Stevenage for sustainability themes.

Theme	Baseline information
Biodiversity, flora and fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 39 Wildlife Sites all in stable condition ● 9 priority species in Borough

Theme	Baseline information
Population and human health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third largest town in Hertfordshire • Young population • High number of adults smoking and smoking related deaths • Falling crimes rates (30% drop since 2007)
Water and soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper Lee is over-abstracted • Local biological river water quality consistently 'fair' • Pockets of localised flood risk but generally low overall risk across the Borough • Water consumption is higher than national average • Urban nature of Borough increases risk of land contamination
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air quality is generally good • No major polluting source
Climatic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower greenhouse gas emissions than national, regional or county averages • 54% of CO² emissions from industry and commercial sources • Domestic energy consumption falling in line with national averages • Commercial and industrial energy consumption significantly higher than national averages
Material assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste recycling lower than national, regional and county averages • Development on previously developed land consistently high
Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 126 listed buildings (1 at risk) • 3 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (1 at risk) • 7 conservation areas (1 at risk) • 17 Archaeological Alert Areas
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 260ha of Green Belt within Borough, less than 0.5% of Hertfordshire total • 1 regionally important geological site (RIGS) • Limited number of properties fall within noise contours for Luton Airport
Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High income/house price ratio • Acute levels of local housing need • Most deprived district in Hertfordshire • An accessible town with good sustainable transport network
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low but improving levels of educational attainment • Unemployment higher than Hertfordshire and regional average but lower than national average • Those who live in the Borough tend to be paid lower average salary than those who work here • Median weekly wage for Stevenage resident £531.20 • New business start ups slightly below the county equivalent • Retail vacancy rates lower than national average

Without a Local Plan

1.12 In the absence of the draft Local Plan reliance will be had on national policies, and these may not always be appropriate for the local context of Stevenage. For example, as long as development proposals meet the NPPF definition of sustainable development, applications will need to be approved. This may result in a loss of employment generating land or lower than desired standards of sustainability of the built form. Development granted under the NPPF may not align with the local vision and objectives for Stevenage. Local opportunities would also likely be lost.

Key sustainability issues

1.13 The diverse character of Stevenage has given rise to a number of complex spatial issues that have been addressed in the draft Local Plan (see table below).

Characteristics	Key sustainability issues
<p>A Strong Competitive Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improving educational attainment. ● Increasing jobs particularly local jobs for local people. ● Tackling barriers to employment. ● New business development. ● Business retention. 	<p>There is a need to increase the number and variety of businesses in the Borough and help local residents access those jobs. For the workless population, the barriers to employment and enterprise can include low skill levels and low levels of educational attainment, reluctance to take 'low quality' jobs in some cases, difficulty finding suitable work within easy travelling distance and difficulty finding affordable childcare. The number of school places in the Borough is currently insufficient to meet future demand, both at secondary and primary level.</p>
<p>A Viable Town Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A viable, safe and well managed town centre. 	<p>New shops need to be located in a way that supports rather than undermines the existing town centre, and in areas of high public transport accessibility. Maintaining active street frontages and an appropriate mix of ground floor uses are also key issues along with the need to maintain and improve the environment, public realm and community safety.</p>
<p>Transport and Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good local access to services and facilities. ● Tackling congestion. ● Increase passenger transport accessibility, cycling and walking. 	<p>Passenger transport is generally good across the Borough. Pedestrian and walking facilities are excellent with a diverse network of route across and around the town.</p> <p>Vehicular transport is nearing capacity on some routes and is over capacity on the A1(M) during peak hours. Increasing capacity of this major route will need to be a key component of the Local Plan if the plan is expected to deliver significant levels of growth.</p> <p>Stevenage's future housing growth, economic development and environmental sustainability cannot be achieved without a wide array of essential infrastructure provided by a combination of council run services, partner statutory agencies and private sector companies. Some areas of infrastructure provision are particularly critical because they are already subject to considerable pressure for resources and / or additional land and facilities are required in order to support projected population and economic growth. These include public transport, school places, health and social care services, open space, facilities for policing the Borough and waste facilities.</p>
<p>High Quality Homes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to good housing. ● Affordable housing. ● Sustainable housing. ● Housing mix and types. 	<p>Affordability is a major challenge in Stevenage where the entry level price for housing is very high in relation to average household income. There is a specific shortage of affordable family sized accommodation and smaller units.</p>
<p>Good Design and the Historic Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heritage assets. ● Sustainable places. 	<p>The Borough's 7 conservation areas, numerous listed buildings, 3 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and archaeological alert areas are highly valued and should continue to be protected and/or enhanced.</p> <p>The development of sustainable places is a cornerstone of the planning system. The development of places that work well, places where people want to live, work and spend time, will be essential components of the Local Plan.</p>

Characteristics	Key sustainability issues
<p>Healthy Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Addressing health inequalities and the health needs of existing and new residents. ● Develop healthy communities and help improve and protect the health and well being of residents. 	<p>Health facilities need to be able to deliver services to an increasing population and should help address health inequalities that currently exist across the county. Access to leisure and recreation facilities needs to be improved for all residents in the Borough if significant growth is promoted.</p> <p>The continued reduction of crime and perceptions of crime in the built environment will also be important.</p>
<p>The Green Belt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A review of the Green Belt designation. ● A consideration of the long term future of the Green Belt. 	<p>There is significant pressure on the Green Belt for development. The urban area is tightly constrained and it will be necessary to undertake a review of the Green Belt to determine whether land may need to be released for development during the period of this plan and beyond.</p>
<p>Climate Change and Flooding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reducing CO2 emissions. ● Climate change adaptation, including flood risk management. ● Efficient use and management of resources. ● Efficient use and management of water: addressing increasing demand. ● Efficient use and management of energy. ● Efficient management of waste: increasing recycling rates and self sufficiency in waste disposal. ● Pressure on biodiversity and open spaces. 	<p>Flood risk is a key issue in some parts of the Borough, and the frequency and severity of flood events has the potential to increase as a result of climate change. Small parts of the Borough are located within the highest flood risk zone, generally along the main river designations.</p> <p>Further risks may arise across the Borough from sewer and surface water flooding.</p> <p>Development will need to minimise energy consumption, contribute toward renewable energy production and help improve the environment through sustainable design and construction.</p>
<p>The Natural Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better use of open space. ● Promoting biodiversity. ● Protecting key features of the natural environment. 	<p>Coverage of community facilities is unevenly spread across the Borough, with some neighbourhoods experiencing shortages of usable space, while others apparently have under-used facilities.</p> <p>Some areas, particularly in the north of the Borough, have limited access to natural and semi-natural open space. The current ratio of 1.78ha of unrestricted open space per 1000 population could decrease as a result of any population increase and housing growth, given limited opportunities to create major new areas of open space in the Borough.</p> <p>Pressures on open space will become even more intense across the Borough. There is a need to protect and enhance the wide range of habitats and species that contribute to the Borough's biodiversity.</p>

The Sustainability Appraisal Framework

1.14 The SA Framework is shown in the table below. The SA Framework was developed in the Scoping Report and will be updated in response to consultation comments received. This SA Framework has been used to test the spatial strategy and vision, strategic objectives and options for the draft Local Plan.

Objective		SEA Theme
1	To protect and enhance biodiversity in all areas and maintain and restore the full range of habitats and species to viable levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Biodiversity, flora and fauna ● Water and soils ● Landscape ● Air
2	To protect and enhance human health & wellbeing, meeting the needs of existing residents and encourage local population growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Population and human health ● Social inclusiveness ● Economic development
3	To protect and enhance water quality, encourage water conservation and reduce flood risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Water and soils ● Biodiversity, flora and fauna
4	To reduce land contamination and safeguard soil quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Water and soils ● Material assets
5	To minimise waste and increase recycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Material assets ● Water and soils ● Climatic factors
6	To maximise the quality of environmental conditions by limiting noise and air pollution, reducing greenhouse gas and carbon emissions and maximising the potential for renewable energy production.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Climatic factors ● Air ● Water and soils ● Material assets
7	To preserve and enhance areas and buildings designated for their historic and/or archaeological interest and protect their settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural heritage ● Landscape ● Social inclusiveness
8	To create places, spaces and buildings that work well, age well, look well and which enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of the local character and landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural heritage ● Landscape ● Social inclusiveness ● Population and human health
9	To improve access to all services, taking into consideration inequalities relating to age, gender, disability, race and faith.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social inclusiveness ● Population and human health
10	To address the causes of deprivation and ensure that everyone has access to decent, appropriate and affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social inclusiveness ● Population and human health ● Economic development
11	To reduce the need to travel and increase the use of sustainable methods of transportation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Air ● Climatic factors ● Social inclusiveness ● Population and human health ● Economic development
12	To improve access to skills, knowledge and education to ensure that people can gain access to appropriate and satisfying work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social inclusiveness

Objective		SEA Theme
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Population and human health ● Economic development
13	To support and grow the local economy, increase investment in people, equipment, employment, infrastructure and other assets ensuring that economic and employment centres remain efficient and viable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social inclusiveness ● Population and human health ● Economic development

Appraisal Findings

1.15 An appraisal has been carried out on the sustainability of the draft Local Plan's options. In brief, the following conclusions were made:

A strong, competitive economy

1.16 The appraisal shows that it would be most beneficial to provide policies which identify specific areas of land for specific employment uses. The Council should also seek to safeguard new land for employment, although the exact location of land might require mitigation measures.

A viable town centre

1.17 The Council should seek to allow all new retail floorspace to be developed in the town centre. This would align with the NPPF which states that town centres need to be recognised as at the heart of their communities and that councils should pursue policies to support their vitality and viability.

Transport and infrastructure

1.18 The Council should seek to encourage all opportunities for sustainable travel. This should include new or improved bus services, the encouragement of more flexible working and the improvement of pedestrian and cycle facilities.

High quality homes

1.19 It is recognised that previously developed land sites perform the best for housing allocations. Other potential site types would require mitigation measures to make development acceptable in planing terms.

1.20 Our evidence shows that around 40% of affordable housing could be achieved and the sustainability appraisal confirms this to be the best option.

1.21 There is an imbalance in the housing stock and an increasing demand for smaller properties so house conversions have the potential to improve the current housing mix. It is acknowledged that the Council should seek to include policy which restricts conversions to where existing access and facilities are not at risk.

1.22 Whilst there is a requirement for smaller properties, there is also high demand for large family homes. However, it is recognised that demand changes over time. The most sustainable option would be to acknowledge the most up to date evidence for demand.

1.23 The provision of additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches would best be located with the existing site at Dyes Lane. This performs well in terms of social inclusiveness. Alternative site options would need to be appraised if they are identified.

Good design

1.24 It is important to strike a balance between conservation and development and we need to decide whether to direct design through area based policies or not. Our appraisal shows that the application of criteria for development across the town would be more flexible and allow each site to be considered on its merits. It performs well in terms of encouraging growth whilst acknowledging that national guidance will protect heritage assets.

Healthy communities

1.25 Our evidence shows that some of the existing local and neighbourhood centres do not perform well. The appraisal shows that we should make changes to the existing designations to reflect the current nature of our centres and facilities. Whilst this may increase the need to travel we could consolidate services and ensure their continued viability.

1.26 With regards to health, the option to safeguard land at the Lister Hospital performs best in terms of long term health-care for Stevenage and the sub-region. If land is not identified for expansion we could severely limit the future success of this facility.

1.27 We have not identified specific options on leisure or education but we have introduced these issues in the draft Local Plan. If options are presented in the future then they will be assessed later in the SEA/SA process.

The Green Belt

1.28 Of three options presented for the future of the Green Belt, our appraisal shows that we should give priority to fully meeting the objectively assessed needs of the Borough to 2031 and beyond. It is recognised that this option would require mitigation measures but would have significant economic benefits over the longer term.

Climate change and flooding

1.29 This issue presents a number of measures which might be considered for inclusion within local planning policies. All of the options perform well in terms of environmental objectives but each one could increase risk to the viability of sites. The appraisal shows that relying on national targets or standards is the most appropriate proposal.

The natural environment

1.30 The appraisal of open space designations shows that the most appropriate option would be to take forward the approach contained within the current District Plan whilst making any necessary changes to reflect and change in circumstances since its adoption. Policy should also consider the allocation of smaller green spaces and this performs well in terms of local character and distinctiveness.

The historic environment

1.31 We have appraised whether we should include local policies to protect heritage assets, or rely on national guidance. It is recognised that, given the variety of styles and design throughout Stevenage, we should rely on national guidance. We have Supplementary Planning Documents already in place to support our conservation areas and all of our heritage assets are clearly supported through the NPPF.

Mitigation

1.32 Where necessary, the SA process has identified mitigation measures which may be required if particular options are progressed. It may be that these measures provide sufficient weight to balance any potential negative effects of a proposed option but this will be determined as we move further along the SA process.

Reasonable alternatives

1.33 Reasonable alternative approaches have been, and will continue to be, considered in developing the draft Local Plan. This SA has appraised the reasonable alternatives identified for a matrix of options, the outcomes of which will feed into the next plan making stages.



2 . What is a Sustainability Appraisal?

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

2 What is a Sustainability Appraisal?

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

2.1 Sustainability appraisal (SA) is a process undertaken during the preparation of a plan or strategy. Its role is to assess whether emerging policies and proposals will achieve the identified relevant environmental, social and economic objectives.

2.2 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, SA is mandatory for all Development Plan Documents (DPD).

2.3 This report comprises the first stage of SA of the emerging local plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

2.4 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic process for evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed plans or programmes to ensure environmental issues are fully integrated and addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision making.

2.5 SEA was introduced to the UK through the EU Directive 2001/42/EC. In England, this Directive has been transposed via the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Stevenage Local Plan has been screened as a plan that requires an SEA under the Directive.

2.6 This report comprises the first stage of SEA of the emerging local plan.

Combining SA and SEA

2.7 The requirements of undertaking an SA and SEA are distinct. The objectives of an SEA focus on environmental effects, whereas an SA is concerned with the full range of environmental, social and economic matters.

2.8 It is possible to undertake the two assessments together through a single appraisal process. Government guidance encourages the two appraisals to be undertaken together.

2.9 Government guidance identifies the following key areas to ensure that both SEA and SA requirements are met:

- Collecting and presenting baseline information;
- Predicting the significant effects of the plan and addressing them during its preparation;
- Identifying reasonable plan options and their effects;
- Involving the public and authorities with social, environmental and economic responsibilities as part of the assessment process;
- Monitoring the actual effects of the plan during its implementation.

2.10 This report uses an approach that addresses the requirements of both SEA and SA. It gives consideration to environmental issues whilst also addressing the range of socio-economic concerns.

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

2.11 Section 102 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) requires a Habitats Regulations Appraisal to be undertaken during the preparation of a local plan, if necessary.

2.12 The purpose of HRA is to assess the implications of a land use plan for European sites, in view of the sites' conservation objectives. Such sites are defined in Regulation 10 of the Habitats Regulations as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Ramsar sites are also considered within HRA as a matter of policy. HRA should ascertain whether the plan, on its own or in combination with other plans, is likely to adversely affect a site's integrity. If this is the case, or the Council is unable to ascertain that fact, it must examine alternative solutions which better respect the integrity of the site.

2.13 Stevenage's Local Plan may affect the Lee Valley SPA. We have identified this SPA because most of the sewage from Stevenage is treated near to the site.

2.14 A HRA process is being carried out for the local plan. Whilst the HRA will support the findings of the SEA/SA process, the HRA will be carried out independently and will be reported on separately.

Purpose of this report

2.15 This report has been prepared to ensure that documents in support of our local plan are compliant with European⁽¹⁾ and national law⁽²⁾.

2.16 'Sustainable development' is a phrase that has been used since the 1990s. It means making economic progress while also looking after our social and environmental needs. It also means not using too many of the resources that future generations might need.

2.17 The Government is committed to achieving sustainable development. Its strategy called Securing the Future (2005) sets out 5 guiding principles:

- Live within environmental limits;
- Ensure a strong, healthy and just society;
- Achieve a sustainable community;
- Promote good governance; and
- Use sound science responsibly.

2.18 Sustainable development is an important part of good plan making.

2.19 This report contains the sustainability appraisal of the local plan. It shows how we have considered the likely social, economic and environmental consequences of our policies. It also shows how we chose between different options.

2.20 This stage of the process falls in line with the development stage of the local plan process. This forms part of the evidence gathering process for the local plan.

1 Directive 2001/42/EC - the SEA Directive

2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004



3 . The Local Plan

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

3 The Local Plan

The Stevenage Local Plan

3.1 Stevenage Borough Council, as the local planning authority, is currently preparing a new local plan for Stevenage. This will replace the Stevenage District Plan 2nd Review, adopted in 2004, and the Interim Planning Statement, adopted in 2012.

3.2 The lifespan of the local plan will be from 2011 to 2031.

Table 2 Key facts relating to the new Stevenage Local Plan

Name of responsible authority	Stevenage Borough Council.
Title of plan	Stevenage Local Plan.
What prompted the plan	The plan will follow the Stevenage District Plan 2nd Review, which covered the period 1991 to 2011 and the Interim Planning Policy Statement. The plan is being developed following the implementation of the Localism Act (2011) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).
Subject	Planning - as part of the local Development Plan.
Period covered by the plan	From 2011 to 2031.
Area covered by the plan	Administrative area of Stevenage Borough Council.
Purpose and/or objectives of the plan	The Objectives of our plan are yet to be determined but we consider that they will include the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create healthier lifestyles; ● Develop affordable homes; ● Reduce fear of crime; ● Increase the range of employment opportunities; ● Regenerate the town centre and the neighbourhood centres; ● Create cleaner and greener communities; and ● Promote better transport.
Plan contact point	<p>Planning Policy Team, Stevenage Borough Council, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, SG1 1HN.</p> <p>Telephone - 01438 242161</p> <p>Email - planningpolicy@stevenage.gov.uk</p>



4 . Approach to the Sustainability Appraisal

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

4 Approach to the Sustainability Appraisal

4.1 The Council, statutory consultees, other environmental bodies will be engaged in the SEA/SA process at different times.

4.2 This chapter sets out the broad approach to the overall process, the stages involved, and highlights where the relevant information can be found in this scoping report and future reports.

Stages of the SEA/SA process

4.3 There are five key stages for the SA process. These are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 The Sustainability Appraisal Process

SA Stage	Description
Stage A	Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope.
Stage B	Developing and refining options.
Stage C	Appraising the effects of the DPD.
Stage D	Consultation on the document and sustainability appraisal report.
Stage E	Monitoring the implementation of the document.

4.4 The stages for both the SEA and SA processes overlap. Table 4 provides a summary of the key stages of the SEA process as shown in our Scoping Report. The first column of the table broadly indicates where the stages overlap with the the SA process. Those shaded in grey indicate the stages covered in this report. The third column indicates where information about each respective stage can be found in this document.

Table 4 SEA/SA stages, and stages covered in this and other reports

SA Stage	SEA Stage	
Stage A	Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding upon the scope	Location in report
	A1: Identify other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives	In Scoping Report.
	A2: Collecting baseline information	
	A3: Identifying environmental problems	
	A4: Developing SEA objectives	
	A5: Consulting on the scope of the SEA	
Stage B	Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects	
&	B1: Testing the plan objectives against the SEA objectives	In future report as developed.
Stage C	B2: Developing strategic alternatives	Chapter 8 and Appendix 1 and future SA/SEA process.
	B3: Predicting the effects of the draft plan, including alternatives	

	B4: Evaluating the effects of the draft plan, including alternatives	
	B5: Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects	Appendix 1
	B6: Proposing measures to monitor the environmental effects of plan implementation	Chapter 6 and future reports
	Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report	
	C1: Preparing the Environmental Report	Combination of SEA/SA process.
Stage D	Stage D: Consulting on the draft plan and Environmental Report	
	D1: Consultation on the draft plan and Environmental Report	See SEA and future reports.
	D2: Assessing significant change	In future report.
	D3: Decision making and providing information	In future report.
Stage E	Stage E: Monitoring the implementation of the plan	
	E1: Developing aims and methods for monitoring	Chapter 6 and future reports.
	E2: Responding to adverse effects	In future report.

The Environmental Report

4.5 The SEA Directive requires the preparation of an ‘Environmental Report’, which sets out the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the draft plan. This is a key output in the SEA process. The scoping report and this sustainability appraisal report will eventually meet the requirement of an ‘Environmental Report’.

4.6 Table 5 illustrates how the requirements of the SEA Regulations have been met in this scoping report, or will be met in future documents.

Table 5 Environmental Report requirements

Stages of Environmental Report	Sections of this report
1. An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan, and of its relationship (if any) with other relevant plans and programmes.	In Scoping Report & future iterations of this SA
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan.	
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds and Directive 92/43/EEC on habitats.	In Scoping Report
5. The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	In Scoping Report
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects, and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, on issues including (a) biodiversity; (b) population;	Chapter 5, 7, Appendix 1 & future iterations of this SA

(c) human health; (d) fauna; (e) flora; (f) soil; (g) water; (h) air; (i) climatic factors; (j) material assets; (k) cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; (l) landscape; and (m) the inter-relationship between the issues referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (l).	
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan.	Appendix 1 & future iterations of this SA
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information.	In future report
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with regulation 17.	Chapter 5 & future iterations of this SA
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 9.	In future report



5 . Scoping the key issues

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

5 Scoping the key issues

Other relevant plans, policies and programmes

5.1 In order to establish a clear scope for the SA of the local plan it is necessary (and a requirement of SEA) to review and develop an understanding of the wider range of policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives that are relevant to the plan. This includes international, European, national, regional and local level policies, plans and strategies. Summarising the aspirations of other relevant policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives (hereafter referred to as 'relevant plans') promotes systematic identification of the ways in which the plan could help fulfil them.

5.2 A thorough review of relevant plans and programmes was undertaken during the SA/SEA scoping stage in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive, this included considering the wider plans reviewed as part of the development of the evidence base for the local plan. This review is included within the Scoping Report 2013, available on the Council's website.

The baseline

5.3 Collection of baseline information is required under SEA legislation, and is fundamental to the SA process to provide a background to, and evidence base for, identifying sustainability problems and opportunities in Stevenage and providing the basis for predicting and monitoring effects of the local plan. To make judgements about how the emerging content of the plan will progress or hinder sustainable development, it is essential to understand the economic, environmental and social circumstances in Stevenage today and their likely evolution in the future. The aim is to collect only relevant and sufficient data on the present and future state of the Borough to allow the potential effects of the plan to be adequately predicted.

5.4 The SA Guidance provided by Government proposes a practical approach to data collection, recognising that information may not yet be available, and that information gaps for future improvements should be reported as well as the need to consider uncertainties in data. Collection of baseline information should be continuous as the SA process guides plan making and as new information becomes available.

5.5 SA Guidance advises that, where possible, information should be collated to include:

- Comparators - (ie the same information for different areas) - as points of reference against which local data may be compared;
- Targets, which will highlight how far the current situation is from such thresholds; and
- Trends - to ascertain whether the situation is currently improving or deteriorating.

5.6 Baseline data for Stevenage's Local Plan has been identified and is detailed within the Scoping Report 2012, available on the Council's website. The report draws together national, regional and local data to enable assessment of the current situation within the Borough.

5.7 The key issues that arose from the baseline profile are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Baseline data for Stevenage

<p>Biodiversity, flora and fauna</p> <p>Demand for growth will place pressures on biodiversity in some areas of Stevenage. There is potential for international, national and locally designated sites to be affected by growth options. Links between areas create important wildlife corridors and may come under threat as development sites are identified and changing levels of surface water run off could affect the habitat of Stevenage Brook. There are increasing recreational pressures on Wildlife Sites.</p>
<p>Population and human health</p> <p>Stevenage, in common with many other areas, is experiencing an ageing population. This will have implications for health service provision and accessibility to other services, facilities and amenities. There is also a lower than average male life expectancy.</p> <p>The local population have lower than average levels of physical activity; higher than average levels of child obesity; higher than average levels of children living in poverty and higher than average levels of smoking related deaths.</p>
<p>Water and soils</p> <p>There are existing low flow levels in local river systems and local sections of waterways are classified as 'at risk'.</p> <p>The local aquifer is over-abstracted, there is a higher than average household water consumption and groundwater is vulnerable to pollution. Localised areas susceptible to fluvial flooding and surface water flooding.</p> <p>Land contamination at sites previously used for industrial purposes must be considered.</p>
<p>Air quality</p> <p>Emissions from road traffic have the potential to be a continuing issue and new housing and employment development areas have the potential to lead to impacts on air quality from increased traffic flows. New business development also has the potential to lead to negative air quality impacts.</p>
<p>Climatic factors</p> <p>There is an increased incidence of drought as a result of climate change is likely to reduce water levels. High quality habitats have the potential to be affected by changes in rainfall and invasive species. CO² emissions have remained stable and there is a need to ensure that emissions are reduced.</p> <p>Domestic energy consumption should continue to drop but commercial and industrial energy consumption is significantly higher than regional and national averages.</p>
<p>Material assets</p> <p>Recycling rates are less than national and county averages.</p> <p>There may be pressures on greenfield land dependent on growth options so there is a need to maximise the number of completions on previously developed land.</p>
<p>Cultural heritage</p> <p>The pressure for development in historic areas increases as the positive management of an area improves its attractiveness to businesses and developers. The impact of new development on heritage assets must be carefully managed.</p> <p>The Borough has archaeological potential to varying degrees and is not confined by heritage designations. Key elements of urban character are protected by Conservation Areas and Listed Building designations.</p>

<p>Landscape</p> <p>Although direct impacts on the landscape are unlikely, increased development could increase recreational pressure on the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.</p> <p>The amount of protected Green Belt land in Stevenage has decreased by 30% in the last decade, though this needs to be viewed in a broader context. Plans and policies need to ensure the continued protection of the most important structural green spaces within the urban area.</p>
<p>Social inclusiveness</p> <p>The affordability of housing is a key issue and there is a pressing need to diversify housing stock in both the private and social sectors.</p> <p>There are areas of significant deprivation, particularly around the town centre and parts of Bedwell which feature among the most deprived areas of the country.</p> <p>There is currently a good coverage of the public transport, pedestrian and cycle networks although some gaps have been identified. A new plan should encourage use of alternate modes of transport to the private car and attempt to arrest and then reverse decades of decline.</p>
<p>Economic development</p> <p>Low levels of educational attainment in schools needs to be tackled alongside improvements in qualification levels amongst the working population.</p> <p>There is a need to achieve a closer match between the demand and supply of labour by increasing the supply of affordable housing and introducing training and education measures that will improve local access.</p> <p>An urban renaissance is required that respects the New Town status. This should include the town centre and retail provision will need to significantly improve to maximise the regeneration of the town.</p> <p>Stevenage must be firmly established as a focal point for economic growth between London and Cambridge, by supporting key areas of economic development such as biotechnology and research and development.</p> <p>An adequate supply of high quality business land and premises that meet the needs of the town's diverse economy will need to be provided.</p>



6 . The SA Framework

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

6 The SA Framework

6.1 The SA Framework provides the basis by which the sustainability effects of the emerging local plan will be described, analysed and compared.

6.2 The Scoping Report 2013 sets out a list of objectives which have resulted from an assessment of the key sustainability issues for Siteevenage.

6.3 The framework will be reviewed as the local plan progresses to accommodate recommendations resulting from the consultation exercises. Table 7 outlines some of the decision aiding questions we will consider when evaluating the effects of each option.

Table 7 Analysing the objectives

SA Objective	Decision aiding questions. Does the policy....
Biodiversity <i>SEA themes: Biodiversity, flora and fauna</i>	
1. To protect and enhance biodiversity in all areas and maintain and restore the full range of habitats and species to viable levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> protect and enhance designated and locally valued habitats and species? prevent and reverse habitat fragmentation, where possible promote understanding of and access to biodiversity? provide opportunities for provision and enhancement of a network of greenspaces?
Health and population <i>SEA themes: Population, human health</i>	
2. To protect and enhance human health & wellbeing, meeting the needs of existing residents and encourage local population growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> protect and increase the provision of and accessibility to community, cultural and recreational facilities? require design that ensures safe, attractive places and engenders a sense of place? require design that promotes healthy lifestyles and increased physical activity? increase accessibility to health facilities and encourage multi-functional use of facilities? ensure residents have access to healthy and affordable food through, for example, the provision of allotments? meet the needs of an ageing population?
Water <i>SEA themes: Water, soils, biodiversity, flora and fauna</i>	
3. To protect and enhance water quality, encourage water conservation and reduce flood risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> require the use of water efficiency measures? manage and minimise risk of flooding including regard to future climate change (promotion of adaptation measures)? promote the adoption and use of sustainable drainage systems? protect ground and surface water sources: quality & quantity? progress compatibility with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive? promote access to water for recreation, enjoyment and understanding (including valued biodiversity/ habitats)?
Soil <i>SEA themes: Soils</i>	
4. To reduce land contamination and safeguard soil quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prioritise the use of previously developed land to minimise greenfield development? protect soil resources and manage in a sustainable way? make the best use of available land?

SA Objective	Decision aiding questions. Does the policy....
Waste and recycling <i>SEA themes: Material assets</i>	
5. To minimise waste and increase recycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● help reduce waste and facilitate recycling in construction and operation? ● encourage composting?/ ● encourage development that is self-sufficient in waste management? ● support the recovery of energy from waste?
Environmental quality <i>SEA themes: Air quality, climatic factors, human health, soils, water</i>	
6. To maximise the quality of environmental conditions by limiting noise and air pollution, reducing greenhouse gas and carbon emissions and maximising the potential for renewable energy production.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● improve air quality, e.g. through transport management and reduction of employment related emissions? ● reduce and manage noise pollution? ● reduce and manage the impact of light pollution? ● ensure there is no pollution of water sources? ● ensure there is no pollution of the soil? ● require the use of sustainable building standards?
Heritage <i>SEA themes: Cultural heritage</i>	
7. To preserve and enhance areas and buildings designated for their historic and/or archaeological interest and protect their settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● protect and where appropriate enhance the historical and archaeological environment (landscapes, sites, buildings and settings), including resources of local value? ● support, develop and where appropriate enhance and increase access to cultural & heritage resources and activities? ● help accommodate new development without detriment to the existing built and cultural heritage?
Good design <i>SEA themes: Cultural heritage, population, human health</i>	
8. To create places, spaces and buildings that work well, age well, look well and which enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of the local character and landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● promote recognition of local distinctiveness and a sense of place in style, materials and scale within the public realm? ● make best use of existing buildings through reuse and conversion? ● promote innovation in sustainable design for new and heritage development? ● promote integration of new development with existing context/design? ● recognise the role of the community in securing good design? ● maintain important landscape features?
Access to services <i>SEA themes: Material assets, population and human health</i>	
9. To improve access to all services, taking into consideration inequalities relating to age,gender, disability, race and faith.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ensure inclusion of all sections of the community? ● ensure equality of access to services? ● integrate new and existing communities? ● encourage community cohesion and a sense of community ownership? ● reduce social exclusion of disadvantaged groups? ● support the provision of community facilities, for example cultural, health, recreational and social facilities? ● ensure the delivery of infrastructure that meets the needs of new and existing development? ● ensure appropriate timing and phasing?
Housing <i>SEA themes: Population and human health</i>	

SA Objective	Decision aiding questions. Does the policy....
<p>10. To address the causes of deprivation and ensure everyone has access to decent, appropriate and affordable housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● deliver affordable and sustainable housing both in keeping with local character? ● support the sympathetic accommodation of housing growth in sustainable locations? ● balance housing and employment land delivery with community facilities and environmental capacity? ● provide for an appropriate mix of dwelling size, type, density and phasing to meet local needs? ● provide for a range of housing to meet the needs of specific groups, (e.g. the elderly, disabled, young, Gypsies and Travellers) and adaptable housing that meets the needs of people in different life stages?
<p>Travel SEA themes: Air quality, climatic factors, population, material assets</p>	
<p>11. To reduce the need to travel and increase the use of sustainable methods of transportation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● support delivery of quality public transport that is accessible to all sections of the community? ● enable the enhancement of a network of footpaths and cycle links between homes and work and community facilities? ● support the need to reduce travel, especially during peak times? ● locate new development to reduce the need to travel? ● help create an integrated sustainable transport system, for example through providing for safe storage for cycles, respect for users of shared road space, green lane linkages?
<p>Skills SEA themes: Population & human health, material assets</p>	
<p>12. To improve access to skills, knowledge and education to ensure that people can gain access to appropriate and satisfying work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● help improve educational attainment? ● help promote higher level education? ● provide jobs matching local skills? ● improve access to jobs? ● provide land allocations in appropriate locations to meet the needs of new and existing businesses?
<p>Investment SEA themes: Population and human health</p>	
<p>13. To support and grow the local economy, increase investment in people, equipment, employment, infrastructure and other assets ensuring that economic and employment centres remain efficient and viable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● provide a diverse range of jobs that meet the needs of local people? ● ensure jobs are located in sustainable locations? ● reduce both out commuting and in commuting? ● support the regeneration of the town centre? ● support live work units & working from home? ● balance suitable employment with housing growth? ● encourage environmentally and socially responsible employment and help to create local markets for local goods/services? ● aim towards establishing a low carbon economy for Stevenage?

6.4 On the basis of our identification of the sustainability issues and the presentation of baseline data, our SA Framework will be monitored via the indicators outlined in Table 8. Each objective will be measured via a combination of indicators. The following table outlines each objective, the relevant indicators and their source. Where targets have been set these are also included. For

the complete set of data, with comparisons where appropriate, please refer to our Monitoring Dataset⁽³⁾. The data we decide to use for our monitoring purposes might change as we develop our plan. Future iterations of this SA will reflect this as appropriate.

Table 8 - The SA Indicators

Indicator	Data source	Trends
Objective 1 - To protect and enhance biodiversity in all areas and maintain and restore the full range of habitats and species to viable levels.		
Number and extent of Wildlife Sites	Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.	Area covered by designations has increased by 9% since 2009.
Implementation of BAP Actions	Stevenage Borough Council.	BAP adopted in 2010, 36% of actions already completed or in progress.
Area of important habitats	Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Natural England and Forestry Commission.	Area of Borough covered by woodland and grassland has remained relatively stable. Area of Wetland has declined considerably since 2006.
Priority species for Stevenage	Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.	Local populations of Pipistrelle Bat and Great Crested Newt are declining. Populations of Badger and Bluebell are stable. Data gaps identified.
Number of ancient lanes and hedgerows	Stevenage Borough Council.	Number of ancient lanes and hedgerows has remained stable at 18 since designation in 2004.
Area of land in Green Belt	Stevenage Borough Council	Land removed from Green Belt as a result of District Plan 2nd Review 2004. Area has remained stable since at 258ha.
Green Links	Stevenage Borough Council.	Number of Green Links has remained stable at 8 since designation in 2004.
Objective 2 - To protect and enhance human health & wellbeing, meeting the needs of existing residents and encourage local population growth.		
Population profile	Office for National Statistics.	Overall population has increased by 5% since 2001. The largest population gain since 2001 has been in the 45 - 59 age band. In terms of percentage, the greatest next greatest relative increase has been in the 75+ group; the number of our residents in this age category has increased by just over a quarter since 2001.
Life expectancy rates	Office for National Statistics.	Since 2001, life expectancy for our residents in Stevenage has risen steadily. Life expectancy for female residents has remained broadly in line with the national average. Life expectancy for male residents has not improved at the same rate.
Identification of areas of health concern	Office for National Statistics, Department of Health, National Obesity Observatory, NHS Information Centre, Sport England.	In 5 year period, smoking during pregnancy, teenage pregnancy and childhood obesity have fallen. The number of adults participating in exercise has increased by almost 2%.

3 The Monitoring Dataset is a live document, updated as new data becomes available. Please see our website for further details

Indicator	Data source	Trends
		However, the number of adults smoking has steadily increased and the number of obese adults has increased by more than 5%.
Access to services	Stevenage Borough Council.	Since 2004, net dwelling completions within 30 minutes public transport of schools, areas of employment and the town centre have increased to 100%. Completions within 30 minutes of the hospital have fluctuated over the same period.
Quantity of public open space	Stevenage Borough Council.	The quantity of open space has remained stable since 2006, although the per 1,000 of the population figure has steadily declined in line with growth.
Recreational facilities	Stevenage Borough Council.	The number of recreational facilities has remained stable since 2006.
Crime rates	Hertfordshire Constabulary, Home Office.	'All crime' rate has decreased by more than 40% since 2005.
Objective 3 - To protect and enhance water quality, encourage water conservation and reduce flood risk.		
Average household water use per capita	OFWAT, Anglian Water, Affinity.	In the 2005 to 2010 period, Affinity recorded a 5% decrease in water consumption and Anglian Water recorded an increase of 3%.
Health of groundwater resources	Environment Agency.	The local aquifer has been recorded as 'over-abstracted' since 2006.
Chemicals present in the water systems	Environment Agency.	Currently no trend data available. Currently each of the 3 data collection points are categorised as 'at risk'.
Applications implementing water conservation techniques	Stevenage Borough Council.	Limited trend data available. From 2010/11 to 2011/12 period, the percentage of major applications incorporating water conservation techniques increased from 9% to 80%.
Environment Agency advice on applications	Environment Agency.	Number of applications where an EA objection was unresolved has remained at 0 since data collection started in 2007.
Number of flood storage reservoirs	Stevenage Borough Council.	Number has remained stable at 10 since FSRs designated.
Objective 4 - To reduce land contamination and safeguard soil quality.		
Housing completions on previously developed land (PDL)	Stevenage Borough Council.	Since 2008, more than 80% of dwelling completions have been on PDL.
Objective 5 - To minimise waste and increase recycling.		
Household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting	Stevenage Borough Council and DEFRA.	Household waste sent for recycling has steadily increased since 2002 from 15% to almost 40%.
Residual household waste per household per kg/household	Stevenage Borough Council and DEFRA.	Residual waste per household has steadily decreased since 2002 by 35%.

Indicator	Data source	Trends
Collected household waste per person	Stevenage Borough Council and DEFRA.	Collected waste per household has steadily decreased since 2006 by 15%.
Objective 6 - To maximise the quality of environmental conditions by limiting noise and air pollution, reducing greenhouse gas and carbon emissions and maximising the potential for renewable energy production.		
Number of Air Quality Management Areas	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council.	There has never been a recorded need to use Air Quality Management points in Stevenage.
Annual mean Nitrogen and Particulate levels	Stevenage Borough Council.	There has been 1 automatic monitoring site for N02 and PM10 recording since 2006. Results since 2006 have fluctuated but, overall, N02 levels have reduced by 3% and PM10 levels have reduced by 26%.
Employment emissions	Stevenage Borough Council.	No trend data is currently available.
CO2 emissions per capita	Department of Energy and Climate Change.	Emissions have steadily declined from 6.8 tonnes per capita to 6.0 tonnes per capita. This is in line with county and regional averages.
Energy use	Department of Energy and Climate Change.	Domestic electricity use has decreased by 0.6% since 2003, whilst commercial use has increased by 0.4%. Domestic gas use has decreased by 22%, whilst commercial use has decreased by 17%.
Energy consumption	Department of Energy and Climate Change.	Overall total energy consumption has decreased by 16%, this is slightly less than regional and national trends.
% of energy from renewable sources	Department of Energy and Climate Change.	No trend data is currently available.
Renewable energy	Stevenage Borough Council.	No trend data is currently available.
Transport share of greenhouse emissions	Department of Energy and Climate Change.	Since 2005, Stevenage transport emissions have steadily reduced by 8.2% from 38.7 tonnes to 34.7 tonnes. This is a greater reduction than seen across Hertfordshire (7%), regional and national averages (both 5%).
Kyoto reduction targets of CO2 emissions	Department of Energy and Climate Change.	Emissions, by sector, have steadily decreased alongside regional and national averages.
Climate averages	Met Office.	Average temperatures, days of rainfall and sunshine have broadly changed in-line with regional and national averages.
Noise complaints	Stevenage Borough Council.	The number of noise complaints, per 1,000 population, has steadily decreased by over 20% since 2001.
Objective 7 - To preserve and enhance heritage assets designated for their archaeological, architectural, artistic and/or historic interest and protect their settings.		
Number and area of conservation areas	Stevenage Borough Council.	The number and area of conservation areas increased in 2007 through the designation of two new areas. Since 2001, the area covered by conservation area designations has increased by 67%.

Indicator	Data source	Trends
Number of Listed Buildings	English Heritage.	Since 2001, there have been two new listed building designations.
Number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments	English Heritage.	The number of SAMs has not changed since our records began in 2008.
Number of heritage assets 'at risk'	English Heritage.	The number of heritage assets at risk has fluctuated over the years as some assets fall into disrepair prior to their reinstatement. Two assets have remained on the list for more than three years.
Objective 8 - To create places, spaces and buildings that work well, age well, look well and which enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of the local character and landscape.		
Number of Code for Sustainable Homes Assessments	Stevenage Borough Council.	No trend data is currently available.
Number of BREEAM assessments	Stevenage Borough Council.	No trend data is currently available.
Area of land in Green Belt	Stevenage Borough Council	Land removed from Green Belt as a result of District Plan 2nd Review 2004. Area has remained stable since at 258ha.
Objective 9 - To improve access to all services, taking into consideration inequalities relating to age, gender, disability, race and faith.		
Population profile	Office for National Statistics.	See Objective 2.
Access to services	Stevenage Borough Council.	See Objective 2.
Quantity of public open space	Stevenage Borough Council.	See Objective 2.
Number of recreational facilities	Stevenage Borough Council.	See Objective 2.
Number of community services	Stevenage Borough Council.	See Objective 2.
Objective 10 - To address the causes of deprivation and ensure everyone has access to decent, appropriate and affordable housing.		
% of children living in low-income households	Department of Revenue and Customs	This has increased from 19.8% in 2006/07 to 20.6% in 2010/11. This follows the regional trend (15.8% to 16.5% in the same period) although the county and national trends have remained fairly consistent at 14% and 21% respectively.
Index of Multiple Deprivation ratings	Department of Communities and Local Government.	Data is available every 3 years from the 2004/05 period. Consistently, Bedwell is the most deprived ward and Manor is the least deprived. The % of SOAs among the 20% most deprived in England has remained consistent at 1.9%. The % of SOAs among the 20% most deprived in Hertfordshire has decreased steadily from 42.3% in 2004/05 to 38.5% in 2010/11.

Indicator	Data source	Trends
Housing affordability (income and price)	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council.	Housing affordability has fluctuated since 2003 but overall has improved the most for the purchase of detached properties. Property price/income ratios for semi-detached, terraced and flats have also fluctuated but in the 2011/12 period they remain consistent with data for the 2003/04 period.
Affordable housing supply	Stevenage Borough Council.	Supply of affordable homes has gradually increased since 2008 from 19.0% to 25.3% in 2011.
Housing trajectory	Stevenage Borough Council.	Since 2003/04, net completions in Stevenage gradually increased to a peak of 368 in 2008/09. In the 2011/12 period there were 241 completions.
Right-to-buy sales	Stevenage Borough Council.	Properties sold through the 'right-to-buy' have decreased by 97% from 265 in the 2001/02 period to 9 in 2011/12.
Number of authorised gypsy and traveller sites	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council.	After an extension to Dyes Lane in 2009, the number of authorised pitches increased from 14 to 17. There have been no further changes.
Number of permitted gypsy and traveller sites	Stevenage Borough Council.	
Housing density	Stevenage Borough Council.	Average densities for new developments have fluctuated since 2004/05 with a peak of 108 in 2008/09. This reflects the high number of flatted developments constructed at this time. The average density, across the recorded period, is 59dph.
Affordable housing completions	Stevenage Borough Council.	Net affordable housing completions fluctuate with the property market and peaked at 201 in the 2007/08 period.
Types of homes available	Stevenage Borough Council.	<p>Since 2006/07, the number of new build properties with 1-2 bedrooms increased considerably from 70.8% of total completions to a peak of 91.9% in 2008/09. This reflects the development of a particularly large flatted development at this time. Since that peak, these home types have decreased to an all time low of 65.3% in 2011/12.</p> <p>The number of new build properties with 3-4+ bedrooms therefore hit an all time low of 9.1% in 2008/09 and has since steadily increased to 34.7% in 2011/12.</p>
Council tax bands	Stevenage Borough Council.	<p>Since 1993, the highest relative increase of 117% has been in Band H, although with only 13 properties recorded in the 2011/12 period, this data is not reflective of the overall stock.</p> <p>The greatest increase has been in Band A at 62%. Bands D, E and F have broadly similar increases of 44%, 50% and 50% respectively.</p>
Number of aspirational homes	Stevenage Borough Council.	The % of properties in the highest tax bands (G&H) has consistently remained at only 1.2% across Stevenage

Indicator	Data source	Trends
		since 2001. This is less than the county (9.2%), regional (4.4%) and national (4.1%) averages.
Objective 11 - To reduce the need to travel and increase the use of sustainable methods of transportation.		
Mode of travel to work	Hertfordshire County Council, Office for National Statistics.	Provisional data from the 2011 Census shows that there have been slight increases in travel by public transport and private car in the past ten years. Fewer people cycle, slightly more people walk. Overall, the greatest reduction has been in the working from home category. In 2001, 7% of the resident workforce worked from home, compared with only 3% in 2011.
Distance travelled to work	Hertfordshire County Council, Office for National Statistics.	Data shows that people are gradually working further from home. In 2002/03, 32% of the local resident workforce worked within 3 miles of home, compared with 20% in 2009/10.
Number of employees in-commuting to Stevenage	Hertfordshire County Council, Office for National Statistics.	No trend data is currently available.
Green Travel Plan production	Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council.	Where required, a Green Travel Plan has always been provided in support of an application.
Access to buses	Stevenage Borough Council.	The % of Stevenage residential properties within 400m of a bus stop has remained consistently high in excess of 99%.
Objective 12 - To improve access to skills, knowledge and education to ensure that people can gain access to appropriate and satisfying work.		
% of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A to C	Department of Education.	When compared with county, regional and national averages the relative increase in the % of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A-C has been significantly greater at the local level. Since 2005/06, the total for Stevenage has increased from 46.9% to 71.8%.
Number of NVQ qualifications	Office for National Statistics.	In the same period (as above) NVQ qualifications have also increased. The greatest increases have been in the NVQ1+ and NVQ4+ categories.
Objective 13 - To support and grow the local economy, increase investment in people, equipment, employment, infrastructure and other assets ensuring that economic and employment centres remain efficient and viable.		
Number and total of s.106 obligations	Stevenage Borough Council.	Insufficient data is available for trend analysis.
Net retail, employment and leisure floorspace	Stevenage Borough Council.	Land developed for employment use has fluctuated, with an all time high of 35,000m ² of B Class development in the 2008/09 period. Since 2004/05 (where planning applications advise) the D2 floorspace totals have remained constant with the exception of an increase in 2011 due to the replacement of a nightclub with a children's play centre. Retail completions have been steadily increasing which reflects the low vacancy rates in the town centre and the Old Town.

Indicator	Data source	Trends
Number of jobs and vacancies	Office for National Statistics, Hertfordshire County Council.	Insufficient data is available for trend analysis on the number of jobs. The number of job vacancies has declined steadily in line with county, regional and national averages since 2006.
Employment rate	Office for National Statistics.	The % of people of working age in employment has gradually decreased from 80.3% to 74.2% in line with county, regional and national averages since 2004.
Unemployment rate	Office for National Statistics.	The current unemployment rate matches the current national average of 8.1%. Since 2004, rates have been consistently above the county and regional figures.
Survival of new businesses	Office for National Statistics.	From 2005/06 to 2008/09, local businesses fared well. Since the peak in 2008/09, there have been net losses in the survival of new enterprises. Generally, this runs counter to the performance seen across the county, region and nationally.
Employment land supply	Stevenage Borough Council.	Since 2004, employment land supply increased to a 29ha peak in 2006/07. Since that time supply has fluctuated as sites come forward for development. Our data shows 20ha available in the 2010/11 period.
Employment land take-up	Stevenage Borough Council.	The net change in employment land take up has remained consistently low since our records began in 2008.
Floorspace of retail units	Stevenage Borough Council.	Since 2009, retail monitoring has been completed for the town centre and Old Town. This data shows us that vacancy rates have remained consistently low with little change in the overall amount of floorspace available.
Proportion of long term unemployed	Office for National Statistics.	The proportion of people claiming unemployment benefit who have been out of work for more than a year has remained fairly consistent at around 1% since 2006. Within each period the data has remained either aligned with, or slightly above, county, regional and national averages.
Claimant count	Office for National Statistics.	The claimant count has been monitored since 2001 and data shows that, for Stevenage, a peak of 4% was matched in 2009/10, 2011/12 and 2012/13. Generally speaking, the count has been marginally higher than county and regional rates. Until 2009/10 rates were below the national rate for Great Britain but have remained marginally higher since.
Average weekly earnings	Stevenage Borough Council.	<p>The resident based median gross weekly earnings for full-time employee jobs have increased by 35% since 2002. These earnings have increased at a much faster rate than those for the county, region and Great Britain. However, it is acknowledged that earnings for Stevenage residents are currently paid 9% less than across the county.</p> <p>The workplace based median gross weekly earnings for full time employee jobs have increased by 42% since 2002. These earnings have increased at a significantly</p>

Indicator	Data source	Trends
		<p>faster rate than those for the county, region and Great Britain. Workplace employees in Stevenage are currently paid 12% more than across the county.</p>
Type of jobs available	Office for National Statistics.	<p>Since 2004/05, more jobs are available for senior managers, professional occupations and care/leisure occupations. Significantly fewer jobs have been available for plant operatives and technical positions.</p> <p>Similar changes have been noted nationally, although there has been an increase in technical positions across the county and the country.</p>



7 . Consultation

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

7 Consultation

7.1 The key sustainability issues were identified through the SEA scoping process that was placed on consultation by Stevenage Borough Council with statutory consultees. A summary of their responses is shown in the SEA Scoping Report.

7.2 This Sustainability Appraisal Report is being published alongside the updated Scoping Report and the Local Plan Regulation 25 document, in accordance with SEA Regulations and SA Guidance. It will be published on the Council's website www.stevenage.gov.uk and sent to statutory consultees and other relevant stakeholders.



8 . The Sustainability Appraisal

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

8 The Sustainability Appraisal

8.1 The Local Plan options have been developed from the key issues as highlighted from our Baseline Review⁽⁴⁾. Our options aim to enhance and encourage the positive trends currently experienced within certain sectors but should seek to address any negative issues. This Sustainability Appraisal is informed by the SEA and our extensive evidence base. We will use the SA Framework (See Chapter 6) to determine how each policy decision might affect environmental, social and economic factors across the town.

8.2 The options presented have been guided and developed to take into consideration the broad sustainability issues and, therefore the following section provides a summary of the assessment of the options against the sustainability framework.

8.3 Each issue is cross referenced to the SEA via the identification of relevant themes and the Options presented at this stage are identified and summarised below. The detailed matrix based appraisals are shown in Appendix 1.

Issue 1 - The role of the sub-region

8.4 We have not identified specific options which can be appraised in terms of sustainability. If options are presented in the future then they will be assessed later in the SEA/SA process.

Issue 2 - Identifying the main challenges

8.5 We have not identified specific options which can be appraised in terms of sustainability. If options are presented in the future then they will be assessed later in the SEA/SA process.

Issue 3 - A vision for the future

8.6 We have not identified specific options which can be appraised in terms of sustainability. If options are presented in the future then they will be assessed later in the SEA/SA process.

Issue 4 - NPPF model policy

SEA Themes	Covers all themes through the presumption in favour of sustainable development.	
Options	A	Include the 'model policy' suggested by the Planning Inspectorate.
	B	Include a locally-specific version of the model policy suggested by the Planning Inspectorate.
	C	Do not include a model policy about the NPPF.

How were the options identified?

8.7 The first option has been suggested by the Planning Inspectorate. We must decide whether this is the best approach for Stevenage. It might be considered that a locally specific version of the policy might be more appropriate, or that we need not include the policy at all. Our plan will be in compliance with the NPPF so whether this is required, when we should not include irrelevant policies in our plan, is also debated.

4 Contained within the SEA Scoping Report, 2013

A summary of the SA findings

8.8 Overall it is considered that Options B and C perform equally. Both options require locally specific policies which are in compliance with the NPPF. It is considered that Option A might be overly restrictive.

Issue 5 - The relationship between homes and jobs

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Prioritise jobs over homes and / or seek higher levels of self containment.
	B	Seek a reasonable balance between new homes and jobs.
	C	Prioritise new homes over jobs and / or seek lower levels of self containment.

How were the options identified?

8.9 The options were selected after careful consideration of the NPPF principles which favour sustainable development. Option B offers a balance between homes and jobs and the alternative options consider extremes for development of these two sectors.

A summary of the SA findings

8.10 Overall it is recognised that Option B performs the best. Options A and C, whilst offering greater returns in development terms for either homes or jobs, do not provide a balance of overall sustainable development. Options A and C fail to deliver positive benefits across each objective.

Issue 6 - Skills

SEA Themes	Economic Development.	
Options	A	Allow the free market to decide what types of jobs are provided .
	B	Focus on highly-skilled and professional jobs.
	C	Make sure we provide an appropriate range of jobs to meet the rising skill levels of all residents.

How were the options identified?

8.11 The options were identified through our evidence base. Our Employment and Economy Baseline Study acknowledges that the market in which residents seek work is working much less well than the market in which firms in the Borough seek labour. In essence, local employers are able to attract a workforce from an area much wider than Stevenage and local residents are disadvantaged because of low education and skills levels.

8.12 We must decide whether to let the market decide which jobs come forward or to direct growth by using planing policy to focus on highly skilled and professional jobs or provide a balance which addresses a range of local opportunities.

A summary of the SA findings

8.13 Overall, Option C is the most sustainable providing a range of jobs which meet local needs and support the local economy.

Issue 7 - The town centre, the Old Town and the retail warehouses

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Allocate all of the predicted new comparison floorspace to the town centre, replace existing small shop units with larger units (especially in places like Park Place and the area of the bus station) and improve the shopping streets and car parks.
	B	Split the predicted new comparison floorspace between the town centre, the Old Town High Street and the retail warehouses.
	C	Allocate all of the predicted new comparison floorspace to the retail warehouses, either through allowing new units to be built or existing units to be extended.

How were the options identified?

8.14 The options were identified via our evidence base.

A summary of the SA findings

8.15 Overall, it is considered that Option A provides greater opportunities for existing and future residents by enabling a focus of activity within the highly accessible town centre. Options B and C perform less well in terms of sustainability and would require a number of mitigation measures to make development acceptable, principally adherence to the Exception Test.

Issue 8 - Development viability

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Prioritise the collection of contributions towards local infrastructure (CIL).
	B	Prioritise the provision of affordable housing.
	C	Prioritise the sustainability of new buildings.

How were the options identified?

8.16 Although these options are not formally addressed in the local plan consultation, they have been assessed in terms of sustainability. There are three key components which affect development viability: affordable housing; s106/CIL; and increased efficiency in building techniques. It is necessary to understand how each component should be balanced to achieve viable development which provides for local need.

A summary of the SA findings

8.17 Overall, each approach provides both positive and negative effects in terms of sustainability. Option A provides supporting infrastructure, but at the expense of building more affordable homes and more energy efficient homes. However, where positive effects have been identified it is recognised that their effect is significantly more positive.

8.18 Option B provides more affordable homes, but at the expense of supporting infrastructure and more energy efficient homes. This option provides some major positive effects but it is recognised that overall this approach is unachievable. There will need to be a careful balance as any type/mix of new homes must be supported by key items of infrastructure.

8.19 Option C provides more energy efficient homes, but at the expense of supporting infrastructure and higher levels of affordable homes. In sustainability terms, this option performs well at the environmental level but generally poorly in terms of socio-economic objectives.

Issue 9 - Borough housing target

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
	A	Urban capacity (2,800)
	B	Borough-wide capacity (5,300)
	C	Population-led (6,600)

How were the options identified?

8.20 The options were identified in a number of different ways. They present:

- the maximum number of homes we could accommodate within the town (Option A);
- the maximum number of homes we could accommodate within the Borough boundary to meet the 'with migration' housing target as required by the NPPF (Option B);
- the number of homes we need to meet the need when considering that immigration and emigration levels are equal over the period of the plan (Option C).

A summary of the SA findings

8.21 Option A promotes a total based on the urban capacity of the town, that is to say mostly the number of brownfield sites available for development. Whilst this option performs well in terms of biodiversity, it is recognised that it still fails to meet local housing needs. It fails to meet the needs of existing residents and does not encourage population growth.

8.22 Options B and C promote totals which performs better than Option A as they provide more homes overall. However, both options would still fail to meet local needs and some difficult decisions might need to be made on what sites were made available to accommodate the growth. They would have an adverse effect on biodiversity.

8.23 It is recognised that Option C performs better in terms of supporting the local economy. It supports and grows the local economy by providing greater levels of housing for the population, further addresses deprivation through the delivery of affordable homes and provides access to services.

8.24 We have also assessed three further options as identified via our assessment of housing requirements from 2011-2031. The Highways Agency previously suggested that the capacity of the A1(M) might severely restrict growth in the Borough.

8.25 They proposed that more than 1,000 new dwellings would trigger an objection to our Local Plan. Option i presents an option which would have made the growth of Stevenage acceptable to the Highways Agency. This options would fail to meet local needs and would lead to a severe shortage of homes, particularly affordable homes which we are keen to promote, for local people. The Highways Agency have recently advised us that they would not object on this basis. The option is retained within the SA as it formed part of our preliminary work towards developing the list of options for consultation.

8.26 Option ii performs similarly to Option C with more homes improving performance against Objectives 2 and 10. Option iii would supply the necessary number of affordable homes to meet local need. Overall, it is considered that both of these options perform well, although Option iii out-performs in terms of affordable housing supply.

Issue 10 - Gunnels Wood

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Continue with a very open policy approach.
	B	Identify specific areas for specific uses.
	C	Allow a range of job-creating uses in addition to traditional employment uses.
	D	Allow a specified part of the area to be re-developed from employment use to housing.

How were the options identified?

8.27 The Council have previously consulted on options to zone areas in the draft Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan for specific types of employment use. This approach builds on the 2004 District plan policy by developing more detailed guidance for the area of Gunnels Wood. We should also appraise whether the approach in the District Plan (2nd Review) of 2004 is a suitable option. Both of these options encourage the development of specific employment uses in the area of Gunnels Wood.

8.28 It may be found that, as an overall strategy, the direction towards specific use classes is inappropriate. The inclusion of other types of employment uses, or housing to meet our local needs, may be an appropriate approach. These will also be appraised.

8.29 Clearly, there are a number of use classes that might be considered for this area. However, given our tight urban constraints, and the demonstrated need to allocate land for homes and jobs, these are the realistic options we have opted to appraise.

A summary of the SA findings

8.30 Option A would enable B class uses to be developed across Gunnels Wood. In terms of sustainability, a key negative effect is that by allowing the unrestricted development of B class uses, there would be limited control on the number of low density businesses. For example, a large collection of distribution centres would utilise a large percentage of land in Gunnels Wood but only provide limited employment opportunities for local people.

8.31 Option B provides a number of zoned areas where specific land types are allocated. Overall, this option performs well in terms of sustainability for all objectives where there is a recognised effect, except one - the provision of affordable housing.

8.32 Option C would enable a greater range of job-creating uses to locate in Gunnels Wood. This option performs well in improving access to work opportunities and increasing investment. However, key negative effects would be the lack of strategic control on the connectivity of the area and in determining the appropriate balance of employment types to meet local need.

8.33 Option D would relinquish part of the area for housing. Whilst this performs well in terms of supporting local population growth and access to affordable housing it is recognised that this does not support employment growth and investment.

Issue 11 - Pin Green

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Continue with a very open policy approach.
	B	Identify specific areas for specific uses.
	C	Allow a range of job-creating uses in addition to traditional employment uses.
	D	Allow a specified part of the area to be re-developed from employment use to housing.

How were the options identified?

8.34 The Council have previously consulted on options to restrict unit sizes and refuse permissions for offices in Pin Green via the draft Site Specific Policies DPD. This approach may no longer be appropriate. We should also appraise whether the approach in the District Plan (2nd Review) of 2004 is a suitable option. Both of these options encourage the development of specific employment uses in the area of Gunnels Wood.

8.35 It may be found that, as an overall strategy, the direction towards specific use classes is inappropriate. The inclusion of other types of employment uses, or housing to meet our local needs, may be an appropriate approach. These will also be appraised.

8.36 Clearly, there are a number of use classes that might be considered for this area. However, given our tight urban constraints, and the demonstrated need to allocate land for homes and jobs, these are the realistic options we have opted to appraise.

A summary of the SA findings

8.37 Option A would enable B class uses to be developed across Pin Green. In terms of sustainability, a key negative effect is that by allowing the unrestricted development of B class uses, there would be limited control on the number of low density businesses. For example, a large collection of distribution centres would utilise a large percentage of land in Pin Green but only provide limited employment opportunities for local people.

8.38 Option B provides some restriction on the type of B class uses within Pin Green. Overall, this option performs well in terms of sustainability for most objectives where there is a recognised effect, with two exceptions. The first negative assessment is the lack of provision of affordable

housing and the second is the lack of control over B class uses with potentially adverse environmental effects. Mitigation measures for developments near the surrounding residential areas would need to be considered if this option were preferred.

8.39 Option C would enable a greater range of job-creating uses to locate in Pin Green. This option performs well by improving access to work opportunities and increasing investment. However, key negative effects would be the lack of strategic control on the connectivity of the area and in determining the appropriate balance of employment types to meet local need.

8.40 Option D would relinquish part of the area for housing. Whilst this performs well in terms of supporting local population growth and access to affordable housing it is recognised that this does not support employment growth and investment.

Issue 12 - New employment land

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Air, Climatic Factors, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Work with North Hertfordshire District Council to deliver a new 30 hectare (ha) employment site at Junction 7 of the A1(M).
	B	Safeguard or allocate around 6 ha of land to the west of North Road.
	C	Safeguard or allocate up to 10 ha of land to the east of North Road as part of a new neighbourhood.
	D	Safeguard or allocate around 7 ha of land to the north of Stevenage Road.
	E	Safeguard or allocate around 7 ha of land to the west and south-west of Junction 8.
	F	Safeguard or allocate up to 10ha of land to the west of the A1(M) as part of a new neighbourhood.
	G	Do not safeguard or allocate any new employment land.

How were the options identified?

8.41 The NPPF is clear that we should plan positively and encourage sustainable economic growth. Our strategic employment study recognises that the site at Junction 7 has the strongest strategic location of any potential new sites on the edge of Stevenage. There are limited options within the urban area, most sites would only be considered for mixed use developments. We need to provide a number of opportunities and investment options on a much larger scale than can be accommodated within the existing urban area.

8.42 The allocation of land at junction 7 will require us to work closely with North Hertfordshire District Council and therefore presents considerable risk in terms of deliverability. Alternative options were devised following a borough-wide review of potential sites.

A summary of the SA findings

8.43 Option A performs poorly in environmental terms but is the best performing option in terms of socio-economic opportunities. It is the largest site and will require the cooperation of North Hertfordshire District Council for delivery. Strategically the best option, alternative options consider land allocations wholly within the Stevenage boundary.

8.44 Option B would not require the rollback of the Green Belt, although the site is currently greenfield. This option performs the best overall but does not offer the same economic potential as Option A.

8.45 Option C would require a roll back of the Green Belt (only Option B does not). It therefore performs poorly in terms of biodiversity but well across all other objectives where an effect has been identified.

8.46 Options D and E perform poorly in terms of environmental effects and are very difficult to access by foot or cycle, increasing the need to travel by alternative means. Additionally, Option E is affected by areas at risk of flooding. They both perform well across all other objectives where an effect has been identified.

8.47 Option F would not require the rollback of the Green Belt, although the site is currently greenfield. Located at the edge of the urban area this option would require significant supporting infrastructure to be sustainable. In terms of overall size, this option provides the greatest benefits to the local economy.

8.48 Option G is the most sustainable in environmental terms as it would not require the allocation of land for development. However, it is recognised that this option performs poorly in socio-economic terms and will not provide for local need. This option could lead to a reliance on neighbouring authorities for provision of employment opportunities.

Issue 13 - Detailed retail

8.49 We have not identified specific options which can be appraised in terms of sustainability. If options are presented in the future then they will be assessed later in the SEA/SA process.

Issue 14 - A new foodstore

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Identify one or more neighbourhood centres to be redeveloped with new foodstores.
	B	Identify a completely new site for a large foodstore.
	C	Allow extensions to existing large foodstores and/ or neighbourhood centre shops.

How were the options identified?

8.50 These options were developed considering all reasonable options for increasing convenience provision as required/identified through our evidence base. This might be through the extension or redevelopment of existing premises or through the allocation of a new site.

A summary of the SA findings

8.51 Overall it is recognised, at this stage in the local plan process, that Option C would be the most appropriate option. However, it is recognised that many of the effects of these options must be classed as unknown until such a point as specific sites have been identified.

8.52 Option A might provide the most appropriate option for an under-performing site but it may risk the mixed use function of an existing centre. It is also recognised that the delivery of this option would require significant capital investment, partnership agreements and time.

8.53 Options B provides a more simplistic approach to delivery although the unknown location of any potential site poses a number of questions. It is difficult to fully appraise this option. It is also recognised that this option will enhance service delivery at a single location.

8.54 Option C provides a choice to extend facilities in areas of greatest need and at locations already well serviced by sustainable transport options. This option also provides an opportunity to enhance the design and function of existing centres.

Issue 15 - Passenger transport, walking and cycling

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Air, Climatic Factors, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Provide new or improved bus services.
	B	Encourage more flexible working and home-working.
	C	Improve pedestrian and cycling facilities.
	D	Do all of the above.

How were the options identified?

8.55 The options are based upon guidance from the NPPF to encourage sustainable transport options but also recent evidential work. Our Urban Transport Plan (2010) has identified weak links in the pedestrian and cycle network. However, we realise that it would be practicable to promote all of these measures.

A summary of the SA findings

8.56 All of the options perform well by encouraging and improving the use of the sustainable transport network. It is clear that a combined approach which includes Options A to C will provide the greatest benefits in terms of sustainability. No negative effects or measures for mitigation have been identified.

8.57 Previously, the Highways Agency had suggested that they would raise an objection to the development of more than 1,000 dwellings within Stevenage. In light of this position, we assessed the impact of making improvements to the A1(M), shown as Option i against the issue in Appendix 1.

8.58 This option presents some negative effects relating to the environment which would require further mitigation. In terms of sustainability, it is considered that the wider benefits to growth outweigh impacts which could be mitigated to a satisfactory conclusion. The medium to long term positive effect on creating places that work well would be improved through a combination of approaches.

8.59 The Highways Agency have recently stated that they would not object to a growth plan of more than 1,000 homes. The assessment is included as part of the valid SA process which has determined options for consultation.

Issue 16 - The location of new homes

8.60 We have not identified specific sites which can be appraised in terms of sustainability. We have appraised 'types' of sites that might come forward as part of the local plan process. Specific sites will be assessed as they come forward in the future.

8.61 The following site types were assessed in general terms:

- Previously developed land (PDL)
- Employment land
- Greenfield sites within the urban area
- Greenfield sites outside the urban area

8.62 Overall, it is recognised that PDL sites perform the best in terms of sustainability. The use of employment land or open space would require mitigation measures to make development acceptable in planning terms.

Issue 17 - House conversions

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness.	
Options	A	We could permit house conversions in all circumstances.
	B	We could only permit house conversions where existing and potential residents are not adversely affected.
	C	We could not permit any house conversions.

How were the options identified?

8.63 Our evidence shows that there is an imbalance in the housing stock and an increasing demand for smaller properties. Therefore, house conversions have the potential to improve the current housing mix. However, the incremental development of conversions can have a negative impact on the local infrastructure.

A summary of the SA findings

8.64 Option A performs well in terms of sustainability but it is acknowledged that, left unmanaged, the incremental development of house conversions would increase pressure on local services. Although providing housing need for a growing population, this option would have a negative impact upon the needs of existing residents.

8.65 Option B is preferred as it provides a sustainable alternative to housing supply. The re-provision of under-used larger properties into smaller properties, which are in greater demand, performs well in sustainable terms. Option B is further enhanced by a provision to ensure that local services and infrastructure are not subjected to greater pressure. This option performs well against a number of our objectives with no known negative impacts.

8.66 Option C does not perform well. The removal of conversions as an option for housing supply will require local housing need to be delivered elsewhere. This will perform poorly for many environmental objectives as the demand for land supply will increase, having a negative effect on biodiversity, pollution and flood risk.

Issue 18 - Affordable housing

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness.	
Options	A	We should set targets that require up to 40% affordable housing on qualifying sites.
	B	We should set targets that are higher than Option a.
	C	We should set targets that are lower than Option a.

How were the options identified?

8.67 Development sites that might come forward in the plan period are a mix of large and small sites. If we calculate the average number of homes which might come forward from all of our sites we can see that a total of around 40% affordable housing could be achieved. Our evidence shows that larger sites can afford to provide a little more. We are also consulting on whether we should provide more than the 40% average (Option B), or less (Option C).

A summary of the SA findings

8.68 Option A is preferred as it maximises the potential for affordable housing whilst limiting negative effects on the economic viability of sites. This option will support objectives which seek to meet the needs of residents, reduce deprivation and support and grow the local economy.

8.69 Option B ensures that a significant proportion of affordable housing would be built. This option would achieve a considerable step change in the provision of affordable housing and reduce deprivation. However, over time, the increase of affordable housing will perform poorly as less market value homes are provided. This does not meet sustainability objectives as it will lead to an imbalance in the social make-up of the town. It may also render many development sites unviable and lead to a long term stagnation in the local development industry.

8.70 Option C would ensure that more market value homes are made available. This option fails to meet the needs of residents through an under-provision of affordable housing. This will lead to further out-migration as more people are unable to afford to live in Stevenage. It may also increase the need to travel for those workers that seek to live elsewhere.

8.71 Overall, it is recognised that lower provision might stimulate the delivery of sites and deliver the greatest change in the balance of current stock. However, it is acknowledged that lower provision will fail to meet the local demand for properties and further increase social deprivation. It is considered that Option A affords a balanced approach to provision.

Issue 19 - Housing mix

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	We should follow the recommendations of our evidence base.
	B	We should focus on large family homes.
	C	We should focus on flats and units for first time buyers.

How were the options identified?

8.72 Our evidence studies show that there is a current imbalance in the housing mix. There are significantly more terraced properties with 3 bedrooms. There are deficiencies in smaller units and aspirational housing.

A summary of the SA findings

8.73 Option A is preferred as it provides a flexible approach to housing mix, responding to market needs at the time of delivery. This option will have long-term positive effects on meeting the needs of an existing and growing population as it will cater to the needs of all sections of the community. It will also improve opportunities for access to decent and appropriate housing.

8.74 Option B ensures that sites will concentrate on the provision of larger homes, which will provide for the housing demand of families. This option will not however cater for the demand of small sized dwellings for the elderly and those residents attempting to step onto the property ladder. This option will therefore have a negative effect on meeting the needs of an existing and growing population. It will also increase the need to travel as local workers have a limited choice of property types available.

8.75 Option C ensures that sites will concentrate on the provision of small units, which will help to provide for an identified ageing population and a lack of homes for first time buyers. Whilst this option performs a little better than option B in terms of reducing deprivation, it will not cater for the demand of medium sized dwellings for families. This will therefore have a negative effect on meeting the needs of an existing and growing population. It will also increase the need to travel.

Issue 20 - Gypsies and Travellers

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health and Social Inclusiveness.	
Options	A	Extend the existing site at Dyes Lane.
	B	Identify a new site, probably near Junction 8 of the A1(M).
	C	Identify a different site elsewhere.

How were the options identified?

8.76 The existing site at Dyes Lane is located west of the A1(M). The site is fully occupied and provides accommodation for a locally established need. The potential for Dyes Lane is considered as Option A and a further two options are based on work completed in support of our evidential base.

A summary of the SA findings

8.77 Option A performs the best overall as it proposes the extension of a well established site. It would provide immediate continuity and cohesion within an existing community. Options B and C are difficult to appraise appropriately at this time but it is recognised that they would provide the same positive effects as Option A through the delivery of accommodation for local need and support of the local economy. The locational appraisal of individual sites, if identified, would provide a more comparable baseline in future versions of the Sustainability Appraisal.

Issue 21 - Character zones

SEA Themes	Cultural Heritage and Landscape.	
Options	A	Carry forward the approach in the Old Town Area Action Plan for this part of the town.
	B	Extend the character zone approach to cover the whole town.
	C	Do not use area-based policies and apply generic criteria to all applications for development.

How were the options identified?

8.78 It is important to strike a balance between conservation and development and we need to decide whether to use area-based policies or not. The Council have previously consulted on the option to use character zone based policies within the Old Town Area Action Plan and this stage of the emerging Local Plan considers whether this is an appropriate option for the area of the Old Town, the town as a whole, or whether generic criteria should apply to all applications.

A summary of the SA findings

8.79 Option A will identify the distinctive features and areas that, in combination, define the character of the Old Town. This option enables the area of the Old Town to develop in a manner which is consistent with the local character. Restrictions on scale and massing within the area remove the flexibility to develop the area using innovative methods that might have a reduced impact on the street scene. Limiting the opportunities for development will reduce housing numbers. In the long term this will not help to meet the needs of existing residents or encourage population growth in a very sustainable part of the town.

8.80 This option performs well in preserving and enhancing the area of the Old Town and helping to create places that work well. However, it is recognised that this approach performs poorly in terms of the promotion of growth and investment.

8.81 Option B expands the positive and negative issues associated with character zones across the town. It is recognised that this option performs poorly in the medium to long term by restricting growth across the town. Restrictions on scale and massing remove the flexibility to develop areas by placing overly onerous policy restrictions on all sections of the town, regardless of their importance in the local townscape.

8.82 This option performs the same as Option A with the added negative issue of restricting the development of housing across the town - rather than in a localised area.

8.83 Option C performs well against the provision of housing and the promotion of growth and investment. A managed approach to development scenarios on a site by site basis provides flexibility and the ability to adapt to change. However, it is recognised that this approach will not provide further support to designated heritage assets.

8.84 This option will enable the Council to meet the need for appropriate housing across all areas and be flexible enough to encourage local investment at the appropriate locations as sites come forward.

Issue 22 - Neighbourhood centres and facilities

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Retain the existing neighbourhood centre designations set in the District Plan.
	B	Make changes that reflect the current nature of our centres and facilities.
	C	Allow more flexibility and let the market decide what to provide.

How were the options identified?

8.85 The options are based upon a number of scenarios. We need to understand what might happen if we retain our existing policy for the neighbourhood centres, bearing in mind that significant changes have occurred in these centres since our District Plan was adopted.

8.86 Our evidence base proposes a change in designations based on survey work and the NPPF encourages a hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic change. The 'do nothing' approach is also considered.

A summary of the SA findings

8.87 Option A would retain all existing designations. This option performs well in terms of access to facilities and reducing the need to travel but could have a negative effect on economic viability if under-performing centres are restricted from major change and subject to a lack of investment over the longer term.

8.88 Option B would reduce the overall number of designated centres from 12 small centres to 7 and 10 large centres to 7 and create a new district centre at Poplars. This option would reassess the existing hierarchy based on more recent evidential work. Option B performs well in terms of making facilities more viable and would be based on current use of each centre. However, it is recognised that the reduction in number of centres would increase the need to travel and reduce access to services.

8.89 Option C is the 'do nothing' approach. This option performs well in terms of economic viability as it allows the market to decide what is viable based on need or use of the centres. However, it is recognised that this approach would not manage the use of centres and could lead to a significant reduction in local services. A more managed approach would consider the strategic implications of service reductions. This option has the potential to perform poorly against most of the objectives where an effect has been identified.

Issue 23 - Lister Hospital

SEA Themes	Population and Human Health, Social Inclusiveness and Economic Development.	
Options	A	Do not identify land for the future expansion of the hospital.
	B	Safeguard land to the north of the Lister Hospital for future expansion.

How were the options identified?

8.90 We recognise the importance of the Lister Hospital, both as a healthcare facility for Hertfordshire residents and a major source of employment in the town. The hospital might need to grow in the future and we need to plan early for how we might manage that. Our options are based on the two land-use solutions we are considering, whether to safeguard land or not.

A summary of the SA findings

8.91 Option A performs well in terms of environmental sustainability. It is recognised that the containment of expansion within the existing site will reduce the pressure for development. This option will assist in the long term protection of habitats and reduce flood risk from surface water run-off. However, it is also acknowledged that this option will limit the long term development of the hospital.

8.92 Option B performs much better in socio-economic terms, and less well in environmental terms. Providing the hospital with the option of expansion will ensure the future success of the site in its sub-regional role. As the town's largest employer it is important to recognise the economic value a site such as this brings to the town. This option provides flexibility and greater opportunities for long term development needs.

Issue 24 - Leisure and culture

8.93 We have not identified specific options which can be appraised in terms of sustainability. We have appraised our current approach in Appendix 1. If options are presented in the future then they will be assessed later in the SEA/SA process.

8.94 Our previous approach has been to support the modernisation of leisure and cultural facilities where assessments illustrate that sites are still viable. We will support the provision of new facilities in accessible locations.

8.95 The future of Council owned community buildings will be considered following the conclusion of the asset review. If this review considers a selection of options we will appraise alternatives in future iterations of the local plan and the accompanying, evolving sustainability appraisal.

8.96 However, overall this approach performs well in terms of human health and providing for the needs of existing and future residents. This option also performs well in terms of increasing access to services and reducing social deprivation. We will continue to support the provision of new facilities in accessible locations as this reduces the need to travel.

8.97 In economic terms, the assessment of sites provides the most cost effective solution in terms of viability. There will be a need to assess the town-wide distribution of facilities resulting from the progression of our growth options.

Issue 25 - Education

8.98 We have not identified specific options which can be appraised in terms of sustainability. We have appraised our current approach in Appendix 1. If options are presented in the future then they will be assessed later in the SEA/SA process.

8.99 Our previous approach has been to support the modernisation of educational facilities where assessments illustrate that sites are still required to meet current needs.

8.100 Overall this option performs well in terms of human health and providing for the needs of existing and future residents. This option also performs well in terms of increasing access to services and reducing social deprivation. We will continue to support the provision of new facilities in accessible locations as this reduces the need to travel.

8.101 The improvement in quality and access to educational facilities also delivers positively by improving access to skills, knowledge and education and supporting the local economy.

8.102 There will be a need to assess educational facilities resulting from the progression of our growth options and we will continue to work with Hertfordshire County Council, as the local education authority, to ensure that the needs of existing and future residents are met in this regard.

Issue 26 - Green Belt

SEA Themes	Biodiversity, Population and Human Health, Water and Soils, Landscape, Social inclusiveness, Economic Development.	
Options	A	Give priority to maintaining the full current extent of the Green Belt within Stevenage Borough and do not attempt to fully meet the objectively assessed needs of the Borough.
	B	Give priority to fully meeting the objectively assessed needs of Stevenage Borough to 2031 and pursue the rolling back of the inner Green Belt boundary (i.e. releasing land from the Green Belt) to allow development to happen.
	C	Give priority to fully meeting the objectively assessed needs of the Borough to 2031 and beyond. Pursue the rolling back of the inner Green Belt boundary (i.e. releasing land from the Green Belt) and seek the identification of 'safeguarded land' for future development in neighbouring Council areas.

How were the options identified?

8.103 The options were identified from our evidence base - The Green Belt Review.

A summary of the SA findings

8.104 Of the three options presented, Option C provides the most appropriate option both in terms of meeting the requirements of the NPPF but also in terms of sustainability. The long term approach to a potential Green Belt release will enable a more strategic approach to land allocations.

8.105 In sustainability terms, Option C provides the greatest benefits in terms of meeting local needs and future provision, but also in terms of supporting the local economy ~ particularly over the longer term. Whilst this option, along with Option B, does have an adverse impact on biodiversity (and environmental objectives more generally) Option A will not enable the Council to meet the socio-economic requirements of a growing population without significant development in neighbouring districts. The overall positive effects of Options B & C could be seen to outweigh the negative environmental impacts, which could be mitigated to some degree.

Issue 27 - Sustainability standards

SEA Themes	Biodiversity, Water and Soils, Air, Climatic Factors and Material Assets.	
Options	A	Use Code for Sustainable Homes/ BREEAM standards.
	B	Set local targets for renewable energy and low carbon technologies.

	C	Set standards for water consumption in new development.
	D	Use higher emissions standards than building regulations.
	E	Introduce local targets or standards for more than one or all of these things (please specify).
	F	Do not introduce local targets or standards and rely on national standards and/or existing guidance.

How were the options identified?

8.106 The options represent a raft of measures which could address sustainability in new buildings. These are options promoted by sustainable building professionals and best practice. Using the current building regulation standard as the benchmark, we are assessing whether adding additional policy requirements in our local plan will provide significant benefits in terms of sustainability.

A summary of the SA findings

8.107 The appraisal finds that all of the options expose sites to increased risk as they impose additional costs on a new build development. Whilst performing well in environmental terms, they perform poorly in terms of housing provision and meeting local need. In sustainability terms, Option F performs the best. The Council is able to meet Government targets whilst exposing development viability to minimal risk.

Issue 28 - Open space designations

SEA Themes	Biodiversity, Population and Human Health, Water and Soils and Landscape.	
Options	A	To carry forward the District Plan allocations unchanged.
	B	To take forward the approach in the draft LDF documents and make any necessary changes to reflect current circumstances.
	C	As Option B but also protect smaller areas of open space.

How were the options identified?

8.108 The options presented cover a 'do nothing' scenario by carrying forward the District Plan allocations unchanged. Alternative options consider a review of existing designations and the inclusion of new spaces where identified.

A summary of the SA findings

8.109 Option A, whilst protecting existing designations, does not provide an opportunity to review sites. It may be determined that new sites should be included, or that some sites should/could be released for alternative options.

8.110 Option B considers a review although Option C also considers the inclusion of smaller green spaces as potential designations. These would further enhance local character and distinctiveness. Overall, it is recognised that Option C performs the most positively.

Issue 29 - Heritage assets

SEA Themes	Cultural Heritage.	
Options	A	Include local policies to help determine applications that affect heritage assets.
	B	Do not include local policies and rely on national guidance and legislation instead.

How were the options identified?

8.111 The options consider the reliance on national policy and whether local guidance might also be appropriate. The options have been formulated through the consideration of our evidence base, best practice and approaches adopted by other authorities.

A summary of the SA findings

8.112 Overall, it is considered that Option B performs marginally better against the protection of local character. However, it is recognised that the local plan should not repeat national guidance and significant local guidance is already in place through the conservation area management plans.



9 . Cumulative Effects of the Plan

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

9 Cumulative Effects of the Plan

9.1 In addition to the appraisal of individual policies undertaken in SA/SEA, the SEA Directive requires consideration of the overall effects of the plan, including the secondary, synergistic and cumulative effects of plan policies. This may include incremental effects that can have a small effect individually, but can accrue to have significant environmental effects.

9.2 In good practice SA/SEA, the analysis of cumulative effects should also consider the significant effects of the plan in combination with the effects of other plans, policies and proposals. This should include the cumulative effects of the plan policies (known as the intra-plan effects) and the combined effects with other relevant plans and projects (known as the inter-plan effects).

9.3 Until we proceed with development options it is not possible to clearly determine the likely cumulative impacts of the local plan. We intend that this section of the SA/SEA process will follow alongside future local plan consultations.

9.4 We have listed other plans, policies and programmes that we need to consider alongside this plan in our Scoping Report. An assessment of the in-combination impacts of the plan will be considered as we move forward with definitive options.

9.5 We must particularly consider the impacts of our plan against those being developed by other local planning authorities in the local, and possibly regional, area. In the local plan we have referred to these authorities as core authorities and outer core authorities. The following table outlines each authority and illustrates their position in the development plan process.

Authority	Adopted development plan compliant with Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004?	Commentary
Core authority		
Central Bedfordshire	Yes, in 2009, but only covers northern area of the now unitary authority.	Core Strategy for the northern area adopted November 2009. The southern area was proposed for coverage by a Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Core Strategy, withdrawn in 2011. Northern Area Core Strategy: 17,950 new homes and 17,000 new jobs by 2026. Most development focused around larger settlements.
East Hertfordshire	No, Local Plan covering period to 2011 adopted under transitional arrangements of Act in 2007.	Local Plan delivered Hertfordshire Structure Plan target of 11,100 homes. Housing and employment directed towards main centres/larger settlements. New District Plan to 2031 underway. First consultation delayed. Awaiting updated timetable.
North Hertfordshire	No, Local Plan adopted 1996 and saving direction made in 2007.	Provision was made for about 8000 dwellings between 1986 and 2001. Housing and employment directed towards main centres/larger settlements. New Local Plan scheduled for adoption July 2015. No firm direction on housing and employment at this stage.

Authority	Adopted development plan compliant with Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004?	Commentary
Core authority		
Welwyn Hatfield	No, District Plan covering period to 2011 adopted 2005 and saving direction made in 2008.	<p>Provision was made for about 5,600 dwellings between 1991 and 2011.</p> <p>Core Strategy scheduled for adoption Autumn/Winter 2014. Current proposals set a target of 6,800 new homes to be provided within Welwyn Hatfield between 2011 and 2029, growth directed towards existing settlements.</p>
Outer core authority		
Barnet	Yes, adopted 2012.	<p>28,000 new homes by 2026. Majority of growth directed towards west side of the borough in North West London – Luton Corridor. Employment land demand equates to just over 13ha between 2009 and 2026. New business to be directed to Brent Cross, then Cricklewood, Colindale and Mill Hill East.</p>
Broxbourne	No, District Plan covering period to 2011 adopted 2005 and saving direction made in 2008.	<p>District Plan delivered 5,400 dwellings during the Plan Period 1991-2011. Key sites were at Hoddesdon and Turnford. Employment was to be provided by key sites at Park Plaza and North East Hoddesdon; existing industrial estates; and local employment sites.</p> <p>New Local Plan underway. Awaiting updated timetable.</p>
Enfield	Yes, adopted 2010.	<p>Covering the period to 2025, the Core Strategy delivers 13,500 homes with strategic allocations at Meridian Water, New Southgate and North East Enfield. At least 6,000 jobs are to be provided in Upper Lee Valley (4,000) and other town centres and priority areas (2,000).</p>
Hertsmere	Yes, adopted 2013.	<p>The Council make provision for at least 3,990 additional dwellings within the District between 2012 and 2027. Borehamwood is expected to be the largest source of housing supply ahead of Bushey and Potters Bar.</p> <p>Provision will be made for the supply of at least 110 ha of designated employment land for B-class development within the Borough up to 2027, focused on the following locations: Elstree Way and Stirling Way, Borehamwood; Cranborne Road and Station Close, Potters Bar; Otterspool Way, Bushey; and Centennial Park, Elstree.</p>
Luton	No, Local Plan covering period to 2011 adopted 2007 and saving direction made in 2008.	<p>The Local Plan identifies sites for 432 dwellings during the period 2004-2011; and provides for planning permission to be granted to enable at least a further 504 dwellings to be built on unidentified sites during that period.</p> <p>New Local Plan scheduled for adoption June 2014. No firm direction on housing and employment at this stage.</p>
St Albans	No, Local Plan adopted 1994 and saving direction made in 2007.	<p>A new Local Plan for the period 2011-2028 proposed 4,250 new homes on several small sites across the district. St Albans City & District</p>

Authority	Adopted development plan compliant with Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004?	Commentary
Core authority		
		Council is reviewing their evidence base and this figure may change as a result.

9.6 We will use the information gathered from other local authorities as we develop our local plan to understand the cumulative effects of development proposals.

Without the plan

9.7 Until we proceed with development options it is also not possible to clearly determine what might happen without the local plan. However, we can assume that the key issues we have highlighted would remain, and might deteriorate, over time.

9.8 We intend that this section of the SA/SEA process will also follow alongside future local plan consultations.



i . The Sustainability Matrix

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

i The Sustainability Matrix

i.1 The following section of this sustainability appraisal sets out the matrix tables. These tables are our assessment of each option in terms of sustainability. In some instances we have not been able to provide a selection of options and, where this is the case, this has been explained.

i.2 Each table assesses the short, medium and long term effect of each option against the thirteen indicators established from our Scoping Report. The objectives are as follows:

Table 9 Sustainability objectives

Objective No.	Objective description
1	To protect and enhance biodiversity in all areas and maintain and restore the full range of habitats and species to viable levels.
2	To protect and enhance human health & wellbeing, meeting the needs of existing residents and encourage local population growth.
3	To protect and enhance water quality, encourage water conservation and reduce flood risk.
4	To reduce land contamination and safeguard soil quality.
5	To minimise waste and increase recycling.
6	To maximise the quality of environmental conditions by limiting noise and air pollution, reducing greenhouse gas and carbon emissions and maximising the potential for renewable energy production.
7	To preserve and enhance areas and buildings designated for their historic and/or archaeological interest and protect their settings.
8	To create places, spaces and buildings that work well, age well, look well and which enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of the local character and landscape.
9	To improve access to all services, taking into consideration inequalities relating to age, gender, disability, race and faith.
10	To address the causes of deprivation and ensure that everyone has access to decent, appropriate and affordable housing.
11	To reduce the need to travel and increase the use of sustainable methods of transportation.
12	To improve access to skills, knowledge and education to ensure that people can gain access to appropriate and satisfying work.
13	To support and grow the local economy, increase investment in people, equipment, employment, infrastructure and other assets ensuring that economic and employment centres remain efficient and viable.

i.3 In order to assess the short, medium and long term effects of each options, the following assessment is used:

Table 10 - Short, medium and long term assessment

Symbol	Description of the effect
++	Major significant positive effects Option actively encouraged as it would resolve an existing sustainability problem.
+	Minor significant positive effects No sustainability constraints and option acceptable.
0	Neutral
?	Unknown or uncertain effects
-	Minor significant negative effects Potential sustainability issues; mitigation and /or negotiation possible.
--	Major significant negative effects Problematical & improbable because of known sustainability issues ; mitigation or negotiation difficult and /or expensive.
x	Absolute sustainability constraints.

i.4 Some issues are not appraised in this matrix style, as described in the summary of every issue in Chapter 8.

i.5 Following each matrix assessment, each option is followed by commentary which explains the matrix in more detail. A summary of the matrices is shown in Chapter 8.



ii . The Matrix Tables

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

ii The Matrix Tables

Issue 4 - NPPF model policy

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Include the 'model policy' suggested by the Planning Inspectorate.													
Short	+	+/-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/-	+	+/-	+/-
Medium	+	+/-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/-	+	+/-	+/-
Long	+	+/-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/-	+	+/-	+/-
Commentary													
Overall it is recognised that this option performs well in encouraging sustainable development. However, it is recognised that by restricting development, based on harm to the local environmental conditions, could cause negative effects in terms of delivering housing and employment for existing and future residents.													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure that policy does not restrict the potential for allocated and potential sites in the Development Plan.													
Option B - Include a locally-specific version of the model policy suggested by the Planning Inspectorate.													
Short	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Medium	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Long	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Commentary													
This option performs well as it takes into account the model policy but makes adjustments to allow for local variations, ensuring that allocated and potential sites are not adversely affected by restrictive policies.													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Option C - Do not include a model policy about the NPPF.													
Short	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Medium	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Long	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Commentary													
This option performs well. It acknowledges the NPPF, as it must comply with the framework, but also allows policy to makes adjustments to allow for local variations, ensuring that allocated and potential sites are not adversely affected by restrictive policies.													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													

Issue 5 - The relationship between homes and jobs

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Prioritise jobs over home and / or seek higher levels of self containment.													
Short	+	--	0	0	0	+	0	0	++	--	++	++	++
Medium	+	--	0	0	0	+	0	0	++	--	++	++	++
Long	+	--	0	0	0	+	0	0	++	--	++	++	++
Commentary													
<p>It is considered that this option performs very well in terms of creating employment opportunities and supporting the local economy (Objectives 12 & 13) by prioritising jobs, although it is acknowledged that this issue does not address the 'type' of jobs available. The provision of jobs that do not meet the skills of local people will lead to the secondary effect of higher levels of in- and out-commuting. (See Issue re: Skills).</p> <p>Seeking higher levels of self containment will reduce the need to travel (Objective 11), therefore reducing vehicular emissions (Objective 6), and increase access to services (Objective 9). It is also considered, to a lesser extent, that this option will deliver positive outcomes for biodiversity as higher concentrations of development in the existing urban area will reduce the need for major urban expansion.</p> <p>The prioritisation of jobs over homes will reduce local population growth and the number of homes built. This has significant adverse effects for Objectives 2 & 10.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure that a focus on the economy does not create deficiencies in other sectors such as housing, retail, neighbourhood centre development and/or regeneration schemes.													
Option B - Seek a reasonable balance between new homes and jobs.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	+	+	+
Medium	0	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	+	+	+
Long	0	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	+	+	+
Commentary													
<p>It is recognised that this option performs the best in terms of overall sustainability. Developing a reasonable balance between homes and jobs provide positive benefits where effects have been identified against Options A & C. It is acknowledged that this balance will reduce the positive benefits to homes and employment as this option, when compared with alternative options, will inevitably lead to lower levels of development for each sector.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Option C - Prioritise new homes over jobs and / or seek lower levels of self containment.													
Short	-	++	0	0	0	--	0	0	--	++	--	--	--
Medium	-	++	0	0	0	--	0	0	--	++	--	--	--
Long	--	++	0	0	0	--	0	0	--	++	--	--	--

	Sustainability Objectives
Commentary	<p>Of the three options, Option C performs the least well. The prioritisation of homes over jobs performs poorly in terms of employment and the local economy (Objectives 12 &13). It is also recognised that, coupled with a potential for lower levels of self containment, this option may place additional pressures on Green Belt land(especially over the longer term as additional land allocations are sought) which has adverse effects for Objective 1. This will increase the need to travel and could lead to further distances of travel for local services, adversely impacting Objectives 6, 9 and 11.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that this option will provide housing for existing and future residents (Objective 2) and improve social deprivation (Objective 10) where growth of affordable homes is delivered.</p>
Mitigation measures	<p>Ensure that a focus on the economy does not create deficiencies in other sectors such as employment, retail, neighbourhood centre development and/or regeneration schemes.</p>

Issue 6 - Skills

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Allow the free market to decide what types of jobs are provided.													
Short	0	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	-	++
Medium	0	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	-	++
Long	0	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	--	-	++
Commentary													
<p>It is recognised that this option will not provide jobs which necessarily meet the skill sets of local residents. This does not support their well-being or meet their needs (Objective 2). This option would increase the need to travel (Objective 11) and increase travel emissions (Objective 6) as residents look to other areas for work.</p> <p>If local employers utilise workers from other areas this could reduce access to skills through the workplace.</p> <p>These impacts could cause cyclical decline ~ increasing negative effects over the longer term as local residents are restricted from access to highly skilled areas of employment (Objective 12).</p> <p>However, the impact on the local economy could have significant positive effects. These will be borne from an increase in high levels of technical industry, and support growth sectors in the town.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Provide a wider range of jobs.													
Option B - Focus on highly skilled and professional jobs.													
Short	0	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	-	++
Medium	0	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	-	++
Long	0	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	--	-	++
Commentary													
<p>It is recognised that this option will not provide jobs which necessarily meet the skill sets of local residents. This does not support their well-being or meet their needs (Objective 2). This option would increase the need to travel (Objective 11) and increase travel emissions (Objective 6) as residents look to other areas for work.</p> <p>If local employers utilise workers from other areas this could reduce access to skills through the workplace.</p> <p>These impacts could cause cyclical decline ~ increasing negative effects over the longer term as local residents are restricted from access to highly skilled areas of employment (Objective 12).</p> <p>However, the impact on the local economy could have significant positive effects. These will be borne from an increase in high levels of technical industry, and support growth sectors in the town.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Provide a wider range of jobs.													
Option C - Make sure we provide an appropriate range of jobs to meet the rising skill levels of all residents.													

	Sustainability Objectives													
Short	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+/-
Medium	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+/-
Long	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+/-
Commentary														
<p>This option provides mostly positive effects in terms of sustainability. It is acknowledged that the provision of local employment opportunities for local people will encourage access to skills through workplace training (Objective 11). By providing an appropriate range of jobs for local residents (Objective 2), this option will encourage self containment and support the local economy (Objective 13). However, it is also recognised that this option might reduce the capacity of more technical growth industries which may have a negative impact on the local economy.</p>														
Mitigation measures														
None identified.														

Issue 7 - The town centre, the Old Town and the retail warehouses

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Allocate all of the predicted new comparison floorspace to the town centre, replace existing small shop units with larger units (especially in places like Park Place and the area of the bus station) and improve the shopping streets and car parks.													
Short	0	+	0	+	0	+	+	++	+	0	++	+	++
Medium	0	++	0	+	0	+	+	++	+	0	++	+	++
Long	0	++	0	+	0	+	+	++	+	0	++	+	++
<p>Commentary</p> <p>This option performs well against all objectives where an effect has been identified.</p> <p>By concentrating retail development in a central location this option reduces the need to travel for all, regardless of inequalities (Objectives 9 & 11) as the town centre is located next to the bus and train stations. This improves sustainable transport options and therefore limits air pollution from vehicular traffic (Objective 6).</p> <p>The development of brownfield land reduces land contamination and safeguards soil quality in other areas (Objective 4).</p> <p>Investment in the town centre would improve the historic setting of the town square conservation area (Objective 7) and relevant listed structures, which could be managed and protected through national legislation.</p> <p>It is recognised that sections of the town centre fail to perform well in urban design terms (Stevenage Town Centre Masterplan, 2010) and further development at this location would provide an opportunity to enhance this (Objective 8).</p> <p>Overall, it is considered that this option provides greater opportunities for existing and future residents (Objective 2) by enabling a focus of activity within the highly accessible town centre. This will support the local economy and provide further employment opportunities (Objectives 11 & 12).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Option B - Split the predicted new comparison floorspace between the town centre, the Old Town High Street and the retail warehouses.													
Short	0	+	0	+	0	+/-	+	+	+/-	0	+/-	+	++
Medium	0	+	0	+	0	+/-	+	+	+/-	0	+/-	+	++
Long	0	+	0	+	0	+/-	+	+	+/-	0	+/-	+	++
<p>Commentary</p> <p>This option performs well against most objectives where an effect has been identified.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that this will increase the need to travel, in part, through the promotion of the retail parks which are less accessible by public transport (Objective 11). Subsequently, this option will have negative effects on pollution (Objective 6) and access to services (Objective 9).</p> <p>In more positive terms, this option would reduce land contamination and safeguard soil quality in other areas (Objective 4).</p>													

Sustainability Objectives													
<p>Investment in these areas would improve the historic setting of the town square and Old Town High Street conservation areas (Objective 7) and relevant listed structures, which could be managed and protected through national legislation.</p> <p>It is recognised that sections of the town centre fail to perform well in urban design terms (Stevenage Town Centre Masterplan, 2010) and further development at this location would provide an opportunity to enhance this (Objective 8), albeit to a limited degree than Option A as fewer improvements would be enabled by this option.</p> <p>Overall, it is considered that this option provides opportunities for existing and future residents (Objective 2) and provides services at well established centres. This will support the local economy and provide further employment opportunities (Objectives 11 & 12).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
<p>Ensure that the Exception Test is met.</p> <p>Require sustainable transport measures to be in place prior to development.</p> <p>Direct applicants towards more original urban design strategies that more closely reflect the principles of New Town design.</p>													
<p>Option C - Allocate all of the predicted new comparison floorspace to the retail warehouses, either through allowing new units to be built or existing units to be extended.</p>													
Short	0	+	--	+	0	-	0	-	--	0	-	+	++
Medium	0	+	--	+	0	--	0	-	-	0	-	+	++
Long	0	+	--	+	0	--	0	-	0	0	-	+	++
Commentary													
<p>This option performs well in terms of providing for residents needs and opportunities for employment (Objectives 2 & 12), reducing land contamination by directing growth to brownfield sites (Objective 4) and encouraging growth in the local economy (Objective 13).</p> <p>However, by concentrating retail development in the retail parks this option increases the need to travel (Objective 11) by car which would increase emissions and air pollution (Objective 6). This option also limits access for less affluent groups in the short to medium term due to the limited access by sustainable transport (Objective 9). However, it is recognised that access could improve over time, given demand for new services.</p> <p>Development at the retail parks does not typically offer a style of development distinctive to Stevenage. The retail parks are large warehouse units common nationally. This option would therefore not reflect local character (Objective 8).</p> <p>It is also acknowledged that significant sections of some of our retail parks are included within Flood Zones 2 & 3 (Objective 3). This restricts the types of development at several locations and would require the Exception Test to be applied.</p> <p>Overall, it is considered that this option performs poorly in terms of sustainability.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
<p>Ensure that the Exception Test is met.</p> <p>Require sustainable transport measures to be in place prior to development.</p>													

	Sustainability Objectives
	Direct applicants towards more original urban design strategies that more closely reflect the principles of New Town design.

Issue 8 - Development viability

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Prioritise the collection of contributions towards local infrastructure (CIL).													
Short	0	++	+/-	0	-	-	0	0	0	+/-	0	++	++
Medium	0	++	+/-	0	-	-	0	0	0	+/-	0	++	++
Long	0	++	+/-	0	-	-	0	0	0	+/-	0	++	++
Commentary													
<p>This option would enable contributions to be focused towards education and other key items of infrastructure which performs very well against Objectives 12 & 13. This would improve well-being, encourage population growth and improve access to skills (Objectives 2 & 12).</p> <p>It is also recognised that this option could provide solutions to areas of local flood risk although contributions towards a CIL, could limit the deliverability of energy savings functions in new build homes (Objectives 5 & 6). Therefore, this option has the potential to have both positive and negative effects on flood risk (Objective 3).</p> <p>It is acknowledged that this option could have both positive and negative effects relating to the provision of affordable housing (Objective 10). Greater contributions towards local infrastructure might affect what could reasonably be expected in terms of contributions towards affordable housing. However, this might also lead to a diversification in housing stock by allowing more market homes to be provided.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Provide more affordable homes and encourage energy saving initiatives.													
Option B - Prioritise the provision of affordable housing.													
Short	0	+/-	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	++	-	-	-
Medium	0	+/-	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	++	-	-	-
Long	0	+/-	0	0	-	-	0	0	0	++	--	-	-
Commentary													
<p>This option would encourage the development of much needed affordable homes which performs well against Objectives 2 & 10. However, it is noted that this option would fail to deliver supporting infrastructure, local services and energy saving initiatives so this would perform poorly against all other objectives where an effect has been identified.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Provide supporting infrastructure and encourage energy saving initiatives.													
Option C - Prioritise the sustainability of new buildings.													
Short	0	+/-	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	-	0	-	-
Medium	0	+/-	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	-	0	-	-
Long	0	+/-	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	-	0	-	-
Commentary													

	Sustainability Objectives
	<p>This option would prioritise sustainability. Whilst this performs well in terms of energy saving initiatives (Objectives 3, 5 & 6) this could be at the expense of affordable homes and supporting infrastructure (Objectives 10, 12 & 13. Whilst higher standards for new buildings improves human health and well-being it is also noted that less affordable homes do not meet the needs of existing residents so this option could perform both negatively and positively against Objective 2.</p>
Mitigation measures	
	<p>Provide supporting infrastructure and more affordable homes.</p>

Issue 9 - Borough housing target

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Urban capacity (2,800)													
Short	+	-	?	0	0	0	++	0	-	-	-	-	-
Medium	+	--	?	0	0	0	++	0	-	-	-	-	-
Long	+	--	?	0	0	0	++	0	-	-	-	-	-
Commentary													
<p>It is considered that this option provides a housing target which would not meet the needs of existing residents, for all forms of housing but particularly affordable homes, or encourage future population growth (Objective 2). This is based upon the findings of the SHMA, 2013. It is also clear that this option would not reduce the need to travel (Objective 11) as we would not be delivering enough housing for people travelling into the borough from other areas (2001 Census data - 46% of local workforce commute into Stevenage for work, approx 19,000 persons) but it is clear that Stevenage provides employment opportunities for the sub-region so mitigation will be possible to make this option acceptable in terms of this objective.</p> <p>This option would have a positive effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) as it does not include greenfield sites at the edge of the Borough boundary. This would also mean that land to the north of the town, designated for its heritage interest, would not require be required for development. This performs very positively against Objective 7.</p> <p>It is considered that all options to develop land for housing might provide an opportunity to encourage water conservation (Objective 3) in line with current guidelines on the Code for Sustainable Homes and SuDS initiatives but this will be determined through other issues and policy. New housing improves access to services although it is documented that housing need outstrips this supply option (SHMA, 2013) and this option would fail to ensure that everyone has access to decent, affordable housing (Objectives 9 and 10).</p> <p>It is recognised that this option would not provide significant opportunities for employment or support the local economy.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
<p>To ensure that all available brownfield land options are allocated before greenfield sites.</p> <p>This option would require improvements to the A1(M) and the potential negative environmental effects of this would need to be mitigated.</p> <p>Increase sustainable transport connections into the sub-region.</p>													
Option B - Borough capacity (5,300)													
Short	-	-	?	0	0	0	-	0	-	-	+	-	-
Medium	--	-	?	0	0	0	-	0	-	-	++	-	-
Long	--	-	?	0	0	0	-	0	-	-	++	-	-
Commentary													
<p>It is considered that this option provides a housing target which would not meet the needs of existing residents, for all forms of housing but particularly affordable homes, or encourage future population growth (Objective 2). This is based upon the findings of the SHMA, 2013. It is clear that this option would not reduce the need to travel (Objective 11) as we would not be delivering enough housing for people travelling into the borough from other areas (2001 Census data</p>													

Sustainability Objectives													
<p>- 46% of local workforce commute into Stevenage for work, approx 19,000 persons) but it is clear that Stevenage provides employment opportunities for the sub-region so mitigation will be possible to make this option acceptable in terms of this objective.</p> <p>This option will have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) as the final site selection will need to include greenfield sites. This might put land to the north of the town, designated for its heritage interest, at risk. This would then perform poorly against Objective 7.</p> <p>It is considered that all options to develop land for housing might provide an opportunity to encourage water conservation (Objective 3) in line with current guidelines on the Code for Sustainable Homes and SuDS initiatives but this will be determined through other issues and policy. New housing improves access to services although it is documented that housing need outstrips this supply option (SHMA, 2013) and this option would fail to ensure that everyone has access to decent, affordable housing (Objectives 9 and 10).</p> <p>It is recognised that this option would not provide significant opportunities for employment or support the local economy.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
<p>To ensure that all available brownfield land options are allocated before greenfield sites and that the large greenfield sites necessary to deliver this total are designed to minimise their effect on the existing town. It is recognised that positive biodiversity measures can be introduced into a site design to mitigate their negative effects.</p> <p>This option would require improvements to the A1(M) and the potential negative environmental effects of this would need to be mitigated.</p> <p>Increase sustainable transport connections into the sub-region.</p> <p>Potential for compensatory Green Belt provision.</p> <p>A need to ensure that the impact on heritage assets is duly considered.</p>													
Option C - Population-led (6,600)													
Short	-	+	?	0	0	0	--	0	+	+	+/-	+	+
Medium	--	+	?	0	0	0	--	0	++	+	+/-	+	+
Long	--	+	?	0	0	0	--	0	++	+	+/-	+	+
Commentary													
<p>It is considered that this option provides a housing target which would meet the needs of existing and future residents (Objective 2), based upon the findings of the SHMA, 2013, but would provide a greater number of homes than Options A and B. Based on local need this option would reduce the need to travel (Objective 11) although we would not be delivering enough housing for people travelling into the borough from other areas (2001 Census data - 46% of local workforce commute into Stevenage for work, approx 19,000 persons) but it is clear that Stevenage provides employment opportunities for the sub-region so mitigation will be possible to make this option acceptable in terms of this objective.</p> <p>This option will have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) as the final site selection will need to include greenfield sites. This might put land to the north of the town, designated for its heritage interest, at risk. This would then perform poorly against Objective 7.</p> <p>It is considered that all options to develop land for housing might provide an opportunity to encourage water conservation (Objective 3) in line with current guidelines on the Code for Sustainable Homes and SuDS initiatives but this will be determined through other issues and policy. New housing improves access to services although it is documented that housing need outstrips this supply option (SHMA, 2013) and this option would fail to ensure that everyone has access to decent, affordable housing (Objectives 9 and 10).</p>													

Sustainability Objectives													
It is recognised that this option would support the local economy (Objectives 12 and 13).													
Mitigation measures													
<p>To ensure that all available brownfield land options are allocated before greenfield sites and that the large greenfield sites necessary to deliver this total are designed to minimise their effect on the existing town. It is recognised that positive biodiversity measures can be introduced into a site design to mitigate their negative effects. This option would require improvements to the A1(M) and the potential negative environmental effects of this would need to be mitigated.</p> <p>Increase sustainable transport connections into the sub-region.</p> <p>Potential for compensatory Green Belt provision.</p> <p>A need to ensure that the impact on heritage assets is duly considered.</p>													
Further option i - 1,000 homes													
Short	+	-	?	0	0	0	++	0	-	-	-	0	-
Medium	+	--	?	0	0	0	++	0	-	-	-	0	-
Long	+	--	?	0	0	0	++	0	-	-	-	0	-
Commentary													
<p>It is considered that this option provides a housing target which would not meet the needs of existing residents, for all forms of housing but particularly affordable homes, or encourage future population growth (Objective 2). This is based upon the findings of the SHMA, 2013. It is clear that this option would not reduce the need to travel (Objective 11) as we would not be delivering enough housing for people travelling into the borough from other areas (2001 Census data - 46% of local workforce commute into Stevenage for work, approx 19,000 persons) but it is clear that Stevenage provides employment opportunities for the sub-region so mitigation will be possible to make this option acceptable in terms of this objective. It is also noted that our evidence shows that the A1(M) is already over capacity during peak hours⁽⁵⁾.</p> <p>It is clear that this option would have a positive effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) as sufficient sites could be identified on previously developed land (SLAA, 2013) whilst greenfield sites would not be required. This would also mean that land to the north of the town, designated for it's heritage interest, would not require be required for development. This performs very positively against Objective 7.</p> <p>It is considered that all options to develop land for housing might provide an opportunity to encourage water conservation (Objective 3) in line with current guidelines on the Code for Sustainable Homes and SuDS initiatives but this will be determined through other issues and policy. New housing improves access to services although it is documented that housing need outstrips this supply option (SHMA, 2013) and this option would fail to ensure that everyone has access to decent, affordable housing (Objectives 9 and 10).</p> <p>It is also recognised that this option would not support the local economy (Objective 13) as there would be no significant opportunities for the supply of workforce for local employers therefore reducing the need for existing employers to remain located in the borough (Stevenage Employment & Economy Baseline Study, NLP, 2013).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
<p>To ensure that all available brownfield land options are allocated before greenfield sites.</p> <p>Increase sustainable transport connections into the sub-region.</p>													

5 Stevenage Urban Transport Plan, 2010

Sustainability Objectives													
Further option ii - 8,000 homes													
Short	-	++	?	0	0	0	--	0	+	+	+/-	+	+
Medium	--	++	?	0	0	0	--	0	++	++	+/-	+	+
Long	--	++	?	0	0	0	--	0	++	++	+/-	+	+
<p>Commentary</p> <p>It is considered that this option provides a housing target which would not meet the needs of existing and future residents (Objective 2) but would provide a greater number of homes than Options A to C. This is based upon the findings of the SHMA, 2013. Based on local need this option would reduce the need to travel (Objective 11) although we would not be delivering enough housing for people travelling into the borough from other areas (2001 Census data - 46% of local workforce commute into Stevenage for work, approx 19,000 persons) but it is clear that Stevenage provides employment opportunities for the sub-region so mitigation will be possible to make this option acceptable in terms of this objective.</p> <p>This option will have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) as the final site selection will need to include greenfield sites. This might put land to the north of the town, designated for its heritage interest, at risk. This would then perform poorly against Objective 7.</p> <p>It is considered that all options to develop land for housing might provide an opportunity to encourage water conservation (Objective 3) in line with current guidelines on the Code for Sustainable Homes and SuDS initiatives but this will be determined through other issues and policy. New housing improves access to services although it is documented that housing need outstrips this supply option (SHMA, 2013) and this option would fail to ensure that everyone has access to decent, affordable housing (Objectives 9 and 10).</p> <p>It is recognised that this option would support the local economy (Objectives 12 and 13).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
<p>To ensure that all available brownfield land options are allocated before greenfield sites and that the large greenfield sites necessary to deliver this total are designed to minimise their effect on the existing town. It is recognised that positive biodiversity measures can be introduced into a site design to mitigate their negative effects. This option would require improvements to the A1(M) and the potential negative environmental effects of this would need to be mitigated.</p> <p>Increase sustainable transport connections into the sub-region.</p> <p>Potential for compensatory Green Belt provision.</p> <p>A need to ensure that the impact on heritage assets is duly considered.</p>													
Further option iii - 13,400 homes													
Short	-	++	?	0	0	0	--	0	+	+	+/-	+	+
Medium	--	++	?	0	0	0	--	0	++	++	+/-	++	++
Long	--	++	?	0	0	0	--	0	++	++	+/-	++	++
<p>Commentary</p> <p>It is considered that this option provides a housing target which would meet the needs of existing residents (Objective 2). This is based upon the findings of the SHMA, 2013. Based on local need this option would reduce the need to travel (Objective 11) although we would not be delivering enough housing for people travelling into the borough from other areas (2001 Census data - 46% of local workforce commute into Stevenage for work, approx 19,000 persons) but it is clear that Stevenage provides employment opportunities for the sub-region so mitigation will be possible to make this option acceptable in terms of this objective.</p>													

	Sustainability Objectives
	<p>This option will have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) as the final site selection will need to include greenfield sites. This would put land to the north of the town, designated for its heritage interest, at risk. This would then perform poorly against Objective 7.</p> <p>It is considered that all options to develop land for housing might provide an opportunity to encourage water conservation (Objective 3) in line with current guidelines on the Code for Sustainable Homes and SuDS initiatives but this will be determined through other issues and policy. New housing improves access to services although it is documented that housing need outstrips this supply option (SHMA, 2013) but this option would ensure that existing residents have access to decent, affordable housing (Objectives 9 and 10).</p> <p>It is recognised that this option would support the local economy (Objectives 12 and 13).</p>
	<p>Mitigation measures</p>
	<p>To ensure that all available brownfield land options are allocated before greenfield sites and that the large greenfield sites necessary to deliver this total are designed to minimise their effect on the existing town. It is recognised that positive biodiversity measures can be introduced into a site design to mitigate their negative effects. This option would require improvements to the A1(M) and the potential negative environmental effects of this would need to be mitigated.</p> <p>Increase sustainable transport connections into the sub-region.</p> <p>Potential for compensatory Green Belt provision.</p> <p>A need to ensure that the impact on heritage assets is duly considered.</p>

Issue 10 - Gunnels Wood

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Continue with a very open policy approach.													
Short	-	+/-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	+	+	+/-
Medium	-	+/-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	+	+	+/-
Long	-	+/-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	+	+	+/-
Commentary													
<p>This approach would enable B class uses to be developed across Gunnels Wood.</p> <p>This could have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) and create adverse environmental conditions (Objective 6) if development is enabled across all areas with limited management of the site conditions.</p> <p>Human health and well-being (Objective 2) might be positively affected if investment (Objective 13) increases and leads to new jobs and opportunities for residents. However, as the unrestricted allocation of B class uses could include distribution centres this would have a negative effect on the number of opportunities for local people⁽⁶⁾. It is noted that the allocation of land for employment does not support Objective 10 for affordable housing.</p> <p>Further investment in the area would provide positive benefits⁽⁷⁾ and meet Objectives 12 and 13.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure that alternative policies are in place to protect green space (or allocate new areas) and limit pollution. To ensure that the existing Design Guide is supported through the new local plan.													
Option B - Identify specific areas for specific uses.													
Short	+	+	0	0	0	+	0	+	0	-	+	+	+
Medium	+	++	0	0	0	+	0	++	0	-	++	++	++
Long	+	++	0	0	0	+	0	++	0	-	++	++	++
Commentary													
<p>This option provides a number of zoned areas where specific land types are allocated. Each 'zone' has a number of criteria which deals with specific issues relating to the area. This approach enables the lack of open space⁽⁸⁾ to be addressed (Objective 1) via a specific zone policy. This option also performs well in terms of providing opportunities for local residents and a growing population by ensuring a broad spread of employment uses across the area (Objective 2). It is envisaged that this will increase over time as larger, more complicated schemes come forward for greater benefits in the medium to long term ~ as necessary to meet the long term demand for employment land⁽⁹⁾.</p> <p>A more managed approach to development ensures that employment uses with environmental weaknesses are located away from residential areas (Objective 6) and reduces the need to travel by locating office uses nearer to areas with good public transport links (Objective 11). It is noted that the allocation of land for employment does not support Objective 10 for affordable housing.</p>													

6 Stevenage Employment & Economy Baseline Study, 2013
 7 Gunnels Wood Masterplan, 2005
 8 Gunnels Wood: Focus on the Future, 2004
 9 Stevenage Employment & Economy Baseline Study, 2013

Sustainability Objectives													
<p>This zoned approach ensures a more strategic approach to development, ensuring good design and a more integrated approach to the development of the whole area as encouraged by the NPPF. This enables links to be identified and enhanced. This will have a positive effect against Objective 8, especially over the medium to long term as developments come forward.</p> <p>Ensuring a spread of uses will improve access to skills and a more diverse range of employment types (Objective 12). As developments come forward it will encourage investment and improve the viability of the area as a whole, particularly over the medium to long term period (Objective 13).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
No measures identified.													
Option C - Allow a range of job-creating uses in addition to traditional employment uses.													
Short	-	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	-	+	+	+
Medium	-	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	-	++	++	++
Long	-	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	-	++	++	++
Commentary													
<p>This approach will enable a greater range of uses to locate in Gunnels Wood.</p> <p>If other types of development are enabled across all areas with minimal consideration of the site conditions then this could increase pressure on biodiversity (Objective 1). This might also have adverse environmental conditions, particularly where the area abuts residential areas (Objective 6). This option lacks management to provide the right mix of opportunities for local people (Objective 2)⁽¹⁰⁾. Adversely, however, this might enable new businesses to develop in Gunnels Wood which might create a greater variety of employment opportunities for local residents. This then scores positively against Objectives 2, 12 and 13. However, it is noted that the allocation of land for employment does not support Objective 10 for affordable housing.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
<p>This option will require the development of specific design and environmental condition policies to ensure that there are no adverse effects on residential areas. Alternative land options for employment uses might also need to be considered as we seek to achieve greater sustainability within the town, greater employment opportunities for local people. This might also require a design code for Gunnels Wood to ensure that buildings and spaces work well.</p>													
Option D - Allow a specified part of the area to be re-developed from employment use to housing.													
Short	+	+/-	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	++	+	--	--
Medium	+	+/-	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	++	+	--	--
Long	+	+/-	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	++	+	--	--
Commentary													
<p>This option performs well in delivering housing (including affordable housing) for an existing and growing local population (Objective 2 and 10) and would enable the redevelopment of brownfield land for open space and playspace (Objective 1). Complete redevelopment of an area would enable any current issues to be addressed - this might include land</p>													

	Sustainability Objectives
	<p>contamination (Objective 4) and pollution (Objective 6) - there are no known flood issues in the area at present⁽¹¹⁾. This option provides an opportunity to ensure the placement of a residential site within a largely industrial area and might have negative implications if the neighbouring employment use has adverse environmental impacts (Objective 2).</p> <p>Development would be adjacent to an employment area so would reduce the need to travel for local residents employed locally, but the release of land for housing would reduce the number of employment and training options for the town as a whole (Objective 12) and reduce the amount of investment, threatening the viability of the employment area more generally (Objective 13).</p>
	Mitigation measures
	<p>To ensure that the area abuts existing residential areas and is not isolated from other key facilities.</p> <p>To ensure there are new employment land allocations which could still lead to an overall net increase in employment land and jobs.</p>

11 Stevenage SFRA 2009 & 2013

Issue 11 - Pin Green

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Continue with a very open policy approach.													
Short	-	+/-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	+	+	+/-
Medium	-	+/-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	+	+	+/-
Long	-	+/-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	+	+	+/-
Commentary													
<p>This approach would enable B class uses to be developed across Pin Green.</p> <p>This could have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) and create adverse environmental conditions (Objective 6) if development is enabled across all areas with limited consideration of the site conditions.</p> <p>Human health and well-being (Objective 2) might be positively affected if investment (Objective 13) increases and leads to new jobs and opportunities for residents. However, as the unrestricted allocation of B class uses could include distribution centres this would have a negative effect on the number of opportunities for local people⁽¹²⁾. It is noted that the allocation of land for employment does not support Objective 10 for affordable housing.</p> <p>Further investment in the area would provide positive economic benefits and meet Objectives 12 and 13.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure that alternative policies are in place to protect surrounding green space (or allocate new areas) and limit pollution. To ensure that the existing Design Guide is supported through the new local plan.													
Option B - Identify specific areas for specific uses.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	+/-	0	+	0	-	+	+	+
Medium	0	+	0	0	0	+/-	0	+	0	-	+	++	++
Long	0	+	0	0	0	+/-	0	+	0	-	+	++	++
Commentary													
<p>This option would retain employment uses in Pin Green but exclude office development and restrict unit sizes.</p> <p>Our evidence shows that there are several empty office units across the Borough and there is demand for non-office employment land which scores positively against Objective 2. Whilst this provides for a local need, it is recognised that some non-office employment uses may have adverse environmental effects.</p> <p>New opportunities for development enable an extension of the area's character as an employment area (Objective 8) and enhance the distinction of this area as such. The policy will also restrict unit size which is appropriate for this smaller employment area (smaller when compared with Gunnels Wood) which is surrounded by residential land. It is noted that the allocation of land for employment does not support Objective 10 for affordable housing.</p>													

Sustainability Objectives													
<p>In terms of local opportunities, this option performs very well against Objectives 12 and 13 by ensuring the availability of employment land and opportunities for local people. This will improve the investment and viability of the area, particularly over time as new developments come forward. It is also recognised that office developments are more appropriate in alternative locations. Although Pin Green is well served by public transport, it is recognised that locations nearer to the transport hubs in the town centre are more appropriate for office development.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure that industries with adverse environmental effects are managed and sited appropriately.													
Option C - Allow a range of job-creating uses in addition to traditional employment uses.													
Short	-	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	-	+	+	+
Medium	-	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	-	++	++	++
Long	-	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	0	0	0	-	++	++	++
Commentary													
<p>This approach will enable a greater range of uses to locate in Pin Green.</p> <p>If other types of development are enabled across all areas with limited consideration of the site conditions then this could increase pressure on biodiversity (Objective 1). This might also have adverse environmental conditions, particularly where the area abuts residential areas (Objective 6). This might have an adverse effect if a lack of management provides an inappropriate mix of opportunities for local people (Objective 2) leading to adverse environmental conditions locally. It is noted that the allocation of land for employment does not support Objective 10 for affordable housing. Adversely, however, this might enable new businesses to develop in Pin Green which might create a greater variety of employment opportunities for local residents. This then scores positively against Objectives 2, 12 and 13.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
<p>This option will require the development of specific design and environmental condition policies to ensure that there are no adverse effects on residential areas. Alternative land options for employment uses might also need to be considered as we seek to achieve greater sustainability within the town, greater employment opportunities for local people. This might also require a design code for Pin Green to ensure that buildings and spaces work well.</p>													
Option D - Allow a specified part of the area to be re-developed from employment use to housing.													
Short	+	+/-	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	++	+	--	--
Medium	+	+/-	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	++	+	--	--
Long	+	+/-	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	++	+	--	--
Commentary													
<p>This option performs well in delivering housing (including affordable housing) for an existing and growing local population (Objective 2 and 10) and would enable the redevelopment of brownfield land for open space and playspace (Objective 1). Complete redevelopment of an area would enable any current issues to be addressed - this might include land contamination (Objective 4) and pollution (Objective 6) - there are no known flood issues in the area at present⁽¹³⁾. The placement of a residential site within a largely industrial area might have negative implications due to adverse environmental conditions of neighbouring employment uses (Objective 2).</p>													

	Sustainability Objectives
	<p>Development would be adjacent to an employment area so would reduce the need to travel for local residents employed locally (Objective 11), but the release of land for housing would reduce the number of employment and training options for the town as a whole (Objective 12) and reduce the amount of investment, threatening the viability of the employment area more generally (Objective 13).</p> <p>It should be noted that Pin Green provides an employment site to the north east of the Borough, with Gunnels Wood to the west of the town. The location of this area reduces pressure on transport links to/from Gunnels Wood and might be considered to reduce the amount of cross-town travel.</p>
	<p>Mitigation measures</p>
	<p>To ensure that the area abuts existing residential areas and is not isolated from other key facilities.</p> <p>To ensure there are new employment land allocations which could still lead to an overall net increase in employment land and jobs.</p>

Issue 12 - New employment land

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Work with North Hertfordshire District Council to deliver a new 30 hectare (ha) employment site at Junction 7 of the A1(M).													
Short	--	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	++	++
Medium	--	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	++	++
Long	--	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	++	++
Commentary													
<p>This option would require the rollback of the Green Belt and is an area of land adjacent to a Site of Special Scientific interest. Development of this site for any purpose could have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1). It is also recognised that, without supporting infrastructure, this site would increase the need to travel and potentially increase carbon emissions (Objectives 6 & 11) - the site is located next to junction 7 of the A1(M) and is inaccessible by foot.</p> <p>However, it is acknowledged that the site provides a good strategic location for employment which could ultimately improve opportunities for existing and future residents (Objective 2). Our employment study states that the site has the strongest strategic potential (as the largest site) and would provide the greatest benefits in terms of work and investment opportunities (Objectives 12 & 13), when compared with other options.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Consider whether compensatory provision of the Green Belt is required in another authority whilst ensuring that designation meets the tests set out in the NPPF. Ensure that development of the site is designed to reduce the impact on the nearby SSSI. Improve options for sustainable transport measures.													
Option B - Safeguard or allocate around 6 ha of land to the west of North Road.													
Short	-	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	+
Medium	-	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	+
Long	-	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	+
Commentary													
It is recognised that development of this area of green space would have a negative effect on biodiversity, although there are no habitat or species designations on this site. Overall this option performs well with an opportunity to provide employment growth and investment opportunities in a location already well-served with public transport and easily accessible by foot or cycle.													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Option C - Safeguard or allocate up to 10 ha of land to the east of North Road as part of a new neighbourhood.													
Short	--	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	+
Medium	--	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	+
Long	--	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	+
Commentary													

This option would require the rollback of the Green Belt and, therefore, development of this site for any purpose could have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1). Overall this option performs well with an opportunity to provide employment growth and investment opportunities in a location already well-served with public transport and easily accessible by foot or cycle.

Mitigation measures

Consider whether compensatory provision of the Green Belt is required in another authority whilst ensuring that designation meets the tests set out in the NPPF.

Option D - Safeguard or allocate around 7 ha of land to the north of Stevenage Road.

Short	--	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	+	+
Medium	--	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	+	+
Long	--	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	+	+

Commentary

This option would require the rollback of the Green Belt and, therefore, development of this site for any purpose could have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1). It is also recognised that, without supporting infrastructure, this site would increase the need to travel and potentially increase carbon emissions (Objectives 6 & 11) - the site is located next to junction 8 of the A1(M) and is inaccessible by foot.

This option performs well in terms of providing opportunities for existing and future residents (Objective 2) by the provision of employment growth and investment opportunities (Objectives 12 & 13).

Mitigation measures

Consider whether compensatory provision of the Green Belt is required in another authority whilst ensuring that designation meets the tests set out in the NPPF. Improve options for sustainable transport measures.

Option E - Safeguard or allocate around 7 ha of land to the west and south-west of Junction 8.

Short	--	+	--	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	+	+
Medium	--	+	--	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	+	+
Long	--	+	--	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	+	+

Commentary

This option would require the rollback of the Green Belt and is located adjacent to a designated Wildlife Site. Development of this site for any purpose could have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1). The site contains land within Flood Zones 2 & 3 and which would restrict development of the site (Objective 3). It is also recognised that, without supporting infrastructure, this site would increase the need to travel and potentially increase carbon emissions (Objectives 6 & 11) - the site is located next to junction 8 of the A1(M) and is inaccessible by foot.

This option performs well in terms of providing opportunities for existing and future residents (Objective 2) by the provision of employment growth and investment opportunities (Objectives 12 & 13).

Mitigation measures

Consider whether compensatory provision of the Green Belt is required in another authority whilst ensuring that designation meets the tests set out in the NPPF. Ensure that development of the site is designed to reduce the impact on the nearby Wildlife Site. Improve options for sustainable transport measures.

Option F - Safeguard or allocate up to 10ha of land to the west of the A1(M) as part of a new neighbourhood.

Short	-	++	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	+	+
Medium	-	++	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	+	+
Long	-	++	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	++	++
Commentary													
<p>Development of this site, whilst not Green Belt land, would require the loss of greenfield land, thus scoring negatively against biodiversity - albeit not as poorly as other options. This option would increase the need to travel, given that it is located on the edge of the town, which would increase emissions.</p> <p>However, this option provides the greatest opportunities for employment growth in terms of size which could give the greatest benefits in terms of supporting the economy and providing job opportunities for existing and future residents - although the exact nature of employment would be decided through other policies and issues.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Improve options for sustainable transport measures.													
Option G - Do not safeguard or allocate any new employment land.													
Short	++	-	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-
Medium	++	--	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	--	--
Long	++	--	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	--	--	--
Commentary													
<p>This option performs well in environmental terms (Objectives 1 & 3) as it does not require the development of land. However, it is acknowledged that this options fails to provide opportunities for existing and future residents and performs very poorly in terms of employment and investment opportunities (Objectives 2, 12 & 13). It also encourages the need to travel further afield for employment (Objective 10). It is considered that the negative effects of employment provision will increase over the medium to long term as local populations rise.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Will require joint working with neighbouring authorities to ensure that replacement employment opportunities are provided in the sub-region or the intensification of existing employment land over the long term.													

Issue 14 - A new foodstore

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Identify one or more neighbourhood centres to be redeveloped with new foodstores.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	-	+	0	+
Medium	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	-	+	0	+
Long	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	-	+	0	+
Commentary													
<p>This option generally performs well in terms of sustainability, although the redevelopment of existing neighbourhood centres might put the mixed use function of a centre, including housing, at risk.</p> <p>This option would, however, provide enhanced facilities for the existing and growing population (Objective 2), encourage the redesign of centres which do not perform well in design terms⁽¹⁴⁾ (Objective 8) and improve the economic performance of these local centres (Objective 13). This option will reduce the need to travel as all of the centres are currently well served by passenger transport (Objective 11).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure that the mixed use of the centres is retained or compensatory housing is provided elsewhere.													
Option B - Identify a completely new site for a large foodstore.													
Short	?	+	?	?	0	0	0	?	0	-	?	0	+
Medium	?	+	?	?	0	0	0	?	0	-	?	0	+
Long	?	+	?	?	0	0	0	?	0	-	?	0	+
Commentary													
<p>There are several unknown effects of this option as a new site has not yet been identified. The exact location of the site could affect a number of Objectives.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that this option would provide new facilities for the existing and growing population (Objective 2) and improve the local economy (Objective 13). However, the removal of a potential development site from a housing option will negatively effect Objective 10.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure that the location of a new site does not negatively effect environmental objectives or reduce options for housing growth across the Borough.													
Option C - Allow extensions to existing large foodstores and/or neighbourhood centre shops.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	?	0	?	+	0	+
Medium	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	?	0	?	+	0	+
Long	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	?	0	?	+	0	+

14 Stevenage Neighbourhood Centres Investment and Renewal Programme, Matrix Partnership, 2008

	Sustainability Objectives
Commentary	<p>This option has some unknown effects as it unclear which centres/stores might be extended. However, where effects have been identified, this option performs positively against all objectives.</p> <p>Extending existing premises would provide for the population (Objective 2) and improve the local economy (Objective 13) at locations already well serviced by passenger/ sustainable transport measures (Objective 11).</p>
Mitigation measures	<p>To ensure that the extension of existing centres enhances local distinctiveness - as the function of local/ neighbourhood centres is a key component of the original new town design.</p> <p>To ensure that the existing number of dwellings at existing centres is not compromised, and that options to increase housing numbers are identified where possible.</p>

Issue 15 - Passenger transport, walking and cycling

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Provide new or improved bus services.													
Short	+	+	0	0	0	++	0	0	++	0	++	++	++
Medium	+	+	0	0	0	++	0	0	++	0	++	++	++
Long	+	+	0	0	0	++	0	0	++	0	++	++	++
Commentary													
Sustainable travel performs well in all categories ⁽¹⁵⁾ where effects have been identified. By increasing the availability of sustainable transport this option has a positive effect biodiversity and air quality (Objectives 1 and 6) and on the accessibility of local services and employment opportunities (Objectives 9, 11 and 12). The improvement of access also encourages local population growth (Objective 2) and investment in people and infrastructure (Objective 13). No negative effects have been identified.													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Option B - Encourage more flexible and home-working.													
Short	+	+	0	0	0	++	0	0	0	0	++	+	++
Medium	+	+	0	0	0	++	0	0	0	0	++	+	++
Long	+	+	0	0	0	++	0	0	0	0	++	+	++
Commentary													
This option performs well in all categories where effects have been identified. Encouraging home working directly reduces the need to travel ⁽¹⁶⁾ (Objective 11) which has positive effects for biodiversity and pollution (Objectives 2 and 6). This option also encourages wellbeing (Objective 2) by providing alternative options for local residents. It improves access to different employment opportunities through an investment in people and the local economy (Objectives 12 and 13). No negative effects have been identified.													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Option C - Improve pedestrian and cycling facilities.													
Short	+	++	0	0	0	++	0	+	++	0	++	+	+
Medium	+	++	0	0	0	++	0	+	++	0	++	+	+
Long	+	++	0	0	0	++	0	+	++	0	++	+	+
Commentary													
This option performs well in all categories where effects have been identified. By increasing the availability of sustainable transport this option has a positive effect biodiversity and air quality (Objectives 1 and 6) and on the accessibility of local													

15 Stevenage UTP, 2010

16 Alternatives to Travel, DfT, 2011

Sustainability Objectives													
services and employment opportunities (Objectives 9, 11 and 12). The improvement of access also encourages local population growth (Objective 2) and investment in people and infrastructure (Objective 13). This option might also be considered to create places and spaces that work well through the improvement of links through areas (Objective 8). No negative effects have been identified.													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Option D - Do all of the above.													
Short	+	++	0	0	0	++	0	0	++	0	++	++	++
Medium	+	++	0	0	0	++	0	0	++	0	++	++	++
Long	+	++	0	0	0	++	0	0	++	0	++	++	++
Commentary													
This option would provide a combination of Options A through C. This option performs positively against all objectives where effects have been identified.													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Further option i - Make improvements to the A1(M).													
Short	-	++	-	0	0	--	0	0	++	+	-	++	++
Medium	-	++	-	0	0	--	0	0	++	++	-	++	++
Long	-	++	-	0	0	--	0	0	++	++	-	++	++
Commentary													
This option encourages use of the road network and therefore will have a negative effect on biodiversity and particularly pollution (Objectives 1 and 6). This might also increase flood risk (Objective 3) if surface run-off is increased and does not encourage use of sustainable transport (Objective 11).													
However, this option does improve access to and from Stevenage which will have a positive impact on growth (Objectives 2 and 13). An increase in demand for properties will increase supply and gives rise to opportunities to improve access to services and employment (Objectives 9 and 12) and affordable housing (Objective 10).													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure that potential negative effects on the environment are addressed, for example through SUDS schemes. It will be necessary to ensure the ongoing monitoring of polluting particulates to ensure that increases in pollution from road transport do not exceed accepted levels.													

Issue 16 - The location of new homes

The following sites are appraised without considering the total number and type of available sites.

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option i - A previously developed land (PDL) site													
Short	++	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+
Medium	++	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+
Long	++	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+
Commentary													
<p>It is considered that this option performs the best in terms of sustainability. The redevelopment of existing urban sites negates the need to develop a greenfield site, thus performing well in terms of biodiversity. This option also provides an opportunity to improve habitats on urban sites through best practice urban design principles. This option also promotes the opportunity to rectify any existing issues of land contamination which may or may not be present on particular urban sites.</p> <p>Site development for housing provides for the needs of existing and future residents; provides opportunities for affordable homes; reduces the need to travel as sites are located within the existing, serviceable urban area; improves access to existing educational facilities; and supports the economy through the provision of homes for local employees.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure that the maximum number of PDL sites are sought.													
Option ii - An active employment site													
Short	+	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	-	+
Medium	+	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	-	+
Long	+	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	-	+
Commentary													
<p>It is considered that this option performs well in terms of sustainability. This option provides an opportunity to improve habitats on urban sites through best practice urban design principles. This option also promotes the opportunity to rectify any existing issues of land contamination which may or may not be present on particular urban sites.</p> <p>Site development for housing provides for the needs of existing and future residents; provides opportunities for affordable homes; reduces the need to travel as sites are located within the existing, serviceable urban area; and improves access to existing educational facilities.</p> <p>Although the redevelopment of existing urban sites negates the need to develop a greenfield site, thus performing well in terms of biodiversity, this will require the development of employment land which performs poorly in terms of supporting the local economy.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
To identify PDL non-employment sites first.													

Sustainability Objectives														
To work with neighbouring authorities to identify alternative employment sites which may be located outside of the administrative area but bordering Stevenage.														
Option iii - A Greenfield site within the urban area														
Short	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+
Medium	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+
Long	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+
Commentary														
<p>This option would require the development of existing areas of open space.</p> <p>The redevelopment of greenspace performs poorly in terms of biodiversity and also by removing recreational space for existing and future residents.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that this option would provide for the needs of existing and future residents in terms of housing; provide greater opportunities for affordable homes; reduce the need to travel as sites are located within the existing, serviceable urban area; improve access to existing educational facilities; and support the economy through the provision of homes for local employees.</p>														
Mitigation measures														
<p>To identify PDL sites first.</p> <p>To maximise biodiversity opportunities on redeveloped sites.</p>														
Option iv - A Greenfield site outside the urban area														
Short	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	-	+	+
Medium	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+
Long	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+
Commentary														
<p>This option would require the development of existing areas of open space outside of the urban area, including Green Belt sites.</p> <p>The redevelopment of greenspace performs poorly in terms of biodiversity and also by removing recreational space for existing and future residents.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that this option would provide for the needs of existing and future residents in terms of housing; provide greater opportunities for affordable homes; improve access to existing educational facilities; and support the economy through the provision of homes for local employees.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that, in the short term, sites at the outer fringe of the town could lack access to passenger transport and other services which would increase the need to travel by car.</p>														
Mitigation measures														
To identify PDL sites first.														

	Sustainability Objectives
	<p>To maximise biodiversity opportunities on redeveloped sites.</p> <p>To ensure that services are in place as development come forward.</p>

Issue 17 - House conversions

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - We could permit house conversions in all circumstances													
Short	+	+/-	0	0	0	+	0	-	-	+	+	0	+
Medium	+	+/-	0	0	0	+	0	-	-	+	+	0	+
Long	+	+/-	0	0	0	+	0	-	-	+	+	0	+
Commentary													
<p>This option delivers well in sustainability terms. The development of house conversions allows smaller units to be developed from larger under-used properties without the need for new land allocations. This is positive for biodiversity (Option 1) as new build properties might require the need for development of land currently providing wildlife habitats.</p> <p>Locally, conversions will reduce deprivation (Objective 10) by providing the type of properties currently in highest demand. Overall, the provision of homes in greatest need supports the local economy (Objective 13) by providing greater opportunities for local workers within existing local communities.</p> <p>Conversions also limit pollution (Objective 6), a negative effect of development. Pollution might also be reasonably limited through the conversion of properties already served by existing methods of sustainable transport (Objective 11).</p> <p>It should be noted that conversions meet the needs of a growing population (Objective 2) but this is balanced with the additional demands placed upon the local infrastructure. Where additional capacity is not available in the network of services, this fails to meet the needs of existing residents (Objectives 2 & 9). This might mean that additional pressures on, for example parking, would lead to issues with the original design of these spaces which were meant for much lower density living (Objective 8).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
No mitigation measures identified that are not considered within Option B.													
Option B - We could only permit house conversions when existing and potential residents are not adversely affected.													
Short	+	++	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	+
Medium	+	++	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	+
Long	+	++	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	+
Commentary													
<p>This option delivers very well in sustainability terms. It provides all of the positive benefits described by Option A. Additionally, this option balances the benefits to the existing and growing population (Objective 2). The known demand for smaller properties can be realised in a sustainable way without placing adverse pressure on local services.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
No mitigation measures identified.													
Option C - We could not permit any house conversions.													
Short	-	-	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	+
Medium	-	--	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	+

Long	-	--	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	+
Commentary													
<p>Where effects have been identified, this option performs poorly against almost each objective. The removal of conversions as an option for housing supply will require local housing need to be delivered elsewhere. This will perform poorly for many environmental objectives as the demand for land supply will increase, having a negative effect on biodiversity, pollution and flood risk.</p> <p>This option fails to provide a sustainable housing solution which does not assist in reducing deprivation or reducing the need to travel.</p> <p>Positively, this option might support the local economy as development will be required elsewhere. This may provide greater benefits to the wider population through a more suitable mix of property styles.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure that sufficient smaller properties are considered as part of the broader development strategy and within appropriate site allocations.													

Issue 18 - Affordable housing

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - We should set targets that require up to 40% affordable housing on qualifying sites.													
Short	0	++/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	+/-
Medium	0	++/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	++/-
Long	0	++/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	++/-
<p>Commentary</p> <p>Where issues have been identified, this option performs very well. By providing affordable housing to meet local need this option performs well against Objectives 2 & 10.</p> <p>As more people will be able to afford to live locally this will reduce the need to travel for local employment (Objective 11) and also support the local economy (Objective 13).</p> <p>By considering a tiered approach to affordable housing delivery, this option maximises the potential for development without affecting viability. This, in turn, further supports Objective 13 to ensure that the local building industry is supported.</p> <p>However, it is also recognised⁽¹⁷⁾ that a higher levels of affordable housing provision might not improve the overall imbalance of stock across the town. It is acknowledged that this approach might not encourage the release of sites performing poorly against Objectives 2 and 13.</p>													
<p>Mitigation measures:</p> <p>Ensure that the provision of more affordable housing does not restrict growth.</p>													
Option B - We should set targets that are higher than Option a.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	+
Medium	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	-
Long	0	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	--
<p>Commentary</p> <p>This option does address deprivation (Objective 10) by providing more affordable homes and it will reduce the need to travel for these workers. However, it will increase the need to travel for those local workers that wish to buy a property who will find it necessary to move elsewhere. This creates a neutral performance against Objective 11.</p> <p>This option does perform differently over time. In the short term, this option provides more affordable housing but in the medium to long term the increase of affordable housing will perform poorly as less market value homes are provided. This does not meet sustainability objectives as it will lead to an imbalance in the social make-up of the town. It will also mean that less housing is available for local workers which, in the long term, will fail to support the local economy (Objective 13). It may also mean that sites become less viable to develop. This will fail to support the local building industry but will also fail to deliver any potential housing targets we would hope to achieve.</p>													
<p>Mitigation measures:</p> <p>Ensure that the provision of more affordable housing does not restrict growth.</p>													

Option C - We should set targets that are lower than Option a.														
Short	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	--	--	0	0
Medium	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	--	--	0	--
Long	0	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	--	--	0	--
Commentary														
<p>Where issues have been identified, this option performs poorly. This option would fail to meet the needs of existing and future residents (Objective 2) through an under-provision of affordable housing. Over a long time period this will lead to further out-migration.</p> <p>Objective 10 relates to the provision of decent, appropriate and affordable housing and this option would perform poorly over all time periods through under-provision. If people need to move out of Stevenage to live then this will increase the need to travel (Objective 11) for work or leisure opportunities. This would fail to support the local economy (Objective 13) and could lead to people out-migrating to live, and potentially work, elsewhere.</p>														
Mitigation measures:														
Ensure that an under provision does not increase deprivation.														

Issue 19 - Housing mix

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - We should follow the recommendations of our evidence base.													
Short	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0
Medium	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0
Long	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0
Commentary													
<p>This option delivers positively in sustainability terms. Development sites will be decided in future iterations of the local plan and it's associated SA but plainly there will be a need to ensure that certain types of home are placed in appropriate locations. For example, higher density development should be located in accessible locations (NPPF).</p> <p>At this stage we can see that, overall, the mix of housing makes a positive impact in the improvement of access to appropriate housing (Objective 10). It will also meet the needs of existing residents and encourage population growth by delivering units based on local need (Objective 2) as outlined in the NPPF and Stevenage SHMA, 2013. This will reduce the trend of out-commuting currently identified in our baseline review, see also the Stevenage Employment & Economy Baseline Study, 2013.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
No mitigation measures identified.													
Option B - We should focus on large family homes.													
Short	+	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	--	-	0	-
Medium	+/-	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	--	-	0	-
Long	+/-	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	--	-	0	-
Commentary													
<p>This option will provide a mix of both positive and negative sustainability effects. Development of large family homes might perform positively in biodiversity terms (Objective 1) through the development of private gardens which create greater opportunities for wildlife. However, this option would require greater land allocations which might impact negatively on biodiversity over the longer term.</p> <p>This option does not provide for the total mix of deficiencies in the current housing stock⁽¹⁸⁾ and so performs poorly against Objectives 2 and 10. This option also performs badly for the local economy (Objective 13) as it does not provide the total mix required to support local workers and therefore centres of employment. As a result, local employees might be forced to seek accommodation outside of the Borough and subsequently this increases the need to travel (Objective 11).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure that location of large family homes are in appropriate locations and that alternative sites consider other housing type needs.													
Option C - We should focus on flats and units for first time buyers.													

Short	-	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	-	0	-
Medium	+/-	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	-	0	-
Long	+/-	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	-	0	-
Commentary														
<p>This option will provide a mix of both positive and negative sustainability effects. Development of flats and smaller units might limit opportunities for the development of private gardens which reduce opportunities for wildlife (Objective 1). However, this option would require less land which could impact positively on opportunities for biodiversity.</p> <p>This option does not provide for the total mix of deficiencies in the current housing stock and so performs poorly against Objective 2. However, this option does provide a larger number of smaller units which are generally more affordable⁽¹⁹⁾ and would increase opportunities for first time buyers (Objective 10).</p> <p>This option performs badly for the local economy (Objective 13) as it does not provide the total mix required⁽²⁰⁾ to support local workers and therefore centres of employment. As a result, local employees might be forced to seek accommodation outside of the Borough and subsequently this increases the need to travel (Objective 11).</p>														
Mitigation measures														
<p>Ensure that location of flats and unit for first time buyers are in appropriate locations and that alternative sites consider other housing type needs.</p>														

19 Stevenage AMR, 2012

20 Stevenage SHMA, 2013

Issue 20 - Gypsies and Travellers

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Extend the existing site at Dyes Lane.													
Short	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+
Medium	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+
Long	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+
Commentary													
<p>The Dyes Lane site, located west of the A1(M), is an established Gypsy and Traveller site which currently holds 17 pitches. This option would provide further pitches at this authorised site and therefore performs well in terms of socio-economic objectives. The extension of an existing site provides new homes within an established community. The provision of new homes supports the local economy and improves access to services.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Option B - Identify a new site, probably to Junction 8 of the A1(M).													
Short	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+	+/-	+	+
Medium	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+	+/-	+	+
Long	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+	+/-	+	+
Commentary													
<p>The allocation of an alternative site is appraised based on the principle of a new land allocation. In terms of improving access to services (Objective 9) and reducing the need to travel (Objective 11), further work will be required if a site is identified. The effects could either be negative or positive.</p> <p>The allocation of new land will have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) if the site is a greenfield location. The provision of a small isolated site could also have negative implications for human health and well-being if the site is unsustainable.</p> <p>In general terms, the provision of new homes supports the local economy and could improve access to services.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure the site is located in a sustainable location and that the intended occupants are part of an integrated community.													
Option C - Identify a different site elsewhere.													
Short	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+	+/-	+	+
Medium	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+	+/-	+	+
Long	-	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+	+/-	+	+
Commentary													
The sustainability affects of this option are identical to Option B. Without a precise site to appraise, the sustainability appraisal is outlined in general terms.													

	Sustainability Objectives
	<p>The allocation of an alternative site is appraised based on the principle of a new land allocation. In terms of improving access to services (Objective 9) and reducing the need to travel (Objective 11), further work will be required if a site is identified. The effects could either be negative or positive.</p> <p>The allocation of new land will have a negative effect on biodiversity (Objective 1) if the site is a greenfield location. The provision of a small isolated site could also have negative implications for human health and well-being if the site is unsustainable.</p> <p>In general terms, the provision of new homes supports the local economy and could improve access to services.</p>
Mitigation measures	
	To ensure the site is located in a sustainable location and that the intended occupants are part of an integrated community.

Issue 21 - Character Zones

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Carry forward the approach in the Old Town Area Action Plan for this part of the town.													
Short	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	0	-	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	0	+/-
Long	0	--	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	0	+/-
<p>Commentary</p> <p>Character zone statements will encourage the development of the area in a way which is sympathetic to existing character, as encouraged by the NPPF, whilst seeking to resolve some current localised issues.</p> <p>Of particular note is the positive impact this option will have on historic areas and in developing places that work well and are integrated into the existing built environment (Objectives 7 and 8).</p> <p>The long term effect of a more managed approach in the Old Town will further enhance the attractiveness of the area as an area in which to spend time, encouraging the use of the area and therefore supporting the local economy (Objective 13)⁽²¹⁾. However, it is also recognised that whilst a more managed approach will enhance the built area of the Old Town, it's restrictive elements may also stifle investment (Objective 13).</p> <p>It is recognised that this option performs poorly in the medium to long term by restricting growth in the area. Restrictions on scale and massing within the area remove the flexibility to develop the area using innovative methods that might have a reduced impact on the street scene. Reducing housing numbers will not help to meet the needs of existing residents or encourage population growth in a very sustainable part of the town (Objective 2).</p> <p>Mitigation measures:</p> <p>Ensure that increased management does not negatively impact growth.</p>													
Option B - Extend the character zone approach to cover the whole town.													
Short	0	-	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	-	0	0	0
Medium	0	--	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	-	0	0	+/-
Long	0	--	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	-	0	0	+/-
<p>Commentary</p> <p>Character zone statements will encourage the development of the area in a way which is sympathetic to existing character whilst seeking to resolve some current localised issues.</p> <p>Of particular note is the positive impact this option will have on historic areas, particularly non-designated heritage assets (see NPPF), and in developing places that work well and are integrated into the existing built environment (Objectives 7 and 8).</p> <p>The long term effect of a more managed approach across the town will further enhance the attractiveness of areas in which to spend time, encouraging the use of the area and therefore supporting the local economy, as encouraged by the NPPF. However, it is also recognised that whilst a more managed approach will enhance the built fabric of the town, restrictions over a broad area may deter investment.(Objective 13).</p>													

21 Heritage Works: the use of historic buildings in regeneration, English Heritage.

It is recognised that this option performs poorly in the medium to long term as it is less flexible for speculative development opportunities. Restrictions on scale and massing remove the flexibility to develop areas by placing overly onerous policy restrictions on all sections of the town, regardless of their importance in the local townscape. Reducing housing numbers will not help to meet the needs of existing residents or encourage population growth across the town (Objective 2).

Mitigation measures:

Ensure that increased management does not negatively impact growth.

Option C - Do not use area-based policies and apply generic criteria to all applications for development.

Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	+/-	++	0	+	0	0	+
Medium	0	++	0	0	0	0	+/-	++	0	++	0	0	++
Long	0	++	0	0	0	0	+/-	++	0	++	0	0	++

Commentary

This option would provide flexibility in the determination of planning applications on a site by site basis. This would enable us to meet the needs of existing residents and encourage population growth in appropriate locations (Objective 2).

It is recognised that this approach will not provide further support to designated heritage assets although it is considered that national guidance (NPPF) provides a basis which could be complemented with generic criteria (Objective 7).

Policy which provides design guidance to supplement the existing Design Guide with work positively to develop places which work well (Objective 8).

In terms of improving access to housing (Objective 10), this option would perform well as applications could be assessed on a site by site basis. This will encourage growth in more appropriate locations and provides flexibility for the Council to determine where higher densities could be achieved. This will ultimately improve local investment across the town (Objective 13).

Mitigation measures:

To ensure that the wording of policy is sufficiently balanced to protect and enhance all heritage assets whilst encouraging growth.

Issue 22 - Neighbourhood centres and facilities

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Retain the existing neighbourhood centre designations set in the District Plan.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	+	-
Medium	0	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	-	+/-	++	0	+	-
Long	0	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	--	--	++	0	+	--
Commentary													
<p>Our approach has been to support the modernisation of community buildings where assessments illustrate that sites are still viable. This option performs well in terms of human health and providing for the needs of existing and future residents (Objective 2). Community buildings provide opportunities for leisure and social facilities which also performs well in terms of increasing access to services (Objective 9) and reducing social deprivation (Objective 10). The provision of community buildings might also provide opportunities for learning and improving skills through an informal classroom style environment. This performs well in sustainability terms by meeting the needs of Objective 12.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that the retention of facilities at centres which are no longer economically viable or vital will have a negative effect (Objective 13) which may amplify over the longer term. The quality of these centres may also deteriorate over time if the Council is unable to invest in or support all of the allocated centres. This will have negative impacts over the medium to long term for Objectives 2, 8 & 9.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
No mitigation measures identified.													
Option B - Make change to reflect the current nature of our centres and facilities.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	+	-	-	+
Medium	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	+	-	-	+
Long	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	+	-	-	+
Commentary													
<p>This option would reduce the overall number of designated centres which could perform poorly in terms of access to services, knowledge and education (Objectives 9 & 12) and the need to travel could be increased (Objective 11).</p> <p>However, it is recognised that this option could provide positive benefits by enabling some centres to become available for other land allocations such as housing. This would perform well in terms of providing for local need (Objective 2) and reducing social deprivation (Objective 10). It is also recognised that there would be significant economic benefits (Objective 13) in concentrating the services and facilities in fewer locations providing an improved chance of viability and vitality to local businesses.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure that access to services is not so significantly affected so as to reduce the availability of services in particular areas of the town.													
Option C - Allow more flexibility and let the market decide what to provide.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+

Medium	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	++
Long	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	++
<p>Commentary</p> <p>This option is more difficult to assess in terms of sustainability as there are potentially positive and negative effects to this option. Access to services, knowledge and education could be negatively affected if centres become unviable (Objectives 9 & 12) and the need to travel could be increased (Objective 11).</p> <p>However, this option would perform very well in terms of providing for existing and future residents (Objective 2) based on need. It also supports the local economy (Objective 13) by making the best use of land. This option could improve social deprivation by ensuring that centres which are under-performing are developed into alternative uses such as housing (Objective 10) but this is not a guaranteed solution. Centres could spiral into disrepair causing significant social deprivation.</p>													
<p>Mitigation measures</p> <p>To ensure that access to services is not so significantly affected so as to reduce the availability of services in particular areas of the town.</p> <p>To ensure that centres do not become so degraded that they become the target of anti-social behaviour. The gradual decline of a centre would create a poor image for a local area. There would need to be pro-active agreements in place to either ensure the continued viability of a centre or the redevelopment of all/part of a centre to support the local population.</p>													

Issue 23 - Lister hospital

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Do not identify land for the future expansion of the hospital.													
Short	++	-	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	-
Medium	++	--	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	--
Long	++	--	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	--
Commentary													
<p>This option performs well in environmental sustainability although poorly in socio-economic terms.</p> <p>The development of the existing site removes the need for new land allocations. This is positive for biodiversity (Objective 1) as wildlife habitats might otherwise be at greater risk. This option will also performs well in terms of reducing flood risk (Objective 3)⁽²²⁾. By containing development within the existing boundary the amount of developed land is lessened thus reducing surface water run-off.</p> <p>In terms of social inclusiveness, this option limits development of the site and therefore reduces the scope to improve human health (Objective 2) and social deprivation (Objective 10). It is anticipated that limiting the flexibility of the site might have a significantly adverse effect over the medium to long term as the future needs of the hospital might not be met⁽²³⁾.</p> <p>Limits placed on the long term development of the hospital will also have significantly adverse effects economically. This option would put the delivery of future jobs at risk and fail to support the local economy (Objectives 12 and 13) at a site which provides the greatest number of jobs within the town⁽²⁴⁾.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
No mitigation measures identified.													
Option B - Safeguard land to the north of the Lister Hospital for future expansion.													
Short	-	+	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+
Medium	--	++	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	++
Long	--	++	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	++
Commentary													
<p>This option performs well in socio-economic terms although poorly in environmental sustainability.</p> <p>Safeguarding land for future development puts local habitats and species at risk and therefore performs poorly in terms of biodiversity (Objective 1). The development of further land would also increase surface water run-off and increase the probability of local flooding issues (Objective 3)⁽²⁵⁾.</p> <p>However, increased flexibility for future development improves the probability that the needs of the local and sub-regional population will be met in terms of human health, especially over the medium to long term (Objective 2). Locally, this option provides more opportunity to reduce social deprivation (Objective 10) by reducing the incidence of negative health</p>													

22 Stevenage SFRA 2009 & 2013.

23 Submissions by NHS Trust and Stevenage Employment Capacity Update, 2010.

24 Stevenage Employment Capacity Update, 2010.

25 Stevenage SFRA 2009 & 2013.

issues associated with areas of deprivation, such as teenage pregnancy, obesity and smoking related deaths⁽²⁶⁾. This option also improves the potential availability of local jobs, supporting the local economy and health infrastructure (Objectives 12 and 13).

Mitigation measures

Ensure that areas protected for their value in terms of biodiversity are not safeguarded for development.

26 As evidenced in the Baseline Review, See SEA Scoping Report 2013.

Issue 24 - Leisure and culture

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Identified option - to support the modernisation of leisure and cultural facilities where assessments illustrate that sites are still viable.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	++	0	+
Medium	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	++	0	+
Long	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	++	0	+
Commentary													
<p>Our approach has been to support the modernisation of leisure and cultural facilities where assessments illustrate that sites are still viable. This option performs well in terms of human health and providing for the needs of existing and future residents (Objective 2). This option also performs well in terms of increasing access to services (Objective 9) and reducing social deprivation (Objective 10). We will continue to support the provision of new facilities in accessible locations as this reduces the need to travel (Objective 11).</p> <p>As growth options are developed we will assess the town-wide supply of leisure and cultural facilities in future iterations of the local plan and the accompanying, evolving sustainability appraisal. It will be necessary to assess the distribution of facilities required for growth and ensure that their location remains accessible for existing and future residents.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
No mitigation measures identified.													

Issue 25 - Education

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Identified option - to support the modernisation of educational facilities where assessments illustrate that sites are still required to meet current needs.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	+	++	++
Medium	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	+	++	++
Long	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	+	++	++
Commentary													
<p>Our approach has been to support the modernisation of educational facilities where assessments illustrate that sites are still required to meet current needs.</p> <p>This option performs well in terms of human health and providing for the needs of existing and future residents (Objective 2). This option also performs well in terms of increasing access to services (Objective 9) and reducing social deprivation (Objective 10). We will continue to support the provision of new facilities in accessible locations as this reduces the need to travel (Objective 11).</p> <p>The improvement in quality and access to educational facilities also delivers positively in terms of Objectives 12 and 13 which aim to improve access to knowledge and support the local economy.</p> <p>The County Council, as the local education authority, are currently reviewing future education needs from elsewhere within the existing town. As growth options are developed we will assess educational needs in future iterations of the local plan and the accompanying, evolving sustainability appraisal.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
No mitigation measures identified.													

Issue 26 - Green Belt

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Give priority to maintaining the full current extent of the Green Belt within Stevenage Borough and do not attempt to fully meet the objectively assessed needs of the Borough.													
Short	++	-	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	-	+	-	-
Medium	++	-	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	--	+	-	-
Long	++	-	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	--	+	-	-
Commentary													
<p>It is considered that this option presents the most environmentally positive option in terms of biodiversity (Objective 1) for the Green Belt. Directing growth to existing urban areas will maintain the boundary, safeguard the countryside and maintain soil quality (Objective 4). It is also recognised that this option will improve access to services (Objective 9) and reduce the need to travel (Objective 11) by directing growth to the urban area with existing supporting infrastructure.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that this option cannot deliver enough land within the Stevenage boundary as required for growth. In this respect, this option performs poorly in terms of meeting needs of existing and future residents through a limited provision of land for housing, employment and other services (Objective 2) and, therefore, does not address deprivation/affordable housing issues in the Borough (Objective 10).</p> <p>It is considered that this option does not improve access to appropriate and satisfying work (Objective 12) which, in turn, does not support the local economy (Objective 13).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Will require co-operation of neighbouring districts to meet housing demand.													
Option B - Give priority to fully meeting the objectively assessed needs of Stevenage Borough to 2031 and pursue the rolling back of the inner Green Belt boundary (i.e. releasing land from the Green Belt) to allow development to happen.													
Short	-	++	0	-	0	0	0	0	--	+	--	+	+
Medium	-	++	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	++	-	+	+
Long	-	+	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	++	-	+	++
Commentary													
<p>This option provides well for the needs of existing and future residents (Objective 2) although it is acknowledged that this does not consider needs in the long term, beyond the plan period. This option will reduce deprivation through appropriate housing provision (Objective 10), and provide greater opportunities for employment and economic growth (Objectives 12 & 13).</p> <p>However, it is recognised that this option will require the development of greenfield land which performs poorly in terms of protecting soil quality (Objective 4) and biodiversity (Objective 1). The development of land at the periphery of the Stevenage urban area could reduce access to local services and increase the need to travel to local centres in the short term (Objectives 9 & 11).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Will require co-operation of neighbouring districts to meet housing demand.													
To ensure the timely provision or expansion of local services in areas of significant growth.													

Sustainability Objectives													
Option C - Give priority to fully meeting the objectively assessed needs of the Borough to 2031 and beyond. Pursue the rolling back of the inner Green Belt boundary (i.e. releasing land from the Green Belt) and seek the identification of 'safeguarded land' for future development in neighbouring Council areas.													
Short	-	+	0	-	0	0	0	0	--	+	--	+	+
Medium	-	++	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	++	-	++	++
Long	-	++	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	++	-	++	++
<p>Commentary</p> <p>Of the three options presented, this option performs the best in terms of sustainability. By making a limited and managed release of land from the Green Belt for essential infrastructure this option will enable the Council to deliver land opportunities for local and future needs beyond the lifetime of the local plan, as directed by the NPPF.</p> <p>This option performs well in terms of providing for future residents (Objective 2) and could deliver a large number of affordable homes (Objective 10). It is considered that the release of larger sections of land for essential development beyond the plan period will also provide greater employment opportunities, supporting the local economy. It is recognised that these positive effects will be particularly felt over the longer term.</p> <p>However, there are repercussions to this approach. As with Option B, it is recognised that this option will require the development of greenfield land which performs poorly in terms of protecting soil quality (Objective 4) and biodiversity (Objective 1). The development of land at the periphery of the Stevenage urban area could reduce access to local services and increase the need to travel to local centres in the short term (Objectives 9 & 11).</p>													
<p>Mitigation measures</p> <p>To ensure the timely provision or expansion of local services in areas of significant growth.</p>													

Issue 27 - Sustainability standards

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Use Code for Sustainable Homes/ BREEAM standards.													
Short	0	+/-	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
Medium	0	+/-	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
Long	0	+/-	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
Commentary													
This approach will perform positively for improving well-being (Objective 2), encouraging water conservation (Objective 3), increasing recycling (Objective 5) and maximising renewable energy production (Objective 6).													
However, it is recognised that higher quality build techniques could affect viability which, in turn, could reduce the number of homes built ~ this could impact negatively against Objectives 2 & 10.													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure viability is not compromised and build more affordable homes.													
Option B - Set local targets for renewable energy and low carbon technologies.													
Short	0	+/-	+	0	0	++	0	0	0	--	+	0	0
Medium	0	+/-	+	0	0	++	0	0	0	--	+	0	0
Long	0	+/-	+	0	0	++	0	0	0	--	+	0	0
Commentary													
The effects of this approach are similar to Option A for the same reasons. However, it is acknowledged that higher demands at the local level could further weaken viability which would have greater negative effects against Objective 10.													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure viability is not compromised and build more affordable homes.													
Option C - Set standards for water consumption in new development.													
Short	0	+/-	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
Medium	0	+/-	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
Long	0	+/-	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
Commentary													
It is recognised that this approach performs well in terms of enhancing well-being (Objective 2) and encouraging water conservation (Objective 3). However, it is noted that higher quality build techniques could affect viability which, in turn, could reduce the number of homes built ~ this could impact negatively against Objectives 2 & 10.													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure viability is not compromised and build more affordable homes.													

Sustainability Objectives													
Option D - Use higher emissions standards than building regulations.													
Short	0	+/--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	0	+/--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Long	0	+/--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commentary													
<p>This approach will perform positively for improving well-being (Objective 2), encouraging water conservation (Objective 3), increasing recycling (Objective 5) and maximising renewable energy production (Objective 6).</p> <p>However, it is recognised that the requirement for build techniques higher than the current national standard could significantly affect viability which, in turn, could reduce the number of homes built ~ this could impact negatively against Objectives 2 & 10.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure viability is not compromised and build more affordable homes.													
Option E - Introduce local targets or standards for more than one or all of these things.													
Short	0	+/-	++	0	+	++	0	0	0	-	+	0	0
Medium	0	+/-	++	0	+	++	0	0	0	-	+	0	0
Long	0	+/-	++	0	+	++	0	0	0	-	+	0	0
Commentary													
<p>As a combination measured approach to sustainability this option also performs well against environmental objectives. Viability of development is a key area of concern and the Council should ensure that proposed policies do not have a negative impact on meeting local housing needs (Objectives 2 and 10).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure viability is not compromised and build more affordable homes.													
Option F - Do not introduce local targets or standards and rely on national standards and/or existing guidance.													
Short	0	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
Medium	0	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
Long	0	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
Commentary													
<p>This approach performs the best in terms of sustainability. The Council is able to meet Government targets whilst exposing development viability to minimal risk.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													

Issue 28 - Open space designations

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - To carry forward the District Plan allocations unchanged.													
Short	+	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	--	0	0	0
Medium	+	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	--	0	0	0
Long	+	+/-	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	--	0	0	0
Commentary													
<p>This approach will continue to protect designated open spaces which enhances biodiversity, human health and places that work well (Objectives 1, 2 & 8).</p> <p>However, this approach fails to designate areas which have become more important in either qualitative or quantitative terms since 2004. This might include allotments which have seen an increase in demand by local residents in recent years.</p> <p>It is also recognised that the continued protection of land which has not been assessed, in qualitative terms, would restrict opportunities for housing (Objectives 2 & 10).</p>													
Mitigation measures													
Ensure that the designations are appropriate and of high quality for maximum biodiversity aims.													
Option B - To take forward the approach in the draft LDF documents and make any necessary changes to reflect current circumstances.													
Short	++	++	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
Medium	++	++	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
Long	++	++	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
Commentary													
<p>This option performs well against all objectives where an effect has been identified. This approach will protect those areas worthy of protection, ensure that new areas are identified where appropriate and remove designations which may no longer perform well in terms of biodiversity.</p>													
Mitigation measures													
None identified.													
Option C - As Option B but also protect smaller areas of open space.													
Short	++	++	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	+	0	0	0
Medium	++	++	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	+	0	0	0
Long	++	++	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	+	0	0	0
Commentary													
<p>This option performs well against all objectives where an effect has been identified. This approach will protect those areas worthy of protection, ensure that new areas are identified where appropriate and remove designations which may</p>													

	Sustainability Objectives
	no longer perform well in terms of biodiversity. It is recognised that this option performs best, against alternative options, in terms of protecting local character designations (Objective 8).
Mitigation measures	
None identified.	

Issue 29 - Heritage assets

	Sustainability Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Option A - Include local policies to help determine applications that affect heritage assets.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	0	0
Long	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	0	0
Commentary													
It is considered that this option performs the best in terms of sustainability. It enhances well-being, protects the setting of buildings and areas designated for their historical importance and enhances the distinctiveness of local character.													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure that there is no repetition of national guidance.													
Option B - Do not include local policies and rely on national guidance and legislation instead.													
Short	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0	0	0
Long	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0	0	0
Commentary													
Whilst this option performs well against the same objectives as Option A, it is recognised that a reliance on national guidance does not take into account locally specific character. This option, therefore, performs less well against Objective 8.													
Mitigation measures													
To ensure that local policy is robust and afforded maximum weight in the planning decision process.													

