



# South Somerset District Council



## Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Report June 2012

## Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background to Sustainability Appraisal	1
1.2 Structure of the SA report	1
1.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment	4
1.4 Equality Analysis	5
2. South Somerset's Local Plan	6
2.1 Background	6
2.2 Proposed Submission Local Plan	6
3. Sustainability Appraisal methodology	8
3.1 Introduction	8
3.2 Stage A: Scoping	8
3.3 Stage B: Developing alternatives and assessing effects	9
3.4 Stage C: Preparing the SA report	11
3.5 Stage D: Consulting on the SA report	11
3.6 Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of the Local Plan	11
3.7 Who carried out the SA; assumptions made; and difficulties encountered	12
4. Sustainability context and baseline	13
4.1 Introduction	13
4.2 Relationship with other plans and programmes	13
4.3 Sustainability baseline and predicted future baseline	15
4.4 Sustainability issues	17
4.5 The SA framework	18
5. Appraisal of Options	20
5.1 Introduction	20
5.2 Outline of the reasons for selecting the options	20
5.3 Consideration of options at the 'Issues and Options' stage	21
5.4 Consideration of options at the 'Preferred Options' stage	26
5.5 Consideration of options subsequent to the 'Preferred Options' stage	38
6. Summary of the Proposed Submission Local Plan SA findings	44
6.1 Introduction	44
6.2 Settlement Strategy	44
6.3 Yeovil	47
6.4 Market Towns	51
6.5 Economic Prosperity	54
6.6 Housing	58
6.7 Transport and Accessibility	61
6.8 Health and well being	62
6.9 Environmental Quality	63
7. Monitoring	66

**Separate accompanying documents:**

SA Non-Technical Summary.

**Appendix 1** – Review of Plans, Policies, and Programmes.

**Appendix 2** – Baseline data.

**Appendix 3** – Core Strategy ‘Issues and Options’ appraisal matrices.

**Appendix 4** – ‘Draft Core Strategy incorporating preferred options’ appraisal matrices.

**Appendix 5** – Sustainability Appraisal of Yeovil’s Strategic Growth options:

**5A:** December 2009

**5B:** February 2010

**5C:** August 2010

**5D:** Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension – options considered post ‘preferred options’.

**Appendix 6A** – Sustainability Appraisal of options for locating development around the ‘Market Towns’<sup>1</sup>.

**Appendix 6B** – Maps of ‘Market Towns’ showing growth options.

**Appendix 7** – ‘Proposed Submission’ Local Plan policy appraisal matrices.

**Appendix 8** – Cumulative effects of the ‘Proposed Submission’ Local Plan matrix.

---

<sup>1</sup> Chard SA carried out by the consultants ‘LDA Design’.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background to Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.1.1 The principles of ‘sustainable development’ are central to the planning system. A common definition of sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>2</sup> A presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of national planning policy.
- 1.1.2 In order to ensure that sustainable development is achieved, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all Development Plan Documents (DPDs) produced by local authorities to undergo a process of Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The Local Plan is the key DPD which dictates the scale, type, and location of new development in South Somerset, and so is subject to SA.
- 1.1.3 SA involves the identification and evaluation of the DPD’s impacts on economic, social and environmental objectives – i.e. its compatibility with the three dimensions of sustainable development. The SA process incorporates the requirements of European law<sup>3</sup> (the ‘SEA Directive’) requiring certain plans (including DPDs) and programmes to undergo a formal Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 1.1.4 SA and SEA are therefore both statutory requirements. The Government’s approach to this dual requirement is to incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive into the SA process. This SA has been prepared to accord with the legislative requirements, and supporting Government guidance. Figure 1.1 sets out the information required in the SEA Directive, alongside where these requirements can be found in the SA report.

## 1.2 Structure of the SA Report

- 1.2.1 The remainder of the SA Report is structured as follows:

**Section 2** – Introduces the South Somerset Local Plan/Core Strategy, briefly describing the contents of the ‘Proposed Submission’ Local Plan.

**Section 3** – Describes the SA methodology, who carried out the SA and any difficulties in carrying out the assessment.

**Section 4** – Sets out other relevant plans and programmes that have influenced the plan, the sustainability baseline and issues, and the SA framework.

**Section 5** – Summarises the findings of the SA of the ‘Issues and Options’ and the ‘Draft Core Strategy incorporating Preferred Options’.

**Section 6** – Summarises the SA findings of the ‘Proposed Submission’ Local Plan.

---

<sup>2</sup> Brundtland Report, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the ‘SEA Directive’).

**Section 7** – Indicates the indicators that will be used to monitor the significant effects of the Core Strategy.

**Section 8** – Highlights the next steps in the SA process following the publication of this report.

1.2.2 A Non-Technical Summary of this SA report has been published separately.

1.2.3 The following table highlights where the information required in the SEA Directive can be found in this SA report.

**Figure 1.1: Information required in the SEA Directive**

Information required in the SEA Directive	Where addressed in the SA Report
Preparation of an environmental report in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated.	This report in its entirety.
An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	The contents of the Local Plan are outlined in Section 2; the main objectives are in Section 5; and the relationship to other plans and programmes in Section 4 and Appendix 1.
The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	Section 4 and Appendix 2.
The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	Section 4 and Appendix 2.
Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.	Section 4 and Appendix 2.
The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	Sections 4, 5 and 6 and Appendix 1.

<p>The likely significant effects<sup>4</sup> on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.</p>	<p>Sections 5 and 6, and Appendices 3-8.</p>
<p>The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.</p>	<p>Sections 5 and 6, and Appendices 3-8.</p>
<p>An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.</p>	<p>Section 5. Difficulties encountered are in Section 3.7.</p>
<p>A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10.</p>	<p>Section 7.</p>
<p>A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.</p>	<p>See separate Non-Technical Summary.</p>
<p>The report shall include the information that may reasonably be required taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment, the contents and level of detail in the plan or programme, its stage in the decision-making process and the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process to avoid duplication of the assessment</p>	<p>This report in its entirety.</p>
<p>Consultation:</p> <p>Authorities with environmental responsibility, when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report.</p> <p>Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme.</p> <p>Other EU Member States, where the implementation of the plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment of that country.</p>	<p>The draft Scoping Report was sent to the statutory consultees (the Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage) and selected others (listed in Appendix 1 of the Scoping Report). An SA report accompanied the 'Draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options)' consultation, and this SA report has been published alongside the 'Proposed</p>

<sup>4</sup> These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.

	Submission Local Plan' consultation.
Taking the environmental report and the results of the consultations into account in decision-making.	Comments received have been incorporated where appropriate, and additional options considered as detailed in Section 5.
<p>Provision of information on the decision:</p> <p>When the plan or programme is adopted, the public and any countries consulted shall be informed and the following made available to those so informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The plan or programme as adopted.</li> <li>• A statement summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 have been taken into account in accordance with Article 8, and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and</li> <li>• The measures decided concerning monitoring.</li> </ul>	A sustainability statement will be published containing this information when the Local Plan is adopted.
Monitoring of the significant environmental effects of the plan's or programme's implementation.	Ongoing through the District Council's Annual Monitoring Report.
Quality assurance: environmental reports should be of a sufficient standard to meet the requirements of the SEA Directive.	Completion of this self-assessment.

## 1.3 Habitats Regulations Assessment

1.3.1 As well as the SEA Directive, another important piece of European legislation that directly impacts upon the content of the Local Plan is EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), and its implementation in the UK under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. A Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) (also known as 'Appropriate Assessment') is required for a plan or project which, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a 'European Site' and which is not directly connected with the management of the site. The term 'European Site' incorporates Special Area's of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area's (SPA) and Ramsar sites.

1.3.2 There is only one 'European Site' within South Somerset: 'Somerset Levels and Moors' Special Protection Area / Ramsar. A Habitats Regulations Assessment has

therefore been carried out to ascertain the potential impact of the Local Plan on this designation. Additionally, a HRA has been carried out for 'Bracket's Coppice' Special Area of Conservation located just outside the South Somerset district boundary (south east of Crewkerne). The HRA reports have been published separately, and the results of the HRA process have informed consideration of policy options in the sustainability appraisal, and have fed into the plan preparation.

## 1.4 Equality Analysis

- 1.4.1 The need for an Equality Analysis of the Local Plan arises from the Equality Act 2010, which states that the District Council must have 'due regard' for equality in the way that it provides services and make decisions. The District Council are required to undertake an Equality Analysis of the Local Plan policies in order to ensure that different groups are not unfairly disadvantaged or discriminated against, and everyone has fair access to information and services. An Equality Analysis of the Local Plan has been completed and published separately.

## 2 South Somerset's Local Plan

### 2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 The South Somerset Local Plan sets out the broad scale, type and location of future development in South Somerset. The Local Plan also incorporates topic-based development management policies to be used more generally in considering planning applications across the District. It is important to note that earlier drafts of the Local Plan were known as the Core Strategy, but the name has been changed to reflect updated national planning policy. When adopted, the South Somerset Local Plan will become the statutory planning document for the District.
- 2.1.2 The preparation of the Local Plan/Core Strategy has involved extensive evidence gathering and several stages of public engagement. The first stage culminated in public consultation on the 'Core Strategy Issues and Options' (I&O) in March 2008. In addition to a draft vision and strategic objectives for development in South Somerset up to the year 2026, the I&O included 'strategy' options for the level and distribution of new development across the district, and potential policy options based around particular topics.
- 2.1.3 Following consideration of consultation responses received on the I&O report, the Council prepared the 'draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options)', published for public consultation in October 2010. An updated vision and set of strategic objectives was set out, and policies were drafted on the settlement strategy, specific settlements, and topic-based policies.

### 2.2 'Proposed Submission' Local Plan

- 2.2.1 This SA report has been published alongside the 'Proposed Submission' Local Plan (June 2012), which is structured into the following sections:
- **Spatial Portrait** – describes the key characteristics of South Somerset, and the role it plays in both the county and the wider south west region.
  - **Vision and Strategic Objectives** – sets a vision for how South Somerset should look in the year 2028, and identifies the key objectives that will be necessary in order to achieve the vision.
  - **Settlement Strategy** – identifies the settlement hierarchy that sets the context for development, the scale and distribution of development required to meet the needs of South Somerset, and the approach for ensuring infrastructure delivery.
  - **Yeovil; Market Towns; and Rural Centres** – these three sections set out more specific issues for the main settlements in the District, and proposals for new development at these places.
  - **Housing; Economic Prosperity; Transport and Accessibility; Health and Well being; Environmental Quality** – these five sections include topic-based

development management policies to be applied in considering planning applications across the District.

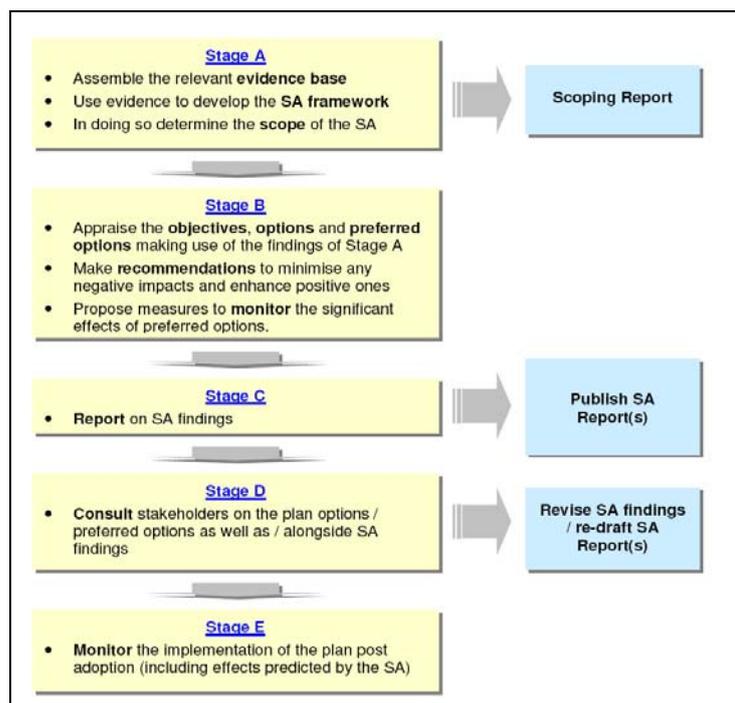
- **Implementation and Monitoring** – explains how the Local Plan will be subject to ongoing monitoring through the use of indicators in order to ensure that the plan is effectively implemented, including a five yearly comprehensive review of the Local Plan.

## 3 Sustainability Appraisal Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The methodology for carrying out Sustainability Appraisal is prescribed by the Government, which advocates a five stage approach. Stage A involves gathering an evidence base and defining SA Objectives, which are documented in a Scoping Report that undergoes a five week consultation period. The appraisal of the plan including alternative options is conducted at Stage B – elements of this stage are carried out more than once as preparation of the plan develops. The outcome of SA findings are recorded in preparation of the SA Report during Stage C. Following consultation alongside the draft plan the SA Report may require updating to reflect changes made in response to representations (Stage D). Finally, Stage E involves the ongoing monitoring of significant effects (within the Annual Monitoring Report). This section briefly explains how this methodology has been applied in developing the SA to accompany South Somerset’s Local Plan/Core Strategy. A simplified version of the SA methodology is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

**Figure 3.1: Simplified SA methodology**



### 3.2 Stage A: Scoping

3.2.1 Stage A of the SA process was largely undertaken between 2007 and 2009. The Council commissioned ‘Scott Wilson’ (planning consultants) to assist with the Sustainability Appraisal by carrying out initial work on the SA (Stage A) culminating in production of the Scoping Report in September 2007, which included informing the emerging South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy. Some contextual

amendments were made to reflect updated national and regional policy before the Scoping Report was published for consultation with statutory consultees (Environment Agency, Natural England, and English Heritage) and key stakeholders in April 2009 – the full list is set out in Appendix 1 of the Scoping Report. The revised Scoping Report, including an appendix highlighting the comments received during consultation and the Council’s response, was published in September 2009.

- 3.2.2 The Scoping Report contains a review of other relevant plans and programmes that set the context for carrying out SA, baseline information, and key sustainability issues for the District. This information was used to inform the SA framework that incorporates SA objectives, appraisal questions and indicators; these are presented in section 4. It is important to note that the context is dynamic and new or revised plans and programmes emerge on a regular basis – with this in mind the Council regularly review the context, and most recently revised this in September 2011.

### 3.3 Stage B: Developing alternatives and assessing effects

- 3.3.1 A key purpose of carrying out SA is to assess the likely significant social, economic, and environmental effects of implementing the plan, along with any ‘reasonable alternatives’. Although ‘reasonable alternative’ is not defined in the SEA Directive, European Commission guidance<sup>5</sup> considers an alternative to be a different way of fulfilling the objectives of the plan, which should be realistic, and falls within the legal and geographic competence of the authority. Government guidance<sup>6</sup> indicates that alternatives should consider ‘strategic’ options, ‘policy/thematic’ options, and ‘location/site’ options. SA has been undertaken as the South Somerset Local Plan/Core Strategy has evolved, and formally recorded for each stage of the plan preparation process.
- 3.3.2 SA is fundamentally based upon an objectives-led approach whereby the potential impacts of the plan are gauged in relation to a series of aspirational objectives for sustainable development. SA objectives provide a way in which the sustainability effects of the plan can be described, analysed and compared. The SA framework comprises objectives, supporting questions and indicators. Each policy and alternative option has been tested against the SA framework (detailed in section 4.5), or screened out for reasons that are documented in the appraisal matrices set out in the appendices.
- 3.3.3 It is only necessary to assess the ‘likely significant effects’ of the plan, not all possible effects. Annex II of the SEA Directive sets out the general criteria of significance and these have been considered in the scoring approach that has been used. In summary, this states that various effects should be considered, including secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects. These effects are identified in the ‘commentary’ column in the

---

<sup>5</sup> Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, European Commission, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Local Development Frameworks – Guidance on Options Generation and Appraisal, Planning Advisory Service, 2009.

appraisal matrices set out in the appendices, where necessary. An indicative score was given in assessing the effect, as explained in figure 3.3 below.

**Figure 3.3: Assessing the significance of effects**

Score	Meaning	Symbol
Significant positive effect	The option / policy fully addresses the SA Objective and most of the appraisal questions, contributes significantly to the achievement of the SA Objective.	+ +
Positive effect	The option / policy broadly addresses the SA Objective but does not address the majority of the appraisal questions.	+
Neutral	The option / policy does not have any effect on the achievement of the SA Objective.	0
Negative effect	The option / policy detracts from the SA Objective or appraisal questions.	-
Significant negative effect	The option / policy detracts significantly from the achievement of the SA Objective and appraisal questions.	- -
Uncertain effect	There is an uncertain relationship between the option / policy and the SA Objective.	?

- 3.3.4 The sustainability implications of plan policies and policy options have been considered all through the preparation of the South Somerset Local Plan/Core Strategy. The matrices that document the SA findings at each stage of the plan are set out in the appendices. The 'Core Strategy Issues and Options' just contained policy options, and the 'draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options)' included specific policy wording, along with some 'strategic options' that were also discussed. An SA report that documented the findings of both these stages was published for consultation alongside the Core Strategy preferred options document in October 2010. The key SA findings of these two stages are set out in section 5, alongside details of how appraisal findings have been taken into account. Further detail is included in the appendices.
- 3.3.5 The 'Proposed Submission' Local Plan (June 2012) has been developed from the options / preferred options (draft policies) that were considered, and subjected to appraisal, at the preferred options stage. However, for three key issues there has been a need for further consideration of options subsequent to the preferred options stage / prior to drafting the proposed submission document. These issues are: the scale of development at Yeovil due to the proposed revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies; further refinement of the Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension; and potential options for a 'direction of growth' at Langport/Huish Episcopi after the status of this settlement was changed and there was a subsequent increase in the scale of development. Chapter 5 also presents appraisal findings from this most recent stage of options consideration, and explains how this consideration of options has influenced the Proposed Submission document.
- 3.3.6 The most recent stage of appraisal has involved appraising the draft ('Proposed Submission') plan approach. Appraisal findings and recommendations are presented in Chapter 6.

3.3.7 The final task of Stage B involves proposing measures to monitor the environmental effects of the plan – these are set out in section 7.

### 3.4 Stage C: Preparing the SA report

3.4.1 This document is the SA report, and is a key output in the SA process. It sets out an appraisal of the draft ('Proposed Submission') plan approach and also an appraisal of a range of reasonable alternative approaches (options) to addressing key plan issues. This SA Report is published for consultation alongside the Proposed Submission Plan in order to facilitate and effect consultation. In particular, the information presented within this report will be of interest to those that might like to suggest modifications to the proposed submission approach, or even that the Council should consider an alternative approach (albeit at this advanced stage of plan-making it is not the Council's intention to revisit the consideration of alternative approaches). Subsequent to the consultation, the Council will take on-board appraisal findings, alongside consultation responses, and finalise the plan for submission to the Secretary of State.

### 3.5 Stage D: Consulting on the SA report

3.5.1 The SA report must be available at the same time as the draft plan, as an integral part of the consultation process. This SA report is the 'formal' document that sets out the findings of the appraisal of all stages of the Local Plan/Core Strategy, and needs to meet the information required in the SEA Directive. If significant changes occur subsequent to the 'Proposed Submission Local Plan', it may be necessary to consider whether a revised SA report is needed.

3.5.2 When the Local Plan is adopted, a statement will be issued summarising:

- how sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Local Plan;
- how the SA report has been taken into account;
- how any consultation responses received on the Local Plan/Core Strategy and SA reports (at all stages) have been taken into account;
- reasons for choosing the Local Plan proposals and policies in light of other reasonable alternatives considered; and
- the measures that will be undertaken to monitor the significant sustainability effects of implementing the Local Plan.

### 3.6 Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of the Local Plan

3.6.1 The SA framework contains a number of indicators that will be used to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan – these indicators are set out in section 7. The District Council's monitoring report will identify the findings of the ongoing monitoring of significant effects indicators.

### 3.7 Who carried out the SA, assumptions made, and difficulties encountered

- 3.7.1 The SA has been carried out by Officers in the District Council's Spatial Policy Team, and undertaken as a group activity on key examples in order to enable debate and different perspectives to be considered in making a judgement on the sustainability effects. In addition, sustainability consultants from 'Scott Wilson/URS' have assisted the District Council in the SA process, initially through preparation of the Scoping Report, and then through a 'peer review' of the outputs reported at the preferred options stage and through review of this SA report.
- 3.7.2 In terms of the assumptions that have been made, the aim of the SA is to identify and respond to significant effects – what constitutes 'significant' will vary according to circumstance and is a matter for professional judgement using available baseline data, responses from consultees, and in considering the likely impacts of the plan. The types of effect that should be considered are: short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative, and secondary, cumulative and synergistic. It was necessary to take a precautionary approach in considering some effects where there was a lack of information available.
- 3.7.3 There were some difficulties encountered in carrying out the SA. An inherent difficulty in appraising a 'strategic' document was the relative lack of detail for some of the options or policies considered, which made it difficult to determine the effects for some of the objectives. For example, it was difficult to determine the effects of options that considered the scale of housing development upon landscape or historic assets, without greater detail on the location of the housing. The appraisal matrices highlight where this difficulty is an issue, often through scoring the option as having an 'uncertain' effect against particular objectives.

## 4 Sustainability context and baseline

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Setting the context is a key aspect of carrying out SA, and involves compiling the background information needed to undertake the appraisal. The key tasks are to identify the key messages of other plans and programmes that influence the SA in order to establish the 'context'; collect the baseline information that helps to provide a basis for predicting and monitoring effects, and identifying the key sustainability issues; and using this information to develop the SA framework. This section summarises the sustainability context and baseline, with further detail in Appendices 1 and 2.

### 4.2 Relationship with other plans and programmes

- 4.2.1 The South Somerset Local Plan is influenced in various ways by other plans and programmes that have been produced at an international, national and local level. For the purposes of this SA, the relevant plans and programmes have been categorised according to each 'strand' of sustainability i.e. environment, social, economy, although there is some cross over for many of the plans that were reviewed. It is important to note that no such list can ever be exhaustive, and new or revised relevant plans and programmes emerge on a regular basis meaning that regular review of these is necessary. A particular recent example is the replacement of the raft of Planning Policy Statements/Guidance notes with the National Planning Policy Framework. Plans and programmes also often exist in a hierarchy (from international to national and local) and, in general, the implications of the SA become more specific as the hierarchy descends.
- 4.2.2 Appendix 1 sets out the plans and programmes that have been reviewed in developing the SA – some of the key examples are highlighted below:

#### Environment

- Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora Directive (92/43/EEC) (Habitats Directive).
- South Somerset Biodiversity Action Plan (2008).
- South Somerset Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008).
- Air Quality Strategy for Somerset (2008).

#### Social

- Planning Policy for Traveller sites (2012).
- Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2011).
- South Somerset Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2009).

### Economic

- Regional Economic Development Strategy for the South West of England 2006-15 (2006).
- Somerset Economic Assessment (2011).
- South Somerset Employment Land Review (2009-10).

### General (i.e. environment, social, economic)

- Climate Change Act 2008.
- Securing the future: delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005).
- National Planning Policy Framework (2012).
- South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy (2009).
- Somerset Future Transport Plan 2011-2026 (2011).

4.2.3 Some of the key 'sustainability' messages that the review of other plans and programmes has identified are the need to:

- Use land efficiently, re-using previously developed land wherever possible.
- Preserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.
- Manage the location of development in order to reduce the risk of flooding, and require sustainable drainage systems.
- Increase the supply of housing and provide for a better mix of dwelling sizes, tenures, and types with a range of housing densities.
- Provide additional accommodation for traveller populations as may be needed.
- Promote mixed economic development in order to help alleviate economic and social deprivation.
- Maximise tourism potential whilst minimising impact on the environment.
- Improve access to jobs, services, social areas etc. by modes other than the private car.
- Ensure a full and appropriate response to climate change.
- Seek to make sustainable design and building practice the norm rather than the exception.
- Direct development to brownfield land which has good public/mass transport access.

## 4.3 Sustainability baseline and predicted future baseline

4.3.1 The 'sustainability baseline' is information on the current social, economic and environmental state of South Somerset. The collection of baseline information provides a basis for predicting and monitoring effects, as well as helping to identify sustainability issues. When collecting baseline data, the aim is to assemble sufficient data on the current and likely future state of the District, in order to enable the effects of the South Somerset Local Plan to be adequately predicted. The sustainability baseline is set out in detail in Appendix 2, and summarised in the following paragraphs.

### Population

4.3.2 South Somerset is home to around 158,000 people,<sup>7</sup> and is a largely rural district of small communities: some 45% of the population lives in settlements of fewer than 2,500 people and only two towns (Yeovil and Chard) have more than 10,000 inhabitants. The rural nature of South Somerset is illustrated by its population density of 1.7 people per hectare, less than half the national average. The generally small size of settlements can be beneficial in encouraging a sense of community and enabling participation in local affairs but it also poses challenges in terms of the economic provision of services and facilities.

4.3.3 A relatively high proportion of South Somerset's population is aged over 65 years, and a lower proportion of young people (16-29 years) than regional and national averages, in South Somerset. This is anticipated to be because young people have been leaving the District to pursue higher education and not returning, contributing to a shortage of highly skilled young graduates entering the local workforce. However this trend does appear to be slowing, with a recent increase in people studying for qualifications locally or via distance learning.

4.3.4 South Somerset has a significantly more homogeneous population than other parts of the UK, with more than 98% of the population describing themselves as white, British.<sup>8</sup> There is higher than average life expectancy for both males and females in South Somerset and a lower than average premature death rate. The general health of the District is favourable, and crime levels are lower than regional and national averages.

### Housing

4.3.5 Higher than average house prices, combined with lower than average wages mean that housing affordability is a key issue in South Somerset – the average house price is over 8 times the average salary. Evidence<sup>9</sup> indicates that around 660 new affordable homes are required each year to meet demand. Homelessness has increased slightly over the last few years, linked to the economic recession.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Mid 2010 estimate, ONS.

<sup>8</sup> Census 2001, ONS.

<sup>9</sup> Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> South Somerset Annual Monitoring Report 2010-11.

- 4.3.6 The proportionate increase in the number of households in South Somerset is growing at a faster rate than population, reflecting the national trend of decreasing household size.

### **Economy**

- 4.3.7 In general terms, South Somerset is relatively prosperous, with unemployment around half the national average, and new businesses showing more resilience than other parts of the country. The manufacturing sector is a strong sector of the economy, and the proportion of people employed in this sector in South Somerset (around 25%) is approximately twice the national average. This is principally down to the presence of Defence industries.

- 4.3.8 An area of concern is that although average household income in South Somerset is similar to county and regional averages, it is nearly 20% lower than the national figure. The proportion of people qualified to degree level or above is also lower than elsewhere.

### **Transport**

- 4.3.9 Transport and travel patterns reflect the rural nature of large parts of South Somerset, with public transport coverage outside the main urban areas relatively poor. This compounds difficulties in accessing key services and facilities, which is the most prevalent form of deprivation in the District. Less people in South Somerset use public transport to get to work than virtually the whole of the UK, and there are issues with traffic congestion at the two largest settlements of Yeovil and Chard.

### **Natural and Historic Environment**

- 4.3.10 South Somerset has a high quality natural environment with the internationally designated Somerset Levels and Moors protected for its biodiversity, and parts of three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the District, particularly notable. There are some fertile belts of high quality agricultural land. The historic environment is also highly valued, with over 80 Conservation Areas, around 350 Grade I or II\* listed buildings, and 18 Historic Parks and Gardens. There are also important archaeological sites in the District, including over 70 Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- 4.3.11 Biological river quality is improving in South Somerset, although chemical quality has declined mirroring the national trend. Air quality is generally good, although there are air quality issues caused by congestion in parts of Yeovil, with the entire town being designated as an Air Quality Management Area.
- 4.3.12 Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions are 7.7 tonnes per person in South Somerset, which is similar to the neighbouring Districts of Taunton Deane (7.3 tonnes) and Mendip (7.9 tonnes), and slightly less than the county average of 8.3 tonnes per person. Industrial and commercial sources produce the highest amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per person (2.8 tonnes) in South Somerset, followed by domestic sources (2.4 tonnes) and transport (2.1 tonnes) with similar proportions.

### **Future trends...**

- 4.3.13 Predicting the nature of future trends is very challenging as it will depend on a wide range of factors including the global and national economic climate, and decisions made at a national, regional and local level. Some of the key trends that are likely to continue in South Somerset without implementation of the Local Plan are:
- The population is forecast to rise, particularly in the over 65 category, mainly due to in-migration of retired people.
  - Life expectancy is expected to rise, in line with the regional pattern.
  - House prices seem likely to continue to rise, in line with regional and national trends.
  - Homelessness should reduce as affordable housing is delivered.
  - There has been a high proportion of development on previously developed land, but this is likely to decline as available brownfield land is used up and the Greenfield development commitments are built out.
  - Biodiversity and nature conservation trends are positive with the extent of land given to conservation increasing and future conditions set to improve.
  - Household waste arisings are declining and set to continue to decline to meet national objectives.
  - Recycling rates are improving and this trend is set to continue.
  - Overcrowding in households has declined and is set to decline as availability of properties and conditions improve.
  - The historic environment is identified as experiencing good protection and of high quality and this trend is expected to continue.
  - Accessibility to key services is an identified problem in rural areas and looks likely to continue given the decline in rural services.

## 4.4 Sustainability issues

- 4.4.1 The identification of key sustainability issues facing South Somerset provides an opportunity to define the main issues for the Local Plan, and to develop sustainable plan objectives and options for resolving these. The analysis of the baseline information has led to the identification of the following key issues for each element of sustainability in South Somerset.

### Environmental

- Air quality is generally good, apart from at Yeovil which is designated as an Air Quality Management Area.
- There is a range of important biodiversity areas, protected at a local, national and international level.

- There is a high quality historic environment.
- Flood risk is an issue for some parts of the District.
- Transport and travel patterns reflect the rural nature for much of the District, and the lack of public transport outside urban areas.
- Although CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compare well with neighbouring areas, it is necessary to take measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

### Social

- Population projections indicate additional growth, particularly through elderly in-migrants to the District.
- In general, South Somerset is not deprived, but there are pockets of deprivation, particularly in the main urban areas.
- Crime levels are generally lower than regional and national figures.
- There are slightly higher levels of attainment at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE's than regional and national averages.
- More affordable housing is required to meet identified need.

### Economic

- In general terms, the District is relatively prosperous with a growing economy, unemployment around half the national average, and a net increase in new businesses in recent years.
- The employment structure indicates a dependence on manufacturing sector.
- Wages are below national average.

## 4.5 The SA framework

4.5.1 Using the information gathered from the context / baseline / future baseline review, and analysis of sustainability issues, the Council have developed a series of SA objectives and appraisal questions – see figure 4.1 below.

**Figure 4.1: SA objectives and appraisal questions**

SA objective	Appraisal questions: will the policy / proposal / strategy help to...?
1. Improve access to essential services and facilities	...ensure high levels of accessibility to shops, schools, health/leisure facilities and other key services by walking, cycling, and public transport? ...reduce social exclusion?
2. Reduce poverty and social exclusion	...benefit particularly deprived areas?...encourage active involvement of local people in community activities? ...maximise opportunities for all members of society? ...maximise opportunities within the most deprived areas? ...reduce fuel

	poverty?
3. Provide sufficient housing to meet identified needs of the community	...increase the range, quality and affordability of housing for all social groups? ...reduce homelessness?
4. Improve health and well being	...improve access to high quality health facilities? ...reduce health inequalities? ...encourage healthy lifestyles through, for example, open space and green infrastructure provision?
5. Improve education and skills of the population	...improve qualifications and skills of young people and adults? ...promote life-long learning that is accessible to all? ...provide an increased supply of skilled workers to the economy?
6. Reduce crime and fear of crime	...reduce anti-social behaviour? ...reduce actual levels of crime? ...reduce the fear of crime?
7. Support a strong, diverse and vibrant local economy	...foster balanced economic growth? ...provide jobs for all with a diverse range of employment opportunities? ...ensure accessibility to work by walking, cycling and public transport? ...promote town and local centre vitality and viability? ...improve business development and enhance competitiveness? ...assist businesses in finding appropriate land and premises? ...promote sustainable tourism opportunities?
8. Reduce the effect of traffic on the environment	...reduce the need to travel? ...increase proportion of journeys made by non-car modes? ...reduce road traffic accidents? ...reduce the growth of congestion?
9. Protect and enhance the landscape and townscape	...protect and enhance the landscape and townscape and its local distinctiveness? ...reduce the amount of derelict, degraded and underused land? ...promote visual amenity? ...protect and enhance natural landscapes within the urban area, including recreational open space and green corridors?
10. Conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment	...conserve and enhance the cultural heritage, archaeological sites and remains, listed buildings?
11. Reduce contribution to climate change and vulnerability to its effects	...promote energy efficiency? ...encourage renewable energy? ...reduce carbon dioxide emissions? ...incorporate the principles of sustainable construction? ...make efficient use of water? ...consider the need to adapt to climate change?
12. Minimise pollution (including air, water, land, light, noise) and waste production	...improve and maintain air and water quality? ...minimise noise and light pollution, odour and vibration? ...minimise pollution of land and soil (including minimising loss of best and most versatile agricultural land)? ...reduce waste production and increase reuse, recycling and recovery of waste?
13. Manage and reduce the risk of flooding	...minimise the risk of flooding to people and property? ...promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS)?
14. Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	...protect and enhance wildlife habitats and sites of geological conservation interest? ...conserve and enhance species diversity, in particular avoiding harm to protected species? ...promote Green Infrastructure?

## 5 Appraisal of Options

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 A key element of SA is to identify and appraise alternative approaches (options) to addressing key issues. As highlighted in section 2, the Local Plan/Core Strategy has been developed over several years, and involved two distinct stages where policy options have been identified and appraised: 'Issues and Options' (March 2008) and 'draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options)' (October 2010). Additional options were also considered post-preferred options consultation in light of consultation responses, and the proposed revocation of Regional Strategies. This chapter discusses the consideration of options that has fed into the Proposed Submission Local Plan.

### 5.2 Outline of the reasons for selecting the options

5.2.1 As explained in section 3.3.1, 'reasonable alternatives' are considered to be a different way of fulfilling the objectives of the plan, which should be realistic, and fall within the legal and geographic competence of the authority. In the context of the South Somerset Local Plan/Core Strategy, the general considerations when deciding what constitutes a 'reasonable alternative' are dictated by the parameters discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### **National and regional policy**

5.2.2 The South Somerset Local Plan/Core Strategy must be consistent with national policy, previously in the form of a series of Planning Policy Statements/Planning Policy Guidance notes, and recently with the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012). There is limited opportunity to consider options that are substantially different to the guidelines set in national policy – for example, conserving and enhancing heritage assets, managing flood risk, supporting economic growth, and protecting nationally designated landscapes.

5.2.3 In addition, the early stages of the plan were prepared in accordance with the Regional Strategy and the emerging replacement of this (RSS 'Proposed Changes', July 2008), which was to form part of the 'development plan'. However, the Government intend to revoke all Regional Strategies outside London and given that the emerging RS for the South West was never adopted, additional evidence has been prepared locally e.g. to inform the appropriate scale of development in the District.

#### **Geographic scope and time horizon**

5.2.4 South Somerset District Council's legal and geographic competence lies within the district boundary, and the Local Plan has been prepared according to this jurisdiction. It is possible to prepare plans jointly with other local authorities, but there is insufficient justification for this in South Somerset's case.

5.2.5 The time horizon of the early stages (I&O and preferred options) of Local Plan/Core Strategy preparation was up to the year 2026, to accord with the emerging Regional

Strategy. This has been extended by two years in the Local Plan to 2028 in order to plan for 15 years from the adoption of the plan.<sup>11</sup>

### **Vision and objectives**

5.2.6 The Local Plan vision is an aspirational statement of how a truly sustainable South Somerset should look in 2028, supported by strategic objectives that indicate how this vision can be achieved. The vision and objectives are based upon the Sustainable Community Strategy, and although comments were invited on potential amendments, it was not considered necessary or appropriate to explore alternatives.

5.2.7 Where appropriate, further detail on the reasons for selecting the alternatives is given in the discussion of the main strategic options considered below.

## **5.3 Consideration of options at the ‘Issues and Options’ stage**

5.3.1 The SA of the Core Strategy ‘Issues and Options’ (I&O) systematically appraised options for levels of district-wide housing supply, the distribution of development, and ‘topic’ policies. The SA of the I&O took place in late 2009-Spring 2010 after the District Council had formally approved responses to consultation comments that had been received on the ‘issues and options’. The findings of the SA were a key part of the evidence in developing the ‘draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options)’. The findings of the appraisal are summarised in this section and the full appraisal matrices are in Appendix 3.

### **District-wide growth**

#### **13,600 dwellings, including 6,400 at Yeovil**

5.3.2 This option was considered as it was identified as the appropriate figure to meet population growth in the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West (2006). The appraisal highlighted a significant under provision of housing compared to latest available household projections which would mean the needs of the community would not be met – particularly the need for affordable homes identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This scenario does have the benefit of being an economic-led approach that balances housing numbers with forecast job creation. Less development means that the environmental effects are the lowest of the four options, although negative effects on the landscape and biodiversity will require mitigation. An increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is likely, but lower than the other options due to less development.

#### **16,600 dwellings, including 7,400 at Yeovil**

5.3.3 This option was identified from further work in developing the RSS prior to the Examination in Public (EiP), when the Office of National Statistics released more up to date population projections. The option of 16,600 dwellings would mean an under provision of homes compared to household projections presented at the EiP itself, but

---

<sup>11</sup> The requirement for a 15 year period from the adoption of the plan was a requirement of national policy (PPS12) at the time this decision was made. The recent (March 2012) revision of national policy states that the plan should cover at least 15 years, and the plan to the year 2028 has been retained.

evidence suggests that the economy can support this level of housing development. The scale of growth means that there is the potential for negative environmental effects but it is assumed that sufficient mitigation measures such as high quality design, avoiding areas of important historic assets, and sustainable construction, will be implemented meaning that negative effects will be avoided. Overall, this performed best of the different levels of housing supply in sustainability terms, and was subsequently taken forward as the ‘preferred option’.

**19,700 dwellings of which 6,400 should be within Yeovil’s urban area, 5,000 as an urban extension to Yeovil, and 8,300 elsewhere in the District**

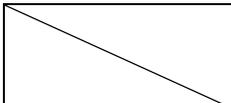
5.3.4 The option for 19,700 dwellings district-wide was identified as a result of the RSS EiP, which presented more recent data on household projections. The additional disaggregation of this figure for Yeovil and elsewhere was considered as a result of the recommendation in the RSS EiP Panel Report (2008)<sup>12</sup>. These options would bring the significant positive effect of meeting the community’s need for new homes, particularly affordable homes. There would also be greater opportunity to help make services and facilities more viable under this option. However, the relative increase in homes compared to job creation in this option may make it harder for those living in South Somerset to access suitable local employment opportunities, and potentially exacerbate outward commuting. There is potential for significant negative environmental impacts (particularly at Yeovil) and increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that will require strong mitigation, the achievement of which would be a challenge and hence cannot be assumed with certainty. Negative effects include landscape and townscape, biodiversity, historic environment, pollution, potential loss of high quality agricultural land, and increased traffic levels.

**Growth in excess of 19,700 dwellings**

5.3.5 An option in excess of 19,700 dwellings was also considered due to the fact that RSS figures do not represent a ‘ceiling’ for development and can (in theory) be exceeded; and the Housing Green Paper (July 2007) that proposed a level of housing beyond that proposed in RSS’s. The likely significant effects of this option are largely similar to the option discussed above, although there is general uncertainty due to the lack of prescription as to the scale and location of development. A significant positive effect would be meeting the community’s need for housing generally, with additional affordable housing provision a particular benefit. However, the negative environmental effects identified above would be exacerbated with higher levels of development.

5.3.6 The following matrix summarises the appraisal findings for the various district-wide growth options.

**Figure 5.1 Summary of SA findings for district-wide growth options**

	<p><b>Sustainability Appraisal Objective and Score</b></p>
---	--

<sup>12</sup> The Panel Report recommendations were subsequently included in the Secretary of State’s ‘Proposed Changes’ to the RSS (July 2008).

Option	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<b>Levels of Development</b>														
<b>Option S1 (A)</b> 13,600 dwellings (6,400 at Yeovil)	+	+	--	?	-	?	+	-	-	? / 0	-	-	? / -	-
<b>Option S1 (B)</b> 16,600 dwellings (7,400 at Yeovil)	+	+	-	?	0	?	++	-	-	? / -	-	-	? / -	-
<b>Option S1 (D)</b> 19,700 dwellings (6,400 in Yeovil urban area & 5,000 Yeovil urban extension)	+	++	+	-	+	?	-	--	--	? / -	-	--	-	-
<b>Option S1 (E)</b> Growth in excess of 19,700 dwellings	+ / ?	++ / ?	++ / ?	- / ?	+ / ?	?	- / ?	-- / ?	-- / ?	-- / ?	- / ?	- / ?	- / ?	- / ?

## Distribution of development

### Concentrating development in 'B' (or 'Market Town') settlements only

5.3.7 The 'concentration' of development at Market Towns was considered as these settlements already contain a range of jobs, services and facilities, and therefore it represents a potentially realistic option for distributing development. The concentration of new development at 'B' settlements only should ensure new residents have good access to jobs and services. This approach should reduce the need to travel and maximise opportunities to use non-car travel modes – CO<sub>2</sub> emissions associated with car travel would therefore be minimised. However, the adverse environmental impacts of new development would disproportionately affect 'B' settlements under this option. There are also likely to be negative effects for the rural areas including limited economic benefits, rural housing need not being met (particularly affordable housing need), and potential negative impact on the viability of rural services due to limited opportunities for future development and therefore lack of new residents to help support these services.

### A dispersed approach directing all development to 'B' (Market Towns) and 'C' (small towns and villages) settlements

5.3.8 This 'dispersed' option was identified as a variant to the concentrated option discussed above, and to consider the effects of directing development to a broader range of settlements. This more dispersed approach generally performs better in the sustainability appraisal, and a derivation of this option was carried forward in consideration as the preferred policy approach. This option would ensure the social and economic benefits of additional development are felt more widely. The distribution of development to all of the main settlements in the district should ensure that the need to travel is reduced, and public transport opportunities are maximised. There

could be some negative environmental impacts arising from new development, particularly where additional development has the potential to adversely affect the character of some of the smaller 'C' settlements.

#### **Distribute development to only some 'B' and 'C' settlements**

- 5.3.9 The final option presented was to distribute development to only some 'B' and 'C' settlements – as settlements were not categorised as 'B' or 'C' at the 'issues and options' stage, there is some uncertainty in the SA findings for this option. This option was identified in order to assess the effects of a more selective approach to distributing development, and as a mix between the two options above. There is general uncertainty as the distribution of development is not prescribed, but this option should ensure that the need to travel is reduced, and public transport opportunities are maximised. There could be some negative environmental impacts due to additional development, impacting on the character of some of the smaller 'C' settlements.

#### **'Topic' options**

##### **Housing**

- 5.3.10 Various options were put forward for delivering affordable housing, including continuation of the existing approach, plus a range of alternatives based upon the draft RSS. Although the option for requiring a contribution to **affordable housing** on all sites and/or a higher affordable housing target would lead to the provision of more affordable homes in the District in theory, evidence shows that this would not be economically viable and could therefore preclude new development coming forward. Policy criteria were suggested for considering **Gypsy and Traveller sites** using the existing Local Plan policy as the starting point – the appraisal showed that the inclusion of a criteria relating to proximity to local services would improve its sustainability. In terms of **housing density**, options were derived using national policy, emerging regional policy, and alternatives. One broad density of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) across South Somerset is likely to have a negative impact in terms of loss of greenfield land around Yeovil and the Market Towns. Conversely the application of a district-wide density of 50 dph would be likely to have a negative impact on the townscape of Rural Settlements.

##### **Economic Prosperity**

- 5.3.11 In terms of **level of employment growth**, the option of providing fewer jobs or land to accommodate the future economically active population is likely to have a significant negative impact on the vitality and viability of the local economy through increased levels of unemployment, and adverse impacts on the resident population (affecting their economic and social well-being) forcing them to travel outside of the District to work. This will have negative impacts on service and facility provision, levels of pollution, air quality and climate change, mainly because people will need to travel further (outside the district) to work. The option to ensure that there are sufficient jobs to meet the future economically active population has positive impacts on the residents, economy and indirectly on the housing market of South Somerset. The **retention of employment land** has also been identified as a key issue in the district, with the option for including a policy that protects employment land from being

developed for other uses having key economic benefits. Options on the **approach to retailing** were also considered using evidence in the South Somerset Retail study.

#### **Transport and Accessibility**

- 5.3.12 The options that encourage walking, cycling and public transport have many sustainability benefits such as improving health, minimising pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and reducing social exclusion. An alternative option suggested in consultation of not prioritising walkers and cyclists over cars is likely to lead to negative effects such as increased traffic congestion, poorer access to essential services and facilities, and increased pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The more stringent traffic demand management measures which were raised as potential options could have negative effects on the local economy such as additional costs deterring businesses from locating in South Somerset, costs of workplace charging to existing businesses, congestion charging deterring visitors to the towns and therefore affecting town centre vitality and viability.

#### **Health and Well-being**

- 5.3.13 This theme incorporated two questions/options on the protection of existing open space, sport and recreation areas; and facilities for new development. These were not formally appraised as they were either not actually options or not likely to lead to significant effects.

#### **Environmental Quality**

- 5.3.14 Various standards of the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM<sup>13</sup> were appraised as potential options, with the highest standards having numerous positive sustainability effects including climate change mitigation and adaptation through incorporating high standards of energy efficiency, decentralised and renewable energy technologies, and water efficiency measures. The higher costs of achieving these standards was identified as having a potential negative effect on housing supply, however these should reduce as the economy adapts and high standards of sustainable construction become 'the norm'. Requiring high design standards would be likely to have numerous benefits across most sustainability objectives.

#### **Other Options that were rejected**

- 5.3.15 Additional options were suggested at public consultation on the core strategy 'issues and options', some of which were not formally appraised as they did not constitute 'reasonable alternatives'. For example, building a new settlement was suggested as an alternative approach to distributing growth, but was not subject to SA as it was contrary to the RSS 'Proposed Changes'. Despite the proposed revocation of the RSS, a new settlement is still not considered a 'reasonable alternative', as the amount of development proposed in the Core Strategy (around 8,100 dwellings outside Yeovil) is not sufficient to justify a new settlement when existing housing commitments (of around 6,000 dwellings) are taken into account.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method.

<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that the Sustainability Appraisal of the RSS Proposed Changes does recommend that, given the substantial further increase in housing growth in the south west, the option of building one or

## **Mitigation identified as a result of the 'Issues and Options' SA**

5.3.16 The most important influence of the issues and options SA was in terms of the selection of preferred options. However, beyond this, the issues and options appraisal also identified a range of mitigation measures that were reflected in the policy wording drafted for preferred options. The following list includes some of the recommendations that were proposed (as set out in the matrices in Appendix 3) and subsequently included in developing the 'Draft Core Strategy (incorporating Preferred Options)' policies:

- Promote sustainable construction and decentralised and renewable energy in order to minimise carbon dioxide emissions;
- Incorporate sustainable drainage systems to reduce the risk of flooding;
- Incorporate green infrastructure to protect and enhance biodiversity and promote health and well being;
- Include high quality design standards to minimise impact on landscape and townscape and help 'design out crime';
- Provide enhancements to health and leisure facilities to promote health and well being;
- Prioritise sustainable transport modes.

## **5.4 Consideration of options at the 'Preferred Options' stage**

5.4.1 At this stage the focus of the appraisal was on both appraising the preferred approach to addressing a range of policy issues (with a view to identifying ways in which these preferred approaches could be improved) as well as appraising options for:

- The broad spatial approach to growth outside of Yeovil.
- The location for an urban extension at Yeovil.
- The spatial approach to growth around the district's market towns.

5.4.2 The detailed appraisal matrices for the draft preferred options policies are set out in Appendix 4; whilst the detailed matrices for the location of development options are set out in Appendices 5 (Yeovil) and 6 (Market Towns). Appendix 4 also outlines the results of testing the Local Plan objectives against the SA framework, which indicates that the strategic objectives of the plan are broadly compatible with the Sustainability Appraisal objectives, and there is much support for several SA objectives.

### **The broad spatial approach to growth outside of Yeovil**

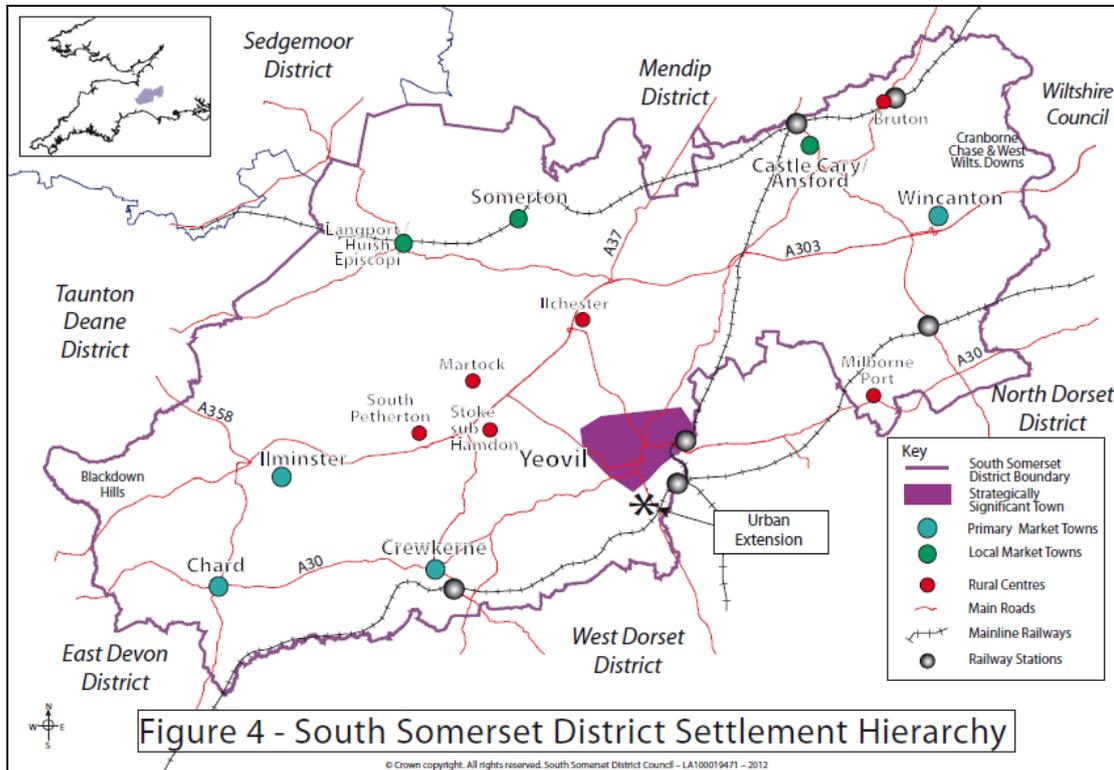
5.4.3 Drawing on the findings of the I&O SA, the preferred option for the scale of development in South Somerset was identified as being 16,600 dwellings between 2006-26. The 'draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options)' then proposed

---

more large new settlements in the region should be considered in an early review of the RSS – now highly unlikely given the proposed RSS revocation.

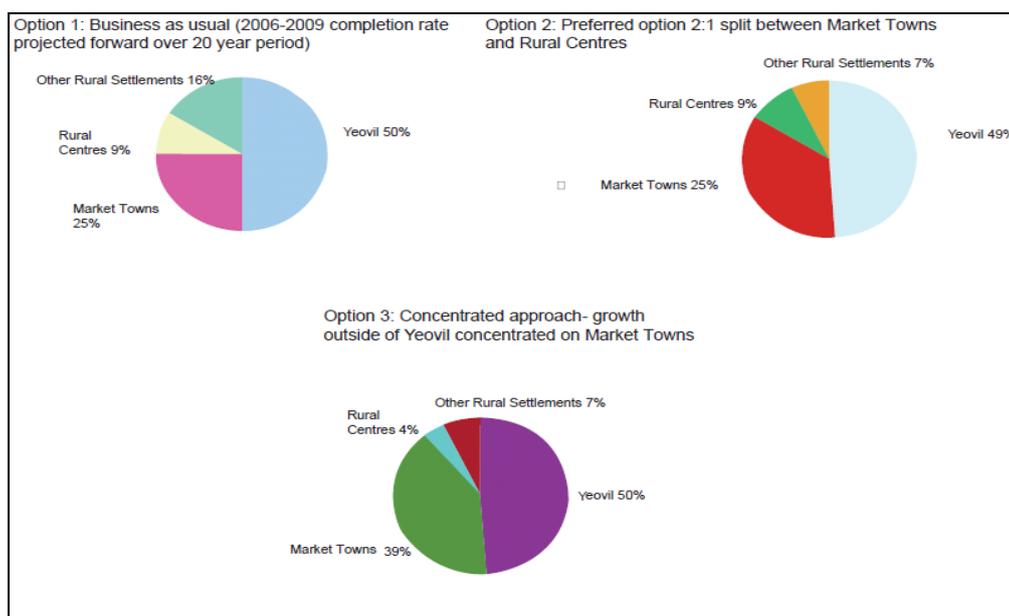
spatial options for how this development should be distributed across South Somerset. The Core Strategy/Local Plan key diagram shows the different 'tiers' of settlement to which these options apply, as reproduced below (figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2: The Local Plan 'Key diagram'**



5.4.4 Given that the overall levels of development were already considered at the 'issues and options' stage, including varying amounts for Yeovil, the preferred options focussed on how development should be distributed across the district. Three options were proposed for the distribution of the 8,400 new dwellings required in South Somerset outside Yeovil – see figure 5.3 and explanation below.

**Figure 5.3: The three Strategic Options for the spatial distribution of development**



### Option 1: 'Business as usual' / dispersed

5.4.5 This option presented the 'business as usual' approach by projecting the dwelling completion/under construction/commitment/allocation rate that has occurred in recent years (2006-09) over the entire plan period (2006-26), until the preferred option for 8,400 dwellings (to be built in settlements outside Yeovil) was met. The outcome of these projections is that although there would be a focus on the Market Towns with around half (4,190) of new dwellings, this option would result in just 1,465 dwellings located in Rural Centres, with 2,700 in the other Rural Settlements and countryside, leading to a dispersed strategy for new development.

5.4.6 The outcomes of a dispersed approach to development leads to mostly negative effects, including lack of access to services, increasing the need to travel, increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and negative impact on the landscape and townscape of Rural Settlements in particular. A potential positive of this option is the greater scope to meet affordable housing need in rural areas, but conversely this may mean need in Market Towns and Rural Centres is not met.

5.4.7 The continuation of a 'business as usual' approach would have particular negative consequences for settlements that have seen relatively high amounts/commitments of development in recent years. For example, there is potential for significant adverse environmental effects (particular adverse effect on landscape and townscape) at South Petherton, Martock and Milborne Port.

### Option 2: Focus on Market Towns and Rural Centres

5.4.8 Under this scenario there was a greater focus on the Market Towns with around twice as much development (5,800 new dwellings) as elsewhere in the district (2,600 dwellings). Rural Centres would provide 1,400 dwellings and be the focus for development outside Market Towns, with development in rural areas limited to that which is already allocated, completed and committed (1,200 dwellings).

5.4.9 This more balanced approach to the distribution of development has several sustainability advantages over Option 1 by ensuring better access to jobs, shops, and facilities and services which are located in the Market Towns and Rural Centres. This should help reduce the need to travel in the district. The focus on Market Towns and Rural Centres will allow housing need in the larger settlements to be met, whilst limiting new housing in rural settlements where there is generally poor access to jobs, services etc which would increase the need to travel. The impact on the landscape and townscape of Rural Settlements should be less given lower levels of development than Option 1.

**Option 3: Concentrate all development in Market Towns**

5.4.10 This option considered a concentrated approach to new development (outside Yeovil) with all dwellings that are not already committed or allocated being built in the Market Towns. This would result in nearly 6,500 new dwellings at the Market Towns, just 650 dwellings in Rural Centres, and 1,200 dwellings in Rural Settlements.

5.4.11 Greater concentration of development at the Market Towns would enable good access to services, facilities, jobs and shops for new residents, and minimise CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. However the economic benefits of new development would be limited to Market Towns and not spread as widely as Options 1 and 2 – to the detriment of businesses in more rural areas, and also making services less viable in the rural settlements. This potential lack of access to work and services could mean travel is increased in rural areas. The concentrated approach to development would result in limited housing provision in rural areas, which would mean affordable housing need in particular is not met.

**Summary of SA findings for the spatial distribution of development**

5.4.12 The following table (figure 5.4) compares the sustainability scores for each of the three options, and illustrates that all three options have a mixture of positive, neutral, negative and mixed effects. The following commentary summarises the SA findings for these options.

**Figure 5.4: Options for the spatial distribution of development - SA findings**

SA objective	Option 1 'Business as usual' / dispersed		Option 2 Market Towns and Rural Centres		Option 3 Concentrate development in Market Towns	
1. Improve access to essential services and facilities	-		+		+	
2. Reduce poverty and social exclusion	-		+		+	
3. Provide sufficient housing to meet identified needs of the community	+		++		+/	--
4. Improve health and well being	0		+		+/	-
5. Improve education and skills of the population	-		++		+/	-
6. Reduce crime and fear of crime	?		?		?	
7. Support a strong, diverse and vibrant local economy	+/	-	++		+	-
8. Reduce the effect of traffic on the environment	--		-		--	
9. Protect and enhance the landscape and townscape	-		+/	0	+/	-
10. Conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment	+/	-	+/	-	+/	-
11. Reduce contribution to climate change and vulnerability to its effects	--		-		0	
12. Minimise pollution (including air, water, land, light, noise) and waste production	-		0		-	
13. Manage and reduce the risk of flooding	?		?		?	
14. Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	+/	-	+/	-	+/	-

5.4.13 Overall, Option 2 performed best in sustainability terms as it delivers the most sustainability benefits, and the fewest negative effects. The economic and social benefits would be spread more evenly under this option to those settlements where population, jobs, community services and facilities are concentrated, and there is most potential to use alternatives to the car. There are some negative environmental effects for this option, such as increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions associated with new development and increased population, and negative traffic effects. The SA proposes mitigation measures to minimise these adverse effects, including sustainable construction to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and incorporate water efficiency measures, improved sustainable transport links, and to locate and design new development so that it can adapt to climate change. There is also uncertainty for some objectives that may become clearer when more precise locations for development are considered e.g. flood risk, landscape/townscape and biodiversity impact.

5.4.14 A concentrated approach to development (Option 3) scores quite well in sustainability terms, although there are mixed effects depending on the needs and constraints of particular settlements. The continued application of existing policies under the 'business as usual' option would result in a dispersed approach to new development, and mostly negative effects (Option 1) as previously explained.

## Urban extension at Yeovil

5.4.15 The consideration of growth options for Yeovil has been a long process that has involved numerous iterative steps. The process began at an early stage of plan-making, reflecting the fact that it was realised early on that an urban extension would probably be necessary. The detailed findings of the SA of Yeovil's strategic growth options are set out in Appendix 5, separated as 5A, 5B and 5C to reflect the refinement of the options as they were developed between December 2009 and August 2010. This was originally based upon the RSS Proposed Changes requirement for a 5,000 dwelling urban extension to Yeovil, and the first two appraisal stages (December 2009 and February 2010) reflected this. However following the proposed revocation of the RSS,<sup>15</sup> the 'draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options)' included an urban extension of around 3,700 dwellings at Yeovil in order to meet the economic and housing needs of the town. In order to determine the most appropriate location for the urban extension, potential locations have been subject to SA. Initially, the 360-degree area of search around Yeovil was divided into six options for further analysis, reflecting where the six main 'A' roads enter Yeovil, as shown on the map overleaf (figure 5.5). The six potential options underwent SA to provide provisional information for further discussion.

**Figure 5.5: Initial options for the urban extension to Yeovil**



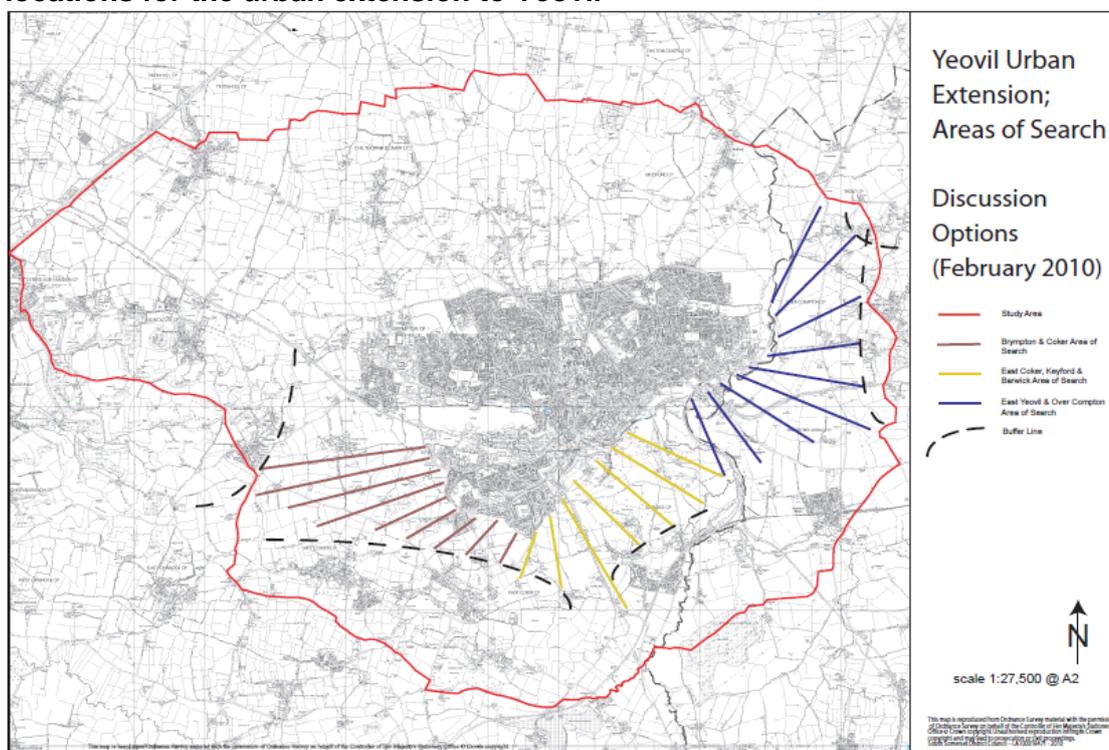
5.4.16 Following engagement with town and parish councils, and using findings from the initial SA, the options were developed and refined from 11 areas reflecting the 360-

<sup>15</sup> The Coalition Government sought to revoke Regional Strategies in July 2010, but this was subsequently overturned in the High Court. However, the Government have committed to revoking Regional Strategies in due course following environmental assessments of this.

degree area of search, to 6 separate geographic areas. Three options (see figure 5.6 overleaf) were eventually identified as appropriate for inclusion within the Core Strategy – the findings of the SA were integral in this decision making process as options to the north were not incorporated mainly due to adverse highways and landscape impact. The three options are:

- Brympton / Coker to the South West of Yeovil; (shown as brown lines)
- Barwick / Keyford / East Coker to the South (shown as yellow lines - preferred option for public consultation); and
- Dorset / Over Compton to the East of the town (shown as blue lines).

**Figure 5.6: Draft Core Strategy incorporating preferred options – potential locations for the urban extension to Yeovil**



- 5.4.17 The area to the south of Yeovil (Barwick / Keyford / East Coker) performed best in sustainability terms because this option has the most positive sustainability benefits against the fewest negative effects. The principle sustainability advantages of the southern option are its relative proximity to the town centre meaning good access to services and facilities; less congestion and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions due to this proximity to the town centre meaning greater potential to walk and cycle; proximity to deprived areas of Yeovil which offers greater opportunities to reduce poverty and social exclusion through the potential regeneration benefits of new development; and positive benefits on health and well being through its proximity to Goldenstones Leisure Centre and Yeovil Country Park.
- 5.4.18 The SA also identified that development of a relatively large urban extension will have several negative effects, particularly on the environmental objectives. The negative effects likely to arise from the southern option specifically include impacts on: biodiversity due to the presence of local wildlife sites, historic parks and gardens, high

quality agricultural land, the landscape, and flooding. Mitigation measures are recommended in order to ensure adverse effects are minimised, such as: flood alleviation/Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), avoidance of areas with a high historic and landscape value, high design standards that minimise noise, air, light and water pollution, and protect/retain wildlife routes through provision of green infrastructure and open space.

### **Spatial approach to growth outside the district's Market Towns**

5.4.19 The incorporation of 'spatial strategy option 2,' the option which performed best in the SA and has been incorporated as the Core Strategy preferred option, would mean that all of the Market Towns except Crewkerne (due to the existing Key Site allocation) would require an urban extension/direction of growth in order to accommodate the proposed levels of development. In accordance with Government guidance,<sup>16</sup> locations for future development have been filtered using a 'strategic sift' of existing planning policies, and evidence of deliverability in order to ensure 'reasonable alternatives' are considered. Maps of each of the Market Towns with the potential options for urban extensions/directions of growth, alongside key environmental constraints, community services and facilities are included as Appendix 6B. The full results of the SA of potential growth locations around the Market Towns are in Appendix 6A; with the key sustainability findings are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

#### **Chard**

5.4.20 The Chard Regeneration Framework<sup>17</sup> developed options setting out how to regenerate the town, including the delivery of the much delayed 'key site'. These options arose out of a desire to focus regeneration and growth on those areas that have the greatest need for, and capacity to accept change. Impacts on areas of recognised townscape and heritage interest and valuable areas of green spaces were avoided. In addition to these constraints the ability to accommodate growth was also examined in terms of topography and hydrology, nature reserves, vegetation and open space within Chard. Those areas were identified as generally being those that fall into the following categories:

- Capable of contributing to the creation of an urban pattern that strengthens and enhances the existing urban form of the town;
- Areas that are fragmented or with a poor urban quality within which there is opportunity for change;
- Sites that are available for change due to development opportunities arising from relocation and/or change of use;
- Streets and spaces with opportunity for enhancement to improve the pedestrian experience.

---

<sup>16</sup> Local Development Frameworks: Guidance on Sustainability Appraisal, Planning Advisory Service, 2007; Sustainability Appraisal advice note, Planning Advisory Service, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Undertaken by the Council with the consultants 'LDA Design'.

5.4.21 Four options were subject to SA carried out by the consultants 'LDA Design', from a focus on town centre regeneration, to growth to the 'natural limits' principally dictated by landscape constraints:

- Option 1: a focus on town centre regeneration;
- Option 2: eastern growth area part 1 (around 1350 dwellings);
- Option 3: eastern growth area full build out (around 2700 dwellings);
- Option 4: growth to Chard's 'natural limits' (around 3485 dwellings).

5.4.22 Option 3 'eastern growth area full build out' scores best in sustainability terms as it provides a scale of growth that will enable Chard to achieve and maximise its offer of employment, housing, retail and associated amenities, whilst not re-introducing undue congestion within the internal road network of the town. However, there are likely to be negative effects under this option, including significant encroachment onto greenfield and agricultural land to the east of the town, and impact on wildlife habitats and sites of geological conservation. Mitigation measures will need to be incorporated to reduce these impacts, such as protection of wildlife corridors and green infrastructure provision.

#### **Ilminster**

5.4.23 Areas of high flood risk to the west, and high landscape value to the north east and south, ruled out some locations around the town. Three growth options were therefore appraised for Ilminster:

- Option 1: south east;
- Option 2: south west;
- Option 3: north.

5.4.24 Option 2 produces the most positive effects overall as it is well related to schools, shops and health facilities and would be most likely to result in reduced local car usage as it is closer to the employment land allocations and town centre. Option 1 (south east) may require the development of another site and would result in a more dispersed loss of greenfield land. Option 3 (north) is less favourable in landscape, townscape and biodiversity terms. In conclusion, Option 2 is recommended on the basis of the SA findings.

#### **Wincanton**

5.4.25 Areas of high landscape value and flood risk were not considered, and information in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) was used to indicate the potential delivery of land for development. The ability to easily access the strategic route network was considered necessary in locating strategic employment land. Four potential options were considered in the potential growth of Wincanton:

- Option 1: west/north west;

- Option 2: south west (employment only<sup>18</sup>);
  - Option 3: south east;
  - Option 4: east.
- 5.4.26 Option 1 has the most positive effects overall as it is well related to schools, shops and sport facilities and would be most likely to result in minimised journeys by car. Option 2 would result in a more dispersed loss of greenfield land by providing employment use only, and creating the appropriate infrastructure to allow safe access across the A303 is likely to be costly. Developing south of the A303 (Options 2 and 3) could, in the long term, result in a settlement divided by the national strategic road network and given that there is a more suitable options to the north of the A303 which could accommodate development, it is considered that it is not necessary to breach this boundary. Option 4 is less favourable in landscape and townscape terms and more divorced from existing facilities than Option 1. Overall, Option 1 performs best in sustainability terms.

#### **Somerton**

- 5.4.27 Areas to the north and east of the town were ruled out for flood risk and historic environment reasons, respectively. There is evidence of site deliverability in the SHLAA to the west and north west of Somerton, and a relatively unconstrained area to the south of the town. Three potential broad locations for extending Somerton therefore emerged, and were subject to sustainability appraisal:
- Option 1: south;
  - Option 2: west;
  - Option 3: north west.
- 5.4.28 Although Option 1 is closest to the shops and services in the town centre, the negative effects on environmental objectives, particularly the historic environment, and poor quality road access (potential road safety issue) mean Option 1 is not recommended. Options 2 and 3 are similar distances from the town centre, but Option 2 is favoured due to less environmental impact, potential to use/enhance the existing bus service on Langport Road, and clear evidence of housing deliverability in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

#### **Ansford / Castle Cary**

- 5.4.29 Landscape constraints were considered to discount growth options in the south of the town, and therefore the three growth options are all to the north:
- Option 1: north west;
  - Option 2: north;
  - Option 3: north east.

---

<sup>18</sup> Area for employment only suggested in early engagement with the Town Council.

- 5.4.30 Option 1 has the most positive effects overall as it is well related to existing employment opportunities, the town centre and is medium distance from both primary and secondary schools, whilst having least landscape impact. Option 2 has several positive effects in its relationship with the secondary school and opportunities to link with the train station, however this option is further from key services and the town centre. Option 3 has many positive effects in terms of its proximity to Ansford School, the town centre, and is medium distance from the primary school and health provision. All options have negative effects from the loss of greenfield land including Best and Most Versatile agricultural land, noise and land pollution and impact on feeding grounds for bat populations which would require mitigation measures. In conclusion, Option 1 scores best in sustainability terms.

### **Appraisal of preferred ‘topic’ policies**

- 5.4.31 The preferred options document proposed ‘topic’ policies for the five themes of housing; economic prosperity; transport and accessibility; health and well being; and environmental quality.
- 5.4.32 The ‘draft Core Strategy incorporating preferred options’ included more formal policy wordings as opposed to the ‘issues and options’ stage, which put forward various options as to how the key issues could be tackled. These draft policies have developed using the sustainability findings from the ‘issues and options’ stage. Where appropriate, recommendations to policy wordings have been made to improve the sustainability of the policies. Appendix 4 contains the detailed appraisal tables of these policies, with the key sustainability findings for each topic highlighted below.

### **Housing**

- 5.4.33 The appraisal of the density policy recommended that sensitive design will be required to ensure that the townscape is protected and enhanced – high density development will generally not be appropriate in rural settlements. It is recommended that areas where new housing development is developed at relatively high densities are supported by appropriate infrastructure improvements e.g. provide for sustainable travel modes, in order to ensure congestion is not increased.
- 5.4.34 Significant positive benefits would arise from setting an affordable housing target of 35% in developments of six dwellings or more, although it is recognised that viability is key, particularly given the tough economic situation. It is recognised that the flexibility within the policy may mean this level of affordable housing is not achieved in all cases.
- 5.4.35 The preferred policy option on housing mix ensured that a mix of all housing types and sizes is achieved across the district reflecting the most recent evidence, and applies specific percentages to strategic sites which ensures that where the most significant growth is being delivered where it will most appropriately meet the needs of the market.
- 5.4.36 The preferred option policy for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people had several positive social benefits through meeting community needs, and has been changed following the ‘issues and options’ SA to include consideration of health and

safety of residents and incorporation of travelling show people to ensure the needs of the whole travelling community are met.

### **Economic Prosperity**

- 5.4.37 In general, the move to a low carbon economy is encouraged in order to reduce the contribution to climate change. The policy on live/work units demonstrated sustainability benefits across the range of social, economic and environmental objectives, such as supporting local shops and services, improving health and well being, and reducing the need to travel.
- 5.4.38 Tourism policies should bring economic benefits, although the SA recommended ensuring proposals do not harm the District's environmental, cultural or heritage assets, particularly in rural areas. Similar sustainability issues are raised with the farm diversification policy, which highlighted the economic benefits whilst recommending mitigation measures to reduce landscape impact.
- 5.4.39 The retail policies supported strong and vibrant local economies, encouraged self-containment, reduced the need to travel and improved access to essential services and facilities thereby reducing social exclusion. The SA highlighted the importance of retail being an appropriate scale to each particular settlement in order to promote self-containment.

### **Transport and Accessibility**

- 5.4.40 Several positive effects would result from the draft transport policies, arising from the intention to promote sustainable travel modes – this was a key mitigation measure that will be required if development generally is to deliver the most positive sustainability effects. These include improved health and well being, reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, improved air quality, and reduced poverty and social exclusion through providing alternatives to the car.
- 5.4.41 There was some potential for negative economic effects arising from the perception that enhanced business competitiveness is dependent on free and unrestrained access by car. However, this can be mitigated by reduced costs to the business of not having to provide extensive and costly (both in terms of land take, and construction and maintenance) parking facilities; additionally promoting sustainable travel can enhance a company's 'green credentials'.

### **Health and Well Being**

- 5.4.42 Some of the sustainability benefits of these policies included the provision of open space, especially in conjunction with tree planting, which can help contribute to flood mitigation proposals, reduce CO<sub>2</sub> levels, adapt to climate change, and conserve and enhance the landscape and biodiversity interest. There were also social benefits such as the provision of play and community facilities, which can encourage social cohesion and help to reduce social exclusion. This topic also included the 'sports zone' policy which will have positive effects on health and well being, but potential negative effects due to additional traffic generation were identified as requiring mitigation measures such as the promotion of sustainable travel modes.

### **Environmental Quality**

- 5.4.43 The policies in this chapter had numerous positive effects across the SA objectives, but particularly for the environmental themed objectives and improving health and well being. The development of renewable energy technologies would have the potential for adverse effects on landscape, townscape and historic environment, so the SA recommended including a criterion in the policy to address this issue.
- 5.4.44 The earlier introduction of the higher levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes and a higher renewable energy requirement is recommended to achieve a greater positive effect on reducing the contribution to climate change and vulnerability to its effects. However, it is recognised that feasibility and viability issues will mean this is unlikely to be achievable across the district.

## **5.5 Consideration of options subsequent to the ‘preferred options’ stage**

### **Revisiting the broad spatial approach**

- 5.5.1 Consultation on the ‘draft Core Strategy (incorporating preferred options)’ finished in December 2010. In reviewing the consultation responses, and considering the changing national and regional policy context, it was necessary to consider additional options for some key plan issues, including the broad spatial distribution of development.
- 5.5.2 In particular, in light of the impending revocation of the RSS it was necessary to look again at the presumption that around half of new development should be directed towards Yeovil.
- 5.5.3 The option of a lower proportion of development at Yeovil should be subject to sustainability appraisal in order to ensure that all ‘reasonable alternatives’ have been appraised. Greater development at Yeovil is also a potential alternative, following public consultation comments proposing this, and updated evidence<sup>19</sup> that indicated a higher theoretical capacity at Yeovil. An option in between these two ranges was also considered. Therefore, the following additional options were subject to SA:
- A. Yeovil: 75% of new development; elsewhere across the District: 25%
  - B. Yeovil: 25%; elsewhere: 75%.
  - C. Yeovil: 37%; elsewhere: 63%.
- 5.5.4 Option A – Several positive sustainability benefits of a greater focus of development at Yeovil due to the presence of (by far) the widest range of community facilities, shops and services of any settlement in the District. Also there would be greater potential to help regenerate the town through new development and help alleviate some of the most deprived areas in South Somerset, which are located in Yeovil. However, under this scenario the potential benefits of new development would not be felt across the

---

<sup>19</sup> Housing Requirement for South Somerset and Yeovil, Baker Associates, 2011.

wider District, Yeovil's economy would be unable to generate enough jobs to match the number of homes, and there are potential for significant adverse environmental effects at Yeovil arising from such a large scale development.

- 5.5.5 Option B – The scenario of a low proportion of development at Yeovil would bring limited sustainability benefits. Although district-wide housing need would be met, it would not be in the most sustainable location (i.e. Yeovil) in terms of access to key services and facilities, meeting affordable housing need, economic growth, and the need to reduce travel in general. Also there would be less opportunity to help regenerate the deprived parts of Yeovil. Lower loss of best and most versatile agricultural land is a benefit of limited growth at Yeovil, but large amount of development elsewhere means greater potential for adverse impact on the character of the wider rural area.
- 5.5.6 Option C – Some positive effects on meeting housing need and helping to alleviate poverty through the benefits of new development, but potential for several negative environmental effects. Potential negative economic effects as the scale of development at Yeovil is likely to be too low compared to job creation, making it more difficult for people to access local jobs, and leading to increased in-commuting to the town.
- 5.5.7 Overall the SA findings indicate that the approximate 50:50 split set out in the 'draft Core Strategy incorporating preferred options' continues to be pursued as this has the most economic benefits, enables a good level of accessibility to services and facilities, and helps to meet housing need where it is greatest at Yeovil. Negative environmental effects are likely from all options, and mitigation measures are proposed to overcome these, but a focus of development at Yeovil should reduce the need to travel, offers greater potential to use alternatives to the car, and would avoid the character of the wider rural area being too adversely affected.

### **District-wide scale of growth**

- 5.5.8 Various options were also considered subsequent to the preferred options for the overall district-wide scale of growth, with a range of 9,800 dwellings to 17,300 dwellings based upon updated economic and population projections. The upper end of the range was preferred because it:
- Reflects more closely the Council's economic aspirations to encourage economic growth, and the national Government's priority to support economic growth;
  - Maximises economic growth potential and avoids potential growth inhibition due to lack of workforce;
  - Minimises increased congestion and in-commuting;
  - Maximises opportunities for affordable housing and Community Infrastructure Levy returns (given that the local building capacity appears in place following discussions with developers and evidence in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment);

- Minimises upward pressure on house prices (other things being equal).
- 5.5.9 Growth options for the lower end of the range were not formally appraised for the reasons bulleted above, but particularly due to the potential to inhibit economic growth if the scale of growth is set too low – this would be contrary to national policy<sup>20</sup> that supports economic growth, and would therefore not constitute a ‘reasonable alternative’. A figure of 13,600 dwellings district-wide was sustainably appraised at the ‘issues and options’ stage.

### **Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension**

- 5.5.10 The SA carried out in preparing the preferred options initially considered a Yeovil urban extension of 5,000 dwellings, plus associated employment land, community facilities and services. This was subsequently reduced to 3,700 dwellings for the preferred options document itself (and also subject to SA). However, in considering consultation responses, the scale of the urban extension was reduced to 2,500 dwellings (and associated development), of which 1,565 would be delivered in the plan period (up to the year 2028) and the remaining development beyond. Given this reduction in scale, it is considered necessary to re-appraise alternatives in order to ensure that the SA findings fully inform the decision making process. The key SA findings of the three additional options are set out below.
- 5.5.11 Option 1. ‘south and west’ – the SA findings of this option are set out in section 6.3 as this was taken forward to the ‘proposed submission’ plan.
- 5.5.12 Option 2. ‘north west’ – This is shown in purple on figure 5.7 below. Although this option was ruled out earlier in the plan process, it was reconsidered given the large number of comments proposing this alternative during preferred options consultation. The north west option benefits from being a single direction of growth and the economies of scale that this brings (e.g. likely to support a secondary school, a single employment allocation, community services, Combined Heat and Power plant and a regular bus service), but it does not perform very well against most of the SA objectives. The distance to the town centre (around 6km) means less potential to easily access the key shops, services, facilities, and jobs there, and sustainable travel opportunities are relatively limited. There are also some significant environmental concerns of developing in this option, such as the impact upon the landscape, the setting of Montacute House Historic Park and Garden, Thorne Coffin Conservation Area, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and European Protected Species. Whilst mitigation can help reduce the impact upon these assets, the loss of a significant amount of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land is a negative environmental effect that cannot be mitigated. In addition, there is uncertainty that this option can be delivered due to a current lack of evidence that the location is suitable, available and viable for development.
- 5.5.13 Option 3. ‘multi-site’ – This incorporates four parcels of land to the north west, north east, east, and south/south west of Yeovil, as shown on figure 5.7 below. This includes the area identified in Options 1 and 2 above, with the addition of land in West Dorset District between Babylon Hill and Compton Road, and to the north east of

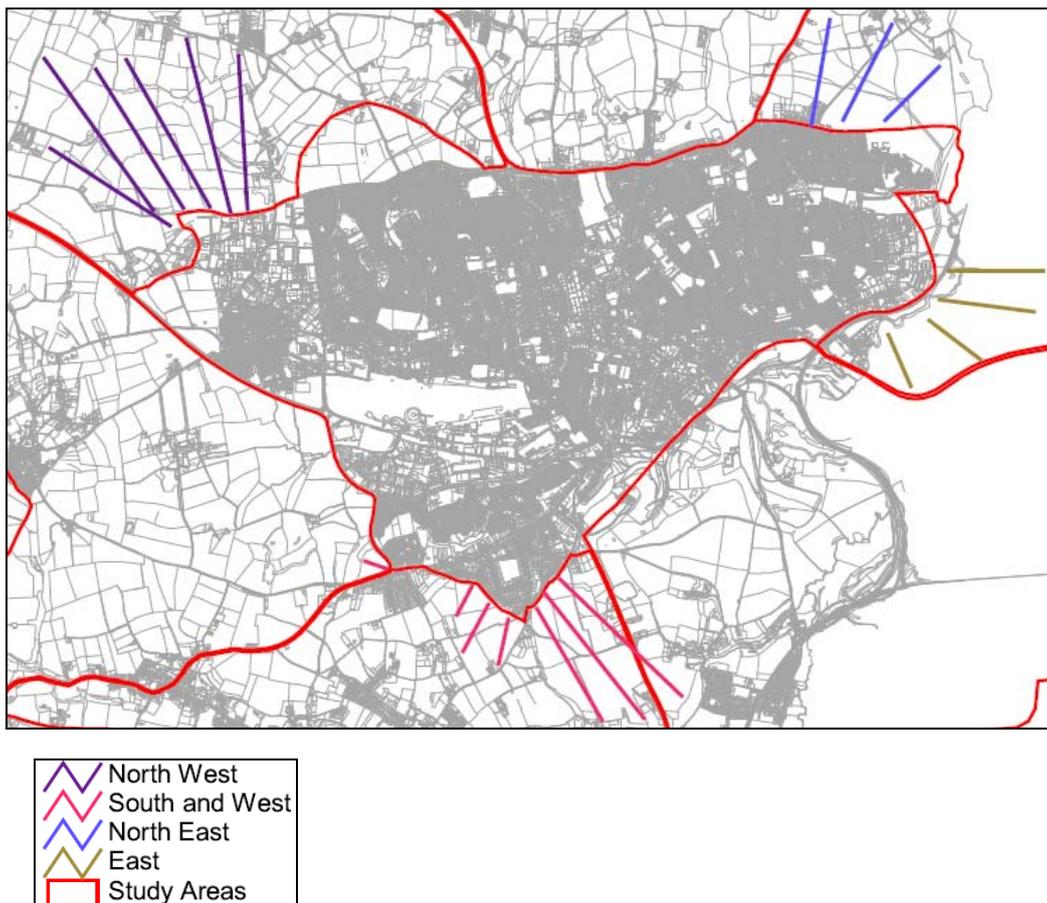
---

<sup>20</sup> NPPF, 2012; The Plan for Growth, HM Treasury, Dept for Business, Innovation and Skills, March 2011.

Yeovil extending north to Up Mudford and west toward Mudford Hill. This option does not offer the 'economies of scale' associated with a single urban extension so would no longer be able to generate the need to support the range of community facilities and services that would create a more 'sustainable' community, compared to having the development in a single location. This is likely to increase the propensity to travel, and also offer less opportunity to use decentralised and low carbon energy such as Combined Heat and Power. Employment allocations could no longer be contained on one site and would instead need to be split between several sites. The negative environmental effects within each option remain, such as areas of high historic and landscape value to the north west, and the presence of best and most versatile agricultural land around the majority of the edge of Yeovil. The cumulative landscape effects of development on several locations around the edge of Yeovil are likely to be greater under this option.

5.5.14 The diagram below illustrates these three options.

**Figure 5.7: Yeovil urban extension 'additional options' considered post-preferred options**



5.5.15 There was also further refinement of the 'buffer zone' between the Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension and surrounding areas. The concept of a 'buffer zone' emerged from the SA undertaken at the preferred options stage, in order to mitigate the potential impact of large scale built development on Yeovil's peripheral historic environment. Three options have been SA'd: 1) No Policy – reliance on existing historical

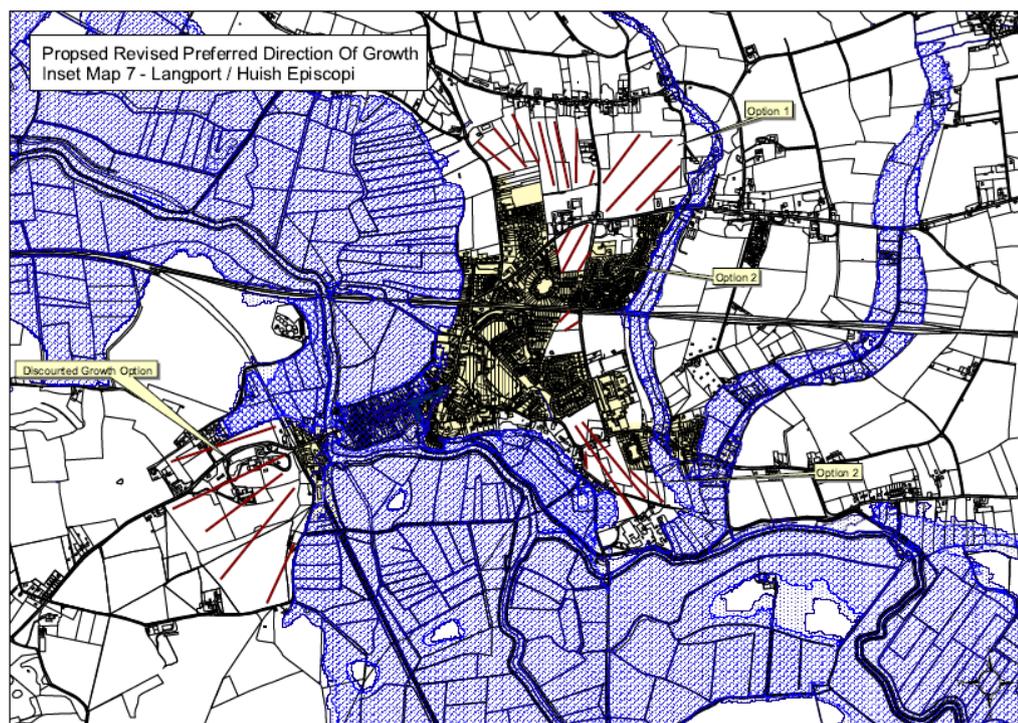
- designations; 2) a Built Development Buffer Line Policy; and 3) an East Coker & North Coker Buffer Zone Policy.
- 5.5.16 A lack of policy on this issue (option 1) would mean less certainty regarding the extent of built development, the location of open land for recreation, or indirectly the protection of local wildlife. This approach would also fail to address the issue of settlement coalescence however all existing historical assets including Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas and Scheduled Ancient Monuments and their settings would remain protected, albeit as individual designations rather than a group.
- 5.5.17 Option 2 would provide further certainty to the full extent of built development associated with the Yeovil Urban Extension, however it does not provide further certainty regarding the safe protection of open countryside for recreation and wildlife uses. This approach does provide greater protection to some historical assets through the acknowledgement of settlement coalescence issues, although some land is artificially constrained while the weight of other existing designations is eroded, specifically the setting of Barwick Historic Park and Garden.
- 5.5.18 Option 3 performed best in the SA, and the findings are set out in section 6.3.

#### **Langport/Huish Episcopi 'direction of growth'**

- 5.5.19 Following preferred options consultation, the status of Langport/Huish Episcopi in the settlement hierarchy was changed from a 'Rural Centre' to a 'Local Market Town' and the scale of development subsequently increased. This required a 'direction of growth' to be considered at the town. Much of the area surrounding Langport/Huish Episcopi has a high flood risk, which limits the potential for development; there are also landscape constraints, and areas of historic value. An option to the west was initially considered, but discounted because of a lack of evidence of further land availability for development in this area; low landscape capacity; and high historic value with the presence of a Grade II\* listed building. After consideration of environmental constraints and availability of sites through analysis of the SHLAA, two options emerged as broad locations at Langport/Huish Episcopi: Option 1 – north and east of Old Kelways, and Option 2 – south of Old Kelways, area adjacent the railway line/cricket pitch and south of St Mary's Church (a combination of three areas). These options are shown in figure 5.8.
- 5.5.20 Option 1 offers good accessibility to services and facilities being approximately 1km from the town centre, and slightly closer to the major supermarket, schools, health and leisure facilities. There are likely to be social benefits of new housing provision and subsequent boost to the economy, and evidence that the housing can be delivered in this location. This location is around 1km from potential job opportunities in the town centre, but over a mile to the Westover Trading Estate and the abattoir. There would be a negative effect upon the landscape if the northern section near Wearne is developed, indicated as moderate-low capacity in the Peripheral Landscape Study. Other environmental effects include potential negative archaeological impact and the loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land.

- 5.5.21 All locations within Option 2 have good accessibility to services and facilities, being within 800m of the town centre, major supermarket, schools, health and leisure facilities. There would be a significant positive benefit of additional homes to meet the needs of the town, and there is evidence of housing deliverability in the SHLAA within these locations. New development is likely to benefit the economy through job creation, and additional residents should help promote the town centre's vitality and viability and the local economy – these locations are within 0.8 -1km of potential job opportunities in the town centre, but further (around 1 mile) to the Westover Trading Estate, although the abattoir is closer, being adjacent to the southern section. The locations in this option are well related to the townscape of the existing settlement. Much of these areas have a high landscape capacity to accommodate built development but negative effect is loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (Grade 2). A potential negative is the impact upon the historic environment as the southern part of the area is adjacent to a Grade I listed church and Conservation Area, and within an Area of High Archaeological Potential. The southern part of the option is also adjacent to areas of high fluvial flood risk, and flood incidents have occurred in the past in this area.
- 5.5.22 Overall, both options perform similarly in the Sustainability Appraisal, and there is evidence that land is available for development in both. Therefore, the SA recommends options 1 and 2 be incorporated as the 'direction of growth' at Langport/Huish Episcopi. It is worth noting that the Habitats Regulations Assessment has recommended that the southern part of Option 2 be developed as employment land only due to the potential impact upon the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar.

**Figure 5.8 Options for the Direction of Growth at Langport/Huish Episcopi** (nb. the northern section of Option 1 was reduced as a result of the SA)



## 6 Summary of the ‘Proposed Submission’ Local Plan SA findings

### 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section presents an appraisal of the policies in the ‘Proposed Submission’ Local Plan against the 14 SA objectives, structured around the 8 Local Plan chapters that contain policies. This chapter highlights the key findings and proposed mitigation measures whilst the full appraisal results are set out in the matrices in Appendix 7. It is important to note that the time horizon for the Proposed Submission Local Plan is 2006 – 2028; an extra two years at the end of the plan period compared to earlier iterations of the plan. It is not considered that this minor change would give rise to any further need to consider options, and the preferred approach is still justified by the consideration of options at earlier stages in the plan preparation process.

6.1.2 An indication of the cumulative impact of the plan policies is given in Appendix 8, which highlights the sustainability performance of each policy on a matrix. It is also important to consider the cumulative effect of the plan in conjunction with other plans and programmes; some key examples are:

- The emerging Somerset County Council Waste Core Strategy proposing the western side of Yeovil as a ‘zone’ for a strategic waste management site, which could have negative effects on traffic generation, pollution, and the natural environment in this area without adequate mitigation.
- The implementation of the Somerset Economic Assessment in conjunction with the Local Plan should further support economic growth in the District.
- National policy (Eco Town PPS) being used to ensure the Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension meets high sustainability standards.
- The Somerset Future Transport Plan should have positive effects on reducing the effect of traffic on the environment by minimising the growth of traffic in urban areas, and improving accessibility to jobs and services in rural areas.

### 6.2 Settlement strategy

#### **Policy SD1 ‘Sustainable Development’**

6.2.1 The purpose of this policy is to promote sustainable development and is required by national policy – therefore this has been ‘screened out’ of the SA i.e. it is not necessary to formally appraise the policy or consider ‘reasonable alternatives’ to the approach.

#### **Policy SS1 ‘Settlement hierarchy,’ Policy SS4 ‘District wide housing provision’ and Policy SS5 ‘Delivering new housing growth’**

6.2.2 Policies SS1, SS4 and SS5 are considered together as they are closely related and hence the sustainability effects are likely to be the same. Policy SS1 identifies the settlement hierarchy, which supports development appropriate to their role and function, whilst SS4 and SS5 implement this by prescribing housing levels according to this hierarchy. The district-wide housing requirement is 15,950 dwellings over the plan period 2006-28, slightly less than proposed at preferred options due to fewer jobs being created in the early years of the plan.

6.2.3 There are likely to be several social benefits from the approach in these ‘strategic’ policies as development is encouraged where there is already good accessibility to services and facilities, and where housing need is greatest. This should also support the economy by focussing development where existing businesses, and workers, exist. Focussing development on the larger settlements offers the best opportunities for sustainable travel, although opportunities for this are relatively limited in what is essentially a rural District. However, there are likely to be some negative environmental effects due to additional development in general, such as upon the historic environment, landscape, and climate change. Given the ‘strategic’ nature of the policy, some effects are uncertain until more specific proposals are considered.

#### **Policy SS2 ‘Development in Rural Settlements’**

6.2.4 Policy SS2 has positive social effects by supporting the provision of services and facilities at Rural Settlements, and these were further improved through the incorporation of a recommended SA mitigation measure that housing should only be permitted where key services are present. Development to meet housing need and to provide employment opportunities is also supported, although the SA recommended that development should be appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement, which should minimise adverse environmental impacts.

#### **Policy SS3 ‘Delivering new employment land’**

6.2.5 The scale of housing and employment land provision across the District is based upon economic and demographic growth forecasts, past trends and market deliverability. The distribution of these jobs and homes across the settlement hierarchy is based on balancing the projected economic performance of each settlement over the plan period with local aspirations for growth. Balancing the distribution of jobs and homes seeks to ensure more sustainable and self-contained communities that are better placed to offer a range of opportunities to all of their residents. It is essential that enough employment land is available across the main settlements in the District to support job creation and enable residents to access work, which will support the growth of the South Somerset economy. The distribution of employment land allows residents to have the option to work locally, which raises the level of self-containment in settlements, reducing the need to travel and enabling local services and facilities to be supported. The danger of not delivering sufficient land is that it would raise the level of unemployment, or encourage people to travel to work outside the District, and all the resultant negative impacts associated with this.

#### **Policy SS6 ‘Infrastructure delivery’**

6.2.6 This policy seeks to ensure that new development is properly planned and has infrastructure provided either in direct relation to the development through planning obligation S106 or through Community Infrastructure Levy monies which the Council can then prioritise to ensure delivery of physical, social and environmental infrastructure. There are several positive sustainability results from this policy, largely on social objectives through the provision of community infrastructure ensuring that any new development adds to the sustainability and self-containment of the District's communities.

**Policy SS7 'Phasing of Previously Developed Land' and Policy HG2 'The use of Previously Developed Land for new housing development'**

6.2.7 These two policies are considered together as they are closely related and hence the sustainability effects are likely to be the same. No negative effects are identified for this policy. The several positive impacts include potential to reduce crime through the re-use of disused sites which can attract criminal activity, reduce the use of Greenfield sites, and helping to improve access to jobs and services as PDL tends to be located in existing urban areas.

**Figure 6.1: Existing and potential Mitigation measures for the 'Settlement strategy'**

Potential effect – Settlement strategy	Existing mitigation within the plan (and what policy)	Is there a need to consider further mitigation, and if so what?
Increase in car traffic.	Focus development at locations that have the best potential to access jobs, services, shops and facilities (Policies SS1-5). Prioritise sustainable travel (Policy TA1).	No.
Difficult to access essential services and facilities in rural areas.	Housing should only be permitted in Rural Settlements that have key services (Policy SS2).	No.
Potential increase in crime / fear of crime.	Ensure that high quality design standards are required which can help to 'design out crime' (Policy EQ2).	No.
Impact on landscape and townscape; and loss of Greenfield land.	High quality design and landscaping should be incorporated that fosters local distinctiveness (addressed in Policy EQ2). Development should be appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement (Policy SS2). Previously Developed Land should be developed first (addressed by Policy SS7).	No.

Impact on the historic environment.	Ensure adverse impacts upon the historic environment are effectively mitigated (Policy EQ8).	No.
Loss of Best and Most versatile agricultural land.	Avoid developing on Best and Most Versatile agricultural land, unless this is unavoidable considering other sustainability issues, and that land in lower grades has been fully considered (addressed in considering locations for development).	Inclusion of a policy/policy criterion in the Local Plan specifically on Best and Most Versatile agricultural land.
Additional waste generation as a result of new development.	Encourage sustainable construction (Policy EQ1, 2).	Earlier introduction of sustainable construction standards.
Increase in carbon dioxide emissions.	Sustainable construction should be encouraged order to minimise carbon dioxide emissions, and renewable energy encouraged (Policy EQ1).	Earlier introduction of sustainable construction standards.
Need to adapt to the changing climate.	New development should be located and designed to cope with hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters (Policy EQ1).	No.
Increase in flood events.	Sequential test should be applied and SUDS encouraged in order to reduce flood risk to people and property (Policy EQ1).	No.
Impact on biodiversity.	Ensure that designated sites and protected species are avoided or any harm is mitigated (Policy EQ3).	No.

## 6.3 Yeovil

### **Policy YV1 'Urban framework and Greenfield housing provision for Yeovil'**

6.3.1 Housing development at Yeovil where there is best access to jobs, shops, and facilities and services in South Somerset will bring several sustainability benefits. This should also help reduce the need to travel in the district. The focus on Yeovil will allow housing need to be met, where it is greatest. Development also offers potential regeneration opportunities for deprived parts of the town. Some more site-specific issues such as impact on landscape and historic environment will become clearer in considering locations for development, although a negative effect is likely from

development upon best and most versatile agricultural land which is widely present around the town.

#### **Policy YV2 ‘Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension’**

- 6.3.2 As explained in chapter 5, several alternative locations were considered for Yeovil’s urban extension, and at various levels of development. Using the information in the SA, it is proposed that the urban extension is located to the south and west of the town. The relatively close proximity (approx 2km) of the south and west option to the town centre offers several sustainability benefits, including good access to existing services, facilities, and employment. This proximity also offers the potential to provide realistic opportunities for sustainable travel, although the topography is likely to present some issues for walkers/cyclists. There is also potential to make use of Yeovil Junction train station, located near by (around 2km). The ‘economies of scale’ that 2,500 dwellings will bring should ensure that key services and facilities, and employment land can be provided ‘on-site’, and sustainable travel measures such as good public transport links can be supported. There are likely to be some negative environmental effects that will require mitigation, such as upon the landscape, historic environment, and biodiversity; however the loss of a significant amount of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land is a negative environmental effect that cannot be mitigated.

#### **Policy YV3 ‘East Coker and North Coker buffer zone’**

- 6.3.3 This policy helps to provide certainty regarding the full extent of built development associated with the Yeovil Urban Extension, and the protection of open countryside and wildlife in the vicinity. This approach complements existing historical assets while acknowledging the issue of settlement coalescence towards East and North Coker. This policy does not provide additional protection to the South and South East towards Barwick and Stoford, although existing designations remain extant. Given the advantages and disadvantages listed, this approach is preferred as it provides certainty that historic assets are fully protected, whilst maintaining the flexibility of design approaches to the South and South East.

#### **Policy YV4 ‘Yeovil Summerhouse Village’**

- 6.3.4 This proposal for mixed-use development is located in a sustainable location in Yeovil’s town centre that offers a high potential to access a range of jobs, services and facilities by walking or cycling. The aspiration to achieve the highest sustainability standards is welcomed, although it is noted that this is subject to viability. The loss of town centre car parking is highlighted as a potential negative effect, and mitigation in the form of replacing these spaces is proposed. The southern part of the site is located in an area of high flood risk so built development should be avoided here, and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) provided.

#### **Policy YV5 ‘Yeovil Airfield flight safety zone’**

- 6.3.5 This policy was incorporated following consultation on the preferred options, as a result of comments made by ‘AgustaWestland’ who operate the Yeovil airfield. As the inclusion of the flight safety zone is seen as key to supporting the District’s main

employer, it was not considered that reasonable alternatives were available. The ‘focussed’ nature of this policy means that many of the SA objectives are not relevant. However, significant positive social and economic effects are identified through supporting the continued operation of ‘AgustaWestland’.

**Policy YV6 ‘Delivering Sustainable travel at the Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension’**

6.3.6 There are likely to be numerous sustainability benefits as a result of delivering sustainable travel – this policy includes a target of 50% of travel originating from the urban extension by sustainable means. These range from improved health and well being by encouraging people to walk and cycle, minimise the air pollution that is caused by additional cars, and a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions through promoting alternatives to the car. The SA does highlight that the delivery of the 50% sustainable travel target will be a challenge that will need to be costed through further more detailed work, and does rely on ‘critical mass’ to deliver the necessary measures.

**Figure 6.2: Existing and potential Mitigation measures for ‘Yeovil’**

Potential effect – Yeovil	Existing mitigation within the plan (and what policy)	Is there a need to consider further mitigation, and if so what? <sup>21</sup>
Loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land around Yeovil.	Alternatives were considered for Yeovil’s urban extension but the loss of BMV land will still occur as most of Yeovil is surrounded by BMV land.	No.
Impact on historic assets to the south and west of Yeovil.	Introduce a ‘buffer zone’ to preclude development that would adversely affect identified historic assets (Policy YV3)	No.
Access to services and facilities in order to deliver a ‘sustainable community’ at Yeovil’s urban extension.	On-site provision of key services and facilities (Policy YV2).	Ensure early provision of services/facilities in phasing the development.
Traffic congestion in Yeovil.	Promote sustainable travel by providing a high quality walking and cycling within the site, and to surrounding key locations, including to National Cycle Route 26. Ensure a high quality bus service is in place (Policy	Ensure early provision of sustainable travel modes in the phasing of development.

<sup>21</sup> These should be considered in further masterplanning work to be produced for the Yeovil sustainable urban extension.

	YV6).	Investigate potential for surrounding links e.g. to the Yeovil Country Park.
Impact on landscape on the edge of Yeovil.	Direct development to areas with a moderate-high landscape capacity (Policy YV2). Incorporate high quality design that fosters local distinctiveness (Policy EQ2).	Reduce housing densities in areas located in a 'rural setting' and include appropriate landscape treatment, particularly to the west and south.
Potential increase in crime / fear of crime.	Ensure that high quality design standards are required which can help to 'design out crime' (Policy EQ2).	No.
Need for employment.	The proposal for development should include specific provision for employment land (Policy YV2).	Ensure phasing of employment land alongside housing development.
Impact on European Protected Species to the south and west of Yeovil.	When master planning the site, incorporate mitigation such as retaining the hedgerows, using sensitive lighting, providing green space and woodland (partly addressed in Policy YV2).	More detail on biodiversity mitigation to be provided when site is master planned.
Potential for fluvial and surface water flooding in Yeovil.	Apply the sequential test and incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (Policy EQ1).	No.
Increased pollution (e.g. through additional car use, street lighting, water quality) and waste production.	High quality design to minimise noise, light, air, and water pollution (Policy EQ2).	Require a Site Waste Management Plan to minimise waste production.
Increase in carbon dioxide emissions.	Prioritise sustainable travel (Policy YV6); require new homes to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes, and non-domestic buildings to meet high BREEAM standards; incorporate opportunities for decentralised and low carbon energy such as Combined Heat and Power (Policy EQ1).	Earlier introduction of sustainable construction standards.

## 6.4 Market Towns

### **Policy PMT1 'Chard strategic growth area' and Policy PMT2 'Chard phasing'**

- 6.4.1 These policies seek to encourage and guide development at Chard, and will ensure a variety of benefits as a result. These include improving the permeability and connectivity of movements within the town centre and access to local facilities such as Millfields neighbourhood centre, new education, open space and sports provision; the range and quality of housing in the town will be improved including affordable housing; promotion of economic growth - critical mass of town will be increased significantly to attract larger employers and retailers; and the additional link roads around the east of the town will ease the levels of traffic dependent on Oaklands Avenue and Henderson Drive. However, some negative effects are identified such as the loss of Greenfield/agricultural land, and impact on wildlife habitats and geological sites. The protection of wildlife corridors and additional green infrastructure provision are recommended mitigation measures to lessen these impacts.

### **Policy PMT3 'Ilminster Direction of Growth'**

- 6.4.2 The Sustainability Appraisal identifies mainly neutral or positive outcomes. It is considered that mitigation measures can be put in place to protect wildlife, landscape and townscape, reduce the effects of pollution and manage flood risk. Option 2 was previously preferred based on the assumption that one comprehensive development may be able to 'afford' to deliver better community infrastructure than two schemes. Since the previous SA was undertaken, the Council is recommending to move to a CIL and therefore the argument for one comprehensive residential development to deliver infrastructure, as opposed to a number of smaller schemes, combined delivering the 332 dwellings, is less persuasive, although ideally access to services/facilities will be provided 'on site'.
- 6.4.3 In considering the direction of growth further, issues were raised regarding highways and viability, and consultants were appointed to undertake an assessment of the capacity of the highway network to accommodate residential development at Shudrick Lane, and have indicated that the site can be reasonably accessed without undue impact on the road network nor requiring major off site works.
- 6.4.4 Given the finely balanced nature of the SA findings in respect of Options 1 and 2, the potential changes that may be introduced through adoption of CIL, the support of the town council and the expectation that the south east option could meet the total housing requirement for the town, it is considered that the preferred direction of growth for Ilminster be revised from Option 2 - South West to Option 1 - South East.

### **Policy PMT4 'Wincanton Direction of Growth'**

- 6.4.5 The reduced size of the Direction of Growth (to accommodate 5 ha of 'B' use employment land) reflects the change in the overall strategic approach to the delivery of growth at Wincanton due to the relatively high amount of existing housing commitments at the town. More specifically, housing provision has been reduced to existing commitments only, whilst employment land has been increased, in order to ensure a better overall balance of homes and jobs is provided at the town. At the

preferred options stage, Option 1 'west/north west' performed best in the SA however given the impact on the landscape, topography and vehicular access in the northern section of this option, and that employment growth only is now proposed, the south west of Preferred Option 1 provides the most sustainable area to be taken forward. A key benefit is good access to the strategic route network.

- 6.4.6 The provision of extra employment land will make Wincanton more attractive to potential developers, providing the opportunity to have a range and choice of sites and help support a more balanced, self-contained settlement. There are likely to be some negative environmental effects due to increased noise and light pollution and being within a foraging area for bats.

#### **Policy LMT1 'Ansford/Castle Cary Direction of Growth and link road'**

- 6.4.7 Additional development should benefit the local economy, and have social benefits through the provision of additional housing. The close proximity of this location to the town centre, schools and the train station offers a relatively good level of accessibility. A link road is recommended as a mitigation measure to minimise adverse traffic effect in this part of the town. Although the location is acceptable in landscape terms, there will be some loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land, and there is potential for noise and light pollution but mitigation is possible. There is also potential to negatively impact on the feeding grounds of serotine bats, although mitigation is possible for this also.

#### **Policy LMT2 'Langport/Huish Episcopi Direction of Growth'**

- 6.4.8 Although Langport/Huish Episcopi is not particularly deprived, new development generally should bring social and economic e.g. additional jobs, affordable homes, community facilities. The town currently has a good balance of jobs and workers (around 1:1), but high levels of out-commuting (60%) so there is a need to ensure adequate employment opportunities are provided. The direction of growth is within walking/cycling distance of the town centre and other key services. There may be some negative environmental effects that would require mitigation measures; particularly upon the historic environment with the presence of a Grade I listed church, Conservation Area, and potential archaeology. Therefore mitigation is recommended to investigate potential impact on historic environment, and ensure no adverse effects. The proximity to the Somerset Levels and Moors Special Protection Area/Ramsar has been highlighted in the Habitats Regulations Assessment, and mitigation measures are recommended to resolve this impact including only allowing employment development in one part of the growth option.

#### **Policy LMT3 'Somerton Direction of Growth'**

- 6.4.9 There will be several social and economic benefits of new development for the town, although measures are recommended to ensure adverse effects are mitigated e.g. investigate potential impact on historic environment, and ensure no adverse effects; appropriate landscaping to reduce landscape impact; contribute to enhancing the facilities/provision of the bus route on Langport Road. Distance of around 1km may discourage walking/cycling to the town centre for some, but local shops, primary

school and employment opportunities at Bancombe Road Trading Estate are within walking/cycling distance.

**Figure 6.3: Existing and potential Mitigation measures for the ‘Market Towns’<sup>22</sup>**

Potential effect – Market Towns	Existing mitigation within the plan (and what policy)	Is there a need to consider further mitigation, and if so what?
Increase in traffic levels at Chard, causing congestion and air pollution.	Provision of eastern link road will result in a reduction in levels of town centre traffic and associated pollution; improvements to walking and cycling potential (Policy PMT1, 2).	No.
Impact of additional traffic at Ilminster, particularly the town centre.	Incorporate a road link between Shudrick Lane and Townsend/Long Orchard Hill, and promote sustainable travel (Policy PMT3, TA1).	No.
Loss of BMV agricultural land on the edge of Ansford/Castle Cary, Chard, Langport/Huish Episcopi, Ilminster.	Alternatives to BMV land were considered, but rejected due to other sustainability considerations.	No.
Impact on the peripheral landscape of the Market Towns, through the loss of Greenfield land.	Locate development in areas where there is a more acceptable impact on the landscape (addressed by Policies PMT 1-4, LMT1-3). Reduce direction of growth to the north of Old Kelways, Langport/Huish Episcopi in order to protect the landscape near Wearne (Policy LMT2). Incorporate sensitive design and landscaping (addressed in Policy EQ2). Promote Previously Developed Land (addressed by Policy SS7).	No.
Increased noise and light pollution on currently ‘greenfield’ land at the edge of Market Towns.	Incorporate sensitive design standards (Policy EQ2).	No.
Impact on European Protected Species e.g. to the east of Chard.	Measures should be included when the sites come forward e.g. maintain wildlife corridors and features such as hedgerows and provide the opportunity to strengthen existing	No.

<sup>22</sup> Some of the more general mitigation measures already highlighted in the ‘strategy’ section have not been repeated again in figure 6.3.

	networks of habitats via green infrastructure (Policies PMT1, EQ4, 5).	
Impact of development at Langport/Huish Episcopi on the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar.	Alternative natural green space should be provided (Policy LMT2, EQ4, 5).	No.
Impact of southern part of Langport/Huish Episcopi Direction of Growth on Grade I listed building and Conservation Area.	Investigate potential impact on historic environment, and ensure no adverse effects (addressed in Policy EQ3).	No.
Southern part of Somerton Direction of Growth is in an Area of High Archaeological Potential.	Investigate potential impact on historic environment, and ensure no adverse effects (Policy EQ3).	No.
Potential for increased surface water flooding.	Areas of new development will incorporate SUDS to ensure a neutral or improved attenuation and runoff rate (Policy EQ1).	No.
Increase in carbon dioxide emissions as a result of new development.	Encourage sustainable construction in order to minimised CO2 emissions, promote renewable energy and use water efficiently (Policy EQ1).	Earlier introduction of sustainable construction standards.

## 6.5 Economic Prosperity

### Policy EP1 'Strategic Employment sites'

6.5.1 The SA demonstrates significant economic benefits, as the strategic sites will provide the land that will deliver 'B' Use jobs, and provide opportunities to raise the level of self-containment in the relevant settlements. Providing sufficient jobs in Yeovil, Crewkerne and Ilminster (latter two in particular) may lead to the retention locally of the better-educated or more skilled residents. Negative effects still remain for landscape, pollution, and flood risk (due to the sites at Ilminster being in Flood Zone 3) but it is considered that these effects should be mitigated by other policies on design and climate change and this will counter any negative impacts arising from development. Overall, supporting local economies is the most sustainable option.

### Policy EP2 'Office development'

6.5.2 This policy is likely to have positive impacts on the vitality and viability of Town Centres by increasing footfall and the number of potential shoppers and service users. Locating office development in the Town Centre also enables more office workers to use public transport to get to work, as more bus services are available into Town Centres, thereby reducing the need to travel by private car, which has positive impacts

on the environment. The amended sequential approach ensures that offices are not developed in unsustainable locations, where there is a lack of public transport (although it is noted that the NPPF allows office development in rural areas). The application of the sequential approach will mean that the positive impacts of the policy will still be felt, but the degree will reduce with distance from the Town Centre.

#### **Policy EP3 ‘Safeguarding Employment land’**

- 6.5.3 The importance of providing a range of sites, by both type and cost is crucial for the economy. The second-hand employment land/premises market is especially important for small businesses/self-employed who form a large part of the South Somerset economy. Without putting a level of protection in place through including a policy in the Local Plan, the economy and businesses would suffer, as alternative, more profitable uses would occupy employment land. This would also increase unemployment and possibly encourage entrepreneurs to move outside of the District. Therefore the SA highlights significant positive economic effects. The policy has been revised to prevent the long-term protection of land, which is contrary to the NPPF.

#### **Policy EP4 ‘Expansion of existing businesses in the countryside’**

- 6.5.4 An economic benefit of supporting existing rural businesses and creating jobs and prosperity in rural areas (in line with the NPPF) is likely as a result of this policy. Whilst the policy may generate the need to travel, in reality the distances travelled by employees may be less than travelling to a Primary/Local Market Town or Rural Centre. Negative effects still remain, but it is considered that these effects could be mitigated by other policies on transport, design and climate change and this mitigation will counter any negative impacts arising from development. On balance, supporting local economies is the most sustainable option.

#### **Policy EP5 ‘Farm diversification’**

- 6.5.5 The support for existing farm enterprises, and general support for the wider rural economy, demonstrates significant economic positive effects. Some negative effects are highlighted in relation to environmental objectives such as transport, landscape and biodiversity, although mitigation measures in other policies.

#### **Policy EP6 ‘Henstridge Airfield’**

- 6.5.6 This is a site-specific policy that restricts development at a remote airfield at Henstridge. It was “saved” from the adopted South Somerset Local Plan (2006) and is informed by the Henstridge Airfield Masterplan (2009). Although the policy has a negligible effect on many of the SA objectives, there are positive impacts on traffic and landscape by seeking to limit development in such a rural location.

#### **Policy EP7 ‘New build live/work units’**

- 6.5.7 This policy performs well across the range of SA objectives, through supporting the economy by, for example, helping start-up businesses as combined live/work space has lower costs. The reduction in the need to travel that would result has benefits in terms of reducing the effect of traffic and minimising carbon dioxide emissions and pollution. Live/work units can also potentially reduce the fear of crime by increasing

natural surveillance during the day. An approach to restricting their development to sustainable locations where standard housing is allowed, which will ensure that they do not 'spring up' all over the countryside, which would be less sustainable.

**Policy EP8 'New and enhanced tourist facilities'**

- 6.5.8 This policy seeks to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of tourism in the District, which will have significant positive economic effects by supporting a strong, diverse and vibrant tourist economy. The policy is also considered to have a positive effect in terms of improving access to services and facilities and reducing poverty and social exclusion. Negative effects are apparent in protecting the landscape and biodiversity, but it is considered that these effects could be mitigated by other plan policies.

**Policy EP9 'Retail hierarchy'**

- 6.5.9 The application of this policy should have significant positive economic effects by supporting a strong, diverse and vibrant economy. The policy seeks to make Yeovil, the Market Towns, District and Local Centres more sustainable by ensuring that a range of town centre uses, appropriate to the role and function of the settlement in question, are encouraged, and that not only do the right services and facilities develop in settlements, but that they promote self containment and do not harm the overall retail hierarchy. The other sustainability benefits include supporting strong and vibrant town centres and their local economies, encouraging self-containment, reducing the need to travel, improving access to essential services and facilities thereby reducing social exclusion.

**Policy EP10 'Convenience and comparison shopping in Yeovil'**

- 6.5.10 By placing an upper limit on new retail development in Yeovil the policy seeks to make the District's Town Centres more sustainable by allowing a retention of a range of main town centre uses, appropriate to the role and function of the settlement in question, which promotes their self containment. The policy seeks to protect the overall retail hierarchy. The policy will support strong and vibrant town centres and their local economies, encourage self-containment, reduce the need to travel and improve access to essential services and facilities thereby reducing exclusion.

**Policy EP11 'Location of main town centre uses (the sequential approach)'**

- 6.5.11 The approach focuses development on the town centre first, which will generate more business for existing commercial enterprises and is generally the most sustainable location, in terms of access via sustainable modes of travel. The policy approach to out-of-centre development and the co-location next to existing retail warehousing should reduce the overall impact in terms of traffic generation, by allowing more linked trips. This policy should have significant positive economic effects by supporting a strong, diverse and vibrant Town Centre economy.

**Policy EP12 'Floorspace threshold for impact assessments'**

- 6.5.12 The specific nature of this policy means there are relatively few sustainability effects, but the appraisal outlines support for a strong, diverse and vibrant local economy, by

seeking to ensure that large-scale developments do not jeopardise existing centres, and that their impact contributes to the retail/town centre offer, rather than detracts from it.

**Policy EP13 ‘Protection of retail frontages’**

- 6.5.13 There are few identified effects for this policy but those that are identified are positive through the identification of Primary Shopping Frontages, locations where retail (A1 uses) should dominate, which will protect the retail function of the District’s Town Centre and therefore the policy will support strong and vibrant local economies.

**Policy EP14 ‘Neighbourhood centres’**

- 6.5.14 The findings demonstrate support for strong and vibrant local economies, reduce the need to travel and improve access to essential services and facilities by supporting their development in locations such as large residential estates that currently lack access to day-to-day services. This can help to reduce social exclusion by providing local shopping facilities to serve day-to-day needs.

**Policy EP15 ‘Protection and provision of local shops, community facilities and services’**

- 6.5.15 Several positive effects are identified across the range of social, economic and environmental objectives as a result of this policy. These include improving/maintaining access to services and facilities, and reducing social exclusion, particularly important given the rural nature of South Somerset. Local shops, services and facilities make a vital contribution to the local economy, and the protection and provision of these will support the vitality of existing centres. The environmental benefits include reducing the effect of traffic to access services, and minimising associated carbon dioxide emissions.

**Figure 6.4: Existing and potential Mitigation measures for the ‘Economic Prosperity’ section**

Potential effect – Economic Prosperity	Existing mitigation within the plan (and what policy)	Is there a need to consider further mitigation, and if so what?
Loss of offices leading to a negative impact on the vitality and viability of town centres.	Delete “Other out of centre sites” criterion from the policy, as this implies that other, less sustainable, locations with poor sustainable travel options are acceptable (Policy EP2).	No.
Inhibiting housing supply through the protection of employment sites.	Revise policy wording to remove the sequential approach to redevelopment, which would allow residential use where appropriate (Policy EP3).	No.

Increased crime or fear of crime due to preventing alternative uses coming forward on redundant/disused employment sites.	Wording to require marketing for a maximum period of 18 months, or a period agreed by the local authority (some sites may need to be marketed for longer for various reasons) (Policy EP3).	No.
Rural development of tourism facilities has the potential to have a detrimental impact on biodiversity and geodiversity, and landscape character.	Amend the policy text to further protect not only international, but national, wildlife and landscape designations (Policy EP5). Ensure no adverse impacts on the character of the countryside (Policy EP8).	No.
Not a great enough mix of uses in order to promote vitality and viability of the town centre.	Amend policy text to refer to town centre uses, rather than just retail and leisure, as the role and function of town centres is much greater and includes offices and 'other uses' (Policy EP9).	No.
Traffic generation from 'town centre' uses.	Revised wording to include a requirement that out-of-centre sites be well served by sustainable modes of travel; include reference to co-location of new uses next to existing retail warehousing (Policy EP10).	No.
Access to essential services and facilities on large-scale housing estates.	Revise wording to make Policy applicable universally to large residential developments coming forward in South Somerset and not restricted to Yeovil and Chard, as there are other locations such as Ilminster or Somerton where there may be a need for services more locally (Policy EP14).	Ensure the phasing of services/facilities alongside housing development.
Loss of services and facilities, particularly in rural areas.	Amend the Policy to also apply to cultural facilities, as these are also important for community welfare (Policy EP15).	No.

## 6.6 Housing

### Policy HG1 'Strategic Housing site'

6.6.1 There are significant positive effects for housing delivery in carrying forward this allocation at Crewkerne,<sup>23</sup> including provision of affordable housing. There would also be economic benefits that development will bring to the town, with job creation at construction stage, and provision of 'B' use employment land. The on-site provision of

<sup>23</sup> At preferred options stage this policy also included key sites at Lufton and Thorne Lane in Yeovil but these have removed from this policy as they now have planning permission.

a primary school and recreation land will help improve access to services and promote social inclusion. The site is currently Greenfield, but strategic landscaping will be required to mitigate this effect, and measures will be taken to protect biodiversity e.g. dormice bridge.

**Policy HG3 'Provision of affordable housing' and HG4 'Provision of affordable housing - sites of 1-5 dwellings'**

- 6.6.2 There are obvious benefits of these policies in contributing to meeting affordable housing need, which can help reduce poverty and social exclusion, and improve health and well being by housing those currently in sub-standard accommodation. The imposition of a threshold of 6 dwellings would lead to more sites being expected to contribute towards affordable housing provision than at present (currently 15 dwellings is being applied), and would have the positive impact of increasing the supply of affordable housing subject to viability and is supported by the evidence. The provision of 35% affordable housing will help meet the need identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Additional affordable housing will also help to reduce social exclusion.

**Policy HG5 'Achieving a mix of market housing'**

- 6.6.3 The focussed nature of this policy mean that most of the SA objectives are not relevant, particularly the environmental objectives. There are likely to be social and economic benefits by providing the opportunity for the delivery of the size and type of market housing that is required for the district based on the most recent evidence. By ensuring that a mix of market housing is provided the residents of South Somerset should be more able to have access to the type of housing that best meets their health needs.

**Policy HG6 'Care homes and specialist accommodation'**

- 6.6.4 The Core Strategy I&O addressed Lifetime Homes and specialist housing for the elderly, and the supporting text in the Draft Core Strategy (incorporating Preferred Options) refers to the challenge of coping with an increasingly elderly population and to Lifetime Homes standards, no specific policy was included to address specialist housing for the elderly. However it was subsequently considered that it would be appropriate to have a new policy to address the specialist housing needs of the elderly, informed by consultation responses and SA findings. The introduction of this policy brings about positive impacts for the provision of housing to meet the needs of older people in South Somerset. By directing care homes and other specialist housing accommodation to the most sustainable locations in the district will contribute to the objective of providing balanced and mixed communities and help to ensure that health and well being issues can be addressed.

**Policy HG7 'Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling show people'**

- 6.6.5 Of the two options originally considered, through sustainability appraisal Option A presented a number of weaknesses in the policy most notably access to local services and Option B sought to address this issue, scoring more positively than Option A. Additional criteria were added including health and safety, the omission of Travelling

Showpeople and flood risk that improved the sustainability performance of the policy. Some negative effects still remain, but it is considered that these will be mitigated by other policies on transport, biodiversity and historic environment. The further amendment of the policy to allow the consideration of land outside of nationally designated areas as well as inside improves performance in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity.

**Policy HG8 ‘Replacement dwellings in the countryside’**

6.6.6 There are few sustainability effects due to the specific nature of this policy, but the policy ensures that suitably designed replacement dwellings should be sympathetic to the surroundings and appropriate to the landscape character; this will help to maintain environmental quality and the quality and character of the wider countryside.

**Policy HG9 ‘Housing for agricultural and related workers’**

6.6.7 The inherently rural location of this type of housing is likely to have significant negative effect in terms of access to services and facilities, although the restrictive nature of the policy is likely to mean a limited scale of such housing being developed. The policy should support rural businesses by allowing essential workers to live near by (where a need is proven). Sensitive design should ensure the protection of landscape, and although there would be an increase in carbon dioxide emissions due to the need to travel to access services, travel to work emissions will be zero/minimal.

**Policy HG10 ‘Removal of agricultural and other occupancy conditions’**

6.6.8 This is a very specific policy ensuring that all reasonable efforts are made to demonstrate there is no longer a need for this type of housing in that location. The appraisal demonstrates that there is a net benefit of the policy in its ability to maintain housing facilities.

**Figure 6.5: Existing and potential Mitigation measures for the ‘Housing’ section**

Potential effect – Housing	Existing mitigation within the plan (and what policy)	Is there a need to consider further mitigation, and if so what?
Cumulative impact of a large number of new care homes or other specialist elderly persons accommodation in the countryside would have a negative impact on vulnerability to climate change if a locally based work force were not available and visitors had to travel further distances to visit residents.	Require a clear justification for locating such proposals in the countryside (Policy HG6).	No.
Rural location means the housing for agricultural and related workers	Set strict criteria in order to limit the scale of such housing to that which can be clearly	No.

is likely to be isolated from services and facilities.	justified (Policy HG9).	
Loss of Greenfield land.	Sensitive design and landscaping (Policy EQ2).	No.

## 6.7 Transport and Accessibility

### Policy TA1 'Low carbon travel'

6.7.1 This policy will have numerous positive effects across the objectives either through encouraging sustainable travel or reducing the need to travel. The social benefits include improving access to services/facilities, and walking and cycling that can encourage healthy lifestyles. There are also positive economic effects through less congestion, and supporting rail freight terminals. Low carbon travel also helps to minimise carbon dioxide emissions and therefore reduce South Somerset's contribution to climate change, as well as air, noise and light pollution.

### Policy TA2 'Rail'

6.7.2 A range of positive effects is likely through improving sustainable transport alternatives for both passengers and freight. For example, in terms of supporting the economy, new rail passenger facilities would improve access for both commuters and visitors and this would have a knock-on effect on the town and local centre vitality and viability both in terms of reducing congestion and increasing visitor spend. Also, new Rail Freight terminals have the potential to enhance the competitiveness of a centre, increase local economic activity and reduce HGV traffic volumes.

### Policy TA3 'Sustainable travel at Chard and Yeovil'

6.7.3 The measures in this policy are likely to mean similar positive effects to Policy TA1 above. There are more significant positive effects for TA2 given the greater potential for sustainable travel opportunities at Yeovil and Chard, as these settlements offer the best opportunity to access jobs, services and facilities in close proximity, and the policy proposes improvements to public transport provision in the settlements.

### Policy TA4 'Travel Plans'

6.7.4 This would result in generally positive effects, similar to those discussed in Policy TA1 and TA2 above. Travel Plans are a useful tool in raising awareness and in enabling a choice of travel modes, however the degree of effectiveness is dependent on the choice of modes available and therefore they are usually complimentary to other measures within the sustainable travel policies set out above.

### Policy TA5 'Transport impact of new development'

6.7.5 The appraisal recognises that the balance between achievable sustainable transport measures and ensuring economic viability is delicate and will be challenging to achieve. The rural nature of South Somerset means that owning a car is likely to be

essential for many people, but there are positive effects from promoting sustainable travel and addressing the transport impacts of new development, including the economic benefits of an effective transport system.

### Policy TA6 ‘Parking standards’

- 6.7.6 There are likely to be several positive effects associated with ensuring appropriate parking provision based upon site characteristics, location and accessibility. Secure cycle parking in particular should be encouraged. Several benefits with promotion of lower car parking levels at accessible locations, specifically Yeovil, including minimise air pollution, encourage use of alternative travel modes, minimise CO2 emissions, and potentially reduce the growth of traffic congestion. It is useful to note that Somerset County Council undertook an options appraisal of the County Parking Strategy, which, although not adhering to SA requirements, does contain some helpful information on the options appraisal process.

**Figure 6.6: Existing and potential Mitigation measures for the ‘Transport and Accessibility’ section**

Potential effect – Transport and Accessibility	Existing mitigation within the plan (and what policy)	Is there a need to consider further mitigation, and if so what?
Potential for car parking provision to detract from the design quality in new development.	Add the provision that the policy should be design-led (Policy TA6).	No.
Increase in crime as rail stations, especially when not staffed, tend to attract anti-social behaviour. Similarly theft from rail freight hubs has historically been a problem.	Adequate measures would need to be in place e.g. through careful design, to ensure stations and freight hubs remained free from crime & perceived as safe (Policy EQ2).	No.

## 6.8 Health and well being

### Policy HW1 ‘Provision of open space, outdoor playing space, sports, cultural and community facilities in new development’

- 6.8.1 This policy has benefits through improved facilities, and adequate local and strategic sports facilities enables everyone the opportunity to participate in play and leisure activities that should improve health and well being. The provision of open space should also have environmental benefits. Some potential negative effects have been identified on the landscape/townscape, flood risk and biodiversity, but these will depend on the location of such facilities and it is considered that other plan policies should ensure adverse effects are mitigated.

### Policy HW2 ‘Sports Zone’

6.8.2 The appraisal demonstrates a clear benefit to services and the health and well being of the population by providing a key sports facility. There is some uncertainty around some of the objectives until a location of the facility is chosen, but it is considered that other plan policies should ensure adverse effects are mitigated.

**Policy HW3 ‘Protection of play spaces and youth provision’**

6.8.3 The narrow focus of this policy means that most objectives are not relevant for the appraisal. The SA demonstrates positive effects on health and well being and access to facilities in its ability to protect outdoor sports, play space and youth provision.

**Figure 6.7: Existing and potential Mitigation measures for the ‘Health and well being’ section**

Potential effect – Health and well being	Existing mitigation within the plan (and what policy)	Is there a need to consider further mitigation, and if so what?
New facilities could impact on townscape	Ensure new development is designed to a high quality (Policy EQ2).	No.

## 6.9 Environmental Quality

**Policy EQ1 ‘Addressing Climate Change in South Somerset’**

6.9.1 This policy performs very well across most objectives, with numerous sustainability benefits. The positive effects include potential to reduce ‘fuel poverty’ due to improved energy efficiency of new dwellings and therefore lower the costs of running a home, the promotion of renewable technologies and sustainable construction techniques to support the transition to a low carbon economy, and incorporating climate adaptation measures. There are some potential negative effects arising from the impact of renewable technologies on the landscape and historic environment, although these are uncertain at this stage and until locations for such development are considered.

**Policy EQ2 ‘General development’**

6.9.2 There are likely to be several positive effects arising from this policy, across the range of objectives. Socially, high quality design can have positive health benefits due to being able walk, cycle and access open space; and can help ‘design out crime’ through the creation of safe environments that benefit from natural surveillance, well overlooked streets and open spaces, appropriate lighting and other security measures. Effective design that improves connectivity and reduces the need to travel by car will help to reduce the effect of traffic on the environment, and can also support the economy. There are also positive landscape impacts through consolidating landscape character of the area, whilst reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local context.

### **Policy EQ3 'Historic environment'**

- 6.9.3 The historic environment should benefit from significant positive effects as a result of this policy. There should also be indirect positive effects on townscape through the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

### **Policy EQ4 'Biodiversity'**

- 6.9.4 Several positive effects on the environmental objectives are likely through the requirement to protect the biodiversity value of land and buildings and prevent fragmentation of habitats. Maximise opportunities to restore, enhance and connect natural habitats and incorporate beneficial biodiversity conservation features can also help species and habitats adapt to climate change. In addition, these measures are also likely to protect and enhance the landscape.

### **Policy EQ5 'Green Infrastructure'**

- 6.9.5 As well as significant positive effects on flooding and biodiversity, this policy also has some social benefits through improving access to services and health and well being. For example, the provision and management of open space, provides larger permeable areas of land for water storage, and the creation of attenuation ponds help alleviate flooding especially in times of peak flow. In conjunction, tree planting can contribute to flood mitigation proposals as they filter rainwater and slow down surface run off, which helps to reduce soil erosion as well as reducing costs for drainage infrastructure. Creating access to open space, parks, playing fields and provision for children and young people provides opportunities for recreation, walking and cycling which is clearly beneficial to the health and sense of well-being of the local community.

### **Policy EQ6 'Woodlands and forests'**

- 6.9.6 This is likely to have significant positive effects for several environmental objectives, due to the differing benefits of woodlands and forests e.g. filter rainwater and slow down surface run off which helps to reduce soil erosion and reduce CO2 levels in the atmosphere, reduce pollution levels, and helping biodiversity.

### **Policy EQ7 'Pollution control'**

- 6.9.7 Most of the objectives do not apply given the focussed nature of this policy, but there should be positive effects for health and well being and minimising pollution. Air pollution is specifically considered due to the presence of an Air Quality Management Area in Yeovil.

### **Policy EQ8 'Equestrian development'**

- 6.9.8 This policy seeks to ensure that equine development respects countryside character and protects important ecological features, and should help support the rural economy. Mitigation measures are included to ensure that adverse effects are minimised.

### **Figure 6.8: Existing and potential Mitigation measures for the 'Environmental Quality' section**

<b>Potential effect – Environmental quality</b>	<b>Existing mitigation within the plan (and what policy)</b>	<b>Is there a need to consider further mitigation, and if so what?</b>
Improve the sustainability performance of residential and non-residential buildings.	Require Code for Sustainable Homes/BREEAM standards for all new development, not just at specific 'development areas' (Policy EQ1).	Earlier introduction of sustainable construction standards.
Potential for negative effects on landscape and townscape through encouraging decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy technologies.	Include the provision that there should be no significant adverse impacts upon landscape character and visual amenity (Policy EQ1).	No.
Potential for negative effects on the historic environment through encouraging decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy technologies.	Include the provision to protect designated heritage assets (Policy EQ1).	No.
Potential negative effect of decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy technology on biodiversity interest.	Add text relating to the protection of bats and bird species from wind turbine proposals (Policy EQ1).	No.
Need to manage flood risk.	Add reference in the policy to the Exception Test to provide greater detail on managing flood risk (Policy EQ1).	No.

## 7 Monitoring

- 7.1.1 The monitoring process is integral to both plan making and sustainability appraisal. Monitoring is crucially important in understanding the characteristics of the local area, to assess the impact of policies and whether the strategy is delivering sustainable development. Regular monitoring ensures that unforeseen adverse effects can be identified and appropriate remedial action can be undertaken.
- 7.1.2 The following table (figure 7.1) outlines the monitoring indicators that will be used to measure the potential significant effects of the Local Plan that have been identified through the SA process. The indicators aim to concentrate on the key sustainability issues identified in the appraisal. The outcome of the 'significant effects indicators' will be reported in the District Council's Annual Monitoring Report.

**Figure 7.1: Significant effects indicators**

Potential effect	Indicators (source)
Ensuring access to services and facilities in rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of Super Output Areas (SOAs) in South Somerset where 'Road distance to GPs, Hospitals, Primary Schools and Post Offices' is in worst 20% nationally (Indices of Multiple Deprivation);</li> <li>➤ Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling (% of parishes covered by Demand Responsive Transport) (Somerset County Council)</li> </ul>
Benefiting deprived areas and promoting social inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of SOAs in South Somerset which are within the 20% most deprived nationally – overall weighted score; and income (IMD);</li> <li>➤ Number of benefit recipients (Nomis).</li> </ul>
Meeting housing need across South Somerset.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Net additional homes provided (SSDC);</li> <li>➤ Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) (SSDC);</li> <li>➤ Number of homeless people in the district (SSDC);</li> <li>➤ Provision of gypsy and traveller sites in relation to identified need (SSDC).</li> </ul>
Promoting healthy lifestyles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Obesity among primary school age children in Year 6 (NHS Profile);</li> <li>➤ Adult participation in sport (Sport England, Active Peoples Survey);</li> <li>➤ Healthy life expectancy at age 65 (NHS Profile);</li> <li>➤ Number of SOAs within the 20% most deprived nationally for health and disability (IMD).</li> </ul>
Improving education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Working age population qualified to at least Level 2 (GCSE)/Level 4 (Degree) or higher (ONS);</li> </ul>
Reducing crime and fear of crime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of SOAs within the 20% most deprived nationally for crime and disorder (IMD);</li> <li>➤ % of residents who feel safe/very safe whilst outside (daytime and night time) (BMG Quality of Life survey).</li> </ul>
Supporting the economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Average earnings of employees (ONS);</li> <li>➤ Overall employment rate (ONS);</li> <li>➤ Proportion of employees in different sectors (Census);</li> <li>➤ Business Births and Deaths (ONS)</li> </ul>
Promoting town and local centre vitality and viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Proportion of retail, office and leisure development completed in town centre (SSDC).</li> </ul>
Increase in the number of journey's made by the car.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Travel to work – modal split (Census).</li> </ul>

Loss of Greenfield land.	➤ % of new homes built on previously developed land (SSDC).
Improving design standards	➤ Peer review of design achieved in development (SSDC).
Impact on the historic environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of listed buildings lost / 'at risk' (English Heritage (SSDC);</li> <li>➤ Number of Conservation Area appraisals / Management Plans prepared (SSDC);</li> <li>➤ Total area covered by conservation areas, historic parks and gardens (SSDC);</li> <li>➤ Total number of archaeological sites (SCC).</li> </ul>
Increase in carbon dioxide emissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Department of Energy and Climate Change);</li> <li>➤ Renewable energy capacity installed (Ofgem).</li> </ul>
Adapting to climate change.	➤ Number planning permission should be granted where Environment Agency objections cannot be overcome (EA).
Worsening air pollution, particularly in Yeovil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number and extent of Air Quality Management Areas (SSDC);</li> <li>➤ Number of days of air pollution exceeding 40µg/m<sup>3</sup> in Yeovil AQMA (SSDC: Sustainable Community Strategy).</li> </ul>
Impact of development on water quality	➤ River quality (% of very good, good or fair) (EA).
Increasing household waste production.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Residual household waste per year (SCC);</li> <li>➤ Household waste recycled and composted (Somerset Waste Partnership).</li> </ul>
Loss of Best and Most versatile agricultural land.	➤ Loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (SSDC).
Increase in number of flood incidents.	➤ Number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency (EA) on flooding grounds (EA).
Impact on biodiversity interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ % of SSSIs in favourable or recovering condition (Natural England);</li> <li>➤ Number/area of Local Wildlife Sites in South Somerset (Somerset Environmental Records Centre).</li> </ul>

## 8 Next steps

- 8.1.1 This SA report is being published for formal consultation alongside the 'Proposed Submission Local Plan', with a view to informing the consultation. Consultees might also like to comment directly on the findings of the SA (given that its purpose is to inform plan-makers directly, as well as support consultation on the plan). Any comments on this SA Report can be made on the representation form that accompanies the plan, or by visiting [www.southsomerset.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/localplan)
- 8.1.2 If there are significant changes made to the plan subsequent to consultation, the District Council will need to consider whether a revised SA report needs to be prepared. Assuming there are no fundamental issues, the Local Plan and accompanying SA report, plus any representations, will be submitted to the Secretary of State for the independent Examination in the autumn of 2012. It is envisaged that the South Somerset Local Plan will be adopted in the summer of 2013.
- 8.1.3 Following adoption of the Local Plan, a sustainability statement will be produced (as detailed in section 3.5) that will demonstrate how the SA process has influenced the content of the plan, and measures for monitoring the significant sustainability effects of the plan.