

**South Somerset District Council  
Local Plan:  
Strategic Growth Options for  
Yeovil**

**Sustainability Appraisal  
Report**

**30<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

**(as amended with the addition of Chapter 4 'Strategic Options Assessment in Plan Making' following PMB on October 25<sup>th</sup> 2013)**

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# South Somerset District Council Local Plan: Strategic Growth Options for Yeovil Sustainability Appraisal Report

<i>date:</i>	<i>4 October 2013</i>	
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## 1.0 Introduction, Scope and Methods

### Introduction

- 1.1 South Somerset District Council (SSDC) has been undertaking Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) since 2009 to inform the preparation of the South Somerset Local Plan. The SA and Local Plan progress to date may be summarised as follows:

**Table 1.1: Local Plan and SA/SEA activities and published documents to date**

Local Plan Documents & Consultation	SA Documents & Consultation
Core Strategy Issues and Options (March 2008) Public consultation 7 March to 25 April 2008	SA Scoping Report Sent to statutory consultees and wider stakeholders 29 April to 03 June 2009
Area Based Workshops (members, Town and Parish Councillors and other stakeholders) July 2009, Nov/Dec 2009, Jan 2010 & July 2010	SA Scoping Report (Sept 2009) incorporated changes as a result of consultation
Draft Core Strategy (incorporating Preferred Options) Public consultation 08 October to 03 December 2010	SA Report (Oct 2010) Public consultation 08 October to 03 December 2010
Proposed Submission Local Plan Public consultation 08 June to 10 August 2012	SA Report (June 2012) Public consultation 08 June to 10 August 2012
The Local Plan was Submitted to the Secretary of State on 21 January 2013	SA Addendum (Jan 2013) accompanied the Local Plan on Submission

- 1.2 Following the public Hearings into the South Somerset Local Plan during May and June 2013, the Inspector raised three significant issues of concern. The First Issue relates to the SA of the Strategic Growth Options for Yeovil with concerns relating to weighting of effects on agricultural land, landscape evidence, lack of consistency regarding the historic environment, and lack of clarity with regard to biodiversity and geodiversity.
- 1.3 The Second Issue relates to the soundness of the proposed direction of growth at Ilminster. The Council has acknowledged that there is an error in the SA for the town and this is being addressed through a re-appraisal by Officers. The Third Issue relates to employment land provision – Policy SS3 and does not concern the SA (although the SA implications have been considered). The Inspector agreed to a suspension of the Examination into the Local Plan in order for the Council to address these concerns.

- 1.4 In August 2013 the Council commissioned Enfusion Ltd to provide specialist, independent services to help complete the additional SA work required by the Inspector. The Council has acknowledged the need for more clarity and consistency in the SA and commissioned Enfusion to carry out a fresh and independent SA of the Strategic Growth Options for Yeovil.

### **Scope of SA Work**

- 1.5 In the first instance, Enfusion carried out an independent compliance review of the SA/SEA work completed by the Council to date. This review was made against the Quality Assurance (QA) Checklist advised by Government for undertaking SA/SEA, together with the SA requirements from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The specific SA concerns from the Inspector and representations from public consultation relate to the SA of the Strategic Growth Options for Yeovil. Accordingly, the SA compliance review focused on the previous SA relevant to Yeovil in order to inform the SA work that will address the concerns from the Inspector.
- 1.6 The SA review was completed at the end of August 2013 and is available on the Council's website [www.southsomerset.gov.uk/](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/). This independent review made a number of recommendations to help strengthen the SA, provide greater clarity, and to address the concerns made by the Inspector in his Preliminary Findings from the Local Plan Examination. The key recommendations from the review are as follows:
- Clearly set out the reasons why the sustainability issues were amended and how they were changed.
  - Update the baseline information and plans/programmes review to ensure that the evidence base for the ongoing SA is current.
  - Provide a clear narrative of how the strategic options for Yeovil have been considered through the Local Plan preparation and the SA; clearly set out the reasons for selecting or rejecting options, explain why any options were considered to not be reasonable and thus not need SA.
  - Screen changes made to the Local Plan since Examination to determine if they are significant and thus need further SA.
  - Update the SA Report Non Technical Summary to clearly set out the purpose and objectives of the Local Plan, and to include the characteristics of the area, the summary reasons for selecting/rejecting options and the summary of the further SA work.
- 1.7 The Council accepted these recommendations. Enfusion was required to focus on the fresh SA of the Strategic Options for Yeovil, and to prepare this SA Report.

### **Methods**

- 1.8 The Council wishes to demonstrate that an independent SA of the Strategic Options for Yeovil has been undertaken in order to clearly show that the Inspector's concerns regarding the SA have been addressed. Both plan

making and SA are iterative and ongoing processes; findings from technical studies and the SA, together with consideration of representations from consultations, are used to inform the development of the Local Plan.

- 1.9 The SA of reasonable alternatives (options in plan-making) was undertaken by Enfusion using the same SA Framework based on the evidence available, including updated studies, and professional opinion based on experience and expertise. The assessment of effects considered the mitigation that is now inherent in the Local Plan through the development management policies that, for example, will avoid adverse effects on protected biodiversity. Any residual effects were recorded, together with any further mitigation of likely significant negative effects or enhancement of positive effects that should be considered at the next stage of planning and assessment. Whilst each strategic option was appraised individually, a comparative assessment was also made to try to inform which option would better progress objectives for sustainable development.

### **This SA Report**

- 1.10 This SA Report on the Strategic Growth Options for Yeovil is part of the SA Report that accompanies the Submission South Somerset Local Plan. It is presented for public consultation alongside the Proposed Main Modifications to the Plan. Any comments received will be considered by the Council when finalising its submission to the Inspector for the reopening of the Examination, anticipated in spring 2014.
- 1.11 Section 2 of this SA Report explains the scoping of issues for sustainability in the South Somerset area and how these developed as a result of technical studies and consultation; it sets out clearly why the SA Framework of objectives was amended and demonstrates that the issues and SA objectives do align with the NPPF and are still valid to form the basis for appraisal of the Strategic Growth Options for Yeovil. The development of the SA Objectives at the scoping stage is provided here in this report at Appendix I.
- 1.12 Section 3 sets out the story of the development and SA of strategic options for Yeovil – provided in one place to help provide clarity for the reader. The reasons for taking forward or not progressing options at each stage of the plan-making and SA processes are outlined. The process for assessing and selecting reasonable alternatives for strategic options in August 2013 is reported, and the fresh independent SA of these detailed in Appendix II. Section 4 summarises the findings and sets out the next steps including how to respond to the consultation on this report.

## 2.0 Sustainability Issues and the SA Framework

### Issues for Sustainability and the SA Scoping Process

- 2.1 The SA/SEA process is required to identify issues, problems and opportunities taking into account the characteristics of the area and the scope of influence of the plan. This SA Scoping process includes reviewing other plans and programmes relevant to the South Somerset Local Plan and compiling baseline information with the current condition and likely trends. From these studies, a Framework of objectives and decision-aiding questions are developed to help resolve the issues identified for sustainability and to form the basis for the appraisal.
- 2.2 The Inspector's Preliminary Findings state that there is no detailed explanation of how the SA objectives have been drawn up or their relationship to guidance on delivering sustainable development as contained within the NPPF. The detailed explanation of how the SA objectives were developed was provided in Section 6 of the SA Scoping Report (Sept 2009). Baseline information and a review of plans, policies and programmes were used to identify key sustainability issues for the District. The key sustainability issues then informed the development of the SA Objectives. This process is explained in sections 4.1 – 4.5 of the SA Report (June 2012). The Draft NPPF and its implications for the SA were considered in the review of plans, policies and programmes presented in Appendix 1 of the SA Report (June 2012). The plans, policies and programmes review have been updated as part of this further SA work, including the final NPPF, as set out in later in this section paragraphs 2.6 -2.7.
- 2.3 The Scoping Report was published for consultation in April 2009. Following consideration of consultation responses, the SA objectives were amended primarily for reasons of clarity and succinctness – and to keep the SA objectives strategic and to a manageable number to provide the basis for appraisal (detailed in this report Appendix I).
- 2.4 The revised SA Scoping Report was published in September 2009 and section 5.2 sets out a total of 28 key sustainability issues in South Somerset, categorised as environmental, social and economic factors. These issues were refined and amalgamated where appropriate in order to make the SA Report (June 2012) more concise and readable.
- 2.5 The following table shows the relationship to guidance on delivering sustainable development in the NPPF by referring to where topics covered by each SA objective are discussed in the NPPF.

**Table 2.1: Relationship of SA Objectives to NPPF**

SA Objective	SEA Directive topic	Relevant NPPF paragraph
1. Improve access to essential services and facilities	Population	17, 28 – 30, 37, 38, 69, 70

2. Reduce poverty and social exclusion	Population	17, 28, 69, 70
3. Provide sufficient housing to meet identified needs of the community	Material assets, population	17, 47 – 52, 54, 55
4. Improve health and well being	Population	17, 69, 70, 73 – 78
5. Improve education and skills of the population	Population	17 – 21, 72
6. Reduce crime and fear of crime	Population	58
7. Support a strong, diverse and vibrant local economy	Population	17 – 28
8. Reduce the effect of traffic on the environment	Human health, air, climatic factors	17, 29 – 38, 93, 95
9. Protect and enhance the landscape and townscape	Landscape	17, 28, 56 – 66, 74 – 78, 109 – 111, 113 – 116
10. Conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment	Cultural heritage	17, 126 – 141
11. Reduce contribution to climate change and vulnerability to its effects	Climatic factors,	17, 30, 34, 93 – 99
12. Minimise pollution (including air, water, land, light, noise) and waste production	Air, water, soil	17, 109, 110, 112, 120 – 125
13. Manage and reduce the risk of flooding	Water	17, 94, 99 – 104
14. Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity	Biodiversity, flora, fauna	17, 109, 110, 113, 114, 117 – 119

### Baseline and Plans/Programmes Review

- 2.6 The baseline information and plans/programmes review were updated and this information is provided in another SA Report (October, 2013) prepared by Council Officers to address the other SA issues raised by the Inspector. This updated evidence was used by Enfusion in the independent SA of the Strategic Growth Options for Yeovil.

### Summary

- 2.7 The SA scoping process has been outlined and the identification of the issues for sustainability and the SA explained. The SA Framework of objectives for helping resolve these sustainability issues is presented showing the changes made as a result of consultation and updated evidence. The updated baseline and plans/programmes review has been set out clearly. The SA Framework and baseline evidence is still valid and reflects the iterative and ongoing process of SA to inform plan-making.

### **3.0 Strategic Options for Yeovil**

#### **Introduction**

- 3.1 The strategic direction of development growth for Yeovil presented in the South Somerset Local Plan has evolved over years as a result of ensuring compliance with national and regional policy and legislation, various technical studies and consideration of comments made from consultation with the public, stakeholders and regulators. The SA has an important role in helping to refine options and to inform the decision-making process by identifying the likely sustainability effects (both negative and positive) and suggesting possibilities to mitigate negative effects.
- 3.2 In his Preliminary Findings into the Examination of the Local Plan, the Inspector set out his concerns regarding the SA of the Yeovil Growth Options which may be summarised as follows:
- Sustainability issues & development of SA Objectives (please see section 2 in this SA Report)
  - Lack of comparative significance between high and low quality agricultural land
  - Lack of substantive evidence in terms of landscape effects
  - Lack of consistency regarding the historic environment
  - Lack of clarity regarding the significance with regard to biodiversity and geodiversity
- 3.3 The Inspector acknowledged that the SA has been long and iterative in nature and that there may be uncertainty and that some level of subjectivity is inevitable. The independent review of the SA by Enfusion found that the SA reports did not always make clear the reasons for selecting or rejecting the options for an urban extension to Yeovil at each stage of plan-making. The identified needs for development in the Yeovil area have changed since 2009 (with some 5000 dwellings and associated infrastructure in a sustainable urban extension) through to 2012 (with only 1565 dwellings required in the lifetime of the Plan) and the intention for a total of 2,500 dwellings to be delivered in order to create a more sustainable community.
- 3.4 In consideration of the complexity of options assessment and SA, changes since 2009, together with the specific concerns from the Inspector, the Council has reconsidered the realistic options for a strategic direction of growth at Yeovil, taking into account updated evidence (most notably landscape sensitivity and capacity studies). These options have been subject to independent fresh SA by Enfusion and the findings are reported here in this section 3.

#### **Assessment of Options in Plan-Making**

- 3.5 Development planning issues, such as how much, what kind of development and where, are considered within the requirements of legislation and policy together with the characteristics of the plan area and the views of its communities. Potential options for resolving such issues are identified by the Councils through various studies, such as population projections and housing

need, community strategies, infrastructure capacities, and environmental constraints analysis – and through consultation with the regulators, the public, businesses, service providers, and the voluntary sector.

- 3.6 At the earlier and higher levels of strategic planning, options assessment is proportionate and may have a criteria-based approach and/or expert judgment; the focus is on the key differences between possibilities for scale, distribution and quality of development. As a plan evolves, there may be further consideration of options that have developed by taking the preferred elements from earlier options. Thus the options for plan-making change and develop as responses from consultation are considered and further studies are undertaken. For Yeovil, it was identified that growth should be developed as urban extension(s) with strong functional linkages to the existing town.
- 3.7 At the later and lower levels of development planning for strategic growth direction and site allocations, options assessment tends to be more specific, often focused on criteria and thresholds, such as land availability, accessibility to services and impacts on local landscape, and particularly informed by technical studies such as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). There is also a hierarchy of options assessment with sites; directions of growth and sites that are not viable or deliverable or might have adverse effects on protected assets are rejected at an early stage.
- 3.8 It is important to remember that the Local Plan sets out **strategic directions for growth** in Yeovil. **It does not provide Site Allocations.** Further detailed assessments will be made at the next level of plan-making - masterplanning for Yeovil. These will consider potential form and layout of development and details of associated infrastructure, including open space and green infrastructure, community services and facilities. Such information will take into account any mitigation or enhancement suggested at the strategic level of planning to inform planning briefs and masterplans.

### Alternatives in SA

- 3.9 The EU SEA Directive<sup>1</sup> requires assessment of the likely significant effects of implementing the plan and “reasonable alternatives” taking into account “the objectives and geographical scope” of the plan; and the reasons for selecting alternatives should be outlined in the Report. The Directive does not specifically define the term “reasonable alternative”; however, UK SA/SEA guidance<sup>2</sup> advises that it should be taken to mean “realistic and relevant” i.e. deliverable and within the timescale of the plan.
- 3.10 Extant SEA guidance<sup>3</sup> sets out an approach and methods for developing and assessing alternatives (known as options in plan-making). This includes acknowledgement of a hierarchy of alternatives that are relevant and

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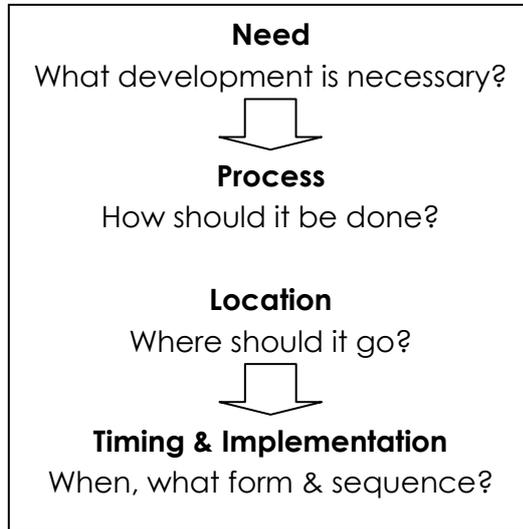
<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-legalcontext.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-directive-guidance>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pageld=152450>

proportionate to the tiering of plan-making. The assessment should be proportionate to the level and scope of decision-making for the plan being prepared. The hierarchy of alternatives may be summarised in the following diagram:

**Figure 3.1: Hierarchy of Alternatives in SA/SEA and Options in Plan-Making**



- 3.11 Recent case law in England has clarified and provided further guidance for current practice on how alternatives should be considered in SA/SEA of spatial and land use plans. The Forest Heath Judgment<sup>4</sup> confirmed that the reasons for selecting or rejecting alternatives should be explained, and that the public should have an effective opportunity to comment on appraisal of alternatives. The SA report accompanying the draft plan must refer to, summarise or repeat the reasons that had been given in earlier iterations of the plan and SA, and these must still be valid.
- 3.12 The Broadlands Judgment<sup>5</sup> drew upon the Forest Heath findings and further set out that, although not an explicit requirement in the EU SEA Directive, alternatives should be appraised to the same level as the preferred option; the final SA Report must outline the reasons why various alternatives previously considered are still not as good as the proposals now being put forward in the plan, and must summarise the reasons for rejecting any reasonable alternatives - and that those reasons are still valid. The Rochford Judgment<sup>6</sup> confirmed that the Council had adequately explained how it had carried out the comparative assessment of competing sites and that any shortcomings in the early process had been resolved by the publication of an SA Addendum Report.
- 3.13 The role of the SA is to inform the Councils in their selection and assessment of options; SA is undertaken of those reasonable alternatives (options) identified through the plan-making process. The findings of the SA can help with refining

<sup>4</sup> Save Historic Newmarket Ltd v Forest Heath District Council (2011) EWHC 606

<sup>5</sup> Heard v Broadland District Council, South Norfolk District Council, Norwich City Council (2012) EWHC 344

<sup>6</sup> Cogent Land LLP v Rochford District Council (2012) EWHC 2542

and further developing these options in an iterative and ongoing way. The SA findings do not form the sole basis for decision making – this is informed also from planning and other studies, feasibility, and consultation feedback.

### Options for Strategic Growth in Yeovil 2009-2012

- 3.14 There have been a number of alternatives considered through the plan-making process, from high level growth and spatial distribution options to alternative options for the direction of growth around Yeovil and the Market Towns. These alternatives have been subject to early and ongoing iterative consideration through public consultation since the Issues & Options Report in 2008 and to Submission in 2013. Table 2.1 below sets out the alternatives considered for development growth at Yeovil through the progress of the Local Plan preparation and identifies how they have been considered through the SA/SEA process.

**Table 3.1: Consideration of Alternatives for Yeovil through the Plan and SA/SEA**

Options for Yeovil Growth proposed by the Plan	Reasons for rejection or selection in Plan Making
Six strategic growth options covering a 360 degree search area around Yeovil.	The six growth options were defined, and subject to SA, to provide provisional information for further discussion. Therefore, no recommendation was made as to which option(s) to pursue at this stage (Proposed Submission SA Report, Para 5.4.15 and Appendix 5C, pg 12).
<p>As a result of workshops held in Dec 2009 with stakeholders, 8 locations for an urban extension were identified, with a further 3 locations identified by Officers (Options 8, 9 &amp; 11) to ensure a full 360 degree area of search (Appendix 5B, Pg. 2).</p> <p>Option 1: Keyford South                      Option 2: Barwick                      Option 3: Cartgate                      Option 4: Lufton West                      Option 5: Yeovil Without                      Option 6: Northern Linear                      Option 7: Combe St Lane/ Mudford                      Option 8: Brympton D'Evercy                      Option 9: South/ Keyford                      Option 10: Keyford/ Barwick                      Option 11: Dorset/ Over Compton</p> <p>A review of these Options by policy officers narrowed the options down to 6 (Appendix 5B, Pg. 4) (which were then subject to SA and see below).</p>	<p>11 options refined to 6 to ensure compliance with planning policy, constraints and to remove overlapping sites as follows:</p> <p>3: Cartgate rejected as not contiguous with urban area;                      5: Yeovil Without, 6: Northern Linear, 7: Combe St Lane/ Mudford were combined to remove duplication &amp; refined to remove Yeovil Marsh &amp; then taken forward as relatively few constraints.                      11: Dorset/ Over Compton extended to include Yeovil golf club as there is landscape capacity and taken forward as relatively few constraints.                      10: Keyford/ Barwick, 2: Barwick, 1: Keyford South combined &amp; extended to remove duplication &amp; reflect the barrier of the railway line - taken forward as relatively few constraints                      1: Keyford South significantly reduced in size to avoid landscape constraints                      4: Lufton West reduced to avoid landscape constraints &amp; extended to the east to include 6: Northern Linear and taken</p>

Options for Yeovil Growth proposed by the Plan	Reasons for rejection or selection in Plan Making
	<p>forward as fewer constraints 8: Brympton D'Evercy extended to southeast to ensure a contiguous area of land around the edge of Yeovil 9: South/ Keyford taken forward as relatively unconstrained</p> <p>The 6 options carried forward to the next stage of planning incorporate Parish and Town Council consultation and more readily reflect local constraints mapping. These 6 options were then subject to SA – see below:</p>
<p>The Draft Core Strategy SA Report (2010) states that, “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 degree area of search, to 6 separate geographic areas” (Para 5.4.6, Pg. 22). This is also stated in the Proposed SA Report (Para 5.4.16, Pg. 31 &amp; 32) and in Appendix 5B (Pg. 4). The six options were:</p> <p>Option 4: Luffton Option 7: Yeovil Marsh/ Mudford Option 8: Brympton Option 9: South/ Keyford Option 10: Barwick/ Keyford Option 11: Over Compton/ West Dorset</p> <p>Three of these options were eventually identified as appropriate for inclusion within the Core Strategy (Proposed Submission SA Report, Para 5.4.16, Pg. 32).</p>	<p>Options 4 and 7 performed less well than the other options for the following reasons (SA report Appendix 5B, Pg 14, 15):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Located furthest from existing community facilities within the town centre;</li> <li>- Limited opportunities to improve town centre connectivity via walking/cycling or encourage a healthy lifestyle;</li> <li>- Would not benefit existing education deficit in secondary education in the south of the town;</li> <li>- Located furthest from railway stations and least likely to encourage public transport;</li> <li>- Increase private transport use and will have a detrimental impact on road congestion – mitigation through major road infrastructure provision is not considered viable.</li> <li>- Limited opportunity to avoid sensitive landscapes;</li> <li>- Impact on wildlife species (although mitigation help lessen this).</li> </ul> <p>In addition, growth option 7 is north with less potential to achieve solar gain; and it is least accessible to employment centres in the south, east and west of the town.</p> <p>Options 8, 9, 10 and 11 were relatively less constrained, particularly in relation to highways and landscape impact, and were therefore carried forward (albeit in a modified form, as explained below).</p>
<p>The three options identified as appropriate for inclusion within the</p>	<p>As set out in the SA report, Appendix 5B, Pg 15, Options 8 and 9 were amalgamated as</p>

Options for Yeovil Growth proposed by the Plan	Reasons for rejection or selection in Plan Making
<p>Core Strategy were:</p> <p>Option 8: Brympton &amp; Coker Option 10: Keyford &amp; Barwick Option 11: East Yeovil &amp; Over Compton</p> <p>Despite options 4 (Lufton West) and Option 7 (Yeovil Marsh/ Mudford) having been rejected earlier in the process, they were subject to further SA as a single Option called the Northern Options to provide a comparator for the other options (Appendix 5C, Pg. 3).</p>	<p>County Council transport officers indicated the key reason for the size of the original Option 9 (i.e. making a link route between the A37 and A30/3088) would deliver limited transport gain and that this option should be divided between Option 8 and Option 10 (where there is already overlap). The overlap area of Option 9 was therefore removed and left solely within Option 10. Option 8 was also adjusted to avoid the newly emerged Yeovil Airfield flight safety zone.</p> <p>The result of these two amendments means that the resultant Brympton &amp; Coker option is a merger of options 8 and 9 (primarily option 9 with the southern portion of option 8), which benefits from being relatively unconstrained.</p> <p>The Barwick/Keyford/East Coker option was included primarily due to its close proximity to the town centre and the accessibility benefits to a range of services, shops and facilities that this would provide.</p> <p>Dorset/Over Compton also benefits from its proximity to the town centre, train station, and being relatively unconstrained by negative environmental effects.</p> <p>Despite options 4 (Lufton West) and Option 7 (Combe St Lane/ Mudford) having been rejected earlier in the process, they were subject to further SA as a single Option called the Northern Options to provide a comparator for the other options (Appendix 5C, Pg. 3).</p> <p>At this stage the scale of the urban extension was reduced from 5,000 dwellings to 3,700 dwellings following the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and subsequent preparation of local evidence on housing requirement.</p>
<p>After considering consultation responses on the Draft Core Strategy (which suggested a lower level of growth at Yeovil), the Council considered it necessary to re-appraise alternatives in order to ensure that the SA findings fully</p>	<p>The south west option was refined from options considered earlier in the process (Options 9, 10, 11) due to a reduced land take required as a result of a smaller urban extension, and to reflect environmental constraints (particularly further work undertaken in relation to the historic</p>

Options for Yeovil Growth proposed by the Plan	Reasons for rejection or selection in Plan Making
<p>inform the decision-making process (Proposed Submission SA Report, Section 5, Para 5.5.10, Pg. 40). Three options were subject to further SA, these were:</p> <p>Option 1: South West Option 2: North West Option 3: Multi-site</p>	<p>environment).</p> <p>Although the north west option (Option 4) was ruled out earlier in the process, it was reconsidered at this stage given the large number of comments proposing this alternative during preferred options consultation.</p> <p>The north west option was rejected due to being relatively far from the town centre with less potential to access services, shops, facilities and jobs in a sustainable manner; adverse landscape impact; and adverse impact on the historic environment.</p> <p>The multi-site option was rejected as offering less potential to offer 'economies of scale' meaning fewer services, facilities, shops and jobs 'on site'. This leads to poorer accessibility and increased need to travel.</p> <p>The south west option was progressed due to its relative close proximity to the town centre, offering the key accessibility benefits discussed above, and with less harm to the landscape and historic environment than the alternatives. Again, a single site would provide better 'economies of scale' in terms of delivering social and community infrastructure, retail, employment and assist in sustainable travel provision.</p>

### Options for Strategic Growth in Yeovil 2013

- 3.15 The plan-making process includes an analysis of constraints (such as protected biodiversity and important historic assets), development viability and deliverability. Strategic options are usually considered at an early stage of plan-making. However, any realistic options for Yeovil now will be informed by previous constraints analyses, various technical studies and updated evidence; mitigation of any negative effects is also available through the development management policies in the Local Plan. Therefore, rather than just re-appraise the strategic options for Yeovil that were of concern to some consultees and the Inspector, the Council considered the current situation with updated evidence in order to determine realistic options for SA.
- 3.16 Following Examination, the Inspector acknowledged in his Preliminary Findings that there is little to differentiate between the four areas of search for development growth in Yeovil with regard to accessibility, reducing poverty/social exclusion, provision of housing, improving health, improving education and skills, reducing crime, supporting strong diverse local

economy, traffic, climate change, and reducing flood risk. The Inspector requested more information and a comparative SA with particular consideration of the effects on landscape/townscape, the historic environment, agricultural land, and biodiversity and geodiversity.

- 3.17 Council Officers reconsidered the constraints and potential opportunities for development for areas all around the edge of Yeovil (i.e. a 360 degree search), as indicated by the SHLAA and other technical studies such as flood risk assessments to help confirm the strategic growth options that are realistic for fresh SA. As landscape sensitivity and capacity is a key factor in differentiating between the options, and had been identified as a key concern by the Inspector, more detailed landscape studies<sup>7</sup> were undertaken by the Council and informed the refinement and choice of options to be subject to SA. Figure 3.2: Options A-F for Strategic Growth in Yeovil provided here in this SA Report as Appendix III shows the study areas that were investigated.
- 3.18 Following reconfirmation of constraints and taking into account the findings of the more detailed landscape studies, 6 potential strategic directions for growth in Yeovil were identified as follows:
- A: Brympton D'Evercy
  - B: Coker
  - C: Middle Yeo Valley & Dorset Hillsides
  - D: Upper Mudford
  - E: Yeovil Marsh
  - F: Land North & West of Lufton
- 3.19 The area to the south east of the town (between areas B and C) was not considered appropriate to include as a 'reasonable alternative' for a strategic direction of growth primarily due to having a low landscape capacity<sup>8</sup>. In addition, there are several other constraints in this area that limit the scope for development, namely: topography, high flood risk, historic environment (with two Historic Parks and Gardens), and biodiversity with the presence of Local Wildlife Sites.
- 3.20 Areas to the north of the town (between areas D, E, and F) were not considered appropriate for a strategic direction of growth because of having a low or moderate-low capacity to accommodate built development.<sup>9</sup>
- 3.21 South Somerset District council Proposed Submission Local Plan (June 2012) Policies SS5 and YV1 identify that the objectively assessed need for housing and associated infrastructure in a Yeovil sustainable urban extension is for an additional 1565 dwellings over the lifetime of the Plan up to 2028. Council Officers and the SA specialists held a roundtable workshop on 3 September 2013 to identify realistic options that could provide this level of development. It was considered that the density of housing would be around 35-40 dwellings per hectare.

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<sup>7</sup> Yeovil Peripheral Landscape Studies Addendum August, 2013

<sup>8</sup> Yeovil Peripheral Landscape Study 2008; and Addendum 2013

<sup>9</sup> Yeovil Peripheral Landscape Study 2008; and Addendum 2013

- 3.22 As these are **strategic options for direction of growth** rather than sites allocations (to be detailed at the masterplanning stage of planning) and thus reflect major developments, it was considered that each area should be able to deliver at least 500 dwellings. This was considered to be the minimum size of development that can deliver the community benefits necessary to promote a more sustainable development. Based on other major developments in South Somerset since 2006, developments of less than 500 dwellings have not been required to make provision for a primary school or on-site formal playing fields and other community facilities.
- 3.23 Realistic strategic options that could accommodate 1565 dwellings, either alone (single site option) or combined (multi-site option of 2-3 times approximately 500 dwellings) and avoiding constraints were identified from the 6 areas of search (see above 3.18) as follows:
- Area B Coker:** could accommodate 1565 dwellings at a density of 35-40 houses per hectare avoiding major constraints of landscape sensitivity, flood plains and heritage assets.
- Area C Middle Yeo Valley & Dorset Hillside:** could accommodate 1565 dwellings at a density of 35-40 houses per hectare avoiding major constraints of landscape sensitivity and flood plain.
- Area D Upper Mudford:** could accommodate 1565 dwellings at a density of 35-40 houses per hectare avoiding major constraint of landscape sensitivity.
- Multi-site Option:** considering approximately 1565 houses from Search Area A in part (avoiding the major constraints of the Brympton D'Evercy listed house and park, as well as landscape sensitivity), Area B, Area C, and Area D.
- 3.24 **Search Area E Yeovil Marsh:** was not progressed further as it is completely divorced from the established northern edge of the town and therefore would appear as a separate settlement rather than an urban extension. This would vastly reduce the potential for the creation of a sustainable development as it would not benefit from the services and infrastructure of Yeovil. Furthermore, as this site is located at the bottom of a steep slope, the potential for journeys by foot or bicycle is significantly reduced.
- 3.25 The site is detached from Yeovil's urban fringe and any significant development would introduce an incongruous urban form into this rural area. As a result the landscape and visual impacts of development in this area will have an adverse effect upon Yeovil Marsh and the surrounding area. The PLS Addendum stated that mitigation does not satisfactorily address the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the introduction of substantive and detached urban form within these distinct rural areas. It therefore recommends that these study areas are not considered for urban growth. This rationale is supported by the Peripheral Landscape Study and evidence previously submitted to the Inspector for Examination.

- 3.26 **Search Area F Land North & West of Luffton:** was not progressed further due to the significant landscape sensitivities and potential effects on heritage assets. The potential development land lays at a relatively low elevation; it is separated from the town and is outside its topographic setting and would introduce urban expression into a large rural area, wholly at variance with the character of the wider landscape of the valley, and the sensitive receptors of Montacute House Historic Park & Gardens, St Michaels Tower and Ham Hill Scheduled Monument. The PLS Addendum stated that mitigation does not satisfactorily address the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the introduction of substantive and detached urban form within these distinct rural areas. It therefore recommends that these study areas are not considered for urban growth.

### **SA of Strategic Growth Options for Yeovil 2013**

- 3.27 The four options for strategic growth in Yeovil were subject to independent SA by Enfusion using the SA Framework that has been used throughout the SA process, and the updated baseline, together with professional opinion where appropriate. The appraisal took into account the mitigation that is provided by various development management policies in the Local Plan. Assumptions and any uncertainties were reported, and as required by the SEA Directive. Where relevant, the SA made suggestions and recommendations for further studies and to mitigate negative effects or promote enhancement possibilities at the next stage of planning – the preparation of masterplanning.
- 3.28 The Enfusion appraisal recognised 5 categories of potential significance of effects and recorded them with the same symbols and colours as had been used by the previous SA for the Yeovil options. These categories of significance are described in the following table 3.2. The same SA Framework was used in order to provide continuity and consistency with the previous work. For some of the SA Objectives, both positive and negative effects could be potentially identified and this is also explained in table 3.2. Where effects were uncertain, for example, because more information will be provided through further detailed studies at the next stage of planning, this was recorded with a question mark.

**Table 3.2: SA Categories of Significance for Yeovil Options**

Categories of Significance		
Symbol	Meaning	Sustainability Effect
--	Major Negative	Problematical and improbable because of known sustainability issues; mitigation likely to be difficult and/or expensive
-	Minor negative	Potential sustainability issues: mitigation and/or negotiation possible
+	Minor positive	No sustainability constraints and development acceptable
++	Major Positive	Development encouraged as would resolve existing sustainability problem
?	Uncertain	Uncertain or Unknown Effects
0	Neutral	Neutral effect
+ -	The SA Objectives 1, 4, 8, 11 & 12 consider more than one topic such that there could be different effects. For example, Objective 12 includes pollution (air, land, water, light, noise, waste, and protection of soil quality). An option could have a negative effect through loss of agricultural land but also have a neutral effect on pollution through adequate protection mechanisms – thus resulting in two symbols being shown.	

3.29 Each of the four options was appraised separately and the detailed findings of each SA are presented in matrices in this report as Appendix II. A comparative appraisal was also undertaken to help inform the decision – making for the Council. Where appropriate and possible, the SA made recommendations for further studies or requirements for any future development proposals and commented on mitigation/enhancement possibilities with their comparative effectiveness. The findings of the SA are summarised in the paragraphs below:

**Area B Coker**

3.30 This Option extends out from the south of the town and is 1.6 km from the Town Centre. As for all the options the key positive effects relate to the provision of housing and employment with associated benefits for communities, through improved public transport and pedestrian links (walking and cycling). For this Option topography is the main barrier to improving pedestrian movement as there is a steep gradient to the north into the town centre and existing services and facilities. There is the potential for enhanced positive effects for this Option if pedestrian links can be made to the adjacent Yeovil Country Park as well as improvements to pedestrian links between the town centre and Country Park.

3.31 As for all the options there is the potential for negative effects on the landscape as well as transport through increased traffic, which has the potential for negative effects on climate change through increased carbon emissions. It is considered that appropriate mitigation is provided through plan policies and available at the project level to ensure that there would be

no significant effects. Key negative effects for this particular option relate to the historic environment and the loss of agricultural land. There is one Scheduled Monument (Roman Villa North of Dunnock's Lane) and a number of Listed Buildings within this option area as well as a Scheduled Monument (Chessels Roman Villa) adjacent to the boundary to the west and the North Coker Conservation Area to the south west<sup>10</sup>. It is considered that suitable mitigation is available through the Local Plan and at the project level to address the potential significant negative effects, with minor residual negative effects. As for all the options, there is also an element of uncertainty until further until project level surveys and assessments have been completed. It should also be noted that there are potential opportunities to enhance the setting of the Roman Villa (Dunnock's Lane) and achieve gains through placing interpretation and encouraging community involvement in the management of the Scheduled Monument.

- 3.32 This option predominantly contains Grade 1 agricultural land<sup>11</sup>, which is identified as 'excellent' in the Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales<sup>12</sup>. Development within this option area would lead to a significant loss of the highest grade agricultural land, which has the potential for permanent significant long-term negative effect on this SA Objective. Compared to the other options, this option has the potential for the greatest loss of the highest grade of agricultural land.

### **Area C Middle Yeo Valley & Dorset Hillsides**

- 3.33 This Option extends out from the east of the town and is 2.1 km from the Town Centre. As for all the options the key positive effects relate to the provision of housing and employment with associated benefits for communities, through improved public transport and pedestrian links (walking and cycling). For this Option, the River Yeo and railway are the main barriers to improving pedestrian movement as there is currently only one crossing point into the town along Sherborne Road (A30). It may be possible to provide additional crossing points but this could be costly and ultimately may not be feasible. It should also be noted that this Option lies within another Local Planning Authority area, so would not be subject to the same planning policies and contributions as the other Options. This adds an element of uncertainty that is not present for the other single site options.
- 3.34 As for all the options there is the potential for negative effects on the landscape as well as transport through increased traffic, which has the potential for negative effects on climate change through increased carbon emissions. It is considered that appropriate mitigation is provided through plan policies and available at the project level to ensure that there would be no significant effects. Key negative effects for this option include flooding and the loss of agricultural land. There are some areas of significant flood risk within this option as the River Yeo runs along the western boundary<sup>13, 14</sup>. It is

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<sup>10</sup> The National Heritage List for England (Accessed 13/09/13) Map Search. Available online: <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/mapsearch.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> Defra - Magic Map (Accessed on 11/09/13) Available online: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of agriculture, Fisheries & Food (Oct 1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England & Wales

<sup>13</sup> South Somerset District Council (Aug 2008) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

considered that appropriate mitigation is provided through plan policies and available at the project level to ensure that there would be no significant effects, which could include avoiding development in the areas of high flood risk.

- 3.35 This option predominantly contains Grade 1 and Grade 2 agricultural land<sup>15</sup>, which is identified as 'excellent' and 'very good' respectively in the Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales<sup>16</sup>. Development within this option area would lead to the significant loss of both Grade 1 and 2, which has the potential for permanent significant long-term negative effect on this SA Objective. This option is likely to have a slightly reduced effect compared to Option B as it is not all Grade 1 agricultural; however, it is still considered significant.

### **Area D Upper Mudford**

- 3.36 This Option extends out from the north east of the town and is within 3 km of the Town Centre. As for all the options the key positive effects relate to the provision of housing and employment with associated benefits for communities, through improved public transport and pedestrian links (walking and cycling). Similarly to Option B, topography is the main barrier to improving pedestrian movement for this option as the site rises towards the northern escarpment.
- 3.37 As for all the options there is the potential for negative effects on the landscape as well as transport through increased traffic, which has the potential for negative effects on climate change through increased carbon emissions. It is considered that appropriate mitigation is provided through plan policies and available at the project level to ensure that there would be no significant effects. The key negative effect for this particular option relates to the loss of agricultural land. This option predominantly contains Grade 3a and 3b agricultural land<sup>17</sup>, which is identified as 'good to moderate' in the Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales<sup>18</sup>. The Option area also contains small proportions of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land. Development within this option area would predominantly lead to the loss of both Grade 3a and 3b, which has the potential for permanent minor long-term negative effect on this SA Objective. This option is considered to have a reduced negative effect compared to the other Options as it does not have the potential to lead to a significant loss of Grade 1 and 2.

### **Multi-site Option (consist of any combination of Areas A, B, C, D)**

- 3.38 This Option consists of four potential areas for development to the south, west, north east and east of the Town. All of the areas have relatively similar levels of accessibility to services and facilities and all have some form of barrier to

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<sup>14</sup> Environment Agency (Accessed on 09/09/13) What's in your Backyard. Available online: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/37793.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> ALC maps supplied by Natural England (September 2009)

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of agriculture, Fisheries & Food (Oct 1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England & Wales

<sup>17</sup> Defra - Magic Map (Accessed on 11/09/13) Available online: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of agriculture, Fisheries & Food (Oct 1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England & Wales

pedestrian movement be it topography or the River Yeo and the railway. As for all the options the key positive effects relate to the provision of housing and employment with associated benefits for communities, through improved public transport and pedestrian links (walking and cycling).

- 3.39 The key difference between the multi-site and single site options is that a dispersed pattern of development consisting of smaller scale sites limits the scope for the delivery of new and improved public transport infrastructure/pedestrian (walking & cycling) links. While there is the potential for contributions to enhance existing public transport and pedestrian links, these are less likely to be significant considering the reduced scale and dispersed nature of development. There is also less potential for a coordinated approach to the delivery of new public transport/pedestrian links alongside housing and potential employment uses, which means this option is less likely to reduce the need to travel and encourage more sustainable modes of transport. It is still considered that a multi-site option can provide improvements through contributions but the potential for positive effects is slightly more uncertain than for the larger scale single site options. However, this is obviously dependent on the distribution of development across the sites.
- 3.40 As for all the options there is the potential for negative effects on the landscape as well as transport through increased traffic, which has the potential for negative effects on climate change through increased carbon emissions. It is considered that appropriate mitigation is provided through plan policies and available at the project level to ensure that there would be no significant effects. Key negative effects for this particular option relate to the historic environment and the loss of agricultural land.
- 3.41 There are a number of historic designations that have the potential to be affected by development in Areas A and B. These include the historic park and garden of Brympton d'Evercy which is adjacent to the western boundary of Area A and a Scheduled Monument (Roman Villa North of Dunnock's Lane) and a number of Listed Buildings within Area B. It is considered that suitable mitigation is available through the Local Plan and at the project level to address the potential significant negative effects, with minor residual negative effects. As for all the options, there is also an element of uncertainty until further until project level surveys and assessments have been completed. It should also be noted that as the combination of sites and distribution of development across them is unknown there is an element of uncertainty.
- 3.42 Development through this option has the potential to result in the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. Area A, B and C are predominantly Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land whereas Area D is predominantly Grade 3a and 3b, with small proportions of Grade 1 and 2. Given this, there is the potential for development to have a permanent significant long-term negative effect through the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. It should be noted that the significance of this effect is dependent on the distribution of development across the areas as the grade of the agricultural land varies.

- 3.43 The summary findings of the SA comparative appraisal for the 4 options for the strategic growth of development in Yeovil are set out in the following table 3.3:

**Table 3.3: Summary Comparative Appraisal of Options for Strategic Growth in Yeovil**

Sustainability Objective	Strategic Options								Summary Comparative Appraisal
	Option B (Coker)		Option C (Middle Yeo Valley & Dorset Hillside)		Option D (Upper Mudford)		Multi-site Option (Areas A, B, C & D)		
1. Services and facilities	?		?		?		?		Options B and C are closest to the Town Centre; however, when considering the barriers to pedestrian movement for each of the options as well as the potential provision of services/facilities, the differences in terms of distance become less significant. Uncertainty as the scale and scope of facilities and services to be provided are not known.
2. Poverty and social exclusion	+		+		+		+		All of the Options are considered to have a similar effect against this SA Objective. Development could benefit the deprived wards within the Town with the potential for indirect minor medium to long-term positive effects on this SA objective.
3. Housing	++		++		++		++		All of the Options have the potential to deliver the identified need of 1,565 dwellings. Option B and the Multi-site Option could potentially provide further long-term benefits after the life of the plan as more development could be accommodated over the identified need, as identified in the PLS Addendum.
4. Improve health and well being	+	?	+	?	+	?	+	?	There are no significant differences between the Options in terms of distance from existing health services, in particular Yeovil District Hospital. All of the Options have the potential for minor positive long-term effects on health through the provision of housing and employment. There is an element of uncertainty as each of the options has barriers to improving pedestrian movement, which includes steep topography for Options B, D and the Multi-site and the River Yeo and railway for Option C and the Multi-site.
5. Education and skills	?		?		?		?		Option D and is the closest to an existing secondary school, however this isn't considered to be significant. Options B and C are a similar distance from an existing secondary school while the Multi-option could potentially comprise a number of these areas. The scale of proposed development is unlikely to result in the provision of any significant new education facilities, such as a secondary school; however, there is the potential for all the options to

Sustainability Objective	Strategic Options								Summary Comparative Appraisal
	Option B (Coker)		Option C (Middle Yeo Valley & Dorset Hillsides)		Option D (Upper Mudford)		Multi-site Option (Areas A, B, C & D)		
									provide a new primary school and extend/upgrade existing facilities. Uncertainty as the scale and scope of education facilities to be provided as part of development are not known.
6. Crime	0		0		0		0		No significant differences between the options.
7. Economy	+		+		+		+		All of the options have the potential to deliver 5ha of employment land as set out in Local Plan Policy SS3, with the potential for a minor long-term positive effect on this SA objective. All of the options have good access to existing employment areas, taking into account the potential barriers to movement for each of them.
8. Traffic	-	+	-	?	-	+	-	?	All options have the potential to exacerbate current congestion issues within the existing road network. Transport assessments concluded that there is little difference in terms of traffic impact between potential sites. Multi-site option is more likely to have less significant localised impacts but also provides less scope for a coordinated approach to the delivery of development and infrastructure, with less potential for positive effects through improved public transport and walking and cycling routes. There is currently only one crossing point into the town across the River Yeo and railway from Option C along Sherborne Road (A30). It is possible that providing additional crossing points over the River Yeo and railway may not be feasible. The site also lies within another Local Planning Authority area, so would not be subject to the same planning policies and contributions as Options B and D. This could restrict the provision of new pedestrian links between the site and the town centre as well as existing employment. Providing new and/ or improvements to existing pedestrian links could potentially be costly and would need to be carefully planned and designed. With this in mind it is considered that there is some uncertainty with regard to the potential for Option D to deliver improvements to pedestrian links as identified for Options B and D.

Sustainability Objective	Strategic Options								Summary Comparative Appraisal
	Option B (Coker)		Option C (Middle Yeo Valley & Dorset Hillside)		Option D (Upper Mudford)		Multi-site Option (Areas A, B, C & D)		
9. Landscape and townscape	-		-		-		-		Once mitigation has been considered there are no significant differences between the options. It is considered that all the Options have the potential for a residual minor medium to long-term negative effect on this SA Objective. The cumulative effect of a number of smaller scale developments as part of a multi-site option is difficult to determine as each area is within a different landscape setting. With this in mind you could assess that the impact of a number of smaller sites would be less than a larger site within an individual landscape setting. However, in the years extending beyond this plan period, the potential development areas within Areas A to D identified by the Addendum, are likely to come forward for development, and if this happens in piecemeal stages rather than as a single masterplanned form, then the resultant growth may lack the cohesion and appropriate mitigation that a larger site can deliver.
10. Historic environment	-	?	?		?		-	?	Given existing constraints and evidence it is considered that Option B and the Multi-site Option (particularly Areas B & D) have the potential for a minor long-term negative effect on designated heritage after considering mitigation. The effect of the multi-site option will be dependent on the combination of sites selected and scale of development. There is an element of uncertainty for all options until detailed proposals and project level assessments have been carried out.
11. Climate change	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	It is considered that all of the options have the potential to increase levels of carbon emissions through increased traffic with the potential for a minor long-term negative effect on this SA objective. It is also considered that all of the Options have the potential for a minor positive effect by either providing some form of renewable or low carbon energy on-site, or if not feasible, mitigating remaining emissions off-site (Governments proposed 'Allowable Solutions').

Sustainability Objective	Strategic Options								Summary Comparative Appraisal	
	Option B (Coker)		Option C (Middle Yeo Valley & Dorset Hillside)		Option D (Upper Mudford)		Multi-site Option (Areas A, B, C & D)			
12. Minimise pollution	0	--	0	--	0	-	0	--	It is considered that there is suitable mitigation available through the Local Plan and at the project level to address potential negative effects on air, water, land, light and noise pollution in the medium to long-term. Potential for significant long-term negative effects identified for Options B, C and the multi-site through the significant loss of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land, which is classed as 'excellent' and 'very good' respectively in the Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales <sup>19</sup> . Option B contains predominantly Grade 1 whereas Option C contains a mix of Grade 1 and 2. There is an element of uncertainty for the multi-site option as the effect is dependent on the combination of sites selected, which could include the Areas A and B. Option D is predominantly Grade 3a and 3b, which is classed as 'Good' to 'Moderate', with small areas of Grade 1 and 2, so is likely to have less of a significant effect on this SA objective through the loss of agricultural land.	
13. Flooding	0		-		0		-		?	No areas of significant flood risk within Options B and D. Significant flood risk areas in Option C as River Yeo runs along western boundary. There is an element of uncertainty for the multi-site option as the effect is dependent on the combination of sites selected, which could include the area in Option C.
14. Biodiversity and geodiversity	?		?		?		?		?	Given existing constraints and mitigation available at the project level and provided by Local Plan policies it is considered that significant effects are unlikely for any of the Options. However, there is still an element of uncertainty until project level surveys and assessments have been completed.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Oct 1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales

#### 4.0 Strategic Options Assessment in Plan Making

4.1 The findings of the revised SA have helped to inform the options assessment carried out by the Council. It should be noted that whilst the SA findings are considered by the Council in its selection of options and form part of the evidence supporting the Local Plan, the SA findings are not the sole basis for a decision. The Council have used a criteria based approach to further inform decision-making, which considers key planning issues such as deliverability and viability. Table 4.1 below summarises the options/alternatives considered for strategic growth around Yeovil, with an outline of the reasons for selection and rejection where relevant.

**Table 4.1 Reasons for the selection/ rejection of options in plan making**

Options for Strategic Growth in Yeovil 2013	Reasons for rejection or selection in Plan Making
Area B Coker	<p>This option was rejected because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It would lead to the significant loss of Grade 1 agricultural land;</li> <li>- There is the potential for greater effects on heritage assets compared to other options;</li> <li>- A single-site option of 1565 dwellings would extend beyond established landscape boundaries, to thus require substantial mitigation to counter development impact.</li> </ul>
Area C Middle Yeo Valley & Dorset Hillside	<p>This option was rejected because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is severance between the site and the rest of the town and mitigation is likely to be extremely costly and could affect the viability of development.</li> <li>- The deliverability of the site is in doubt because it is outside of the district and the relevant authority (West Dorset) have expressed strong concerns about its acceptability (landscape impact, coalescence, flood risk). In addition, West Dorset District Council have stated they would not support development in this area.</li> </ul>
Area D Upper Mudford	<p>This option was rejected because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is not enough available and deliverable land identified through the SHLAA to accommodate the objectively assessed need of 1,565 dwellings.</li> <li>- The impact of a larger site would not be easily mitigated, having limited landscape containment. The smaller option is better related to the existing town, and the evolving</li> </ul>

Options for Strategic Growth in Yeovil 2013	Reasons for rejection or selection in Plan Making
	<p>Wyndham Park site, extending east from the A359 to cross Primrose Lane, to butt against the northwest edge of Wyndham Park. By laying within credible landscape boundaries, and having capacity for ready mitigation, the smaller site is the preferred landscape option in this quarter of the town.</p>
<p>Multi -site Option (consist of any combination of Areas A, B, C, D)</p>	<p>Area A rejected because of the limited capacity of the site to deliver a strategic housing site. The site can accommodate up to 250 dwellings but this volume is not considered to be sufficiently significant to form part of the Direction of Growth.</p> <p>Area C rejected because of the reasons listed above.</p> <p>Areas B and D were selected because it is considered that a reduced scale of development over 2 sites will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve deliverability/viability</li> <li>- Reduce the site specific impacts upon infrastructure and allow the council to make use of CIL to provide facilities in the most appropriate location.</li> <li>- Reduce the loss of Grade 1 agricultural land on Area B.</li> <li>- Reduce the potential negative effects on heritage assets through development in Area B;</li> <li>- Reduce impacts on the landscape by containing built form within logical landscape boundaries.</li> <li>- Link well with the existing community and offer the potential for improvements to routes and services over a wider area</li> <li>- Still deliver services and facilities to the benefit of the surrounding community</li> </ul>

## 5.0 Summary and Next Steps

- 5.1 This SA Report on the Strategic Growth Options for Yeovil (October 2013) is part of the SA Report that accompanies the Submission South Somerset District Council Local Plan. It has been prepared to address the significant issues of concern regarding the SA raised by the Inspector following the public Hearings into the Local Plan during May and June 2013.
- 5.2 The baseline information and plans/programmes review has been updated and provided an updated basis for appraisal. The way in which the issues for sustainability were identified and reported in previous SA Reports is explained more explicitly and aligned with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) as implemented last year. The development of the SA Framework including the amalgamation of objectives to make a more manageable number has been explained more clearly.
- 5.3 The potential options for distributing development in Yeovil were reconsidered and identified using the updated baseline information, most notably the updated Peripheral Landscape Studies (August, 2013) which included landscape sensitivities and potential capacity for development. The realistic options (reasonable alternatives with regard to SEA ie deliverable within the Plan period) were appraised by independent SA specialists, Enfusion.
- 5.4 The findings of this SA have been taken into account by the Council in selecting the proposed direction of growth for Yeovil.
- 5.5 This SA Report, together with the proposed changes to the Local Plan, will be subject to public consultation for a period of 6 weeks from November 2013. The responses received will be considered and the final changes to the Local Plan, accompanied by the SA Addendum Report will be submitted to the Inspector for consideration when the examination is resumed in 2014.